

@ANNUAL REPORT UPDATES

EUROPE UPDATE

Selected events from 1 January to 31 May 1992

YUGOSLAVIA: More details came out about torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings in Croatia by all sides in the conflict which had taken place before the January ceasefire. From April on, the focus of the conflict shifted to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where there were more reports of deliberate and arbitrary killings and ill-treatment. Amnesty International sought more information about the killings and ill-treatment; however, at the end of May the organization still lacked details of the circumstances in which most incidents had occurred.

TURKEY: During demonstrations to mark the Kurdish new year in March, security forces opened fire with machine guns on unarmed civilians, including women and children. There were continuing allegations of extrajudicial executions by government-appointed village guards and by Hizbollah, an organization believed to have links with the security forces in the mainly Kurdish southeast. During a fact-finding trip to Turkey, Amnesty International heard eye-witness accounts of such killings of unarmed civilians, and spoke to a witness of one of four deaths believed to be a result of torture in police custody.

AFRICA UPDATE

Selected events from 1 January to 31 May 1992

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: There were more than 100 arrests in February following demonstrations protesting at the president's refusal to implement recommendations of a commission of inquiry into army brutality in May last year. Those arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment include the main opposition party leader, member of parliament Laurent Gbagbo, and also the president of the country's League for Human Rights. More than 50 other prisoners of conscience are still held without trial.

MALAWI: The government responded to international pressure by releasing up to 50 political detainees in January. However, when the country's Roman Catholic bishops criticized human rights violations in March they were interrogated and subjected to death threats. Later in the year, trade union leader Chakufwa Chihana was arrested at the airport in April as he returned to Malawi to organize a pro-democracy movement. Other opponents of the one-party system were detained in May, some of being them tortured. As of 31 May, the government defied a judge's order to produce Chakufwa Chihana in court, sparking protests in which dozens lost their lives.

SOUTH AFRICA: In the lead up to the second round of constitutional reform talks in May, more evidence came out of police and army involvement in political killings, both in the mid-1980s and the 1990s. Amnesty International released a major report on the issue in June 1992 showing police involvement in some killings and failure to react to killings by Inkatha, mostly of suspected ANC supporters, in the two years since the political reform process in the country started.

MIDDLE EAST UPDATE

Selected events from 1 January to 31 May 1992

ALGERIA: Following the resignation of President Chedli Benjedid in January, a new High Committee of State was formed; that committee cancelled the second round of national elections and in February declared a state of emergency.

Under emergency legislation over 6,000 detainees, including probable prisoners of conscience, were held in seven internment camps located between 800 and 3,000 kilometres from Algiers. Their families were not informed of their whereabouts for up to two months after arrest. Thousands of other suspected government opponents were arrested, sometimes ill-treated and released or brought to trial. In May, nineteen people were sentenced to death for involvement in political attacks which caused 14 deaths.

JORDAN: In April King Hussein lifted martial law - in force since the outbreak of the 1967 war with Israel - under which prisoners of conscience and other political prisoners were tried by martial law courts and received unfair trials.

SYRIA: Fourteen members or sympathizers of the Committees for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria (CDF) were sentenced in March to up to ten years in prison after a trial by the State Security Court which did not satisfy international standards for fair trial. They were convicted on three separate charges of dissemination of false information, receiving money from abroad, and withholding of information from the authorities about CDF activities.

Also in March President Assad issued a general pardon for prisoners whose beneficiaries reportedly included 600 political prisoners. Their names have not been made public and in most cases it was still unclear by 31 May whether they had actually been released. One prisoner of conscience, Yusuf al-Burji, is known to have been released on 2 April.

AMERICAS UPDATE

Selected events from 1 January to 31 May 1992

PERU: On 5 April President Alberto Fujimori made a surprise speech on television announcing the forced dissolution of congress and major reforms, with the backing of the armed forces. Some 60 people, including journalists, politicians and trade unionists, were then arrested and held without charge for up to several days, the majority of them prisoners of conscience.

The following day a decree set out the aims of the new Government of Emergency and National Reconstruction, including a reform of the constitution and of the judiciary and Public Ministry, an institution charged with initiating investigations into human rights violations. The dissolution of Congress stopped the work of congressional commissions dealing with human rights and virtually the entire judicial system was halted in practice for four weeks, effectively suspending the right to habeas corpus.

On 6 May, two police officers and 39 prisoners who were members of the Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path) were killed during a security force operation at Miguel Castro Castro prison in Lima. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of those prisoners still held at the prison and those transferred elsewhere and has called on the government to make available details of all prisoners affected by the security force operation.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Amnesty International was very concerned about the increasing use of the death penalty: by the end of May, 19 executions had taken place in the USA, compared to only 14 in the whole of 1991. Four states, Arizona, California, Delaware and Wyoming resumed executions after more than 20 years. Seven of the eight death sentences commuted by the departing Governor of Ohio in 1991 were reinstated in January 1992 by the new administration. One juvenile offender, Johnny Garrett, was executed in Texas. The acquittal of police officers charged with beating a motorist sparked off riots in Los Angeles: Amnesty International has been reporting on police brutality in the USA for some years.

VENEZUELA: Following an attempted coup on 4 February many people were arrested, some tortured and even killed. There were reports of human rights violations by the security forces, including the extrajudicial execution of at least five people and the arrest and torture of many others.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC UPDATE

Selected events from 1 January to 31 May 1992

AFGHANISTAN: United Nations efforts to find a solution to 14 years of armed conflict in Afghanistan led to a peace proposal in early 1992 for a three-stage transfer of power which involved the president stepping down and a new Mujahideen ruling council being established. During that process hundreds of prisoners, the majority of whom were political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, were reportedly released in Kabul and other cities.

CAMBODIA: The internationally-sponsored peace agreement signed in October 1991 began to be implemented by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in March, which was committed to investigating and monitoring human rights violations. In April all members of the Supreme National Council (SNC), which embodies Cambodian sovereignty in the run-up to the elections, signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

MYANMAR (BURMA): In April Myanmar's ruling military authorities began to release political prisoners deemed not to affect national security, including U Nu, an 84-year-old former prime minister. Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and leader of the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy, continues to be held under arrest where she has been detained without charge or trial since July 1989; she is now allowed family visits, however, which she had been denied for over two years. Amnesty International remains concerned about hundreds of other political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, who are still detained without trial or after unfair trials. In late April the military authorities signed an agreement with the Bangladesh government to repatriate some 250,000 Burmese Muslims who had fled to Bangladesh to escape gross human rights violations in Myanmar's Rakhine (Arakan) state. Amnesty International considers that none of these refugees should be forcibly returned at least until the authorities can conclusively demonstrate that human rights violations no longer occur in the Rakhine state.

THAILAND: Gross human rights violations were committed by Thai security forces against Bangkok demonstrators in May, who were calling for the resignation of the unelected prime minister, General Khraprayun Suchinda. Security forces opened fire and killed an unknown number of demonstrators. Over 3000 people were arrested, many of them prisoners of conscience, including key organisers of the demonstrations such as elected member of parliament Chamlong Srimuang. At the end of May, 789 people involved in the demonstrations had been reported missing. Amnesty International urged the Thai authorities to hold full, impartial investigations into the killings and to bring those responsible to justice.

INDONESIA: Five people were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 6 months to 15 years for charges relating to the Santa Cruz demonstrations. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience. Two others may face harsh sentences for similar offenses and Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience. The government said that it will try eight military men for their actions during the massacre, but no proceedings had been initiated at the end of May.