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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **SRI LANKA** (This item is being sent to media in Sri Lanka by the research team)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: A short external document on **Sudan: Outside the war zones: secret detention and torture in northern Sudan** (AI INDEX: AFR 54/31/94) will be in the weekly mailing of 7 September. There is no news item to go with this document but you may be interested in passing the report on to any of your media with an interest in Africa/Sudan.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Brazil - 14 September - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL RELEASE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Kosovo - 19 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Indonesia - 28 September - LAUNCH OF CAMPAIGN

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

France - 12 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Yemen - 1 September - See news service 194/94

**** Thailand - 8 September**** - Please note change of date. Apologies for this second delay, we had to incorporate comments from UNHCR which took some time to arrive. The news release will be in the news service tomorrow and we will be swiftairing the report to you tomorrow also. SEE NEWS SERVICE 184/94

Togo - 15 September - See news service 168/94

Turkey - 14 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

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1 SEPTEMBER 1984

SRI LANKA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES INVESTIGATIONS INTO PAST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Amnesty International welcomes the decision by Sri Lanka's newly elected government to establish three independent commissions to investigate the fate of thousands of people who "disappeared" in Sri Lanka during recent years.

"For many years, the security forces in Sri Lanka have been immune from prosecution for human rights violations," Amnesty International said.

"If this climate of impunity is to be stopped, it is essential that violations are impartially investigated and those found to be responsible brought to justice".

However, achieving justice often depends on the powers given to the investigative authorities. Amnesty International has requested full details of the mandate and the terms of reference of the three commissions and of the steps the government is planning to take once the commissions have concluded their investigations.

The human rights organization is urging the government to ensure that the commissions' mandate is in accordance with United Nations principles. These call for the investigating authority to be given powers and resources "to obtain all the information necessary to the inquiry", and to also oblige witnesses and officials allegedly involved in extrajudicial executions to attend the commissions and give evidence.

Amnesty International is also urging the new government to repeal the Indemnity (Amendment) Act which gives immunity from prosecution to all members of the security forces, members of the government and government servants involved in enforcing law and order between August 1977 and December 1988. Even though this law has not been used to date, the fact that it remains on the statute book means defendants can invoke it in court to protect themselves from prosecution in cases relating to events from this period.

"Repealing this Act would be a clear signal to members of the security forces that those responsible for human rights violations - regardless of when they were committed - will not be protected," Amnesty International said.

"Reestablishing accountability is a crucial condition to preventing human rights violations in the future".

Amnesty International also hopes that the government will, at the earliest opportunity, bring Sri Lanka's security laws and practices fully in line with relevant international standards and ratify international human rights standards and humanitarian standards.

The organization had appealed to all political parties at the start of the election campaign to make public their position on human rights and to work for the advance of protection of human rights, regardless of party-political or other differences.

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