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INTERNAL

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **NIGERIA** (please note that the Nigeria released has been reclassified as international not targeted. Please see below for explanation.)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: An IS delegation including Pierre Sané will be visiting Colombia from 12-20 November. The visit will include meetings with the section, and government officials. On 19 November the delegation will be holding a press conference in Bogota. Lovisa Stannow, the Press Officer at the Swedish section, will be in Colombia coordinating the media work for the visit. If you have any journalists you think should be informed of the press conference please pass their details on to Lovisa at the Swedish section, tel: +46 8 670 6200, fax: +46 8 662 7322, before 8 November. Next week we will be sending out a news service item on the visit.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Peru/Committee against Torture - 9 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 243/94

** Nigeria - 11 November** - Please note this is now an international release and will be sent to wire agencies. Apologies for such short notice on this but wire coverage appears to be essential if the release is to be picked up by Nigerian media. As mentioned in news service 248/94 key countries for Nigeria are USA, UK and EU members. SEE NEWS SERVICE 248/94

Iraq - 29 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

News Service 252/94

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EMBARGOED FOR 11 NOVEMBER 1994

NIGERIA: MILITARY GOVERNMENT CLAMPS DOWN ON DISSENT

The Nigerian government's campaign to stifle political activity by jailing hundreds and killing dozens of its opponents in recent months has only served to fuel the political crisis they are trying to bring under control.

"The country is now facing one of the most serious human rights crises for decades, triggered by these killings of critics, imprisonment for treason of the president-elect of Nigeria and the detentions of ethnic group leaders, prominent trade unionists and opposition politicians," said Amnesty International in a report published today.

So far this year, Nigerian government forces are reported to have killed at least 50 people in Ogoniland, southeast Nigeria, and detained an estimated 600 Ogoni, with scores held for months without charge or trial under harsh conditions. The Ogoni people are a marginalized, impoverished community who have been protesting against air, soil and water pollution caused by oil companies, in particular the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited.

The Ogoni have been targeted for repression because of their support for the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and for its leaders who are currently held without charge or trial. Since May, the security forces have held Ken Saro-Wiwa, an internationally renowned writer and president of MOSOP, for long periods in incommunicado detention where he has been chained hand and foot and not given the medical care he needs.

The government has also arrested hundreds of demonstrators, detained government critics and used excessive lethal force to crush pro-democracy protests and strikes that have brought Nigeria to a standstill in recent months.

Amnesty International considers Moshood Abiola, the winner of the 1993 presidential elections currently awaiting trial on treason charges, to be a prisoner of conscience imprisoned for his non-violent political activities.

Abiola has been held in harsh conditions, far from his home, often having to sleep on the bare ground and go without food. The authorities have frequently defied court orders that he be allowed access to family and lawyers, as well as improved conditions. Government doctors have confirmed that he risks permanent paralysis without necessary medical tests and surgery.

"The military government of General Sani Abacha has shown its contempt for the rule of law and internationally recognized human rights by silencing the opposition not only in the press and the streets, but also in the courts," Amnesty International said.

In September, the government issued eight decrees that effectively "legalized" actions it had already taken which flouted the rule of law. The decrees extended already draconian powers of detention and stripped courts of their jurisdiction to hear legal challenges against the government.

"Several trade union leaders are also being detained incommunicado and without charge or trial because they led major strikes," Amnesty International said. "The list of former senators, journalists and human rights activists arrested by police is getting longer each day."

In late May and June, the soldiers and police of the Internal Security Task Force attacked at least 30 towns and villages in Ogoniland, killing, assaulting and raping the local population, then setting fire to homes and destroying property.

Amnesty International is calling on the Nigerian authorities to take urgent and effective measures to stop the extrajudicial executions by government forces and other human rights violations in Ogoniland. The organization further urges the Nigerian government to set up an independent and open judicial inquiry into the killings and make its findings public.

Amnesty International is also appealing for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience and the abolition of legislation allowing indefinite detention without charge or trial.

"Other governments with influence in Nigeria should push the military government there to end the killings, political imprisonment and other human rights violations," Amnesty International said.

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