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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 26/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Venezuela, Thailand and South Africa.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Albania - Death Penalty

(New Information)

Some media, including Reuters, have recently carried a story about a public hanging in Albania. If you get any queries about this, please refer to Urgent Action EUR 11/06/92 (UA 216/92).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

USA - 26 June

(New Information)

Many thanks to all of you for your support in keeping to the stringent embargo guidelines on the Los Angeles report. The embargo was held and the report was very successful.

We are now compiling press reports and trying to get feedback about the coverage worldwide and would very much appreciate your comments. We will hopefully have a report in next week's weekly update, so please let us know how coverage was in your country as soon as possible.

To give you an initial impression, to quote Jean Freedberg at AIUSA, the coverage there was phenomenal. There was blanket coverage on all LA media and heavy national coverage including major networks and newspapers. Internationally, all the wire agencies covered the story at length, as did international radio stations, CNN & BBC World Service Television. The report was apparently covered well in Mexico and was broadcast extensively throughout Africa and Asia. In Europe coverage seems to have been patchy but overall probably better than average.

It was important that the report was covered in the USA and in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We seem to have achieved our objectives although hopefully we'll get more accurate information shortly.

Annual Report - 9 July

The embargo time is confirmed at 1300 hrs gmt. After the event we will be asking you for feedback about how the media coverage was, particularly in the light of the changed time.

The Annual Report summaries, updates and news release have now been sent to you. Thanks to those of you have sent in additional questions - we are working now on answers and they will be with you shortly.

Syria - 22 July

Our first major report on Syria in some time will be released on 22 July. We consider this to be an extremely important document, because it makes clear that despite recent amnesties in Syria hundreds of political prisoners are still held in the country. We've discussed the publicity strategy with the research team, who say that high level international publicity is a key goal of releasing the report, and we would ask press officers to do as much work on this as possible.

There have recently been reports of new trials in Syria. We are following the situation closely and will probably refer to it in the news release.

Indigenous People's Campaign - 7 October

Discussions are currently under way at the IS about the media strategy for the report. We are currently considering media materials, speakers, how to present the material, etc. As this is the first time we have done a report like this, we would like your input and think there should be an opportunity to discuss problems in advance. If you are interested in a conference call, please let us know: so far only one section has shown any interest.

GOOD NEWS ENR

The footage was sent out on 1992 Annual Report ENR. This is to confirm restrictions on the use of items 12 and 13 in the "Good News" footage which was sent (on the same tape) with the 1992 Annual Report ENR. (see note accompanying the ENR dated 3 June signed by Anne Jenkins)

Please note that the two items-clips on Benazir Bhutto and Kim Dae-Jung - have not been cleared for general use and must not be used or offered for external use during 1992. They are part of a new AI video "AI in Asia", which will be released publicly in Asia this month. Please ensure that they are not offered for other use to broadcasters for the rest of this year.

You may of course use these two clips internally to show to the membership, providing they are not broadcast.

SECTION INITIATIVES

Moscow: Information Officer

The new information officer in Moscow has a number of newspapers interested in running regular AI columns. One, a children's newspaper, wants material that is aimed at children. If sections have any publications aimed at children or sections in their newsletters aimed at young people, could they send the material to the IS Press Office for us to forward to Mexico.

British Section: Wanted - Women Poets from round the world!

The British Section is working with a major feminist publisher in the UK on a women's poetry book, scheduled for publication in Autumn 1993.

Please let us know if there are any women poets in your country whose work relates - roughly - to Amnesty's concerns, which has been translated into English, or perhaps have written poems which you feel are so strong that they should be translated into English.

When the book is published, the publishers will be looking for international rights sales. Please let any sympathetic publishers in your country whom you think might be interested in buying the rights for this book know about the book.

Please contact Norma Johnston, Head of Communications at the British Section, for suggestions of poets.

FORTHCOMING WEEKLY UPDATE ITEMS

Zimbabwe

A report on Zimbabwe will be going out to sections within the next few weeks. There will be a weekly update item to accompany the document, which the IS will be sending to key southern Africa and special interest media. It will not have an embargo date but we will suggest the best dates for publicity - more information next week.

CSCE

The concluding document on the Conference on Security & Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) is expected to be signed at the CSCE summit meeting in Helsinki on 9 & 10 July. We are hoping to have a response to it ready in time for next week's weekly update. Obviously it clashes with the Annual Report but some sections may get press queries.

2. AFR 53/WU 04/92 EXTERNAL

1 July 1992

SOUTH AFRICA: AI AGAIN CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO END SECURITY FORCE KILLINGS AFTER BOIPATONG MASSACRE

Amnesty International has reiterated its call on the South African government to take urgent steps to end unlawful killings by security forces following the massacre of 47 residents of Boipatong township on 17 June.

In its June 1992 report, South Africa: State of Fear, the human rights organization documented incidents of police complicity in violent attacks since 1990, chillingly similar to the attack on Boipatong.

Those killed at Boipatong, who included small children, were the victims of an attack by hundreds of armed men, alleged to be supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) based at a nearby migrant workers' hostel. Police were reportedly warned of the impending attack but failed to protect the residents of Boipatong and, according to eye-witness accounts, actively colluded with the killers. At least three more killings occurred on 20 June when police opened fire without warning on township residents after protestors caused State President F W de Klerk to call off a planned visit to Boipatong.

Following the killings in Boipatong, the African National Congress (ANC) announced that it was breaking off talks with the South African government, which it accused of collusion in the 17 June massacre and other political killings. The ANC made various demands which it said the government would have to meet before negotiations could resume, including the prosecution of security force personnel involved in township violence and an end to covert operations by security forces.

The Commission of Inquiry regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, headed by Judge Goldstone, has announced that it will investigate the Boipatong massacre, commencing hearings in the first week of July. It will be assisted in this through the appointment of two international experts, former Chief Justice Bhagwati of India and Dr P A J Waddington, a British criminal justice expert. As part of its inquiry, the Commission is investigating allegations that former members of a South African police unit involved in counter insurgency operations in Namibia, Koevoet (Crowbar), participated in the 17 June attack in Boipatong.

3. AMR 53/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL

1 July 1992

INTERNAL

This weekly update is being sent to sections to coincide with the release of a report on torture and other human rights violations in Venezuela, AI Index AMR 53/05/92, which will be sent to sections in the weekly mailing of 1 July and will be available in Spanish at the same time. The report includes details of the reported extrajudicial execution of at least seven people on the day of the attempted coup on 4 February 1992. Its release comes at a time of growing political crisis and social unrest, in the context of which a number of human rights violations have been reported (see Urgent Action 203/92, AI Index: AMR 53/07/92).

The IS will be sending the report to some Latin American and specialist interest media to arrive during the week of 15 July. Please ensure that any specialist media contacts in your country receive the report together with a copy of this weekly update no sooner than that week. Please also draw it to the attention of your Campaign Co-ordinator.

EXTERNAL

VENEZUELA: AI CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO END TORTURE

Amnesty International is calling on the government of Venezuela to take urgent action to end torture, in a report which details widespread human rights violations.

The document is issued in a climate of growing political tension in Venezuela and increasing allegations of human rights violations. In its report, Amnesty International highlights cases of people who were arbitrarily arrested and tortured or ill-treated by members of various branches of the security forces, including the Metropolitan Police and the National Guard. The document also examines human rights violations, including at least seven extrajudicial executions, reported following a coup attempt in February 1992.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the complaints procedure for human rights violations by members of the security forces appears to be largely ineffective. "There is strong evidence that torture is widespread in Venezuela and the security forces are getting away with it," said the organization. "In the last nine months alone we have received reports of at least 60 people being tortured or ill-treated.

"Victims are often from the poorest sectors of society, often suspected criminals, sometimes juveniles. We know of one 15-year-old boy who was tortured until he fell unconscious and was later given a mock execution by police." Political activists, students leaders and members of grass-root organizations have also been the subject of torture and ill-treatment as a result of their activities.

An Amnesty International delegation, which visited Venezuela in May 1992, heard how seven people were extrajudicially executed in the town of Valencia on 4 February 1992, the day of the attempted coup. One victim, a student, was reportedly shot as she lay terrified on the floor of a bus which had been intercepted by members of the security forces. Police reportedly shot another student in the back as he came out of a house where he had taken cover. Five other people were reportedly shot after giving themselves up.

In the same town 22 people were arrested on 4 February by the Carabobo State Police who subjected them to beatings and electric shocks with a cattle prod. One woman, four months pregnant at the time, nearly miscarried as a result of the beatings. The security forces accused the detainees of involvement in the coup but all were released for lack of evidence.

Very few cases of torture and ill-treatment have resulted in convictions of the perpetrators and in cases where convictions have been secured they have often been on the most lenient of charges, usually resulting in suspended sentences or conditional release. Problems include

long delays in both the pre-trial investigations and in the courts of justice. There have also been numerous reports in the courts of leniency towards members of the security forces, political manipulation and corruption.

Amnesty International believes the impunity afforded in practice to those responsible for torture and extrajudicial executions is one of the principal reasons that these human rights violations continue. For example, not one member of the army or security forces has been brought to justice for human rights violations, including torture and arbitrary killings committed during the period of suspended constitutional guarantees in 1989. The Venezuelan government has never responded to the concerns expressed by Amnesty International in its report on human rights violations in 1989.

Amnesty International has called on the Venezuelan government to ensure that any complaint of torture or ill-treatment is immediately and vigorously investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice, in line with the government's international commitments. The organization has also called for those responsible for extrajudicial executions on 4 February 1992 to be brought to justice.

4. ASA 39/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL

1 July 1992

THAILAND: AI RAISES CONCERNS WITH GOVERNMENT

An Amnesty International delegation met Thai government officials in June to express concern about gross human rights violations committed by security forces during the violent crackdown on mass protest demonstrations in Bangkok, Thailand's capital, from 17 to 20 May. The two person delegation had meetings on 8 and 9 June with the Director General of the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Interior officials who are responsible for compiling lists of people missing since the demonstrations.

Amnesty International welcomed the establishment by the government of two committees to investigate the extrajudicial executions of scores of unarmed demonstrators, the detention and torture of others, and the whereabouts of hundreds of people reported to have "disappeared". Amnesty International also urged the government to ensure that those found responsible for human rights violations are brought to justice. Foreign Ministry officials assured Amnesty International that the findings of the committees would be made public upon completion of their reports.

Shortly after the demonstrations, the Ministry of the Interior and Thai non-governmental organizations (NGOs) established hotlines so that relatives of those who had "disappeared" could file reports, which then formed the basis for a comprehensive list of missing people. The government lists over 50 people as having been killed during the demonstrations and hundreds of others injured. Thai NGOs say some 1,000 people are still missing; the Ministry of Interior lists some 700 as missing.

There continue to be widespread but as yet unconfirmed reports that the military removed the bodies of protestors from the scene of the demonstrations and dumped them in military installations and other locations around the country. To date the military has apparently not allowed investigators to visit these alleged burial sites. Amnesty International has urged the Thai government to ensure that free access by investigators to such sites is assured immediately to facilitate clarification of the fate and whereabouts of those who remain unaccounted for.

Shortly before he resigned, former Prime Minister Suchinda Khraprayun signed an amnesty decree on 23 May to grant immunity to all those involved in the demonstrations, including the security forces responsible for perpetrating human rights violations. The legal status of the decree is currently unclear, however, as it was not approved by Parliament. The opposition coalition has sought a new ruling about the amnesty from a constitutional tribunal, which is now deliberating on its legality, although the House of Representatives was dissolved on 30 June in preparation for new elections.

Amnesty International believes that those responsible for extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations should be brought to justice and that the amnesty decree should not be used to give them impunity.

5. ORG 60/WU 01/92 INTERNAL

1 July 1992

UK: BRITISH NEWSPAPER REPORTS THAT GOVERNMENT INTELLIGENCE MONITORS AI TELEXES

On 28 June 1992 the British newspaper, The Observer, carried a report claiming that the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) routinely and secretly monitors communications from a range of organizations including Amnesty International and the British charity, Christian Aid, which operate both legally and openly. The newspaper said that in one specific case a telex communication from Amnesty International had been intercepted by GCHQ.

At this stage we do not wish to seek publicity on this issue. However, if you receive queries you may use the following in response:

Amnesty International has not so far received evidence that this happened but is obviously concerned about the report and has written to the government seeking clarification about the allegations.

6. ACT 81/WU 01/92 INTERNAL

1 July 1992

SPONSORSHIP: BENETTON QUERIES TO IS

The clothing company Benetton has approached the Italian section and the IS with a proposal that AI collaborates with Benetton in a campaign against the death penalty, beginning later this year. The proposal includes the use of the Benetton name and AI logo and possible joint news conferences. Benetton has also indicated that its campaign would be publicized in the following countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and USA.

The issue of sponsorship is covered by the ICM decision to apply the guidelines on fund-raising and the acceptance of funds to this area. When a section refers the matter to the IEC, the IEC then applies, as appropriate, the guidelines on corporate sponsorship developed in the course of negotiations over the Human Rights Now Tour (these were sent to all sections at that time). The IEC has just applied these guidelines in the case of a major multinational corporation offering to sponsor aspects of a section event that would include production of a T-shirt displaying both the logo of the corporation and that of AI (joint use of logos not being in accordance with the IEC guidelines on corporate sponsorship).

The IS has informed Benetton that their proposal would be a matter for IEC decision. However, the company sells internationally on a big scale and may approach individual sections with similar proposals. If it approaches your section, please refer it to the IS.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 26/92

Enclosed in this addition to the weekly update is an external item on Djibouti.

1. AFR 23/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

DJIBOUTI: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION VISITS DJIBOUTI

Representatives of Amnesty International are visiting Djibouti from 4 to 12 July 1992 to observe the trial of Ali Aref Bourhane, Aref Mohamed Aref and 20 others accused of attempting to overthrow the state and conspiracy to murder, which carries the death penalty, and to obtain information on related human rights issues.

The 22 defendants have been in custody since January 1991. Their cases are described in a report published by Amnesty International in November 1991, "Djibouti, Torture et Emprisonnement politique", (AI Index AFR 23/07/91/F).

The delegation is led by Maître Diabira Maroufa, a Mauritanian lawyer and founder-member of the Mauritanian Association of Human Rights (l'Association mauritanienne des droits de l'homme), who is accompanied by a staff member of Amnesty International's International Secretariat.

In accordance with Amnesty International's normal practice, the representatives are not expected to make public statements about the trial during their visit but will report on their conclusions to Amnesty International's International Executive Committee.