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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: INTERNAL - SINGAPORE (For verbal response only)
EXTERNAL - GUATEMALA

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

South Africa - 8 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 63/94
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

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

INTERNAL
News Service 70/94
FOR VERBAL RESPONSE ONLY

AI INDEX: ASA 36/WU 01/94
8 April 1994

SINGAPORE: AI OPPOSITION TO CANING

Amnesty International condemns all instances of caning in Singapore of which there are hundreds every year. Caning is a cruel, inhuman and degrading form of punishment prohibited by international human rights standards.

In addition to our paper and medical action on caning issued in 1991, we have continued to mention our opposition to caning in all our annual report entries on Singapore in the AI Annual Reports of 1992 and 1993. We will also be mentioning our opposition to caning in the Annual Report of 1994 which is to be issued in July.

AI has continued to oppose caning in Singapore since 1991 through our annual reports.

For those who want further information on caning in Singapore, please refer them to Singapore: Cruel Punishment AI INDEX: ASA 36/03/91 or Malaysia: The Cane to Claim More Victims AI INDEX: ASA 28/08/93.

The Legal and Intergovernmental Organizational Office (LIGOO) is urgently putting together a brief document on corporal punishment in the world which will summarize why corporal punishment is prohibited by international standards and will give an overview of cases documented by AI in many different countries.

This document will be finalized and faxed, e-mailed or sent to sections as soon as possible.

News Service 70/94

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8 April 1994

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED FOR THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA

The protection of fundamental human rights in Guatemala could be seriously jeopardized if the government suspends certain constitutional guarantees, Amnesty International said.

On 4 April 1994, President Ramiro de León Carpio is reported to have begun discussions with top government advisors to consider such measures, which include the possibility of establishing a "state of exception". The discussions come in the wake of political unrest and a wave of violence in the country.

The shooting of the President of the Constitutional Court on 1 April is one of the recent events reportedly cited by some authorities to justify the measures currently under discussion. Eduardo Epaminondas González Dubón was shot by armed men in an apparently politically motivated attack. His intervention in reversing the attempted coup by President de León's predecessor, Jorge Serrano, in May 1993, was widely seen as critical in preserving civilian rule.

Amnesty International has written to President de León urging that in any government response to the recent unrest in Guatemala all necessary steps be taken to ensure that basic human rights are fully respected. This should include protection from extrajudicial execution, "disappearance", torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and arbitrary detentions.

Such guarantees are particularly relevant following the recent Human Rights Accord signed by the Guatemalan Government and the armed opposition coalition, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, on 29 March. In this agreement the Guatemalan Government undertook, among other things, to strengthen the protection of human rights and to take firm action to break impunity for human rights violations.

In the letter, Amnesty International also strongly urges the government to demonstrate its willingness to fulfil its obligations to this agreement by ensuring that the results of the investigation which it has announced into the killing of Eduardo Epaminondas González Dubón are made public and that those found responsible are brought to justice.

"It is imperative that basic principles of human rights protection established in international law, including international human rights instruments to which Guatemala is a party, are adhered to," Amnesty International said.

International law stipulates that even in time of war, public danger, or other emergency that threatens the independence or security of a state, governments are obliged to protect certain fundamental rights, including the rights to life, physical security and judicial guarantees essential to maintain these rights, such as habeas corpus. Guatemala is a state party to both the American Convention on Human Rights of the Organization of American States and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which include these obligations.

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