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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **CROATIA** (this item is mainly intended for lobbying purposes, but is also being sent to some media)

INTERNAL -

PLEASE NOTE:

We may try to send section press officers an update press statement on the trials that may or may not be taking place in Rwanda. This depends on whether we get any information from Kigali today or tonight. Preliminary reports from our Central African Research Team in Rwanda is that six defendants will have a preliminary hearing today, 6 April, with an adjournment for a week-long period of mourning. The trials may resume at the end of next week. Amnesty International concerns include the lack of access by defendants to defense lawyers, the lack of resources of the Rwandese judicial system, and the death penalty as a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Please see an "Urgent Update to Burundi and Rwanda Actions" being sent today to campaign coordinators in all sections. We are also seeking to have an observer at the trial. More info to come.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95, 64/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

MONGOLIA - 18 APRIL - SEE NEWS SERVICE 67/95

ETHIOPIA - 19 APRIL - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

TIBET - 9 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 64/95

GERMANY - 16 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

ROMANIA - 22 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 66/95

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

** ITALY - 25 APRIL ** - There may be a press release to tie in with the release of a document presented to the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) on 27 April. The release is only intended for Italian media and will focus on torture and ill-treatment.

JAPAN - 4 MAY - SEE NEWS SERVICE 64/95

ISRAEL AND OCCUPIED TERRITORIES - 11 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

IRAN - 31 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

EVENTS AND MISSIONS

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 HAITI 18 March - 3 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 58/95

MISSION TO GUATEMALA 21 MARCH - 10 APR - SEE NEWS SERVICE 67/95

MISSION TO PARAGUAY & URUGUAY 22 MARCH - 12 APRIL - SEE NEWS SERVICE 67/95

MISSION TO CHAD - 27 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 59/95

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CROATIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING AND PROTECTION TO BE MADE A PRIORITY FOR NEW UN FORCE

Political priorities should not be allowed to get in the way of the UN's work in monitoring and protecting human rights in Croatia, Amnesty International said today.

"UN member-governments should act to ensure that pressure is put on all parties to ensure that this work is strengthened and not reduced," the human rights organization said.

Yesterday it was reported that a local Serbian military commander had warned of a ban on UN Civilian Police monitors (UNCIVPOL) and Military Observers (UNMOs) in part of the Serbian-controlled areas of Croatia. This may be related to the recent renaming and redefinition of the mandate of the UN force in Croatia as a result of pressure from the Croatian Government.

The government has made it clear that its priorities for the UN centre on control of its international borders and has expressed deep dissatisfaction with the lack of progress towards the reintegration of the Serbian-controlled areas.

Because of their mobility and visibility, UNCIVPOL monitors and UNMOs both have a role in protecting and monitoring human rights, particularly those of members of the minorities in the UN mandate areas. Amnesty International is particularly concerned that the political arguments over the UN presence may threaten this part of the operation.

A UN peacekeeping force (UNPROFOR) has been present since the spring of 1992 in the UN Protected Areas (UNPAs) of Croatia which include about one third of the country. These are mostly areas controlled by local Serbian authorities, but also a smaller area which remained under Croatian Government control.

Thousands of people, predominantly Croats, were effectively expelled from the UNPAs in 1992 and 1993, many as a result of violent acts perpetrated by uniformed individuals.

Reports of serious human rights abuses from the UNPAs covered by the old UN mandate have been much less frequent in the last year, following the Serb-Croat ceasefire agreement of March 1994. However, there have been allegations of ill-treatment by police and soldiers, as well as acts such as firing at the houses of members of the remaining minorities to intimidate them.

The allegations relate to both the Serbian and Croatian Government-controlled areas.

An Amnesty International delegation recently visited Croatia and concluded that clear risks remain for members of the remaining minorities in the UNPAs, many of whom are elderly people living in relatively isolated situations. The uncertainty over the continuation of the UN presence has contributed to that sense of insecurity.

There are up to 28,000 Croats, Hungarians or other non-Serbs remaining in the Croatian Serb-controlled areas of the UNPAs or the adjoining "pink zones". Up to 5,000 Serbs remain in the Croatian Government-controlled area which was also designated a UNPA.

Last Friday, in Resolution 981, the UN Security Council authorized the establishment of a new UN force -- the UN Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) -- to replace the UNPROFOR peacekeeping force's operations in Croatia. UNCRO is to be deployed by 30 June 1995.

Although an outline of the UNCRO mandate was included in the resolution, details of the implementation are to be agreed in consultation with the Croatian Government and local Serbian authorities. This is to be reported to the Security Council by 21 April.

A guarantee of continuity is one of the key elements in ensuring adequate protection. Individuals at risk should be assured that monitoring and protection, such as that carried out by the UNCIVPOL monitors, will continue as long as there are significant risks for them. Without such a guarantee they may be discouraged from reporting incidents or seeking protection out of fear of reprisals after the UN's departure from any particular area.

Amnesty International is calling for the creation of medium- and long-term programs for human rights monitoring and protection in the areas of Croatia covered by the current UN mandate. These should be structured programs aimed at creating the conditions for the eventual withdrawal or scaling down of the international presence and should be an integral part of any final political settlement.

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