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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 31/91

Contained in this weekly update are two external items on India and Morocco, an internal item on El Salvador and the text of a news release on Sri Lanka, embargoed for 11 September 1991.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Morocco - 28 August
MDE 29/22/91

The targeted news release to accompany the external document about disappeared Sahrawis included in last week's weekly update was sent out earlier this week. This document is one of the final stages in the ongoing campaign about Morocco. A questions and answers will be forwarded tomorrow.

Please do not confuse the Sahrawis document and news release embargoed till 28 August with the addition to the weekly update 30/91 on the recent royal amnesty for political prisoners in Morocco sent out on 19 August. The piece on Morocco in this week's weekly update relates to the royal amnesty as well and has nothing to do with the Sahrawis.

Sri Lanka - 11 September
ASA 37/14/91

An international release on gross human rights violations in north-eastern Sri Lanka, the first document focusing specifically on this region of the country. The report deals with thousands of extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" in North Eastern Sri Lanka. It also covers abuses by the Tamil Tigers in greater detail than any previous report on the country. The timing of the release ties in with a visit by a UN working group to the country in early October, which we hope will investigate some of the issues raised in the report. The news release to accompany the report is included in this weekly update.

Mexico - 18 September

Mexico - Torture with Impunity AMR 41/04/91

News release and questions and answers sheet on a report on torture in Mexico. The main point in the report is that anyone who is arrested in Mexico is at risk of torture and that the government has done little to bring police or others to justice. The news release will contain the most recent example possible.

China - 26 September

Report on administrative detention - news release and possible questions and answers.

ICM - 29 August to 7 September

Information will be provided shortly about the media strategy for the ICM. In the meantime, if you get any queries please refer them to the IS press office.

USA - 9 October

USA - The Death Penalty and Juvenile Offenders AMR 51/23/91

International news release to accompany the external document.

Egypt - 23 October

News release to go with an external document on torture, including strong individual cases and photo material.

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2. AMR 31/WU 03/91 INTERNAL

22 August 1991

AI DELEGATION TO VISIT EL SALVADOR

Two members of AI's International Secretariat will visit El Salvador between 25 August and 2 September 1991 to carry out on-site research into the current human rights situation in the country and to investigate recent cases of killings, "disappearances" and torture. The delegates will hold meetings with representatives of Salvadorian human rights groups and other non-governmental organizations. The last visit to the country by an AI delegation was in April/May 1990.

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3. AI Index: ASA 37/15/91

Embargoed for 0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 11 September 1991

SRI LANKA: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ESCALATE IN THE NORTHEAST

Human rights abuses have increased alarmingly in northeastern Sri Lanka with thousands extrajudicially executed or "disappeared" since armed conflict between the security forces and Tamil separatists resumed in June 1990, Amnesty International said today. Entire families, from babies to villagers in their 70s, have been arrested by the army, "disappeared" or killed in custody during recent months.

"The massive wave of human rights violations in southern Sri Lanka, which left tens of thousands dead or vanished after arrest between 1987 and 1990, is now sweeping the northeast," the worldwide human rights organization said in its latest report. Amnesty International was allowed to visit Sri Lanka in early June this year for the first time since 1982. Its researchers found substantial evidence of abuses by both the security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who control large areas of the north.

People suspected of having links with the Tamil guerrillas have been arrested, shot, stabbed, hacked to death or burnt alive by government forces. Between July and October 1990 some 3,000 Tamil people were estimated to have been killed or "disappeared" in Amparai district alone. Reports of further mass killings have since been reported to Amnesty International from every district in northeastern Sri Lanka.

Government forces, helped by paramilitary Muslim and Tamil groups opposed to the separatists, seem to be acting with total impunity, the organization said. Virtually none of those responsible for any of the countless cases of arbitrary arrest, torture and killing have ever been brought to justice.

The vast majority of victims are Tamils, in whose name the LTTE say they are fighting for a sovereign state. The LTTE has itself consistently carried out arbitrary execution-style killings of hundreds of civilians, including large numbers of Sinhalese and Muslims as well as Tamils it labelled "traitors". The insurgents are also responsible for many "disappearances" and the torture of prisoners.

In June 1990 the LTTE massacred more than a hundred police officers it had taken prisoner in what marked the renewal of civil war in the northeast. As the hostilities escalated former Minister of State for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne announced "all-out war" in the region.

"The ensuing military campaign led to mass killings and arrests, large-scale round-ups of civilians and an almost total breakdown of civil administration", Amnesty International said. "Over a million people became refugees in their own country."

In one incident over 160 people, including babies, children, old men and women, were taken into custody from four villages in the Batticaloa district. Heavily armed soldiers raided the villages on 9 September 1990 and ordered all residents to gather on the road. They were taken to an army camp and have not been seen since. Amnesty International fears that they may have been killed like hundreds of other civilians previously arrested in similar circumstances.

The authorities did nothing to clarify the whereabouts of the villagers. One of the victims was Natkunasingsam Sithradevi, a mother in

her twenties, who "disappeared" together with her six-year-old son, her three-year-old daughter and her new-born baby son.

In June 1991 soldiers from an army camp in the same district went on the rampage in the villages of Mahiladithivu and Muthalaikuda after two of their unit were killed by a landmine nearby. At least 67 civilians were massacred and several others remain unaccounted for. A commission of inquiry established by the authorities is currently hearing evidence from survivors and witnesses.

Amnesty International urges the Sri Lankan government to issue firm directives regularly to its security forces to respect human rights in all circumstances. Army, paramilitary forces and the police should be given clear instructions that no human rights abuses will be tolerated and that those found responsible will invariably be brought to justice.

"Regardless of the atrocities committed by armed groups it is the responsibility of the government to safeguard the rights of its citizens", the organization said.

Amnesty International is also appealing to the LTTE to halt immediately its practice of incommunicado detention, torture and killing of prisoners.

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT WEDNESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 1991

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4. MDE 29/WU 08/91 EXTERNAL

22 August 1991

INTERNAL

We have just learned that Mohamed Srifi, one of 30 cases highlighted in Amnesty International's 30th anniversary campaign, was among those freed recently in a royal amnesty in Morocco.

Forty political prisoners were released on Friday 16 August, as reported in an addition to Weekly Update 30, AI Index MDE 29/WU 07/91. Of those, Amnesty International had adopted 24 as prisoners of conscience -- Mohammed Srifi was one of them.

On his release, Mohamed Srifi contacted the Amnesty International group in FRG which had adopted him. He expressed his intention to write a letter to Amnesty International about his experiences and his gratitude, which could then be used in possible follow-ups to the 30th Anniversary campaign at Section level. If possible, we will try to make this letter available as a facsimile and to get photographs to be used as publicity material for the campaign.

The following information can be used externally immediately.

EXTERNAL

MOROCCO: MOHAMED SRIFI FREED

Mohamed Srifi, one of the cases highlighted in Amnesty International's 30th anniversary campaign, has been released from prison under a royal amnesty in Morocco.

He was one of 40 political prisoners set free, 24 of whom had been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

On his release, Mohamed Srifi got in touch with an Amnesty International group in Federal Republic of Germany, who had been working for his freedom for years. He told them how happy he was to be free again, and passed on his thanks to Amnesty International. While in detention, he said he had received hundreds of letters from Amnesty International members from all over the world.

Mohamed Srifi is now free for the first time since 1974 and has been reunited with his wife and her family in Tanger. His wife also spent five years in jail as a political prisoner. Mohamed Srifi now plans to finish the dissertation that he began writing in prison.

Almost 17 years in prison have taken their toll on Mohamed Srifi's health. His eyesight has deteriorated very badly -- as a result, he believes, of the year and a half he spent blindfold before he was finally brought to trial in 1977. During the same period in garde-à-vue

incommunicado detention, he was also tortured. Severe beatings to the soles of his feet have left him with problems standing and walking for long periods.

Mohamed Srifi was serving a 30-year jail sentence in Kenitra Central Prison, after a blatantly unfair trial in 1977 where he was accused of wanting to overthrow the Moroccan monarchy and being a member of the outlawed Marxist organization Ila'l-Amam. An Amnesty International observer reported that there was no evidence to back up charges that Mohamed Srifi and others had suggested using violence. Defence lawyers were intimidated, Mohamed Srifi was not allowed to describe the torture he had suffered and he and those tried with him received an extra two years for protesting about the unfairness of the trial.

At the time of his arrest, Mohamed Srifi was studying Spanish literature at Rabat University.

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5. ASA 20/WU 03/91 EXTERNAL

22 August 1991

INDIA: AI CONCERNED ABOUT 2,000 DETAINED TAMILS FACING DEPORTATION

Amnesty International is concerned about the arrest during recent weeks of some 2,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India. It is feared that the refugees may face forcible deportation to Sri Lanka and risk serious human rights violations.

In a letter to the Indian Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Shankarrao Chavan, Amnesty International calls for the release of all those refugees not facing criminal charges. The organization reminds the government of international principles prohibiting the forcible return of anyone to a country where they could face serious human rights violations and stating that those detained must have an opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention in an individual hearing before a judicial authority.

The 2,000 arrested are believed to be among 75,000 Tamils who fled to India from Sri Lanka in recent years, and who have not registered as required with the Indian police. Amnesty International is concerned that political considerations have led to these mass arrests -- connected with the suspicion that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), fighting for an independent state in Sri Lanka, were responsible for the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

International standards say that refugees should only be detained under certain circumstances. Amnesty International has therefore asked the government for information on the grounds for the arrest of the 2,000 Tamils and the opportunity for them to have their detention reviewed.