
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 48/94

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 11 MARCH 1994

NO OF WORDS:815

AI INDEX: NWS 11/48/94
DISTR: SC/PO

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - UZBEKHISTAN

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Jordan - 22 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/94

****Turkey -30 March**** - This is the new embargo time, although this may also be subject to change, we will let you know as soon as we hear anything more. As soon as the report is printed we will do a special mailing to make sure it gets to press officers in time. SEE NEWS SERVICE 26/94

Hong Kong - 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Colombia - 15 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 41/94

South Africa - 31 March - POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - NOTE CHANGE OF DATE - more details to follow Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

INTERNAL FOR VERBAL RESPONSE ONLY

AI INDEX: AMR 23/WU 02/1994

EMBARGOED FOR 1700 HRS GMT, 15 MARCH 1994

Following is an addition to the Colombia Campaign Questions and Answers sheet. It includes some answers for questions which may arise when doing interviews for the Colombia Campaign launch. Please do not raise these issues yourselves and only use these answers in response to queries.

COLOMBIA Q AND A - EXTRA POINTS

1 - Urabá - is a region facing increasing levels of violence as the elections approach. It is impossible to deny that this is happening. Much of the violence is between guerrillas and demobilized guerrillas. In all likelihood it now seems evident that FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) guerrillas carried out a massacre at La Chinita massacre in which *Esperanza, Paz y Libertad* (EPL), a political party formed by demobilized *Ejército Popular de Liberación* guerrillas, supporters were killed whilst attending a meeting. But human rights violations by security forces and their paramilitary protégés are also part of the reality in Urabá.

However, what is happening in this region is not representative of what is happening in other regions of Colombia where there are clear lines of responsibility. Of course the situation in Urabá is serious and of concern to Amnesty International, but the situation in the region should not be used as a means to cover up the responsibility of the state in human rights violations elsewhere and in Urabá itself.

2 - On the two naval officials who confessed to belonging to a secret intelligence network responsible for the assassination of over 100 human rights workers and other activists. The authorities, are now arguing that the two officials were Cali cartel infiltrators, this could simply be an attempt to invalidate their confessions.

3 - A further note on the use of language - often paramilitary are referred to as the "illegal paramilitary". Indeed paramilitary forces are in theory illegal, but by emphasising their illegal nature, the Government is trying to distance its responsibility from any human rights violations committed by these forces whether in joint operations with the armed forces or not.

Of course the Government presents itself as an innocent bystander to all cases of human rights violations and we should always be ready to challenge this position.

News Service 48/94

AI INDEX:EUR 62/WU 01/1994

11 March 1994

UZBEKISTAN: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE ARRESTED IN COUNTRY-WIDE CRACKDOWN AGAINST OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER

Amnesty International is concerned about the detention of nine men identified with the outlawed opposition Erk (Freedom) political party. They were arrested on 4 March in connection with attempts to distribute copies of the Erk party newspaper, which is banned in Uzbekistan. Amnesty International considers these people to be prisoners of conscience.

The arrests took place in various locations in Uzbekistan. Eight of the nine men who are in detention are leading activists in Erk. They include party first secretary Samat Muratov. Two women activists who were also arrested on 4 March, including party spokeswoman Dilarom Ishakova, were released after questioning.

The ninth man to have been arrested is writer Muhammadali Mahmudov. He is not a member of Erk and sources allege he was arrested solely because a package of the party's newspapers were delivered to him by mistake.

The arrests are part of an official clampdown against Erk, which has intensified in recent weeks. A statement broadcast on national television and radio on 7 and 8 March accused the party president, poet Muhammad Salih, who lives in exile, of conspiring to destabilize Uzbekistan with the help of international agencies including human rights organizations. Relatives and associates of Muhammad Salih have recently suffered official harassment. In February, Muhammad Salih's brother was evicted from his apartment in Tashkent, the capital, while a university professor is reported to have been dismissed recently for analyzing Muhammad Salih's poems in one of his classes.

Erk was registered as Uzbekistan's only opposition political party in 1991. Harassment by the authorities began the following year, and in October 1993 the party lost its registration. In that same month party first secretary Samat Muratov was seized from a street in the town of Karshi by suspected government agents and driven to the town rubbish dump, where he was beaten unconscious.

ENDS/