
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 90/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: External - Georgia. Plus Good News story from Ghana.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 89

Sudan - 29 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 89

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Laos - 9 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 87 & 88

Georgia - 10 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 83

Sierra Leone - 12 August We are currently finishing a short document on children held in detention in the civil war in Sierra Leone. There will be a news service item to go with this, which we expect to be with you by the end of this week - the IS press office will be sending it to international media, embargoed 12 August. We will be faxing the document to some sections - if you wish to receive the document please get in touch with the IS press office.

Angola - date to be arranged A document has been prepared on human rights violations since last year's elections in Angola and we are planning a news service item to be released to the media within the next few weeks. The document has not yet been in the weekly mailing so we will be faxing it to some sections in advance of the media work - if you wish to receive it please get in touch with the IS press office.

North Korea - 1 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE ALSO NEWS SERVICE 88

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Myanmar - 7 October (International). PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October (International)

Venezuela - 10 November (International, linked to EJEs & Disappearances)

AI INDEX: EUR 56/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
3 AUGUST 1993

GEORGIA: ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING THE CONFLICT IN ABKHAZIA

Hundreds of lives are estimated to have been lost by both sides in the armed conflict in Abkhazia, a region in the northwest of the former Soviet republic of Georgia, since August 1992.

Amnesty International has received numerous reports that Georgian armed forces have been involved in the arbitrary detention of non-combatants, some of them held as hostages, on the grounds of their ethnic origin; in beatings, torture, ill-treatment and rape of detainees; and in extrajudicial executions. Abkhazian forces have also been accused of torture and extrajudicial executions.

In the first months of the conflict Georgian forces are said to have detained scores of non-combatant civilians solely on grounds of their ethnic origin. Amnesty International has received numerous testimonies from non-Georgians who allege that armed Georgian troops entered their homes, or those of their neighbours, and subsequently robbed, beat and took away many of the occupants solely because they belonged to a different ethnic group. Many were held for short periods then released. Others are believed still to be imprisoned, or to have "disappeared".

Numerous allegations of torture and ill-treatment, including rape, have been made, along with reports of extrajudicial executions, against troops from the Georgian army, the National Guard headed by the Minister of Defence, and a paramilitary group known as "Mkhedrioni" ("Horsemen"). The majority of these relate to the first four months of the conflict, from August 1992, when the situation was said to have been exacerbated by lack of government control over undisciplined troops. However, to Amnesty International's knowledge no alleged perpetrators of torture, beatings and killings or extrajudicial executions during the Abkhazian conflict have been brought to justice.

In October 1992 Aleksandr Kavsadze, Chairman of the Georgian State Committee for Human Rights and Ethnic Relations, alleged that forces under Abkhazian control have also been perpetrating torture and extrajudicial executions. Amnesty International is seeking further verification of these allegations and has written to the Abkhazian authorities concerning reports that at least 12 people accused of looting were shot by firing squad in Gagra in early October 1992 by units under the control of the Abkhazian military commandant.

Amnesty International takes no position on the legitimacy of territorial claims, or the political objectives of the parties to the conflict in Abkhazia. The organization continues to urge all sides to uphold international humanitarian standards and to protect human rights. It believes that all violations of human rights are to be deplored and that in no circumstances can abuses perpetrated by one party be used as justification for abuses carried out by another.

for further information please see Georgia - Alleged human rights violations during the conflict in Abkhazia, (AI Index: EUR 56/07/93).

AI INDEX: AFR 28/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
3 AUGUST 1993

The following is the text of a letter from a Ghanaian former prisoner of conscience who was released in 1992. The letter was sent to Amnesty International in May 1993 and we have omitted his name.

I wish to express my profound appreciation for the wonderful things your organisation has been doing for the defenceless all over the world.

Ever since I was released from detention I have been reading a lot of documents and have been hearing a number of verbal accounts of the relentless campaign you put up on my behalf and that of other Ghanaians to secure our release from detention without trial...

The experiences from my incarceration has made me more resolved than ever before to fight for the rights and liberties of my fellow human beings, here in Ghana and elsewhere in the world...

I am further seeking advice... on the possibility of joining Amnesty International itself.

I was deeply touched by your latest humane act of sending £500 to me through my friend. At this time of abject poverty in Ghana, I have no words to thank you for this timely humanitarian assistance. I can only pray fervently that Amnesty International grows from strength to strength until Dictatorship is completely eradicated and Liberal Democracy rules the entire world.

I wish you all God's guidance in your undertakings.