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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 172/94

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS  
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE  
DATE: 4 AUGUST 1994

NO OF WORDS: 1318

AI INDEX: NWS 11/172/94  
DISTR: SC/PO

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - MALAYSIA, HAITI Q&A

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Colombia - 5 August - FINAL ITEM SENT OUT IN NEWS SERVICE 167/94

Kosovo - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

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

France - \*\* 12 October\*\* - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Bhutan/Nepal - 25 August - See news service 168/94

Brazil - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Togo - 15 September - See news service 168/94

Indonesia - 28 September - LAUNCH OF CAMPAIGN

**INTERNAL**

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS/AV OFFICERS -- CLARIFICATION NOTE**

Last week a proposal for an international meeting of press/av officers was sent for comment in the news service, which has apparently caused some concern amongst European press officers planning a regional meeting of their own.

We would like to clarify that during the meeting of press officers held at the International Secretariat earlier this year, press officers were asked how we could best foster a sense of cooperation amongst the movements' media professionals.

The meeting agreed that annual meetings of press officers should be held, and also agreed that an international meeting was preferable to a series of regional meetings. The view expressed at that time was that an international meeting would ensure a more cohesive approach to our media work, and would enable sections of varying size and experience to develop an understanding of media work throughout the movement.

Based on the outcome of the meeting, the Media/Audiovisual Program at the IS is now proposing to hold an international press/av officers in February 1995 in London. Such a meeting convened at the international level does not preclude press officers working together in different regions or on different issues convening separate meetings to discuss issues of common concern. It is entirely up to press officers whether they wish to attend either or both such meetings. It is also possible to have separate regional discussions as part of the international meeting if this is the wish of press/av officers.

The proposal sent to press/av officers last week was a first attempt at drafting an agenda, based on feedback from the meeting earlier this year. At that meeting, press officers said they felt discussion of campaign media work was useful, but that we should also focus more on general media issues. The draft agenda has tried to reflect a mix of campaign and general media issues, as well as including formal section response on the International Media/AV strategy to be debated at the 1995 ICM.

We hope that this note helps clarify the reason that an international meeting is proposed at this time, and we would encourage press/av officers to send their comments to the IS as soon as possible on the proposed agenda so that we can finalize the content and timing of the meeting.

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**MALAYSIA: MASS ARRESTS FEARED FOLLOWING FATWA ANNOUNCEMENT TOMORROW**

Amnesty International is concerned that mass arrests may follow the expected government ban of the Al Arqam Muslim sect in Malaysia, following a fatwa (ruling) to be announced by the National Fatwa Council in Malaysia tomorrow.

Over the last two weeks, up to 41 followers of Al Arqam -- a Shia sect which has followers in Malaysia and other Asian countries, including Indonesia and Thailand -- have been arrested for distributing leaflets in Kuala Lumpur and other Malaysian states.

The Malaysian authorities arrested seven people last Tuesday, only three days after they had detained 27 people in and around Kuala Lumpur. Ten of them were released on bail shortly afterwards and they are expected to be charged in the coming weeks.

Amnesty International fears these people may have been detained solely for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs, which is a right guaranteed by international human rights treaties.

The leaflets reportedly contained information about the sect and were issued in response to allegations made by the Malaysian Government that Al Arqam preaches deviationist religious teachings.

The government now seems to regard the group as a security threat and is stepping up its action against them. However, to Amnesty International's knowledge, Al Arqam has not been engaged in violent activities or inciting its followers to violence.

"We are urging the government to either immediately release those detainees still in custody or to charge them with a recognisable criminal offence", Amnesty International said.

These arrests have come only weeks after the founder of the sect was banned from entering Singapore and Indonesian religious leaders banned the group's teachings.

ENDS\

Internal  
(For use of AI members only)

AI Index: AMR 36/WU 07/94

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS  
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE  
DATE: 4 AUGUST 1994

### HAITI: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

This is the second questions and answers on the current situation in Haiti. We plan to issue such information sheets on a regular basis to help sections deal with their campaigning, lobbying and media work during this crisis period.

#### 1) What are AI's concerns in a nutshell?

Our current concerns fall into four categories:

- 1) the continuing violations of human rights in Haiti
- 2) ensuring that persons responsible for these serious human right violations are not granted immunity either in Haiti or any other country to which they may flee
- 3) the procedures for processing and conditions for holding Haitian asylum-seekers who are picked up at sea by the US Coast Guard and taken to Guantánamo Bay or elsewhere
- 4) the potential for human rights violations - whether by foreign troops, Haitian security forces or citizens who might take advantage of the instability or invasion to exact reprisals.

#### 2) What is the current human rights situation in Haiti?

The Haitian military has indiscriminately killed men, women and children during periodic arbitrary sweeps on areas where people are believed to be supporters of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Almost daily, Amnesty International receives reports of politically targeted murders. In addition, "disappearances" of activists and rape and torture of detainees seem to be increasing.

Faced with such abuses, it is not surprising that Haitians in their thousands have taken to the seas, desperately fleeing the country in flimsy boats. Not all have made it. Some drowned when their overcrowded crafts capsized. In late June, some 40 people drowned after jumping overboard when Haitian military police opened fire on their boat off the southern coast of Haiti.

#### 3) What is AI's position on a possible US-led intervention?

While AI does not take a position for or against armed intervention, we have continually voiced our concern that human rights violations could escalate during any intervention. Amnesty International is not only concerned that the Haitian military could commit more human rights violations during armed conflict, but also that the foreign troops in an intervention might commit their own human rights violations. Finally, some sectors of the Haitian population might seek reprisals during chaos resulting from foreign armed intervention.

#### 4) What has Amnesty International done so far?

\* AI is writing to the Haitian authorities, reminding them of their international obligations with respect to human rights, and that the perpetrators of human rights violations should not count on impunity from justice in Haiti or elsewhere in the world.

\* AI has established a presence in the Dominican Republic to closely monitor the human rights situation in Haiti.

\* AI is getting information to the media about human rights violations in Haiti.

**\* AI is monitoring the situation of asylum-seekers picked up by the US Coast Guard and taken to Guantánamo Bay, and will monitor their situation in the future -- both in Guantánamo and any other place where they may be taken.**

**\* AI has written to US Secretary of Defense William Perry, all members of the UN Security Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on Haiti and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressing our position that any UN-approved military intervention must respect the minimum human rights and humanitarian standards that are relevant during armed intervention.**

**ENDS\**