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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - RWANDA

PLEASE NOTE: The news service item, USA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO SUSPEND MILITARY AID TO COLOMBIA, AI Index: AMR 51/WU 05/94, sent out in News Service 74/94, may now be sent out to media with the following change: Please delete the first line in paragraph 2, saying - "This is the first time that Amnesty International has made such a call in its more than 30-year history." Apologies for the delay.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Hong Kong - 0600 hrs gmt, 21 April - SEE NEWS SERVICES 71/94 AND 36/94

Trade Unionists - 29 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - SEE NEWS SERVICE 62

Burundi - 16 May - SEE NEWS SERVICES 53/94 and 36/94

China - 1 June - More details to follow

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Switzerland CAT - 19 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94

Israel & OT CAT - 25 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 7 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

USA SECTION INITIATIVE

Following is an AIUSA news release being released today for your information:

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR SUSPENSION OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA

International human rights organization maintains that U.S. aid may contribute to human rights violations

Washington D.C. -- Amnesty International today called on the United States Government to maintain its current hold on, and to suspend future military assistance to Colombia because of its grave concerns that past assistance has contributed to the human rights crisis in that country.

Amnesty International is troubled by the evidence -- not least of which comes from the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) -- that U.S. military assistance has gone to Colombian units responsible for the killing of unarmed civilians, as well as other human rights violations.

Since 1986, over 20,000 people have been killed for political reasons in Colombia - the vast majority by the government and their paramilitary proteges during counterinsurgency operations.

In a letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher on April 14, William F. Schulz, Executive Director, AIUSA formally communicated Amnesty International's call for a suspension of U.S. aid to Colombia, and reiterated the five questions which Amnesty International considers central to any discussion on US military assistance to Colombia:

- 1) To what extent has there been a diversion of U.S. funds designated for counternarcotic programs to counterinsurgency?
- 2) What are the units of the Colombian armed forces that currently receive or have received U.S. military assistance?
- 3) To what extent has the U.S. Government funded Colombian units (both counternarcotics and counterinsurgency) that have been implicated in human rights violations?
- 4) What steps has the U.S. Government taken to ensure its aid does not end up with Colombian units implicated in human rights violations?
- 5) What investigative and/or corrective measures were taken to address the results of the GAO investigation on counternarcotics aid to Colombia made public in August 1993?

Amnesty International USA wrote to the Department of State on March 10 and March 16 of this year requesting information on the above questions. It has not yet received any substantive written communications in response, despite the urgency of the situation.

Today's letter to the Secretary of State follows the launch last month of Amnesty International's worldwide campaign to end political killings and "disappearances" in Colombia, and comes the day before U.S. Congress begins its deliberations on the U.S. Admins FY 95 US foreign assistance requests.

AIUSA has also called on members of the Appropriations Committees of the U.S. Congress not to release the hold on FY 1994 military assistance to Colombia and not to grant requests for FY 1995.

Since August 1989 when President Bush approved the Andean Drug Initiative, Colombia has received more military assistance from the USA than any other country in the Western Hemisphere. In the first three years of the initiative over two hundred million dollars in military assistance was provided to Colombia. Although the bulk of this aid has been sent under the aegis of counternarcotics initiatives, Colombian military officials have admitted in the past that much of the aid has been used for counterinsurgency. Amnesty International believes that, in spite of the seriousness of the drugs-trafficking related violence, there is strong evidence that U.S. aid intended to fight it is not serving that purpose, and is instrumental in the commission of human rights violations.

"If the Colombian government will not take responsibility for its army and their paramilitary auxiliaries, it is high time that the U.S. Government take action to show it will not be complicit in these killings. That is why we are calling on the U.S. Government now to suspend future military aid," said Dr. Schulz.

Amnesty International's recent report, *Political Violence in Colombia: Myth and Reality*, documents the severity of the human rights situation including widespread political killings and disappearances, criticizes the Colombian government for not taking decisive action to make the armed forces act within the law, and demonstrates a pattern of impunity for human rights violators.

At the launch of Amnesty's campaign, Dr. Schulz emphasized that "it is the responsibility of the U.S. Government to ensure that funds provided to foreign governments do not contribute to human rights violations. The fact that the US government has persistently failed to question the end use of military aid it provides has contributed to the deadly spiral of violence in Colombia," he said.

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14 APRIL 1994

RWANDA: A CRISIS LONG IN THE MAKING

As world attention has focused on foreigners being evacuated from Rwanda, thousands of innocent and defenceless local people have been left behind to be slaughtered. And extrajudicial executions continue while the United Nations has failed to take effective human rights initiatives to stop these killings.

Amnesty International said today that while it appreciates that western governments' first concern is the safety of their own nationals, they should do more to protect Rwandese lives. In addition, the UN Security Council should expand the human rights monitoring capacity of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

While the UN today tries to arrange a cease-fire in the fighting, Amnesty International demands that any agreement reached includes a substantial contribution of human rights monitors and real guarantees for future protection of human rights. Noting the UN's failure to implement its own recommendations for Rwanda, Amnesty International advocates long-term solutions be found in the conflict.

The human rights organization also strongly condemned the thousands of extrajudicial executions by the armed forces and vigilante gangs allied to extremist Hutu political parties close to the former president. Some reports put the death toll at around 20,000. The majority of victims are those suspected of opposing or criticising the government of President Habyarimana, who was killed in a 6 April attack on his aircraft, and many members of the minority Tutsi ethnic group.

The evacuation of foreigners coordinated by Belgium, France and the United States has overshadowed the plight of the thousands of Rwanda citizens still at risk of being killed in the chaos.

"Closed doors at foreign embassies have meant that refuge has been denied to people at imminent risk of being killed," Amnesty International said. "Governments should bear in mind the universality of human rights, not just for their own citizens abroad, but for the equally innocent and defenceless civilian population of Rwanda."

Amnesty International urged governments to consider what steps could be taken to ensure the safety of those in peril from the Presidential Guard and armed Hutu gangs, who have committed most of the carnage in Rwanda. In the last few days, a small number of Rwandese have been evacuated from the country on Western aircraft, but these few represent only a tiny proportion of those in danger.

On 7 April, the Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity expressed his shock and outrage about the "wanton killings of innocent civilians." He added that he was equally outraged by the killing of the UN military personnel. He condemned "in the strongest terms these heinous acts perpetrated by some elements of the security forces."

The UN should also play a larger role in Rwanda. The main purpose of the UN force has been to supervise the Peace Accord between the government and the opposition Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF).

Amnesty International calls for the expansion of the UN operation's mandate so that it can investigate and report on human rights abuses not only by the police and gendarmerie, but also by all armed forces, including the army, the Presidential Guard and the RPF. To date, Amnesty International has been unable to verify that the RPF has carried out human rights violations against civilians since the beginning of this latest crisis. However, there has been fighting between government troops and the RPF, as well as reports of fighting between different factions of the army.

The civilian police monitoring component of the UN force, which has deployed only 52 personnel, should also be expanded at the appropriate time, Amnesty International said. These monitors should follow the human rights organization's guidelines for peacekeeping

operations. Those include ensuring frequent and public reporting of any human rights violations the monitors witness or learn about and taking preventive measures to address such violations.

Amnesty International has long been appealing to the international community to assert pressure on the Rwandese authorities and the RPF to safeguard human rights since the start of the armed conflict in 1990. Yet the world has turned a blind eye to the human rights situation in Rwanda for most of the past 30 years, voicing virtually no protest when most members of the government overthrown by President Habyarimana in 1973 were killed in prison, or at the permanent system of discrimination against the country's Tutsi minority. When the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions visited Rwanda in 1993, he documented massacres of Rwanda's civilian population and other human rights abuses.

Among the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur were measures to: prevent further widespread extrajudicial executions, mount a national reconciliation campaign, dismantle all violent organizations and reform the Rwandese judicial system. At the time, the Special Rapporteur warned: "The international community must not remain indifferent to their situation and must therefore provide its assistance wherever that of the Rwandese state is inadequate or nonexistent."

None of the suggestions became a reality because the United Nations failed to commit the staff, resources and training to implement the solutions. Amnesty International believes the UNAMIR operation to have been inadequate in its provisions for human rights investigation and protection. Those inadequacies have meant mass extrajudicial executions in the recent upheaval in Rwanda.

"The international community knew what had to be done and knew the historical problems, but they didn't act until their own nationals were in danger," Amnesty International said.

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