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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 11/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, INDIA  
PLEASE NOTE: SEE BELOW FOR CHANGE OF SAUDI ARABIA EMBARGO DATE

PLEASE NOTE: We would very much like to receive any comments you have particularly on how the IS Press Office is servicing you, EG. whether your work is suffering from an overload of news releases, if we are giving you the information you need, etc. The Press Officers meeting on 19, 20 & 21 February will be followed by a morning meeting on 22 February for us to present the proposed new Media/AV Program for AI and is an opportunity for you to have your input. If you are not coming to the PO meeting, please send Paula e-mails/faxes letting us know your comments so that your input is not left out. Thanks.

## NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

### INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

UN Peacekeeping operations - 26 January - SEE NEWS SERVICES 170 AND 05/94

Burundi - 27 January - SEE NEWS SERVICE 05/94

UK - 8 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 170

Kuwait - 24 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 170

### TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Zaire - 2 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 170

### FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Women - 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

Saudi Arabia - 31 March more details to follow

Colombia - 16 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56-57/93

South Africa - 23 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 05/94

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**AI INDEX: MDE 15/WU 02/1994  
19 January 1994**

**ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: OPENING OF A NEW AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OFFICE IN GAZA**

**On Monday 17 January, Amnesty International's first office in the Occupied Territories was opened by a member of the human rights organization's International Executive Council, Menno Kamminga. The office, located in Gaza, will be used by Amnesty International groups from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.**

**Despite practical difficulties, such as travelling between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, there are now approximately 250 Amnesty International members in the Occupied Territories, organized into 15 active groups.**

**Plans for the work of the new office include activities, in cooperation with local non-governmental organizations, on human rights education projects for children.**

**In October 1993, Amnesty International obtained assurances from Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat that the PLO is fully committed to respecting internationally recognised human rights and that the Palestine police would receive training in human rights.**

**The Amnesty International delegation is continuing to hold meetings with both the Israeli authorities and Palestinian leaders in order to seek their support for the human rights organization's groups in the Occupied Territories.**

**ENDS/**

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AI INDEX: ASA 20/WU 01/1994  
20 January 1994

**INDIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION RETURNS FROM RESEARCH VISIT**

An Amnesty International delegation has completed the organization's first visit for 14 years to an Indian state to conduct on the spot research. The delegation, consisting of Professor Rod Morgan, Dean of the Faculty of Law at Bristol University, and Yvonne Terlingen a member of staff at Amnesty International's International Secretariat, visited Bombay from 8 - 15 January and received full cooperation from officials.

The delegation sought information on two main issues. Firstly, details of arrest and detention practices in Bombay in view of Amnesty International's longstanding concern about reports of custodial violence during interrogation throughout India. Secondly, police accountability for alleged human rights violations, including during the December 1992 and January 1993 communal violence, which had prompted the organization's request to visit the state in April last year. Although initially refused permission, Amnesty International's visit was eventually scheduled for November 1993 but was postponed at the Government's request.

In Bombay, Amnesty International's representatives met the Secretary and the Additional Chief Secretary of the Home Department of Maharashtra, as well as the Director General of Police for Maharashtra, the Commissioner of Police (Greater Bombay), who gave the delegates permission to visit a Bombay police station; as well as the former Police Commissioner and officials in the Home and Law Departments. The meeting Amnesty International had requested with Chief Minister Sharad Pawar, however, could not be arranged. The delegates also attended the J.B. Shrikrishna Commission of Inquiry which is carrying out a detailed investigation into the December 1992 - January 1993 communal riots in Bombay. They met former prisoners, their relatives, lawyers and other people actively involved in human rights protection in the state. The organization is still awaiting certain details regarding police accountability that it was promised by the Home Department during the visit.

Before visiting Bombay, Amnesty International met the Indian government's Home Minister S.B. Chavan; Minister of State Rajesh Pilot; Home Secretary N.N. Vohra and other officials in the Ministries of Home and External Affairs in Delhi. Amnesty International expressed concern at the apparent rise in the number of custodial deaths reported to be the result of torture in Delhi: nine such cases were reported during 1993. The organization was glad to learn, however, that several proposals for legal reform to improve

the protection of detainees in custody, will be put to Parliament at its forthcoming session.

The Government promised Amnesty International a detailed response to the allegations made in its report, "An Unnatural Fate" "disappearances" and impunity in the Indian states of Jammu, Kashmir and Punjab, published on 15 December 1993, that 208 people had "disappeared" in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. Reiterating its request to visit Jammu and Kashmir to see the situation for itself, Amnesty International was disappointed that the Home Minister did not give the organization such permission.

The delegates urged that three political leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Abdul Gani Lone and Shabir Shah, whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience, be released. However, the Government gave no reasons as to why they were being detained. The delegation also met the Secretary General of the Human Rights Commission, which started work one month ago.

**This was the first research visit by Amnesty International to India, after 14 years in which successive governments refused the organization access to India for such research. "We are very pleased that the Indian Government has taken this positive step with Amnesty International and we hope this will mark a new openness towards human rights issues and an enhanced respect for human rights by central government and state officials," said Amnesty International. The full findings from the visit will be made available to the Indian Government in due course, and will be made public.**

**ENDS/**