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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 43/95

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **WOMEN AND WAR; SUDAN** (this item will be targeted to Africa and Middle East media)

PLEASE NOTE : We have decided to re-issue the **Women and War** news briefing (see NS 42/95), plus the other three briefings coming up, as external news releases.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: Enclosed is the **NEWS EVENT ADVISORY** the IS is issuing today to mark the launch of the Campaign on Women.

ALSO, FOR YOUR INFORMATION: The *Campaign on Women and Human Rights - Additional Advice on the Strategy and Sections' and Groups' Campaigning* (ACT 77/07/95) went out in the weekly mailing on 22 February. *The 15-Point Program to Protect Women's Human Rights* (ACT 77/10/95) should be going out in the weekly mailing today.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES**

Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95, 37/95 & 42/95

Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

## **TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES**

CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

## **EVENTS AND MISSIONS**

NB: The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO BURUNDI 27 February - 14 March- SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

AI INDEX: ACT 77/WU 02/95  
EMBARGO: 7 MARCH 1995

WOMEN AND WAR

"In a war the winner does not have to pay. Human rights have no priority in any war."

This quote is from a former Uruguayan general, talking of counter-insurgency operations in which he had been involved in the 1970s. It reflects the modern reality that during conflicts -- international and civil wars or insurgencies -- civilians are inevitably at risk.

Human rights become secondary to military advantage, and torture, massacres and "disappearances" have become mere tactics.

In recent years, the horrific stories of rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the mass exodus of refugees fleeing the genocide in Rwanda have shown how particularly vulnerable women are in conflicts -- and how they are often singled out for human rights violations that men don't suffer.

One of the most terrifying violations for women -- rape and sexual abuse -- has been reported in almost every modern armed conflict from Kuwait and Peru to Liberia and India. Rape has, very simply, become a weapon of war -- and reflects the special terror it holds for women.

Rape by armed forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina has received unprecedented publicity and the extent of sexual abuse there caused shock and dismay. Women were raped in their homes, in detention centres, and in hotels where they were kept just to be raped by soldiers.

In one case, a 17-year-old Muslim girl was taken by Serbs from her village to a hut in woods nearby in June 1992. During her three months there, she was one of a dozen women raped repeatedly in the hut in front of the other women -- when they tried to defend her they were beaten off by the soldiers.

Women who survive conflicts and flee their homes often confront sexual abuse and harassment by officials in their search for a new homes. Sex may be the price demanded by security forces, border guards and smugglers who stand between these women and a safe haven.

A refugee women fleeing from Ethiopia during the Mengistu government, who was five months pregnant and travelling with two children, said that during her journey to a neighbouring country two men stopped her and said "No safe passage before sex!" before forcing her to the ground, kicking her in the stomach, and raping her.

Women who do make it to refugee camps, where they are sometimes confined for years, are also at risk of sexual violence from officials and from male

refugees. Some women are forced into prostitution; others are coerced into sexual acts by men in exchange for documents or food rations.

Although women are the majority of refugees, they are a minority of those who succeed in gaining asylum in the wealthy countries of the North. Women often feel inhibited about telling asylum officials of the sexual abuse mentioned above because of the social stigma attached to rape, and therefore may have a more difficult time making their case for asylum.

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FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

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NEWS EVENT ADVISORY

PRESS CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

To mark the launch of Amnesty International's Campaign on Women, the organization's International Secretariat in London has organized a **Press Conference** to take place at **11:00 am** on **7 March 1995** at the **Foreign Press Association, London**.

To better portray the diversity of women's struggle for their rights around the world, Amnesty International has brought together women's rights activists from different countries, to speak about their experiences, achievements and present challenges.

**Actress Juliet Stevenson**, an active Amnesty International member, will introduce the speakers and close the conference by reading a statement by a woman victim of human rights violations.

The speakers will include:

**Njeri Kabeberi**, member of the Board of Directors of the Kenya Human Rights Commission;

**Érica Páez**, Colombian lawyer and co-chair of Refugee Women's Network, London;

**Anita Tiessen**, Media Director, Amnesty International - International Secretariat.

Address: The Foreign Press Association, 11 Carlton House Terrace  
London SW1Y 5AJ

Note: The speakers will be available for interviews after the conference, both in English and their native languages.

The press package to be distributed during the conference will include copies of Amnesty International's report "Human Rights are Women's Rights" (to be released on the day of the conference), a briefing version of the same report, briefing sheets and a short profile of the participants.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 1 MARCH 1995  
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SUDAN: SECURITY POLICE TARGET WOMEN PROTESTORS FOR BEATINGS AND THREATS

Women family members of executed army officers have been beaten up and threatened with rape and death following anti-government protests in Sudan on Saturday 25 February, Amnesty International reported today.

"We are seriously concerned about the safety of these women. They meet regularly in open defiance of the authorities, who do not know how to keep them quiet. The security police appear to be getting increasingly violent," said the organization, which is currently running a major worldwide campaign on the situation of human rights in Sudan.

On Saturday morning, 28 women with their children -- dressed in white, the colour of mourning -- held a small protest march in Khartoum carrying placards and photographs of their male relatives who were summarily executed 24 hours after being arrested in April 1990 and accused of an attempted coup.

The families meet each year around the anniversary of the executions, which happened on the 28th day of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, to voice their protest and to demand official word on what happened to their husbands, sons and brothers. The authorities refused to release the bodies to the families and have not even told them where they are buried. Each year, the women face harassment and arrest.

After walking a few hundred metres from the Presidential Palace to the University, handing out leaflets and protest poems, the women were confronted by security officials and police from the Ministry of Interior who are reported to have beaten them. An eye-witness has said that policemen smashed the head of one of the women protestors, Wadid Hassan Ali Karrar, against a wall. Other women were cut and bruised.

Six women were arrested, among them Wadid's sister Samira, who the authorities appear to regard as the ring-leader of the family protests. Taken to security offices, they were verbally abused and hit. Samira was threatened with death.

Made to stand battered and bleeding in the sun, they were released in the evening with orders to report to the security offices the next day. On Sunday, they decided to defy the order. The next day, Monday 27 February, security officials called on them and demanded that they cancel a meeting to be held that night.

The families met in the evening but decided not to make speeches and hold other planned activities. Security police disrupted the gathering and ordered Samira and her sister to leave, before following them home in a vehicle. They remain under close security surveillance.

"These Sudanese women are determined to continue to protest until they receive justice," Amnesty International said. "This put them at real risk. Their public defiance is unusual -- but their treatment as government opponents is not exceptional and underlines why we believe it necessary to put Sudan under an international human rights spotlight."

Amnesty International's campaign on human rights violations in Sudan was launched in late January with the publication of a 132-page report drawing attention to the serious human rights situation in all parts of the country -- both the war-torn south and the government-controlled north.

The human rights organization has accused both the government and armed opposition groups -- the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) and the South Sudan Independence Army (SSIA) -- of tens of thousands of political killings in the war zones as each deliberately targets civilians in the long-running civil war. This has created famine and caused millions of southerners to flee their homes.

In the north, which is directly affected by war, the military government which seized power on 30 June 1989 has set out to take control of civil society and to suppress any form of opposition as it implements an Islamist agenda. Over the years, thousands of real or suspected government opponents have been arbitrarily detained and torture has become systematic. Increasingly, the authorities are turning to shorter periods of detention back up by physical beatings and harassment as a method of intimidation.

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