

media advisory

AI INDEX: ASA 04/10/98 News Service 59/98
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE 0700 HRS GMT 22 APRIL 1998
AI INDEX: ASA 04/10/98 News Service 37/98



Children in South Asia *"Their rights – the region's future"*

On 22 April, Amnesty International launches a campaign highlighting children's rights in South Asia. The official media launch will take place with press conferences and public activities in Karachi and Dhaka and a rally of 1,000 schoolchildren in Kathmandu. Thousands of non-governmental organizations in India and Sri Lanka are also being invited to participate.

**For more information, a copy of the campaign media pack, or an interview, please call:
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A 15-year-old girl is raped by armed guards after her father is killed for allowing her to go to school ... A 14-year-old ragpicker is tortured by having pins pierced through his fingernails ... A two-year-old girl is killed in an indiscriminate bombing by an armed opposition group ... Children as young as a few months old are held in a private jail for bonded labourers, where 10-year-old girls are repeatedly raped by the landlord ... A 13-year-old boy is sent off to fight by his teachers ... A 12-year-old boy serves 12 years in jail – held almost continuously in leg irons – for a robbery conviction which is later thrown out ... Dozens of children "disappear" after being picked up by the security forces ... An estimated 9,000 girls are trafficked from Nepal and Bangladesh to India and Pakistan destined for a life as prostitutes each year ...

All the governments in the region have made a commitment to uphold the Convention on the Rights of the Child and have strengthened this commitment through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Yet, children continue to be ill-treated in the custody of the state as it administers juvenile justice, are left unprotected in the family and community and suffer the consequences of living in the midst of armed conflict. Economic disadvantage, social exclusion and political marginalization add to the vulnerability of youth to perpetuate these cycles of abuse. Girls face particular disadvantage in South Asia, which compounds the discrimination faced by women.

Amnesty International's members worldwide will be calling on the governments of South Asia, armed groups as well as the international community to take action to ensure that children in the region are able to enjoy all the rights which they are guaranteed – be it the right to education or to freedom from torture. One quarter of the world's children live in South Asia: the way that children are treated now will have an impact on human rights protection for generations to come. ENDS/.