

AI Index: NWS 11/24/93
Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 2060

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
United Kingdom

London WC1X 8DJ

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 24 MARCH 1993

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 24/93

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on Mali and an internal item on war crimes tribunals in the former Yugoslavia.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Chad - 21 April

Please Note

The document to go with this campaign has been sent out to sections dated February. Please inform your section campaign coordinators and anyone else who may receive it that it is EMBARGOED FOR 21 APRIL.

Chad Campaign, document, news release, Q&A and ENR. The news release should be with you by 2 April, the Q&A shortly afterward.

Bangladesh - 28 April

Document on serious human rights violations in Bangladesh, accompanied either by a news release or an embargoed weekly update item.

Tadzhikistan - 5 May

Publication and news release on killings in the context of civil war - with striking similarities to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

US Juvenile Death Penalty - HOPEFULLY THIS WEEK

A weekly update item about executions of juveniles scheduled in both Texas and Missouri, will be sent out shortly, and will hopefully be embargoed for some time this week. The IS will be sending it to media.

Baltic States Death Penalty Action - 1 April

Weekly update enclosed in WU NWS 11/20/93, embargoed for 1 April to coincide with the action launch. The IS press office is not proactively sending this out to media, though it will be used in response to media enquiries. It is mainly to assist sections who are planning media initiatives to go with the action.

Morocco - 14 April

Document and weekly update item - more info soon.

China - 16 April

Document and embargoed weekly update item on torture, timed to coincide with China reporting to the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT). China is scheduled to appear on 23 April - media are entitled to attend and we will be encouraging contacts to do so.

Brazil - 7 May

Please note new embargo date. Document on prison massacre, including new forensic information. Weekly update item to go with it. Sections are also being asked to carry out campaign work in connection with this document.

Unconfirmed news initiatives

News releases or embargoed weekly update items are being considered on the following subjects:

Malawi (May)

Indigenous people (to go with May Focus article)

Guatemala (May?)

Egypt (mid-May)

World Conference (early June)

Nagorno-Karabakh (to go with possible action, May)

Aceh, Indonesia (July)

Section Initiatives

French Section - European Press Officers' Meeting

The second European Press Officers' meeting will take place in Paris this year. The date of this meeting is now fixed for 15 and 16 May as the majority of you asked for. It will be focused on two themes: Audiovisual work (production and TV experiences) and how to improve it; and the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

European World Conference Press Briefing in June

The British Section Press Office has been talking to the EC project office and the Francophone Belgium Press Officer about holding a European press briefing in Brussels for MEPs and for journalists who will be covering the World Conference. The date will probably be Tuesday, June 8th in the morning. The aim will be to look at the EC's role as a whole in terms of its internal shortcomings (Asylum issues, etc), external policies - aid/development, etc, and also to look at Europe's role within the UN.

Although the idea has been suggested by the British Section, it is hoped that all European Section Press Officers will be interested in being involved. For further information please contact either Daphne Davies, in the British Section Press Office or Johannes in the EC project office.

2. AFR 37/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
24 March 1993

MALI: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPEALS FOR FORMER PRESIDENT TRAORÉ

Amnesty International has called on the government of Mali to commute the death sentences imposed on the country's former President, General Moussa Traoré, and three senior security officers.

On 12 February 1993 the High Court (*Cour d'assises*) in Bamako, the capital of Mali, convicted former President Traoré, General Mamadou Coulibaly, former Minister of Defence and Chief of General Staff, General Sékou Ly, former Minister of the Interior, and Colonel Ousmane Coulibaly, former Chief of Army Staff, on charges of murder and grievous bodily harm (*d'assassinats, de coups et blessures volontaires et de meurtres*). They were accused of responsibility for the killing by the army of 106 pro-democracy demonstrators in Bamako and other towns in the days before the government was overthrown by a military coup on 26 March 1991. They have the right to appeal to a higher court.

The trial started on 4 June 1992 but was adjourned after lawyers withdrew from the court because of insufficient protection from angry spectators. It recommenced on 26 November 1992. The other accused, 29 former government ministers and officials of the former ruling party, were acquitted on 12 February 1993 on charges of complicity to murder and grievous bodily harm (*complicité d'assassinats et de complicité de coups et blessures volontaires et de meurtres*). They had been held in custody since their arrests in March 1991. However, only eight were released; the other 21 face a further trial on charges of embezzlement of public funds.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges against them. The defence claimed that the French government had engineered former President Traoré's downfall because he had rejected calls for democracy, that there was insufficient evidence to convict and that another senior officer, who testified for the prosecution at the trial, had been responsible for giving the order to fire on demonstrators.

The four who were sentenced to death have the right of appeal on points of law (*pourvoi de cassation*) to the Supreme Court (*Cour de cassation*). If the sentences are upheld, they may petition the head of state for clemency. Former President Traoré and others, including his wife and son, are expected to face a further trial, the date of which has not yet been set, on charges of embezzlement and corruption.

In January 1992 a new constitution was approved in a referendum and multi-party presidential elections were held in April 1992. In June 1992 the transitional government, which had ruled Mali since the overthrow of former President Traoré's 23-year dictatorship, handed over power to President Alpha Oumar Konaré and a civilian government.

No death sentences are known to have been carried out in Mali since August 1980. In 1986 and 1987 the *Cour d'assises* passed at least eight death sentences, five of them *in absentia*, for aggravated theft, murder and arson, none of which were carried out. The Special State Security Court, which had passed at least 57 death sentences for embezzlement of state funds or threatening the security of the state since its creation in 1976, was formally abolished in October 1991. None of its death sentences were carried out but two former members of President Traoré's government, sentenced to death in October 1978 for allegedly conspiring to overthrow the government, died in 1983 at the remote desert prison in Taoudénit, apparently from ill-health and medical neglect.

By appealing against these death penalties, Amnesty International neither condones the killing and wounding of demonstrators in March 1991 nor questions the right of governments to bring those who commit such offences to trial. Indeed, Amnesty International made numerous appeals in the early months of 1991 to former President Traoré and his government to halt the killings and torture of government opponents and to bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice. However, Amnesty International believes that the death penalty is in all cases a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which has never been shown to have any special deterrent effect. Amnesty International has consistently campaigned against the imposition of death penalties in Mali and welcomed both the decline in the number of executions in the 1980s and the abolition of the Special State Security Court in October 1991. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that the use of the death penalty now, and in such a politically-charged context, can only exacerbate political and social tensions at a time when there is above all a need for reconciliation and cooperation.

3. EUR 48/WU 02/92 INTERNAL
24 March 1993

INTERNAL ONLY - EXTERNAL ITEM PLANNED EARLY APRIL

THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: PLANS FOR ACTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL

On 26 February sections received an external weekly update which set out AI's initial reaction to the UN Security Council decision to establish an ad hoc international war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The UN Secretary General will report to the Security Council, possibly by 22 April, on how to set up such a tribunal. Our immediate aim is to influence the preparation of this report in the hope that it might lead to a tribunal which is just, fair and effective. In the immediate future we will have two lobbying opportunities: firstly, in the next few weeks as the issue is debated informally by governments and the UN legal department writes the Secretary-General's report and, secondly, after 22 April when the Security Council formally considers whether and how to accept the Secretary General's recommendations.

The aim of this weekly update is to inform sections about actions which are planned for the next couple of months in relation to the war crimes issue (sections will receive a separate document summarising current strategy on the former Yugoslavia).

1. March/April - External document & section level action: The Legal and Intergovernmental Office at the International Secretariat is now analyzing detailed proposals submitted to the Security Council by France, Italy and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) about how to set up the tribunal. We will write a short external document highlighting aspects of these proposals which we believe may not result in a fair and just tribunal and setting out some fundamental principles which should guide the Secretary General and the Security Council. Many complex questions are involved and we hope to finish the document by the first week in April. We will give sections a more definite date as soon as possible.

All sections will be encouraged to distribute the document as widely as possible. However, the following is a broad outline of the minimum action which we believe should accompany release of this document:

(i) The IS will send the document to: **Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali** as well as the New York and Geneva missions of members of the **Security Council**, the current Chair of the **CSCE Council of Foreign Ministers** (Sweden), the current **EC President** (Denmark), members of the **Organization of Islamic Conference Contact Group** on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Turkey). The IS will also send the document to various other influential bodies such as the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia (the Owen-Vance talks) and the Special Rapporteur on the former Yugoslavia. AI's representatives to the UN in New York and Geneva will meet with key people in the UN and the UN Missions to raise our concerns.

(ii) We hope that **Sections** in countries listed in (i) above will be able to send the document urgently to their Foreign Ministers and, if possible, to arrange a meeting with relevant officials.

(iii) Release of the document will be accompanied by an external **Weekly Update**. As the aim is to influence the position of governments in the Security Council, it will be particularly useful if sections in countries listed in (i) above are able to generate a debate in the media.

2. May - After publication of Secretary-General's report: It is not at all clear how detailed the Secretary-General's report will be or what will be the subsequent process to set up the tribunal. Nevertheless, some time after 22 April the Security Council will consider whether and how to act on Boutros-Ghali's report. The IS will assess whether the Secretary General's report fulfils our basic criteria of justice, fairness and effectiveness. If it does not, then depending on when the Security Council is likely to make a decision, we may ask sections, especially those in key countries, to broaden the membership action with the aim of urging their government to ensure the tribunal does in fact accord with fundamental human rights principles.

If there are any queries relating to the membership action, please contact Robbie Marsland in the Campaign and Membership Department. If you wish to discuss issues relating to the war crimes tribunal and AI strategy, please contact Nick Howen in the Legal and Intergovernmental Organizations Office.