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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 163/94

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**PLEASE SEE INTERNAL SECTION ON INTERNATIONAL PRESS/AV MEETING**

**PLEASE NOTE:** The research team has warned us that those doing interviews on the Pakistan report (press release is in today's news service) should be cautious about security concerns in connection with Islamist groups. There will be a questions and answers sheet sent to you tomorrow to help answer the difficult questions. We suggest only one person identified as the spokesperson for Amnesty International do all interviews. Co-group leaders who do interviews should also be warned to be aware of possible security concerns. If any threats result from media work, please notify the IS press office as soon as possible.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Pakistan - 27 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94 - We are sending the report out via Swift air so it should reach you in time for the release date.

Kosovo - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - second week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Brazil - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

**Internal**

**FOR THE ATTENTION OF PRESS AND AV OFFICERS  
COMMENTS ASKED FOR BY 5 AUGUST**

### **INTERNATIONAL PRESS/AV OFFICERS MEETING**

At the international press officers meeting earlier this year section press officers requested that such a meeting take place annually, and the Media/Audiovisual program is therefore planning to hold such a meeting in early 1995.

The following proposal outlines the purpose of the meeting, and possible timing and activities for the meeting. We are sending this to press/av officers at this stage for your feedback by 5 August. Once your responses have been received, we will finalize the agenda and send it to all sections.

#### **Why hold an international press officers meeting**

AI's media and audiovisual work is a de facto decentralized program, with the IS, sections and groups servicing different media internationally or in their region/country. At the 1994 meeting we discussed the best way for all those involved in media/av work throughout the movement to develop their media/av work so that we are as dynamic and effective as possible.

The conclusion of the meeting was that one way to achieve this was to hold an annual international press officers meeting to discuss specific media activities, to train press officers, and to allow sections to exchange their experiences.

We discussed whether it was more effective to hold international or regional press officers meetings, and the conclusion was that an international meeting was the best way to foster a truly international approach and to allow sections that are in the early stages of developing media work to benefit from the experience of other sections.

The last meeting was exclusively for press officers, and we are proposing that the 1995 and subsequent meetings involve both press and audiovisual officers from sections. The Media/Audiovisual program at the IS is increasingly taking an integrated approach to media and audiovisual work, and would like to encourage such an approach throughout the movement.

#### **Purpose of the meeting**

Based on the 1994 meeting, we would like to propose the following purposes for the 1995 meeting.

- 1) to provide an opportunity for section press and av officers to develop informal contacts to be used in future cooperation on media/av work
- 2) to discuss communications between IS and section press offices
- 3) to provide training in specific areas of media/av work
- 4) to provide an opportunity for section press/av officers to exchange positive and creative experiences in specific media/av initiatives
- 5) to discuss the major 1995 campaign on human rights violations against women
- 6) to discuss the international media and audiovisual strategy which will be debated at the 1995 ICM

#### **Specific activities**

Based on the proposed purpose of the meeting, we would like to suggest the following components of the meeting. We would like section press/av officers to comment on the specific items, so that we can finalize the program. Depending on your response, we would hold these activities in workshops or with the group as a whole.

## **0 Training**

The purpose of training sessions would be to develop specific media skills to help section press/av officers in their daily media work. As much as possible, we would like to involve section press officers in presenting these sessions so that we can benefit from a wide range of experience.

**a) media work for smaller sections/groups**  
- a workshop led by a press officer from a smaller section discussing issues/solutions for media/av work in smaller sections

**b) interview training**  
- training particularly in radio and television interviews, including how to brief section spokespeople

**c) writing**  
- a workshop led by the IS or a section press officer in writing/adapting media material for use with national media.

**d) organizing special events**  
- a workshop led by a section press officer in organizing special media events, covering both the practical and creative sides

**e) developing media contacts**  
- a discussion led by the IS and a section press officer on effective ways of developing strong media contacts

**f) use of av materials**  
- discussion led by IS and section press officer on creative ways to use audiovisual materials in media work

## **2) Exchanging experiences**

We would like to have one or more press/av officers discuss particular media issues or activities they have been involved in, highlighting both problems encountered and successes. This will provide an opportunity for other sections to benefit from their experience.

The possible areas where such presentations could be made include:

- case study of a campaign launch from a smaller and larger section
- a particularly interesting or successful special event carried out by a section
- examples of special contacts that have been developed with the media, and how those have improved section media work
- issues press/av officers face in their work within a section, and any ideas or positive experiences to be exchanged with other press/av officers
- discussion of international campaign launches, and how we as a movement can best use these

## **3) IS/Section press office communications**

We would like to take the opportunity of an international press/av officers meeting to discuss ongoing communications between IS and section press offices. Some of the topics that could be discussed are:

- priorities - how to improve the use of the news service in providing sections with advice on priorities among news service items
- Email - how we can most effectively use email to encourage conversations on strategies, responses to breaking news, exchanging ideas, etc

- Strategy - how can we involve section press officers more effectively in developing media strategies for major campaigns/priority countries.

#### **4) Theme campaign on women**

A section consultation meeting will be held with sections in 1994 to discuss the campaign, and this will include media work. At the press/av officers, we would like to focus more specifically on the activities planned by press officers for the duration of the campaign to encourage creative media work.

In the 1994 press officers meeting, we focused almost exclusively on the Colombia and Indonesia campaigns, including presentations from campaign coordinators and research teams, mock press conferences, and discussion of the media strategy. We would like feedback from press/av officers about this approach, with suggestions for changing the campaign discussion to suit your needs.

#### **6) International media/av strategy**

The IEC has decided that media and audiovisual work will be one of the major issues debated at the 1995 ICM. The Media/Audiovisual program will be developing a strategy paper for the ICM, and circulating it to sections for discussion and comment in November 1994. Part of the consultation process is to have section press officers present their official section response to the draft strategy at the 1995 International Press/AV Officers meeting.

Further details on the strategy and consultation process will be sent to all sections shortly.

#### **Timing**

We are considering having the meeting in February 1995, after the launch of the Sudan campaign and before the launch of the Women's theme campaign. No specific dates have been discussed at this time, but we would like you to plan at this stage for a February meeting.

#### **Financing**

The IS will be paying for the costs of the meeting itself, one complimentary meal, and costs related to training sessions. Sections are responsible for covering their travel and accommodation costs.

We are starting the planning for the meeting at this stage so that press officers can plan for the expense in their 1995 budgets. Press officers from smaller sections will need to make proposals to their sections for their participation to be funded from the horizontal communications budget that sections receive.

Once we have finalized the plans for the meeting, the Media/Audiovisual Director will be sending a letter to all section directors encouraging participation in the meeting, particularly since the Media and Audiovisual strategy will be discussed.

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**AI INDEX:AMR 51/WU 10/94  
25 JULY 1994**

**USA: OUTRAGEOUS EXPLANATION BY ARKANSAS TO JUSTIFY MULTIPLE EXECUTIONS**

The claim by Arkansas State Correction Department that executions are more cost effective and less stressful than keeping people in prison was condemned by Amnesty International today as "flying in the face of all civilized, rational and humane behaviour."

Alan Ables, the State Correction Department spokesperson claimed that the execution of three men scheduled for 3 August will be a means of saving money and causing less stress to prison employees.

"If an execution is so stressful to prison personnel, what must it do to the society and the state which sanction it?"

In an open letter to President Clinton earlier this year about the death penalty, Amnesty International reported that it actually costs, on average, between two and three million dollars to execute one prisoner. This is three times as much as it would take to keep that individual in prison for forty years.

The human rights organization opposes the death penalty in all cases and has urged Arkansas Governor, Jim Guy Tucker, to commute the sentences of the three men. The organization also urged the state to seek ways of providing a more effective punishment which is more in keeping with the standards and values of a civilized society.

"The death penalty in all cases is a barbaric practice which brutalizes humanity, particularly the individuals involved in the process. By its own admission, the state of Arkansas appears to agree with us," Amnesty International said.

This will be the second multiple execution carried out by Arkansas in recent months, following the execution of two men on 11 May.

Although multiple executions used to be a fairly common practice in the United States, the executions in May were the first time two inmates from the same state were put to death on the same day since the US Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

"By carrying out such executions the United States is associating itself with countries such as China -- where multiple executions frequently take place -- and other countries known to have done this in the past like Iran, Iraq and Nigeria," Amnesty International said.

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### PAKISTAN BLASPHEMY LAWS ABUSED TO PERSECUTE INNOCENT VICTIMS

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are increasingly misused to punish the persecuted victim rather than prosecute the malicious abuser of such laws, Amnesty International said today as it urged the government to prevent such travesties of justice.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are so vaguely formulated that they encourage, and in fact invite, the persecution of religious minorities or non-conforming members of the Muslim majority, the human rights organization said.

"One human rights violation after another is piled upon a victim: It starts with the initial arbitrary arrest, continues in a blatantly unfair trial and results in ill-treatment in jail and harassment or assassination by citizens upon release. And if the person is convicted, the travesty ends in an execution by the state," Amnesty International said today as it released its report Pakistan: Use and abuse of the blasphemy laws.

"Many of the recent cases are based solely on hostility towards the Christian minority -- whether the person accused of blasphemy really was a Christian or was just assumed to be one," Amnesty International said. "Often that hostility has been exacerbated by professional or economic rivalry, personal enmity or desire for political advantage."

Of the dozens of people charged with blasphemy, the majority are members of the Ahmadiyya community who have been persecuted for many years for professing, practising and promoting their faith. During the last three years, Christians also have been increasingly charged with blasphemy as have members of the Muslim majority who advance new ideas.

All those now facing a blasphemy charge are, if arrested, prisoners of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released and any charge of blasphemy be dropped, Amnesty International said.

The government should take all legislative and other measures to ensure that blasphemy laws do not lead to the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience. The authorities should also to make an unfounded accusation of blasphemy itself an offence.

Amnesty International welcomes the government's recent announcement that procedural changes would be introduced to prevent the laws' abuse, but is not aware of concrete legislative measures taken. Such steps are overdue to prevent wrongful accusations of blasphemy and ensure fair trials.

Pakistan's police sometimes arrest people on blasphemy charges who obviously could not have been guilty of the offence. **Salamat Masih**, a 13 year-old Christian boy, is totally illiterate but was alleged to have written blasphemous words on the wall of a mosque. **Arshad Javed**, a mentally disturbed person shouted in the streets he that was Jesus Christ. Charged with blasphemy, he was sentenced to death. His appeal is still pending. **Tahir Iqbal**, a Christian convert, died in jail in July 1992 under mysterious circumstances after a jail warder threatened his life.

This unfair treatment extends to the courts of Pakistan. Muslim clergy have interfered in blasphemy trials, thronging the courtrooms and demanding that the accused be hanged. Apparently judges are sometimes influenced by the climate of hatred against minorities.

For example, a Christian man, **Gul Masih**, was sentenced to death for blasphemy on the sole evidence of the complainant who, the judge said, is "a young man ... with a beard and outlook of being a true Muslim and I have no reason to disbelieve him". Two other witnesses testified that Gul Masih was innocent but they were dismissed for being hostile to the prosecution.

If those charged with blasphemy and later tried unfairly can survive their ill-treatment in jails to be finally convicted, the death penalty awaits them. The death penalty is not only the most severe but the only possible punishment for blasphemy in Pakistan after a 1992 change in the penal code.

So far two people, imprisoned solely because of their beliefs, have been recently sentenced to death under the blasphemy laws. They have been on death row for months while their appeals are pending.

Not only are people charged with blasphemy on weak or non-existent evidence and unfairly tried, they often become a target for ill-treatment and attack by official or private citizens -- whether the victim was free on bail, in police or judicial custody or acquitted. **Manzoor Masih**, a Christian charged with blasphemy and freed on bail, was killed in April 1994 in the streets of Lahore.

A Christian teacher, **Naimat Ahmer**, was killed by a student who said he thought Ahmer had committed blasphemy in January 1992. In April 1994, **Dr Maffiz Farooq Sajjad**, was stoned to death in Gujranwala after the loudspeaker of the mosque announced that a Christian had burned a copy of the Holy Qur'an". He was dragged from the police station while officers stood by and his body was set on fire while he was probably still alive, tied to a motorbike and dragged through the streets. He was believed to have been a devout Muslim but mistaken for a Christian.

"Amnesty International fears that government inaction creates an atmosphere for people to feel at liberty to take the law into their own hands," the organization said.

"The government must condemn and take urgent measures against these kinds of violence to make clear it is committed to protecting human rights for everyone in Pakistan," Amnesty International said. "Silence and inaction sanction such crimes." ENDS\