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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 162/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - YEMEN (this item is for response only),  
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INTERNAL - GUATEMALA (for verbal response only)

MYANMAR/BURMA (this

## 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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AI INDEX: AMR 34/WU 03/94  
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**INTERNAL FOR VERBAL RESPONSE STATEMENT REGARDING THE GUATEMALAN PEACE TALKS AND CLARIFICATION COMMISSION**

Several Sections have asked for guidance as to how to respond to queries regarding the current Guatemalan peace talks. The following information is intended to assist Sections with such queries.

On 29 March 1994 a human rights accord was signed in Mexico City by representatives of the Guatemalan Government and the armed opposition coalition, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. This accord is to be followed by a series of talks, in which different topics are to be discussed each month, including indigenous people, a ceasefire accord, constitutional reforms and finally, in December 1994, a peace treaty.

On 25 May 1994, the anniversary of the attempted "self-imposed" coup by Guatemala's former president Jorge Serrano Elias, Amnesty International issued an external News Service item **ONE YEAR AFTER THE ATTEMPTED COUP IMPUNITY PREVAILS; WILL TALKS IN NORWAY ESTABLISH A "CLARIFICATION COMMISSION"?**, AI Index: AMR 34/WU 02/94, in which the organization made certain recommendations relating to a proposed "Clarification Commission" which was to be discussed during talks between the two parties in Norway in June 1994.

The government and the URNG subsequently held these talks in Norway from 13 June until 23 June, during which time an agreement was reached between the two parties on the formation of a Commission for the Clarification of Violations of Human Rights and Acts of Violence which Caused Suffering to the Guatemalan People during the Armed Conflict.

However, AI is concerned that the proposed Commission does not include measures which the organization considers are essential, not only for the victims and their relatives, but so as to prevent such abuses from happening again.

The Commission, which is to have three members, is to produce a report containing the results of the investigations and making specific recommendations. However, the report will not name specific individuals involved in the perpetration of human rights violations, nor will it have any legal authority to punish those responsible for human rights violations and its findings will not be considered valid as evidence in a court of law.

It will cover the period from the beginning of the armed conflict until the signing of the final peace agreement and will begin operating after the signing of the planned peace treaty in December 1994 and will last for an initial six months, which may be extended for a further six months if members of the Commission so decide.

AI believes that the results of the Commission's findings should be referred to the appropriate judicial bodies and those found responsible for human rights violations and abuses<sup>1</sup> brought to justice. It should be given a mandate and sufficient resources to enable it to look into all reported cases of human rights violations carried out by both government forces and the armed opposition. The organization also recommends that such a Commission should study, report on, and make recommendations to eliminate the structures, policies or mechanisms which contributed to the persistence of human rights violations in Guatemala over a period of almost three decades.

The government's failure to aggressively pursue inquiries into human rights violations which have occurred under President de León's administration, combined with increasing reports of harassment and death threats suggests that despite the hopes for an improvement in the human rights situation expressed by many in Guatemala and abroad when President de León came to office, the situation remains unstable and bears close monitoring. Amnesty International believes these unresolved cases must be studied by the newly agreed Clarification Commission and those responsible brought to justice if the government wishes to signal that no further human rights violations will be tolerated.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "human rights violations" is used when referring to governments (which have formal obligations in international human rights law at all times). The term "abuses" is used for political non-governmental entities (where international standards are explicit and binding only in the context of armed conflict).

**During the June talks in Norway an agreement was also signed on the resettlement of those displaced by the armed conflict, including refugees in Mexico and internal refugees. The talks regarding this issue had been carried out in Mexico City.**

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**AI INDEX: MDE 31/WU 05/94**

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**YEMEN: RELEASE OF JOURNALISTS**

Yesterday, the authorities in Yemen released all the remaining journalists still in detention following arrests earlier this week after a seminar organized by the Yemen Times.

Amnesty International had expressed grave concern that the detainees may have been subjected to torture or ill-treatment while in detention.

"We welcome the authorities' positive response to our appeals on this case and hope that they will be similarly receptive to other concerns that we have raised with them," Amnesty International said today.

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**MYANMAR GOVERNMENT DECLARES IT HAS NO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM, WHILE ITS ARMY TORCHES A CIVILIAN REFUGEE CAMP**

Only 24 hours after Myanmar army soldiers attacked a civilian refugee camp, that country's foreign minister today told journalists that Myanmar has no human rights problem, according to Amnesty International.

Myanmar's Foreign Minister, Ohn Gyaw, told journalists at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Bangkok that he would be happy to meet the United Nations Secretary General to discuss human rights and democratic reform in Myanmar. He also told correspondents that he did "not believe that Myanmar has a human rights problem".

Less than 24 hours earlier, 360 soldiers from 62nd battalion of the Myanmar army (the tatmadaw) entered the Halockhani civilian refugee camp on the border with Thailand. After taking over a western section of the camp, populated by civilian refugees from the Mon ethnic minority, they tried to advance and occupy the main camp.

When soldiers from the armed wing of the New Mon State Party moved into the area and stopped them, the tatmadaw soldiers returned to the western section of the camp and set fire to half of the 120 houses. As they left the camp, they took with them 16 men, including the civilian leaders of the camp. Half of them were handcuffed.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of the 16 men currently in the hands of the tatmadaw, particularly because the organization has received many reliable reports of torture and killing of civilians by the tatmadaw.

Many of the remaining residents of the camp's western section have fled in fear over the border to Thailand.

"If the Myanmar government is serious in its offer to talk to the United Nations Secretary General about human rights, it must prove its good intentions by ensuring an end to such incidents", Amnesty International said.

The news of this attack came in the same week as the international community and human rights groups focused on the fifth anniversary of the house arrest of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, one of 58 known prisoners of conscience currently detained in Myanmar.

Amnesty International is also calling on the Myanmar government to demonstrate its stated commitment to human rights by immediately and unconditionally releasing Aung San Suu Kyi and all the 57 other known prisoners of conscience currently detained in Myanmar.

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