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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 55/93 (2nd today)

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

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

Annual Report - 8 July

Annual Report publication, Worldwide Summary, Regional Summaries, Regional Updates, news release. All these materials, except the news release are almost ready and you will receive them this week.

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

Document and news release to go with action on massive numbers of political killings.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Tunisia - 3 June

The summary of a document - Tunisia: Women victims of harassment, torture and imprisonment, AI Index: MDE 30/02/93 - is being faxed to some selected media on 3 June. The report, which is embargoed for 3 June, was sent out in this week's Weekly Mailing. If you need an earlier copy, please contact Donatella at the IS on +44 71 413 5631.

****Saudi Arabia - 1 July****

A weekly update item is being written to go with the document: Saudi Arabia: An Upsurge in Public Executions, AI Index: MDE 23/04/93. The document and weekly update item will be embargoed for 1 June and will be sent out to selected international media by the IS Press Office. Please note that the document is being sent out in the weekly mailing on 3 June.

Section Initiatives

British Section - Update on European World Conference Press Briefing in June

Please note the time, date and place of this press conference.

The Press Conference will be held on Thursday, June 10th, at 11am at the International Press Centre, Boulevard de

Charlemagne 1, 1040 Bruxelles.

The two speakers are:

Ken Coates - MEP and chairman of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human rights

Daphne Davies - Amnesty International British Section

We will also be asking someone from a Brussels-based NGO.

A press release will accompany the press conference.

The conference will call on the EC and its member states to adopt a coordinated and focused approach at the World Conference with a view to adapting and improving the UN human rights mechanisms and to promote the proposal to appoint a Special Commissioner on Human rights. In addition the Press Conference will provide journalists with a critique of the EC's own human rights record.

Please will Press Officers in EC Sections contact their media who have contacts in Brussels to let them know about the Press Conference

2. AMR 34/WU 03/93
2 June 1993

GUATEMALA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION VISITS GUATEMALA TO URGE FOR RESTORATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION

Amnesty International today sent a four person delegation to Guatemala (to arrive on Thursday, 3 June). Amnesty International's delegation will assess at first hand the effects on human rights protection of the present institutional situation in the country following the measures taken by President Jorge Serrano Elias and his subsequent forced resignation.

Defence Minister General José Domingo García Samayoa announced the President's resignation on 1 June 1993 and said that the Constitutional Court would hold power until Congress chooses a new leader. According to the government's press department, President Serrano was forced out of office by an alliance of the army, opposition parties, business leaders and other sectors. The Amnesty International delegates will raise the organization's concerns regarding these changes directly with Guatemalan authorities and will urge for the restoration of constitutional guarantees for human rights protection.

These events follow a series of measures announced by President Serrano on 25 May. Amnesty International has been gravely concerned at the threats to human rights posed by announcements by the President that he had partially suspended the Constitution, dissolved Congress, dismissed Supreme Court and Constitutional Court judges, and replaced the rule of law in the country with rule by decree. Amnesty International has been further concerned to learn that various governmental human rights entities such as the Human Rights Procurator's Office and the Procurator's Office of the Public Ministry were suspended and attempts apparently made to arrest certain government officials associated with official human rights initiatives in the country. Amnesty International also wishes to establish the whereabouts and current legal situation of a number of trade unionists, also reportedly detained.

Amnesty International has also been deeply disturbed to learn of a number of measures which had been taken by President Serrano to curtail freedom of expression and prevent both Guatemalans and concerned international observers from learning of the true human rights situation in the country. It was reported for example that the offices of both governmental and independent human rights reporting entities have been surrounded by the security forces, and their staff prevented from communicating both within Guatemala and abroad. In addition, warrants had reportedly been issued for the arrest of a number of journalists and Article 35 of the Constitution concerning freedom of expression suspended. According to further information received by Amnesty International, certain television channels, radio stations and newspapers had been prevented from publishing or broadcasting; those which have continued to publish or broadcast have reportedly only been able to do so under censorship.

The type of concerns which Amnesty International intends to discuss with the authorities were sent in a communication to President Serrano on 26 May 1993. In that communication, Amnesty International also set out the steps which it believes to be imperative to ensure respect for human rights in the country. These include restoration of constitutional guarantees for human rights protection, and assurances for the personal safety of all detainees, who must be protected from extrajudicial executions, "disappearance," and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. While in Guatemala, Amnesty International's delegation will also emphasise the organization's view that a public statement should immediately be issued to express the authorities' commitments to fully protect the human rights of all citizens, including human rights defenders. Such a statement should make clear that all infractions of human rights standards will not be tolerated and will be severely punished. Amnesty International will also repeat its request that: information to be made public concerning all those detained; any individuals in custody to be permitted access to their families and to lawyers; and anyone arrested for their conscientiously-held beliefs and who are known not to have used or advocated violence, be immediately and unconditionally released. Amnesty International's delegation will call again on the authorities to immediately re-establish the functions of the judiciary, public ministry and legislature designed to protect human rights.

Amnesty International has also called upon the state members of the Organization of American States to take energetic measures in favour of the restoration of the protection of human rights and the rule of law in Guatemala.

Amnesty International's delegation is made up of Canadian citizen Roger Clark, Secretary General at the Canadian Section of Amnesty International (AI); Mexican citizen Guadalupe Rivas, Information Coordinator at the Mexican Section of AI; Chilean citizen Carlos

Salinas, Government Programmes Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean at the USA Section of AI; and United States citizen Tracy Ulltveit-Moe, Researcher at the International Secretariat of AI.

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