

AI Index: NWS 11/38/92
Distr: SC/PO

No. of words: 2938

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 25 SEPTEMBER 1992

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 38/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey x 2 and the UN World Conference on Human Rights and an internal item on Iran/Turkey.

Pierre Sané

Pierre Sané, the new Secretary General, will be starting work at the IS on 5 October. Although there has already been demand for him to do press interviews, obviously he will not be available for interviews for the first few weeks. We expect he will be able to do some interviews by November - all interviews should be arranged through the IS Press Office.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

As you know, we are currently working on a document and news release on Bosnia-Herzegovina which we hoped would be ready next week. Unfortunately, the research team has been hit by illness, so at the moment we can't say when it will be ready. There have been several weekly update items recently - please continue to use these to deal with media enquiries.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Indigenous Peoples' Campaign - 7 October

We have explored the options for launching the campaign in the region, and have determined that it is possible to go ahead with such a launch.

The launch will take place in Mexico City with a news conference involving AI spokespeople and representatives of indigenous groups. The AI spokespeople will be Ligia Bolivar of the IEC; Tracy Ulltveit-Moe, researcher on indigenous peoples; and a representative of the Mexican section. We are still approaching indigenous people to participate in the launch.

The embargo time will be 0001 hrs gmt 7 October -- this translates into 1700 hrs local time on 6 October in Mexico City.

We will send further details about the launch as we confirm them, but would encourage sections to let us know now if they have correspondents for their national media whom they wish invited to the launch.

Myanmar - 28 October

A document and news release on Myanmar, to go with an action to coincide with the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Turkey - 11 November **PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE**

PLEASE NOTE that the embargo on this news release and document has been changed. We will not be issuing a news release in the week of 3 November because of the US presidential elections, which will probably take up a lot of media space around the world.

The document to go with the news release and action, Turkey: Walls of glass (AI Index: EUR 44/75/92), has been sent in the Weekly Mailing. Unfortunately it has been printed without an embargo - the document is nevertheless embargoed for 11 November and should not be used before then.

The document and news release go with a section level action about a wide range of human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Children/AI week - 21 October

A targeted news release on children to go with a Focus article in October.

2. MDE 16/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
25 September 1992

INTERNAL

This may be given to media inquiring about Jordan. There is a possibility that Ian Martin will be able to see King Hussein while he is visiting Jordan. If this happens, there could be international media interest. For recent information about Jordan please see Weekly Update NWS 11/35/92, item MDE 16/WU 01/92. It is also possible that Ian Martin will be going to Egypt to meet with the Arab League. Again, this may raise media interest and the IS Press Office will try to keep sections posted about any developments.

EXTERNAL

JORDAN: VISIT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S SECRETARY GENERAL

AI's Secretary General Ian Martin is visiting Jordan from 24 September 1992. The main purpose is to visit AI's groups in Jordan and to discuss with the Jordanian authorities matters relating to AI's membership in the country and human rights promotion and protection in the Arab world and in Jordan.

AI's membership in Jordan is in the process of being formally recognized and registered by the Ministry of the Interior. There are over 17 active groups in different parts of the country. The Secretary General will meet AI members in Amman and Irbid.

AI's outstanding concerns in Jordan include incommunicado detention and unfair trials of political prisoners by the State Security Court, and the death penalty.

3. MDE 23/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL
25 September 1992

SAUDI ARABIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PROTESTS AGAINST EXECUTION OF POSSIBLE PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International has protested to the Saudi Arabian government about the execution of a possible prisoner of conscience. Sadiq 'Abd al-Karim Malallah, aged 23, was publicly beheaded on 3 September at al-Qatif in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. He had been convicted of apostasy and blasphemy after a trial before the General Court of First Instance in al-Qatif in 1988. His death sentence was ratified by the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Judicial Council and confirmed in a Royal Decree issued on 23 August 1992.

Sadiq Malallah was arrested in July 1988. He was reportedly held in solitary confinement for long periods during his first months in detention, handcuffed, with his feet shackled, beaten and tortured before being brought to trial.

Sadiq Malallah is believed to have been involved in efforts to secure improved rights for Saudi Arabia's Shi'a Muslim minority. Amnesty International has not received any information to suggest that he had used or advocated violence.

Amnesty International has also called on the Saudi Arabian authorities to disclose details of the precise charges and legal procedures used in Sadiq Malallah's case and to take immediate steps to prevent further executions.

4. EUR 44/WU 06/92 EXTERNAL
25 September 1992

TURKEY: DRAFT REFORM PACKAGE WITHDRAWN FROM PARLIAMENT AGENDA

On 26 August a draft package of tentative reforms concerning the protection of detainees from ill-treatment and torture was withdrawn from the agenda during a stormy session of the Turkish Parliament. It had previously been blocked by President Özal on the grounds that it might be prejudicial to national security.

The draft package was then amended to exclude political detainees from its terms for a certain period and resubmitted to parliament. However, even the much diluted form of the package met considerable opposition from within the ranks of the ruling True Path Party (DYP). The package may be resubmitted to parliament, but no date has yet been set.

On 24 August Amnesty International had published an open letter to all Turkish parliamentary deputies, outlining much stronger safeguards required to stop torture in police custody, which is widespread in Turkey, and pointing out that even in its original form the draft fell far short of internationally accepted human rights standards.

5. EUR 44/WU 07/92 EXTERNAL
25 September 1992

TURKEY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED KILLING OF CIVILIANS BY SECURITY FORCES IN __RNAK.

Amnesty International has called for an immediate, independent and impartial inquiry into the events in __rnak between 18 and 21 August 1992 when at least 15 civilians, including five children, were killed by security forces who fired, apparently indiscriminately, for 48 hours on the city and neighbouring villages. The organization has asked that the findings of the inquiry should be made public.

In government statements it was initially claimed that the security forces' actions were in response to a large-scale attack on government and military buildings by 1,500 guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). However, this figure was repeatedly revised downwards, and it appears that no guerrillas nor any of the heavy weapons purportedly used by them in the attack were captured.

Information coming from the region has been confused, and journalists and politicians visiting the area have been obstructed in their efforts to establish what happened. It appears that the incident may have been triggered by a brief initial attack on 18 August from within the city, during which members of the security forces were killed. The security forces then responded massively by shelling and firing for 48 hours, reportedly expending hundreds of thousands of bullets.

Refugees fleeing the city were reported as saying that security forces had deliberately crashed into cars and buildings with tanks, broken into shops and set fire to houses. Members of the local branch of the ruling True Path Party who were in their party building at the time described being fired on by a tank. Although much of the city was seriously damaged, and many houses wholly or partially destroyed, observers state that government buildings, the police headquarters and civil servants' residential blocks were largely unharmed.

In the village of Balveren, 12 kilometres from __rnak, the house of the Artuç family was hit by an explosive device allegedly fired by the security forces. Ten-year-old _brahim Artuç was killed instantly, while five other children and their mother were severely injured.

Mustafa Malay, the governor of __rnak, has stated: "There may have been some mistakes".

The United Nations Basic Principles on the use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials state that law enforcement officials should "minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life" (Article 5b). Article 9 states: "Law enforcement officials shall not use firearms against persons except in self-defence or defence of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury, to prevent the perpetration of a particularly serious crime involving grave threat to life, to arrest a person presenting such a danger and resisting their authority, or to prevent his or her escape, and only when less extreme means are insufficient to achieve these objectives". It would appear that these conditions did not prevail in __rnak at the time the civilians were killed. The UN Basic Principles also prohibit the use of firearms and ammunition that cause unwarranted injury or present an unwarranted risk.

Following the incident approximately 20,000 inhabitants fled from the city and are now staying in other towns in southeast Turkey or in makeshift camps some distance from the city.

The killings in __rnak are the most recent in a succession of similar incidents which have occurred since the new government took over in November. More than a hundred civilians, including many women, children and elderly persons, have been killed in incidents in which it was clear that security forces either killed civilians who were offering no violence, or failed properly to establish targets. On 5 March police marched in __rnak shouting slogans such as "Blood for blood" and "__rnak will be the grave of the Kurds", and allegedly caused considerable damage to property in the city. The government did not appear to react in any way to this incident and two weeks later, five children and two elderly people were among at least 30 civilians killed during disturbances at the time of the Kurdish New Year. The government again failed to take any steps to investigate effectively the circumstances in which the civilians were killed.

6. IOR 41/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
25 September 1992

INTERNAL

Please bring this to the attention of NGO Coordinators as soon as possible.

EXTERNAL

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED AT LACK OF PROGRESS OF THE UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Amnesty International is deeply disappointed at the failure of the third preparatory meeting of the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights to come to any agreement on the agenda for what should be a historic land-mark event in the field of human rights.

"This failure to move forward in the preparatory process can only be a bleak reflection of the lack of political will of a number of member governments of the UN to take human rights seriously," said Amnesty International, "and to ensure that the World Conference achieves real results in the promotion and protection of human rights."

The decision to hold a World Conference on Human Rights was taken two years ago by the UN General Assembly and formal preparations began a year ago. However, most of the three sessions of the Preparatory Committee have been characterized by deep divisions between different countries and regional groups and by fruitless and lengthy negotiations - often behind closed doors - which have so far shown few concrete results. The Conference is still without any clear direction or focus.

The Conference, which is to take place in Vienna in June 1993, is the first UN World Conference on Human Rights for 25 years - the last one was held in Teheran in 1968. Its main objectives, according to the General Assembly, include:

- to review progress in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- to examine ways to improve the implementation of human rights instruments and the effectiveness of the UN mechanisms established in this field,
- to make concrete recommendations for future action,
- to examine the relation between development and the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights.

However, far from getting down to business, the last three meetings of the Preparatory Committee have been taken up principally with procedural issues.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned by the latest failure of the Preparatory Committee even to agree on an agenda for the Conference. With only ten months left before the Conference itself and only one further preparatory meeting scheduled next March, this represents a serious set-back and calls into question the commitment of some governments to the holding of this event.

Of the three regional preparatory meetings scheduled to take place, the one in Asia has already been postponed until next year. The first regional meeting is expected to be the one in Tunis at the beginning of November followed by a second one in Costa Rica a month later. If these go ahead they will be at a serious disadvantage - it is hard to see how regional meetings can really make an effective and useful contribution to a Conference which does not even have an agenda.

It also makes it extremely difficult for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to prepare their own participation in the World Conference. It was only last week that the Preparatory Committee took a final decision on which NGOs would be entitled to attend the regional meetings and the Conference itself. While Amnesty International welcomes the fact that this issue has finally been clarified, it is regrettable that the decision imposes a number of conditions on NGO participation which have worrying implications.

NGOs in consultative status with the UN should, as a matter of principle, have unimpeded access to such UN meetings - instead, the Preparatory Committee decided to limit the participation in regional meetings to NGOs in consultative status which are active in the field of human rights or development and which are active in the region concerned.

As regards NGOs not in consultative status, their participation in regional meetings is to be restricted to those active in the field of human rights or development which have their headquarters in the region concerned and only then after prior consultation with the countries of the region. It is particularly worrying that only those countries attending each regional meeting will have a formal role in deciding the participation of non-consultative status NGOs in their regional meeting - and hence at the World Conference itself.

Amnesty International, and many other NGOs attending the Preparatory Committee sessions, had repeatedly called for the broadest possible participation of NGOs, particularly given the key role of the NGO community in many countries - often at great personal risk to their staff and supporters - in the promotion and protection of human rights.

"It is high time that the governments of the UN showed that they are serious about the World Conference," said Amnesty International. "This important event is a unique opportunity to advance the protection of human rights and governments should be working together constructively and creatively, with real commitment.

"Precious little time now remains to make this Conference a success and it is certainly not acceptable, as some governments have suggested, to wait until the last session of the Preparatory Committee, just three months before the Conference itself, to decide on the agenda.

"The General Assembly, which will have to consider the outcome of this Preparatory Committee meeting, has a heavy responsibility to act to ensure that this Conference does not represent a major failure in the history of human rights."

**7. MDE 13/WU 07/92 INTERNAL
25 September 1992**

Please bring this to the attention of refugee coordinators.

IRAN/TURKEY: AI WRITES TO TURKISH AUTHORITIES ABOUT ASYLUM-SEEKERS FROM IRAN

On 21 September AI wrote to the Turkish Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs following reports of a new protocol concluded between Iran and Turkey regarding border security and the activities of opposition groups. AI said that while it did not dispute the right of a government to take measures to protect the security of its borders or enter into extradition agreements with other states, such measures should not conflict with a government's international obligations to protect human rights, and in particular the obligation not to return people to countries where they risk serious human rights violations. Amnesty International noted that in the past it had repeatedly raised concerns with the Turkish authorities about Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey who were about to be returned to Iran.

AI added that it does not take any position on the activities of any political opposition group of any country, but drew attention to the continuing serious human rights violations in Iran, and sought assurances that the new measures would neither obstruct the individual's right to seek protection in Turkey, nor allow for the forcible return of any Iranian asylum seeker to Iran who risks imprisonment as a prisoner of conscience, torture or execution.

AI called on the Turkish authorities to issue clear instructions to all its agents and officials that the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees within its territory must be protected.