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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 214/94

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**NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - COLOMBIA** (This item is not being sent to international media by the IS, but it is going to media in Colombia)  
**HAITI** (This item is going to international media from the IS).

**PLEASE NOTE EDAI AND EFAI:** The Haiti Q&A sent out in news service 213/94 and the Haiti news release enclosed in this news service are for priority translation. Please could you send us the texts of your translations as soon as they are done. Thanks - Dina S.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This is just a reminder to those sections who have not sent us details of the media coverage for the Annual Report or the Colombia Campaign -- please would you send in your information as soon as possible, as Lone Hvass, the IS press office intern needs the material to complete her evaluation. Many thanks - Dina S.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES**

**\*\* Indonesia - 0400 hrs GMT 28 September\*\* - PLEASE NOTE EXACT EMBARGO TIME. LAUNCH OF CAMPAIGN**

**France - 12 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94**

**Algeria - 25 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94**

**APEC - 3 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94**

## **TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES**

**Mali - 21 September - SEE NEWS SERVICES 212/94 AND 205/94**

**Egypt - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94**

**Turkey - 14 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94**

**Iraq - 29 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94**

**News Service 214/94**

**AI INDEX: AMR 23/WU 11/94  
20 SEPTEMBER 1994**

**COLOMBIA: CRUCIAL TEST OF GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS**

Days before a draft law against "disappearances" is due to be debated by the Colombian Senate, Humberto de la Calle, the Colombian Vice-President, met with Amnesty International officials in Belgium to discuss the new government's recently unveiled human rights programme.

"While we welcome both the government's pledge to make human rights a priority issue and its stated commitment to eradicate paramilitary groups and stamp out impunity, the most immediate test of this commitment is the forthcoming debate around the "disappearance" law," Amnesty International said today.

In June this year the Colombian Congress approved a law against forced "disappearances". The outgoing President, César Gaviria, then refused to pass it into law on the grounds that aspects of it were "unconstitutional" and "inconvenient", and it was subsequently returned to Congress. Tomorrow, the Ministers of Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs have been invited to appear before the plenary session of the Colombian Senate to clarify the new government's position on these objections.

"The new government has so far failed to publicly make known its position on these objections. If the objections are not retracted "disappearances" will, in effect, continue to be considered "acts of service" and as such continue to be heard in military courts," Amnesty International said.

Military courts have consistently failed to convict members of the security forces who have carried out "disappearances" and other serious human rights violations, and they are a key element in perpetuating impunity. Failure by the government and Congress to take a firm stand now to ensure "disappearance" cases are not handled by military jurisdiction will reconfirm the dangerous practice of military courts dealing with all forms of human rights violation cases.

"This will help maintain impunity, and the new government's stated policy objectives to improve the human rights situation may be seriously undermined before they even gets off the ground," Amnesty International said.

As well, security force members responsible for "disappearances" would also be able to continue to invoke "due obedience" as a defence, rendering the new law ineffective.

Members of the new government, and human rights officials such as the Procurator General and the People's Defender have all publicly recognized the pressing need to define the concept of "act of service" in order to end impunity.

"A firm stand now from the government against former President Gaviria's objections will send a clear message to the international community of the government's political will to tackle the human rights situation in Colombia", Amnesty International said.

**ENDS\**

**News Service 214/94**

**AI INDEX: AMR 36/WU 14/94**

**EMBARGOED FOR 1700hrs GMT 20 SEPTEMBER 1994**

**HAITI: HUMAN RIGHTS IGNORED IN HAITI AGREEMENT**

**NEW YORK --** The impunity for human rights violators granted in the agreement between the US Government and the Haitian military puts that country's population in immediate danger, Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané said today.

"Letting killers and torturers off the hook undermines long-term solutions to the country's continuing human rights crisis because it sends a message that they can continue their abuses," Mr Sané said in New York, where he delivered a speech at the headquarters of the United Nations.

"The danger is heightened by the failure to disband the paramilitary forces that have abducted and tortured thousands of men and women and who have shot or beaten to death other thousands of unarmed Haitians," Mr Sané said.

Amnesty International remains convinced that respect for human rights in Haiti will not be established until all those responsible for gross human rights violations are made to answer for their crimes.

Mr Sané criticised the apparent lack of any human rights plan for Haiti during the UN-sanctioned operation, such as an immediate independent international human rights monitoring presence to observe and report on the human rights situation in the country.

This is necessary to ensure that human rights are not violated by the de facto Haitian military authorities and their paramilitary agents, by US or other foreign forces, or by Haitian civilians who could now seek reprisals, Mr Sané said.

For example, the expelled Organization of American States/UN civilian human rights mission (MICIVIH) could return to resume its functions in circumstances where its security would be guaranteed and its mandate can be carried out.

Mr Sané also stressed the need for a long-term commitment to institution-building in Haiti, which could include the following recommendations:

- The development of a fair and impartial justice system, including the provision of training for judicial officials;
- The police and military must be rebuilt as entirely separate institutions, and personnel of both institutions must receive human rights training to ensure that both bodies respect human rights; and
- A clear and long-term commitment by the international community to the promotion, support and protection of human rights groups in Haiti.

"The international community must keep its attention turned to Haiti, to ensure that human rights protection is foremost on the agenda," Mr Sané said.

**ENDS\**

**[Mr Sané is in New York to meet UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and to deliver a speech at the UN. Copies of that speech are available. Mr Sané is available for interviews from 13:00 to 15:30 EST (local New York time) by calling Amnesty International at 1 - 212 - 867 - 8878.]**