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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
NEWS SERVICE 57/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - ALGERIA

PLEASE NOTE: As the IS press office intern, I am putting together an evaluation report on the media coverage received by the Colombia campaign, and it would therefore be very helpful if you could send me any details you might have about coverage in your national media, e.g. press cuttings, section campaign initiatives and a description of how you feel the coverage of the launch has been. Hope to hear from you soon, thanks - Jan.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94
Hong Kong - 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

China - 29 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 54/94
Turkey - 30 March - SEE NEWS SERVICES 46/94 AND 26/94
Switzerland CAT - 19 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94
Israel & OT CAT - 25 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - More details to follow
Annual Report - 7 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

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ALGERIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED BY GROWING NUMBER OF KILLINGS

Amnesty International is gravely concerned by the dramatic increase in the number of killings by both government forces and armed Islamist opposition groups in Algeria.

"The rule of law is being completely disregarded in Algeria and the civilian population is trapped in a widening circle of violence", said Amnesty International. "The security forces carry out killings and extrajudicial executions daily and with total impunity. Armed Islamist opposition groups continue to kill civilians targeting a growing sector of the civilian population".

In the past week close to 200 people have been killed by the security forces in a vast security operation following the escape of hundreds of detainees from Tazoult Prison on 10 March. Security forces reports state that those killed were "terrorists" killed in armed conflict.   However, other sources indicate that many of those killed in the past week were extrajudicially executed.   One eyewitness reported that on 19 March a group of about 20 people were extrajudicially executed in Ouedfoda after having been arrested by the security forces.

At the same time, armed Islamist opposition groups have also stepped up their campaign of violent attacks on civilians.   Women, journalists, magistrates and others have been killed or wounded in such attacks in recent days; others have managed to escape unharmed, but live in fear of further attacks.

Majid Yasef and Rachid Benhaddou, a cameraman and a chauffeur for the weekly newspaper Hebdo Libéré, were gunned down on 21 March by an armed group   who entered the premises of the newspaper and opened fire on those present.   Three others were seriously injured in the attack, including the brother of the director of the newspaper and a 20-year-old woman.

A communique signed by the Groupe Islamique Armé, GIA, (Islamic Armed Group), sent to a news agency last week called for the killing of the "enemies of Islam", in particular journalists and foreigners.   Other communiques from Islamist groups have recently issued threats to women who do not comply with the Islamic dress code.   Over the past few days, an increasing number of women have been killed in attacks believed to have been carried out by armed Islamist groups.   Katia Bengana, a 17-year-old high school student was shot dead on 28 February in Blida after receiving threats that she would be killed if she did not wear the hijab (headscarf).

Amnesty International condemns in the strongest terms the extrajudicial executions carried out by the security forces and the arbitrary and deliberate killings of civilians by armed Islamist opposition groups. The organization calls on both sides to stop the spiral of human rights abuse violence which is claiming an increasing number of victims every day.

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