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UN checks urged to help prisoners of conscience

The United Nations has been urged to check on how member states have observed UN calls for the release of certain categories of prisoners, including prisoners of conscience.

In an oral intervention to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in Geneva on 31 August 1981, *AI* said there was a need to follow up such UN calls by creating procedures to gather information on the relevant categories of prisoners, and in particular prisoners of conscience.

AI stressed that it was not asking the UN to support the convictions or activities of prisoners of conscience. But in accordance with the standards and principles it had proclaimed, the UN had a responsibility to ensure that individuals were not prosecuted for peacefully expressing their convictions. *AI* said it believed that the mere fact of the UN gathering such information would help prisoners of conscience all over the world.

In recent years the UN has been increasingly concerned with such violations of human rights as torture, "disappearance" and political killings. This concern has resulted in a number of important initiatives, such as the drafting of a convention against torture, the establishment of a working group to respond to reports of "disappearances" and the appointment of special rapporteurs to study the human rights situation in particular countries.

However, relatively little attention has been paid to the detention of prisoners of conscience—people imprisoned because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs and who have not used or advocated violence.

The UN General Assembly has in recent years adopted a number of resolutions concerning the protection



Bishop Gong Pinmei, imprisoned in the People's Republic of China since 1955

of the human rights of certain categories of prisoners. These resolutions do not use the term "prisoners of conscience" but the different categories of prisoners referred to would include many prisoners of conscience.

In 1977, the Assembly referred to all people detained or imprisoned as a result of their struggle against colonialism, aggression and foreign occupation, for self-determination, independence, the elimination of *apartheid* and all forms of racial discrimination and racism. The Assembly also drew attention to the fact that in many parts of the world prisoners are detained for offences they have committed, or are suspected of having committed, by reason of their political opinions or convictions. The Assembly called upon member states to examine periodically the possibility of releasing such prisoners.

In 1978 the Assembly asked member states to release prisoners detained because of their trade union activities.

In 1980 the Assembly reiterated its request for the release of all these categories of prisoners.

AI believes that the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience should not be discussed in abstract terms only. Each individual case involves human suffering.

- In Taiwan, WU Yueh-Ming, aged 61, has been imprisoned in Green Island prison for more than 30 years. He is reported to have been charged with "having been handed a communist

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Bangladesh Stay granted to condemned army officers

Twelve army officers condemned to death by a military court for their part in last May's attempted coup in which President Ziaur RAHMAN was assassinated were granted a stay of execution by Bangladesh's Supreme Court on 9 September 1981.

The stay order followed the dismissal two days earlier by the High Court of petitions filed by relatives of the condemned officers against the military court's verdict.

The High Court had ruled that it had no constitutional jurisdiction to hear any writ challenging decisions by military courts.

The Supreme Court decided to hear petitions for special leave to appeal against the High Court's judgment on 17 September 1981.

Acting President Mr Justice Abdus SATTAR had rejected appeals for clemency by the officers' families.

The 12 officers were sentenced to death by the Field General Court Martial in Chittagong on 11 August, after an *in camera* trial without defence lawyers of their own choice.

In a news release on 19 August, *AI* called on the Acting President to spare the officers' lives. It said it was deeply concerned to learn that the death sentences had been passed on them, the more so "as their trial *in camera* without defence lawyers of their choice and without appeal to a court of law fell short of international human rights standards and allowed for the possibility of a miscarriage of justice".

No national or international observers were allowed to attend the trial.

The 12 condemned were among 31 defendants who appeared before the Field General Court Martial.

On 14 August *AI* had cabled the Acting President appealing to him to exercise his prerogative of mercy and commute the death sentences on humanitarian grounds □

Egypt

Over 1,500 arrested in one week

More than 1,500 people were detained during the first week in September 1981 in the biggest wave of arrests since President SADAT came to power in 1970.

According to the Egyptian press, 1,536 people were arrested because they contributed to or participated in events which "threatened national unity or social peace". They include former cabinet ministers, members of the former Wafd Party, the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and the National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP), prominent members of the Coptic and Muslim religious communities, journalists, teachers and lawyers, as well as alleged members of fundamentalist Islamic movements.

Political investigations led by the Socialist Prosecutor General are to be conducted in every case, according to the press, and people detained will have the right to protest against their detention for up to six months after arrest. The investigations are said to be in accordance with provisions contained in the Law on the Protection of Values from Shameful Conduct (Law 95), promulgated in 1980. Charges may follow the investigations.

The detentions appear to be in

accordance with Presidential Decree No. 493 issued on 2 September 1981. At the same time President Sadat issued several other decrees amending laws on political parties and dissolving a number of religious organizations.

Assurances sought

AI wrote to President Sadat on 16 September expressing concern at the arrests and detentions and asking for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience. It also asked for assurances that those detained had been granted access to a lawyer of their own choosing and to members of their families. *AI* urged that information about the detainees, including their place of detention and any charges preferred against them, be made public.

AI has also learned that the trial of 30 people charged with organizing the banned Egyptian Communist Party (see November 1980 *Newsletter*) is scheduled to resume on 3 October before the Supreme State Security Court in Cairo. The defendants, who include prominent lawyers and journalists, are charged under Law 40 of 1977, which provides for a maximum punishment of life imprisonment with hard labour □

Guatemala

'Massacre' by army reported

More than 150 Guatemalan peasants are reported to have been killed during an army attack on the village of Coyá in the department of Huehuetenango on 19 July 1981.

Most of the victims are said to have been women, children and old people. A survivor is reported to have said that after the alleged attack the troops piled up the bodies and hacked them to pieces with machetes.

According to this report, a fighter aircraft and a helicopter took part in the attack, in which machine-guns and grenades were used.

The authorities are reported to have said that the army had discovered and destroyed a "communist" school in Coyá and that 25 "subversives" had been killed.

Another village attacked

In an earlier incident, armed men are reported to have killed villagers and taken others into custody at gunpoint in the small agricultural cooperative village of El Arbolito, Peten, on 17 June 1981.

The intruders are said to have destroyed homes and burned crops. A number of villagers are said to have been summarily executed.

The attackers were said to have identified themselves as members of the *Ejército Secreto Anticomunista*, Secret Anti-communist Army, but survivors said the armed men later changed into army uniform and joined other uniformed soldiers at a temporary military camp about 20 km from the village □

ETHIOPIA

An amnesty for 367 prisoners was announced in Addis Ababa on 5 September 1981; *AI* is seeking details. In late August the authorities released the former Minister of Tourism, HABTE SELASSIE, Tafesse and two other long-term political detainees □

Comoros

Detentions cause concern

An aide memoire has been sent to the Comorian Government detailing *AI*'s concerns in the country and containing recommendations essential to remedy the violations of human rights in Comoros which fall within *AI*'s mandate.

An *AI* mission visited Comoros from 23 to 30 May 1981 at the government's invitation. The delegate, Amand D'HONDT, a lawyer and Vice-President of *AI*'s Belgian Section, met President Ahmed ABDALLAH and other high officials and was allowed to interview a number of prisoners in private in Moroni central prison, El Marouf hospital and Voidjou army camp.

The talks centred on *AI*'s current concerns in Comoros: the prolonged detention without charge or trial of 33 civilian and security officials of the government of President Ali SOILIH, which was overthrown in May 1978; the detention (often short-term) of political opponents on several occasions

since then, most recently in February 1981; unfair trial of political opponents before special courts: ill-treatment of political prisoners and the harsh conditions of their imprisonment.

Thirty-four tried and untried political prisoners, most of them held since May 1978, were released by act of presidential clemency during *AI*'s mission. Eighteen others, also detained since May 1978, including nine who have not been charged or tried, are held in Moroni central prison.

Eleven other prisoners arrested in February 1981 and publicly accused of possessing subversive documents and cassettes are still detained without charge or trial in Voidjou army camp.

AI's aide memoire called for the immediate release of prisoners of conscience, the fair and early trial of all political prisoners, and immediate steps to ensure the humane treatment of political prisoners □

DEATH PENALTY

AI has learned of 482 people being sentenced to death in seven countries and of 466 executions in five countries during August 1981.

Campaign for Prisoners of the Month



Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In no circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

Manda PARIC, Yugoslavia

A former nun aged 36, she is serving a six-year prison sentence for "participation in hostile activity".

During the early 1970s Manda PARIC was a qualified nurse working in an old people's home in Vienna, Austria. She was arrested in July 1976 while visiting her home in Yugoslavia.

According to evidence presented in the District Court of Tuzla, she had, at the request of her brother, a Croatian emigre, distributed in Vienna about 20 copies of a Croatian emigre publication and had participated in a ceremony to commemorate Croatians killed in the Second World War. The court sentenced her to six years' imprisonment on 17 September 1976.

In late 1979 she is reported to have had an operation on her right breast and it is strongly suspected that she was suffering from breast cancer with secondary deposits on her spine. She is reported to have been discharged from hospital and returned to prison in Slavenska Pozega six days after the operation.

Please write courteous letters appealing for her immediate release to:
President of the State Presidency/Mr Sergej KRAIGHER/Predsednik Predsednistva SFRJ/Bul. Lenjina 2/ Belgrade/Yugoslavia.

Zwelakhe SISULU, South Africa

A journalist aged 31, he has been detained without charge and held incommunicado since 20 June 1981. He had earlier been restricted under a three-year banning order, in December 1980.

Zwelakhe SISULU was detained by security police at his home in Soweto in the early hours of 20 June 1981. He was first held under a law permitting 14 days' incommunicado detention and

was then transferred to detention under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, which empowers the security police to detain any person incommunicado for an unlimited period. Under the Act, the security police are not obliged to give any information about any detainee, neither to confirm a detention nor to disclose the place of imprisonment.

No reasons have been given by the authorities for Zwelakhe Sisulu's detention, nor for that of another leading black journalist, Thami MAZWAI, who was detained three days earlier and is also held incommunicado.

At the time of his arrest, Zwelakhe Sisulu was restricted under a three-year banning order imposed by the Minister of Justice, again with no reasons being given, in December 1980. The order placed him under house-arrest at night and throughout most of the weekend and prohibited him from receiving any visitors at home other than his mother, his father-in-law and a doctor. Like all banned people, he is subjected to a range of other restrictions on his freedom of movement, expression and association, and is forbidden contact with other banned people. As banned people may not be quoted and are prohibited from preparing any material for publication, his banning in December 1980 brought an immediate and arbitrary end to his work as a journalist.

Zwelakhe Sisulu was National President of the Media Workers' Association of South Africa (MWASA), a trade union representing black journalists and media workers, at the time of his banning.

He has a wife and young child. His father, Walter SISULU, a leader of the banned African National Congress, is serving a sentence of life imprisonment on Robben Island. His mother, Albertina SISULU, was banned from August 1964 to July 1981.

Please send courteous letters appealing for the release of Zwelakhe Sisulu to: Hon. H.J. Coetsee/Minister of Justice/Union Building/Pretoria/South Africa.

LI Ching-jung, Republic of China (Taiwan)

A journalist who contributed to various opposition publications, he is serving a five-year sentence for sedition. He was arrested in December 1979 and convicted of spreading pro-communist propaganda.

LI Ching-jung worked on the *China Times*, a daily newspaper with a wide circulation, from 1960 to 1973, when he reportedly lost his job after writing a series of articles criticizing corruption in the government. He subsequently contributed to various opposition publications and most recently edited the political magazine *Fubao Chihsheng*, Demo-Voice. It was banned in July 1979 and its publisher, HUNG Chih-liang, was arrested the following month because of a visit to the People's Republic of China. Shortly afterwards, Li Ching-jung was interrogated by the military security authorities; he was released without charge after a day.

Li Ching-jung is known for his criticism of the press and aspects of the economic system of Taiwan.

He has also, in a number of articles, advocated talks between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan).

He was arrested by the Taiwan Garrison Command on 26 December 1979 (in the same month there were mass arrests of people associated with the opposition magazine *Formosa*) and held incommunicado for two months. Reportedly subjected to prolonged interrogation, he confessed to sedition and spreading pro-communist propaganda. He was tried in an open court by a military tribunal on 25 April 1980 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. He is being held in Green Island Military Prison.

Please send courteous letters appealing for his release to: His Excellency President CHIANG Ching-Kuo/Office of the President/Chiehshou Hall/Chungking S. Road/Taipei/Taiwan/Republic of China.

"The writer and human rights" is the theme of a four-day international writers' congress opening in Toronto on 1 October 1981. Two of its aims are to affirm the principle of universal respect for human rights and to draw attention to the plight of imprisoned writers—many of them adopted as prisoners of conscience by AI—and campaign for their release. AI's Secretary General addressed the participating writers who had gathered from all over the world; here are extracts from his speech.

The writer and human rights

Writers have a specific role in the defence of human rights and the fact that so many of them are prisoners of conscience in countries around the world shows that they are willing to accept their responsibility to speak on behalf of those who cannot.

One of their tasks is to counter the systematic propaganda warfare waged by governments concerned about their image and disturbed by reports of torture in their countries that are flashed around the world.

The propaganda campaigns by such governments take many forms. For instance, the measures adopted by the South African Government have included taking over newspapers at home and abroad, bribing politicians and publishing a "smear" book called *Amnesty for Terrorism*—this was after AI had published a report on political imprisonment in South Africa.

We know also that other governments are investing money to "correct" their international reputation and there are international "markets" where governments can trade principles for nuclear power plants, arms, wheat or oil.

The more such cynicism pervades the world the more important becomes the role of writers and journalists.

It is not by chance that so many of the prisoners of conscience for whom AI works are writers and journalists: one single poem, one article or book can open eyes closed by millions of dollars' worth of propaganda.

Some of them are imprisoned because they tried to publish their works independently, defying state censorship. Some are in jail for their unpublished manuscripts, which have been confiscated or destroyed. Some have become victims because they tried to tell others of their prison experiences.

Other writers have joined the struggle for human rights in their country and been arrested for that. There are those who have written about the fundamental social and political problems faced by their nations—and been convicted of

IMPRISONED WRITERS



Yang Ching-Chu, Republic of China (Taiwan)—left— and Vasyl Stus, USSR



Ahmed Fu'ad Negm, Egypt—left—and Vaclav Havel, Czechoslovakia



conducting "propaganda against the state". Some have joined opposition political parties or banned organizations. Some have been in the forefront of the resistance to repression, continuing their struggle under successive regimes, and finally paying for their convictions with their lives.

The purpose of shackling the writer is to create silence. But words can be stronger than chains. When the Indonesian novelist PRAMOEDYA Ananta Tur was sent to the isolated island of Buru in the late 1960s he was at first denied pen and paper. By the time he was eventually released some 12 years later in 1979 he had begun compiling the stories he had composed and related to his fellow prisoners in the evenings. Two volumes of these stories have now been published, but in May this year Indonesia's Attorney-General banned their further circulation.

When the Venezuelan poet Ali LAMEDA was released in 1974 after six years' imprisonment in North Korea, he told a journalist: "They killed everything except my memory". By this, he meant the more than 300

sonnets and 400 other poems he had composed mentally—without benefit of either pen or paper. It was an extraordinary feat, described by a Latin American critic as "a gigantic creative effort in a world of horror and misery".

These images of the poet in prison call to mind the words of the Russian imagist poet AKHMATOVA describing the 17 months she spent in the prison lines in Leningrad under Stalin: "Once someone, somehow recognized me. Then a woman standing behind me, her lips blue with cold. . . woke from the stupor that enveloped us and asked me, whispering in my ear (for we spoke only in whispers): 'Could you describe this?' I said, 'I can.' Then something like a smile glided over what had once been her face."

We deal with that world of whispers and desperate messages, where names and snatches of verse are scratched on prison walls, where lives are risked to pass on news to the outside world.

Out of Libertad Prison in Uruguay some time ago came a tiny collection of poems smuggled out on cigarette papers. Among them, this one:

You should see
the contradictions
in the army.
You should have heard
the arguments between
the sub-lieutenant and the captain
while they were torturing me.

There were no names, no signatures on the poems. In a real sense, they were *prison poems*.

When AI was asked by the organizers of this conference if it could supply a list of all writers in prison throughout the world, the answer was that it could not. Secrecy and censorship make any complete tally impossible. AI did compile a small selection of cases that could stand as symbols for all others, both the known and the unknown. The range, even in this handful of examples, illustrates the fact that we are dealing with an issue that crosses the demarcations of ideology and government.

• Ahmed Fu'ad NEGM, of Egypt, well known throughout the Arab world for his colloquial poetry, is

currently serving a sentence of one year's imprisonment in Cairo. His poems frequently describe social or political injustice and many are set to music and sung by the blind musician Sheikh IMAM. Both have been imprisoned several times for their songs.

- Jorge Mario SOZA Egaña, a 55-year-old Chilean poet and short story writer, was sentenced in August 1980 to four years' internal exile in Freirina, a small town in the semi-desert region of northern Chile. He is unable to find work there and has had to build himself a small shack to live in. He is reported to have been tortured after his arrest in May 1980 and was charged under a law prohibiting "Marxist" organizations.
- Vaclav HAVEL, the Czechoslovak playwright, is serving a four-and-a-half-year prison imposed on him in October 1979. He was one of a group of people belonging to the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted—known as VONS—who had been arrested in May that year for preparing and circulating information about people they considered to be unjustly persecuted.
- YANG Ching-Chu, a writer from the Republic of China (Taiwan), is serving a prison sentence of four years and two months, imposed after he had taken part in a demonstration in December 1979 to mark the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the time he was on the editorial committee of the opposition magazine *Formosa*.
- Haroldo CONTI, the Argentinian novelist and short story writer, was dragged out of his home by a group of armed men on 5 May 1976 and then "disappeared". Although his detention was never officially acknowledged, a released prisoner has testified to seeing him in a secret detention centre in Argentina.
- Vasyi STUS, of the USSR, is a leading Ukrainian poet and human rights activist who is serving a 15-year sentence of imprisonment and internal exile for his activities as a Helsinki monitor; he was convicted of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" in 1980.
- Don MATTERA, the South African poet, is currently restricted under a second five-year banning order. Ebenezer MAQINA, author of *The Trial*, is also banned and prevented from writing for publication.
- Armando VALLADARES, the Cuban poet who has been paralysed in his legs for several years, is still serving a 30-year prison sentence. Earlier this

year he is reported to have been attacked by guards and security officers in the prison hospital and beaten unconscious.

These imprisonments violate agreed international standards. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

The same right is spelled out in Article 19:2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This means that the right of freedom of expression is part of international law. But this has not prevented governments from arresting writers who have done no more than to speak up, or even from introducing laws which by themselves make a mockery of the right of expression. Criticism is branded as "subversion" or "anti-state propaganda", sympathy for a minority group as an "attempt to divide the nation".

Several prisoners of conscience have been incarcerated just for their attempts to discuss such hypocrisy, for their work for real human rights. In many cases they are not recognized as authors or journalists by the "establishment" in their home countries.

One of them is WEI Jingsheng who is now serving a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment for "counter-revolutionary offences" in China. He was an electrician who became a leading figure in the Chinese "democratic movement", as the main editor of an unofficial journal, *Exploration*.

Another is Yuri ORLOV who was the founding Chairman of the Moscow Helsinki monitoring group. At his trial in 1978 cries of "traitor" and "spy" rang out in the courtroom. He was convicted of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment. He said he would continue to monitor and report violations of the Helsinki Final Act throughout his years in prison.

The forces that threaten to stifle creativity and freedom of expression are real and are continually claiming their victims. We must have the courage to work through our differences and manifest our solidarity with those who are being silenced.

There is a great deal we can do, confident that, in the words of the writer Georgi VLADIMOV, "All attempts to control literature will inevitably be as unsuccessful as projects for perpetual motion machines" □

Colombia Military violence in rural areas

Serious human rights violations are reported to have been taking place in rural areas in Colombia under military control—known as "militarized zones": there are reports of summary executions and of people being tortured to death; others are said to have been interrogated under torture.

On 5 August 1981 *AI* wrote to President Julio César TURBAY Ayala of Colombia expressing concern about the reports and detailing 14 cases of abuses attributed to military forces between the end of 1980 and July 1981—the cases affected 35 people. Transcripts of the testimonies of nine people were included; they gave detailed information on abuses they had either witnessed or been the victims of; in some cases the authors of the abuses are named.

The 14 cases include local councillors, peasants and farmers, people in business, students and a police officer, and the victims' ages range from 12 to 70 years. Ten of those mentioned in the letter had either been killed in summary executions or had died under torture. Several of the others said they had received death threats from military personnel in charge of their local area.

AI has written evidence that in at least one case the victim, a local councillor, had asked for protection from the authorities after being threatened, allegedly by military personnel. *AI*'s information is that the authorities did not respond to the request and the councillor was shot dead.

None of the people listed in *AI*'s letter had been accused of any criminal offence.

The abuses described are alleged to have been committed by military personnel operating under the state of siege, which has been in force almost continuously for the past 30 years. They took place in seven different regions of Colombia and different military units are said to have been responsible □

Prisoner Releases and Cases

The International Secretariat learned in August of the release of 62 prisoners under adoption or investigation; it took up 141 cases.

United Kingdom AI's work on The Maze Prison

AI has issued a 32-page document outlining its work on The Maze Prison in Northern Ireland, where 10 inmates had died by early September 1981 as a result of a hunger-strike which began on 1 March 1981.

The developments in the prison, arise out of a protest carried out by large numbers of prisoners convicted of, or awaiting trial for, politically motivated offences, who demand special treatment. The protest started in 1976 and included refusal by the prisoners concerned to wear prison uniform or do prison work. In 1978 it escalated when prisoners refused to wash, and smeared excrement on the walls of their cells: this became known as the "dirty protest".

From the beginning the authorities imposed a regime of punishments for the breaches of the prison rules implicit in the protest. The "dirty protest" has ended and has been replaced by a hunger-strike, which was still going on at the time of going to press.

Within its mandate, AI cannot address or support the demand for special treatment of prisoners because of their political motivation and AI has at no stage either supported the protest or spoken out against it, nor has it attempted to negotiate a settlement of the dispute. The interventions which were made by AI should be seen in this light.

In 1978 and 1979 it expressed its concern to the authorities that the regime of punishments imposed might amount to inhuman and degrading treatment in depriving protesting prisoners of basic facilities which should be afforded unconditionally to all prisoners at all times. AI suggested that there were alternatives to the conditions being imposed.

In 1980, a decision by the European Commission of Human Rights on a complaint by some protesting prisoners was published. Although the Commission held that the authorities had not imposed the inhuman and degrading conditions resulting from the "dirty protest", it held that the authorities had a duty to be flexible in their response. Subsequently, AI, referring to this decision, urgently called upon the government to explore ways of resolving the deadlock.

On 28 November 1980 an AI delegation met British Government representatives and suggested that there were important options left to the

government—short of granting special treatment to certain prisoners—which would break the deadlock. In turn, the government outlined relaxations it had introduced in the prison regime.

Although as a result of these, and later, relaxations AI's statutory concerns abated, the deadlock in the prison intensified when prisoners went on hunger-strike. AI therefore continued its interventions, on humanitarian grounds, making specific suggestions which it hoped would break the deadlock—but it did not enter into negotiations.

After a first hunger-strike ended without loss of life, the second started on 1 March 1981.

A number of bodies attempted to mediate, including the European Commission of Human Rights, the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace (ICJP), a body of the Roman Catholic Church of Ireland, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. All these attempts have so far failed, although on a number of occasions a solution appeared within reach.

Demand dropped

On the basis of carefully worded proposals made by the ICJP the prisoners in early July 1981 *de facto* dropped their demand for special status, opening the way for a solution based on the *substance* of the prison regime without involving matters of principle. The ICJP's proposals, which apparently were acceptable to the prisoners, were however not accepted by the authorities.

On 16 July 1981 AI wrote to the British Government, stressing that the ICJP's proposals were within the government's own stated policy principles and urging it, on humanitarian grounds, to implement such proposals in order to avoid further loss of life.

AI pointed out that although its concerns about the regime of punishments had abated, it could not but fail to take a serious view of a situation "extraordinary even from Amnesty International's experience around the world, of a hunger-strike in the course of which prisoners die in such numbers in such a short space of time".

• The full document on AI's work on The Maze Prison is available from national sections of AI or from the International Secretariat in London □

South Africa Bannings revoked

Restriction orders on 24 banned people in South Africa—most of them adopted by AI as prisoners of conscience—were lifted on 31 July 1981, before they were due to expire.

One of them was Nohle MOHAPI, a former Black People's Convention member who was restricted under a five-year banning order shortly after being released from detention in October 1978. She is a mother of two and a widow: her husband, Mapetla MOHAPI, died in police custody in August 1976.

Earlier, on 29 June, the Minister of Justice, H.J. COETSEE, had revoked restriction orders against two other people, Peter RANDALL and Cedric MAYSON, who had been banned in October 1977.

No reasons given

As is commonly the case, the Minister of Justice gave no reason for revoking the banning orders—nor, of course, had he been legally obliged to provide specific reasons for his initial decision to ban the individuals concerned.

It is rare for the Minister to revoke banning orders before their date of expiry and by far the majority of banned people may expect to remain restricted at least until their orders expire: in many cases the orders are renewed, for instance:

- Dr Fatima MEER, a lecturer in sociology at the University of Natal, had her five-year banning order renewed for another five years at the end of July 1981.

The June and July revocation of certain banning orders does not appear to imply a change of policy on the use of arbitrarily imposed restriction by the Justice Department.

In June 1981 new banning orders were imposed on six other people, including white and black students active in campaigning against official celebrations to mark the 20th anniversary of the South African Republic.

In August 1981 Charles NQAKULA, 38, a senior reporter on the East London *Daily Despatch* and Acting President of the Media Workers' Association of South Africa (MWASA), was banned until 31 December 1983. He is the sixth leading MWASA member and second Acting President to be banned □



amnesty international

campaign for the abolition of torture

News in brief

Ugandan political prisoners smuggle out plea for help

Political prisoners detained in the military-controlled Luzira prison, near Kampala, have smuggled out a letter alleging serious human rights abuses there and calling on the international community to "rescue us from annihilation".

The letter says that three prisoners died recently after being denied medical treatment and that others are seriously ill because of harsh conditions in the prison, where about 260 political prisoners have been held in recent months.

A fourth prisoner, Philip LUANDE, a Kampala trader, who was one of those who had signed the letter, is reported to have died of disease and malnutrition on 16 August 1981, the day the letter was published in the international press. He had been held without charge since March 1981.

The letter says that the prisoners—ranging from 12 to 80 years—are denied any contact with relatives, lawyers or priests, and are locked in their cells for 24 hours a day; are fed inadequately only once a day; have no beds, blankets, washing materials or change of clothes—many are said to be "in rags". Fewer than half are said to have been charged with any offence or formally detained under the Public Order and Security Act (1967), which permits indefinite detention without charge or trial; the rest are allegedly held illegally.

Most of the prisoners are officials of or sympathizers with the opposition Democratic Party or Uganda Patriotic Movement. They include members of parliament, former government ministers, priests, civil servants, lawyers, students, and local political party officials. None has yet been tried.

Two of the prisoners—Yoweri KYESIMIRA and Haji Ali SSERUNJOGI, both members of parliament, were charged with incitement to commit violence, granted bail in court, but then served with detention orders under the Public Order and Security Act.

The prisoners are alleged to have been detained for involvement in the

guerrilla activities which began in February. *AI* believes that many are in fact imprisoned for their political beliefs rather than any guerrilla involvement and it has adopted several detainees as prisoners of conscience.

About 2,000 political prisoners are believed to have been arrested in Uganda during 1981—*AI* is investigating the cases of about 100 of them.

A further 3,500 prisoners, mostly members of the security forces captured during the overthrow of the government of Idi AMIN in April 1979, are also still detained without trial—a number were charged recently, some with murder. They too have suffered from insufficient food, ill-treatment and denial of medical treatment, although conditions improved to some extent in late 1980, when the government granted access to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC has not been granted access to prisoners arrested in 1981 under President OBOTE's government.

Uganda's Minister of Internal Affairs, John LUWULIZA-KIRUNDA, has denied the allegations of ill-treatment made in the smuggled letter and said that all the prisoners were detained in accordance with the law. However, other published reports and some received privately by *AI* are consistent with the account in the prisoners' letter. Conditions of detainees in other prisons, military barracks and police stations, are also harsh, particularly in Kireka, Malire and Lubiri army barracks in Kampala and Makindye military police barracks, where torture is reported to be routine.

Please send courteous letters expressing concern about reports of harsh prison conditions of political prisoners arrested in recent months, particularly in Luzira prison; urging a full inquiry into the prison conditions of all those detained on political grounds (with the results made public); and appealing for the immediate release of people detained solely for their political opinions, and an early and fair trial for all other political prisoners to: His Excellency Dr A. Milton OBOTE/President of the Republic of Uganda/State House/ PO Box 11/Entebbe/Uganda

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

AI has appealed for the urgent release of Ray SIPPMMANN, a prisoner of conscience in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) believed to have been on hunger-strike since the beginning of August in protest against the conditions of his detention. He is serving a 27-month sentence for "incitement hostile to the state".

In its appeal, *AI* stressed that the hunger-strike added urgency to the need for his release from a detention that contravened the GDR's international commitments to respect human rights □

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

The isolation—either alone or in groups of only two or three—of prisoners suspected or convicted of politically motivated offences was once more raised by *AI* in a letter to the Federal Republic of Germany's Justice Minister, Dr Jurgen SCHMUDE, on 6 September 1981. *AI* believes that such isolation poses a threat to the prisoners' health (see June 1980 *Newsletter*).

In its letter, *AI* pointed out that although both the federal and state authorities had expressed willingness to lessen prisoner isolation, this had led to no real improvement in practice.

It urged Dr Schmude to take up this apparent contradiction between practice and stated willingness with the authorities concerned, with a view to abolishing solitary confinement and small-group isolation altogether □

HAITI

In the early hours of the morning of 26 August 1981 Sylvio CLAUDE, his daughter Marie-France CLAUDE and Gabriel HERARD (all three prisoners of the month in May 1981) and 19 others were sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour after they had been convicted of plotting against the internal security of the state. Four others received one-year sentences.

The defendants had been detained during 1980 (see January 1981 *Newsletter*). *AI* believes they are prisoners of conscience arrested for their peacefully held political beliefs. On 28 August it cabled President Jean-Claude DUVALIER of Haiti expressing concern at the sentences and urging the prisoners' unconditional release □

Eight years after 1973 coup. . .

Killings, torture continue in Chile

Eight years after the coup which overthrew Chile's elected government, citizens suspected of non-violent opposition to the present authorities still risk sudden death, torture, imprisonment or banishment to remote areas.

On 9 September 1981—two days before the anniversary of the 11 September 1973 coup—*AI* issued a worldwide call for public appeals to the Chilean authorities to release prisoners held because of their opinions, to halt torture and killings by the security forces, and to account for the estimated 1,500 people who "disappeared" from 1973 to 1977.

In a news release *AI* said the reports it received from Chile showed there had been changes in the ways human rights and international standards were violated: there was no longer the epidemic of "disappearances" of earlier years, but there had been several reports over the past year of people killed after arrest or abduction.

UN checks urged

Continued from page 1

poster and having posted it up". He was also charged with having joined a communist group in 1950. He was sentenced to life imprisonment by a military tribunal sitting *in camera*.

- In the People's Republic of China, GONG Pinmei, the former Roman Catholic Bishop of Shanghai, has spent more than 25 years in prison. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of counter-revolutionary activities. He is now over 80 years old.

- In Morocco, Abdelali Ben CHEKROUN, 29, a mathematics teacher, was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment in 1977. Together with almost 180 others he was charged with belonging to illegal associations attempting to overthrow the government, although even the prosecution accepted that the defendants had only reached the stage of propagating their ideas.

Each of these people is a prisoner of conscience, only three cases among thousands—*AI*'s information is that there are prisoners of conscience in almost half the member states of the United Nations □

Torture still appears to be a systematic part of official policy in Chile. There are consistent reports of electric shock being applied for hours to the most sensitive parts of prisoners' bodies after they are tied to metal bedframes and soaked in water. Some prisoners are suspended and beaten. A frequently reported torture is the "telephone"—blows to the ears with open palms. In other cases, squirting water at high pressure into body orifices, burning with cigarettes, rape and other sexual abuse are the torture methods used.

Humiliation, threats and combinations of physical and psychological torture are used to "soften up" prisoners. Some are kept standing, blindfolded, in absolute silence for long periods. Noise may be used to disorient them or they may be forced to listen or be present when others are tortured.

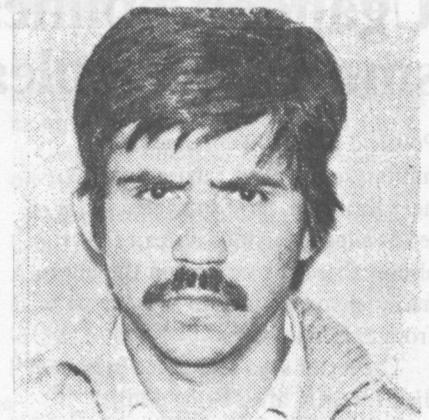
Frequent short-term detention or banishment of political suspects makes it difficult to estimate the number of political prisoners at any one time. In 1980, about 2,700 people were arrested for political reasons; all but about 100 were released after a few hours or days. Recent estimates indicated about 250 people imprisoned or sentenced to banishment on politically related charges, and about 50 on bail pending the outcome of trials.

Ban on political activity

A total ban on political parties and activity has resulted in thousands of arrests since 1973. A new constitution which came into force on 11 March 1981 gives the authorities wide powers to limit individual freedoms. In the first three months after it came into effect, more than 370 people were reliably reported to have been arrested. Most were released after a few days; but some of those released had been tortured while being held incommunicado in secret detention centres.

Arrests are usually carried out without warrants by the secret or regular police.

Banishment to remote areas, whether for three months by order of the Interior Ministry, or for longer periods by court sentence, has been used against human rights activists, students and others who take part in non-violent protests. They are usually sent to isolated villages, often in a harsh



The Chilean artist Hugo Eduardo RIVEROS Gómez, 28, found dead on the outskirts of Santiago on 8 July 1981—his hands had been tied behind his back and he had been stabbed three times. The day before, three men had blindfolded him and dragged him out of his home. He had previously been detained in October 1980, held incommunicado for more than a fortnight and reportedly tortured. On 5 November he was charged with belonging to a banned organization. In March 1981 he was released on bail. At the end of June the prosecution recommended that he be sentenced to 541 days' *relegación*, internal exile. He was murdered about a week later. There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that members of the security forces were involved in the killing.

climate where they have to support themselves far from their families or friends. *AI* has received a number of reports of people arrested, tortured and sent with only the clothes they were wearing to cold, wet regions—all without trial.

AI is aware that some Chilean opposition groups have used violence which has sometimes resulted in deaths of members of the security forces. Under international agreements which Chile has accepted, however, this cannot justify a government derogating from its obligation to protect basic human rights, including the right to life and to protection from torture or inhuman or degrading treatment □

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