



## GLOBAL UPDATE

EVENTS COVERING THE PERIOD FROM 1 JANUARY TO 4 MAY 2011

**Under strict embargo for 23:01 GMT Thursday 12 May 2011 (00:01 BST Friday 13 May 2011)**

### OVERVIEW

The first four months of 2011 witnessed an unprecedented surge of ordinary people speaking up for their rights and demanding change. Inspired by political upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa, protesters peacefully called for greater freedoms in Sudan and Azerbaijan, while online activists in China urged a 'Jasmine Revolution'. But the authorities' repressive attempts to silence these voices through arrests and detentions, ill-treatment and prison sentences continued.

Civilians elsewhere also paid a heavy price for exercising their civil and political rights. Hundreds were killed during Nigeria's election period in April, and hundreds of thousands of people displaced by post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire still fear reprisals if they return home.

In contrast, 2011 has seen some victories for international justice, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia's sentencing of three former generals for crimes committed during the Balkans war. Another step was made on the path towards ending the death penalty, as Illinois became the USA's 16<sup>th</sup> abolitionist state.

Yet entrenched human rights abuses and insecurity continued unabated in many countries. In Mexico, 11,000 migrants were abducted during a six-month period alone, and in Colombia, more human rights activists were killed. Amid increased Taliban attacks in Afghanistan, questions about security are also mounting following the killing of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan.

Worldwide, the struggle for free expression, security and human rights is in sharper focus than ever.

Please see *State of human rights in the Middle East and North Africa, January to mid-April 2011* for information about recent events in the region.

### KEY MOMENTS in 2011 BY REGION

#### AFRICA

##### Sudan

An overwhelming majority of the south Sudanese population voted for independence from the north in a referendum held in January 2011, with the secession now set to happen on 9 July 2011. Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir and two other alleged perpetrators of crimes in Darfur continue to evade justice, two years after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against them. From the end of January onwards, the authorities in Khartoum repressed peaceful demonstrations inspired by events in North Africa. Scores of people were arrested and some still remain in detention where they are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

## **Côte d'Ivoire**

Violence escalated in Côte d'Ivoire following the disputed presidential election in November 2010, resulting in extra-judicial killings, ill treatment, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and sexual violence – including rape – by both parties. After outgoing President Laurent Gbagbo was arrested in April, Amnesty International called on the UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to significantly increase its presence to allow displaced people to return safely to their communities. President Alassane Ouattara called for Ivorians to “abstain from all forms of reprisals and violence”, but people suspected of being pro-Gbagbo remain at risk of violent reprisals from the security forces and others loyal to President Ouattara.

## **Nigeria**

Supporters of rival political parties clashed violently in the run-up to Nigeria's national parliamentary, presidential and state elections held between 9-28 April. Hundreds of people were killed in politically motivated, communal and sectarian violence, and threats and intimidation also took place. At least 20 people died and many more were injured in political attacks and clashes throughout the country in March. On polling day on 9 April, two bombs killed several people and injured more near polling stations in Maiduguri, Borno state. According to media reports, at least 500 people were killed in rioting and violent attacks in the north and centre of the country following the presidential elections, and many more were injured.

## **Kenya**

In March 2011 the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) summoned six Kenyan citizens for alleged crimes against humanity during the 2007-2008 Kenyan post-election violence. An initial hearing process in April is due to be followed by confirmation hearings in September to determine whether the Prosecutor has sufficient evidence to refer the case for trial. However, in April the Kenyan government requested that the cases be deferred to Kenya's national courts, stating that all necessary reforms are being put in place to investigate and try cases involving post-election violence. Amnesty International is concerned that these are empty promises which cannot be used to pre-empt the Court's jurisdiction.

## **AMERICAS**

### **Brazil**

In April, the Inter-American Commission ordered Brazil to stop all works on the Belo Monte hydroelectric project in Pará state, in order to obtain free, prior, informed consent from the indigenous groups affected.

In February, a federal police operation aimed at fighting police corruption in Rio led to the arrest of over 25 civil police officers, including deputy head of the civil police, Carlos de Oliveira. The head of the civil police, Allan Turnowski, also resigned. Phone taps revealed that police had systematically looted residents' property during a large-scale operation to retake the Complexo do Alemão neighbourhood from drug factions in November.

### **Colombia**

In April, a judge sentenced a former paramilitary leader to 36 years in prison for his part in the killing of trade unionist Jairo Antonio Chimá Paternina in 2001. Iván Roberto Duque Gaviria (alias 'Ernesto Báez') was considered the political head of the paramilitary umbrella organization, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia.

Following a spate of killings this year, the government has announced measures to reorganize its protection programmes for human rights defenders, victims, witnesses and judges. This year's victims include Judge Gloria Gaona, who was presiding over the trial of an army officer accused of raping and killing children; land rights activist David Góez Rodríguez; Ever Verbel Rocha, a member of the Movement of Victims of

State Crimes; and Bernardo Ríos Londoño, who had close ties to the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.

## **Cuba**

By the end of March, Cuba had released all its prisoners of conscience, most of whom left for Spain under an agreement between the two governments and the Cuban Catholic Church. Twelve former prisoners of conscience who refused to accept leaving Cuba as a release condition were finally provisionally released. But the laws that allowed them to be detained remain in place.

## **Haiti**

Former President Jean Claude Duvalier was detained two days after returning to Haiti following nearly 25 years of in exile in France. He now faces a possible trial for crimes against humanity. He fled Haiti in 1986 after a popular uprising which was violently repressed by the former Haitian Armed Forces and a local militia known as the “Tonton Macoutes”.

## **USA**

In March, President Obama ended a moratorium on new military commission prosecutions of Guantánamo detainees. Amnesty International opposes these types of prosecutions because they don't comply with international standards for fair trials. In April, the administration referred for trial by military commission five Guantánamo detainees accused of involvement in the 11 September 2001 attacks. This reversed the US Attorney General's November 2009 announcement that the five would be brought to the US mainland for trial in an ordinary civilian court.

On 9 March, the Governor of Illinois, Pat Quinn, signed a bill abolishing the death penalty in his state, making Illinois the USA's 16<sup>th</sup> abolitionist state. By 11 April, the USA had executed 11 people during 2011. A further six people died after being hit by tasers, bringing the total number of such deaths since June 2001 to 458.

## **Mexico**

In February, the sister, brother and sister in-law of murdered human rights defender, Josefina Reyes, were abducted and killed in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua state. The National Human Rights Commission reported that an increased number of migrants – 11,000 – had been abducted in Mexico over a six month period. More than 120 bodies were discovered in mass graves in Tamaulipas state in April, near where 72 bodies of migrants were found in August 2010. Thirty-four people were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the abduction and murders, including 16 police.

## **ASIA-PACIFIC**

### **China**

In an attempt to pre-empt a Middle East-style uprising, the government widened its crackdown on activists. After an online call on 17 February urged people to stage a “Jasmine Revolution”, more than 100 activists, many of them active online, went missing. Others were detained or put under illegal house arrest or surveillance by the government. At least six people have been formally arrested, including on suspicion of “endangering state security”, and four people have been sentenced to Re-education Through Labour. The authorities briefly detained more than a dozen lawyers and pressured them not to take up sensitive cases.

### **Afghanistan**

The Taliban increased its attacks on key government sites in April, including an Afghan army headquarters in Laghman Province and the Ministry of Defence in Kabul. On 1 April, Afghan forces were unable to stop demonstrators who attacked the UN office in Mazar-e Sharif, killing 10 aid workers and security guards.

Nearly 500 Taliban fighters escaped from a prison in Kandahar on 18 April. These incidents raised doubts about the Afghan government's ability to assume security from US and NATO forces. The security handover started in March and aims to put Afghan forces in charge of security in 2014.

### **Sri Lanka**

In April, a UN Panel of Experts submitted their report about alleged violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the final stages of Sri Lanka's armed conflict. It concluded that tens of thousands of civilians were killed in northern Sri Lanka between January and May 2009. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had used civilians as a buffer against the advancing Sri Lankan Army, recruited child soldiers and shot people who attempted to escape. The government had knowingly shelled areas after encouraging civilians to gather there and systematically deprived people in the conflict zone of humanitarian aid.

### **Myanmar**

Myanmar's new administration officially assumed power in March following the 2010 elections. Freedom of assembly and expression remain severely restricted, and some 2,100 political prisoners are still incarcerated. Detainees have reportedly been tortured, and violations against ethnic minorities continue – including acts constituting crimes against humanity. After Myanmar's human rights record was examined by the United Nations Human Rights Council in January 2011, the government denied sentencing anyone for political reasons and stated that the Rohingya ethnic minority were "illegal immigrants". It maintained that it provides accountability, although the new Constitution effectively protects state officials from prosecution for past abuses.

### **Pakistan**

On 1 May, US forces killed Osama bin Laden during a raid in Abbottabad, raising questions about the Pakistani government's knowledge about his presence in the country, as well as about the conduct of US forces and the fate of Osama's companions detained during the raid.

At least 100 activists from Balochistan were victims of 'kill and dump' operations between July 2010 and March 2011. Baloch civil society groups blame Pakistani security forces and intelligence agencies.

Salman Taseer, governor of Punjab province, was assassinated on 4 January, and the Minorities Minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, on 2 March. Both were seeking reform of the country's blasphemy laws.

## **EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

### **Azerbaijan**

The Azerbaijani authorities clamped down severely in March and April on public protests inspired by events in the Middle East. They denied requests to hold peaceful protests, violently dispersed demonstrators and arrested key protest organisers. Protesters have reportedly also been unfairly tried and ill-treated. Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience at least seven people currently in custody on charges relating to the recent protests.

### **Belarus**

Harassment and arrests of civil society activists continued following the post-election demonstration on 19 December. On 6 April the Polish Belarusian journalist Andrei Pochobut was detained and charged with "libel against the president" for his articles published in the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*. People charged with taking part in the demonstration on 19 December began to be sentenced. As of the end of April, five out of 11 prisoners of conscience had been sentenced to between two and five years' imprisonment.

A bomb explosion on the Minsk metro on 11 April killed at least 14 people and led to further activists being arrested and harassed. United Civic Party activist Pavel Levinau was detained on suspicion of being involved in organizing the explosion. The Ministry of Information initiated proceedings to shut down the independent newspapers *Nasha Niva* and *Narodnaya Volya* after they received a third and final warning for their coverage of the attack.

### **Balkans and the legacy of war crimes**

In April, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) acquitted General Ivan Čermak and sentenced Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač, two former Croatian Army generals, to 24 and 18 years' imprisonment respectively for crimes related to "Operation Storm" in 1995, which aimed to permanently force ethnic Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia.

In February, the ICTY delayed the retrial of former Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, in Kosovo because key a witness refused to testify. The ICTY sentenced police general Vlastimir Đorđević to 27 years' imprisonment for war crimes in Kosovo, including his lead role in concealing the murder of over 800 Kosovo Albanians by transferring their bodies to Serbia in April 1999.

### **Counter-terrorism and security**

Despite a lack of political will, small but significant steps were made towards holding European governments accountable for their roles in CIA-operated rendition and secret detention programmes. In March, the European Parliament finally committed to producing a new report into the CIA's alleged use of European countries for these purposes. A criminal investigation into Poland's complicity continues, amidst growing concerns about a lack of transparency and participation by victims. In January, Lithuania's Prosecutor General prematurely terminated the investigation into Lithuania's involvement in secret detentions between 2003 and 2005. Many NGOs have expressed concern that the inquiry into the UK's involvement in mistreating detainees held abroad falls short of international human rights obligations.

### **Italy**

More than 28,000 people from North Africa have arrived in Italy since January as a result of the upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, mainly on the island of Lampedusa. The Italian authorities have failed to provide them with adequate humanitarian assistance and to assess people's individual need for international protection. They have also routinely detained and summarily removed migrants and asylum-seekers from the island.

### **Russian Federation**

On 24 January, a suicide bomb attack at Moscow's Domodedovo airport, for which Chechen separatists claimed responsibility, led to at least 37 deaths and over 120 injuries.

### **Notes to editors**

1. *Amnesty International Report 2011: State of the World's Human Rights* covers the period January-December 2010.
2. Facts and figures, audio-visual materials, details of media events and other information are available please email [press@amnesty.org](mailto:press@amnesty.org) for further details.
3. For more information or to arrange an interview with an AI spokesperson and those involved in the frontline of the struggle for human rights in the past year, contact the Press Office on + 44 (0) 20 7413 5566 or [press@amnesty.org](mailto:press@amnesty.org).



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**