

0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 21 October 1992

**CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD TARGETED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.**

Children around the world are being tortured, killed or arbitrarily detained by government military forces and police, Amnesty International said today.

"It is appalling that children are actually being targeted for human rights violations," said the organization, "but we see it happen time and time again."

"Sometimes they are singled out because they are seen as a threat, sometimes they are arbitrarily detained or even tortured to get at their parents. Other children suffer abuses at the hands of government forces and opposition groups, simply because they live in the midst of armed conflict."

Every year Amnesty International receives hundreds of reports of human rights violations against children. Over the years in Brazil, for example, thousands of poverty-stricken street children have been tortured or murdered by death squads, which are often run by off-duty police officers. In Burundi, a household of two women and five children killed with a grenade were among the 1,000 or more people deliberately killed by soldiers last year against a backdrop of extreme ethnic tension.

Children often become the innocent victims of human rights abuses in situations of armed insurgency, suffering "disappearances", abductions, targeted killings and mass reprisals. In Peru children have been among the thousands "disappeared" or killed by the security forces. The armed opposition Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path) have included children among their many victims.

In Turkey, Kurdish children have been victims of human rights abuses by both government forces and guerrillas belonging to the opposition Kurdish Workers Party. In March this year a 16-year-old Kurdish girl, Biseng Anik, died in police custody, following disturbances during the Kurdish New Year. Half her head had been blown away and her body was reportedly covered with torture marks.

According to the official version of events, Biseng Anik had not been tortured and had killed herself with a rifle she found in her cell. But, there has been no full, independent inquiry into her death.

A handful of governments continue to impose the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment on children. Over the last 10 years, seven countries are known to have executed young people for crimes committed when they were still juveniles - the largest confirmed number, five executions, has been carried out in the United States of America. In February 1992 the state of Texas executed juvenile offender Johnny Garrett for a crime he committed when he was just 17. He was mentally impaired, chronically psychotic, brain-damaged and suffered from paranoid delusions.

"Children and young people are particularly vulnerable," said Amnesty International. "But instead of protecting them, all too often we see governments killing, torturing and imprisoning them. Children cannot stand up for their own rights - it is imperative that governments take action to do that for them."

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