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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 05/93

Contained in this weekly update is an external for response item on Venezuela and an internal item on Jamaica.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

****Racism and ill-treatment in Europe - 3 February****

(New Information)

Please note that there is a correction to the news release which was sent out in the Weekly Mailing this week and was sent to Press Officers by e-mail/telex/fax last week. The corrected news release was faxed/ e-mailed/telexed to Press Officers today. It is to go with the February Focus and campaign action on racist ill-treatment in Europe which has been sent out. The Campaigns Team is producing extra campaign material which should reach sections shortly.

Australia - *1301 hrs gmt 10 February*

(New Information)

Please note that the embargo has been confirmed for 1301 hrs gmt, Wednesday 10 February for the news release and document on Aboriginal deaths and ill-treatment in custody.

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 - 12 February

(New Information)

Please note that the embargo is confirmed for 12 February for a Weekly Update and document about the Sri Lankan government's implementation of AI's recommendations. The IS Press Office plans to send it to selected media.

Audio-visual News

The French translation of the Doctors and Torture video is now available from John Darcy (ISD) at the IS.

2. AMR 53/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL FOR RESPONSE
22 January 1993

INTERNAL

Please note that the following is to be used only in response to media enquiries, it should not be used for proactive media coverage.

EXTERNAL

VENEZUELA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION VISITS VENEZUELA

Two members of the Americas Research Department of Amnesty International's International Secretariat are visiting Venezuela from 23 January to 4 February 1993. The delegates will gather first-hand information about alleged extrajudicial executions and torture following the 27 November 1992 attempted coup d'etat -- as well as other human rights violations reported since the last mission to Venezuela in May 1992. The delegates will also participate in a workshop on gathering information, organized by local human rights organizations.

3. AMR 38/WU 01/93 INTERNAL
22 January 1993

JAMAICA: MOVES TO RESUME HANGINGS UPDATE

Following is an update to the external document: JAMAICA - Moves to resume hangings: Amnesty International's concerns. (AI Index:AMR 38/01/93), which was sent to all sections in the last Weekly Mailing. Some sections have already received the text of this document, with specific recommended actions to start immediately. Other sections may be required to take further action in the future and are asked to keep the document as relevant background. Please draw this item to the attention of Campaign Coordinators.

The Jamaica Court of Appeal will now start hearing appeals against prisoners' capital murder reclassifications from mid-February - not this week as was originally announced. This delay is due at least in part to pressures brought to bear on the authorities by lawyers who had been given inadequate time to prepare legal representation. No execution warrants will be issued before this period. (It has now been conceded by the authorities that legal aid will be available for prisoners seeking a review of their classification, although the level of legal aid in Jamaica is very low.)

We now know that a further 35 death row prisoners had their offences reclassified so far this month. Twenty-three were reclassified "capital murder" and 12 as "noncapital murder". Since October 1992, therefore, at least 108 death row prisoners to date have had their offences reclassified as "capital murder" and 59 have had their death sentences commuted under the new law.

Amnesty International is unsure of the exact number of prisoners currently on death row, due to new death sentences being passed and the as yet incomplete reclassification process. However, the first paragraph of the external document cited above should have added the sentence "More than 270 prisoners were under sentence of death when the new law came into effect" (that, is, as of October 1992).