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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 73/93

Contained in this weekly update are external items on the World Conference on Human Rights and Saudi Arabia.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

SECRETARY GENERAL PRESS CONFERENCE IN CAIRO, EGYPT

PLEASE NOTE: You were told on Friday that there may be an alteration to the speech Pierre is giving at the press conference in Cairo (see below). We are not able to say for certain whether Pierre will make any changes, so please ensure that if you give copies to the media it is marked: "CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY". However, the speech should not be issued until it is given at 1800 hrs (Cairo time), 29 June.

Pierre Sané will be visiting Egypt from 28 June to 4 July and will be giving a press conference on Tuesday 29 June, at 1800 hrs (local time), in Cairo.

Pierre Sané will be giving a speech, which will also be issued as a press release embargoed for 1800 hrs (Cairo time) on Tuesday 29 June. The IS Press Office will fax this statement to international media as soon as the press conference begins - please note it is embargoed until then and should not be given to media in advance.

Please refer to OAU six-point appeal, AI Index: IOR 63/04/93, which we will fax/e-mail/telex to you as an urgent note to press officers today. This document will also be handed out at the press conference on Tuesday 29 June, and is embargoed until then.

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS

(New Information)

PLEASE NOTE: On Friday you were sent an initial response to the World Conference Declaration. Enclosed in this weekly update is a summary from Pierre Sané: "The Summit of Missed Opportunities". This replaces Friday's For Response statement: it is external and reflects our current position on the final declaration of the World Conference. Our position may be finetuned further as we carry out detailed analysis of the declaration.

You were also faxed on Saturday an internal For Response analysis of the conference declaration. While still valid, you may find today's statement covers much of the same ground and has the benefit of being external.

Annual Report - 0600 hrs gmt, 8 July

URGENT - CHANGE TO NEWS RELEASE An urgent note was sent to press officers, advising them of the urgent change to the annual report news release, in the light of developments at the World Conference. The new version of the news release has already been sent to you, as follows.

The second and third paragraphs of the original text should be deleted, and the following text inserted in their place:

"The World Conference has restated the human rights principles of the past, instead of dealing with the violations of today and the threats of the future," said Amnesty International.

"The real yardstick of the World Conference will be action, not words. What are governments now going to do to stop the torture, the "disappearances" and the killings?"

"When we compare the fine speeches and final document with the damning evidence of political repression in this report it is clear that governments have yet to prove that the World Conference will make a difference to the lives of people around the world."

The rest of the news release remains unchanged.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

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

Tunisia - possibly December 1993

The research team is in the early stages of planning a news release, document and membership action on Tunisia for the end of the year. The document sounds quite exciting - they want to compare the government's many promises on human rights to its actual record, by quoting the government directly. They also want to highlight the government's international image and look at its self-appointed role as human rights leader of North Africa.

They are therefore looking for press cuttings about Tunisia and human rights from the last two years, from as many countries and newspapers as possible. Many sections have cuttings files - it would be a great help to the research team if you could look through your files and fax or post suitable cuttings to them within the next month or two. Hopefully things will be a bit quieter for many of you after the annual report and you might find time to do this. Thanks for your help.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 1 July

A weekly update is included in this weekly update, to go with the document: Saudi Arabia: An Upsurge in Public Executions, AI Index: MDE 23/04/93. The document and weekly update item are 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 17/93 EXTERNAL
28 June 1993

INTERNAL

The following statement was given to media at the World Conference in Vienna on Friday 25 June.

On Friday you were sent an initial response to the World Conference Declaration. This item replaces Friday's For Response statement: It is external and reflects our current position on the final declaration of the World Conference. Our position may be finetuned further as we carry out detailed analysis of the declaration.

You were also faxed on Saturday an Internal For Response analysis of the conference declaration. While still valid, you may find today's statement covers much of the same ground and has the benefit of being external.

EXTERNAL

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS WORLD CONFERENCE "SUMMIT OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES"

Amnesty International's Secretary General has denounced the World Conference on Human Rights as "a summit of missed opportunities".

In his statement he said "there has been no reprieve for the victims, as governments fine-tuned their official declarations and reaffirmed the 50 year-old core values of universality, indivisibility, and interdependence."

The complete statement by the secretary general is attached.

Summary Comments at the Conclusion of the World Conference on Human Rights

By: Pierre Sané, Secretary General, Amnesty International

THE SUMMIT OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

First, I would like to point out that as the conference is coming to an end, many of the governments have continued to kill, torture and persecute political opponents. 4400 known prisoners of conscience in 60 countries languish in jails. Amnesty International groups have been working for 11,000 individuals in 80 countries. 25 appeals for Urgent Action to save lives, stop torture and the death penalty have been issued. Thousands of appeal letters were sent to Brazil, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, India, Kuwait, Latvia, Malawi, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Turkmenistan, USA, Uzbekistan, and Yugoslavia. At least 20 people have died under torture. Over 40 people have "disappeared". More than 100 death sentences have been passed. Every four hours a prisoner has been executed in one of the 106 countries which continue to use the death penalty. Gross violations have continued unabated in many other countries around the world.

THESE ARE THE FACTS

ALL THESE VIOLATIONS TOOK PLACE DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS

There has been no reprieve for the victims, as governments fine-tuned their official declarations and reaffirmed the 50 year-old core values of universality, indivisibility, and interdependence.

Secondly, analyzing the Declaration of Principles which governments attending the world conference have agreed to, AI welcomes:

1. That women's rights have now been put in the mainstream of the UN human rights machinery and that their rights have been reaffirmed as being "inalienable, integral, and an indivisible part of universal human rights." This is tribute to the struggle that human rights activists and women's organizations throughout the world have been waging for decades.
2. The priority accorded to the rights of the child and the call for universal ratification by 1995 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Children constitute certainly the group under highest risk in times of increased pauperization and armed conflicts.

3. That the rights of indigenous peoples has been reaffirmed. However, it seems that nothing very new has been recommended.

Amnesty International regrets however:

1. That no radically new principles have been articulated to address the enormous challenges of today's world and to move the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from a "common standard of achievement" to an "obligation under international law". The text does not even state that human rights violations are an obstacle to development.

2. The references to national and regional particularities that may weaken universality.

3. That states are being "encouraged" to ratify international treaties instead of being "urged" to do so (for instance, the Convention Against Torture).

Amnesty International utterly rejects:

1. The condescending phraseology regarding the NGOs whose courageous work keeps the human rights issue on the international agenda, and without whom the UN system of human rights monitoring and protection would collapse.

2. The potentially dangerous reference to the rights of the media guaranteed only under national law and not under international standards of freedom of expression.

Thirdly, looking now into the Action Plan issued by the world conference which of course will be the yardstick against which we NGOs will measure the extent to which the world's governments will live up to their proclamations, we note that:

1. The High Commissioner is referred to the General Assembly of the UN for further study. This is another missed opportunity to attach to the Vienna Declaration a political initiative that would have made this conference a landmark.

2. The International Court is referred back to the International Law Commission which is "encouraged" to continue its efforts. This is another proof of the lack of clear political support and an attempt to reintroduce the so-called national and regional "particularities" through the back door.

3. The resources of the UN Centre are to be increased within the existing and future regular budgets. When we know how strained the UN budget is at the moment and how stretched its operations are, this recommendation turns any Action Plan into mere wishful thinking.

Clearly Amnesty International has to look beyond Vienna and work more forcefully for the emergence and build up of a strong human global human rights movement that will constitute one of the major guarantees of human rights protection and promotion in the future. The seeds of such a movement were planted in Vienna.

**3. MDE 23/WU 02/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR THURSDAY 1 JULY 1993**

SAUDI ARABIA: SHOCKING UPSURGE IN PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

Public executions, often following grossly unfair trials, have reached shocking proportions in Saudi Arabia in the past year, with 105 people publicly beheaded between 15 May 1992 and 15 May 1993 - more than four times as many as were carried out during the same period in 1991 to 1992.

In a 10-page report issued today, Amnesty International expressed a real fear that the huge increase in executions may signify a new trend.

In the month 15 May to 15 June 1993 at least seven other public beheadings were carried out, five of people convicted of drug trafficking, all of them foreign nationals, and two of Saudi citizens convicted of armed robbery.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the victims may have been convicted after trials which failed to conform to international fair trial standards. There is no bar association in Saudi Arabia and defence lawyers are not formally present during trials. Furthermore, in accordance with the Saudi Arabian legal system a defendant may be convicted on the sole basis of his or her "confession". Amnesty International is gravely concerned that some "confessions" may be obtained under duress, particularly in light of torture or ill-treatment of suspects which appear to be common in Saudi Arabia.

Sadiq 'Abdul-Karim Malallah, a Shi'a Muslim, was publicly beheaded on 3 September 1992 in al-Qatif, in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, after being convicted of apostasy and blasphemy. He was arrested in April 1988, charged with throwing stones at a police patrol and was reportedly held in solitary confinement for long periods and tortured prior to his first appearance before a judge in July 1988. The judge reportedly asked him to convert from Shi'a Islam to Sunni Wahhabi Islam, promising him a lighter sentence if he complied, but he refused and remained imprisoned until his execution.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally, believing it to be a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Amnesty International is urging the government of Saudi Arabia to commute death sentences and to limit the number of offences punishable by death in Saudi Arabia with a view to abolishing the use of the death penalty. The organization also urges the Saudi Arabian authorities to allow defendants access to defence lawyers during trials and to independent medical attention. It also calls on the authorities to investigate immediately and impartially all allegations of torture and to make "confessions" which may have been extracted under torture inadmissible in court.