
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 161/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - MOROCCO, BURUNDI (this item is for response only)

PLEASE NOTE EFAI: There have been a couple of changes to the text of the Morocco item that were not in the version originally sent to you. The last paragraph has just been added in and also the wording of the first line of the quote in the second paragraph should read "This amnesty is a milestone for Morocco in the process of redressing the injustice...". Can you please amend your translation accordingly and distribute the final version to your sections. I hope this isn't a problem, please can you let me know if it is, thanks - Dina

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Pakistan - 27 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94 - We are sending the report out via Swift air so it should reach you in time for the release date.

India - 16 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 129/94

Kosovo - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - second week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Brazil - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

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RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS A MILESTONE FOR MOROCCO

Amnesty International welcomes the amnesty for more than 400 political prisoners in Morocco this week, many of whom are prisoners of conscience and political prisoners sentenced in unfair trials since the 1980s and who have spent more than 10 years in prison.

"This amnesty is a milestone for Morocco in the process of redressing the injustice of past unfair trial, however we remain concerned that other political prisoners also convicted in unfair trials, including prisoners of conscience, remain imprisoned," Amnesty International said.

Hundreds who "disappeared" since the 1960s, most of them Sahrawis, also remain unaccounted for.

During the past three years, Amnesty International has welcomed a number of measures taken by the Moroccan Government to improve the human rights situation in the country. Such reforms include the release of more than 40 prisoners of conscience and hundreds of "disappeared" from secret detention centres since 1991, the appointment of the first Human Rights Minister in 1993, and the commutation of 195 death sentences in 1994.

Most recently, the organization had also welcomed the repeal on 5 July of a 1935 decree relating to the repression of demonstrations against public order and to the non-respect of authority, which had often been used to imprison prisoners of conscience.

The repeal of this decree comes in the context of the work of a commission set up to reexamine certain laws with the view to bring Moroccan laws in line with international standards.

Amnesty International is calling on the Moroccan authorities to review all outstanding cases of political prisoners not addressed by the amnesty, and urges them to take the necessary steps in law and in practice to prevent future human rights violations and give substance to their commitment to turn a page on the violations of the past.

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BURUNDI: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL VISIT

Amnesty International is sending an investigation team to Burundi to collect information both about human rights violations -- past and current -- and recent political violence in Burundi.

The team intend to meet members of Burundi's human rights organizations as well as looking into what human rights work is being done by the United Nations and Organization of African Unity missions and by the authorities themselves.

The delegates -- the Africa Director at Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London and a former prosecutor who conducted Chad's 1991 investigation into human rights violations under the Habré regime -- aim to collect information on the progress of official investigations into the massacres in late 1993 and assess the fairness of the process so far.

During the visit, Amnesty International's delegation also plan to meet Burundi's political leaders to hear their assessment of the human rights situation in Burundi.

Amnesty International's delegation will be liaising with two former African heads of state who will also be in Burundi during their own mission of reconciliation. The former president of Mali, Ahmed Toumani Touré, and Nigeria's General Olusegun Obasanjo will be promoting dialogue between all sections of Burundi's society to reduce the chances of violence similar to the mass killings that began in October 1993.

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