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26 AUGUST 1993

CYPRUS: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED BY DETERIORATING SITUATION FACING CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Amnesty International today wrote to President Glafcos Clerides of Cyprus expressing concern at the increasingly long sentences being meted out to conscientious objectors to military service and urging an end to the practice of imposing repeated prison sentences on them. The organization also renewed its call for a civilian alternative to military service, in line with international standards, to be implemented in Cyprus.

A case singled out by Amnesty International as particularly regrettable is that of 28-year-old Georgios Anastasi Petrou from Strologos, Nicosia, who is serving his fourth prison sentence in the Central Prisons. Georgios Anastasi Petrou, who was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on 1 July, is the main provider in a family of eight, which is struggling to keep going without him.

"This man has already been in prison three times," said Amnesty International. "Unfortunately, there is nothing to stop the authorities imprisoning him a fifth, a sixth, a seventh time... Isn't it time the authorities stopped harassing him?"

Amnesty International also appealed to the government to clarify its plans for conscientious objectors and amend the legislation providing for alternative service, passed last year but so far not implemented, in order to bring it into line with international standards. On numerous occasions representatives of the Jehovah's Witness community have sought an interview with the present and former government to discuss its position so that an arrangement which is acceptable to both parties can be found. However all such requests have been turned down.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights in its resolutions on conscientious objection has recognized that the right to have conscientious objections to military service is a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Amnesty International believes that by failing to provide for a civilian alternative service for conscientious objectors and imprisoning them, the Government of Cyprus is violating conscientious objectors' rights.

Amnesty International redoubled its call for a completely civilian alternative service of non-punitive length to made available to conscientious objectors on religious, ethical, moral, humanitarian, philosophical, political or similar grounds. The possibility of performing such a service should not be suspended at any time.

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25 AUGUST 1993

PERU: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS "SHINING PATH" MASSACRE OF ASHANINKA

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the massacre of at least 62 people, including women and children, by attackers identified as members of the clandestine armed opposition group Partido Comunista del Perú (Sendero Luminoso, PCP, Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path), on 19 August 1993 in the province of Satipo, Junin Department, Peru. The majority of the victims came from 12 indigenous communities of the Ashaninka ethnic group.

According to information received from a church commission that visited the area and interviewed survivors of the massacre, members of the PCP carried out the mass killings. Approximately 70 assailants, presenting themselves as members of army controlled civil defence patrols, arrived in the 12 villages in Satipo province in the early evening of Wednesday 18 August. The assailants were armed with spears, machetes and axes. The aggressors killed women, men and children in every community and left the area on the morning of Thursday 19 August. Many of the victims were said to have been severely mutilated before being killed. A number were seriously wounded, including eight children and one woman, who have been transferred to Lima. The rest of the wounded are being treated in the vicinity. At least seven hundred people are estimated to have fled the area and become internal refugees.

This is not the first time that the PCP has carried out massacres among the Ashaninka population in the province of Satipo. Deliberate and arbitrary killings by the PCP were investigated by Amnesty International delegates during recent visits to Peru, including several perpetrated in Ashaninka villages in the districts of Rio Negro and San Martin de Pangoa, Satipo province.

On 17 May 1990, some 30 men, women and children who lived in a communal indigenous family house in the Unión Alto Saniveri settlement were killed. According to the recorded testimony of one of the community leaders, the massacre was a reprisal for the community having refused to join the ranks of the PCP.

Amnesty International condemns the torture and killing of prisoners and other deliberate and arbitrary killings carried out either by groups such as the PCP or by the security forces. The organization therefore urges the PCP to publicly repudiate the massacre and to halt further deliberate and arbitrary killings and torture.

Amnesty International also urges the Peruvian authorities to take all necessary steps to ensure that the people in the area affected by this atrocity are given adequate protection, and that an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the massacre is carried out.

Amnesty International has received reports on summary executions and massacres since 1980; on several occasions entire communities have been wiped out. These atrocities have been committed by the PCP as well as by government military forces and military-run civil defence patrols.

The PCP has declared that those communities that do not support them are against them and are therefore subject to reprisals. On the other hand, if these communities are seen to be collaborating - voluntarily or involuntarily - with the PCP they may suffer retaliation from the security forces. In the words of one peasant: "We are between a sword and the wall. If the authorities do not eliminate us, we are eliminated by Shining Path."

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