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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 113/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - ZAIRE

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 105

Yugoslavia/Kosovo - 23 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 104

Section-level action, open letter to governments and news release on violations in Kosovo. Action circular and open letter to be finalized and sent to sections early next week, news release late next week. All documents are embargoed for 23 September. IS staff hope to launch them in Belgrade, but visas may not be granted, in which case we will go ahead and launch them from the IS and sections. Apologies for late notice - will keep you posted of developments.

Sudan - 29 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

Myanmar - 8 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October

Campaign and news release. News release currently being written.

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Iraq - 8 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 105/111

Both news service items enclosed are embargoed for 8 September and will be sent together to international media by the IS Press Office.

Zaire - 16 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

News service item enclosed.

North Korea - 1 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

Togo - 5 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

Francophone Summit - 11 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

## FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Iran - 3 November (international)

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

AI INDEX: AFR 62/WU 01/93  
EMBARGOED FOR 16 SEPTEMBER 1993

**ZAIRE: THOUSANDS MURDERED OR TORTURED AS ZAIRE FACES WORST HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS SINCE CIVIL WAR**

Zaire is facing its worst human rights crisis since the end of the civil war in the early 1960s, marked by ruthless brutality of government security forces, under the control of President Mobutu Sese Seko, who have murdered or tortured thousands of civilians and members of the peaceful political opposition.

"Zaire is sliding inexorably towards a total breakdown of law and order and the government is using the country's worsening political and economic situation as an excuse for appalling human rights violations," said Amnesty International in a report, entitled Zaire: Violence against democracy, issued today.

Since 1990, violence by the security forces and President Mobutu's other supporters has escalated; hundreds, perhaps thousands of civilians have been executed extrajudicially by government troops or killed by what the authorities claim are "unknown gunmen". Others have simply "disappeared". President Mobutu's supporters and allies have fanned ethnic violence, causing thousands to die.

On 22 February this year, about 52 unarmed men, women and children were reportedly shot dead and many others severely injured by members of President Mobutu's elite Presidential Guard known as the *Division spéciale présidentielle* (DSP), Special Presidential Division, in Kinshasa's Kimbanseke district. The attack was reportedly carried out to avenge the killing of a member of the security forces by a group of civilians. Three days earlier DSP soldiers had knifed a civilian to death and truckloads of other security force members joined them to subject civilians to beatings, rape, other torture or ill-treatment and looting of their property. As in all such incidents no efforts are known to have been made to punish those responsible or even investigate the incidents.

Although only a number of killings have received international publicity - such as the killings of several hundred civilians at the time of an army mutiny in September 1991 and the extrajudicial execution of more than 30 Christian pro-democracy demonstrators in February 1992 - the violence against democracy by President Mobutu's security forces has been continuous over the past three years. In addition to hundreds of killings and "disappearances", leading government opponents have also been arrested and detained mostly without charge or trial. For example, Joseph Olenga Nkoy, an envoy of opposition Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, was among several dozen people detained in April and May 1993, for opposing or peacefully criticizing President Mobutu and his policies. Although most of these were released by August 1993 some may still be held.

Since assuming power in 1965, President Mobutu, who holds the rank of army Field Marshal, has been personally in charge of the security forces. He has built up the size and firepower of his forces, often with the help of foreign governments, and has set up various security services and specialized military and paramilitary units. These are all responsible for human rights violations and enjoy almost total impunity for their actions, suggesting they commit abuses with the acquiescence of the President.

Civilian opponents of the government, including members of the main opposition party, the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS), Union for Democracy and Social Progress, have been arrested and tortured in custody. Detained members of the security forces identified as opposition sympathizers have been treated even more brutally; being held in secret detention centres and subjected to electric shocks, whipping, stabbing, mock executions, sexual assault, while others have been killed or "disappeared". Dozens of prisoners have reportedly died of starvation or lack of medical attention in appalling prison conditions.

Political reforms announced in April 1990 - including legalization of opposition parties and human rights groups, and the liberalization of the independent press - seemed set to end more than two decades of political repression and single-party rule. But

**expectations of a free and democratic country were dashed by the failure of promised reforms and the utter desperation caused by political and economic collapse have led civilians to confront the heavily armed security forces, with disastrous consequences.**

**Recently, the security forces have periodically seemed to be out of control, rampaging through cities and towns carrying out looting sprees against unarmed civilians. The President has used the instability to argue that he must remain in power, as he is the only one who can control the security forces and thus ensure security and stability for Zaire. However, appeals by Zairians and the international community to the President to stop his security forces from violating human rights have gone unheeded.**

**Amnesty International is publishing this report to call on the international community - including governments - to devise ways and means to bring an end to the growing crisis in Zaire. Human rights must be protected, including the rights to life, freedom of expression and association and the basic right of each individual to be treated humanely.**

**ENDS/**