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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (This release is being targeted to journalists at the Commission meeting, ending today, in Geneva. It can also be used by section press officers as they see fit.)

PLEASE NOTE -- CAMPAIGN ON WOMEN COVERAGE

Can you please give us your reaction to the embargo time and date set for the launch of the Campaign on Women, plus details of the coverage you've received by the end of next week. Many thanks, Androulla

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95, 37/95, 42/95 & 44/95

Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

EVENTS AND MISSIONS

The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO BURUNDI 13 - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- 10 MARCH 1995
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UNITED NATIONS: THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS FAILS TO TAKE ACTION ON FIVE
CRUCIAL HUMAN CRISES

Amnesty International today described the latest session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva as "extremely disappointing".

"The members of this UN body have again demonstrated their lack of political will to tackle situations where there are grave and persistent human rights violations and where close scrutiny is needed: Algeria, Colombia, Indonesia, Jammu and Kashmir, and Turkey," Amnesty International said.

At the beginning of the six-week session, Amnesty International had appealed to all members of the Commission to do "less politics and more human rights".

The organization had put before Commission members overwhelming evidence of severe and systematic violations of human rights in these places - torture, "disappearances", extrajudicial executions, unfair trials and arbitrary detention.

"The credibility of the Commission on Human Rights is being eroded as this UN body ignores these grave crises of human rights," said Amnesty International.

"We question whether the Commission is holding the Governments of Algeria, Colombia, India, Indonesia and Turkey to account for blatantly suppressing the rights they are legally bound to uphold and protect under international law. The answer is clearly 'no'."

"Most members of the Commission are aware of human rights violations in these places, but it is appalling to see how they refuse to translate this knowledge into real action," Amnesty International said.

Political considerations - such as close cultural or economic ties - are repeatedly put forward by some members to justify their inaction with respect to certain countries. Other members have hidden behind what they call "constructive engagement", which is often an alibi for not assuming their responsibilities as members of the Commission. Those governments systematically abstained during most of the votes on country resolutions.

The Commission on Human Rights again blatantly failed to address the human rights crises in Algeria and Turkey, in spite of private acknowledgement by most members of the worsening situation in both countries.

"The European Union should not consider that it has done away with the problem of human rights violations in Turkey by simply mentioning this country in its statement - among some 50 other countries," Amnesty International said. "The European Union should exercise its special responsibility for addressing human rights in other European countries."

The Commission again ignored human rights violations in Indonesia, although after lengthy backroom negotiations, it agreed a statement on East Timor from the chairperson that did criticize sharply recent human rights violations, including killings. Even that statement, however, failed to hold the Government of Indonesia to important steps which the Commission itself called for two years ago.

Members preferred to entertain the illusion that total silence was the best means to appear neutral in the polarized debate on Jammu and Kashmir. No resolution was discussed, even though this amounted to disowning the victims of violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

While Amnesty International and many other non-governmental organizations had argued strongly for the appointment of a special rapporteur on Colombia, the Commission failed to make a firm commitment to following up on the conclusions and recommendations of its own thematic rapporteurs following their 1994 visits to the country.

Instead of taking responsibility for halting killings and "disappearances" and ending the cycle of impunity, all the Commission did was to listen to a letter sent by the Ambassador of Colombia and read out by the chairperson.

"Being members of the Commission entails certain responsibilities, such as taking initiatives on countries which have escaped scrutiny so far," said Amnesty International. "The credibility of the UN human rights system is being seriously damaged as the Commission fails to act in the face of such blatant violations."

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