

EXTERNAL

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FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
AND ITS WORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

THE BEGINNING

- Amnesty International was launched in 1961 by British lawyer Peter Benenson.
- His newspaper appeal, "The Forgotten Prisoners", was published worldwide on 28 May 1961 and brought in more than 1,000 offers of support for the idea of an international campaign to protect human rights.
- Within 12 months the new organization had sent delegations to four countries to make representations on behalf of prisoners, and had taken up 210 cases. Amnesty International members had organized national bodies in seven countries. The first year's expenditure was £6,040.
- The principles of strict impartiality and independence were established. The emphasis was on the international protection of human rights: Amnesty International members were to act on cases worldwide and not become involved in cases in their own countries.

TODAY

- Amnesty International has more than 1,000,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in over 190 countries and territories and over 4,341 local Amnesty International groups registered with the International Secretariat, plus several thousand school, university, professional and other groups in 93 countries.
- There are nationally organized sections in 54 countries, 33 of them in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East and Central Europe.
- The organization's nerve centre is the International Secretariat in London, with more than 300 permanent staff and 95 volunteers from more than 50 countries. The Secretary General is Pierre Sané.
- Amnesty International is governed by a nine-member International Executive Committee (IEC). It comprises eight volunteer members, elected every two years by an International Council comprising representatives of the worldwide movement, and an elected member of the International Secretariat.

HELPING THE VICTIMS

-- **Amnesty International** has a precise mandate, detailed in an international statute. The main focus of its campaigning is to:

- free all prisoners of conscience. These are people detained anywhere for their beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or language -- who have not used or advocated violence;
- ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners;
- abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel treatment of prisoners;
- end extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

-**Amnesty International** also opposes abuses by opposition groups: hostage taking, torture and killings of prisoners and other arbitrary killings.

Amnesty International members around the world work on behalf of people threatened with imprisonment, unfair trials, torture or execution. This year's activities are an indication of the level of work done every year on behalf of these people.

At the end of May 1996.

Amnesty International takes **long-term action** on all the concerns reflected in its mandate, including prisoners of conscience. By the end of May 1996 Amnesty International groups were working on 4,036 long-term assignments on behalf of 4,953 named individuals, including prisoners of conscience and 2,903 unnamed individuals from 94 countries worldwide.

Rapid action for prisoners and others who are in immediate danger, such as torture or execution, is mobilized by the **Urgent Action** network of around 80,000 volunteers in some 85 countries. They are organized through electronic mail, fax, courier, express and airmail to send fast appeals on behalf of those at risk.

In the first five months of 1996, 218 new actions on 70 countries were issued to the Urgent Action Network. Further appeals on existing actions were requested 162 times, making a total of 380 occasions on which the network was activated. Each Urgent Action or a follow-up can generate hundreds of appeals to the authorities within days of being issued and several thousand within a few weeks.

The new actions covered a variety of concerns : prisoners whom it was feared might be tortured; those at risk of, or who had been the victim of, extrajudicial execution or "disappearance"; prisoners sentenced to death; and people who had been harassed or had received death threats from agents of the state or armed opposition groups. Actions included many other concerns, for example: arbitrary arrest, prolonged incommunicado detention, detention without charge or trial, death in custody and risk of refoulement. (Note these concerns are not mutually exclusive, more than one concern may feature on any action.)

-- **Medical office details for first five months of 1996:** the Amnesty International network of health professionals numbered between 9,000 and 10,000 members in 1996, organized in medical groups and networks in some 30 sections. The network appealed in several cases, including 10

medical actions issued on behalf of prisoners in need of medical attention; in cases of torture and suspicious death in detention; where there is evidence to suggest spurious medical certification following a death in custody; or following examination after torture has been alleged. In addition, during this period there was one Amnesty International research mission in which a doctor was part of the delegation. In May Amnesty International launched a campaign on the role of health professionals in the exposure of human rights violations.

-- This year, up to the end of May, 158 **Regional Action Networks (RANs)** were issued. RAN members concentrate their work on any one of five regions of the world to assist people subjected to any of the human rights abuses that Amnesty International opposes in almost all of the world's countries. During this period there were 2,319 ongoing allocations of local groups to RANs.

-- Amnesty International issued 59 **major documents** on human rights violations on 23 countries including: the refugee situation in Rwanda and Burundi; human rights violations in Sudan; human rights at a time of impunity in Peru; systematic human rights violations in China; continuing human rights abuses in Turkey and five years of impunity for human rights violations in Kuwait.

-- From January to the end of May 1996 the organization sent 72 **delegations** to 59 countries. Delegates carried out a range of work which could include discussing Amnesty International's concerns with government authorities, observing political trials and carrying out on-the-spot investigations into human rights abuses. Some of the countries visited were Algeria, Burundi, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Israel and the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian Authority, and Turkey.

THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE

Every year, Amnesty International produces a global report which details human rights violations against men, women and children in all regions of the world. The **1996 annual report**, which detailed abuses during 1995, is indicative of the kinds and levels of abuses against people every year. According to that report:

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

- Prisoners of conscience or possible prisoners of conscience were held in some 85 countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina, China, Kenya, Peru and Tunisia.

DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

- 43 countries, including Azerbaijan, India, Israel and the Occupied Territories and areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, Paraguay and Rwanda held a total of more than 46,000 people without charging them with any crime.

UNFAIR TRIAL

- A reported 27 countries, including China, Colombia, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia imprisoned people after unfair trials.

TORTURE OR ILL-TREATMENT

- At least 10,000 detainees were subjected to torture or ill-treatment, including rape, in 114 countries including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Indonesia and East Timor, Iran, Mexico and Sudan.
- More than 4,500 people died as a result of torture in custody or inhuman prison conditions in 54 countries, including Egypt, Kenya, Myanmar and Turkey.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

- Thousands of extrajudicial executions or possible extrajudicial executions were reported in 63 countries including Bahrain, Burundi, Colombia, India, Russia and Rwanda.

"DISAPPEARANCES"

- The fate of more than 140,000 people in 49 countries who “disappeared” in recent years, including 1995, remains unknown. Many of those, in countries including Burundi and Rwanda, Colombia, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Turkey, may have subsequently been killed.

DEATH PENALTY

- Some 2,900 people were known to have been executed by hanging, firing squad, lethal injection or other means in 41 countries in 1995, including China, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, although Amnesty International believes the real figure to be far higher.
- Amnesty International documented the cases of more than 3,700 people who were sentenced to death in 58 countries, including China, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine and the United States of America. The organization believes the true figure to be much higher.
- A documented total of at least 5,500 prisoners remained under sentence of death in 31 countries, including Iran, Japan, Kenya, Russia and the United States of America.
- In 1995, four countries abolished the death penalty in whole or part -- Mauritius, Moldova, South Africa and Spain -- while Gambia reintroduced the death penalty.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

- In 41 countries, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Colombia, Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom, armed opposition groups committed human rights abuses, such as torture, hostage taking, and deliberate and arbitrary killings.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS AND TREATIES WORLDWIDE

Today an ever-growing human rights constituency is gathering the facts on abuses by governments, taking action to stop them and strengthening the forces necessary to prevent future violations.

- More than 1,000 domestic and regional organizations are working to protect basic human rights;

- An increasing body of international human rights agreements hold governments accountable for their actions;
- 132 governments are now party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and 133 governments are party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). These covenants require countries ratifying them to recognize or protect a wide range of human rights;
- 87 states are now party to the Optional Protocol to the (first) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Protocol establishes procedures allowing both individuals and states to present complaints of human rights violations;
- 29 states are now party 2nd Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at the abolition of the death penalty;
- 96 governments are now party to the United Nations Convention against Torture.
- 127 states are party to both the Refugee Convention and the Refugee Protocol

THE MONEY

Amnesty International's funding reflects the movement's independence and its reliance on broad public support. No money is sought or received from governments. The hundreds of thousands of donations that sustain the organization's work come from the pockets of its members and the public.

The international budget for 1995 is approximately GBP 17,209,000. This does not include funds needed to maintain the operations of the national bodies in individual countries or the costs of the thousands of letters and telegrams sent every month by individual members around the world.

The international budget is spent on professional research by Amnesty International staff into human rights violations worldwide, on delegations that observe trials and make representations to governments, and on the movement's international public information, campaigning and development activities.