

MEDIA ADVISORY
UPDATE

6 OCTOBER 1997

MEDIA ADVISORY

News Service 166/97
AI INDEX: IOR 41/12/97

Amnesty International urges UNHCR Executive Committee to have human rights on the agenda

PRESS BRIEFING INVITATION

The annual meeting of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) taking place in Geneva from 13 to 17 October will debate issues which will affect millions of refugees' lives. Amnesty International is urging the officials of the world's governments present at EXCOM to take proper account of human rights issues in their deliberations. The human rights organization will be holding a press briefing at:

10:00 am, Wednesday 8 October 1997
Palais des Nations, Geneva
(in the library behind press room 2)

The main issue for debate this year at the Excom is going to be the subject of repatriation. Amnesty International believes that repatriation of refugees can only be based on an objective analysis of the human rights situation of the refugees' country of origin. Without this analysis, there is the danger of refugees being returned to a country which is not yet safe, and possibly facing grave human rights violations such as torture, "disappearance", or execution. Governments which return refugees to dangerous situations are clearly disregarding their legal obligations under the UN Refugee Convention.

States around the globe fail to equally share responsibility for hosting refugees and funding their support. In particular, governments fail to ensure that the UNHCR is able to implement its full protection mandate, and that funding arrangements are made to improve support for those states which bear the overwhelming responsibility for hosting refugees.

Speaking at the press briefing will be:

- Leanne MacMillan, Amnesty International's Refugee Program coordinator
- Saul Takahashi, Amnesty International's Refugee Program Officer

For further information please contact:

Fiona McElree, Amnesty International's Geneva office
International Secretariat, Press Office

Tel: (41) 22 798 2500
Tel: (44) 171 413 5566/5831