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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 02/93

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Hong-Kong Section and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

NEWS INITIATIVES

Bosnia-Herzegovina - 21 January

(New Information)

A 10-page document on rape in Bosnia will be embargoed for 0900 hrs gmt, Thursday 21 January 1993 and will be released at a press briefing in Geneva (details follow). The IS Press Office will send the document to all section Press Officers as soon as possible.

Thanks for your response about the conference call - we will send out details later this week.

The Swiss Section, in connection with the IS, is organizing a media event and press briefing at the UN Palais des Nations in Geneva - as a conclusion to the letter-writing campaign for human rights in the Former Yugoslavia. We already have over 250,000 letters from around the world, which will be used for a visual photo opportunity - which should attract TV. The IS will be inviting the international media, including agencies, radio and television - you are encouraged to invite any of your media who may be interested in attending.

We will be sending you more details as they are finalized - in the meantime, please contact Daniel Bolomey at the Swiss Section if you have any queries.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Australia - EMBARGO DELAYED

(New Information)

Please note that the document on Aboriginal deaths and ill-treatment in custody has been held up in approvals and will not meet the embargo date originally set. We will keep you posted of developments and the new date.

Japan - 10 March

A document and news release on refugee issues in Japan. We anticipate a high level of media interest in this news release.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Chad - 29 January

An open letter is being planned to coincide with the National Conference in Chad. The IS will be sending it to specialist media, embargoed for 29 January.

Sri Lanka - EMBARGO DELAYED

(New Information)

Please note that the document about the Sri Lankan government's implementation of AI's recommendations has been delayed. There will be a weekly update to accompany it when it is ready. We will keep you posted of further developments. The IS Press Office plans to send it to selected media.

Brazil - 1600 hrs gmt 15 January 1993

Please note the human rights concert which was planned for 17 January has unfortunately been cancelled. The report will still be launched in Brazil as planned (details follow), but the text of the weekly update item index: AMR 19/WU 02/92, sent in Weekly Update NWS 11/51/92, needs to be changed:

Remove the last sentence on page 2 of the text (referring to the concert), so that the item ends: "curb human rights violations in the region."

Please note that the embargo has been confirmed for 1600 hrs gmt, 15 January 1993. The above-mentioned weekly update item is to accompany a document about human rights violations against indigenous peoples in Brazil, which will be sent to you in the first weekly mailing of 1993. A spokesperson from the IS is in Brazil to deal with media there, and the IS will be sending the weekly update item to international media.

Racism and ill-treatment in Europe - 3 February

News release to go with Focus and campaign action on racist ill-treatment in Europe. The embargo has been confirmed for 3 February 1993. The IS Press Office will send the Focus article to section Press Officers next week as the February Newsletter has been delayed because of IS staff shortages.

SECTION INITIATIVES

Equatorial Guinea - 14 January

The Spanish Section has written a news release to accompany a document on Equatorial Guinea, which will be embargoed for 14 January. The document has been sent out to you in the weekly mailing. Please contact Cesar Diaz at the Spanish section for more information about the news release.

2. ASA 19/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
8 January 1993

INTERNAL

The following item is in connection with a newspaper article in today's South China Morning Post, an influential Hong Kong daily. The article drew heavily on a letter from the director of the Hong Kong section, written at a time when she believed she and her assistant were about to be made redundant, and distributed by her widely within the NGO community and other places. The letter was heavily critical of the section's executive committee, and made allegations that she had been made redundant because she was pregnant, that the section is dominated by expatriates rather than Chinese people and that there is no commitment to recruitment of Chinese members within Hong Kong. The newspaper article also contained several inaccuracies, including claiming that the section would be used for membership recruitment within China and for research on China

It is expected that this will provoke a great deal of interest among the Hong Kong and Chinese media, and as this may spill over into international media, we have prepared this weekly update item and a questions and answers. The IS will be sending the weekly update item out to media within Hong Kong but would prefer other sections not to seek publicity.

EXTERNAL

HONG KONG: CHAIR OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE TO VISIT SECTION

The Chair of Amnesty International's ruling body, the International Executive Committee, will be visiting Hong Kong from Saturday, to consult the Hong Kong section's executive committee about the financial problems they are facing.

Mr Ross Daniels will be in Hong Kong from 9 to 14 January, before flying on to Korea and Japan. He is visiting the section to discuss the current financial problems of the section and how they might be solved.

The financial difficulties are not the result of falling support within Hong Kong - local membership and income support have in fact remained fairly constant. Until now, expansion of the Hong Kong office has been financed by a grant from the international movement, on the basis that local fundraising initiatives would eventually lead to increased income. In common with sections in other parts of the world, including Europe and North America, the Hong Kong section has found that ambitious new fundraising targets have not been met. These difficult circumstances have already been the subject of lengthy and continuing discussion between the section executive committee, the International Secretariat in London and the International Executive Committee.

In the light of these financial circumstances, the executive committee of the section decided to make two staff members redundant, the section director Shum Yan-Shan and her assistant. That decision has since been suspended, pending further examination of the circumstances by the local membership. Shum Yan-Shan is currently on maternity leave.

The circumstances of the financial difficulties and the possible redundancies have been made public by Shum Yan-Shan and have been the subject of media reports. Those reports have contained some inaccuracies.

The section in Hong Kong is composed of and run by local people committed to human rights. They carry out campaigning on human rights issues, membership recruitment, fundraising and human rights education on countries around the world, except Hong Kong and China. The section will never be used for researching human rights issues in China. No sections are ever asked or expected to carry out research - all research is the responsibility of the movement's International Secretariat in London.

The section also has no role in recruiting membership in China. An important element of its work is to develop membership within the community in which it is based - Hong Kong - and to develop a membership that reflects that community.

It is also not true to say that there is no commitment to recruit people from Hong Kong's Chinese majority. On the contrary, the section recognises that at the moment its membership does not adequately reflect Hong Kong's community and is committed to changing that. Although in the past the section has had a largely expatriate membership, there has been a gradual shift in the proportion of Chinese members over the last seven years. Of the section's three volunteer groups, one is Chinese, all staff have been Chinese, as is the immediate past chair of the executive committee. The Hong Kong section is an important section in its own right and in its own community and has been so for over 10 years.

Amnesty International also has another office within Hong Kong, the Asia Distribution Service, which is completely separate from the section and part of the international movement. This office does not carry out research or membership recruitment in China.

The Asia Distribution Service is overseen by the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London and its purpose is to distribute Amnesty International material in Asia. It has been based in Hong Kong since 1990, after moving from Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Note to editors: Ross Daniels will be arriving in Hong Kong on Saturday 8 January. He will not be able to talk to media immediately, as he will be seeing representatives of the section executive committee. There may be an opportunity for him to speak to media later in his visit. Meanwhile, the point of contact in the section for media is Mr Kenneth Au, immediate past chairperson of the executive committee. He can be reached on +852 856 1212 (home) or +852 837 7302 (work). Otherwise, please contact the press office of the International Secretariat, on +44 71 413 5810/5582.

**3. EUR 63/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
8 January 1993**

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LAUNCHES REPORT ON RAPE

Amnesty International will be launching a report on rape in the context of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, on Thursday 21 January at 0900 hrs gmt.

The report will be launched at a press briefing at the United Nations (UN) Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The briefing will be followed by a symbolic action outside the UN building, on the Place des Nations, where approximately one third of a million letters will be displayed. The letters come from people in dozens of countries from every region of the world, all concerned about the grave human rights violations which are still being committed by all sides in the conflict. The letters will eventually be delivered to the delegates to the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia.

Rape is just one aspect of the many serious human rights violations which have been the hallmark of the conflict within the former Yugoslavia. Amnesty International has already expressed its deep concern about gross human rights violations in Bosnia-Herzegovina in several public statements, including an open letter to all participants in the Geneva peace talks, the European Community, the UN Commission on Human Rights and others.

Amnesty International's Swiss Section is coordinating the press briefing and action and would like to hear from media who wish to attend. Please contact Daniel Bolomey or Elise Kerchenbaum at:

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Media materials will not be available before the embargo.