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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 43/93

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Israel and the Occupied Territories, Viet Nam and Sri Lanka and an internal item on the UN World Conference.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Indigenous People - 12 May

News release planned to accompany Focus article on Human rights violations against indigenous people worldwide has been sent out. Indigenous people will be one of the main themes of our work on the World Conference.

Guatemala - 19 May

Document or publication with a news release on a full range of recent human rights violations (in the past year or so) in Guatemala. Unfortunately, the document is running behind schedule and will not be in the Weekly Mailing from the IS until 12 May, one week before the embargo. Please get in touch with the IS if you need a copy earlier. The news release has been sent to you.

Egypt - 26 May

Document or publication and news release on all our concerns in Egypt. These include very high numbers of prisoners and torture.

UN World Conference - 2 June

News release on UN World Conference to go with June Focus article. More info soon.

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

Annual Report - 8 July**(New Information)**

Annual Report publication, Worldwide Summary, Regional Summaries, Regional Updates, news release.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES**Brazil - 7 May, 1600 hrs gmt**

Document on prison massacre, including new forensic information. Weekly update item to go with it is enclosed in this document. Sections are also being asked to carry out campaign work in connection with this document.

Malawi - 20 May

Document on human rights violations and the referendum and weekly update item to go with it, which will be sent to international media by the IS Press Office.

Azerbaijan - 28 May**(New Information)**

Document on hostage-taking and weekly update item to go with section-level action. IS Press Office will send out to selected international media.

Unconfirmed news initiatives

News releases or embargoed weekly update items are being considered on the following subjects:
Aceh, Indonesia (14 July)

World Conference: Video Material**(New Information)**

A video setting out our agenda for the World Conference is currently in production. It will be a development from the conventional ENR format and will be available in four languages. It will be distributed to sections and embargoed for 2 June.

Video compilation tapes are also in preparation for use at the time of the World Conference. One will include footage of human rights violations to illustrate the challenge to governments; another will focus on AI's own work. These tapes will be edited on 4 June and will be embargoed for 14 June.

Section Initiatives**French Section - European Press Officers' Meeting****(New Information)**

This year's European Press Officer's meeting takes place at the French Section offices: 4 rue de la Pierre Levee, 75011 Paris, France. The Hotel is: Hotel Du Grand Prieuré, 20 rue du grand Prieuré, 75011 Paris. Tel: +33 1 4700 7414. Underground station: Oberkampf. Anyone who has not received the agenda should call Josette or Luisa at the French Section press office.

The following people will be attending:

Special guests: Pierre Sané, AI Secretary General; Jean Freedberg, Head of Communications, AI USA.

IS: Anita Tiessen; Anna Stuttard; Paula Seager; Adam Lloyd; John Darcy.

European Sections:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Austria: | Geral Kador |
| Belgium: | Phillippe Hensmans & Luc Henkinbrant |
| Denmark: | Lars Christensen |
| Germany: | Gunnar Köhne |
| Italy: | Riccardo Noury & Barbara Capponi |
| Netherlands: | Maud Bredero & Janneke Tigchelaar |
| Norway: | Stig Michaelson |
| Portugal: | José Manuel Cabral |
| Sweden: | Louisa Stannow |
| UK: | Daphne Davies & Brian Dooley |

European World Conference Press Briefing in June

The British Section Press Office has been talking to the EC project office and the Francophone Belgium Press Officer about holding a European press briefing in Brussels for MEPs and for journalists who will be covering the World Conference. The date will probably be Tuesday, June 8th in the morning. The aim will be to look at the EC's role as a whole in terms of its internal shortcomings (Asylum issues, etc), external policies - aid/development, etc, and also to look at Europe's role within the UN.

Although the idea has been suggested by the British Section, it is hoped that all European Section Press Officers will be interested in being involved. For further information please contact either Daphne Davies, in the British Section Press Office or Johannes in the EC project office.

**2. MDE 15/WU 04/93 EXTERNAL
7 May 1993**

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: DEATH IN CUSTODY

Amnesty International has called for a full and impartial investigation into the circumstances of the death in custody of Ayman Sa'ïd Hasan Nassar from the Gaza Strip, who died in Barzalai Hospital in Israel on 2 April 1993.

Ayman Nassar was arrested on 20 March during a military operation in Deir al-Balah Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip in which several houses were destroyed. He and three others were reportedly forced out of the shelter in which they had been hiding by the use of a "smoke bomb" of unknown composition. On emerging, the four were said to be coughing and breathing with difficulty. They were then taken to the beach nearby where they were apparently kicked and beaten on the face and chest.

A Danish independent pathologist who attended an autopsy carried out on 7 April concluded that Ayman Nassar died from "pneumonia due to ruptured lung blisters" and that the rupture of the lung blisters was "presumably due to irritating smoke ... and possibly influenced through beating on the chest". The pathologist believes that had Ayman Nassar received adequate medical treatment earlier, he might have survived.

Three other men were arrested with Ayman Nassar and have alleged that on the way to prison they were all beaten again. In Ashkelon Prison they were reportedly placed in solitary confinement and subjected to further beatings; prolonged shackling (to the extent that one is said to have suffered a partial paralysis of his fingers as a result); hooding with dirty sacks; sleep deprivation; and were prevented from using the toilet for several days. One of them was admitted to hospital on 26 March with chest pains for which he was given oxygen.

On 23 March, Ayman Nassar was taken back to Deir al-Balah Refugee Camp, apparently to reveal a weapons cache. Witnesses are said to have described him as looking pale and weak, unable to walk or talk properly, and as having fallen to the ground. He was allegedly beaten in an orange grove. Later that day he was admitted to the intensive care unit in Barzalai Hospital suffering from acute respiratory distress syndrome. He died on 2 April.

In a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 30 April, Amnesty International said that any investigation into the circumstances surrounding Ayman Nassar's death should include the use of a smoke bomb in a confined space; the allegations of his beatings on the beach, on his way to prison and in an orange grove; his treatment during interrogation; the medical attention he received when taken into custody; why he was taken back to Deir al-Balah on 23 March despite evident signs of acute physical distress; and the treatment he eventually received at Barzalai Hospital. The organization also called for a similar investigation into the treatment in custody of three other men arrested at the same time.

Amnesty International has reiterated its request to the Israeli authorities for clarification of the guidelines governing the use of massive fire power, as well as the use of apparently toxic gas, against houses in which people sought for arrest are suspected to be hiding. It also called on Prime Minister Rabin to show that the guidelines on interrogation, which have recently been reviewed, are consistent with international standards which absolutely and unconditionally forbid the use of torture and ill-treatment.

**3. 41/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
7 May 1993**

VIET NAM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND CALLS FOR MORE RELEASES

Amnesty International welcomes the release from detention of several prisoner of conscience in Viet Nam in recent weeks. Three Protestant pastors - Dinh Thien Tu, Tran Dinh Ai and Tran Mai - were all released on 6 April 1993. A fourth prisoner, Do Ngoc Long, was also released on the same day.

Tran Mai was arrested on 31 October 1991 in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) for allegedly "pursuing religious activities without permission" and using such activities "to fight the government". He was allegedly also accused of "abusing religious powers" and of having maintained links with overseas Christian organizations along with Dinh Thien Tu and Tran Dinh Ai.

Dinh Thien Tu, a pastor of the Christian Association of Churches, was arrested by the government authorities in Ho Chi Minh City on 22 February 1991 allegedly for operating a social work program without government approval and for alleged unauthorized contacts with foreign Christian groups.

Tran Dinh Ai was arrested in Ho Chi Minh City on 27 February 1991 and given a three-year administrative detention order. He was reportedly held on the basis of "evidence" taken from his personal diary which contained information about his daily activities including contacts with foreigners. He was reportedly widely known for his contacts with Pentecostal churches abroad.

Three other pastors were released in late 1992 and early this year - Pastor Tran The Thien Phuoc, released on 1 December 1992, Pastor R Cam Boi, released on 8 December 1992, and Pastor Vo Minh Hung, released on 16 January 1993. Thich Duc Nhuan, a Buddhist monk, was released on 14 January 1993.

Do Ngoc Long, who was also released on 6 April 1993, had been in detention since April 1990 and was accused of a security violation for arranging an unsanctioned meeting between a foreign journalist and influential critics of the government. He had not been brought to trial.

Amnesty International continues to be concerned that a number of prisoners of conscience remain in prison and is appealing for their immediate and unconditional release. Among those held is an Amnesty International member, Nguyen Dan Que, previously held for ten years as a prisoner of conscience until 1988 and rearrested in 1990. He was sentenced to 20-years imprisonment in 1991 for "activities aimed at overthrowing the people's government" at a trial which may have been unfair. This followed his publication of a manifesto calling for non-violent political, social and economic change for Viet Nam, including the introduction of a multi-party system of government.

Amnesty International is also concerned that recent trials of prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners including Doan Viet Hoat, who was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in March this year, may have fallen short of international standards for fair trial. Doan Viet Hoat and seven other political prisoners were sentenced to long jail terms by the People's Court of Ho Chi Minh City at a public trial for activities allegedly aimed at overthrowing the government. Amnesty International is also calling on the Vietnamese government to ensure that international standards for fair trial are respected in political trials.

**4. ASA 37/WU 02/93 EXTERNAL
7 May 1993**

SRI LANKA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES MEASURES TAKEN TO PROTECT AGAINST REPRISALS FOLLOWING ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT

Amnesty International has written to the Acting President of Sri Lanka, Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, expressing appreciation of measures taken by the government to guard against retaliatory attacks against members of the Tamil community - following the assassination of President Ranasinghe Premadasa on 1 April 1993.

The organization said it had been shocked by the killing of President Premadasa and others, and was aware of the danger of retaliatory sentiment being aroused. Amnesty International hopes that the government will continue to make it clear that acts of retaliation will not be tolerated, and take all necessary steps to prevent their occurrence.

The assassination of President Premadasa came only a week after the murder of the leader of the Democratic United National Front, Lalith Athulathmudali, by a killer who has yet to be identified. These killings pose major threats to freedom of political expression in Sri Lanka, especially in the run-up to the Provincial Council elections. Amnesty International hopes that all those responsible will be identified and held accountable so that this cycle of violence may be brought to an end.

5. IOR 41/WU 05/93 INTERNAL
7 May 1993

Note: This note has been sent to IGO Co-ordinators and Campaign Co-ordinators, but may be of interest to press officers.

UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

This information aims to provide some initial feedback on events in the preparatory process towards the World Conference in Vienna in June, in particular the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee (Prep Comm) which is currently in progress in Geneva. The session has been continued for a third week and has so far been heavily pre-occupied with procedural matters leaving many important issues of substance unresolved. From 11-12 May, governments from the UN's WEOG group will meet in Strasbourg to look at progress made at the fourth Prep Comm.

The fourth and last session of the Prep Comm started on 19 April 1993 and was due to last two weeks. In the first days of the session, government delegations delivered general statements on the World Conference itself, without focusing on particular aspects. (During this first phase, Amnesty International delivered an oral statement).

In a second phase, which lasted until the end of the first week, the Committee tried to determine which document should serve as a basis for discussion for the draft final declaration. While some delegations argued that the draft declaration prepared by Mr. Fall, Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, should be the basis of the discussion, many other delegations insisted that the Declarations of the regional meetings should constitute the starting point. After endless hours of discussion, a compromise was eventually reached on the last day of the first week, whereby the final declaration would be drafted "on the basis of the declarations adopted at the regional meetings and other official documents of the fourth Preparatory Committee using (Mr. Fall's) paper as a working tool".

The participation of NGOs in the drafting process, or simply their presence in the room, was the subject of endless discussions in the Committee during the second week. The lack of clear and final decision from the Chair created a permanent climate of uncertainty, perplexity and frustration among governments delegations as well as among NGOs. Initially it was agreed that NGOs could remain in the room as observers only during the discussion on the preamble of the draft Declaration. With the exception of the adoption of two preambular paragraphs, the Committee did not take any decision on this first part of the draft declaration, and referred all the remaining paragraphs to a smaller drafting committee.

When the Committee concluded its consideration of the preamble and decided to continue with a full first reading of the whole text, a lengthy debate arose again, as some delegations wanted to exclude NGOs from the room, contending that the rest of the document should be discussed in a closed drafting group and not in a committee on the whole. The endless and recurring problems concerning the presence of NGOs marred the whole process of the second week.

By the end of the session, the Committee had concluded its first reading of the draft declaration, but had not taken any concrete decision or discussed any substantive issue. NGOs were eventually able to observe the whole process of this first reading, thanks to the determined support of many government delegations, and a delegation of NGOs also submitted to the smaller drafting committee a set of concrete comments/proposals/amendments to Mr. Fall's paper, which had been produced by several working groups of NGOs during the session.

During the first reading of the Final Declaration, any government delegation which wished to do so was able to put forward proposals for revision or additions to each paragraph of the text. There was no debate allowed on these proposals - which of course differed radically - and all were then passed on to the smaller drafting group. The process at least resulted in government delegations making their positions clear and some delegations put forward proposals made by NGOs which included references to the establishment of a Special Commissioner for Human Rights or an Under-Secretary-General. It is not at all clear, however, how many of these proposals will survive the very tough and difficult process of negotiations which will ensue in order to try and arrive at some form of consensus.

In view of the lack of concrete progress on the Final Declaration at this fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, it was decided late on Friday 30 April to extend the session by one week to try and reach some agreement on a text, which would be then finalized in Vienna. However, as of Tuesday 4 May, the progress of the work was extremely slow and it is feared that the additional week will be as fruitless as the previous fortnight.

A proposal has, however, been made to resolve the issue of access to the official World Conference for NGOs in Europe and North America who do not have consultative status with the UN and have been unable to accredit themselves to the Conference following the decision by WEOG not to hold a Regional Meeting. The proposal is that those NGOs who wish to accredit themselves to the official World Conference should write to the UN Centre for Human Rights in Geneva before the 10 May and their names will be added to a list which will be submitted to the WEOG for review. It is not expected that the WEOG will object to any NGO asking to participate. Although this appears to be an informal arrangement rather than a formal decision of the full Prep Comm, the UN secretariat does not appear to

anticipate objections from other regional groups. Those Sections who are in contact with NGOs who wish to accredit themselves should pass this information to them, if they haven't already been alerted.

It has been very helpful to get feedback from some Sections on their own government's reactions to our own proposals and other events in the lead up to the World Conference. Please continue to let us have your reports. We will send a further more detailed report as soon as the Prep Comm is over and the next steps are clearer.