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£LIBERIA

@No chance for a lasting peace without effective human rights guarantees

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Amnesty International believes that there is no chance for a lasting peace in Liberia unless effective guarantees on human rights are included in the peace process. While welcoming and recognizing the significance of the recent peace agreement, signed for the first time in the Liberian conflict under the aegis of the **United Nations** (UN), Amnesty International feels that it is seriously flawed by the omission of conditions obliging the warring factions or any future government to respect human rights or to bring to justice those responsible for killings and torture.

On 25 July 1993 the armed groups which have been contesting control of Liberia in recent years signed a peace accord in Cotonou, Benin, which provided for a UN-supervised cease-fire and for the establishment of a transitional government. It was also signed by the **Economic Community of West African States** (ECOWAS) and the UN, which are responsible for ensuring its implementation, and the **Organisation for African Unity** (OAU). However, by December 1993 the armed groups had not begun to place their combatants into camps or to disarm them, and the formation of the transitional government was plagued by disagreements.

Amnesty International is concerned that the peace accord makes no recommendations about the investigation and reporting of the gross human rights violations which have been committed by all sides since the start of the civil war in December 1989, and that no effective steps have been taken to investigate even the most serious of atrocities committed in 1993. Although a UN inquiry into the massacre of nearly 600 civilians at Harbel in June 1993 called for criminal investigations with a view to

prosecution of those responsible for these and other major atrocities, no investigation is known to have been conducted since by any of the warring parties or by ECOWAS.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the agreement contains no guarantees for the safety of released prisoners or specific human rights guarantees, and that no mechanisms have been established to ensure continuing monitoring of the human rights situation nor to investigate and remedy any violations which may occur. The agreement provides for an amnesty which could include those responsible for human rights violations, war crimes or crimes against humanity. Also, the mechanisms for ensuring implementation of the agreement appear likely to be ineffective.

Amnesty International is therefore calling upon all parties to the conflict and the future transitional government of which they are part:

- to end human rights abuses and provide adequate safeguards for detainees, including ensuring full access to them by the International Committee of the Red Cross;
- to exclude from any amnesty, or from any position of authority over prisoners or over armed personnel, those suspected of being responsible for human rights abuses, and to bring them to justice;
- to report all human rights abuses to the appropriate authorities and to encourage the general public in Liberia also to do so;
- to ratify international human rights treaties and to amend and implement the Liberian Constitution and laws consistently with internationally-recognized human rights standards;
- to undertake steps towards long-term institution-building and reforms for the promotion of human rights, including establishing - in cooperation with the UN, ECOWAS and the OAU - an independent judicial system and properly trained security forces.

Amnesty International is calling on the UN, ECOWAS and OAU:

- to ensure that a human rights monitoring mechanism is established with a mandate to investigate and report human rights abuses and that it issues frequent reports and distributes them widely;
- to establish an international group of civilian advisers to assist in human rights training and amendment of the Liberian Constitution and laws, and to support local human rights initiatives;
- to maintain an international presence in Liberia for as long as may be necessary after any future elections to ensure human rights are respected.

KEYWORDS: IMPUNITY / AMNESTIES FOR VIOLATORS / EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION / UN / OAU / ARMED CONFLICT /

This report summarizes a 10-page document (3703 words), *Liberia: No chance for a lasting peace without effective human rights guarantees* (AI Index: AFR 34/01/93), issued by Amnesty International on 13 December 1993. Anyone wanting further details or to take action on this issue should consult the full document.

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