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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - UNITED NATIONS

PLEASE NOTE: A questions and answers document on John Pilger's film about East Timor which could help with any media inquiries on the film has been sent out in the weekly mailing. If you get any calls before the weekly mailing arrives let me know and I will fax a copy of the Q&A to you.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Women - 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161/26

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

South Korea - 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/94

Jordan - 22 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/94

South Africa (Bophuthatswana) - 11 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

Turkey - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 26/94

Hong Kong - 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

****Colombia - 16 March**** - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56+57/93

Please note: The press conference to be held in Bogota, Colombia, will be invitation only and therefore there will not be a media advisory about the launch after all. If there is any media in your country that you know has a correspondent in Colombia that you think should attend, please contact Paula in the IS Press Office Ext: 5564. The news release minus embargo time was sent out today. The Q&A should be sent out late this week.

As part of the materials for the Colombia campaign, short target sector documents are being prepared on human rights defenders, children and indigenous people. These will arrive after the launch, probably in about two or three weeks, and can be used for continuous work during the campaign. There will be news service items to go with them.

South Africa - 31 March - POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - NOTE CHANGE OF DATE - more details to follow Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 36/94

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**AI INDEX: IOR 41/WU 03/1994
2 March 1994**

**UN Commission on Human Rights
50th session
Agenda Item 12**

Delivered: 2 March 1994

UNITED NATIONS: ORAL STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT

Chairperson,

In the last year, Amnesty International has issued appeals about human rights violations in connection with armed conflicts in more than 15 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific and Europe¹. Last month Amnesty International published a report and its 15 Point Program on peace-keeping and human rights, covering UN operations in more than a dozen situations². Most violations have been committed by the official state apparatus, but Amnesty International has also called attention to abuses by armed opposition groups. All too often, however, governments do not respond to such abuses with responsible measures to contain and control the violence, but use them as an excuse for intensifying repression so that armed conflict becomes the pretext, as well as the context, for appalling violations of human rights.

In Algeria, for example, more than 3,000 people have been killed in the past two years. Armed Islamist opposition groups have been responsible for the deliberate killing of hundreds of civilians. Government forces have shot dead close to 2,000 members and suspected supporters of armed opposition groups, many of them unarmed; others have been extrajudicially executed after arrest or surrender. Known or suspected Islamist militants are reported to have been systematically tortured in secret detention and at least twelve have died in custody. After the promulgation of a new anti-terrorist law in September 1992, 26 people were executed and over 370 sentenced to death before the suspension of executions in November 1993, most of them by special courts in unfair trials which the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has stated do not provide the full right to appeal required by international law.

In Colombia over 20,000 people from all sectors of society have been killed for political reasons since 1986. Successive governments have persistently blamed drug-trafficking organizations and guerrillas for most political killings. While it is clear that guerrilla groups have committed abuses which have contributed to the spiral of violence, the evidence shows that the security forces and their paramilitary allies are responsible for most of the killings. Only exceptionally have those responsible for human rights violations been brought to justice; normally members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations are beyond the reach of the law.

¹ Angola; Afghanistan; Azerbaydzan (Nagorno Karabakh); Bosnia-Herzegovina; Burundi; Chad; Colombia; Georgia; Guatemala; India; Liberia; Papua New Guinea; Peru; Somalia; Sri Lanka, Sudan; Tadzhikistan and Turkey.

² Peace-keeping and Human Rights, AI Index IOR 40/01/94, January 1994

As the Commission is aware, Indonesian military forces in East Timor have been responsible for grave violations of human rights in response to both armed and peaceful opposition since 1975. Far less attention has been given to political killings and "disappearances" on a comparable scale which have been committed in Indonesia. In the last ten years alone, more than 7,000 civilians have been unlawfully killed, and scores of others have "disappeared" in various parts of the country. Few of these cases have been properly investigated, and those responsible have rarely been brought to justice.

In southern Iraq, hundreds of suspected government opponents, including whole families, were rounded up in late 1993 as part of the government's continuing crackdown on the Shi'a Muslim population. Ground military attacks in the marshes region have also continued unabated. In Baghdad, scores of prominent Sunni Arabs were rounded up and several were executed. In response to the alarming deterioration in the human rights situation, Amnesty International reiterates its request that the Secretary-General make available without further delay the necessary human and financial resources for establishing a human rights monitoring operation for Iraq in implementation of the resolution passed by the 49th Session of the Commission on Human Rights.

A new military offensive by the government of Sudan, which has displaced tens of thousands of people from camps near the Ugandan border, underscores Amnesty International's grave concern at the way government forces and both factions of the armed opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) have been ruthless in assaulting civilians as a deliberate tactic of war. Of particular concern is the situation in the Nuba mountains in west Sudan where, since 1989, thousands of villagers have been extrajudicially executed by government forces, and the government's persistent failure to account for hundreds of people who "disappeared" in Juba in south Sudan in 1992 during government retaliation following SPLA incursions into the town. The government has taken no real action while claiming that Sudan is the innocent victim of anti-Islamic propaganda. In addition Amnesty International is concerned by the deliberate and arbitrary killing of thousands of civilians by different factions of the SPLA in fighting between 1991 and 1993 in rural parts of Upper Nile and other areas in the south.

In southeast Turkey, the security forces have tortured villagers, political activists, journalists, human rights defenders, women and children with impunity. Gendarmes and village guards have killed dozens of civilians in reprisal raids, and there are clear signs of security force involvement in many of the political killings in the area, of which there have been more than 800 since 1991. In a new development "disappearances" are now being reported with increasing regularity - at least 24 during the second half of 1993. Armed opposition groups have also been responsible for grave abuses, which has served to enhance impunity extended to the security forces. During 1993, such groups were responsible for over 200 arbitrary killings, with victims including children, teachers, local politicians and other civilians, as well as captured village guards and their families, and people suspected of collaborating with the security forces.

The former Yugoslavia is one of the most tragic situations of armed conflict. Bosnia-Herzegovina has rightly attracted the attention of the international community, but as the Special Rapporteur's latest report indicates, much more remains to be done if human rights are to be protected. By contrast the international community has, as yet, given scant attention to the situation in Burundi where, in October 1993 soldiers executed the head of state and several other senior officials. The attempted coup triggered countrywide intercommunal massacres which left more than 100,000 civilians dead. Surviving members of the government called for UN help to set up a commission of inquiry into the abuses that occurred. It remains unclear whether the UN intends to help the government do this or to provide adequate assistance to Organization of African Unity conflict resolution efforts.

Chairperson,

Amnesty International condemns all arbitrary killings of non-combatants and "disappearances" regardless of who is responsible for them. In times of armed conflict both governments and their opponents should observe minimum standards laid down by humanitarian law. In addition, international law prohibits governments making any derogation from fundamental human rights, including the right to life, even in emergency situations.

In a report published this week - "Disappearances" and Political Killings: Human Rights Crisis of the 1990s - A Manual for Action - Amnesty International has set forth a comprehensive program for the prevention of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions. Many of the measures are drawn from UN instruments³ and from the recommendations of UN bodies and mechanisms⁴, which governments have

³ including the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; the International Covenant

debated and agreed in fora such as this Commission as the basic minimum for their own behaviour. As the report also describes, year after year we have appealed to the Commission to stem the flood of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions.

Once again, we must repeat our appeal. For countless victims, it is already too late. But for those who have survived, for those who will become victims unless prompt action is taken, we urge every government and this Commission to face up to the challenge of protecting human rights in the face of internal armed conflicts.

Thank you.

on Civil and Political Rights and the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions

⁴ including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions