
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 124/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - ISRAEL & OT, N.KOREA, ROMANIA, BANGLADESH,
HONDURAS

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Myanmar - 8 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

Yugoslavia/Kosovo - 12 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 117

EJEs and "Disappearances"* - 20 October

Please fax a short summary of your section's plans for news initiatives and activities during the campaign, plus copies of materials you have prepared, to the IS Press Office by Friday; a special page will be devoted to sharing this with all sections next week.

We would also like to keep a running evaluation of media coverage of the campaign throughout the nine months. Please could all sections keep us posted of news coverage they achieve (a list of coverage, plus a short description of particularly successful coverage, eg. good feature in main national newspaper/radio/tv, etc. would be more helpful than clippings - also info on how you achieved it if something unusual or special was done.) The IS press office will do the same thing and an EJE/Disappearances page will be included in Monday News Services - so please try to send your information by Friday the week before. New section plans for activities throughout the campaign will also be included in this - so please keep us posted. If there is anything else you want to include or you have any comments, please let me know. Thanks, Paula.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Israel & OT - 5 October

Item enclosed will be faxed to international media tomorrow morning.

Togo - 5 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

Council of Europe Summit - 7 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 122

Francophone Summit - 11 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 111

North Korea - 15 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88/119

Afghanistan - 26 October

A news service item is being prepared to accompany the document: Afghanistan: Political crisis and the refugees, AI Index: ASA 11/01/93. This document is going in the Weekly Mailing shortly and is dated September - so please do not give this to media until 26 October.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting - 21-25 October (undecided)

Iran - 3 November (international)

Venezuela - 10 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 121

Papua New Guinea - 19 November (targeted)

Colombia - 16 March 1993 - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56+57/93

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AI INDEX: MDE 15/WU 10/93
5 OCTOBER 1993

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES: CHAIRMAN ARAFAT AFFIRMS PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat has informed Amnesty International that the PLO is committed to respect all internationally recognized human rights standards and to incorporate them fully into Palestinian legislation.

This pledge was made on 2 October 1993 to an Amnesty International delegation visiting Tunis. The delegation met PLO officials and members of the Palestinian Association for Human Rights over a five-day stay.

In his meeting with Amnesty International, Chairman Yasser Arafat also acknowledged the fundamental role of local – including Palestinian – and international human rights organizations in protecting and promoting human rights. He stressed the readiness of the PLO to fully cooperate with them.

The Amnesty International delegation learned that the PLO has noted the Annex to Resolution 1992/54 adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, and was working to set up a Palestinian National High Institution for Human Rights. "I am very much concerned that this institution be independent and protected from any interference," said Chairman Yasser Arafat. On 3 October he issued a decree formally establishing this new Palestinian institution.

Amnesty International stressed the importance of the rapid introduction of human rights training for law enforcement officials and human rights education in schools and universities. It welcomed the readiness of the PLO to give priority to such training and educational programs.

Amnesty International's discussion in Tunis followed a similar visit the previous week to Israel and the Occupied Territories, where Amnesty International delegates met Israeli and Palestinian officials as well as members of human rights groups.

Amnesty International stressed the need for both sides to fully implement international human rights standards in the context of the agreements to be negotiated on the Occupied Territories. "Human rights violations on a large scale have been a daily occurrence in these territories for far too long," said Amnesty International. "Today is an opportunity to change this situation and start building a better future."

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AI INDEX: ASA 24/WU 01/93

EMBARGOED FOR 14 OCTOBER 1993, 1600 HOURS GMT

**NORTH KOREA: THIRTY YEARS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS - THOUSANDS SUFFER
SYSTEMATIC TORTURE, SUMMARY EXECUTION AND DETENTION**

Thousands of people have reportedly been tortured or summarily executed and tens of thousands of others, including prisoners of conscience, have been detained in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) over the past 30 years, said Amnesty International in a report published today.

"These gross human rights violations continue today. We fear that thousands of political prisoners, among them prisoners of conscience, remain held in unacknowledged detention - many in appalling conditions in 're-education through labour' detention centres. Dozens more are executed after unfair trials every year," said the organization.

Amnesty International's report gives details of prisoners of conscience believed to be currently held in North Korea, including former Korean residents in Japan and relatives of Koreans who sought political asylum abroad. According to unofficial sources, people apparently suspected of "crimes against the State" have been detained with their entire family.

Shibata Koza, a Japanese national, may be among them. If he is still alive, he is now 62 years old and has been imprisoned in North Korea since October 1964. He was reportedly still held in a "re-education" camp in late 1990 but there has been no news about him since then. His wife and children may have been imprisoned as well and their fate remains unknown.

Another prisoner, whose name is withheld for his own safety, was arrested in December 1982 with his wife and two children, apparently by officials of the Ministry of State Security. Unofficial sources say that they are still alive, but their relatives have not been able to see or correspond with them for the last 11 years.

Other people accused of "ideological divergence" and "crimes against the State" are said to have been publicly sentenced to death and executed. Witnesses reported seeing such executions in November 1992; according to North Koreans these occur frequently.

Many political prisoners appear to be held without trial or after grossly unfair trials. Judges are not independent and are specifically requested to carry out the policies of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea. Lawyers have virtually no access to prisoners prior to trial.

Political prisoners in "re-education through labour" detention centres are reportedly held in appalling conditions. Former prisoners said that many of their inmates had died of cold, hunger or untreated illnesses. Prisoners appear to have been effectively deprived of all rights. Some categories of "special" prisoners have reportedly been taken to "camps" which received virtually no food or material supplies, where they were expected to live only from what food they were able to produce themselves. Many reportedly died.

Places of detention include makeshift prisons in work camps housing North Korean forestry workers in far eastern regions of the Russian Federation. Workers who have attempted to escape from such camps have been detained there by the North Koreans running the camps, without being afforded any effective judicial recourse against their detention.

The Constitution and laws of North Korea contain nominal safeguards against human rights violations, but these fall far short of international human rights standards. The Criminal Law contains provisions so vague that they may allow imprisonment on criminal charges for the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights. For example, people who "are in revolt" can be imprisoned for up to ten years, and those who "encourage others to attempt...the undermining of the Republic" for up to seven years.

The North Korean authorities have denied allegations of human rights violations and accused critics of being politically-motivated. However, Amnesty International's report is based on information provided by former North Korean detainees and other unofficial sources and by North Korean officials who met an Amnesty International delegation in Pyongyang in 1991. In spite of official curbs on travel and communication in and out of North Korea, Amnesty International's report summarizes the most up-to-date and reliable information available so far.

The human rights organization is calling on the North Korean Government to: release all prisoners of conscience; account for all reported victims of unacknowledged detention; end the ill-treatment of detainees; reinforce statutory human rights safeguards and ensure that they are implemented in practice, in conformity with North Korea's international commitments as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Amnesty International also reiterates its call on North Korea to allow independent human rights organizations access to the country. Following its visit in 1991, Amnesty International has repeatedly pressed the North Korean Government to receive a second visit from the organization, but as yet no response has been forthcoming.

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AI INDEX: EUR 39/WU 01/93
4 OCTOBER 1993

ROMANIA: POLICE FAIL TO PROTECT THREE ROMA FROM PUBLIC LYNCHING

Amnesty International has written to President Ion Iliescu expressing concern at the apparent failure of the Romanian authorities to protect the local Roma community in the Transylvanian village of H_d_reni, following the killing of four people and destruction of 17 houses during racial violence on 20 September.

Three Roma were killed and more than 170 others were forced to abandon their homes and flee from the village after the authorities allegedly failed to adequately ensure their safety and protect their property.

According to information received by Amnesty International, on the night of 20 September a fight broke on H_d_reni's main street between seven or eight Romanians and two Roma, Lucian Ropa L_c_tu_, aged 20, and his brother Pardalian L_c_tu_, aged 22. After Pardalian L_c_tu_ was allegedly injured with a pitchfork, a Romanian, Ghe_an Cr_ciu_n, was stabbed and killed.

The L_c_tu_ brothers then fled to the house of Lucretia Moldovanu. Shortly after, a crowd of between 400 and 500 Romanians and ethnic Hungarians from H_d_reni and neighbouring villages gathered in front of this house and proceeded to set it on fire. Several reports indicate that a police force of around 45 men arrived in the village soon after the crowd had gathered. According to one report, two police officers arrested the two L_c_tu_ brothers when they tried to escape from the house which was on fire and handcuffed them. The villagers who were gathered outside grabbed the two men and beat and kicked them to death.

The policemen reportedly stood aside and although they were armed did not take any steps to protect the two L_c_tu_ brothers. Witnesses who saw the body of one of the brothers in the morgue stated that it was covered with bruises and cuts, that the limbs were contorted and that there were marks on the wrists, which appeared to have been caused by the handcuffs.

After the crowd had killed the two L_c_tu_ brothers, Mircea Zoltan, a Roma who was also hiding in the burning house died in the fire and his charred remains were found the next morning.

The crowd then set fire to other Roma houses. Reportedly 13 houses were destroyed by the fire and four were vandalized by the crowd beyond repair. Before these killings and acts of arson in September there were more than 170 Roma living in H_d_reni. The 32 Roma families lived in 21 homes. All the Roma of this community were forced to flee from their homes. Some of these houses which had not been destroyed by the fire were broken into, looted and heavily damaged.

Fire brigades from Tirgu Mure_, Ludu_ and Tirnaveni arrived in H_d_reni reportedly at 11.30pm, approximately three and a half hours after the racial violence started and the first Roma house was set on fire. They were reportedly prevented by the crowd and some of the policemen from extinguishing the fires in Roma houses. According to a report one fire brigade did not take any action after its arrival stating that it was too late to save any property. However, the last Roma house was set on fire by the crowd at around 4am. It was also reported that members of the police force did not ensure the safety and protect the property of the fleeing Roma. According to a Rom who was forced to flee his home: "Police officers watched and laughed as a TV set and a video-recorder were stolen from my home."

All the Roma were forced to abandon their homes and initially hide in the surrounding fields and later most were reported to have dispersed to neighbouring villages. Many have not been able to return to their homes as they fear that they would not be adequately protected by the police. One report received by Amnesty International indicates that such fears might be well grounded. On 24 September

1993 Maria Moldovan and Violeta Moldovan tried to return to their home in H_d_reni to collect some of their livestock. On the way to the village they were reportedly met by a police officer who is alleged to have attacked and beaten them and warned them not to come back.

Amnesty International believes that the alleged lack of adequate protection for the Roma community in H_d_reni during the racial violence on 20 September represents a flagrant violation of the international human rights standards to which Romania is a party.

Amnesty International is aware that the Romanian Government in its statement of 22 September has undertaken to investigate this event. However, Amnesty International is particularly concerned that such an inquiry should fully and impartially investigate reports of the participation of law enforcement officials in these criminal acts of racial violence and allegations that they failed in their duty to offer the fullest protection to citizens who were manifestly at risk.

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BANGLADESH: PUBLIC EXECUTIONS AND LASHING CARRIED OUT ON THE DIRECTION OF LOCAL BODIES WITHOUT LEGAL AUTHORITY

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that several people have been sentenced to death by public stoning or burning, or to public lashings, by local village councils or salish in Bangladesh which have no legal authority to do so.

Among the victims were a 21-year old woman sentenced to death by stoning in Chatakchara in January 1993 and another woman publicly burned to death in Sripur in June 1993 after salish verdicts. A 14-year old girl was sentenced by salish in August 1992 to 100 lashes after her rape by an influential villager; the salish acquitted the rapist but took her pregnancy resulting from the rape as evidence of illicit sexual intercourse.

The village arbitration council or salish, consisting of local elders, including village clergy, is an institution which goes back to traditional forms of conflict resolution through mediation, but it has no legal authority to try criminal cases. The law under which the salish have illegally tried, convicted and sentenced individuals is a form of Islamic law which contravenes the civil law enshrined in the Bangladesh Penal Code, which is in force in Bangladesh.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that the Government of Bangladesh has apparently failed to take adequate measures to prevent such local councils from taking the law in their own hands. It believes that if the Government had acted swiftly and decisively after the first incident was reported, the extralegal punishments and killings of several people could have been prevented.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Bangladesh to take seriously its duty to ensure that local councils do not assume functions which result in human rights violations.

AI document: BANGLADESH: TAKING THE LAW IN THEIR OWN HANDS - THE VILLAGE SALISH, AI INDEX: ASA 13/12/93 will be available mid-October.

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AI INDEX: AMR 37/WU 01/93
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HONDURAS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR GENUINE COMMITMENT TO INVESTIGATE "DISAPPEARANCES"

Amnesty International has written to the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights, Dr. Leo Valladares, regarding his intention - announced in August - to examine the cases of the "disappeared" in Honduras.

For many years, Amnesty International has campaigned for a thorough inquiry to determine the whereabouts of more than 100 people who disappeared between 1979 and 1989, allegedly while in the custody of military personnel. Repeated communications have been sent by the organization to the present and previous governments expressing its extreme disquiet that the fate of the "disappeared" has never been fully established and that those responsible have never been brought to justice.

Amnesty International has received reports that a few days before the announcement of the Human Rights Commissioner, the Honduran National Congress approved the formation of a special congressional committee, also mandated to investigate these "disappearances".

While noting these moves with interest, Amnesty International expressed its concern that the President, Sr. Rafael Leonardo Callejas, has stated that he supports neither the establishment of the special committee nor the initiative of the Human Rights Commissioner. Furthermore, little detail has been made available regarding the precise nature of the investigations which the government intends to carry out. In view of the manipulation of the issue of the "disappeared" in Honduras in the run-up to the presidential elections, due to be held in November, Amnesty International considered that a serious commitment is required to clarify the fate of the victims.

In its letter, Amnesty International asked the Human Rights Commissioner, Dr. Valladares, to confirm that the Honduran government does indeed intend to carry out exhaustive investigations into the "disappearances" and, if so, what would be the terms of reference and working methods of the investigating body.

Amnesty International enclosed with the letter some recommendations regarding the creation of a commission of inquiry and stated that the investigations could only honour the rights of victims and relatives if it succeeded in clarifying the truth about what happened, bringing to justice those responsible and providing compensation to the families of the victims.

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