

AI INDEX: ASA 11/04/98
17 April 1998

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AFGHANISTAN

Concrete Action Needed Now

Today's announcement that the United States (US) has secured a cease-fire from the Taliban and won their agreement to hold talks with opposition forces by 27 April, indicates that the US is able to play a decisive role in resolving the Afghan conflict and in bringing human rights abuses in the country to an end, according to Amnesty International.

The US ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, is currently visiting Afghanistan.

Amnesty International has said for a long time that countries which have supported various warring factions, or have sent weapons to Afghanistan in the past, must acknowledge a share of the responsibility for the human rights disaster there. It is through their backing or through the use of these weapons in the country, that the warring factions are able to commit human rights violations -- and with total impunity.

Some of the statements that Bill Richardson has made about the situation of women are encouraging, but he and the US Government need to back these statements with concrete action. If it is possible to secure a commitment for a cease-fire, it should certainly be possible to secure a commitment from the warring factions to respect the human rights of women, minorities and individuals.

ENDS.../