



United Nations human rights group to investigate political abductions

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has established a five-member working group to investigate reports of "disappearances".

In a historic decision adopted in Geneva on 29 February the UN commission empowered a group of five experts to demand an explanation from governments following a person's reported abduction.

As a result of the decision, the United Nations has introduced for the first time in its history a procedure for possible immediate action in human rights cases.

The working group, which has been established for a one-year period, will consist of members of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, acting as experts in their individual capacity, selected by the Chairman of the Commission, Waleed SADI of Jordan.

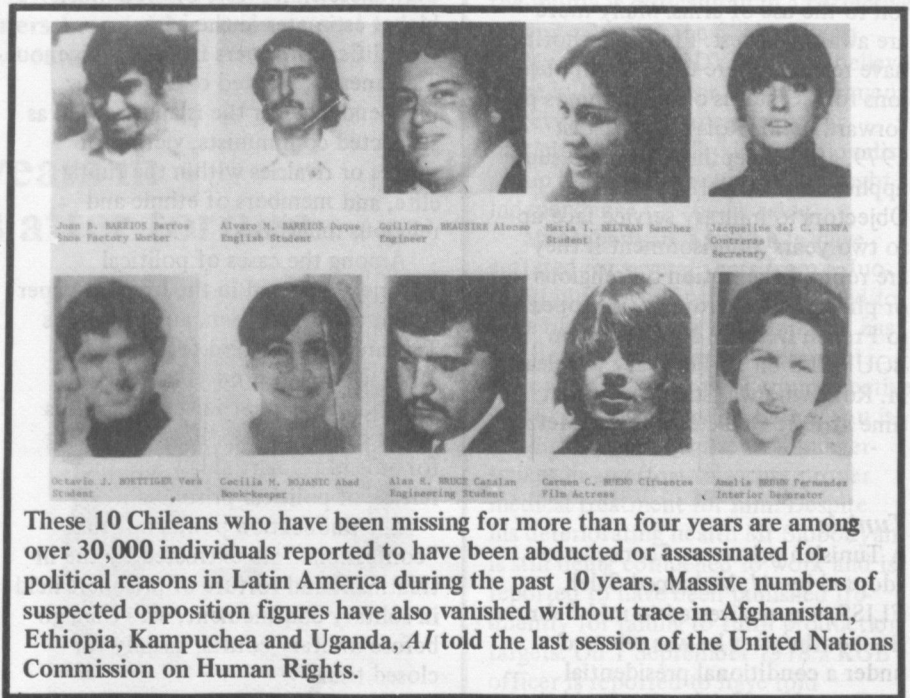
UN human rights director Theodoor VAN BOVEN told the Commission that the "burning and shocking" problem of "disappearances" could sometimes be eased by prompt intervention on behalf of the victims.

He said that if the human rights division were to tackle the problem of "disappearances", it would require an additional £150,000, an extra nine full-time staff and a computer to deal with the mass of information on "disappearance" cases.

His estimate of the resources required to put the decision into effect was not challenged by any of the 43 delegations comprising the Commission. In their final decision they requested the UN Secretary-General "to provide the Working Group with all necessary assistance, in particular full-time staff and resources they require to perform their functions in an effective and expeditious manner".

The working group is empowered to receive information on "disappearances" from governments, intergovernmental organizations, humanitarian organizations "and other reliable sources".

The Economic and Social Council



These 10 Chileans who have been missing for more than four years are among over 30,000 individuals reported to have been abducted or assassinated for political reasons in Latin America during the past 10 years. Massive numbers of suspected opposition figures have also vanished without trace in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kampuchea and Uganda, AI told the last session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

must now approve the Commission's decision, including the allocation of resources to the human rights division to back up the Working Group.

AI made a lengthy presentation to the Commission as relatives of missing Argentinians, wearing white scarves, sat in the public gallery and demonstrated outside the Palais des Nations, the Commission's Geneva headquarters.

No government had asked to speak first on this sensitive question and as a result AI's representative Menno KAMMINGA delivered the opening presentation.

"There can be little doubt that the technique of letting political opponents disappear has spread from one government to another," he said. "Governments in several parts of the world have discovered that this is a convenient way to rid themselves of political opponents. It simply requires a handful of ruthless men to carry out the abduction and a handful of others to interrogate, torture and possibly kill the victim in a hidden place," he added.

As soon as Mr Kamminga cited the testimony of Oscar Alfredo GONZALEZ and Horacio CID DE LA

PAZ, who survived 15 months in secret detention camps in Argentina (March Newsletter), he was interrupted by Enrique ROS of the Argentinian delegation.

Speaking on a point of order, Señor Ros said the testimony of the two men was "an irresponsible falsification". He said that AI was making a political attack on Argentina and should be ruled out of order.

The Ethiopian and Uruguayan delegations supported Argentina. Ethiopia said that AI should not have been allowed to speak first in the debate.

The Commission's Chairman replied that Ethiopia now had the floor and if it wished to address itself to the question of "disappearances" it was free to do so. Ethiopia declined the opportunity, adding that AI was an "imperialist-financed organization".

In an important ruling the Chairman, however, refused to accept the procedural objections and ruled that non-governmental organizations could only provide meaningful information to the Commission if the names of countries and cases were cited □

News in Brief

France

Conscientious objector (CO) Dominique ROLS was re-arrested immediately after a French military court gave him a three-month suspended sentence for refusing armed military service on 30 January. M. Rols, who went on a hunger-strike in protest against his re-arrest, is one of about 20 conscientious objectors imprisoned in France after declaring their opposition to the use of arms. Many more are awaiting arrest. French authorities have rejected more than 160 applications for CO status on the grounds put forward by M. Rols since August 1979, after accepting some 500 such applications from 1975 to 1978. Objectors to military service face up to two years' imprisonment if they are refused exemption on religious or philosophical grounds. *AI* appealed to French Defence Minister Yvon BOURGES on 22 February to release M. Rols, who was still held at that time at Fort Queleu Barracks, Metz.

Tunisia

A Tunisian prisoner of conscience abducted by *AI*, Mohamed Saleh FLISS, was re-arrested in mid-February, six months after he was released under a conditional presidential amnesty. Unofficial reports said the amnesty had been cancelled and Mr Fliss was being held in Bourj-Er-Roumi Prison, Bizerte. Mr Fliss, a former student, was first arrested in 1968. His latest conviction was in 1975 when he was sentenced to eight years for membership of an illegal organization. He had been living under administrative surveillance in "restricted residence" in Bizerte following his release, and reported to the police each day.

Israel

Israeli military authorities will soon bring in new regulations on administrative detention in the Occupied Territories, tightening control of a procedure which allows people to be held for long periods without charge or trial. The period of detention under an order will be limited to six months; orders will be issued only by the military governors of the West Bank or the Gaza Strip and will be subject to review by a military judge within 48 hours. Appeals will be heard by the president of the military court, and orders will be reviewed every three months by a military judge □

Republic of China Hundreds held under martial law

Suspected political dissidents are still being convicted and imprisoned on Taiwan under martial law provisions in force since the Chinese Nationalist Government retreated there more than 30 years ago.

A 16-page briefing on Taiwan, published on 20 March, indicates that several hundred people are believed to be held on political grounds, although Taiwanese exiles have offered much higher estimates in the past.

Political prisoners include indigenous Taiwanese suspected of advocating independence for the island, as well as suspected communists, victims of purges or rivalries within the ruling élite, and members of ethnic and religious minorities.

Among the cases of political prisoners outlined in the briefing paper is that of PAI Ya-tsan, an indigenous Taiwanese who stood for office in 1975. He was sentenced to life imprisonment after raising questions about government policy and calling for an end to martial law and the release of political prisoners.

The publication points out that "confessions" are extracted by the ill-treatment and torture of prisoners held in solitary confinement, who then go before military courts, usually for closed trials.

Among the forms of psychological and physical pressure which have allegedly been used to obtain "confessions" are solitary confinement, round-the-clock interrogation, denial of sleep, extraction of nails, electric

shock and severe beatings.

AI urges the authorities of the Republic of China to implement the human rights guarantees in its constitution and to conduct trials openly and in accordance with international norms. It calls for an end to torture and the death penalty, urges the authorities to release all prisoners of conscience and appeals on humanitarian grounds for the release of those political prisoners who have been held for 20 years or more.

- An *AI* mission visited Taiwan for 10 days in February. It met government officials, families of political prisoners and their lawyers. It also visited Green Island prison and talked to long-term political prisoners held there.

The mission inquired into the cases of people arrested following a Human Rights Day rally in the provincial city of Kaohsiung last December which ended in violence. Eight of the more than 150 people arrested are due to face trial on "sedition" charges that carry the death penalty. The military trial was expected to open on 18 March and the authorities have announced that its proceedings would be open. Verdicts in such trials, however, are normally not announced until at least a month after the hearing.

Amnesty International Briefing on Taiwan (Republic of China): 16 pages, is published in English and Chinese by Amnesty International Publications, 10 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HF, England. Price: 40 pence, and is available from AI's national sections or the International Secretariat.

Poland Farmer convicted

Jan KOZLOWSKI, an imprisoned 51-year-old farmer who edits an unofficial paper that has criticized government policy, has been adopted by *AI* as a prisoner of conscience.

Mr Kozlowski is a founding member of the Provisional Committee of the Independent Farmers' Trade Union, editor of the unofficial paper *Placowka* (Outpost) published by the Independent Peasants' Movement, and a member of the Centre for Peasant Thought. On 1 February he was sentenced by a regional court to two years' imprisonment for "bodily assault", a charge which *AI* believes to be groundless. He has appealed

against the sentence.

Mr Kozlowski's arrest and recent conviction arise from an incident in October 1979 when a stone was thrown through a window of his house. Mr Kozlowski, together with his neighbour, T. KOLANO, pursued the attacker until he was able to identify him and then reported the incident to the local police station. He also reported that he had been warned of such an attack by the State Security Police. A week later Mr Kozlowski and Mr Kolano were both arrested and charged with "bodily assault".

Mr Kozlowski has frequently been subjected to police harassment. In January 1979 he was placed under observation in a psychiatric hospital after writing to the regional Communist Party committee accusing local authorities of abuse of power □

Campaign for Prisoners of the Month



Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In *no* circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

Petr CIBULKA, Czechoslovakia

A 29-year-old worker whose health has suffered under harsh prison conditions was due for release in April after a two-year term for "incitement" against the socialist system of the Republic, but must now serve a further sentence under a stricter prison regime.

Petr CIBULKA was arrested in April 1978 with two other people for organizing private sessions of music and poetry by nonconformist artists and distributing written texts alleged to be critical of the country's social system. He was sentenced in November 1978.

Despite worsening health Mr Cibulka has been forced to do industrial work cutting artificial jewellery. He was reported to have been put in solitary confinement twice in early 1979, sleeping on a stone floor and receiving a minimum of food for 15-day periods. He is said to have been disciplined later by being put in an underground cell on half-rations and to have staged a hunger-strike after being beaten repeatedly by common-law prisoners.

Charged with offending against prison discipline, Mr Cibulka said at a court hearing that his hunger-strike was in protest against his working conditions and physical attacks on him. A prison warden gave evidence that his behaviour was satisfactory. The court sentenced Mr Cibulka on 30 January 1980 to six months, to be served under a stricter regime. The procurator, who had asked for a five-year sentence, appealed. On 12 March the court gave Mr Cibulka a further six months.

Since the trial, *AI* has been told that Mr Cibulka was unable to achieve production targets because of his health and as a result was put in an underground cell on reduced rations. He is also reported to have been beaten again by common-law prisoners.

Please write courteously worded letters appealing for the immediate release of Petr Cibulka. Write to: Dr Gustav Husak, President of The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Praha-Hrad, CSSR.

Sion ASSIDON, Morocco

A 32-year-old student-teacher, sentenced to a 15-year prison term after helping to put out a Marxist-Leninist paper, is one of many political prisoners in Morocco who are believed to be deprived of adequate medical care for serious illnesses.

Sion ASSIDON, who had helped to produce a paper called *Saout al Kadih* (The Worker's Voice) which propagated Marxist-Leninist ideas, was arrested in 1972. Accused of plotting to overthrow the government, he was tried in Casablanca in July 1973 in a case involving some 80 other people.

The defendants said at the trial that they had been tortured by police while being held incommunicado, and Mr Assidon identified a policeman in the courtroom whom he accused of taking part in the torture.

Mr Assidon is now held in the Prison Centrale in Kénitra with more than 100 other political prisoners and is reported to suffer from an ulcer and sciatica. There is serious concern over the health of many of the prisoners as it is believed that they do not receive adequate medical treatment.

In October 1979 Mr Assidon and another prisoner, Najib Bribri, escaped from Avicennes Hospital in Rabat but were recaptured after three days. A third man, Rahal Jbiha, who had been adopted by *AI* as a prisoner of conscience, died in the escape attempt when he fell from the rope used to climb down from the fifth floor of the hospital. Mr Assidon and Mr Bribri were sentenced to three-year terms for the escape attempt. During their trial they said they were beaten after being captured. Mr Assidon is reported to have suffered an injury to his ear-drum and two broken fingers.

AI has reason to believe he has been imprisoned for expressing his political views and has not used or advocated violence.

Please send courteously worded letters appealing for the immediate release of Sion Assidon to: His Majesty King Hassan II, Rabat, Morocco.

People's Revolutionary Party cases, Republic of Korea

Sixteen people are still in prison in the Republic of Korea after having been convicted of political offences in 1974 by an Emergency Court Martial in a case marked by torture of the defendants and grave irregularities in their trial.

The 16, including businessmen, teachers and shopkeepers, were among 54 people convicted of belonging to organizations alleged by the authorities to have as their aim the forcible overthrow of the government and the establishment of a communist regime.

Eight of the accused were hanged on 9 April 1975, despite assurances given the previous day by the Public Prosecutor's Department that no executions would take place before the defendants were allowed to lodge appeals.

An *AI* mission to the Republic of Korea in 1975 reported that defendants had been tortured during interrogation and that there had been grave flaws in pre-trial and court procedure.

Many of the original 54 have been released before the expiry of their sentences. The 16 remaining prisoners are serving sentences of 15 and 20 years and life imprisonment.

The 54 were charged under presidential emergency decrees, the Anti-Communist Law and the National Security Law with membership of the People's Revolutionary Party and the National Democratic Youth and Students Federation.

The remaining prisoners are: CHO Man-ho, CHON Chang-il, CHONG Mangin, HWAN Hyong-sung, KANG Chang-dok, KIM Chong-dae, LEE Chae-hyong, LEE Chang-bok, LEE Kang-chul, LEE Tae-hwan, NA Kyong-il, LEE Song-chae, KIM Han-dok, IM Koo-ho, CHUN Chae-won and YU Jin-gon.

Please send courteously worded letters appealing for their immediate release to: His Excellency President Choi Kyu-hah, The Blue House, Chongno-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Since 1961, when it was founded, *AI* has published more than 50 reports. These range from an annual *Amnesty International Report*, now describing *AI*'s work in some 100 countries, to short *Briefing Papers*, covering a single country. Thanks to the tremendous work of volunteers, these publications have often been translated into as many as 12 languages. Sales of the publications ensure that the information about human rights violations reaches a wide audience and helps to raise funds to continue the research that is so essential to *AI*'s continuing campaign. This month, to boost the distribution of *AI* reports and the *Newsletter*, we are encouraging our readers to make a special effort to make these publications available to their friends and colleagues.

Building a human rights library

Do you know the facts?

- In what country are as many as 15,000 people believed to have been abducted since 1976?
- In what country have political prisoners been "retained" as "prison labourers" for years after completing their sentences?
- Who was the 84-year-old Christian who died in a camp in the Soviet Union this year after serving a total of 23 years as a prisoner of conscience?
- What was the exact outcome of the inquest into the death of Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness leader who died in custody in 1977?
- In what country did the government unleash a program of mass arrests and killings, officially termed "Red Terror"? How many political prisoners are last reported to be in detention there?
- How many countries have abolished the death penalty for all offences?
- Last year *AI* submitted information to the United Nations on violations of human rights in eight countries. Which were they?

Facts are the building blocks of *AI*'s global campaign to expose and halt political imprisonment, torture and executions.

As a supporter of the growing movement to protect human dignity around the world you need to have the details about human rights at your fingertips.

Tell people you support *AI* and more and more you will find they expect you to know the details about the fate of prisoners of conscience and the background to human rights crises that make headlines. They expect *AI* to have found out the truth about cases of torture and political murder.

AI has earned this reputation by maintaining the highest possible standards of accuracy in its research. At a time when many human rights stories are being influenced by political bias and propaganda, *AI* has made a point of sticking to the facts and its policy of strict impartiality.

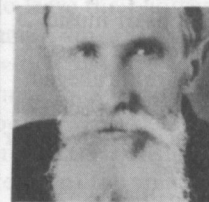
impartial records

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To introduce more people to *AI* reports we are making a set of seven recent publications available as a starter's "human rights library" collection.

If you do not have these reports yourself, you will find them an excellent data pack for talks on *AI* and a useful set upon which to build a reference library that will help you keep track of long-range human rights trends in various countries.

If you are already familiar with these reports, copy or cut out the information on the opposite page and encourage your friends, colleagues, school or local library to purchase the collection and subscribe to *AI*. Or give the set to a friend or community education centre as a gift.

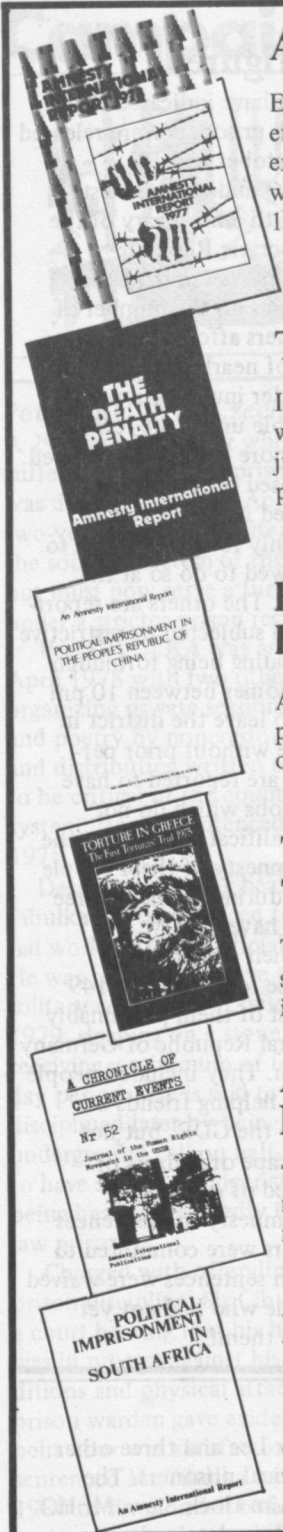


Vladimir Shelkov, founder of The True Witness Publishing House, died in prison this year after serving only a few months of a fresh five-year sentence.

Other answers:

- Human rights groups in Argentina estimate that 15,000 people have "disappeared" since 1976.
- Prisoners in China have been kept on as labourers after expiry of their sentences.
- The Biko inquest found he died of injuries sustained in custody but did not assign criminal responsibility.
- Thousands died in Ethiopia's "Red Terror"; 8,000 political prisoners were reported held in in early 1979.
- At the beginning of 1980, 20 countries had totally abolished the death penalty.
- *AI* submitted reports to the United Nations last year on Argentina, Chile, Ethiopia, Kampuchea, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Uganda.

The order form on the opposite page includes a regular subscription to the *Amnesty International Newsletter* and the *Amnesty International Report*.



Amnesty International Reports

Each year *AI* issues this detailed survey of its global efforts to combat political imprisonment, torture and executions. Each edition is an authoritative reference work on some 100 countries. The set includes 1978 and 1979 reports.

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Political Imprisonment in the People's Republic of China

After years of intensive research *AI* has compiled a portrait of the system of interrogation and imprisonment of political prisoners in China.

Torture in Greece: The First Torturers' Trial

This analysis of the trial of 32 Greek officers and soldiers offers a rare and disturbing insight into the inner clockwork of a torture state.

A Chronicle of Current Events No 52

This latest issue of the unofficial journal of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union includes news of recent arrests, interrogations and conditions in the prisons and camps.

Political Imprisonment in South Africa

Banned by the South African Government, this report documents its repressive system, including detention without trial, widespread torture and the death of detainees in custody.

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Haiti

Government replies to AI appeals

The Haitian authorities have acknowledged the detention of eight people reported by AI in December 1979. They have not supplied any information on four others named by AI.

A letter of 9 January from M. Georges SALOMON, Secretary of State at the Foreign Affairs Department, received by people who wrote in response to an Urgent Action appeal, says two people on the AI list—Fritzner SIDNEY and Prosper SAINT-LOUIS—have been released as “the police investigation did not warrant sufficient charges” against them. Both were held incommunicado for more than four months and, according to reports reaching AI, were beaten savagely.

The letter acknowledges the continued detention of six others:

- Joseph JEANTY, charged on 25 August with stealing a passport. He is reported to have been held incommunicado, possibly on suspicion of going to Miami to contact Haitian exiles.
- Dieugrand FLEURIMOND, arrested for bringing a motorcycle back to Haiti “without complying with customs formalities”, according to the letter, and charged on 4 December 1979. AI’s information is that M. Fleurimond, a peasant, was arrested in February 1979, 10 months before he was charged on suspicion of contact with exiles in the neighbouring Dominican Republic.
- Fernand NOEL and Léon DEFOURNOIS, said by the letter to have been charged on the same grounds as

M. Fleurimond. Reports reaching AI say they may have been seized for alleged participation in an anti-government plot.

— Ulrick DESIRE, former head of customs in St. Marc, said by the letter to be accused of “plotting with a terrorist group in order to smuggle in arms and explosives for subversive purposes”. AI believes that this “plot”, in which M. Noel and M. Defournois may also be implicated, is a device for imprisoning opponents of the government.

— Wilfrid NICOLAS, police corporal, said by the letter to be under investigation for “serious breaches of regulations and of strict military discipline”.

The government letter says the authorities have no information on army Sergeant Bienvenue THEODORE and building designer Gustave COLAS. According to reports received by AI, Sergeant Théodore was arrested after he was denounced by one of his men whom he had rebuked for advocating that striking workers be shot. M. Colas is reported to have been detained since February 1979.

The Haitian letter makes no mention of two people named by AI: Margarita FENELON, a 16-year-old student, is reported to have been arrested in Port-au-Prince solely because of her father’s political activities. She has been adopted by AI as a prisoner of conscience. Sylvio CLAUDE, leader of the Christian Social Democratic Party of Haiti, was arrested in August 1979 (February Newsletter) □

GDR

Release figures

Official figures have indicated that a total of 21,928 prisoners were released between 10 October and 14 December 1979 under an amnesty marking the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic (November 1979 Newsletter).

Overall figures on the number of political prisoners affected are not available, but of nearly 80 prisoners adopted or under investigation by AI who were eligible under the terms of the amnesty, more than 50 were freed.

Of the released prisoners who were AI-adopted most wanted to emigrate but only four are known to have been allowed to do so at the time of writing. The others are reported to have been subjected to restrictive measures, including being forbidden to leave their homes between 10 pm and 6 am, or to leave the district in which they live without prior permission. Some are reported to have been assigned jobs which do not match their qualifications. Under the terms of the amnesty, if these people are re-arrested during the next three years they will have to serve the remainder of their sentences.

Among those released were 149 foreigners, most of them presumably from the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin. They included people imprisoned for helping friends or relatives to flee the GDR, but not commercial escape organizers or people convicted of espionage.

Under the amnesty life sentences on 130 prisoners were commuted to 15 years. Prison sentences were waived for 1,272 people who had not yet started to serve them □

Singapore

Lee Tse Tong freed from prison after 17 years

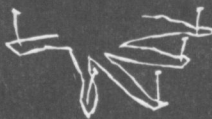
The Singapore Government has released from prison former union leader and member of parliament LEE Tse Tong, who was detained without charge or trial for more than 17 years, but has confined him to a small off-shore island. A member of the left-wing *Barisan Sosialis* Party, Mr Lee was elected to the Singapore Assembly in September 1963 but was arrested a month later. He was held under the Internal Security Act, which provides for indefinite detention of any person considered by the President to be a threat to the internal security of Singapore.

The government has confined Mr Lee to Pulau Ubin, off the Singapore coast. It says that he cannot be released unconditionally as he has refused to give assurances that he will not resume subversive activities. Mr Lee has consistently refused to give such assurances on the grounds that to do so would amount to an admission of guilt. Two other long-term political detainees, Dr LIM Hock Siew and Said ZAHARI, were exiled to off-shore islands in 1978.

Mr Lee’s release came two weeks after publication of the *Report of an Amnesty International Mission to Singapore*, which drew particular

attention to Mr Lee and three other long-term political prisoners. The others are Dr Lim Hock Siew, Mr HO Piao (continuously detained since February 1963), and Dr POH Soo Kai (detained in 1963, released 10 years later, and re-arrested in 1976). The report says the length of time in detention without trial that these men have endured is almost without parallel in the modern world.

AI has cabled Singapore Prime Minister LEE Kuan Yew welcoming the news of Lee Tse Tong’s release and requesting that, in view of the fact that Mr Lee has been detained for more than 17 years without the government’s allegations against him being presented in open court, he be released unconditionally □



amnesty international

campaign for the abolition of torture

appeals

Amnesty International opposes the torture of prisoners in all cases, wherever and whenever it is practised. Any act of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is a violation of the international human rights standards unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. International appeals can help to alleviate the plight of prisoners being subjected to cruel treatment. Your letters should follow carefully the instructions given below.

Student held four years in Argentinian prisons after torture

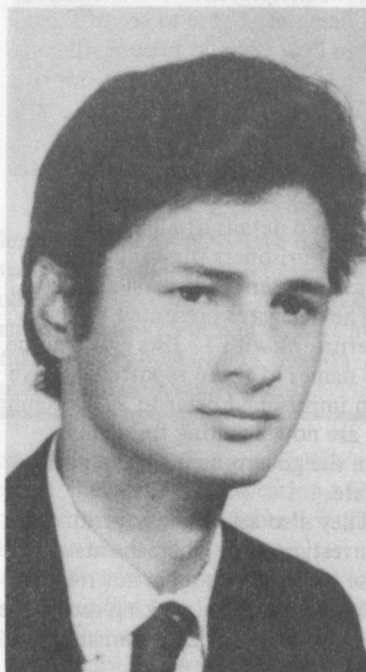
A 27-year-old university student has been held without charge or trial for more than four years in Argentina after being tortured repeatedly.

Gustavo WESTERKAMP, an economics student at the University of Buenos Aires, was seized by armed men in civilian clothing as he left a barracks after a medical examination for military service on 21 October 1975. He was blindfolded, beaten and forced into a waiting car.

Taken to the Federal Security Offices in Buenos Aires, señor Westerkamp was tortured there for two days while handcuffed and blindfolded. He was given electric shocks and beaten on the genitals with chains. His blindfold was sprayed with teargas, causing burns around his eyes. He was left lying on the floor, and those who passed kicked him and spat and urinated on him.

During a transfer in September 1976 from Villa Devoto Prison to Sierra Chica near Olivarría, Sr. Westerkamp and other prisoners were brutally beaten. He was forced to sign a statement saying that the marks left on him were the result of an accident. At Sierra Chica he was kept in an unheated cell with no glass in the window. In winter the temperature fell to -10°C . All physical exercise was forbidden. During a transfer to La Plata Prison in September 1977 he was beaten again. Sent back to Sierra Chica in February 1978 he was transferred to Rawson Prison in 1979 and is still held there.

Sr. Westerkamp is held "at the disposal of the National Executive Power", apparently for the peaceful expression of left-wing views. Under the Argentine constitution prisoners in



Gustavo Westerkamp

this category are allowed to opt for exile rather than face indefinite detention. Sr. Westerkamp applied for this option early in 1976 and a judge granted it. The "right of option" was suspended, however, after the military coup of March 1976. It has since been revived in a restricted form, but Sr. Westerkamp's subsequent applications have all been refused without explanation.

Please send courteously worded letters appealing for the immediate release of Gustavo Westerkamp to: Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República General (R.E.) Jorge Rafael Videla, Casa Rosada, Buenos Aires C.F., Argentina.

USSR

Ukrainian denied medical treatment

A 43-year-old former lieutenant in the militia is critically ill in a corrective labour colony in the Soviet Union.

Mykola SLOBODYAN, now believed to be in his fifth year of imprisonment, is serving an 11-year sentence for participating in a Ukrainian nationalist group known as *Homin* which sought independence for the Ukraine.

Mr Slobodyan is known to have suffered for several years from a duodenal ulcer. Although it is reported to have bled on several occasions, he has not been given adequate treatment. Fellow prisoners in the Perm corrective labour colony where Mr Slobodyan is detained have staged several hunger-strikes in an effort to secure proper medical treatment for him. Despite his deteriorating health Mr Slobodyan is still being compelled to work and is reported to have been punished frequently for failing to fulfil production targets. On 1 September 1978 a KGB officer is reported to have told Mr Slobodyan: "If you work with us, we will give you medical treatment."

Case investigated

Mr Slobodyan's imprisonment results from the efforts of Soviet police to uncover various non-violent nationalist groups organized in the Western Ukraine during the 1960s and 70s. When identified, their members have been given heavy sentences. Because of the lack of precise information about the *Homin* group's program AI is still investigating Mr Slobodyan's case.

Please write courteously worded letters requesting that Mykola Slobodyan be given all necessary medical treatment and urging his release on humanitarian grounds. Write to: The Director, Perm Regional Administration of Internal Affairs, SSSR, RSFSR, g. Perm, Ispolkom Oblastnogo Soveta, Upravleniye Vnutrennikh Del, Nachalniku; *and to the Procurator-General of the USSR:* SSSR, RSFSR, Moskva, Pushkinskaya ul. 15A, Prokuratura SSR, Generalnomu Prokuroru, R.A. Rudenko.

Afghanistan AI mission meets officials and prisoners in Kabul

A two-member AI delegation visited Afghanistan in February to discuss protection of human rights in the country with the new government and to confirm on the spot those human rights abuses previously reported by AI.

After the delegates convey their findings to AI's International Executive Committee the organization will be making recommendations to the government.

The recommendations will cover specific steps to be taken if official human rights assurances given to the delegates are to be implemented fully and effectively.

In a letter to President Babrak KARMAL on 26 February the organization set out the assurances its delegates had received from him and other government officers. He said prisoners now under arrest in connection with their political activities would be treated "in accordance with the principles of law and legality" and that no political prisoners would be tortured or killed.

He also told the delegates that no one would be imprisoned for their beliefs or for expressing an opinion, provided no violence was used.

Government ministers told the delegates that if political prisoners went on trial the hearings would be open to the public and to AI observers and the President said that AI delegates would be welcome to visit Afghanistan again at any time.

He also said the government was considering abolishing the death penalty "under favourable conditions in the country" and that it was considering issuing a statement in the coming weeks, establishing the independence of the judiciary.

In its letter to President Karmal AI pointed out that "it was particularly important for our delegation to be assured by the Minister of Justice that the government considered the prohibition of torture to be absolute and that no person would be subjected to torture, even in situations of a 'foreign threat' to the country."

AI has since asked the government for full details on recent disturbances in the country, the number of people arrested and the nature of the charges against them.

The AI delegates, Professor Mümtaz SOYSAL, a Turkish constitutional lawyer, and Yvonne TERLINGEN, a Dutch lawyer and member of the

organization's International Secretariat, visited Kabul from 11 to 17 February.

They met some of the thousands of political prisoners released under the general amnesty announced on 28 December 1979 and interviewed, without the presence of officials, six prisoners they chose to see of those held in Pule Charchi prison. All six had held government posts prior to the 27 December change of government.

During their mission the delegates urged the government to publish names and details of all 15,084 political prisoners it said it had released under the general amnesty.

The delegates presented the government with 13 lists giving some 450 names of those reported to have been imprisoned prior to 27 December and are now awaiting full details from the government on their release or fate.

They also asked the government to investigate the whereabouts of those political prisoners not released under the amnesty, making use of the expertise of specialized humanitarian organizations.

The government told the delegates that those political prisoners not released had all "disappeared" after arrest and were presumed killed before 28 December. Relatives, however, believe some prisoners are still alive and may be in detention.

The delegation did not visit prisons or towns outside Kabul □

Prisoner Releases and Cases

The International Secretariat learned in February of the release of 371 prisoners under adoption or investigation and took up 78 new cases.

Council of Europe takes first step to abolish death penalties

A Council of Europe committee has recommended the abolition of the death penalty for peacetime offences in all the Council's 21 member states.

The Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly arrived at the decision on 10 March on the basis of a report by Swedish member of parliament Carl LIDBOM.

The Committee also recommended that the European Convention on Human Rights be amended so that executions for peacetime offences would become a violation of human rights.

It is the first time an inter-governmental body has recommended the abolition of the death penalty in such unequivocal terms.

The death penalty is still legal in eight of the member states of the Council of Europe: Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Turkey and the United Kingdom. However, in most of these countries no executions have taken place for a long time.

The Legal Affairs Committee's recommendation goes to the Parliamentary Assembly in April. The Assembly has no power to take binding decisions but can make recommendations to governments □

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