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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 68/93 (2ND ONE TODAY)

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on Sri Lanka.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

****WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS****

URGENT - NEW INFORMATION: An interview with Pierre Sané in the German magazine Der Spiegel has been widely misreported. Pierre did not call for a Special Rapporteur to be sent to Germany, as has been reported. In the interview, Pierre was asked what he thought about a UN decision, already taken, to send a Special Rapporteur to Germany to investigate racism, and Pierre responded positively. We are hoping to get a fuller response to you as soon as possible, when we have received the full text of Der Spiegel here at the IS.

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.

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. ASA 37/WU 03/93 EXTERNAL
21 June 1993

SRI LANKA: ARBITRARY ARRESTS OF HUNDREDS OF TAMIL PEOPLE

Amnesty International is concerned about reports of arbitrary arrests of hundreds of members of the Tamil community in the past three weeks in and around Colombo. It is urging the government to implement fully the measures announced on 10 June 1993 to guard against widespread arbitrary detention and to publicise the measures widely.

Over the past two to three weeks, many hundreds of Tamil people have been arbitrarily detained by police in and around the capital city, Colombo. They appear to have been detained solely on the basis of their ethnic origin. Some were questioned and released after several hours; others have been held for days before being released, sometimes on payment of a bribe. Some have been brought before magistrates and released on bail or kept in custody even though the police have not specified that the individual is wanted for any known offence. It is not known how many people remain in detention.

The arrests began soon after elections to provincial councils had been held, which the ruling United National Party won outright in four out of the seven provinces in which elections were held. The arrests are apparently connected with investigations into the assassinations of opposition leader Lalith Athulathmudali and President Ranasinghe Premadasa on 23 April and 1 May respectively, and with reports that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have infiltrated the city. Police have attributed both assassinations to the LTTE, which is engaged in armed conflict with the government for a separate Tamil state in the northeast of the island.

It is common for Tamil people in Colombo to be stopped by police and detained for questioning if they are not carrying identity documents, if they are visitors to or newly-arrived in the city, or if they are only temporarily resident there. There have also been regular complaints that some police officers and others require payments from prisoners or their relatives in order to secure their release. Many people come to Colombo on business, to visit friends or relatives and in order to apply for passports and other official documents which they cannot get elsewhere. People who have not been issued with official identity cards, such as some Tamil people from the tea estate areas of the hill country, are particularly vulnerable to arrest. In the past two weeks, however, people have been detained regardless of whether they could demonstrate long-standing residence and employment in Colombo and regardless of whether they were in possession of identity documents.

Tamil political leaders have raised a series of complaints with the government about these arrests, protesting that they are indiscriminate and arbitrary; that bribes have been paid to police officers to secure release in some cases; that women have been taken from their homes by male police officers at night, without an escort; and that men and women have been kept together overnight in police stations.

At a meeting with the Tamil politicians on 10 June 1993, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and the senior police and Ministry of Defence officials agreed to several measures to help remedy the situation. Amnesty International is urging the authorities to monitor the implementation of these measures to ensure that they are adhered to and that people are only arrested when there are clear grounds to do so.

The government agreed that the measures would be publicised and Amnesty International is asking for them to be made public repeatedly in all the media in order that the public can be fully informed of the procedures currently in force.

Amnesty International understands that the measures agreed to include that:

- wherever possible, police will take statements from people at their homes or workplaces instead of taking them into custody;
- because of communication difficulties in some cases, people will be able to write their statements themselves, sign them, and hand them over to the police;
- if it is necessary to detain a person, their relatives or others at their home will be given in writing the name and rank of the arresting officer, the time and date of the arrest and told which police station they were being taken to;
- if desired, women can be escorted by a person of their choice if taken to a police station;
- on release, a certificate will be issued to prevent their re-arrest for routine questioning of the same kind;

- detainees will be released at the place they were arrested, and the person receiving them will sign for their release;
- facilities to obtain passports and other documents will be provided outside Colombo to reduce the need for people to travel to the capital.