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Amnesty International

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 8 OCTOBER 1992

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 40/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on the Baltic States and Brazil and an internal item on India.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

(New Information)

Unfortunately the document on Bosnia-Herzegovina has been further delayed. The embargo for the document and news release will probably be nearer the end of October than was stated in last week's update.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

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

(New Information)

PLEASE NOTE the embargo for the Turkey news release is confirmed at 0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 11 November.

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 and should not be used before 11 November.

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

Kenya - 12 October

(New Information)

A weekly update item on unfair trials will be sent to specialist international media on 12 October. The item will go to sections in an addition to the weekly update later this week.

Tunisia - 20 October

(New Information)

A weekly update item will be sent to selected international media to go with a document on unfair trials.

Children/AI week - 21 October

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

1. EUR 51/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

8 October 1992

THE BALTIC STATES: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL VISITS ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

Two Amnesty International delegates will be visiting Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from 17 - 31 October 1992.

This will be the first Amnesty International research visit to the three newly independent Baltic states. The main purposes of the visit are to investigate recent legislative developments, to hold discussions with parliamentary representatives, to establish contacts with local human rights organizations and to collect information on human rights issues related to the organization's mandate.

Amnesty International's main concern in the Baltic States is the continued application of the death penalty.

2. AMR 19/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL

8 October 1992

BRAZIL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SENDS FACT-FINDING DELEGATION TO SÃO PAULO TO INVESTIGATE PRISON MASSACRE

Amnesty International will be sending a forensic doctor to join a delegate already in Sao Paulo investigating the massacre at the Detention House prison (Casa de Detenção).

The human rights organization said that at least 111 prisoners were killed and 35 wounded in circumstances that suggest that many of them were extrajudicially executed by military police.

Amnesty International welcomes the appointment of a commission of inquiry by the Minister of Justice into the circumstances of the killings. The organization urges that the commission will be given all the necessary powers to conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation and that their conclusions will be made public.

According to a state security spokesman, quoted in the Brazilian press, the violence at the jail began in the afternoon of Friday 2 October, when rival gangs in Pavilion 9 attacked each other with home made knives, clubs and guns in the pavilion's central patio. The conflict allegedly spread into a general uprising of more than 2000 prisoners in that pavilion, leading prison officers to call in military police.

After efforts to negotiate allegedly failed, several hundred São Paulo state Military Police officers, backed by helicopters, moved in to take control of the prison at dusk. Most of the inmate deaths allegedly resulted from gunshots.

The authorities acknowledged that the police used machine guns against the prisoners. No police officer was killed during the action, but 22 were reportedly injured. The police reported that 13 revolvers and dozens of home made knives were recovered from inside Pavilion 9. The police didn't allow the prison wardens into the prison until the following day and news about the number of victims were not released until Saturday evening.

According to reports received by Amnesty International the prisoners denied that they were armed with guns and said that no shots were fired at the police and that no prisoner was killed by their fellow prisoners. They denied that there were any plans for a massive escape as claimed by the state authorities.

The prisoners alleged that the police fired machine guns indiscriminately at prisoners and that at a later stage some prisoners were extrajudicially executed after they had locked themselves into their cells. The Catholic Chaplain of the prison told Amnesty International that most of the bodies he saw appeared to have several shot wounds in the chest and head and that at least two of them had their hands joined behind their heads.

In October 1991 twenty four inmates in a Rio de Janeiro prison died as a result of a fire allegedly started by prison officers, and at least 18 others were injured reportedly from beatings. On 28 February 1992 seven prisoners were killed by members of the Assault Battalion (Batalhão de Choque) of the Military Police during a riot at the Anibal Bruno prison in Recife, Pernambuco state. In July 1992 twelve prisoners and a prison officer were killed during an attempted breakout from the 64th Police Station, Delegacia Policial, in São João de Meriti, Rio de Janeiro state. To Amnesty International's knowledge, none of those responsible for the killings has been brought to justice.

2. ASA 20/WU 06/92 INTERNAL

8 October 1992

INDIA: ADVICE ON PUBLICITY RELATING TO INDIA

Amnesty International has been invited to India to discuss our concerns with the Indian government. We have confirmed the invitation and are currently discussing the details of the visit with the government, which we hope will take place late this month or in November. The discussions with the government are at a sensitive stage at this time, and all Amnesty International action on India needs to be considered in light of the visit. We would therefore ask that any sections considering news or publicity events consult with the IS press office.

At this stage we are not in a position to give any details of the governments proposals or our discussions. If asked, press officers may confirm to the media that we have accepted the government's invitation and are discussing the details.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 40/92

Contained in this addition to the weekly update are external items on Myanmar and Kenya and an internal item on Pierre Sané.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

(New Information)

Unfortunately the document on Bosnia-Herzegovina has been further delayed. The embargo for the document and news release will probably be near the end of October - we hope to confirm a date on Monday.

1. ASA 16/WU 05/92 EXTERNAL

9 October 1992

MYANMAR: AI CONCERNED THAT AT LEAST 1600 POLITICAL PRISONERS REMAIN DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL OR AFTER UNFAIR TRIAL

Amnesty International is concerned that at least 1600 political prisoners remain imprisoned without trial or after trials which fell far short of international standards for fair trial in the Union of Myanmar (Burma), which continues to be ruled under Martial Law.

On 26 September 1992, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the military body which rules Myanmar, revoked Martial Law Orders Nos. 1/89 and 2/89. These orders had granted martial law powers to commanders in three military regions and established military tribunals to try all martial law offenders.

Despite the abolition of the military tribunals established in July 1989 and the release of over 500 political prisoners since April 1992, many hundreds of political prisoners sentenced by these unfair courts remain imprisoned and are being denied redress. Other martial law orders which have been used to arrest hundreds of political prisoners remain in force. These include Order No. 2/88, which prohibits gatherings of more than five people on the streets, and Notification 8/88, which prohibits public criticism of the military.

Political prisoners still held include the Venerable U Kaweinda, a Buddhist monk who was active in the 1988 pro-democracy movement. He was arrested in June 1989 in Mandalay and sentenced on unknown charges to seven years' imprisonment. Many students who also participated in the 1988 protest against military rule remain in detention. Aung Din, a prisoner of conscience and student leader, was arrested in April 1989 and is held at Yangon's Insein Prison along with hundreds of other political prisoners. U Hla Wai, also a prisoner of conscience, was an election candidate for opposition political party the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS) and was arrested on the eve of the election in May 1990.

Civilian courts continue to function alongside military tribunals, but do not guarantee defendants a fair trial. The procedures stipulated for use in civilian courts formally appear to meet international standards for fairness, but in practice the independence of the civilian judiciary has been undermined as a result of intimidation by the military authorities. Judges and lawyers who have attempted to exercise their independence have at times been arrested. Furthermore, restrictions placed on political prisoners' access to legal counsel deny them the opportunity to prepare a proper defence.

2. AFR 32/WU 04/92 EXTERNAL  
EMBARGOED FOR 12 OCTOBER 1992

INTERNAL

Please note that this item is embargoed for Monday 12 October as the trial starts on 13 October. It will be sent to international media by the IS press office. The date for multi-party elections may be announced any day now and this item is intended to place our concerns on record before elections.

EXTERNAL

KENYA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE UNFAIR TRIAL AND DEATH SENTENCES IN TREASON TRIAL

On 13 October, a major political trial is due to start in Nairobi at which all the accused claim to have been tortured. The four defendants face treason charges punishable by the death penalty. Those accused are former member of parliament, Koigi wa Wamwere, (a refugee in Norway until shortly before his arrest), two human rights lawyers and a farmer.

Amnesty International is concerned that the accused may not receive a fair trial and is urging the Kenyan authorities to ensure that international standards for fair trials are respected. Political trials in Kenya in recent years have been grossly unfair, with judges routinely dismissing well-founded allegations of torture of defendants in pre-trial detention.

Amnesty International will be following the proceedings of this latest trial closely to see whether the defendants' allegations that they were tortured and forced to make statements under duress are examined in open court and are fully investigated. No statements made under torture by the four defendants should be ruled admissible as evidence against them. The defendants' allegations of torture were summarily dismissed in 1990 when they appeared in court before a magistrate, despite an independent medical report which found evidence to support the allegations.

The four have frequently been denied medical treatment since their arrest two years ago. One, Rumba Kinuthia, a 35-year-old lawyer now in hospital with dangerously high blood pressure, may be too ill to stand trial. Since April 1992 he has been chained by the wrist to his hospital bed, supposedly to prevent him escaping, but imperilling his health further. He also suffered a dislocated shoulder after being beaten by his armed guards in May, and the government has refused to pay for specialist tests for other medical complaints.

Another treason trial is scheduled for 25 November. An Islamic preacher, Sheikh Khalid Salim Balala, is awaiting trial for "imagining the death of the President" in a sermon in Mombasa in July. This highly unusual charge, created in 1977 to stop speculation about succession to the previous President, appears to have been used in an attempt to silence this prominent supporter of the prohibited Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK).

Since President Daniel arap Moi's government accepted a multi-party system in December 1991 following a freeze on foreign aid, 26 long-term convicted political prisoners have been freed before the completion of their sentences, but seven are still held. However, dozens of peaceful government critics have been arrested this year and, though released on bail, face possible trial and imprisonment for exercising their right to freedom of expression. They include Pius Nyamora, editor of Society magazine, Njehu Gatabaki, editor of Finance magazine, and opposition party leaders.

Political prisoners have constantly been denied proper medical treatment and kept in harsh conditions, in some cases in prolonged defiance by the prison authorities of court orders.

In 1992, Kenya has also seen peaceful demonstrators assaulted and beaten by police, and mass round-ups of Somali refugees, with at least one dying as a result of injuries. Death sentences continue to be imposed by courts and at least 350 prisoners are under sentence of death.

West and central Kenya have been rocked by political violence since November 1991, with over 700 people killed in ethnic clashes. Evidence published recently in a 238-page parliamentary report, indicates that one group responsible for many of the killings, nicknamed "Kalenjin warriors" (Kalenjin being President Moi's ethnic group), was supported and financed by senior government and ruling party officials.

Amnesty International is continuing to appeal to the Kenyan authorities not to imprison prisoners of conscience or carry out death sentences. The organization is also investigating official complicity in recent killings in the west and centre of the country.

3. ORG 60/WU 02/92 INTERNAL

9 October 1992

INTERVIEWS, MEDIA WORK AND PUBLICITY IN CONNECTION WITH SECRETARY GENERAL PIERRE SANÉ

Pierre Sané has started his work as Secretary General of Amnesty International. He will have a three-month intensive induction period which will involve briefings in the International Secretariat and its outposts, visits to a number of sections and meetings with other human rights organisations.

During this period, Pierre has decided that it would be inappropriate for him to give interviews, meet the media or make public appearances. This applies not only to the time that he is in London, but also when he is travelling during these first three months.

He has made it clear, however, that he will be happy to give interviews and be involved in publicity work for Amnesty International from the beginning of January - once he has been able to get a first-hand sense of the many issues and aspects involved in our work worldwide.

Section leaders and press officers should make this clear to journalists if they receive requests for interviews, and ensure that Pierre's request to undertake his various meetings and briefings around the world in this period without publicity is respected.