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**@AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
REPORT 1995
UPDATES**

**Selected events covering the period
from January to May 1995**

10/04/95

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Africa Update

Selected events in Africa from January to May 1995

Sudan

In January Amnesty International launched a major international campaign to draw attention to human rights violations in Sudan and urged the United Nations (UN) to create an international civilian human rights monitoring team as a first step in breaking the cycle of abuses. In February women relatives of army officers executed after an unfair trial in 1990 were beaten and threatened with rape and death following an anti-government protest on the anniversary of the executions of their husbands and sons.

In March the UN Commission on Human Rights voted to investigate sending human rights monitors. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights of the Organization of African Unity went a stage further and called for monitors to be deployed.

South Africa

Extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations continued to be reported between January and May 1995, particularly in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Police torture of suspected criminals continued to be reported.

Constitutional Court hearings on the death penalty took place in February 1995. By May the Court had not delivered its ruling. The court's first ruling, in another case, placed the onus on the state prosecutors to prove that confessions are made voluntarily before they can be admitted as evidence. In May the National Parliament passed legislation setting up the Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, which can investigate past human right violations, recommends compensation to victims of those violations, as

well as recommend granting amnesties to perpetrators.

Sierra Leone

Attacks by rebel forces intensified since the beginning of the year, and have moved closer to the capital, Freetown. Hundreds of civilians were deliberately killed and others abducted.

In an attack by rebels on the town of Kambia in Northern Province on 25 January 1995 at least 15 civilians were shot dead by the rebels and more than 100 school children were abducted. Seven foreign nuns abducted from Kambia at the same time were released in March, and a further 10 foreign hostages, two held since November 1994, were released in April. However, large numbers of Sierra Leonean civilians are believed to be still held by rebels.

Liberia

Killings of unarmed civilians by armed political groups have been reported by UN staff in Liberia since the beginning of the year. For example, 62 people — mostly women and children — were killed in early April by machetes in Yosi, and dozens of other civilians were killed during April at Sinje and Tobee.

Burundi

Thousands of unarmed civilians were killed between January and May 1995 by members of the Tutsi-dominated armed forces and extremist Hutu and Tutsi armed gangs. On 24 and 25 March suburbs in the capital Bujumbura were the scene of another outbreak of mass violence and human right abuses. The local Hutu majority were driven out of two suburbs, which were the last remaining ethnically mixed areas in the city. Thousands of Hutu citizens fled the city to the nearby border with Zaire. In early April 1995, around 400 civilians were killed by the army and Tutsi armed groups in Gasorwe and Kizi in Muyinga prefecture. Thousands of Burundians fled to Tanzania.

Rwanda

There were continuing large-scale arrests of people suspected of having committed crimes against humanity including genocide when at least half a million people, mainly Tutsi, were killed between April and July 1994. Prisons conditions - which were already bad - deteriorated further, both in the official prisons and in unofficial detention centres. In April there were an estimated 32,000 people held in detention without charge or trial. Many prisoners died because of overcrowding; there were also numerous reports of ill-treatment, especially in secret jails.

Reports of "disappearances", torture and killings of unarmed civilians by members of the Rwandese Patriotic Army persisted. The single largest incident was the massacre at the internally displaced persons' camp in Kibeho, in the south west of Rwanda. After thousands

refused to move from the camp, soldiers opened fire on the crowds and thousands of unarmed civilians were killed, though the exact figure is still in dispute. An international commission of inquiry into the incident began its work on 8 May.

Many Rwandese refugees in Zaire and Tanzania were still refusing to return home because of persistent reports of attacks on Hutu in Rwanda, despite reassurances by the Rwandese Government that they have nothing to fear.

AMERICAS UPDATE

Selected events in the Americas from January to May 1995

BOLIVIA

Mass arrests of trade unionists have continued under the state of siege legislation declared by President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada on 18 April. Some of those detained have reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment, beatings and electric shocks after being arrested. The state of siege followed three weeks of demonstrations, some violent, staged by the teachers' union against the Education Reform Law and the General Strike called by Bolivian Labour Confederation (COB) in support of teachers' demands. Under Bolivia's constitution, the state of siege is an exceptional measure that the executive power may invoke to preserve public order.

COLOMBIA

Gross human rights violations continued into 1995. Scores of people were killed in an upsurge of paramilitary activity in several areas of the country, including the departments of César, North Santander and Meta. The government took little effective action to disband such groups although one army officer was placed under arrest after openly acknowledging his links with a paramilitary group responsible for a series of massacres in the south of César department.

There have also been renewed attacks against human rights defenders. Members of the Civic Human Committee of Meta (*Comite Cívico de Derechos Humanos del Meta*) based in the departmental capital, Villavicencio, received numerous death threats apparently from paramilitary forces operating in the area. As a result, members of the Committee were forced to leave the area.

In February, President Ernesto Samper Pizano admitted state responsibility for the "disappearance", torture and murder of 107 people by the security forces and paramilitary groups in Trujillo, Valle de Cauca department, between 1988-1990.

HAITI

The US-led Multinational Force that returned President Aristide to power in October 1994 was replaced on 31 March by the United Nations Mission in Haiti, made up of military, civilian police and civilian personnel. Since the return of President Aristide, there has been a dramatic reduction in the level of human rights violations.

In December 1994 the parliament passed a law banning the existence of paramilitary groups. The infamous *chefs de section*, rural police chiefs, who were responsible for numerous human rights violations in the past, were also disbanded. The armed forces have been effectively demobilized, for the time being. Police functions have been separated from the army and a controversial interim police force, composed largely of former military personnel, established. A National Commission for Truth and Justice has been created and government investigations announced into a few cases of extrajudicial executions.

However, many problems still remain. Much needed judicial and prison reform has barely started, and there has been widespread criticism of the lack of systematic disarmament of the military and paramilitary. The lack of a properly functioning police force and judiciary has left a vacuum in which criminal elements, believed to consist largely of former soldiers and paramilitary, feel free to perpetrate acts of violence against the general population.

Amnesty International is concerned that the issue of impunity both for human rights violations of the past and the present has scarcely been touched so far. Legislative and local elections are due to take place in June and presidential elections in December; Amnesty International will be urging the current and new administrations to bring those responsible for past human rights violations to justice as a matter of urgency.

MEXICO

New incursions by the Mexican army into the southern state of Chiapas in February led to a rise of human rights violations. Amnesty International documented scores of cases of arbitrary arrests, including prisoners of conscience, dozens of cases of torture and some "disappearances" of people in Chiapas and elsewhere in Mexico. Despite President Ernesto Zedillo's announcement early this year promising an end to impunity in Mexico, none of those responsible for the violations have been brought to justice.

USA

Violations of human rights continue to be reported in the USA. On issues like the death penalty, police brutality and torture and ill-treatment in jails and prisons, Amnesty International has found repeated violations of international human rights standards. Serious incidents of police ill-treatment and the use of excessive force, often towards racial minorities, have been documented in major US cities, including Los Angeles and New York. Amnesty International has also condemned conditions in some super-maximum security prison units where prisoners are isolated in sealed windowless cells, with no work, educational or rehabilitation facilities. The organization also condemned the recent reintroduction of chain gangs, by an Alabama prison in May, as a retrograde step in human rights.

As of 15 May, 21 executions had taken place in the United States: eight in Texas; two each in Alabama and Illinois; and one each in Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Three of the prisoners concerned had refused to continue with their legal appeals and agreed to their execution.

Two states resumed executions after lengthy gaps. On 2 May Keith Zettlemyer became the first prisoner executed in Pennsylvania since 1962, and on 10 May Duncan McKenzie became the first prisoner executed in Montana since 1943. McKenzie was also one of the country's longest serving death row prisoners having been convicted and sentenced in 1975. On 7 March, New York became the thirty-eighth state to reintroduce capital punishment.

ASIA/PACIFIC UPDATE

Selected events in Asia/Pacific from January to May 1995

CHINA

In China, the first few months of 1995 saw a crackdown on Tibetans protesting at the enforcement of new security measures and restrictions on religious activities. There was also a crackdown on China's Christian community, with Catholics and Protestants claiming they had been subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and heavy fines by local officials for unapproved religious activities. The death penalty continued to be a concern in China, with many executions recorded for drug trafficking and economic offences.

INDONESIA AND EAST TIMOR

In February, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions reported that Indonesian security forces were responsible for at least 100 and possibly as many as 270 killings during the November 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in Dili, East Timor. The report also criticized the Indonesian Government for failing to investigate those killings.

In March, the government renewed its attack on freedom of the press by detaining journalists, raiding the offices of non-governmental organizations and threatening publications which consider employing members of an independent journalists' association.

PAKISTAN

A wave of violence swept Karachi, with more than 300 people shot to death in the first three months of 1995. In response, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto authorized police to use "ruthlessness" whenever necessary, sending a signal that human rights violations may be condoned.

In February, a 14-year-old boy and another man, both members of the Christian minority group, were sentenced to death for blasphemy after an unfair trial based on malicious accusations. In March, the two were acquitted, but Amnesty International urged the government to prevent other such abuses of the blasphemy laws and to protect lawyers and human rights activists threatened by Islamists. In April, a member of the Ahmadi sect who had gone to provide bail for another man imprisoned for conversion was stoned to death in the court premises. Police did nothing to assist him.

SINGAPORE

The Government of Singapore confirmed in 1995 that the true number of executions in 1994 was 76, much higher than the 32 people Amnesty International knew had been executed. Another 16 people are known to have been executed in Singapore between January and May 1995.

One execution in particular attracted worldwide attention. The 17 March hanging of Flor Contemplacion, a Filipino domestic worker, was carried out despite appeals by the Philippine Government and human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, to commute the death sentence. There were doubts about the fairness of the trial. She was executed in Singapore for the murder of another Filipino domestic worker and her employer's four-year-old son, despite new evidence which came up two days before the execution which may have proven her innocence. Flor Contemplacion's cell-mate is reported to have claimed that Flor was forcibly drugged prior to appearing in court, which may explain why she remained silent throughout her trial. Three others were executed alongside Flor Contemplacion.

EUROPE UPDATE

Selected events in Europe from January to May 1995

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

The spring of 1995 saw continuing human rights abuses in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnian Serb-controlled northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina, expulsions of non-Serbs continued. There was new pressure on Croats, partly resulting from military action by the Croatian army which resulted in the creation of many new Serbian refugees in the area. In Kosovo province of Serbia, some 160 ethnic Albanian former policemen were investigated and tried on charges of forming a parallel police force. Many of the defendants and their lawyers alleged that they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated during pre-trial detention in order to obtain self-incriminating statements from them.

CHECHEN REPUBLIC

Reports of human rights abuses committed by Russian troops continued in the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic. Following investigation trips in February and March, Amnesty International documented allegations of people being ill-treated in detention and of civilians being deliberately shot while trying to leave the Chechen Republic. The organization remains concerned that, despite compelling allegations of human rights abuses, no one appears to have been brought to account.

TURKEY

By May 1995 there had been no revision of Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law, under which scores of people are being prosecuted or serving prison sentences for expressing their non-violent opinions. None of the safeguards against torture recommended by expert bodies of international governmental organizations (Committee against Torture, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture) were enacted.

On 19 March 35,000 Turkish troops entered Northern Iraq with the aim of destroying camps of the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) in the mountains along the border with Turkey. As a result of comprehensive controls by the Turkish forces on access by press and monitors to the region, detailed information has proved extremely difficult to obtain. Amnesty International is investigating a number of reports that Turkish troops killed prisoners.

The excessive use of force by Turkish police apparently led to the deaths of demonstrators in Istanbul in March when police broke up a rally to protest an earlier attack on a

café by unidentified assailants. Video footage clearly showed police shooting directly into the crowd.

During the course of the disturbances, Hasan Ocak "disappeared" after being detained on 21 March in the Aksaray district of Istanbul. A detainee claims to have seen Hasan Ocak in police detention - others that they saw his name on prisoner lists. The authorities deny that he was taken into custody. Throughout the rest of the country "disappearances" have continued to occur.

Harassment of human rights defenders was a particular feature of the early months of 1995. Eight members of the Diyarbakır branch of the Turkish Human Rights Association were committed to prison. Two of the prisoners, both lawyers, reported being severely tortured in police custody. Although they were all accused of membership of the PKK, examination of the indictment against them revealed no evidence to support these charges, and Amnesty International, believing that they were arrested for their legitimate human rights work, appealed for their release. All eight were released by Diyarbakır State Security Court at hearings in April and May, but the prosecutions continue.

MIDDLE EAST UPDATE

Selected events in the Middle East from January to May 1995

BAHRAIN

Killings, torture and detentions without trial continue in 1995 as the government sought to crack down on demonstrators calling for democratic rights since December 1994.

At least 12 civilians have been killed by security forces using live ammunition, in circumstances suggesting that they may have been extrajudicially executed. The government has so far failed to take any steps to investigate or prevent such killings.

Unconfirmed estimates suggest several thousand people have been arrested, including women and children. The government has rejected such claims as "exaggerated" yet refuses to disclose the names of detainees and their whereabouts.

State Security Court trials of those arrested, which are being held *in camera*, were unfair. Defendants are held incommunicado and denied access to defence lawyers until the start of their trial. They have no right of appeal against their convictions or sentences to a higher tribunal. According to reports received by Amnesty International, some defendants were tortured to extract "confessions" from them.

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES INCLUDING THE AREAS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

More than a year since the signing of the agreement establishing the Palestinian Authority, human rights violations are still being perpetrated by both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. The Israeli authorities have detained over 6,000 Palestinians, including prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience. In violation of international human rights standards, detainees have been held without access to lawyers for up to 30 days and without access to families for up to 140 days. The Israeli Government has condoned and even encouraged interrogation methods such as hoodings, shaking, beatings, and prolonged sleep deprivation. In April, one detainee died in custody as a result of torture during interrogation.

In the Palestinian Authority's areas, hundreds of people -- including prisoners of conscience and possible prisoners of conscience -- have been arrested and detained without charge, trial, formal access to lawyers or family and without any judicial review. Detainees have been tortured and ill-treated in detention centres in both the Gaza Strip and Jericho; one detainee has died in Jericho, reportedly after torture.

In February, the Palestinian Authority set up its own State Security Court with special procedures. Since April they have sentenced political prisoners, most of them Islamists, to up to 25 years' imprisonment on charges such as inciting suicide bombers.

These trials were held at night and *in camera*. Defendants were not informed that they were to be tried until they were brought to court, and were not allowed to have their own lawyer defend them in court. Amnesty International considers these courts to be grossly unfair.

SAUDI ARABIA

There has been a sharp increase in the number of executions in 1995. At least 90 people were executed between 20 January and 19 April. This is the highest number of executions even recorded by Amnesty International to have taken place in such a short period in Saudi Arabia. Executions are carried out after trials in which internationally agreed safeguards for prisoners facing the death sentence are completely ignored. Defendants have no right to be formally represented by defence lawyers during their trials and confessions, even when obtained under torture, are accepted by the court as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which a conviction is based.