

AI Index: NWS 11/23/92

Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 2146

Amnesty International

International Secretariat

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United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 11 JUNE 1992

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 23/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Paraguay, Germany and two items on Kenya.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

South Africa - 10 June

International news release and questions and answers to go with publication on security force involvement in torture and political killings since the start of reforms.

Greece - 24 June

International news release to go with a publication on ill-treatment. The news release has been sent to you.

Annual Report - 9 July

The embargo time is confirmed at 1300 hrs gmt. After the event we will be asking you for feedback about how the media coverage was, particularly in the light of the changed time.

The Annual Report summaries, updates and news release have now been sent to you. The questions from the Questions & Answers will be sent to Press Officers this week so that you can add any other questions you feel we need to answer.

Syria - 22 July

Our first major report in some time will be released on 22 July. We consider this to be an extremely important document, because it makes clear that despite recent amnesties in Syria hundreds of political prisoners are still held in the country. We've discussed the publicity strategy with the research team, who say that high level international publicity is a key goal of releasing the report, and we would ask press officers to do as much work on this as possible.

TARGETED NEWS ITEMS/WEEKLY UPDATES

Nepal - 17 June

Weekly Update item to go with a document on Nepal.

UNCONFIRMED NEWS INITIATIVES

USA - possibly June/July

We will be notifying sections this week on our plans about the release of the LA report. Discussions are underway about a launch late this month.

Indigenous People's Campaign

Discussions are currently under way at the IS about the media strategy for the report, which will have an embargo date in September/October. We are currently considering media materials, speakers, how to present the material, etc. As this is the first time we have done a report like this, we would like your input and think there should be an opportunity to discuss problems in advance. If you are interested in a conference call, please let us know.

2. AFR 31/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

11 June 1992

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ADOPTS MORE THAN 70 PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International has adopted more than 70 prisoners held in Côte d'Ivoire as prisoners of conscience despite charges against them involving acts of violence. All were arrested following demonstrations last February in the capital, Abidjan. The two demonstrations started as peaceful marches, but were both followed by rioting and damage to property.

More than 200 people were arrested initially, of whom more than 70 were convicted between February and April. Some remain held without charge, but most others have been freed uncharged or acquitted. Most of the convicted prisoners of conscience are serving one-year sentences, but some were sentenced to three years' imprisonment. However, no evidence was presented in court to show that any of the convicted prisoners had been personally responsible for acts of violence or vandalism or for advocating violence. Instead, they were convicted controversially under an article of the penal code (Article 26) which made them "jointly responsible" with those who had committed acts of violence on the grounds that they helped prepare the demonstrations or had taken part. The interpretation given to the law in this case means at least 70 people are in prison for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly.

The February marches were called to protest at President Houphouët-Boigny's refusal to act on the proposals of a Commission of Inquiry into reports of army brutality during a raid on a student residence in May 1991. The inquiry concluded that soldiers had beaten and raped students and held the army chief of staff, responsible calling for him to be punished.

The prisoners of conscience include Laurent Gbagbo, leader of the opposition Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), Ivorian Popular Front, René Dégni Ségui, President of the Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme (LIDHO), Ivorian Human Rights League, and Martial Ahipeaud, President of the Fédération étudiante et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI), Ivorian Federation of Students and School Pupils. Amnesty International is calling for all prisoners of conscience to be released immediately and unconditionally in appeals to the authorities in Côte d'Ivoire and to the country's head of state, President Houphouët-Boigny, who has been residing in France since February 1992.

11 June 1992

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: RELEASE OF OPPOSITION PARTY ACTIVISTS

Plácido Mikó Abogo and four other members of the opposition party Convergencia par la Democracia Social (CPDS), Convergence for Social Democracy, were officially pardoned on 2 June 1992 by President Obiang Nguema on the occasion of his 50th birthday. Only three of the five were in prison: they were freed as a result of the President's decision. Several other prisoners, including possible prisoners of conscience, were reportedly released.

Plácido Mikó Abogo had been held in Blackbeach prison since his arrest on 9 February 1992 after a parcel containing CPDS documents, which was being sent to Spain, was intercepted at Malabo airport. The four others evaded arrest at that time by taking refuge in foreign embassies and in the office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). All five were formally charged with insulting the President and the authorities, and with resisting arrest. After being charged, two of Plácido Mikó Abogo's co-defendants were arrested, since when they too have been held awaiting trial in Blackbeach prison. The other two again took refuge in the UNDP office where they remained until 3 June.

The trial of Plácido Mikó Abogo and the other four was scheduled to take place in early June. A Spanish lawyer, Miguel McVeigh, was visiting Equatorial Guinea on behalf of Amnesty International to observe the trial of Plácido Mikó Abogo and the other four and was in the country at the time of their release.

Two others reportedly released are: Andrés Ondo Mayé, who was sentenced in July 1991 by a military court to three years' imprisonment for defamation, after formally complaining to the authorities about death threats against his family; and José Eneme, a former consul in Doula (Cameroon) who had been unfairly sentenced to death in May 1990 for allegedly causing the death of a colleague by using a form of magic - the sentence was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment. Other prisoners were apparently also released.

Amnesty International welcomes these releases. Although the organization knows of no prisoners of conscience remaining in detention, it is investigating reports that some are still restricted to their villages.

4. AMR 45/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

11 June 1992

PARAGUAY: FORMER SENIOR POLICE OFFICIALS SENTENCED FOR PAST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

Amnesty International has learned of the sentencing of former senior police officials found responsible for the death under torture of Mario Schaerer Prono in April 1976. Amnesty International believes that it is a principal element in the protection of human rights that those responsible for past violations of such rights be brought to justice and welcomes the court ruling.

In April 1989 a formal criminal complaint, (querella), was lodged before judicial authorities by Mario Schaerer's widow accusing Pastor Milquiades Coronel, head of the Police Investigations Department, Departamento de Investigaciones de la Policía, DIP-C, and three of his subordinates, Juan Martínez, Lucilo Benítez and Camilo Almada Sapriza of direct responsibility for the death of Mario Schaerer in DIP-C as a result of torture. Former Interior Minister Sabino Augusto Montanaro, Police Chief Alcibiades Britez Borges and former President Alfredo Stroessner were also accused in the querella. (Please see Paraguay: Investigations into Past Human Rights Violations, AI Index: AMR 45/03/90). The recent court ruling sentenced former DIP-C chief Pastor Coronel and his subordinates Juan Martínez, Lucilo Benítez and Camilo Almada each to 25 years' imprisonment, and former police chief Francisco Britez Borges was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment for covering up the crime (encubrimiento). Defence lawyers have lodged an appeal against the ruling.

Only weeks after General Andrés Rodríguez came to power following a coup d'etat in February 1989, numerous reports of human rights violations under the previous government of General Alfredo Stroessner appeared virtually daily in the press. Dozens of denunciations of illegal detentions, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions of political prisoners during the 1960s and 1970s led to criminal investigations by judicial authorities. Several senior members of the former administration were implicated in serious human rights violations and are currently facing trial.

However, many judicial inquiries into past human rights violations have suffered prolonged delays or were obstructed by authorities who failed to cooperate with the investigations. In other cases judges have reported apparent attempts from some civilian authorities to impede progress of investigations. In January 1991 the Attorney General recommended that the Supreme Court should reject a petition presented on behalf of several former members of the DIP-C on trial for the illegal detention and torture of political prisoners arguing that charges should be dropped because the statute of limitations had expired. The Attorney General ruled that the statute of limitations was not applicable in cases of human rights violations committed by members of the former government.

Amnesty International considers that all human rights violations should be independently judicially investigated and that such investigations should take place even after a change of government. Whatever legal mechanisms are used should effectively clarify the facts and respect the legal rights of defendants. Failure to identify and bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations might encourage extrajudicial executions, "disappearances" and torture by creating a sense of impunity to those responsible for serious human rights abuses. The organization believes that it is a principal element in the protection of human rights that those responsible for past violations of such rights should be brought to justice.

5. EUR 23/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

11 June 1992

GERMANY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED AT REPORTS OF TORTURE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

In May Amnesty International wrote to the authorities in Bremen in the Federal Republic of Germany, expressing its concern about allegations that a number of persons, predominantly black African asylum seekers resident in the city, had been ill-treated and in some cases tortured by police officers in the Hoyaer Straße station.

Amnesty International received reports that officers subjected detainees to: kickings; beatings, including with batons; and electric shocks, using a form of 'gun' which was applied to various parts of the body - including the face, back, stomach and genitals. In many cases detainees were apparently able to identify the officers whom they allege were responsible for their ill-treatment.

In its letter to the authorities Amnesty International welcomed the swift reaction of the Bremen judiciary in ordering an immediate search of the police station in question and in later appointing a special investigator to examine the allegations. The organization asked to be kept informed of the results of this investigation.

Amnesty International also addressed a number of questions to the authorities relating to the practice allegedly employed by the Bremen police of administering injections to detainees suspected of swallowing large quantities of drugs, in order to induce them to vomit.

6. AFR 32/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL

11 June 1992

KENYA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES VISIT KENYA

Two members of Amnesty International's International Secretariat will be visiting Kenya from 9 to 18 June to obtain information on the current situation of human rights in the country. They expect to meet the Attorney General, Amos Wako, human rights activists, lawyers, church representatives and others.

This is the organization's first visit to Kenya for several years and since opposition parties were legalized in December 1991. Amnesty International's concerns in Kenya in recent years have included the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience, unfair trials of political prisoners, torture and ill treatment of prisoners and the death penalty - there are reportedly over 300 prisoners currently on death row.

In accordance with Amnesty International's normal policy, the representative will not be authorized to make public statements about the content of discussions on Kenya during the visit. Upon their return, they will report to Amnesty International's International Executive Committee.

7. AFR 32/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL

11 June 1992

KENYA: CONVICTIONS OF PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE QUASHED

Amnesty International welcomes the recent quashing of the convictions of four prisoners of conscience, including George Anyona, a former member of parliament, and Edward Oyugi, a university professor.

They were arrested in July 1990 and were tortured and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment after a grossly unfair trial lasting six months - but were freed on bail in February 1992 pending the hearing of their appeal. On 21 May 1992 the High Court quashed their convictions on the recommendation of the Attorney General but no reasons were given. The four later said they expected the state to compensate them for "the two years' damage we suffered materially and psychologically".

No. of words: 1360

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 12 JUNE 1992

ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 23/92

Enclosed in this addition to the weekly update is an internal urgent note about the USA and external items on Iran and Paraguay (correction).

1. NEWS INITIATIVES

USA - Police brutality in Los Angeles/Critique of human rights record

There have been lengthy discussions about the most effective timing and occasion for the release of the report on police brutality, including a launch in Los Angeles itself. In the wake of the riots in Los Angeles, it has become clear that we need to get the report out as quickly as possible. Those discussions have also covered the growing concern about other human rights issues in the USA about Haitian refugees and the death penalty in particular, and the need to speak out on the message the USA is sending the rest of the world about human rights protection.

The AIUSA annual general meeting at the end of June in Los Angeles has provided the opportunity both to release the report and to make a statement about the USA human rights record -- which we expect will have a strong impact around the world.

We've decided therefore to have a two-pronged news event at the time of the annual general meeting, 26 June. We realize that this is short notice, but for strategic reasons feel we should be releasing the report sooner rather than later.

Briefly, Ian Martin will attend the AGM to deliver a speech about the USA human rights record, which will be followed by a news conference. The speech and news conference will also be the launching pad for the report on police brutality in Los Angeles.

The materials that we are currently preparing include: the speech, the report on police brutality, the news release based on both the speech and report, and a summary of the report. All of these materials will be finalized next week and will be sent to sections as soon as they are finished.

Once further details about the actual launch are finalized, we will let section press officers know. In the meantime, if there are any correspondents for your national media that you would like invited to the launch please contact Jean Freedberg at AIUSA New York (212-807-8400).

2. MDE 13/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL

12 June 1992

INTERNAL

Many sections have been contacted by their local branch of the PMOI and have forwarded PMOI communications to the IS, together with requests for information. We would like to ask sections to refrain from doing so as we do receive all PMOI communications direct. Sections have also received a letter from the wife of Ali Akbar Ghorbani in France. Sections are requested not to respond to this as this communication will be dealt with by the IS. Finally, the research team is doing its best to keep all sections informed of action on the kidnapping in Turkey as well as recent developments in Iran through this weekly update and two Urgent Actions. We regret that at present our resources do not allow us to respond to each section's individual request for information on these events. A further update will be issued on Monday 15 June regarding the riots and executions in Mashhad and Shiraz.

EXTERNAL

IRAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED AT REPORTS OF ABDUCTION OF IRANIAN NATIONAL IN TURKEY

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that an Iranian national, Ali Akbar Ghorbani, also known as Mansour Amini, was abducted close to his home in Istanbul on 4 June 1992. Ali Akbar Ghorbani is a member of the People's Mojahedine Organization of Iran (PMOI). According to eye-witness reports he was attacked as he was getting into his car near his home; he was then forced into the car and driven away. His whereabouts since then remain unknown. According to reports, bombs were placed in vehicles belonging to the PMOI around the same time.

Amnesty International is concerned for Ali Akbar Ghorbani's safety in the light of previous incidents involving the assassination or kidnapping of Iranian opposition activists outside Iran. Such incidents include the kidnapping in 1988 of Abolhassan Mojtahzadeh who was discovered at the Turkey/Iran border concealed in the boot of a car carrying Iranian diplomatic number plates.

Amnesty International has sought assurances from the Turkish Minister of Interior that all efforts are being made to ascertain the current whereabouts of Ali Akbar Ghorbani.

3. AMR 45/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

12 June 1992

INTERNAL

Please note that this is the correct text. Please discard the Paraguay item sent yesterday in Weekly Update 11/23/92.

EXTERNAL

PARAGUAY: FORMER SENIOR POLICE OFFICIALS SENTENCED FOR PAST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Amnesty International has learned of the sentencing of former senior police officials found responsible for the death under torture of Mario Schaerer Prono in April 1976. Amnesty International believes that it is a principal element in the protection of human rights that those responsible for past violations of such rights be brought to justice.

Amnesty International's membership has been working on the case of Mario Schaerer for many years, urging the Paraguayan authorities to carry out an investigation in order that the truth be made known and those responsible be brought to justice. Most recently the case featured in the organization's appeals in conjunction with its 30th Anniversary.

In April 1989 a formal criminal complaint, (querella), was lodged before judicial authorities by Mario Schaerer's widow accusing Pastor Milquiades Coronel, head of the Police Investigations Department, Departamento de Investigaciones de la Policia, DIP-C, and three of his subordinates, Juan Martinez, Lucilo Benitez and Camilo Almada Sapriza of direct responsibility for the death of Mario Schaerer in DIP-C as a result of torture. Former Interior Minister Sabino Augusto Montanaro, Police Chief Alcibiades Brites Borges and former President Alfredo Stroessner were also accused in the querella. (Please see Paraguay: Investigations into Past Human Rights Violations, AI Index: AMR 45/03/90). The recent court ruling sentenced former DIP-C chief Pastor Coronel and his subordinates Juan Martínez, Lucilo Benítez and Camilo Almada each to 25 years' imprisonment, and former police chief Francisco Brites Borges was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment for covering up the crime (encubrimiento). Defence lawyers have lodged an appeal against the ruling.

Only weeks after General Andrés Rodríguez came to power following a coup d'etat in February 1989, numerous reports of human rights violations under the previous government of General Alfredo Stroessner appeared virtually daily in the press. Dozens of denunciations of illegal detention, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution of political prisoners during the 1960s and 1970s led to criminal investigations by judicial authorities. Several senior members of the former administration were implicated in serious human rights violations and are currently facing trial.

However, many judicial inquiries into past human rights violations have suffered prolonged delays or were obstructed by authorities who failed to cooperate with the investigations. In other cases judges have reported apparent attempts from some civilian authorities to impede progress of investigations. In January 1991 the Attorney General recommended that the Supreme Court should reject a petition presented on behalf of several former members of the DIP-C on trial for the illegal detention and torture of political prisoners arguing that charges should be dropped because the statute of limitations had expired. The Attorney General stated that the statute of limitations should not be applicable in cases of human rights violations committed by members of the former government.

Amnesty International considers that all human rights violations within its mandate should be independently judicially investigated and that such investigations should take place even after a change of government. Whatever legal mechanisms are used should effectively clarify the facts and respect the legal rights of defendants. Failure to identify and bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations might encourage extrajudicial execution, "disappearance" and torture by creating a sense of impunity among those responsible for serious human rights abuses. The organization believes that it is a principal element in the protection of human rights that those responsible for past violations of such rights should be brought to justice, and that the full truth about such violations should be made known.

AI Index: NWS 11/23/92 ADD2

Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 1032

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International Secretariat

1 Easton Street

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United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 15 JUNE 1992

SECOND ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 23/92

Enclosed in this addition to the weekly update are external items on Iran and Turkey.

SECTION NEWS INITIATIVES

British Section - Pakistan News Release

The British Section is today issuing a news release about Pakistan. It will connect AI's concerns in Pakistan with the visit to the UK of Pakistan's Prime Minister starting tomorrow. The IS Press Office will have a copy - please call if you need us to fax it to you.

1. MDE 13/WU 04/92 EXTERNAL

15 June 1992

IRAN: SUMMARY EXECUTIONS FOLLOWING MASS ARRESTS

Amnesty International has protested to the Iranian authorities about the reported execution of at least eight people following mass arrests in connection with riots in a number of Iranian towns, including Shiraz, Arak and Mashhad. At least five other people have also been sentenced to death and are feared to be at imminent risk of execution. Others have been sentenced to long prison terms and floggings following unfair trials by Islamic Revolutionary Courts.

On 10 June 1992 Tehran radio announced the execution of four people, named as Javad Ganjkhanelou, Golamhossein Pourshirzad, Ali Sadeqi and Hamid Javid. They were hanged in Mashhad prison, on 10 June, convicted of various charges which included "creating terror", the use of firearms, setting fire to government buildings and burning books which included the Qur'an. It added that Mashhad's Islamic Revolutionary Court had sentenced an unspecified number of people to long or short prison terms or flogging for their part in the riots, and that trials of others were continuing.

On 11 June 1992 the official Islamic Republic News Agency announced that four people had been executed and five others had been sentenced to death for their part in last month's riots in Shiraz. Mohammad Karami, Prosecutor of the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Shiraz, was quoted as saying that 45 others had been given prison terms ranging from four months to ten years for their role in the 15 April riots in Shiraz. One of those who had been executed was named as Masoud Gholami.

These announcements followed official reports of the arrest of over 300 people in connection with riots and demonstrations in Mashhad on 30 May 1992. Amnesty International believes the real number of arrests may be considerably higher. They were the latest in a series of protests apparently sparked off by incidents such as municipal authorities' attempts to destroy illegally constructed buildings and forcibly evict their inhabitants, and discontent with the government's social and economic policies. The demonstrations began in Shiraz on 15 April 1992, and were reportedly followed by at least 200 arrests after violent demonstrations in Arak at the end of May.

Amnesty International fears that those who are still to be tried will not receive fair trials in accordance with internationally accepted standards for fair trial, and that they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment. It also fears that more executions may take place after secret summary trials.

Amnesty International has issued urgent international appeals to the Iranian authorities calling for an immediate halt to the executions, for all those arrested in connection with the riots to be treated humanely and either be given fair trials or be released. Reports of death sentences and executions continue to be received by the organization, which will be updating its appeals when more information is available.

2. EUR 44/WU 04/92 EXTERNAL

15 June 1992

TURKEY: JOURNALIST KILLED IN POSSIBLE EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION. TORTURE SAFEGUARD PROPOSALS VETOED BY TURKISH PRESIDENT

Haf__z Akdemir, a Kurd journalist for the publication Özgür Gündem (Free Agenda) and member of the Turkish Human Rights Association, was shot dead by an unknown assassin in a Diyarbakir street on 8 June 1992. Haf__z Akdemir is the fourth journalist this year to be killed while covering events in the mainly Kurdish southeast provinces of Turkey, where it is alleged that there have been nearly a hundred extrajudicial executions in the past 12 months. The targets have included members of the Turkish Human Rights Association, local politicians, and members and officials of the People's Labour Party (HEP - which has its main support among the Kurdish minority).

Haf__z Akdemir was released in June 1991 after serving seven years for membership of an illegal Kurdish organization. He and the publication he worked for had received repeated death threats - some from Hizbullah, an organization which is widely believed to have links with the security forces.

The public funeral of the journalist was to take place on 10 June, but on the preceding day Haf__z Akdemir's body was allegedly taken from the hospital morgue by police, who beat and detained bereaved relatives who tried to intervene. The body was buried under police supervision the same day.

It appears that attacks are being carried out systematically against members of the Kurdish political opposition in southeast Turkey, with strong evidence of security force involvement, but the Turkish authorities have consistently failed to respond to Amnesty International's appeals that commissions of inquiry be established, as recommended by the United Nations Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigations of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.

In a separate development in Turkey this week, President Turgut Özal exercised his power of veto over a modest package of legal reforms passed by parliament at the end of May. The reforms included two measures intended as safeguards against torture of detainees in police custody: firstly a halving of the maximum period during which detainees can be held by police before being brought before a judge (which even in their revised form would contravene international standards), and secondly, a measure which restates unambiguously the detainee's existing right to appoint and consult legal counsel while in police custody.

In giving his reasons for the veto, the President reportedly mentioned that the proposals for reform of detention procedures had caused "great concern" in the National Security Council. He stated that he was opposed to the shortening of the detention period and that the new procedures concerning police interrogation would work in the guilty person's favour.

Torture has continued in Turkey undiminished in 1992, and seven people have died in police custody, apparently as a result of torture, since the beginning of the year.