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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - HONG KONG

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

United Kingdom - 14 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 129/94

Pakistan - 27 July - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94

Myanmar - 20 July - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASE SEE NEWS SERVICE 99/94

India - 16 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 129/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Lusophone Summit - 27 June - SEE NEWS SERVICE 124/94 for item

Equatorial Guinea - 30 June - Embargoed item enclosed. Will be sent to limited African media.

North and South Korea - 21 July - Please note change of date. Short document on North Korea and targeted news service item on North and South Korea.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 0600 hrs GMT 7 July 1994 - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

AI INDEX: ASA 19/WU 03/94
24 JUNE 1994

HONG KONG: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR ACTION TO PROTECT ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Amnesty International is calling on the Hong Kong authorities to take action to protect asylum-seekers in response to confirmation this month by an independent inquiry that Hong Kong security forces assaulted several Vietnamese asylum-seekers in April.

On 7 April 1994, over 1,500 Vietnamese asylum-seekers were transferred away from Section 7 of Whitehead Detention Centre. The operation involved hundreds of Correctional Services Department (CSD) and police staff, who used considerable force and large amounts of tear gas to overcome resistance from some of the asylum-seekers. Nearly three hundred asylum-seekers needed medical attention as a result of the incident.

As a result of a public outcry, the Hong Kong Governor on 14 April appointed two Justices of the Peace (JPs) to carry out an inquiry into the incident. In their report, published on 10 June, the JPs accepted claims by some of the asylum-seekers that they had been assaulted by CSD staff, and possibly by police, at different stages of the removal operation.

Asylum-seekers were subjected to beating and kicking, inflicted in at least some cases after they had left Section 7, when they were fully under the control of security forces. The JPs also criticized several other aspects of the operation.

Amnesty International welcomes the JPs' report as a genuine effort to examine all the events which surrounded the 7 April incident. The organization takes note of the report's mention that an internal police investigation into some aspects of the incident, including possible police assault against asylum-seekers, is under way.

However, while the JPs' report states that asylum-seekers were assaulted by CSD officers, their report makes no recommendations for action in connection with such assault. It also makes no specific recommendations about how to avoid assaults occurring in the future.

Amnesty International urges the Government of Hong Kong to ensure that any judicial or disciplinary proceedings against CSD or police officers believed responsible for assaulting asylum-seekers be carried out as a matter of urgency.

The Hong Kong Government should also ensure, in consultation where necessary with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organizations, that:

- all the procedural shortcomings identified in the report are remedied;
- the training of CSD and other officials is modified to help prevent assault from occurring in the future; and
- all the recommendations made in the JPs' report are implemented as a matter of urgency.

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