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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - SOMALIA, SOUTH AFRICA (BOPHUTHATSWANA)

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

PLEASE NOTE: The enclosed item on Somalia is being sent to international media today.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

****South Africa - 8 April**** - Report on Bophuthatswana and news release on lessons to be learned from Bophuthatswana upheaval. News release enclosed.

The report is only just finished - it will be sent to you swiftair on Tuesday. If you need copies earlier, please call Dina in the press office.

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

Trade Unionists - 29 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

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

Annual Report - 7 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

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HUMAN RIGHTS A PRIORITY IN REBUILDING SOMALIA

As the last of almost 20,000 US and Western troops in the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) leave the country, Amnesty International appeals to the UN and Somali political groups to work together for peace and human rights. It urges both to make human rights a priority for the remaining year of this embattled UN humanitarian operation.

Amnesty International is criticizing the weak emphasis placed on human rights so far in the UNOSOM operation. "The UN must be seen to be seriously protecting and promoting human rights", the human rights organization said. A UNOSOM Human Rights Office was established in November 1993 and an Ombudsman's complaints office has been proposed. Yet these offices do not yet have sufficient funding or support to deal properly with human rights abuses, whether by UN or Somali forces, Amnesty International said.

Alongside new human rights proposals which it is making to the UN, Amnesty International is calling on the rival Somali political groups to make a reality of the new peace and reconciliation declaration which General Aidid and Ali Mahdi signed in Nairobi on 24 March. The human rights organization urges them to assert control of their armed militias and supporters and stop the killings and ill-treatment of members of opposed political or clan groups. The Somali political groups must themselves make a real start to establish the rule of law and respect for human rights, the human rights organization said.

Somali civilians have suffered human rights abuses from all sides. Abuses committed by the Somali factions in the past two years were widespread, though difficult to document. Hundreds of arbitrary detentions and killings in Mogadishu by UN and US troops, who were frequently under fire and themselves suffered over 100 casualties, marred the UN's biggest multi-national peacekeeping operation, the latest phase of which began in May 1993. These abuses overshadowed efforts by many civilian UN officials to fulfil their humanitarian mandate. Nearly 20,000 UN troops still remain in the country with a revised UN Security Council mandate for peace-making and reconstruction. "It is vital that the UN learn from what went wrong and avoid similar mistakes occurring in future UN peace-keeping operations", Amnesty International said.

The killing by UN and US troops of hundreds of Somali civilians in Mogadishu, including women and children, raised serious questions about whether their use of lethal force was lawful. In a 23 March 1994 letter to the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Keeping Operations, Amnesty International criticized the inadequacy of investigatory mechanisms into killings by UN and US troops. For example, on 13 June 1993 Pakistani UN forces reportedly shot dead some 20 Somali protestors in Mogadishu, including women and children; and on 12 July 1993 US forces killed more than 50 Somalis in a house compound, including unarmed clan elders and sheiks who had earlier been in talks with UN officials.

Amnesty International has repeated its request to the UN to report publicly on investigations into these and other more recent incidents of possibly unlawful killings by UN and US troops. By its own standards the UN should conduct "prompt, thorough and impartial investigations" and make public reports.

Amnesty International has also written to the Pakistani, Canadian, Belgian and United States governments about allegations of abuses by their troops in Somalia. Only Canada and Belgium replied. A Belgian commission of inquiry reported its findings to parliament and the press, and military courts investigated 13 cases. A Canadian military investigation resulted in prosecutions being initiated against seven soldiers, and in the first concluded court martial earlier this month, a Canadian soldier was found guilty of the torture and manslaughter of a Somali teenager and imprisoned for five years. Said Amnesty International: "We hope that the Canadian action will be seen as a positive example by the UN and countries participating in this UN operation. It is vital that a humanitarian operation like this must at all times meet the UN's own human rights standards. Those who commit abuses should have no impunity from being brought to justice".

The UN's humanitarian-inspired operation moved onto a war footing for more than five months after 24 Pakistani UN troops were ambushed and killed in Mogadishu in June 1993. In the ensuing manhunt for Somali faction leader General Mohamed Farah Aidid, "wanted" by the UN for the killings, UN troops detained hundreds of Somalis, mostly for short periods of some days or weeks. The eight

longest-held detainees, senior Aidid officials, were finally released from detention in January 1994 by order of UN Secretary- General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. UN spokespersons gave contradictory explanations of the grounds and legal basis for detaining people without charge or trial, which violated international human rights safeguards established by the UN itself. The International Committee of the Red Cross was eventually granted contact with the detainees, but access was denied to their families and their lawyers.

Amnesty International is urging the UN to start a program of human rights assistance as soon as possible, including public education about human rights. UNOSOM's legal arm should assist in developing constitutional and legal protection of human rights and the UN should organize training in international human rights standards for UN troops and civilian police. Newly-recruited UN-funded Somali police and prison officers should all receive human rights training. No one implicated in gross human rights violations under the Siad Barre Government (1969-1991), or in the subsequent clan wars in which tens of thousands more were killed and there was widespread rape of women and torture, should be allowed to hold any public office in which they might again commit human rights abuses.

ENDS/

Embargoed for Friday 8 April 1994

SOUTH AFRICA: LEARNING THE LESSONS OF THE BOPHUTHATSWANA CRISIS

The killing of as many as 100 black civilians in Bophuthatswana resulted from the failure of South African authorities to intervene effectively and promptly in the months' long crisis there, Amnesty International said today. In the province of KwaZulu/Natal, authorities have allowed a similar, but far greater human rights crisis to develop that has already claimed many more lives.

Amnesty International's report, South Africa: Securing the Peace: Issues of justice and accountability in the wake of the Bophuthatswana uprising, documents a pattern of organized killings and other human rights abuses that could have been prevented by timely government action. Amnesty International also questioned the will of the South African government to protect citizens who fear for their lives in the continuing unrest in KwaZulu/Natal.

During the turbulent week of 7 March 1994, civilians in Bophuthatswana died at the hands of white rightwing paramilitaries, the Bophuthatswana Police and the Internal Stability Unit of the South African Police. In the end, the intervention of the army became a desperately welcomed solution for thousands of black South Africans vulnerable to violent attack or human rights violations at the hands of the police.

In Bophuthatswana, frightened residents welcomed the 11 March deployment of the South African Defence Force (SADF) troops, following months of increasing repression and violence from the Bophuthatswana Police, the terror of the indiscriminate shooting by invading rightwing paramilitaries, and the "homeland's" descent into lawlessness. In its report Amnesty International noted that there were few complaints from residents regarding the conduct of the SADF members in their efforts to restore calm to the territory.

In contrast there were serious complaints against members of the South African police Internal Stability Unit (ISU) who appeared in Bophuthatswana from 10-13 March. Their methods of suppressing public disorder amounted, in some areas at least, to a shoot-to-kill policy. Amnesty International says in its report that members of the ISU were implicated in the deaths of 13 people in Mabopane, shot dead Thomas Leketo and others in Temba, injured scores of people in Mabopane and GaRankuwa townships, and assaulted people when searching their homes or arresting them in Temba and in Mafikeng and Mmabatho. It remains unclear at whose request and under what authority the ISU units were operating in Bophuthatswana.

These incidents, Amnesty International said, emphasize once again the urgent need for the repeal of remaining laws in South Africa that permit the security forces to use deadly force in situations where it is not strictly necessary to protect life. They highlight as well the repeatedly noted and urgent need for the retraining of the ISU and other law enforcement agencies in methods of public order policing consistent with internationally recognized standards regarding the use of force and firearms.

In KwaZulu/Natal Province, an additional 800 ISU members have been reportedly deployed since 29 March, some apparently having been withdrawn earlier this year from the East Rand. There, as Amnesty International has detailed in a previous report, the ISU was implicated in arbitrary detentions, torture and extrajudicial executions of members of the African National Congress self defense units. In a few areas, such as the Durban township of Umlazi, the ISU are reported to have acted effectively and impartially to prevent bloodshed.

Amnesty International is concerned, however, that in KwaMashu township and other areas of the KwaZulu/Natal province where more than 100 people were killed in late March, ISU members failed to protect residents from armed attackers or failed to stop flagrant breaches of the Electoral Act when they had the capacity and duty to do so, creating suspicions of collusion in these incidents of violence.

In its report on the killings in Bophuthatswana, Amnesty International says extremist white paramilitaries contributed significantly to the death toll during the period of the uprising. The report documents incidents of unprovoked shootings by armed whites against local black residents from early 10 March, prior to the arrival of the several thousand Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF) members who occupied the Mmabatho airbase that night. The report also documents attacks by armed white men, including security guards with suspected Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) sympathies, against Bophuthatswana residents in GaRankuwa and Temba, north of Pretoria, between 10 and 13 March. The majority of these rightwing forces were present in the Bophuthatswana territory at the behest of its then President Lucas Mangope's government and the AVF leader, General Constand Viljoen.

In its report, Amnesty International called for the authorities, in the process of restoring order to the Bophuthatswana territory and establishing a climate conducive to the holding of free and fair elections, to urgently begin the task of training the local security forces in methods of public order policing consistent with internationally recognized standards regarding the use of force and firearms, and in the proper methods of treatment of all persons taken into custody.

At the same time the authorities should launch a full, independent investigation into the involvement of the security forces in unlawful killings resulting from the unjustified use of lethal force, extrajudicial executions, including of two AWB members, and acts of torture.

A lasting peace, Amnesty International said, has to be built on the basis of full accountability of the security forces, officials and others for the human rights violations they committed and some measure of justice for the victims of these violations.

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