

amnesty
international



**handbook
for
groups**

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



HANDBOOK FOR GROUPS

...every person has the right freely to hold and to express his convictions and the obligation to extend a like freedom to others...

Statute of Amnesty International

OBJECTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is an independent organisation which is not associated with any government, political party or religious creed. It works for the release of persons imprisoned, restricted or detained because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, or by reason of their ethnic origin, colour or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. These persons are called Prisoners of Conscience.

See Appendix A for part of the Statute of Amnesty International.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty and the torture or otherwise cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of all prisoners.

Amnesty International seeks to secure throughout the world the observance of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Amnesty International maintains an overall working balance in relation to countries of different world political ideologies and groupings.

METHODS

Amnesty International endeavours to aid and secure the release of Prisoners of Conscience through investigation, adoption, financial and legal assistance to them and their families, working to improve their conditions while imprisoned or detained, and publicising their plight wherever desirable.

Where appropriate Amnesty International sends representatives to investigate allegations that the rights of Prisoners of Conscience have been violated.

Amnesty International publishes carefully researched reports on countries whose treatment of prisoners has become a matter of grave concern.

Amnesty International makes representations to governments and international organisations about Prisoners of Conscience and encourages general amnesties to include such prisoners. At the same time it promotes the adoption of constitutions, conventions, treaties and other measures which guarantee the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to all prisoners.

STATUS

Amnesty International has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the Organisation of American States, the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights, and, in regard to refugees, the Organisation of African Unity. This status gives Amnesty the right of petition, the right to have its observers attend debates and a direct channel for making its views known to these organisations.

SYMBOL

The universally recognised symbol of Amnesty International is a candle surrounded by barbed wire.

STRUCTURE

Amnesty International grew out of an appeal published in London on 28 May 1961 calling attention to the plight of Prisoners of Conscience throughout the world. There are now over 1,100 Amnesty Groups linked in NATIONAL SECTIONS. Sections exist, or are in the process of being formed, in Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, France, Gambia, Ghana, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States.

There are individual members in a further 30 countries.

The National Sections, with an upper limit of five votes each, have proportional representation at the INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL which meets annually to take policy decisions for the movement as a whole.

The International Council elects an INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE consisting of six members and the Treasurer who meet at least twice a year to supervise the conduct of the organisation. Members of the permanent staff of the INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT elect one representative from their ranks as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The Committee may also co-opt up to four other non-voting members.

The Executive Committee appoints a SECRETARY GENERAL who is responsible for running the INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT in London. The main organs of the Secretariat are the RESEARCH DEPARTMENT (see page 5) and the INFORMATION OFFICE.

The International Secretariat as a whole carries out research on prisoners, arranges missions, provides information for groups and the news media, publishes reports and documents under the imprint of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS, organises publicity, co-ordinates relief activities, and performs the day-to-day administration of Amnesty's work.

An EXECUTIVE SECRETARY is responsible for liaison between the International Secretariat and National Sections and Groups.

A RIGOUROUS BALANCE

Amnesty International is unique among human rights organisations because its global impartiality is translated into a rigorously balanced system of case-work. This balance is reflected in Amnesty's annual reports and publications which demonstrate neither favour nor prejudice against any single country, system, religion or geographical region. Three unwavering rules safeguard Amnesty's non-partisanship:

1. Groups and individual members work simultaneously for three prisoners from contrasting ideological backgrounds or holding different political or religious beliefs. Thus, one may be from a Communist country, another from a Western industrialised society and the third from a non-aligned Third World nation.
2. Groups do not work for prisoners arrested by their own government.
3. No one is adopted who is proved to have advocated or used violence or engaged in espionage. This enforces the distinction between Prisoners of Conscience and other prisoners and ensures that Amnesty International cannot justifiably be accused of supporting violent subversion or terrorism.

Furthermore, no prisoner is adopted if this would in any way jeopardise his position.

Adoption of prisoners by Amnesty groups creates individual relationships between them. Each Amnesty member soon feels a sense of personal engagement and responsibility. Adoption aims to bring moral and, at times, material support to the prisoner and his or her family through continuing contact, providing relief where needed and persistent pressure for justice, better treatment or healthier conditions.

The effectiveness and success of Amnesty International rests on mobilizing public opinion everywhere in the interests not only of well-known Prisoners of Conscience but also the little known and unremembered. It demonstrates continuously to prisoner and government that no one is forgotten, that the world cares, that injustice, mass arrests, mock trials and torture will never become just another news item. The candle of Amnesty International symbolises both hope and illumination.

TORTURE

No one shall be subjected to torture, cruel or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

*Article 5,
Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Amnesty International is committed to combatting without exception the practice of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners. Common law prisoners and those who have advocated or used violence are not excluded.

In recent years Amnesty has issued reports on a number of countries concerning allegations of torture. These reports are the responsibility of the International Executive Committee and do not affect the principle that groups only adopt Prisoners of Conscience. Many prisoners adopted by Amnesty groups, however, have been and are still being tortured.

Concerned at their plight and at the growing evidence of the systematic use of brutality against prisoners by many governments, Amnesty has launched a worldwide Campaign for the Abolition of Torture. The aim is to arouse public opinion, secure and enforce legal sanctions against the practice and ensure observance by all governments of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Draft resolutions have been prepared for submission to the UN, together with a draft convention banning torture.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Amnesty International is committed by its Statute to "opposing by all appropriate means the imposition and execution of death penalties...." The 1972 International Council meeting at Utrecht recommended that National Sections in countries where capital punishment is still imposed should work for its total abolition. It also recommended that the National Sections of countries represented in the Council of Europe or similar organs in other parts of the world should work through these bodies towards the same end.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

Amnesty International has been one of the leaders in the worldwide campaign to have conscientious objection recognised as a fundamental human right. The first sentence of the Statute states "that every person has the right freely to hold and to express his convictions and the obligation to extend a like freedom to others". This includes the right of a person to refuse military service on the grounds of conscience or personal conviction, without legal or physical penalty. The 1972 International Council meeting endorsed policy guidelines relating to conscientious objection and the adoption of conscientious objectors.

These guidelines are contained in Appendix B. Groups and members are urged to study them carefully.

REFUGEES

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile" (Article 9). It also states that "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (Article 14). Amnesty International is, therefore, committed to working on behalf of all non-violent refugees and to ensuring that their human rights, including their right to asylum, are respected.

SELECTION OF PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The Research Department in the International Secretariat is responsible for obtaining information about prisoners and for preparing case sheets which are distributed to Amnesty groups. It also produces background papers and reports on particular areas and subjects of concern, and it briefs Amnesty missions.

Amnesty International is bound by its Statute to maintain a strict political balance in all its work. Consequently the Research Department is organised on a broad geographic basis. Research Officers are responsible for carrying out investigations on particular areas. Executive Assistants handle most of the correspondence with groups.

Information reaches the International Secretariat from many sources: newspapers and periodicals in a variety of languages, consultations with experts in particular fields, visits from exiles and relatives of prisoners, letters from prisoners (sometimes smuggled out of prison) and from their families, churches, lawyers, trade unions, professional organisations, exile organisations and Amnesty's own missions.

Each Research Officer attempts to evaluate information about arrests, trials and detention in light of political and legal developments in the country concerned and to provide the adopting Amnesty groups with the fullest possible details about the political background and the individual prisoners. This is sometimes done in co-operation with co-ordination groups in some countries.

See Group Action

The Research Department seeks to ensure that all cases adopted by Amnesty are genuine Prisoners of Conscience who have not taken part in violence or espionage. Each case must be decided on its merits. There are countries where trumped-up charges of espionage or violence are used to discredit prisoners, and such charges can only be evaluated on the basis of a knowledge of the country concerned.

The case sheet will always explain why a prisoner is being adopted. If the International Secretariat believes that a particular individual is a Prisoner of Conscience but lacks conclusive information, the case may be allocated to an Amnesty group as an INVESTIGATION CASE. The group should then attempt to obtain the information required for determining the prisoner's status, rather than press for his release. If after a certain period the authorities have not provided adequate evidence against the prisoner, the case may be upgraded to one of adoption aimed at achieving the prisoner's release.

The Utrecht Council Meeting decided that the assertion by a government that a political prisoner had used or advocated violence should not necessarily be binding on Amnesty. Such an assertion should only be considered valid if it has been substantiated in a fair and public trial.

Detention without trial for long periods is itself an abrogation of Human Rights and such cases may either be adopted or taken up for investigation. As a rule prisoners are given the benefit of any doubt about their status. But if the International Secretariat has serious doubts about the status of a particular prisoner, the case is referred to the BORDERLINE COMMITTEE. This is an ad hoc body appointed by the International Executive Committee and consisting of three members of Amnesty who have a wide knowledge of the problems involved.

CASE SHEETS

Groups receive a case sheet for each adopted prisoner. This is a printed form showing - so far as they are known - personal details of the prisoner (age, profession, marital status, state of health); details of arrest, charges, trial, and sentence; the place and conditions of imprisonment; and addresses of heads of state, government departments (usually the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of the Interior) and other individuals or organisations the groups should contact in attempting to help the prisoner or obtain information.

All case sheets provide a brief account of the political situation in the country concerned and of the laws under which the prisoner is detained. In many cases, the International Secretariat will provide a more detailed background paper on the country or on a particular group of prisoners. Books for further reading are often suggested, and group members should make every effort to familiarise themselves not only with the information provided by the Secretariat and by any co-ordination group which may be involved, but also with the literature of the countries concerned. Such two-fold information helps groups to write informed - and therefore more effective - letters.

The volume of information reaching the Secretariat about individual prisoners varies considerably. In some cases, such as when the prisoner is a well-known politician or writer, full biographical details will be available. In other cases an Amnesty mission may have been able to investigate prison conditions, or an Amnesty observer may have attended a trial. But often very little is known about the prisoner: he may be held incommunicado in a military prison. In these instances the adopting group must endeavour to obtain the required information from the contacts suggested on the case sheet.

The Secretariat will inform groups if further information about their prisoners comes to light. It is equally essential that the groups themselves pass on to the Secretariat immediately any news they receive from other sources. Such information may affect not only their own prisoners but others held in the same circumstances.

SECURITY

The information the International Secretariat provides to groups is classified as: (a) OPEN: may be shown to anybody and used for publicity; (b) RESTRICTED: may be used within the group and for selected contacts; (c) CONFIDENTIAL: should not be disclosed except to group members directly involved with the case. This system is designed to protect Amnesty's informants and prisoners and their families. The family and friends of a prisoner will almost invariably come under police surveillance, and Amnesty groups must always be aware of the serious consequences which may ensue from rash publicity or indiscreet letters.

GROUP ACTION

Political imprisonment is an expression of political, social or economic instability. In some cases certain members of the government may feel that the prisoner's detention is either unjust, poor politics or bad for the country's "image" abroad. It is the purpose of group action to reinforce that feeling by the most suitable means:

LETTERS TO GOVERNMENTS

The case sheet will usually list the names and addresses of the Head of State and responsible Ministers, such as the Minister of Justice or Minister of the Interior, the Chief Public Prosecutor or Attorney-General, or, in a one-party state, the Party Secretary. Letters should be written on official Amnesty paper to every Minister or official mentioned since this increases the chances of some letters getting through to the responsible individuals concerned.

Letters must stress the strict political balance Amnesty International maintains in its work.

Letters should be brief, factual, and, most important, polite.

They should be composed on the assumption - unless instructed to the contrary - that the individual they are addressing has never heard of Amnesty and must be informed of its aims and international and impartial character.

Letters should also be written on the assumption that the authorities are open to discussion. An attempt should be made to find basic points of agreement. Experience has shown that even the most repressive governments may be anxious to foster a belief that they are fair and reasonable. It is important where possible to stress a country's reputation for moderation and justice, to show respect for its constitution and judicial procedures and an understanding of current difficulties - for example, when protesting against the detention of members of the outgoing government after a coup d'etat.

Abusive language and rhetoric must be avoided.

Some guidelines and suggestions:

- Quote Amnesty's aims at the very beginning, pointing out its emphasis on non-violence and humanitarian considerations only.
- Mention the other prisoners for whom your group is working, to show that you are not merely criticising one government.
- Mention all relevant articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Mention the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.
- Quote those parts of the country's constitution, laws and prison regulations that may be relevant. Many constitutions guarantee freedom of speech and opinion. Point to these with approval.
- Cite statements made by important authorities.

- Quote any useful information and promises contained in letters written to the group by officials. ("I am always prepared to answer further questions" etc)
- Always use the correct forms of address ("Your Excellency" etc).
- End the letter with specific questions designed to elicit responses and thus, hopefully, ensure continuation of the correspondence: for instance, "Is it possible for us to correspond with our adopted prisoner?"
- It may be useful in a limited number of cases to write more personal letters to the Head of State or government ministers pointing out their individual responsibility for the situation in their country. Experience shows that groups seldom receive a reply to only one letter of this kind but that repeated attempts may bring results in time.
- The case sheet will advise on which language to use in letters. A general rule is to try to write in the language of the country, or, if this is impossible, in English or French.
- It is important that all letters are written clearly and neatly to give a good impression of Amnesty's seriousness and stature.
- Registered letters tend to receive more and quicker attention than those sent by ordinary mail.
- One may also enclose a receipt in the letter. This means the addressee will have to sign for it and the certificate of registration will be returned to the sender. A receipt may be obtained at the post office.
- In the event no reply is received it may be useful to send the Head of State, Minister or official another letter reminding him of the first one, calling his attention to the date, acknowledging how busy a man in his position must be, but hoping that he will still have time to answer it.

Letters should be sent to governments regularly: on making an adoption, on receiving further news of a prisoner, when a partial amnesty has been announced, on Human Rights Day (December 10), during Prisoner of Conscience Week, on national holidays, on religious festivals, on a President's birthday, on the anniversary of the formation of a government, etc.

Groups may not always receive replies to these letters, but members should not be discouraged by this. The important point is that governments receive regular reminders that their prisoners are not forgotten.

There have been striking examples of the cumulative effect of letter campaigns in securing the release of prisoners even though the writers of the letters never received any acknowledgement from the government concerned.

LETTERS AND DEPUTATIONS TO EMBASSIES

These letters should follow the lines of those written to governments, but they can go further in emphasising trading and cultural relations between the group's country and the foreign government concerned. They are normally written in the language of the country in which the embassy is situated.

In addition to the occasions mentioned above, letters should be sent to embassies on the occasion of visits from trade delegations, sporting teams, and government representatives, and to coincide with international cultural events.

Groups are more likely to receive a reply from an embassy than from its government, and should, therefore, be persistent in writing letters, and attempting to obtain an interview with the ambassador, charge d'affaires or first secretary.

Some of the occasions mentioned above provide a useful opportunity for trying to arrange an Amnesty deputation to an embassy. Such deputations are often organised by National Sections and are most effective when a number of Amnesty groups with prisoners in the same country are involved. Groups should take the initiative and consult their National Sections and the International Secretariat for material to support their case.

LETTERS TO AMNESTY CONTACTS

The case sheet will often suggest the name of a contact who may be able to help the group by providing information about a trial or a prisoner's family. In some countries the contact may be a defending lawyer or a politician actively concerned with human rights.

Groups must bear in mind the fact that letters to such individuals may be opened by security police, and security precautions must be observed. The case sheet will sometimes specify that, contrary to the general suggestions and guidelines above, official paper should not be used.

Letters must always be phrased tactfully: it is best to be cautious in an initial approach and to ask for limited information only.

All information received from contacts should be sent immediately to the International Secretariat because it may affect several prisoners. It is best to send a photocopy of the letter and envelope. If this is not possible, the group should send the original, which the Secretariat will copy and return. Groups should not be disappointed if they do not receive an immediate reply from the informant as he may be extremely busy. It is advisable to send an International Reply Coupon.

LETTERS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Most prisoners have a trade or profession and these usually have a national or international organisation (steelworkers, schoolteachers, journalists, etc) which will be concerned to protect the interests of its

members. Groups should contact the national body representing this trade or profession in their own countries, and try to associate it with protesting against the imprisonment of the individuals concerned. Groups should also contact international organisations of such trades and professions. Names and addresses will frequently be provided on the case sheet and, in some cases, the international organisation will be able to put the group in touch with its branch in the prisoner's country and provide additional information.

Groups should note, however, that all correspondence to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the International Federation of Journalists, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Commission of Jurists must go through the International Secretariat. These organisations work closely with Amnesty but have requested that, to avoid confusion, groups should not write to them directly. All enquiries and replies will be forwarded by the International Secretariat.

EXILE ORGANISATIONS

Groups or individuals in exile provide an important source of information for Amnesty work, and group members may wish to attend their meetings and establish contact with them. Their names and addresses will often be provided on the case sheet. Information so obtained, whether from correspondence with exile organisations, pressure groups, or individuals, should be forwarded to the International Secretariat. However, caution should be exercised in co-operating with such groups in public.

On this subject the following resolution was passed at the Council Meeting in Luxembourg in 1971:

The International Council stresses the importance of Amnesty International being a truly independent and impartial organisation.

In this context no public action, eg, press conferences, demonstrations, public meetings, etc, should be undertaken by groups, regions, or national sections jointly with exile, refugee, or other political organisations committed to opposition to the government of the country concerned, without the prior agreement of the Board of the National Section.

Further it is recommended that no press statements or policy matters of more than local importance should be issued by any group or region, without prior consultation with the National Section and/or International Secretariat.

It should be emphasised to exile, refugee, or other political organisations that the refusal of Amnesty International to co-operate publicly with them is in order to protect the objective nature of Amnesty International and does not reflect approval or disapproval of the aims and judgement of any such organisation.

LETTERS TO PRISONERS

Prisoners usually welcome letters from groups, but the conditions under which prisoners are allowed to receive letters vary considerably. In some countries prisoners are not allowed to receive letters at all; in others, they are rationed to, perhaps, one letter every three months. It would be tragic if a prisoner were deprived of a letter from his wife been used up by an Amnesty group.

The case sheet will inform the group whether it is safe to write to the prisoner, and the Secretariat may be contacted in cases of doubt. From the point of view of the authorities, the most acceptable way to write to a prisoner may be to send an open post-card. The case sheet will specify the languages to be used; English or French usually are suggested if the group cannot write in the prisoner's own language. It is important (particularly if the prisoner's native language is used) to stress that you are a group of well-wishers. Make it clear that you are not exiles. Be careful to explain your own nationality, and write only the most general enquiries about the prisoner's wellbeing. There are exceptional countries where prisoners are allowed to correspond freely with Amnesty groups, and you will be informed if your prisoner falls into this category.

Amnesty's annual Greetings Card scheme helps to encourage prisoners by the knowledge that they are not forgotten. The cards are often shared among prisoners. The Postcards for Prisoners Campaign, which is conducted by individual members rather than groups, is intended to exert additional pressure on governments on behalf of the prisoners.

PARCELS TO PRISONERS

It is most heartening for the prisoner if the group is able to send a regular parcel. But there are many countries where gift-parcels are not allowed, or can only be brought in by relatives. In some cases the best way to help is to send money to a relative who can buy something the prisoner really needs, thus saving heavy postage and possible customs dues. A well-prepared campaign to send a parcel to a prisoner can be an effective means of protest.

Unless you are otherwise instructed, write to the following, asking whether they will deliver or accept parcels and, if not, whether they can recommend any way of sending a parcel: The Director of Prisons (C/o Ministry of the Interior), the Prison Governor, the Prison Chaplain (where appropriate), the Chief Postmaster. The same procedure may be followed in attempting to arrange to send letters. Although the group may not receive a reply, the letters will have an important effect.

If you are able to send a parcel, its contents will depend on the information you can obtain from the authorities or the prisoner's relatives. Remember that heavy customs duties may make it impossible for the prisoner to accept a gift: this is commonly the case when parcels of clothing are involved.

Many prisoners feel the deprivation of reading matter very seriously, and will welcome gifts of books. Where you are able to send them, make sure they are in a language the prisoner understands, and are non-political: poetry, philosophy, classics, magazines of a non-political nature, and occasionally history may get through the prison censor.

In some countries, prisoners are allowed to follow educational courses if the fees are paid and the necessary arrangements made. Centralised schemes on these lines are organised through the International Secretariat using funds provided by the groups. Always enclose an international reply coupon with parcels so that the prisoner has a chance of writing an acknowledgement. In many prisons, cigarettes are a form of general currency, and may be an appropriate gift.

LETTERS AND RELIEF TO PRISONERS' FAMILIES

The case sheet will give the name and address of the prisoner's family (if known), and an indication of whether the family is in financial need. Groups may sometimes be able to discover family details from contacts. The general security provisions already outlined must always be applied: make it clear that you are not an exile organisation, explain your nationality, and emphasise that you are acting solely from humanitarian motives. Do not use Amnesty paper in the first instance. If the family indicates that it is happy to correspond with you, you can mention in the body of the next letter that you are an Amnesty group. It is best to write in the family's native language: English or French are usually suggested as alternatives.

Always remember that a prisoner's family are likely to be under police observation and in danger of arrest themselves, and make sure that any letter you write could not be open to misinterpretation. Picture postcards containing greetings only are likely in many countries to escape censorship altogether, and would be welcomed by families who are financially secure.

The provision of relief for prisoners' families varies from country to country. In some countries, centralised relief programmes are organised from the International Secretariat; in others, groups send gifts or money directly to the families. The case sheet will advise you of the appropriate procedure.

The provision of relief for prisoners and their families is a most important aspect of Amnesty's work. A sum which seems small by Western European standards may enable a family deprived of its breadwinner to keep alive. It may provide for school fees for the children of the family, help to subsidise an inadequate prison diet, pay fares to visit a prisoner, or provide medical help.

In general, it is far better to send money than parcels (other than token gifts) unless the group receives a specific request from a family and knows that the gift will not be liable to customs dues and import quotes. The best way to send money is by bankers' draft or international postal money order. Groups will be advised on this point by their National Section office or the International Secretariat.

Never press a family with letters if you do not receive a reply: it may not be safe for them to write or receive letters.

VISITS ABROAD

Group members who in the course of business or pleasure travel to countries where they have adopted Amnesty prisoners may be able to meet prisoners' relatives and sometimes even visit prisoners. Members on these

cannot speak or negotiate on behalf of Amnesty International. Such visits are quite separate from Amnesty's official missions to observe trials or investigate prison conditions: these missions can be authorised by the International Secretariat only.

Group members anxious to conduct such visits must consult fully with the Secretariat for briefing. No family should be visited without their express consent in advance. A sudden visit from a foreigner may attract unwelcome attention.

PUBLICITY

Publicity is one of Amnesty's most powerful weapons. In some cases, a vigorous publicity campaign initiated in the local press by an Amnesty group has developed into a national protest, and had an identifiable effect on a government's actions. International public indignation can force a repressive government to re-assess its policies, and publicity has in many countries contributed to individual or partial amnesties, to better prison conditions, to open trials, and to the suspension of the death penalty.

But groups must remember that there are also cases where more is accomplished by discreet negotiation than by rash publicity, and that premature publicity may antagonise a government which is actually trying to improve matters. Sometimes, the case sheet will carry a warning not to engage in publicity for a prisoner: it may be that publicity would endanger him, it may be that the Secretariat is engaged in negotiation with the government concerned. But if publicity is advised, groups should make every effort to carry out a sustained campaign on a prisoner's behalf.

The methods of conducting such campaigns start with letters to local newspapers and may develop into campaigns in the national press, television, and radio. Groups should try to persuade persons of influence to support their campaigns remembering that the most effective criticism often comes from people known to be in general sympathy with the regime rather than those whose positions are fundamentally opposed. It is important that publicity campaigns should be sustained, with follow-up letters reporting progress or a government's recalcitrance.

Use all the events in the Amnesty calendar and the national calendar - national days, official birthdays, religious festivals, as well as the prisoner's birthday, the anniversary of his trial - as occasions for obtaining publicity. Publicity is important in many ways. It spreads knowledge of persecution, it increases support for Amnesty, and it has a cumulative effect on governments.

Remember that governments and embassies maintain press-cutting libraries, and that frequent publicity for a prisoner will bring his name to their notice. It may be helpful if groups, or individuals outside groups, sent copies of relevant press-cuttings to the embassies concerned. Publicity campaigns are often co-ordinated by the National Sections in order to make them more effective.

DOUBLE ADOPTIONS

Some prisoners are 'double adopted': two groups are briefed on the same case and each is told of the other's involvement. They work separately for the prisoner while co-ordinating their activities. Double adoption means that pressure can be exerted on governments from two different countries and that the financial responsibility for providing relief is shared.

When writing to prisoners, families, or contacts, groups should always make it clear - unless instructed to the contrary - that they are one of two groups working for the prisoner. Otherwise the recipient may be confused by different persons asking the same questions. Groups should consult each other on the best course of action and on the way in which they may share the work. Though some groups find this a constructive arrangement, others prefer always to have single adoptions.

The International Council decided at Utrecht to phase out double adoptions completely as soon as possible. The International Secretariat, therefore, is keeping double adoptions to a minimum. There may still be exceptional cases where a double adoption will prove of value.

CO-ORDINATION GROUPS

These are groups in some sections which undertake the following tasks in addition to their normal group activities:

- (i) Co-ordination of the work done by groups within the Section working on a particular country.
- (ii) Action, especially publicity. This is carried out in each instance with the approval of the National Section.
- (iii) Research, on particular areas or problems. This is undertaken in close co-operation with the International Secretariat, and only in agreement between the International Executive Committee and the National Section.

ORGANISING AN AMNESTY GROUP

ORGANISATION

The over-riding object of Amnesty group work is to secure the release of adopted prisoners, and it is up to groups to organise themselves in the most effective way towards this end. The number of people in a group varies, but is usually not less than six. Some groups have as many as 50 members. If the group is over-organised, its members may feel inhibited from taking action, but each group should appoint a Secretary and Treasurer.

Individual members will also take responsibility for writing to embassies and governments, organising publicity and press relations, sending money and parcels, and organising fund-raising activities. All groups work out the system that suits them best. They can consult the National Section or the International Secretariat if advice is needed.

VISITS TO INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

The staff of the International Secretariat enjoy contacts with Amnesty members visiting London, although the time allotted to such visits is limited. Intending visitors should telephone or write in advance, mentioning the area they wish to discuss. This enables staff members to organise their work schedules accordingly.

FINANCE

Fund-raising is one of the most important functions of Amnesty International Sections and Groups. The International Secretariat is financed entirely by voluntary contributions. Most of these contributions come from the Sections and Groups.

The money is spent on maintaining the Research Department, sending missions all over the world, supporting a large-scale relief programme, keeping everyone informed of Amnesty's activities, and administering the organisation.

Finance Meetings are held biannually to review the budget, and each Section commits itself to an amount it will contribute to the Secretariat during the coming year. Each Section then decides the amount it will expect from its groups. The contributions are made quarterly in advance. Where no section exists, each individual group has to pay an annual subscription which is agreed at the Finance Meeting. In the National Sections, contributions will be forwarded through the Section's Treasurer.

Each group will decide on the method of fund-raising that suits it best. Exhibitions, concerts and talks can publicise your prisoners as well as raise funds.

REPORTS *Please Note*

It is essential that groups send a quarterly report to the Secretariat. The report should give a full list of all group action, and a record of all letters written, even if no replies have been received. However, groups should inform the Secretariat immediately if they obtain news of a prisoner. Do not wait for a quarterly report. Send the original document if you are unable to make a photocopy.

The Secretariat is also anxious to obtain copies of all letters received from prisoners and their families, and always needs photographs of prisoners and prisons. The Secretariat is constantly receiving requests from National Sections and the press for material illustrating Amnesty's work. Copies of prisoners' letters and photographs are especially useful for exhibitions, publications and publicity. Co-ordination groups are also interested in obtaining such material.

RELEASES

The Secretariate should be informed immediately if the group hears that a prisoner has been released. It would be helpful if groups could indicate at the same time whether they require a replacement as some groups do not want to take on a new case immediately. For some time after a prisoner's release, until he finds employment, a group may assist him in various ways, including financial aid, advice regarding education, employment etc.

SUSPENSION OF GROUP WORK

It sometimes happens that a group is either temporarily or permanently unable to continue working on behalf of its adopted prisoners. If this happens, it is vital to notify the Secretariat immediately. Otherwise it will be assumed that the prisoners and their families are still being looked after. If the Secretariat is notified that a group has closed down it will be possible to arrange for the adoption of its prisoners by other groups.

Please include your group number or name and the name and country of your prisoner in all letters and reports. Also include your own name and address.

When sending money to the Secretariat please give your name and address, the number or name of your group and details of the purpose of the payment.

APPENDIX A

STATUTE OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

As amended by the Fifth International Council Meeting, Utrecht, September 8, 1972.

OBJECTS

1. CONSIDERING that every person has the right freely to hold and to express his convictions and the obligation to extend a like freedom to others, the objects of Amnesty International shall be to secure throughout the world the observance of the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by:
 - (a) irrespective of political consideration working towards the release of and providing assistance to persons who in violation of the aforesaid provisions are imprisoned, detained, restricted or otherwise subjected to physical coercion or restriction by reason of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs or by reason of their ethnic origin, colour or language provided that they have not used or advocated violence (hereinafter referred to as "Prisoners of Conscience").
 - (b) opposing by all appropriate means the imposition and execution of death penalties and torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading penalties or treatment of prisoners and others detained or restricted in violation of the above provisions.

METHODS

2. In order to achieve the aforesaid objects, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL shall:
 - (a) at all times maintain an overall balance between its activities in relation to countries adhering to the different world political ideologies and groupings;
 - (b) promote as appears appropriate the adoption of constitutions, conventions, treaties and other measures which guarantee the rights contained in the provisions referred to in Article 1 hereof;
 - (c) support and publicise the activities of and co-operate with international organisations and agencies which work for the implementation of the aforesaid provisions;
 - (d) take all necessary steps to establish an effective organisation of national sections, affiliated groups and individual members;
 - (e) secure the adoption by groups of members or supporters of individual Prisoners of Conscience;
 - (f) provide financial and other relief to Prisoners of Conscience and their dependents and to persons who have lately been Prisoners of Conscience or who might reasonably be expected to become Prisoners of Conscience if they were to return to their own countries and to the dependents of such persons;

- (g) work for the improvement of conditions for Prisoners of Conscience and political prisoners;
- (h) provide legal aid, where necessary and possible to Prisoners of Conscience and to persons who, if convicted, might reasonably be considered likely to become Prisoners of Conscience and, where desirable, send observers to attend the trial of such persons;
- (i) publicise the cases of Prisoners of Conscience or persons who have otherwise been subjected to disabilities in violation of the aforesaid provisions;
- (j) send investigators, where appropriate, to investigate allegations that the rights of individuals under the aforesaid provisions have been violated or threatened;
- (k) make representations to international organisations and to governments whenever it appears that an individual is a Prisoner of Conscience or has otherwise been subjected to disabilities in violation of the aforesaid provisions;
- (l) promote and support the granting of general amnesties of which the beneficiaries will include Prisoners of Conscience;
- (m) adopt any other appropriate methods for the securing of its objects.

The complete text of the Statute, of which the above is an extract, is available from the International Secretariat.

APPENDIX B

POLICY GUIDELINES RELATING TO CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION
ENDORSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL AT ITS 5TH MEETING 1972

1. Consultative Assembly Resolution 337 (1967) of the Council of Europe

Persons liable to conscription for military service who, for reasons of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, or similar motives, refuse to perform armed service, shall enjoy a personal right to be released from the obligation to perform such service.

2. Draft Universal Charter on Conscientious Objection of the International Peace Bureau

This charter affirms for all people the right to the legal recognition of conscientious objection to military service and training on the grounds of conscience or profound conviction arising from religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, or similar motives, and calls upon all governments to accord to all citizens the right to refuse military service of any kind, in peacetime and in war, including provision for those who, on grounds of conscience or profound conviction, feel the obligation to refuse any type of alternative service.

3. Committee on Society, Development and Peace, SODEPAX Report of the Baden Consultation 3-9 April 1970, IV. Rights and World Peace paras 29-32

The rights of conscientious objectors

The consultation considers that the exercise of conscientious judgement is inherent in the dignity of human beings and that accordingly, each person should be assured the right, on grounds of conscience or profound conviction, to refuse military service, or any other direct or indirect participation in wars or armed conflicts.

The right of conscientious objection also extends to those who are unwilling to serve in a particular war because they consider it unjust or because they refuse to participate in a war or conflict in which weapons of mass destruction are likely to be used. The consultation also considers that members of armed forces have the right and even the duty, to refuse to obey military orders which may involve the commission of criminal offences, or of war crimes or of crimes against humanity.

It is urged that the Churches should use their best endeavour to secure the recognition of the right of conscientious objection as herein before defined under national and international law. Governments should extend the right of asylum to those refusing to serve in their country for reasons of conscience.

4. World Conference on Religion and Peace, Kyoto, Japan, 16-21 October 1970

The rights of conscientious objectors

We consider that the exercise of conscientious judgement is inherent in the dignity of human beings and that, accordingly, each person should be assured the right, on grounds of conscience or profound conviction, to refuse military service or any other direct or indirect participation in wars or armed conflicts. The right of conscientious objection also extends to those who are unwilling to serve in a particular war because they consider it unjust or because they refuse to participate in a war or conflict in which weapons of mass destruction are likely to be used. This Conference also considers that members of armed forces have the right, and even the duty, to refuse to obey military orders which may involve the commission of criminal offences, or of war crimes, or of crimes against humanity.

5. Decision taken at the 3rd meeting of the International Council of Amnesty International, Oslo, 1970

Where a man or woman is detained/imprisoned because he claims that on grounds of conscience he objects to military service he is to be regarded by Amnesty International as, prima facie, a Prisoner of Conscience if his detention/imprisonment is the consequence of one or more of the following:

- (a) the failure of the legal code of his/her country to make provision for the recognition of conscientious objection and for a man/woman to register his/her objection at a specific point in time
- (b) refusal of the man/woman to register - as a matter of principle - although the opportunity for so doing exists
- (c) recognition of conscientious objection being so restricted that only some and not all of the following are acceptable: ethical, humanitarian, political, religious or similar grounds
- (d) restriction of the valid claim to exemption only for the period before induction (call-up). It should be possible to make such a claim at any point during military service. No one should be imprisoned or detained after making an application for exemption (after being called up) and before his/her application has been decided upon
- (e) restriction of the valid claim only to comprehensive objection and the exclusion of selective objection. The possibility should be recognised of a valid objection either to some wars (or to some operations within wars) or to all war as such
- (f) if denied the right to non-combatant service
- (g) if denied the right to alternative civilian service

6. Decision taken at the 4th meeting of the International Council of Amnesty International, Luxembourg, 1971

Whilst recognising that owing to staff and financial limitations, Amnesty International is able only to adopt, at a given time, a proportion of prisoners of conscience, the Council notes with concern the decision taken by the International Council in Oslo 1970, to exclude automatically from consideration for adoption whole groups of conscientious objectors. In particular, it notes the following categories are excluded:

- (a) the "unconditionalists" - thus Amnesty International in the two World Wars would not have recognised many lifelong and dedicated pacifists who were imprisoned for this reason
- (b) those who are prepared to accept a conditional exemption but who have a conscientious objection to the alternative offered, eg, those who were given Civil Defence but who regarded this service as being part of the War Machine
- (c) those who whilst not liable for military service are required as civilians to register for, and to be directed into activities contrary to their conscience, eg, working in an armaments factory, firewatching, etc.

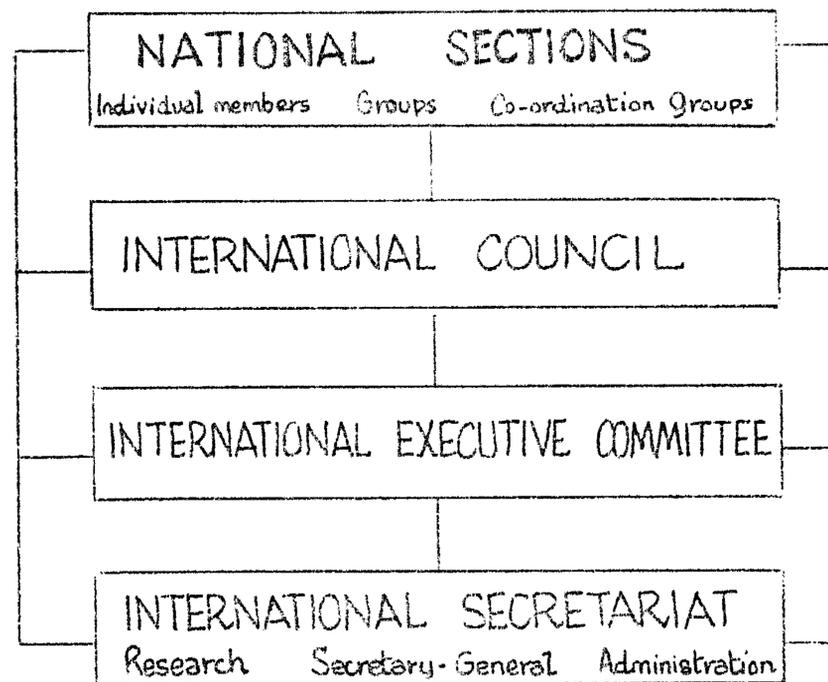
The International Council, believing that where the use or advocacy of violence is not involved, it is contrary to the principles of Amnesty International to make such blanket judgements and to exclude prisoners of conscience, resolves to re-consider its definition of conscientious objection and to widen it so as to include those categories that are at present omitted.

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



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