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KUWAIT

Wave of abuses in the wake of war

AI has publicly appealed to the Emir of Kuwait to end the wave of arbitrary arrests, torture and killings in the country since the withdrawal of Iraqi forces.

The appeal followed a two-week AI fact-finding visit to Kuwait. The team reported that scores of victims had been killed and hundreds more had been arbitrarily arrested since 26 February. Many were brutally tortured by Kuwaiti armed forces and members of "resistance" groups since 26 February. Most of the victims were Palestinians, among them Jordanian passport holders. They also included Iraqi and Sudanese nationals and members of the "Bidun" community (stateless persons in Kuwait, denied basic civil and political rights).

Victims have been shot in public or tortured and killed in secret. Hundreds were taken from their homes or arrested at check-points, many to be tortured in police stations, schools and other makeshift detention centres.

Savage beatings with sticks, hose-pipes and rifle butts and whippings with electric cables were the most common methods, but AI's team catalogued over a dozen forms of torture, including electric shocks, burning with cigarettes, candles and acid, cutting with knives, biting, threats of execution and of sexual assault. Teams of torturers reportedly worked in relays, maintaining the torture for hours. Daily torture of captives appeared to have been common.

Most of the abuses immediately after the Iraqi withdrawal were said to have been carried out by "resistance" squads, but armed forces personnel have been increasingly cited in later cases. Victims were still being killed and tortured during AI's visit from 28 March to 9 April.

The team also updated information in AI's December 1990 report on violations by Iraqi forces in Kuwait. AI was able to confirm that its report had given an accurate overall picture of the range and intensity of the violations inflicted on the population during the occupation, although it could not confirm the precise number of killings by Iraqi forces during the occupation.

However, on the highly publicized issue in the December report of the baby deaths, AI's team was shown alleged mass graves of babies, but found no reliable evidence that Iraqi forces had caused their death.

In response to AI's appeal, the Kuwaiti Government admitted, on 19 April, that human rights violations had been committed immediately after the withdrawal of Iraqi forces but insisted that such abuses are no longer taking place.□

IRAQ

Appeal to stop the killing

IN April AI appealed to the Iraqi Government in the strongest possible terms to immediately put an end to the mass deliberate killing of unarmed civilians and the summary execution of government opponents and their suspected supporters.

The appeal followed numerous and credible reports received by AI that Iraqi Government forces were committing these and other human rights violations following the recapture of cities and towns in the northern Kurdish and southern Shi'a areas of the country. Some two million Kurds and Arab Shi'a Muslims were forced to flee to Iran and Turkey and tens of thousands more into the United States-occupied region of southern Iraq. Many were reportedly deliberately killed by Iraqi forces as they fled.

In its appeal AI also expressed dismay at reports that Iraqi Kurds who returned to Arbil in northern Iraq following a government announcement of an amnesty for Kurds on 5 April were arbitrarily arrested, summarily executed or subjected to forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

In light of these reports, AI also sent urgent appeals to the governments of the United States, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in April, urging them to ensure that Iraqi refugees then under the control of United States-led coalition forces were guaranteed effective and durable protection against human rights violations by Iraqi Government forces. AI stated that it strongly feared that the refugee population would be at risk of certain torture, "disappearance" or execution if returned to Iraqi Government control.□

A Kurdish mother and her sick child at Isikveren refugee camp on the Turkish border with Iraq

© *Roger Hutchings/Katz*

PERU

Human rights activist injured by letter bomb

AI has appealed to President Alberto Fujimori for a prompt investigation into a bomb attack on Dr. Augusto Zúñiga, human rights defender and head of the legal department of the Commission for Human Rights. On 15 March 1991 Dr. Zúñiga opened a letter bomb which blew off his left hand and forearm, and caused considerable damage to his office.

At the time, Dr. Zúñiga was working on the case of student Ernesto Castillo Páez, who "disappeared" after he was reportedly detained by police on 21 October 1990 in Lima. The case received wide publicity when a *habeas corpus* petition was upheld by two lower courts (see *AI Newsletter*, March 1991). However, the Supreme Court subsequently annulled the *habeas corpus* on grounds of procedural irregularites. Dr. Zúñiga was warned that the police might seek reprisals against him, but although he informed the authorities of this, no specific measures of protection were apparently offered to him.□

CAMPAIGN FOR PRISONERS OF THE MONTH

Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In *no* circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

YUGOSLAVIA

Nijazi Beqa: ***an ethnic Albanian from Kosovo, aged 29, he is serving a four-year prison sentence for membership of a group campaigning for Kosovo province to be given the status of a republic within Yugoslavia.***

Nijazi Beqa

Nijazi Beqa, a student of physics, married, with one child, was one of 10 ethnic Albanians from the area of Uroševac in Kosovo arrested in September 1988. They were charged with having formed a "hostile" organization, aimed at securing republic status for Kosovo province. Kosovo borders on Albania and most of its population are ethnic Albanians. It is a province of the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia.

Nijazi Beqa and his co-defendants were accused of having joined an illegal organization, distributed "hostile propaganda materials" and of organizing petitions of a "hostile" nature to officials in and outside Yugoslavia. They were not charged with having used or advocated violence. At their trial in Priština in February 1989, all were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment. Nijazi Beqa received the longest sentence: eight years, later reduced to five years by the Supreme Court of Kosovo.

The Yugoslav federal criminal law was changed in 1990 and many people convicted for similar non-violent political activity were released. However, Nijazi Beqa is still serving his sentence in Dubrav prison near Istok. It is reported that on 22 March he and five other political prisoners there went on a hunger-strike against the conditions under which they are being held.

■Please send courteous letters, appealing for his immediate and unconditional release to: Dr Vlado Kambovski/Federal Minister of Justice/Omladinskih brigada 1/11000 Beograd/Yugoslavia.□

PRISONER NEWS

AI learned in March 1991 of the release of 96 prisoners under adoption or investigation. AI took up 118 cases.

CUBA

Orlando Azcué Rodríguez: ***a 33-year-old cigar factory technician, he is serving a three-year sentence for giving out handwritten leaflets calling for free elections in Cuba.***

Orlando Azcué Rodríguez was arrested on 5 April 1990 in Havana and brought to trial on 12 October on charges of making "enemy propaganda". According to reports of his trial, he was removed from the courtroom because, when asked if he wanted to say anything in his defence, he began to talk about his belief that political change was needed in Cuba. He was found guilty and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Orlando Azcué was one of 12 political prisoners in Combinado del Este Prison in Havana who signed a letter dated 1 January 1991 calling for peaceful political change and respect for human rights, that was smuggled out of the prison. The 12 also refused to wear their prison uniform as a way of reinforcing their demands. As a result of their protest, they were transferred to different prisons. Orlando Azcué and two others were taken to "Kilo 7" Maximum Security Prison in Camaguey where, on 17 January, they declared themselves on hunger-strike. They were said to have been forcibly dressed in the prison uniform and held for at least 17 days with their arms chained to the bars of their cells to prevent them from removing the uniform. Orlando Azcué was also said to have been beaten by prison guards on at least three occasions.

In early February he was transferred to Pinar del Río Provincial Prison after agreeing to give up his protest and end his hunger-strike. However, once there he again refused to wear his uniform and was forcibly dressed and handcuffed to the cell bars to prevent him from removing it. On 6 March he was transferred to the prison infirmary suffering from skin problems and a dramatic fall in his blood sugar level resulting from the earlier hunger-strike.

As of mid-April, he remained in the infirmary and was still refusing to wear the prison uniform if returned to his cell.

■Please send appeals requesting his immediate and unconditional release to: Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz/Presidente del Consejo de Estado/Ciudad de la Habana/Cuba.□

MOROCCO

Mohamed Abbad: ***a 37-year-old student and ex-president of the National Union of Moroccan Students (UNEM), he is serving a 15-year prison sentence in Safi Prison.***

Mohamed Abbad is one of 31 people tried in May 1984 in Marrakech following demonstrations in January 1984 against price rises and the imposition of an examination fee for the baccalaureate examination. They were reportedly arrested without warrant several days after the demonstrations, held incommunicado and tortured in *garde à vue* detention.

Mohamed Abbad was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment on charges including conspiracy to overthrow the government and possessing leaflets aimed at disturbing internal security. The prosecution's evidence consisted of statements which the defendants made to the police in pre-trial custody, allegedly extracted under torture, and confiscated literature. No evidence was produced in court that he had used or advocated violence. He denied all the charges against him except possession of the literature which he said was either on sale in public bookstores or did not advocate violence.

Mohamed Abbad remains in prison with 17 others from this group. Two of the original 31 died during hunger-strikes in 1984 and two others, on hunger-strike since 1985, are isolated and forcibly fed in Averroes Hospital in Casablanca. Mohamed Abbad was originally held in Safi Prison, where he developed diabetes in 1988. He was then transferred to Marrakech where his family lives and could visit him regularly and provide him with the food necessary for his diabetic diet.

On 26 March 1991 he was returned to Safi Prison and in protest he began a hunger-strike which resulted in his falling into a coma, due to his illness, a few days later. He is now held in hospital in Safi.

■Please send courteous letters appealing for his immediate and unconditional release, if possible in French or Arabic to: His Majesty King Hassan II/Palais Royal/Rabat/Morocco.□

SWAZILAND

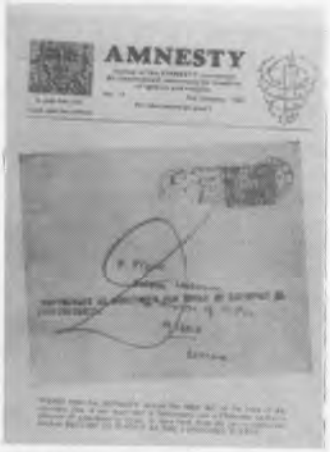
Prisoners freed

FIVE prisoners of conscience held in Swaziland since November 1990 under renewable 60-day administrative detention orders were released on 22 March 1991.

The five were previously imprisoned from June until October 1990 for allegedly organizing a political party — all parties are prohibited. The releases occurred shortly before two AI representatives arrived in Swaziland for talks with the government.□

FOCUS amnesty international

Good news on the front page of *Amnesty (right)*, the movement's first journal: a prisoner is free. Ilker Demir *(far right)*, Turkish prisoner of conscience since 1984, pictured in prison with his daughter. He was released in April 1991 when the Turkish Penal Code was amended. Zikri Hafkhosh *(below)*, one of 315 children who 'disappeared' in Iraq in 1983


AMNESTY

Make tomorrow the day of their freedom

'I feel glad because I know that there are some people who care about us and about our situation here...thank you from our heart...we can see that many people are trying to help us and we are not alone'

Daniel Xidis, Greece, Prisoner of the Month in November 1990

In 1962 *Amnesty*, AI's first journal, had good news on its front page: a prisoner of conscience is free in Spain. A Christmas card sent to him by an AI member in Switzerland had been returned marked "Consignee is free". This is the news AI's members want to hear — that somewhere in the world justice has been done. All too often the bad news dominates the headlines — worldwide human rights violations against a backcloth of war, repression and famine.

AI was founded 30 years ago to campaign for the release of prisoners of conscience around the world. Today the organization continues to focus on their plight. Here we publish the good news. Many of these prisoners are now free. Some have thanked AI, but we take no credit for anyone's freedom

The *Campaign for Prisoners of the Month* in the *Newsletter* has a 26-year history. Every issue has published appeals for the release of prisoners of conscience. The first issue, in January 1971, combined general news about AI's work with the *Postcards for Prisoners Campaign*, a monthly campaign on behalf of three prisoners which began in 1965.

Today the terrible injustice done to those prisoners reaches a mass audience. This *Newsletter*, and the articles in it, are published every month in over 15 languages including Arabic, Brazilian Portuguese, Chinese, English, French, Hebrew, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Tamil. AI's sections all over the world include the *Prisoner of the Month* cases in the magazines and newssheets they publish in languages, ranging from Faroe to Bangla. In many countries, regional and national newspapers report on the *Prisoner of the Month* cases — the Slovenian Catholic weekly *Druzina*, the French national daily *Le Monde*, and the Pakistani daily *The Muslim*, to name but a few. Year in, year out, the *Campaign for Prisoners of the Month* provides a unique window into the harsh and desperate world of the prisoner of conscience. Hundreds of thousands of people have appealed for their freedom. And the prisoners themselves know that they are not alone, that the world has not forgotten them.

This month we review the fate of some of the 92 prisoners of conscience featured in the* Campaign for Prisoners of the Month *in 1989 and 1990

The 1990s began with a dramatic upturn of the fortunes of thousands of prisoners of conscience across eastern and central Europe. In Czechoslovakia former prisoner of conscience Vaclav Havel became President of his country. Others assumed important positions in the government of their countries. In many of these countries the new respect for human rights was embodied in the repeal or revision of laws used to imprison prisoners of conscience.

But there are still prisoners of conscience in Europe, and in every other region of the world.

This month we review the fate of some of the 92 prisoners whose cases were the focus of the *Campaign for Prisoners of the Month* in 1989 and 1990. Thirty-nine of them have been released; about 50 remain in prison. At least one other, Mahmat Abdoulaye, a prisoner of the month in August 1990, will never taste freedom. He was not among the surviving prisoners liberated after the change of government in Chad in December 1990 and is presumed to have died in custody.

None of these people should ever have been prisoners of conscience. They were all arrested for the peaceful expression of their beliefs or opinions or on account of their ethnic origin. Their arrest and detention was not only an assault on their rights but a repudiation of the international standards set by the world community for the protection of everyone's rights. Our task today is to increase the international pressure on behalf of the thousands of prisoners of conscience all over the world, to make tomorrow the day their freedom is restored.□

Free in Africa

Kwame Karikari, Ghana: released December 1988

Akwasi Adu-Amankwah and Yaw Tony Akoto-Ampaw, Ghana: released May 1989

Albert Mukong, Cameroon: released May 1989, rearrested March 1990, acquitted of subversive activities and released April 1990

José Primo Esono Mica, Equatorial Guinea: released February 1990

Oumarou Aman, Cameroon: released from labour camp in January 1991 after being held for more than six years without charge or trial

Peter Chiko Bwalya, Zambia: released April 1989

Thoza Khonje, Malawi: released February 1991, having been detained for two years after making remarks which were interpreted as critical of the Life President

Dr George Mtafu, Malawi: released January 1991. He is Malawi's only neurosurgeon

Wossen-Seged, Michael and Bede-Mariam Mekonnen, Ethiopia: released September 1989

Al-Tijani al-Taïeb, Sudan: released early summer 1990 and then sought refuge in Egypt

Free in the Americas

Manuel González and Lidia González García, Cuba: released on expiry of their sentences, Manuel in January 1990 and Lidia in November 1989

Free in Asia

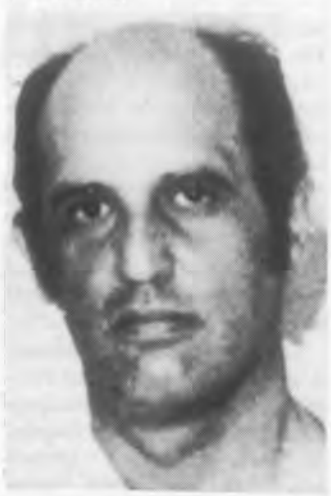
Syamsu Haji Rauf, Indonesia: released October 1990

Maulavi Abdul Rauf Logari, Afghanistan: released November 1989

Baha bin Mohammed, Brunei: released January 1990 after swearing an oath of allegiance to the Sultan, the Government, and the laws of the state of Brunei-Darussalam — a prerequisite for release

Vincent Cheng and Teo Sho Lung, Singapore: conditionally released in June 1990

Daniel Kokkalis, Greece (*above*), was released in January 1991. Ladji Traoré, Mauritania (*below left*), was released in November 1990. Hiram Abi Cobas Nuñez, Cuba (*below right*), was released in November 1990 on health grounds and served the remainder of his sentence at home. He moved to the United States of America in February 1991.



Amos Masondo, South Africa (*above left*), was released under restrictions in February 1989 but was again detained under state of emergency regulations in August 1989. He was released on 19 October 1989 under new restrictions, which were lifted in February 1990. Kevin Desmond de Souza, Singapore (*below*), was released in March 1989. He now works as a legal assistant and is reported to have been admitted to the Singapore Bar.

Over 50 of the *Prisoners of the Month* in 1989 and 1990 have been released. Despite worldwide appeals the remainder are still awaiting freedom. Here we review the fate of the prisoners.

Africa: Francisco Bonifacio Mba Nguema remains in prison in Equatorial Guinea. He is serving a 20-year sentence imposed in 1988 by a military court which found him guilty of attempting to overthrow the government. He was convicted on the basis of confessions he had made under torture and because he had read *The Dogs of War*, a novel about a coup in an imaginary country widely thought to be based on Equatorial Guinea. The only other evidence against him, the testimony of a prosecution witness, was proved to be false in court.

In Kenya Harris Okong'o Arara continues to serve a five-year sentence imposed in 1988 under a law which makes it a criminal offence simply to possess literature critical of the government. After he was convicted, Arara, a former air force officer, said the publications — opposition pamphlets whose contents were kept secret in court — were "honest and truthful", and asked whether it was seditious "to demand fundamental rights and freedoms".

Mulugetta Mosissa, a former civil servant, remains in detention without trial in Ethiopia. He was arrested in 1980, with hundreds of other members of the Oromo ethnic group who were suspected of links with an Oromo guerrilla group. Although many of these detainees were released in 1989, including Mulugetta's wife and son, he is one of about a dozen still held.

The Americas: Three Colombian prisoners of the month remain "disappeared". Dr Alirio de Jesús Pedraza Becerra, a 40-year-old lawyer and human rights worker, was abducted by eight heavily armed men on the night of 4 July 1990 in Bogotá. A judicial inquiry has been initiated into his case but to AI's knowledge no progress has been made. A parallel investigation by the Procurator General's Office has reportedly been impeded by the refusal of the national police to identify the two police agents seen by witnesses as the time of Dr Pedraza's abduction. The police have denied that its agents were present.

Tarcisio Medina Charry, a 21-year-old student, "disappeared" after being arrested in 1988. A judicial investigation into his case ordered the arrest of a member of the national police. However, the case was passed to the military courts who revoked the arrest order. The investigation continues and there is no further information about his fate.

Isidro Caballero, a 33-year-old

Ismail Mehmedov Hyuseyinov, Bulgaria, with his wife. He was released from exile in May 1989 and emigrated to Turkey later that year.

teacher, "disappeared" after being detained on 7 February 1989 by an army patrol. A judicial investigation implicated three members of the Caldas Battalion of the army. The Procurator Delegate for the Armed Forces is conducting a separate investigation, but AI has no information about its progress. Luis Miguel Solís Pajarito was 25 when he "disappeared" in Guatemala on 3 May 1990. He was a leader of the National Council for the Displaced. Despite assurances from government officials that an investigation is in progress, his whereabouts remain unknown.

Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, President of the Cuban Commission of Human Rights and National Reconciliation, who was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in 1989 for "spreading false news with the aim of endangering the prestige or standing of the Cuban state", is still serving his sentence in Agüica Prison: he is due for release in August 1991.

Asia: Alexander Warouw and Manan Effendi have been imprisoned in Indonesia since 1965. Both in their 70s, they continue to serve life sentences imposed in connection with an abortive coup in that year which was blamed on the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). Although both were linked to the PKI, when it was still a legal political party, there is no evidence that either of them had knowledge of the events leading to the coup. Their cases were featured in a British Section Christmas card campaign in 1990 and they received 1,704 cards as a result of the appeal. In early 1991 AI received a letter directly from the two men. They had copied out the names and addresses of everyone who wrote to them enclosed with a message of thanks and good wishes, asking that it be sent on.

Also in Indonesia, Agil Riyanto bin Darmowiyoto, a law student, continues to serve a 15-year sentence imposed for subversion in 1987. A prisoner of the month in June 1990, he is one of a group of seven young Muslim activists in Brebes, Central Java, convicted on charges arising from their involvement in Muslim groups known as *usroh*, which aim to deepen awareness of Islamic teachings and Islamic law. He is serving his sentence in an island prison, far from his home and family. Another of the seven students, 20-year-old Wahyudi, a prisoner of the month in 1989, is still serving a seven-year sentence in Cilacap, Central Java.

Kayathiri Vino Sangaralingam was 10 years old when she was arrested in Jaffna District, Sri Lanka, in 1987 with her mother and two older sisters. They all "disappeared" after being taken into custody by members of the Indian Peace Keeping Force. AI has received no further information on their fate since their case was featured in June 1989 and knows of no investigation either by the Indian or the Sri Lankan authorities.

Two prisoners of conscience in Laos have been held for over 15 years for "re-education". Tiao Sisoumang Sisaleumsak and Houmphanh Norasing, both detained since 1975, are among 33 detainees in Laos' northeastern province of Houa Phanh. Their living conditions are harsh with poor provision of housing, food and medicines. Many are in poor health, resulting from years of hard labour and inadequate medical treatment.

The South Korean authorities wrote to AI in response to its appeals for imprisoned artist Hong Song-dam and publisher Chang Ui-gyun. The authorities said that Hong Song-dam, whose case was featured in August 1990, was not imprisoned merely for sending his paintings to North Korea and books to Koreans in Germany, but because his paintings and writings were to promote a Marxist-Leninist revolution. In September 1990 the Supreme Court dismissed the charges of espionage and returned the case to a lower court. In January 1991 Hong Song-dam was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for producing material benefiting North Korea.

Chang Ui-gyun continues to serve an eight-year sentence for espionage. The authorities denied that his arrest in 1987 was solely because he had met pro-North Korean people in Japan and claimed that he had acted on North Korean orders to collect documents on South Korean opposition groups — regarded as state secrets by the courts because they are deemed capable of benefiting North Korea — and to seek to infiltrate dissident groups in order to create social unrest. They also stated that he had received funds from North Korea. AI had found these accusations unsubstantiated.

Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly, a Roman Catholic priest in Viet Nam, was arrested in May 1983 after trying to organize an unauthorized pilgrimage. In December 1983 he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for "opposing the revolution". He remains detained at Camp "Three Stars" in Ha Nam Ninh province.

Aung Din, a 26-year-old student leader, was arrested by the martial law authorities in Myanmar on 24 April 1989. Since his case was featured in November 1989, AI has received reports that he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment after an unfair trial by a military tribunal. Nay Min, a lawyer in his 40s, was also arrested under martial law in Myanmar. He continues to serve a 14-year sentence imposed after an unfair trial because of reports he sent to the *British Broadcasting Corporation* and for "possession of anti-government literature".

The four prisoners of the month from China featured in 1989 and 1990 are still in prison. Zhang Jingsheng was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment in December 1989 for "counter-revolutionary" crimes during the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations. Xiao Bin, a 42-year-old worker from Dalian, is serving a 10-year sentence for "counter-revolutionary incitement" during the pro-democracy demonstrations. Song Yude, a 36-year-old Protestant evangelist, was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in 1986 for unofficial religious activities.

In Tibet Ngawang Phulchung, a monk from the Drepung Monastry in Lhasa, is still serving a 19-year sentence imposed at a mass sentencing rally in November 1989. Ngawang Phulchung was one of 10 monks sentenced that month to long terms of imprisonment for their activities in support of Tibetan independence, which included circulating Tibetan translations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Mahmout Abdoulaye was not among the surviving prisoners liberated after the change of government in Chad in December 1990 and is presumed to have died in custody.

In the Philippines, there have been some encouraging developments in the case of Zosimo Alpino, prisoner of the month in February 1990. He was one of 25 farmers arrested in November 1987 and accused of membership of the New People's Army, the armed wing of the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines. Zosimo Alpino was released on bail on 13 December 1990. Thirteen of his co-defendants have been acquitted and released unconditionally on the grounds of insufficient evidence for prosecution. The court has yet to rule on the cases of Zosimo Alpino and the remaining 11 defendants.

Mihai Creanga, Romania, was released in May 1989. He was reportedly under house arrest until December of that year

Free in Europe

Branimir Trbojevic, Yugoslavia: released November 1989

Sevinç Tekeli-Öztas, Turkey: released April 1990 after serving the customary 40 per cent of her sentence. Released political prisoners are effectively blacklisted for employment and are denied a passport for travel abroad.

Bohdan Klymchak, USSR: pardoned and released November 1990. He no longer wishes to emigrate and is planning to write his memoirs.

Henrik Gjoka, Albania: released January 1991

Frantisek Starek, Czechoslovakia: released November 1989

Milaim Ziberi, Yugoslavia: released April 1990

Enver Ahmedov Hatibov, Bulgaria: released May 1990

Free in the Middle East

Mubarak 'Abdu Fadhl, Egypt: released April 1990

Sayyid Tahir al-Shimimy, Saudi Arabia: released April 1990

Middle East: Five Saudi Arabian students, prisoners of the month in April 1990, continue to be detained without charge or trial Abdul-'Aziz al-Faris, 'Ali Al-Lail, Salah Nisfan, Hussein Subait and Hatim al-Saddiq are Shi'a Muslims. AI believes they are held because they opposed the government's policy towards the Shi'a community. Shi'a Muslims in Saudi Arabia have long complained of discrimination and denial of their rights to freedom of religious thought and practice.

Three Moroccan prisoners of conscience, serving between them a total of 65 years, remain in prison. Ali Idrissi Kaitouni was given a 15-year sentence for writing poems about social injustice and political oppression in Morocco, deemed by the state to constitute a crime against internal security. Mohamed Srifi, a literature student, was sentenced in 1977 to 30 years' imprisonment for advocating that Morocco become a socialist republic. Assistant teacher Habib Ben Malek was sentenced in the same trial in 1977 to 20 years' imprisonment. They are all held in Kenitra Central Prison.

In Syria hundreds of prisoners of conscience continue to be detained without charge or trial under state of emergency legislation in force since 1963. Among them are the following who have appeared as prisoners of the month: Hakem Sultan al-Faiz, a 61-year-old Jordanian national and former member of the National Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, who has been held for almost 20 years; Ahmad 'Abd al-Ra'uf Roummo, a 55-year-old teacher, arrested in 1975; Muhammad Nabil Salem, an engineer, arrested in the wake of a one-day national strike in 1980 and Mahmud Jalbut, a Palestinian arrested in 1980.

Abdallah Oufkir, (*centre*) Morocco, and other detained members of his family, were reportedly released in February 1990 but are still believed to be subject to restrictions on freedom of movement and association.

AI has received no new information about six members of the Islamic Liberation Party imprisoned in Libya since 1973 for belonging to an illegal organization. 'Ali Muhammad al-Akrami, al-Ajili Muhammad 'Abdul Rahman al-Ashari, 'Ali Muhammad al-Qajiji, Salih Omar al-Qasbi, Muhammad al-Sadiq al-Tarhouni and 'Abdul Qadir Muhammad al-Ya'qubi are believed to be in Abu Salim Prison in Tripoli, although AI received reports that 'Abdul Qadir Muhammad al-Ya'qubi had died at the end of 1988.

In Iran, Mariam Firouz, a writer and translator in her mid-70s, has been imprisoned since 1983 for her non-violent political activities. Although a number of other women prisoners of conscience in related cases have reportedly been freed in recent months, Mariam Firouz remains in prison. Ali Ardalan, a retired civil servant in his mid 70s arrested in June 1990, remains in prison and there is growing concern over his ill-health. His "crime" was to sign an open letter to President Rafsanjani criticizing government failures to uphold rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution of Iran.

Zikri Nafkhosh Mustafa, Nabi Muhammad Shukr, Jabbar Rashid Shifki and Ja'far Tamar Mahmud are four of 315 Kurdish children and youths who "disappeared" after being arrested in Iraq in August 1983. AI has received no further information about their fate since their cases were featured in September 1990. Appeals on their behalf have been suspended because of the current situation in Iraq.

Europe: Daniel, Panayiotis and Pavlos Xidis, three brothers, are still serving four-year sentences in Greece for refusing to perform military service. They are not due for release until 1992, and are among some 400 young men held in Greek prisons for their refusal on religious grounds to perform military service. The three brothers are Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian denomination which does not support the use or advocacy of violence. Their religious beliefs do not allow them to serve in the armed forces in any capacity.

In Turkey Ilker Demir continues to serve his 36-year sentence in Nazilli E-Type Prison for political prisoners. A journalist convicted of making communist propaganda and insulting the authorities, he is reportedly in poor health. The earliest he can expect release is in August 1998. Several initiatives to amend or abolish the articles of the Turkish Penal Code, under which he and most prisoners of conscience were convicted, have so far come to nothing.□

AI visits Sri Lanka

TWO AI delegates were invited as guest speakers to a week-long conference in Colombo on trade unions and human rights. They also met several senior government officials and discussed possibilities for future access by AI to Sri Lanka. AI was last permitted access to the country in 1982.

Among those the delegates met were the Adviser to the President on International Affairs, the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, the Inspector General of Police, the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation, the Director of the United Nations Division in the Foreign Ministry and the Solicitor General.

Soon after the delegates left, the government announced to the press that "a research visit to Sri Lanka would be considered favourably if a formal request were made" by AI. In April AI submitted such a request.□

TUNISIA

Torture in prolonged *garde à vue* detention

DOZENS of people are reported to have been tortured while held incommunicado in prolonged *garde à vue* detention by the Tunisian police since January 1991. *Garde à vue* detention allows the police to detain suspects for interrogation for up to 10 days. Recent information from former detainees, lawyers and human rights activists indicates that suspected political opponents of the government, including boys under 18, have been detained in *garde à vue* well beyond the maximum 10-day period and without obtaining further authorization after four days as required by Tunisian law. AI is concerned that the Tunisian Government, by failing to investigate allegations of torture brought to its notice, appears to be condoning its use.

Sadiq Shourou, a lecturer at Tunis University, was arrested on 23 February 1991 and held in *garde à vue* detention for 42 days. When he appeared before an examining magistrate he alleged that he had been tortured. The examining magistrate reportedly ordered a medical examination, but over a week later he had not yet been examined.

AI welcomed the formation by the Tunisian Government of an official human rights council on 9 April 1991, but remained concerned at continuing reports of torture and ill-treatment of political detainees in *garde à vue* detention.□

MALAWI

Prisoners released

FORMER prisoners of the month Thoza Khonje and George Mtafu were among at least 21 political prisoners released in Malawi between January and March this year — all of them long-term detainees held without charge or trial. It is not yet clear how many of the almost 80 other prisoners freed at the same time were held for political reasons.

Thoza Khonje, a 43-year-old sugar company area manager, was arrested on 28 February 1989, reportedly after being overheard criticizing policy decisions by Life-President Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

George Mtafu, Malawi's only neurosurgeon, was arrested the same month after refusing to apologize for challenging public criticisms of northern Malawians made by Life-President Banda. Other northern Malawians arrested between February and May 1989 are thought to be among those set free. Others freed included William Masiku, detained since 1980, Brown Mpinganjira, detained since 1986, Margaret Marango Banda and Blaise Machira, detained since 1988.

The releases mark the first improvement in the human rights situation in Malawi for several years. However, other prominent prisoners of conscience remain behind bars. For example, Goodluck Mhango, a veterinary surgeon arrested in September 1987, has been rejected for release by a committee established to review the cases of political detainees.□

BAHRAIN

Torture and unfair trials

ON 9 May AI published *Bahrain: Violations of human rights.** The report describes how in recent years hundreds of political activists or suspected activists, including prisoners of conscience, have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and torture and sentenced after unfair trials.

Many are held for months or years in administrative or pre-trial detention, usually incommunicado, when torture most commonly occurs. A law passed in 1974 allows administrative detention for up to three years, renewable, and some detainees have been held for as long as seven years without charge or trial. Methods of torture include beating, burning with cigarettes, and being forced to stand for many hours without moving.

Political cases are tried by the Supreme Civil Court of Appeal, whose procedures do not meet international standards for fair trial. Defendants may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions, or even on police testimony that a confession was made; they have limited access to defence lawyers and no right of appeal.

AI has repeatedly called on the Bahraini Government to ratify and implement international human rights treaties.□

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GUATEMALA

Police officers convicted of murdering street child

FOUR Guatemalan police officers have been sentenced to prison terms of between 10 and 15 years for the murder of 13-year-old street child Nahamán Carmona López. Nahamán Carmona died in March 1990 as a result of severe beatings by police officers. The judge reportedly increased each sentence by 25 per cent on the grounds that the murder had been committed by state agents acting in an official capacity.

This is the second case in recent years in which Guatemalan government agents are known to have been convicted of human rights violations: the six police officers convicted for the 1987 abduction and murder of two agronomy students were released on appeal in July 1990, despite strong evidence linking them to the crime.

In April AI learned that warrants had been issued for the arrest of two police officers and a civilian in connection with the killing of 17-year-old Anstraum Aman Villagrán Morales, who was shot and killed on 25 June 1990 in Guatemala City by two uniformed police officers.

Thirty-six other criminal lawsuits against 35 National Police officers, three Treasury Police officers, 10 civilians and three judges for abuses against street children are reportedly pending in Guatemalan courts.□

MAURITANIA

Prisoners killed in custody

IN April AI called on the Mauritanian Government to investigate reports that up to 200 political prisoners had died or been killed in military or police custody — some executed without trial and many others as a result of torture. The victims were among some 3,000 black Mauritanians arrested late last year.

The authorities claimed they were conspiring to overthrow the government, which is dominated by a different community, the Moors, but offered no evidence to substantiate this.

Prisoners released in March 1991 provided AI with information and themselves bore scars from torture. In a few cases prisoners are reported to have been deliberately executed without trial. Most of the reported deaths, however, were due to torture in military barracks and police stations. Detainees were hung upside down and beaten on the soles of their feet, others were buried in sand up to the neck and left to die or were burned all over their bodies. Torture of political detainees in Mauritania has been routine since 1986, but never before on such a scale.

After the March 1991 releases, 64 prisoners were to be tried *in camera* in April. The trial was postponed and the government announced their release at the end of *Ramadan*, in mid-April. It was not known whether other detainees were still held.□

Death penalty to be abolished

THE death penalty is to be abolished in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat and Turks and Caicos Islands, reportedly following discussions between the British Government and the Governors of dependent territories in the Caribbean. The decision was announced by British Secretary of Foreign Affairs Douglas Hurd, on 28 March. He said that the government hoped Bermuda would "decide to follow this example as soon as possible". In a public referendum in 1990, retention of the death penalty was favoured. A debate and a vote in parliament are pending.□

INDONESIA

Advocates of independence imprisoned

MORE than 130 political prisoners from Irian Jaya are currently serving lengthy prison terms for advocating the province's independence from Indonesia. Most have been convicted since 1988 under Indonesia's sweeping Anti-Subversion Law, accused of attempting to establish an independent state of "West Papua". AI believes that their trials were unfair. The organization has already adopted two of the prisoners as prisoners of conscience and believes that some 80 others may be prisoners of conscience.

Among the possible prisoners of conscience are 37 people sentenced to up to 20 years' imprisonment for their involvement in a peaceful flag-raising ceremony in the town of Jayapura on 14 December 1988. A woman alleged to have sewn the flag was sentenced to eight years in prison and her husband, who led the ceremony, to 20 years. In 1990 a police officer accused of distributing copies of a patriotic song to high-school students was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment by a military court. Four men who allegedly planned demonstrations in December 1989 to commemorate the 1988 flag-raising, were sentenced to terms of between six and 12 years.

In addition to imprisonment, those believed to have advocated Irian Jaya's independence, whether through peaceful or violent means, continue to be at risk of torture, ill-treatment, "disappearance", and extrajudicial execution by Indonesian security forces. This pattern of human rights violations is described in a recent AI report, *Indonesia: Continuing human rights violations in Irian Jaya (Index No. ASA 21/06/91)*, published in April.□

BRAZIL

Moves to reinstate death penalty

A PROPOSAL for constitutional reform to allow a national plebiscite on the reintroduction of the death penalty in Brazil, for kidnappings, burglaries and rapes resulting in the victim's death, was approved by a Congressional Commission of the House of Deputies in December 1990.

The proposal is to be debated and voted on in Congress during the 1991 parliamentary sessions. If the constitutional amendment is passed by parliament, a binding plebiscite would be held within 18 months. AI has appealed to Brazilian parliamentarians expresssing its concern over the moves to reinstate the death penalty which it believes to be the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The death penalty was excluded from the Brazilian Penal Code in 1890 and its abolition is enshrined in the 1988 Constitution.□

Relatives and friends of a man shot dead during pro-democracy demonstrations in Bamako, the Malian capital, with the body at a hospital morgue

© Reuters

MALI

Killings precede coup

OVER 150 men, women and children were killed by Mali's security forces in March, after a wave of pro-democracy demonstrations and riots. In the wake of the killings the government led by President Moussa Traoré was overthrown.

At least 40 people were killed in Bamako on 22 March after a student demonstration was stopped by the security forces and rioting broke out. A state of emergency was declared but at least another 40 people were killed the following day. Some were shot dead when thousands of women, protesting against the killings, tried to march on the President's residence. Up to 65 protesters were reported to have been burned to death when security forces set fire to a shopping centre in which they were seeking refuge. Soldiers also shot at mourners burying the dead at two cemeteries in Bamako. AI called on the Malian Government to halt the killings.

Following a general strike and calls for his resignation, the President was arrested on 26 March by fellow army officers.

Some 50 others associated with the former government were also detained. The authorities promised early elections, and said that the former president and others arrested would be brought to trial.□

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

A hundred death sentences a month

AS AI launched a campaign in March 1991 against the extensive use of the death penalty in China, a nationwide drive to "sternly crack down" on crime continued unabated. AI has recorded about a hundred death sentences each month since the beginning of 1991. During 1990 AI recorded almost a thousand death sentences, of which at least 750 resulted in executions.

In the official press, Chinese politicians, as well as senior members of the judiciary, have repeatedly urged that instructions to "punish criminals heavily and rapidly" be strictly adhered to. Some prisoners who would not normally have received the death sentence may have fallen victim to political interference in the judicial process. Increased official emphasis on speedy investigation and sentencing in death penalty cases is likely to have further undermined the rights of defendants to a fair trial.

On 14 March 24-year-old Han Weijun was executed. He had been found guilty of setting fire to a car and an armoured personnel carrier commandeered by students during the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing. His was the first reported execution in several months for an offence related to the "counter-revolutionary rebellion". A court notice reported the economic loss of the two vehicles, but did not mention any military casualties. The death penalty is routinely used in China for serious economic crimes which involve no personal violence.□

STOP PRESS

Reverend Lawford Immunde of Kenya, one of the prisoners whose case was featured in the May *Focus*, has been released.

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