

ALGERIA

Political violence has continued to escalate in Algeria since the state of emergency was renewed in February.

At least 370 alleged Islamic opposition militants were killed by the security forces in the first seven months of 1993. While many of these deaths appear to have occurred in armed clashes, some may have been the result of excessive use of lethal force and some of those killed appear to have been extrajudicially executed after being captured or incapacitated.

AI has frequently expressed its concern about alleged unlawful killings by the security forces and has urged the Algerian authorities to investigate each case and to make the findings public.

During the same period, the targeting and deliberate killing of civilians by armed Islamic groups spiralled, with at least 75 civilians being killed.

The dead included members of the judiciary and of government-appointed bodies, journalists and intellectuals known for their secularist views. Over 70 policemen and members of the security forces have also been killed in attacks.

No Islamic armed group has yet claimed responsibility for any individual killings, but representatives abroad of some of the groups -- including the banned Islamic Salvation Front -- have issued statements encouraging such attacks against civilians.

AI condemns all deliberate killings of civilians by opposition groups, just as it condemns extrajudicial executions by government forces, and calls for such arbitrary killings to cease.

SOUTH AFRICA

In a rare move, the Attorney General for the Witwatersrand, South Africa, announced in July that he intends to charge a police lieutenant with the murder of Bethuel Maphumulo, who was killed in custody in 1990.

The case, which was referred to the Attorney General by a magistrate's court in March, will be heard by the Supreme Court. The lieutenant was suspended from duty following the magistrate's ruling.

The decision to prosecute came in the wake of a campaign by the Maphumulo family, lawyers and human rights activists, who had struggled for more than two years to convince the authorities to bring charges against the police officer accused of responsibility for the killing.

The South African authorities seldom suspend, bring charges against or prosecute police officers suspected of torturing or killing detainees in custody, despite frequent allegations of such abuses.

BOLIVIA

After a seven-year trial, Bolivia's former president, General Luis Garcia Meza, and 40 people who "collaborated" with his military government -- including former ministers and paramilitary personnel -- were convicted of charges including genocide and assassination of political opponents during the early 1980s. They were sentenced in April to prison terms of up to 30 years.

At the conclusion of the massive Responsibilities Trial, *Juicio de Responsabilidades*, in Sucre on 21 April, the Bolivian Supreme Court sentenced former President Garcia Meza and former Minister of Interior Luis Arce Gómez *in absentia* to 30 years' imprisonment -- the maximum allowed under Bolivian law -- with no possibility of pardon or parole.

Luis Garcia Meza absconded from justice in 1989 and has since been in hiding. Also in 1989 former Minister of Interior Luis Arce Gómez was handed over to the United States authorities. In its verdict the Bolivian Supreme Court said that it is up to the government to request his extradition from the USA, where he is serving a sentence for drug trafficking.

To date, only 10 of the convicted are serving their sentences. Many of the others were never detained and their whereabouts are not known.

Members of government-sponsored paramilitary groups -- convicted of participating in raids where trade unionists and political opponents were killed -- received prison sentences ranging between 20 and 30 years. Some former ministers of General Garcia's government were sentenced to at least two years' imprisonment for subverting the constitution; some were given additional sentences for economic crimes.

Charges against the accused included armed uprising, assassination of political opponents, genocide, organization of irregular armed groups and misappropriation of public funds. AI's concern in the trial was related to the human rights violations that took place during the military government between July 1980 and August 1981.

AI's delegate, Uruguayan jurist Dr Edgardo Carvalho, observed the trial's concluding session, where a particularly significant Supreme Court ruling emerged. The Court rejected the defence of "due obedience" (*obediencia debida*), which had been advanced by some of

the defendants, ruling that no obedience is due to orders that contradict the country's Constitution.

FRANCE

A man of Franco-Algerian parentage -- partially disabled after being arrested and ill-treated by French police in 1992 -- was hospitalized following an incident in a French police station in May 1993.

Jacques Cherigui visited Argenteuil police station on 26 May to deposit a copy of his appeal to the court against a conviction for insulting the police and resisting arrest in June 1992.

When the police refused Cherigui permission to see the inspector in charge of the case, he went to climb the stairs -- only to be seized by his right arm and thrown down the steps to the floor. He slid headfirst into a glass door three metres away, receiving a serious head-wound and being knocked unconscious.

Cherigui was then taken in handcuffs to hospital for emergency treatment. After being detained for 25 hours, he was released and charged with verbally insulting the police.

In June 1992, Cherigui had been arrested in his flat for no apparent reason and reportedly handcuffed and thrown down four flights of stairs. In the van taking him to the police station he was nearly asphyxiated by an officer sitting on his neck, forcing him to bend over double. Officers repeatedly made racial insults and punched Cherigui in the stomach.

Following 19 hours in custody Cherigui was released and charged with resisting arrest and insulting the police. He sought medical treatment for injuries which included cuts and bruises to his arms, legs, trunk and neck. The nerves in his right hand were permanently damaged by the tight handcuffs and he has been officially classified as partially disabled.

Later that month, Cherigui made two complaints of ill-treatment to the court in Pontoise. Although AI was assured by the court that they would be investigated, Cherigui was never interviewed, and in April the Public Prosecutor decided to take no further action on the complaints. Cherigui was tried on 17 May 1993 without a lawyer present and sentenced to one month's imprisonment for insulting the police and resisting arrest.

INDONESIA/EAST TIMOR

Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos: a bank employee living in Kupang, West Timor, was arrested on 3 September 1992. He subsequently "disappeared" and his family fear he has been killed.

Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos was one of dozens of East Timorese political activists arrested in August and September 1992. These arrests followed the detention on 19 August of another political activist -- Agostinho Pereira -- who had documents and personal papers seized at the time of his arrest and who may have been tortured to reveal the names of other political activists.

Agostinho Pereira was one of ten activists who left East Timor in the first half of 1992 to escape military harassment and persecution following the 1991 massacre in Dili, when troops fired on peaceful demonstrators, killing at least 100 -- and possibly as many as 250 -- unarmed people. Some of the ten are understood to have stayed in Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos' house while they were in hiding in Kupang, West Timor. Seven of them sought protection in the Finnish and Swedish embassies in Jakarta on 23 June 1993. The military raided Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos' house just hours after Agostinho Pereira's arrest, but he managed to evade arrest. Two weeks later, however, he was picked up and is understood to have been held incommunicado in Colmera Prison, Dili. Some of those arrested in August and September, including Gaspar's brother, were tortured while in unacknowledged detention and Gaspar may also have been tortured. He has since "disappeared" and his family fear he has been killed.

Please appeal for the immediate clarification of the fate or whereabouts of Gaspar Luis Xavier Carlos to: President Suharto, Istana Negara, Jakarta, Indonesia

JORDAN

INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

At least two members of the Liberation Party in Jordan (LPJ) were arrested and detained incommunicado by the General Intelligence Department (GID) in May.

'Ata Abu al-Rushtah, Official Spokesperson of the LPJ, and Bakr Salem al-Khawaldah, President of the party's Cultural Committee, were arrested on 20 May 1993 on suspicion of conspiring to change the Jordanian Constitution by illegal means, a capital offence. As of mid-July, requests by relatives and one lawyer to visit them had not been granted.

The LPJ aims at establishing an Islamic state including Jordan and all other Muslim countries. It has not applied for official registration, as required by the Law on Political Parties adopted in October 1992, as it opposes Jordan's constitution. However, the LPJ does not use or advocate violence, as acknowledged by the State Security Court in a previous case against Bakr al-Khawaldah and others in 1992.

AI believes that these detainees may be held solely for their non-violent political activities. If this is the case, they should be released immediately and unconditionally.

EL SALVADOR

WAITING FOR JUSTICE

In March a report by the United Nations-appointed Truth Commission confirmed what Salvadorian human rights groups and relatives of victims had long struggled to bring to light -- between 1980 and 1992, government forces systematically killed and "disappeared" tens of thousands of civilians as part of a strategy to eliminate the armed opposition.

From the murder of Archbishop Romero in 1980 to the killing of six Jesuit priests in 1989, from the 1981 massacre of refugees fleeing across the river Sumpul to the 1989 bombing of a trade union office, government forces committed brutal atrocities on a massive scale and with almost total impunity.

The Commission also documented a much smaller number of abuses by the opposition FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional).

Although the long-suppressed truth has begun to emerge, Salvadorians are still waiting for justice. In the six months since the report appeared, the government has been slow to implement the Truth Commission's recommendations and swift to protect those responsible for human rights violations. An amnesty law approved just days after the report's publication shields from prosecution those on either side who carried out human rights crimes before 1992, denying the victims and relatives their right to justice.

The law also lays a dangerous foundation for the future. Within the framework of impunity left intact by the law, serious violations continue. The abduction and torture of left-wing politician Gregorio Mejía Espinoza in May, and the mutilated corpses which are still dumped in public places, suggest that "death-squads" remain in operation. Yet the authorities have failed to take effective steps to investigate and there are fears that the run up to the March 1994 elections will see a resurgence of political violence.

The government has argued that the amnesty law is necessary for national reconciliation -- but real reconciliation, and guarantees for human rights in the future, can only come about when those responsible are held to account for the horrors of the past.

"If we have a judicial system that promotes impunity through an amnesty and obstructs real investigations..." says human rights activist Celia Medrano, "we are only postponing an increase in human rights violations. What guarantee do we have that it will not happen again?"

SUDAN

Parmena Chot Arou, a 55-year-old clerk living in Sudan's capital city Khartoum, "disappeared" after his arrest in December 1991. The authorities claim he has been released, but his family fear that he is either still in detention or was killed by the security men who arrested him.

Parmena Chot Arou, a Dinka from southern Sudan, is married and has five children. He had been living and working in Khartoum for more than 30 years, and had never been active in politics. His peaceful existence was shattered on 19 December 1991, when armed security men arrested him at his workplace in Khartoum North and took him to his home in the Doro Shaab suburb of Khartoum. The men searched the house, apparently looking for documents, but found nothing. They put Parmena Chot Arou back into the car and drove away; his family has not seen or heard from him since.

In March 1992, after his family and lawyers had repeatedly tried to discover where he was being held and get access to him, the security authorities announced that Parmena Chot Arou had been released just 12 days after his arrest. They were unable to explain where he was or why he had not contacted his family.

The reasons for Parmena Chot Arou's arrest are not known. However, the authorities in Khartoum have sometimes targeted southerners because they suspect them of being underground supporters of the armed opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army, which is engaged in a fierce armed conflict against the government and controls much of southern Sudan. Yet Parmena Chot Arou was not involved in any political activity and had not even returned to his home area in the south of the country since he came to Khartoum as the age of 19.

His family have petitioned the security authorities and the Chief Justice to produce him, but the authorities have failed to account for him.

Please send appeals calling for the authorities to account for Parmena Chot Arou and to investigate his arrest and subsequent "disappearance" to: Lieutenant General Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir/Chairman of the National Salvation Revolutionary Command Council/PO Box 281/Khartoum/Sudan.

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The United Nations World Conference on Human Rights -- attended by some 180 official government delegations -- was also the occasion for the largest-ever gathering of human rights organizations from around the world. And it was these organizations who really stole the show in Vienna.

Over 1,500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from every region of the world attended a three-day NGO Forum and the World Conference itself, bringing enthusiasm, colour and warmth to an otherwise lacklustre stage -- and proving themselves far more outspoken in the defence of human rights than the many government delegates.

When the Dalai Lama was banned from addressing the conference after pressure from the Chinese Government, he was invited to speak by the NGOs and received a rapturous welcome at the AI centre just outside the official event.

And when representatives of the military junta in Myanmar (Burma) took the platform in the main conference hall, activists from AI and Asian-Pacific NGOs donned masks bearing the face of the imprisoned Burmese leader and Nobel peace prize-winner, Aung San Suu Kyi. One of the UN security guards asked the protestors for a mask -- it was the most exciting thing to have happened inside the main hall, he complained wearily.

The hard work of AI's Austrian Section meant that the organization had an extremely high profile at the conference centre and throughout the city. Delegates approaching the Austria Centre for the first time could have been forgiven for thinking they had taken a wrong turning somewhere. Five billboards greeted visitors on the approach to the centre, and every one of them bore the words "Our World, Our Rights; Amnesty International".

AI posters were displayed all over Vienna, and there were even AI magazines to read in the city's underground trains.

Events staged in Vienna by AI sections were both popular and successful. For the opening day of the conference, hundreds of AI volunteers worked through the night, piecing together the world's biggest postcard collage in the Stephansplatz, Vienna's historic city centre square.

The results were impressive: a quarter of a million hexagon-shaped postcards featuring the faces of people from around the world, each signed by an individual as a demand that the governments at the conference take action to protect the human rights of everyone, everywhere.

Members of the public and the international press were present at the event to hear AI Secretary General Pierre Sané -- standing in the centre of the vast patchwork -- give a passionate speech demanding that governments take real action on human rights. The event had been developed and produced by AI's Danish Section, with over 50 sections taking part in the campaign.

Nearby, in a busy city centre street, more AI volunteers were running an "urgent action" network organized by the German Section. Over the next two weeks, more than 30,000 appeals -- all signed by people on the streets of Vienna -- were sent to 25 governments on behalf of people in imminent danger of torture, death, "disappearance" and unjust imprisonment.

At least two of the people whose cases were taken up were released, and others reportedly received medical treatment. Two embassies contacted AI, pleading with them to stop sending so many faxes, as the appeals were jamming their machines.

AI was present in force at a human rights march mid-way through the conference, with some 400 volunteers carrying silhouettes designed by the British Section, each representing one of the "disappeared".

As Pierre Sané commented after the conference: "We have to look beyond Vienna and work more forcefully for the emergence of a strong global human rights movement that will constitute one of the major guarantees of human rights protection and promotion in the future. The seeds of such a movement were planted in Vienna."

SUDAN

In April one of the rival factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) massacred about 200 Nuer villagers, many of them women or children, around the town of Ayod. Some of the victims were shut in huts and burned to death, others were shot.

The SPLA has been in effective control of much of southern Sudan for many years, in defiance of the Sudanese Government. Following increasing conflict within the organization, the SPLA split in two in August 1991, largely dividing along ethnic lines. Immediately after the split, Nuer troops loyal to the dissident Nasir group leadership stormed through Dinka villages in the home area of John Garang de Mabior, the leader of the main SPLA faction now known as the Torit group. As many as 2,000 unarmed civilians may have been deliberately killed.

The massacre in April, carried out by Torit forces, appears to have been in revenge for these 1991 killings. The Torit forces attacked a meeting between the Nasir faction and a third breakaway SPLA force. As the Nasir leadership fled northwards, the Torit forces followed, moving through Nuer villages near Ayod and slaughtering anyone they found.

In Pagau, 32 women were lined up and each shot once in the head. Eyewitnesses reported that 18 children were locked in a hut and deliberately burned to death; three children who attempted to flee were shot dead. In Paiyoi, 36 women were reportedly burned to death in a cattle byre and nine others were clubbed to death. About 100 people were slaughtered at Pathal.

AI condemns these deliberate and arbitrary killings by factions of the SPLA and is urging them at all times to observe fully the principles of humanitarian law applicable to cases of internal armed conflict, and to ensure that no deliberate and arbitrary killings or other grave abuses take place.

TADZHIKISTAN

Mirzonazar Imomnazarov, a 42-year-old architect, "disappeared" in December 1992 after being detained by armed men believed to be agents of the People's Front, a paramilitary group linked to the government.

On the afternoon of 14 December Mirzonazar Imomnazarov was returning home from work with two colleagues when their car was stopped on a street in Dushanbe, the capital, by armed men believed to be People's Front agents. The men identified Mirzonazar Imomnazarov as a Pamiri, from the Gorno-Badakhshan region of east Tadjikistan, and arrested him.

Mirzonazar Imomnazarov's colleagues -- one an ethnic Uzbek, the other a Tadjik from the southern Kulyab region -- were allowed to go free. Witnesses saw Mirzonazar Imomnazarov's captors taking him in the direction of Regar, west of Dushanbe. There has been no news of him since.

Mirzonazar Imomnazarov is among scores of people who were reportedly "disappeared" or extrajudicially executed in Dushanbe after government forces seized the city from forces supporting an opposition coalition on 10 December 1992, at the height of Tadjikistan's civil war.

The People's Front had played a leading role in the assault on Dushanbe. In the following weeks, People's Front agents conducted identity checks on the streets and at the airport, and carried out house-to-house searches. They reportedly targeted for arrest or summary execution people found to be from regions of Tadjikistan identified with the opposition, including Gorno-Badakhshan.

The Government of Tadjikistan denies any involvement of forces subordinate to it in extrajudicial executions and "disappearances", and blames criminal gangs.

Please send appeals urging the government to take immediate steps to clarify the fate of Mirzonazar Imomnazarov, and to bring those responsible for his "disappearance" to justice, to: Imamali Rakhmonov, Chairman of the Supreme Council, Dushanbe, Tadjikistan (mark your envelopes "Former USSR" in the language of your national postal authority to make delivery easier).

THAILAND

AI has called on the Thai government to step up its efforts to find at least 20 people still missing over a year after the military's violent crackdown in May 1992 on pro-democracy demonstrators in Bangkok. At least 52 other demonstrators were killed by Thai security forces and some 700 others were injured.

The Thai military has not fully cooperated in efforts by local human rights organizations to locate these people who have not been seen since they attended mass demonstrations protesting the appointment of a non-elected Prime Minister, General Suchinda Khraprayun.

On 24 May 1992 General Suchinda resigned, but shortly beforehand he issued a sweeping amnesty decree which granted immunity to armed forces deployed during the unrest. AI remains concerned that the decree is being used to prevent prosecutions of those responsible for human rights violations during the May 1992 demonstrations.

TURKEY

Falaka (beating of the soles of the feet) and severe frostbite resulted in amputation of the toes or feet of at least four villagers from Ormaniçi in southeast Turkey in February this year.

The male detainees -- accused of firing on government troops and killing one of them during a security raid on Ormaniçi -- were held by local police for 12 days in sub-zero temperatures without shoes or adequate clothing. The villagers also alleged that they had been tortured with electric shocks and raped with truncheons and bottles, and had been forced to eat excrement and drink urine and petrol.

A AI new report on Turkey -- Escalation in human rights abuses against Kurdish villagers (AI Index: EUR 44/64/93) -- describes

how villagers caught up in the conflict between Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) guerrillas and government forces are frequently exposed to brutal treatment by the security forces. It also documents the increasing number of alleged PKK killings of prisoners and civilians, in clear breach of humanitarian law.

United Kingdom: Northern Ireland

AI is concerned that those accused of security offences in Northern Ireland can be tried under unfair procedures. Cases are heard in one-judge, juryless courts (known as "Diplock Courts"), where reduced standards apply for admissibility of evidence and inferences of guilt can be drawn against those who remain silent during interrogation or trial. Those detained under emergency legislation can be denied access to lawyers for multiple 48-hour periods, and are always denied access to lawyers during interrogation.

Five young men, known as the "Beechmount Five", were brought to trial before a "Diplock Court" in May 1993. They were charged with murdering a police officer, whose killing in 1991 had been attributed to the Irish Republican Army. They alleged that they were ill-treated during a period of incommunicado detention, and forced to sign false "confessions", which formed the sole evidence against them. The five had been held in custody for over two years.

On 5 July the court acquitted one of the accused of all charges, after hearing evidence on the admissibility of the "confession". That same day, murder charges were dropped against the remaining four. Following a deal struck with the prosecution, which resulted in their immediate release, the four pleaded guilty to new, lesser charges of "communicating information likely to be of help to terrorists".

In another series of trials held between January 1989 and December 1992, 41 people were prosecuted in "Diplock Courts" in connection with the shooting of two soldiers, after they drove a car into the Casement Park area of West Belfast during a Republican funeral in 1988 and were attacked by an angry crowd. In eight group trials, 21 people have been convicted on charges including false imprisonment and grievous bodily harm; five of them are serving life sentences for murder, although none of them were alleged to have carried out the fatal shootings.

AI believes that many of the Casement Park trials were unfair*: the defendants were denied prompt access to lawyers and were not allowed to have lawyers present during interrogation; prosecution and defence had unequal access to evidence and experts; and the prosecution's case rested mainly on contested confession evidence. The doctrine of "common purpose", which requires proof that the defendants had been involved in a plan to commit the murders, was applied broadly and inconsistently. In May 1993 AI wrote to the United Kingdom Government, urging them to initiate an independent inquiry into the events leading up to the murders of the soldiers and to review the cases of all those convicted. By the end of June, AI had received no response.

*See: UNITED KINGDOM/Northern Ireland: fair trial concerns in Casement Park trials (AI Index: EUR 45/07/93)

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Focus

AI concerns in the former USSR

By 1989 cracks had begun to appear in the once formidable edifice of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The massive Soviet state, which stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean and for 5,000 kilometres from north to south, contained nearly 300 million people from more than 100 ethnic groups. The union consisted of 15 republics, which contained 20 autonomous republics and eight autonomous regions, constituted mainly around titular ethnic groups.

The wave of revolutions in Eastern Europe encouraged the union republics to seek greater autonomy, and by the end of 1990, all of the USSR's 15 constituent republics had passed declarations of sovereignty or independence.

The backlash came on 19 August 1991, when conservative political forces sent tanks onto the streets of Moscow and other major cities and announced that President Mikhail Gorbachov had effectively been deposed.

The attempted coup crumbled in just three days. The military and state security forces were clearly reluctant to back the takeover, especially in the face of the popular resistance movement, which showed itself willing to fight for political freedoms. President Gorbachov resigned on 24 August as the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and its activity was suspended.

The failure of the coup accelerated the trend towards regional autonomy. In September 1991 the USSR recognized the independence of the Baltic States -- Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. In December, all but one of the remaining republics agreed to form a Confederation of Independent States (CIS), declaring that the USSR no longer existed.

But in many of the new republics, ethnic tensions once barely contained by the state apparatus have since exploded into armed conflict. As regional affiliations become more and more apparent, the map of the former USSR has continued to fragment -- and continuing ethnic conflict means that the lines may not yet be firmly drawn.

The death penalty has yet to be abolished in any of the new republics. Few have finalised a constitution or legal code; most are still operating, with some amendments, under the laws of the former USSR.

AI concerns in the region have been dominated by human rights abuses committed in the context of the ethnic conflicts wracking Azerbaydzhan, Georgia, Tadzhikistan and Uzbekistan. The following summary focuses on the human rights issues thrown up by these conflicts.

AZERBAYDZHAN

The Republic of Azerbaydzhan is in Transcaucasia, situated between Iran and Russia on the Caspian Sea. Most of the country's seven million people are Turkic-speaking Muslims, although ethnic Armenians constitute a majority in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. Since 1988 intercommunal violence in this breakaway territory has escalated into a war that has claimed thousands of lives, many of them civilian.

All sides have been accused of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial executions and other deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians; the ill-treatment or torture (including rape) of both non-combatants and combatants; and hostage taking, which is expressly forbidden by the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The administrative unit known as the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region was formed in Azerbaydzhan in 1923, and is separated from Armenia to the west by a six-mile land strip. Intercommunal violence broke out between the ethnic Armenian and Azerbaydzhani populations of the region following demonstrations at the beginning of 1988 calling for the area to be incorporated into Armenia.

Direct rule from Moscow, imposed from January to November 1989, failed to stop the conflict from escalating and in September 1991 councils in the region

declared the formation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR). The Azerbaydzhani government retaliated by dissolving the region's autonomous status. On 6 January 1992, the self-proclaimed NKR declared independence from Azerbaydzhani, but it has not been recognized internationally.

USSR troops were withdrawn after the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaving ethnic Armenian paramilitary units under the control of the NKR parliament in direct conflict with the Azerbaydzhani army. Following recent fighting the ethnic Armenian authorities now have de facto control over most areas of Karabakh, including the capital, Stepanakert. Refugees from both sides are said to number hundreds of thousands. Casualty reports vary; in late 1992 the Azerbaydzhani Interior Minister put the death toll at 3,000 ethnic Armenians and 4,700 Azerbaydzhanis.

Hostage taking

It has been widely reported that both the ethnic Armenians and the ethnic Azerbaydzhanis have been taking hostages, many of them women and children. Some hostages have been taken by the military, others have been held by private families. The hostages are exchanged for family or friends held by the opposition, or are bartered for food or petrol. The exact number of hostages is impossible to determine, but groups in both Armenia and Azerbaydzhani have lists of hundreds of people who are missing or known to be held hostage.

Lev Avakov-Leonov, an 85-year-old ethnic Armenian, was abducted in Baku on the afternoon of 21 March 1992, when three men and a woman smashed through the balcony of his home. They forced the elderly man out of his bed and started to drag him away, reportedly beating his wife as she tried to resist.

More than a year after his kidnapping, unofficial sources say Lev Avakov-Leonov has not been exchanged or otherwise located. Faced with increasing threats to their safety, his family left Azerbaydzhani in June 1992.

The position of ethnic Armenians living in Azerbaydzhani, and that of Azeris in Armenia, has become untenable. The only Armenians currently in the capital, Baku, are said to be those in mixed marriages or those whose names are not recognizably Armenian.

The head of the Azerbaydzhani State Commission on Hostages, Prisoners and Missing Persons, said in March this year that 75 ethnic Armenian residents of Baku were being detained in Azerbaydzhani.

In February 1992, six Azerbaydzhanis – 61-year-old Saltanat Zulal gyzy Mamedova, her two daughters and her three young grandsons – were reportedly detained by ethnic Armenian forces. The family were fleeing from Khodzhal, a town in the Karabakh area populated mainly by Azerbaydzhanis which had fallen to ethnic Armenian forces. About 300 people are said to have been died in the fighting there, many of them unarmed civilians killed by Armenian forces while attempting to flee. On 25 February 1993, the Procurator General of Azerbaydzhani said that 30 people were still being held hostage.

Hostages are seldom allowed to contact friends or relatives, and their safety can be gravely undermined by the illegal and secret nature of their detention. Those holding them are free to act with impunity, and there are numerous reports of hostages from both sides being ill-treated while in detention.

Ill-treatment, torture and extrajudicial killings have also been widely reported. Azeri civilians trying to escape from Khodzhal claim they were ill-treated by Armenian forces while being held hostage in early 1992: Durdana Agayeva said she and other women had been beaten when held in a cell with some 30 other women in a police station in the town of Askeran; Gulaya Orudzheva

reported that while she was held she saw two young Azeri men shot in cold blood, other prisoners beaten, and one woman raped.

Ethnic Armenian Eleanor Grigoryan, released in March 1992, said she had been held for one month with her four-year-old son Dmitry, and was passed around to various Azerbaydzhani military units where she was repeatedly raped. Her small son was also subjected to ill-treatment, including cigarette burns on his hand.

Other non-combatants civilians have been deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Shortly after the alleged massacre of Azeris at Khodzhal, ethnic Armenians from Maraga in the north-east of Karabakh reported that Azerbaydzhani troops entered the village in April 1992, killing at least 45 non-combatant inhabitants. The bodies are said to have been mutilated, and survivors were taken away as hostages. Such incidents are only made known to the outside world when foreign observers are present, and many similar attacks probably go unreported and unverified due to inaccessibility and the combat situation. But the evidence available so far indicates a frightening pattern of ferocity against a helpless civilian population.

GEORGIA

The Republic of Georgia is in Transcaucasia, bordering Russia, Azerbaydzhani, Armenia and Turkey. About 70% of the 5.4 million population is ethnic Georgian. Current political tensions within the republic have been exacerbated by ethnic conflict in Abkhazia, an autonomous republic situated in the north-west of Georgia.

The Abkhaz, a Caucasian people ethnically distinct from Georgians, are currently a minority in their republic (according to the 1989 census they constituted 17.8% of the population, with Georgians making up 45.7%). Tension has long existed between sections of the Abkhazian population who have been seeking greater autonomy, and the Georgian Government, which has sought to preserve the country's territorial integrity. Various measures taken over the years have exacerbated each side's perception that they have been discriminated against by the other.

The current phase of armed conflict broke out in August 1992, when Georgian troops entered Abkhazia and took control of the capital, Sukhumi. Officials explained that the troops had been sent to combat looting and sabotage along the railway line and to search for the kidnapped Interior Minister. The Abkhazian leadership regarded the incursion as an invasion and moved their operations to Gudauta, a city under their control further north.

Fighting continued sporadically over the next 10 months, claiming hundreds of lives on both sides. In July, after fighting around Sukhumi escalated, the Georgian Government declared a two-month period of martial law.

During the first few months of the conflict Georgian forces reportedly detained scores of non-combatant civilians, sometimes holding them as hostages, solely on grounds of their non-Georgian ethnic origin. Many non-Georgians allege that armed Georgian troops entered their homes, or those of their neighbours, and robbed, beat and took away many of the occupants. Many were held for short periods then released. Others are believed still to be imprisoned, or to have "disappeared".

One Abkhazian, Garri Pilia, was reportedly detained by Georgian troops and kept as a hostage because he is related to a member of the Abkhazian parliament in Gudauta. At least one other person was said to have been detained on similar grounds. Garri Pilia's current whereabouts are unknown, and the fate of at least five ethnics Abkhazians detained by Georgian forces in Sukhumi in October 1992 remains unclear.

Georgian army troops, the National Guard and a paramilitary group known as "Mkhedrioni" ("Horsemen") have also been accused of torture and ill-treatment, including rape, and of carrying out extrajudicial executions. To AI's knowledge, none of the alleged perpetrators of torture, beatings and killings during the Abkhazian conflict has yet been brought to justice.

One ethnic Abkhazian from Sukhumi said he was one of a group of about 35 people detained by Georgian troops in August 1992. One of the group, he alleges, was shot dead simply for insisting that he lived in "the Republic of Abkhazia".

In September 1992 L.I. Topuridze, a sanitary inspector with the Abkhazian home guard, was said to have been captured, tortured and raped by Georgian troops. She died the following day in a hospital in Sukhumi. A forensic report reportedly found that she had been shot several times, and had suffered fractured bones and

injuries to her spinal cord and vagina.

Forces under Abkhazian control have also been accused of torture and extrajudicial executions, and AI is seeking further verification of these reports.

The death penalty

The current status of the death penalty in Georgia is unclear. The then Minister of Justice said it was abolished totally in February 1992. However, unofficial sources maintained that abolition was not complete, and on 17 March 1993 the Georgian parliament adopted a law on mercenaries which carries a possible death sentence. The current Minister of Justice, Konstantin Kemulariya, told AI in April that the death penalty had been abolished for many offences, but did not specify which crimes remained capital.

And executions continue: four men were reportedly executed in April in Georgian-controlled Dranda prison for attempting to seize a plane at Sukhumi airport.

Forces loyal to the Abkhazian authorities in Gudauta have also been responsible for carrying out executions. At least 12 people accused of looting in Gagra in early October 1992 were shot by units under the control of the Abkhazian military commandant.

TADZHIKISTAN

Under Soviet rule Tadzhikistan was the poorest and most economically underdeveloped republic, with high unemployment, housing shortages and a history of explosive ethnic tensions.

From May to December 1992, the country was torn apart by a bloody civil war between forces divided along both political and regional lines. The conflict claimed the lives of up to 20,000 people and displaced more than half a million others. Sporadic fighting between government forces and Islamic opposition groups continues, particularly along the Afghan border.

The conflict culminated in December 1992 when government forces retook the capital Dushanbe from forces loyal to an opposition coalition. In the following weeks, hundreds of unarmed civilians, predominantly people from the Pamir and Garm regions, where opposition to the government is strong, are believed to have been extrajudicially executed, or "disappeared" after being taken into custody. The killings and "disappearances" were allegedly the work of the Interior Ministry and the People's Front of Tadzhikistan, a paramilitary group which led the assault on the capital and was then given law enforcement duties.

Last December, for instance, uniformed soldiers from the Ministry of Internal Affairs reportedly boarded public buses in Dushanbe to carry out identity checks. About 20 Garmis and Pamiris were taken off and shot dead on the spot. Many people detained at the airport or in their homes were later found dead in the streets or at the city morgue. Others simply "disappeared".

On 27 January men believed to be agents of the People's Front burst into the home of the Rizvonov family in Dushanbe and shot dead 11 people, including an 80-year-old woman and a four-year-old child. On the following day armed People's Front agents arrested three brothers from the Khaydashoyev family at their Dushanbe apartment. The three men were severely beaten with rifle butts, thrown into the back of a car and then taken to the city outskirts. There, on the banks of the Dushanbinka river, they were lined up and shot in cold blood. Two of them were killed; the youngest, who had been shot only in the legs, fell beneath his brothers, and was left for dead. After the soldiers left, he dragged himself to nearby apartments and contacted his family.

Statements by government officials indicated that the security forces had been authorized to carry out summary executions. In February People's Front leader Sangak Safarov told journalists that armed formations of the People's Front had orders to shoot "looters and marauders" on sight.

Following the publication in May of an AI report outlining these abuses in Tadzhikistan, the Interior Ministry denounced AI, claiming that the organization's main activity was "the publication and dissemination of slanderous material." The Ministry blamed the previous government for carrying out political persecutions, and accused AI of "shedding crocodile tears" for those who had been imprisoned and beaten, adding "prisons are for keeping criminals, and not sanatoria for improving health".

UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan, a predominantly Muslim republic, is in Central Asia, bordering Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is a major cotton producer, but the country is forced to import most of its grain and other foodstuffs because cotton has stripped the soil of nutrients necessary to support other crops. Uzbekistan's population of 20.3 million is around 69 per cent Uzbek and 10 per cent Russian, and there are also sizeable Tatar, Kazakh, Tadzhik and Meskhetian Turkish minorities.

Uzbekistan adopted in December 1992 its first post-independence constitution, enshrining commitments to multi-party democracy, human rights and the rule of law. However, a clampdown against government opponents has been intensifying since mid-1992. Opposition activists have been detained on charges of calling for the overthrow of the state, prosecuted for slandering the President, or have been convicted of criminal charges which are believed to be fabrications.

In one case, an opposition leader is feared to have "disappeared" since his arrest. Short-term "administrative arrest" continues to be used to punish people for exercising their right to freedom of association. Government opponents and independent journalists have been beaten by unknown assailants on the streets, and the authorities appear to have taken few steps to investigate. The home of a human rights activist has been bombed, that of a well-known journalist burned down in suspicious circumstances. Uzbekistan appears to have returned to patterns of human rights violations reminiscent of the human rights practices of the pre-reform USSR.

[information boxes on individual countries -- population figures are based on 1990 census]

ARMENIA

Population: 3.4 million; mainly ethnic Armenian

Government: President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, elected as a candidate of the Armenian National Movement, the largest party represented in parliament; Communist Party reconstituted in 1992 but factionalized; active opposition parties.

Concerns: death penalty -- no executions reported in 1993

AZERBAYDZHAN

Population: 7.2 million; more than 80 per cent Azeri; the vast majority of the population in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh is ethnically Armenian

Government: Following an armed insurrection in June, President Elchibey left the capital and parliament handed his powers to its chairman, Geydar Aliyev, a former Communist Party member who resigned in 1991; active opposition parties

Concerns: hostage taking; allegations of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions; death penalty -- no judicial executions reported in 1993

BELARUS:

Population: 10.5 million; about 80 per cent Belorussian, with sizable minorities of ethnic Russians, Poles and Ukrainians

Government: Parliamentary chairman Stanislau Shushkevich, who

resigned from the Communist Party in 1991 and has no current party affiliation; parliament dominated by former members of the Communist Party; active opposition parties

Concerns: allegations of ill-treatment; death penalty -- at least 28 executions in 1992, no figures available for 1993

ESTONIA

Population: less than two million; about two-thirds ethnic Estonian and one-third Russian, with small groups of other nationalities

Government: President Lennart Meri, former nationalist activist; opposition parties active

Concerns: death penalty -- no executions reported

GEORGIA

Population: 5.4 million; about 70 per cent ethnic Georgian with Russian, Armenian, Azerbaydzhani and other minorities

Government: Chairman of Parliament, Eduard Shevardnadze, no current party affiliation; various parties active in parliamentary coalitions

Concerns: hostage-taking; possible prisoners of conscience; allegations of torture and extrajudicial executions; death penalty -- four executions reported so far in 1993

KAZAKHSTAN

Population: 17 million; 42 per cent Kazakh -- ethnically Turkic, traditionally Sunni Muslim and nomadic -- and 38 per cent Russian with numerous other minorities

Government: President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Socialist Party (the former Communist Party); multi-party system emerging and enshrined in new constitution

Concerns: death penalty -- AI knows of six executions in 1992, the true number is probably much higher

KYRGYZSTAN

Population: 4.5 million; about 52 per cent Kyrgyz -- ethnically Turkic, traditionally Sunni Muslim and nomadic -- with sizable minorities of ethnic Russians and Uzbeks

Government: President Askar Akayev, no party affiliation; multi-party system emerging and enshrined in new constitution

Concerns: death penalty -- one execution reported in 1992

LATVIA

Population: 2.7 million; 52 per cent Latvian and 34 per cent Russian, with other small minority groups

Government: President Anatolijis Gorbunovs, Nationalist Popular Front; Communist party reformed in 1992; opposition groups active

Concerns: death penalty -- two executions in 1992

LITHUANIA

Population: three million; about 80 per cent Lithuanian, with Russian and Polish minorities

Government: President Algirdas Brazauskas, leader of the ruling Democratic Labour Party (the former Communist Party); opposition parties active

Concerns: death penalty -- one execution in 1992

MOLDOVA

Population: 4.3 million; 64 per cent Moldovan (ethnically Romanian); large minorities of Ukrainians and Russians are concentrated in the east of the country where they have declared their own republic; the Gagauz, a Christianized, ethnic Turkic minority in the south, have also proclaimed their own republic
Government: President Mircea Snegur, former Communist Party member with no current political affiliation; various parties active in parliamentary coalitions

Concerns: fair trial; death penalty -- no judicial executions reported in 1993

RUSSIA

Population: 147 million; around 83 per cent Russian, the remainder consisting of more than 100 ethnic minorities

Government: President Boris Yeltsin, no party affiliation; various parties active in parliamentary coalitions

Concerns: death penalty -- 18 executions reported in 1992, no figures available for 1993

TADZHIKISTAN

Population: 5.1 million; 60 per cent Tadjik, 23 per cent Uzbek and 10 per cent Russian. The Tadjik and Uzbek populations are predominantly Sunni Moslem, although the Pamiri people of eastern Tadjikistan are Ismaili Shi`as

Government: Parliamentary chairman Imamali Rakhmonov, former Communist Party leader, no current party affiliation; Communist Party restored in January 1992; four leading opposition parties and movements banned in June 1993 following civil war

Concerns: possible prisoners of conscience; torture and ill-treatment; "disappearances"; extrajudicial executions; the death penalty -- no judicial executions reported

TURKMENISTAN

Population: 3.5 million; 72 per cent Turkmen -- an ethnically Turkic group, traditionally Sunni Muslim -- with Russian and Uzbek minorities

Government: President Saparmurad Niyazov, leader of the Democratic Party (the re-named Communist Party); opposition parties are prevented from organizing

Concerns: short-term house arrests of opposition activists; death penalty -- four executions reported in 1992 and one in 1993, the true number is probably higher

UKRAINE

Population: 52 million; 73 per cent Ukrainian and 22 per cent Russian

Government: President Leonid Kravchuk, former Communist Party member, no current political affiliation; parliament, dominated by former Communist Party members elected in 1990, voted in May to allow Communist Party to resume its activity; active opposition parties

Concerns: death penalty -- Ukraine refuses to publish statistics

on sentences and executions

UZBEKISTAN

Population: 20.3 million; 69 per cent Uzbek -- ethnically Turkic, traditionally Sunni Muslim; 10 per cent Russian; other sizeable minorities

Government: President Islam Karimov, leader of the People's Democratic Party, the former Communist Party; opposition parties harassed or prevented from registering despite commitment to multi-party democracy in constitution adopted in December 1992

Concerns: Prisoners of conscience; ill-treatment; "disappearances"; death penalty -- no executions reported