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WHAT HAPPENED ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY?

9 DECEMBER

International Secretariat:

Pierre Sané gave a speech at the London School of Economics and Political Science with the title: "Human Rights in the 90s - An Agenda for Action".

10 DECEMBER

Dutch section:

There was to be broadcasted a movie/documentary about "disappearances" on Dutch television.

German section:

The section organized a demonstration in Cologne, where demonstrators were to carry 300 shadows of killed and "disappeared" people. Three speakers were expected to be at the event. One expert on fascism in Germany, a relative of a "disappeared" person and the German SG to talk about the government's responsibility for political killings and "disappearances" around the world.

Icelandic section:

In cooperation with the church, priests were asked to talk about human rights and issues related to the campaign in their sermons on this day.

A film about "disappearances" was to be shown on television. Before the film an interview with Pierre Sané on the campaign was to be broadcasted. Furthermore, the section had organized an event at the Nordic House where they would lecture on the campaign and show films. There was also to be played a piece of music, which the French composer Olivier Messien composed when he was in a concentration camp during World War 2. The cases from Sri Lanka and Peru were to be highlighted on this day.

Swiss section:

The Red Cross, the association of humanitarian organizations dealing with refugees in Switzerland, AI Switzerland, the churches and DRS 1 (national radio) was co-operating on the nationwide "Lights for the Disappeared" action, which is a lot of decentralized candle-events.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE POLITICAL KILLINGS AND "DISAPPEARANCES" CAMPAIGN

Hong Kong:

The South China Morning Post (SCMP) has had a week-long publicity campaign on Amnesty from 6-11 December. From 7-10 December 4 cases from the "Lives behind the Lies" were highlighted.

On Human Rights Day there was a 35 minute radio interview with Miranda Sears on British Forces Broadcasting Service on the campaign and with Eunice Chan and Robyn Kilpatrick on Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) Radio 3. Furthermore Cory Ng was interviewed on a Chinese TV channel.

RTHK also covered the exhibition on 27 November and there was an article in Hong Kong Standard.

Canada:

The Globe and Mail reproduced Pierre Sané's entire human rights day speech.

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES UN RESOLUTION ON HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Amnesty International today welcomed a proposal by a special working group of the UN General Assembly to create the post of a High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"This represents a major step forward for the protection and promotion of human rights by the UN," said Amnesty International. "It establishes a high-level post within the UN, to coordinate human rights protection, with the authority of the General Assembly to act quickly to tackle human rights problems - before they become human rights crises."

The proposal achieved consensus in the UN working group and is expected to be adopted by the Third Committee of the General Assembly later this week. The breakthrough comes six months after the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna first recommended that the High Commissioner post should be established by the General Assembly. And while it remains to be seen exactly how the post will develop, Amnesty International expects that the new Office of the High Commissioner will raise the profile of human rights in the UN system and strengthen global protection of human rights.

The High Commissioner will be able to engage in discussion with governments, without needing any special authorization, and will work in cooperation with many human rights organizations around the world. The High Commissioner will have a mandate to promote and protect the right to development, as well as the enjoyment of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Most importantly, the High Commissioner must play an active role in preventing the continuation of human rights violations.

However, while the decision to create the post of High Commissioner is an advance in itself, Amnesty International is disappointed that governments failed to give explicit guidance as to how the High Commissioner would act in human rights emergencies. "Obviously, this issue is fundamental to human rights work," said Amnesty International.

Amnesty International is also waiting to see what decisions will be made about the budget for the regular human rights program at the UN - a program which is widely recognised as seriously underfunded. In addition, the budget recommendations currently being debated at the UN are so far woefully inadequate.

In addition, there are considerable budget implications in creating the Office of the High Commissioner with appropriate staff and resources as well as the promised "liaison office in New York." "It remains to be seen whether there is the will to create an effective functioning Office of the High Commissioner," said Amnesty International. "Without a realistic working budget, the potential for the High Commissioner to help human rights will be minimal. A bad decision on the budget would leave the office powerless."

But despite these reservations, Amnesty International still believes the creation of a post of High Commissioner is a positive development. Said Amnesty International: "It is to be hoped that this commitment to human rights at the international level will be translated to the national level, and that all governments will take the next step and stop violations of human rights at home."

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RWANDA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR PROPER INQUIRY INTO POLITICAL KILLINGS AND ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS

Recent massacres of unarmed civilians in northern Rwanda's demilitarized zone have worsened the climate of violence and instability only four months after the signing of a peace accord between the Rwandese Government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). Amnesty International urges the government of Rwanda and the RPF to initiate a full, impartial and public inquiry to investigate the killings and to bring those found responsible to justice.

On the night of 17-18 November 38 people, including local officials of the former ruling party, the *Mouvement republicain national pour le développement et democracratie* (MRND), were shot dead and others wounded following an attack by unidentified assailants in four communes (villages) in Ruhengeri prefecture in the northern demilitarized zone. Another similar attack took place on 29 November in Mutara village in Gisenyi prefecture, where 17 people including women and children were killed. The killings occurred in the run-up to local elections.

The motives for the attacks are unclear, but have exacerbated tension between government forces and the RPF, with both sides accusing each other of responsibility for the attacks. A unit of the UN Observer Mission to Uganda and Rwanda (UNOMUR) carried out a preliminary investigation into the killings: it confirmed that the killings had occurred but was unable to determine who was responsible. UNOMUR recommended that a further inquiry should establish responsibility for the killings.

The delayed arrival of the UN peacekeeping force, plus the tension caused by widespread killings in neighbouring Burundi, means that the situation is extremely fragile and killings on ethnic grounds related to those in Burundi have recently been reported in southern Rwanda. Several hundred thousand Burundi citizens fled into Rwanda to escape recent massacres in Burundi.

Unrelated to events in Burundi, political killings and attempted assassinations have been occurring in Rwanda throughout this year. After a wave of extrajudicial executions, Samuel Gapyisi, a leading opposition member - tipped to become transitional Prime Minister - was murdered in May by suspected supporters of President Habyarimana. On 14 November, Alphonse-Marie Nkubito, a senior procurator and president of an independent human rights organization, was seriously injured by a grenade that was thrown at him by unidentified men as he entered his home in Kigali. Amnesty International has received countless reports of other politicians who are critical of the President and of human rights activists being threatened and attacked.

The Rwandese government and the RPF signed a series of protocols in the months leading up to the eventual signing of the Peace Accord on 4 August. Some of these protocols, in particular the *Protocol relative to the Rule of Law*, signed in August 1992, included provisions for the protection of human rights. Article 15 calls for the establishment of an independent national commission of inquiry responsible for monitoring human rights violations and Article 16 calls upon the signing parties to set up an international commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations committed during the war. As far as Amnesty International is aware none of these commissions have been initiated as yet.

Amnesty International is urging the government to set up an independent, impartial and public inquiry with a view to establishing responsibility for all political killings, death threats and assassination attempts and for bringing those responsible to justice. The organization appeals to both the government of Rwanda and the RPF to respect human rights and basic humane standards, and to implement the protocols of the peace accord relevant to the protection of human rights without undue delay. The organization is also calling for the UN to ensure that it includes the protection and promotion of human rights in its peacekeeping mission in Rwanda and to ensure that all reports of human rights violations are independently and fully investigated.

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