

AI Index: NWS 11/67/93
Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 1380

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street

London WC1X 8DJ

United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 21 JUNE 1993

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 67/93

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on the World Conference on Human Rights.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS

(New Information)

PLEASE NOTE: Item enclosed on World Conference - speech by Pierre Sané expected to be delivered at an event in Vienna at 2.15pm Vienna time today.

URGENT - PLEASE NOTE: An oral statement to be given to the Plenary Session of the World Conference by AI was sent out to you on Friday. The statement WAS NOT MADE on Friday and at the moment it is unclear when or if we will be making the statement. Please do not make it available to journalists.

PLEASE NOTE: Some kind of membership action is being organized around the World Conference, with sections being asked to lobby embassies in Vienna. Please contact your Campaign Co-ordinators for more information.

PLEASE NOTE: The following numbers are now working in the Vienna Press Office: Tel: +43 222 219 3574/3573/3572, Fax: +43 1 219 357221.

Amnesty International's press office in Vienna will be based at AI's tent outside the Austria Centre and will be open for 24 hours each day.

AI's press team will be staying at Pension Dr Geissler, Postgasse 14, 1010 Vienna. Telephone: +43 1 533 2803.

The strategy team in Vienna will report developments to sections via the IS press office to section press officers. Can press officers ensure that this information is circulated to the relevant people in their section.

General enquiries from press officers should go to Paula and Anna at the IS Press Office, on Tel: +44 71 413 5562/5810.

The second and third ENRs for the World Conference: Challenge to Governments, (Ref: 1838) and AI Activities Compilation, (Ref: 1840) are ready. Please order copies and refer journalists for copies from: Dubbs Copying House, giving the correct video reference number (as above) on Tel: +44 71 629 0055 or Fax: +44 71 287 8796.

Annual Report - 0600 hrs gmt, 8 July

PLEASE NOTE: It is VERY important that the annual report news release does not get leaked to the media over the next two weeks - in view of the pessimistic reference to the UN World Conference. Please be careful not to let it be seen by too many people until after the World Conference is over.

Annual Report Summaries, Regional Updates, ENR and news release have all been sent to you.

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

Document and news release to go with action on massive numbers of political killings.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 1 July

A weekly update item is being written to go with the document: Saudi Arabia: An Upsurge in Public Executions, AI Index: MDE 23/04/93. The document and weekly update item will be embargoed for 1 July and will be sent out to selected international media by the IS Press Office. Please note that the document has been sent out in the weekly mailing.

2. IOR 41/WU 15/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR 1415 VIENNA TIME, 21 JUNE 1993

INTERNAL

Pierre Sané is scheduled to give this speech today, Am Graben, Vienna, at 2.15pm. If there are any changes we will let you know.

EXTERNAL

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS: "A WEEK OF SHAME" - SPEECH BY PIERRE SANÉ

The first week of the World Conference on Human Rights was a week of shame.

It was a week of political arrests. A week of abductions. A week of "disappearances". A week of torture. A week of executions.

Above all it was a week of political killings.

And the people who have the torturers and the killers on their payroll were here in Vienna mouthing phrases about human rights.

Almost half the governments of the world spoke at the conference.

Their speeches added up to almost half a million words.

But there is no evidence that any of those words saved a single life.

There no evidence that a single order was given to stop the torture and killing.

Instead, they have turned this conference into a meeting about words rather than lives.

I stand here in the streets of Vienna and I ask: who has been working for human rights this past week?

My answer is clear. It is here in the streets that the defence of human rights has taken place.

Here in Vienna alone, more than 2,500 people have sent faxes to a dozen embassies pleading on behalf of victims threatened with detention, torture and execution.

And this has made a difference.

One of our appeals was for a journalist in Peru, known for his reports on police brutality. He had received death threats. He was detained. And there were fears that he would be killed in custody.

On the very opening day of this conference, we went to work to save his life.

On Friday we heard that he had been released.

That was after hundreds and hundreds of appeals from all around the world.

So that is how ordinary people made a difference in the defence of human rights last week.

What difference did the diplomats at this conference make?

Let me tell you how embassies in Vienna responded to other

appeals.

The Egyptian embassy asked us to stop clogging up their fax machine.

The Turkish embassy asked us to send our appeals to a different address.

Those were appeals aimed at stopping an execution in Egypt and torture in Turkey.

We were also appealing to prevent torture in Sudan, killing in the Central African Republic, "disappearances" in Peru and India, detention in Tibet, death threats in Guatemala and the death penalty in Kuwait.

No less than half the urgent appeals we launched last week were desperate efforts to stop arbitrary killings, executions and to protect people who had received death threats.

And while these abuses have been taking place, what have so many of the governments at this conference been doing?

They have either been making speeches or been mired in brackets.

They have agreed to principles, such as universality, that were proclaimed nearly half a century ago and are calling that progress.

If there is to be progress, governments will have to deliver far more than this.

Human rights activists are judging the governments at this conference by what they do, not what they say.

That is why, if you ask us how we judge the first week of this conference, we look beyond the speeches to the prison cells, the torture chambers and the mortuaries.

We also have a story to tell of how we, the human rights movement, have been treated at this conference.

We are still excluded from those sessions of the drafting committee where the real work is taking place.

The chair of that committee promised that there would be formal channels of communication so that we could know systematically what was going on.

That has not happened.

What we know we know because governments have leaked it to us.

From what we understand, the work is grinding along at a snail's pace and there is no certainty about what will emerge by the end.

So there are many in the NGO world who say at this point that the world conference may be a ship heading for the rocks.

And many are asking whether the NGOs should leave the ship before it goes down.

Many feel that our continuing presence may be used as window dressing to legitimize a conference that has yet to demonstrate serious collective commitment to human rights.

The answer to that question will be determined in the course of this week.

One government delegation said it did not want a shoot out in the Vienna corral.

But what we cannot forget is that what happened in the first week of this conference was a shoot out in the killing fields of the countries whose own governments came here to talk about human rights.

As always, those who were shot were not other governments.

It was their own citizens who were killed.

And if the governments at this conference do nothing to change this grotesque pattern of abuse, then the torch will pass to the NGOs, to the human rights activists and to the people in the street who have shown this past week that if governments cannot stop the killing, we will.