

AI Index: NWS 11/36/91
Distr: SC/PO
No. of words: 1020

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 26 SEPTEMBER 1991

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 36/91

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Morocco and Bolivia, an internal item on El Salvador and an internal item for response on Morocco.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

China - 26 September

This item is embargoed for today. The news release, AI Index ASA 17/56/91, have been sent out to you. Unfortunately, the proposed questions and answers has not been prepared -- we do not anticipate any problems, but if you do have any, please contact the IS.

USA - 8 October

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

The international news release has been sent out to you this week. Please note that the embargo has been brought forward by one hour. Although the date of the embargo now reads as 8 October, effectively the embargo for many of you will be unchanged. If you are in a time zone where 2300 hrs gmt Tuesday 8 October 1991 falls overnight, the material will still in effect be released on 9 October.

We are hoping to get more information to you, hopefully with details of possible interview candidates.

African Charter - 21 October

An advice to editors on AI's activities to mark the fifth anniversary of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights coming into force has been sent to sections. The advice to editors is not embargoed, although it is intended to encourage specialist media to write about the charter on or around 21 October, African Human and People's Rights Day. The IS will be sending the advice to editors to media in Africa and specialist media in London, and section press officers are encouraged to contact their African specialist media as well.

Egypt - 23 October

Egypt - Ten years of torture MDE 12/18/91

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

2. MDE 29/WU 09/91 EXTERNAL
26 September 1991

MOROCCO - PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE FREED BUT IMMEDIATELY EXILED

On 13 September 1991, Abraham Serfaty, the longest-serving prisoner of conscience in Morocco, was released from prison after 17 years' imprisonment and immediately expelled to France.

Abraham Serfaty was arrested in 1974 and sentenced to life imprisonment in a mass-trial of over 170 people in Kenitra in February 1977. The defendants were members and former members of an illegal Marxist group. They were found guilty of plotting to overthrow the monarchy and threatening the security of the state, though they denied the charges. No evidence was produced in court that any member of the group had used or advocated violence.

All the members of this group were adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience. Most of those convicted have since been released, either on expiry of their sentence or after an amnesty. Most recently, on 16 August 1991, four from this group were among 40 political prisoners released under a royal pardon by King Hassan II.

Amnesty International has written to King Hassan II, welcoming Abraham Serfaty's release but protesting against his summary expulsion from Morocco. The organization urged that he be allowed to return to Morocco if he so wishes.

Amnesty International also called for all prisoners of conscience in Morocco to be released, including Ahmed Rakiz, Abdallah Harif and Ahmed Aitbennacer, the only three remaining prisoners from Abraham Serfaty's group. They are held at Kenitra Central prison.

Abraham Serfaty, who is now 65 years old and suffering from Reynault's disease, joined his French wife in Paris. Christine Daure married Abraham Serfaty in prison five years ago and visited him regularly until May 1991, when King Hassan II barred her from entering Morocco, saying that she had "abused Morocco's hospitality". She has been an active campaigner against human rights violations in Morocco. Abraham Serfaty had announced that he would start a hunger-strike on 1 October if the Moroccan authorities did not allow his wife to enter the country and visit him in prison.

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3. AMR 29/WU 04/91 INTERNAL
26 September 1991

EL SALVADOR: AI TO ATTEND TRIAL OF MILITARY PERSONNEL ACCUSED OF KILLING
PRIESTS

An Amnesty International representative is to attend the trial by jury of the colonel and eight soldiers accused of the murder of six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter in El Salvador in November 1989.

Wilder Tayler, a staff member of the Legal and Inter-Governmental Organizations department at the International Secretariat, will be in El Salvador from 25 September 1991.

You are asked not to publicise this at the moment but an external Weekly Update item will be sent out if necessary during or after the trial. In the meantime, please refer any inquiries to the IS.

4. MDE 29/WU 10/91 INTERNAL (FOR RESPONSE)
26 September 1991

MOROCCO: TAZMAMERT PRISON REPORTEDLY CLOSED

Morocco's secret detention centre at Tazmamert is reported to have been pulled down and its inmates moved elsewhere.

According to a report by Reuters on 20 September, "senior Moroccan sources, who asked not to be named, confirmed that the building, a former military outpost, was 'completely razed to the ground several weeks ago'."

There are conflicting reports as to what has happened to the prisoners held there. According to one report, the death of another inmate has occurred since October 1990, when the last news emerged from the prison, and the surviving prisoners have been transferred to other detention centres. Other reports suggest, however, that some prisoners may have been hospitalized prior to an impending release.

The only prisoner known to have been released is M'Barek Touil, whose wife is a U.S. citizen.

Amnesty International is now seeking further details and clarification of the fate and whereabouts of the other prisoners. A public statement will be made as soon as the picture is clearer.

5. AMR 18/WU 01/91 EXTERNAL
26 September 1991

BOLIVIA: AI SENDS FACT-FINDING MISSION

Amnesty International is sending a fact-finding mission to Bolivia from 23 September to 3 October 1991. The delegates are a staff member of the International Secretariat and Yvon Lebot, a French sociologist.

The delegates are expected to visit La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. No meetings with government authorities are envisaged and the delegates will not be giving press interviews.