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DO NOT USE THIS ITEM UNTIL THE IS PRESS OFFICE INFORMS YOU THAT THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HAS BEEN VOTED IN.

Following is the 'A' copy of the International Women's Day news release. The Special Rapporteur post has not yet been voted at the Commission on Human Rights - we should hear this week. DO NOT USE THIS ITEM until we let you know that the Special Rapporteur post has been voted in - the date of the vote must also be filled in on line one. If the post is voted against, we will quickly redraft the paragraphs in brackets - [] - and send the new version out to you.

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EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT TUESDAY 8 MARCH 1994  
AI INDEX: ACT 77/02/94  
DISTR:SC/PO

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS GOVERNMENTS WORLDWIDE FOR  
FAILURE TO PROTECT WOMENS' HUMAN RIGHTS

[On International Women's Day, Amnesty International welcomed the United Nations (UN) Commission on Human Right's decision on ... March to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women -- but said the post needs to be backed up by government action.

"The creation of this post is a positive sign," said Amnesty International, "but the real test will be whether governments respond to the work of the Special Rapporteur by taking effective measures to stop the torture, abduction and even murder of women by government agents."

"So far governments have consistently failed to address women's human rights -- indeed women are frequently made particularly vulnerable to human rights violations by the policies of their own governments. We hope the creation of this post will be more than a token gesture and that governments will support the Special Rapporteur in combating brutality against women."]

The human rights organization today released a summary of human rights violations of women in all regions of the world, including women targeted for human rights activities, those "disappeared" or killed in conflicts, and those singled out because they are related to government opponents.

Women activists run the same risk as other activists - they pay the same price for opposition and are as likely as men to be singled out and tortured, abducted or killed by government agents.

Civil war in Afghanistan has meant educated women are at particular risk of human rights violations. Women working in professional jobs have become prime targets. Some Mujahideen groups consider that education under the former government "poisoned" women's minds and turned them against Islamic principles

and hundreds have fled the country from the threat of torture or other ill-treatment.

The 1990s have turned millions of people into refugees. Most adults who flee their countries are women; as refugees, often with children to protect, they become especially vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment, or the obligation to grant "sexual favours" in return for documents or relief goods.

Conflict zones have seen governments unable or unwilling to prevent, or actively encouraging abuses to which women are most vulnerable. Rape by government agents and paramilitaries is one of the more common abuses inflicted on women in times of conflict. The rape of women has been widespread during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and all sides in the conflict have been responsible.

Abuses against women often appear linked to a wider pattern of abuses. Rape by police and security force personnel has reached endemic proportions in India - widely reported in states where armed conflict prevails. In Peru, where civil war has raged for more than a decade, women have been raped by troops engaged in counter-insurgency operations. And at least 35 women have been raped by government soldiers in the context of conflict in Djibouti.

Women are frequently seen as a "soft target" - singled out simply because of who they are related to. Djamilah Abubakar was found dead by the side of a road two days after Indonesian soldiers arrested her in March 1991. For two years, Djamilah was persecuted by the army and finally was killed because her husband, Mohammad Jasin bin Pawan Piah, was suspected of being a member of the armed opposition group opposing Indonesian rule in Aceh.

1994 has been declared the Year of the Family by the UN and yet governments in all regions of the world have failed to protect women and their families from their security forces. [The decision to appoint the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women by the UN Commission on Human Rights, follows on from the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993 where the rights of women were given high prominence.

In addition to the appointment of the Special Rapporteur, Amnesty International has been lobbying for all the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights to take much greater account of human rights violations against women. The organization is urging better coordination between all the UN bodies dealing with women's rights in preparation for the Fourth UN World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995.]

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