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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 16/92

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on Zaire.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

PLEASE NOTE - India campaign Information is going out from the Campaign and Membership department at the IS updating campaign coordinators on the India campaign. It contains information which might be helpful to press officers - you will not be sent a separate copy, so do try to have a look at the document when it arrives in the weekly mailing. AI Index ASA 20/27/92, Campaign update and follow-up advice.

USA

A news release has gone out to sections and media today for immediate release, in response to the execution yesterday of Robert Harris in California.

Sierra Leone - 29 April

You have now been sent a news release to go with a short document on human rights in the wake of war with Liberian rebels. The IS press office expects this to be fairly low-key - the UK and US sections are likely to be working on it but other sections can use their judgement.

Israel/Lebanon - 6 May

(New information)

News release and questions and answers to accompany first detailed report on treatment and conditions of detainees in Khiam prison, South Lebanon. The news release will be sent to you very shortly, the q and a is in the pipeline. Because the subject matter of this report is very complex from a mandate point of view we are considering organising a conference call - let us know if you think that would be helpful.

Please note that the date of this news release has now been brought forward one day, because 7 May is a national holiday in Israel.

Burundi - 13 May

Targeted news release with short document, following recent mission to Burundi.

China (Tibet) - 20 May 1992

A document and news release on repression in Tibet to go with a small-scale campaign. The document includes chapters of prisoners of conscience, torture and ill-treatment, killings and extrajudicial executions of demonstrators and the death penalty. An electronic news release has also been prepared which contains very good footage of riot scenes in Tibet, with security forces clearly beating up Buddhist monks. There is also some new footage belonging to AI, of a monk describing the torture he suffered at the hands of the security forces.

Pakistan - 28 May

A document and targeted news release on arrests in Sind.

Annual Report - 9 July

Thank you for your quick responses to our query about the embargo date. All responses were positive, so 9 July is the confirmed embargo date. We have now sent out a further inquiry about the timing of the embargo, suggesting 1300 hrs gmt (please see note to press officers sent out on 7 April). Thanks to all those of you who have replied so far, and if you have not yet expressed your opinions, please let us know as soon as possible. So far, more people seem to be in favour than have strong feelings against it, so if a 1300 hrs embargo will cause you significant problems, do let us know quickly!

POSSIBLE NEWS INITIATIVES, STILL TO BE CONFIRMED

South Africa - date now possibly 10 June

The research team is planning a document, but as yet cannot give a definite date. It will have an international news release and probably a questions and answers - the date has still not been fixed, although it is quite likely to be 10 June.

Turkey

The planned news release on Turkey has been cancelled. A document on past abuses is planned, and weekly update items will keep you up-to-date with new developments. A research mission is planned for this month, with a possible news release to follow, depending on what information the research mission brings back.

2. AFR 62/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
22 April 1992

ZAIRE: AI CONCERNED OVER FATE OF SOLDIERS

Amnesty International has made urgent appeals to the government of Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire to clarify the situation of more than 25 members of the armed forces arrested in July 1991 and January 1992.

About 30 soldiers were arrested in January 1992 after they briefly took control of the La Voix du Zaire, Voice of Zaire, radio and television complex in the capital Kinshasa. Twenty-seven of them were subsequently brought to trial charged with mutiny and other violent offences, but only nine of the defendants appeared in court. At least 18 others were tried in absentia; no reasons are known to have been given by the authorities for their absence from the court. During the trial, which concluded on 4 April, some of the nine defendants who did appear before the court alleged that they had been repeatedly tortured by being beaten, sexually abused, struck with bayonets and subjected to mock execution. All nine were convicted, however, and sentenced to prison terms of up to 10 years. Those tried in absentia were all sentenced to death, provoking fears that they might already have been killed in custody.

Eight other soldiers have been held without charge or trial since July 1991, apparently because they were suspected of links with the Union Sacre, Sacred Union, political coalition opposed to President Mobutu. They have apparently been held incommunicado since their arrest and there are growing fears for their safety. All eight are army officers, the highest ranking, Lieutenant Colonel Mayolo Mokakoso is a military dentist. He is said to be held incommunicado at Ndolo military prison in Kinshasa but it is not clear that the other seven are also there.

Amnesty International is urging President Sese Seko Mobutu to commute the 18 death sentences, to clarify the legal status and whereabouts of the imprisoned soldiers and to ensure that those held since July 1991 are released without delay if they are not to be brought to trial promptly and fairly on recognizably criminal charges.