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INTERNAL

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **STATEMENT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AIUSA AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON FORTHCOMING AMERICAS SUMMIT** (This is enclosed for your information, please check against delivery by calling the press office in Washington on +1 202 544 0200).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Afghanistan - mid-December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 267

Bosnia - (21 December) - possible change - SEE NEWS SERVICE 268

Sudan - 25 January - SUDAN CAMPAIGN VIDEO INFORMATION (please inform AV officers and campaign coordinators):

SUDAN: A NATION SCARRED - Soldiers led by Omer Hassan Ahmad al Bashir seized power in Sudan in June 1989. Sweeping away a democratically elected government, the new rulers promised a revolution of "national salvation". What they delivered is a human rights disaster. From the streets of the capital Khartoum to remote rural villages, the human rights of Sudanese people are being abused.

The Sudan campaign video has now been completed and is available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and international versions. An order form with full details and transcript will be sent out next week, but to speed up the ordering process, we are suggesting that your section sends their order to the Audiovisual Resources team at the IS by fax or e-mail in the next two weeks stating which language and video format you require. SEE NEWS SERVICE 261

Turkey - 8 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 261

Northern Iraq - 28 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 266

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

News Service 271/94

**STATEMENT BY WILLIAM F. SCHULZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA**

**Press Conference on the Summit of the Americas
National Press Club, Washington, D.C.
December 1, 1994**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The avant-garde artist Yves Klein once offered for sale a series of works which he entitled "Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility." He insisted on payment in gold and hundreds of people took him up on his offer, the work unseen. Despite its impressive title, "Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility" turned out to be nothing but pure air and Klein compounded the charade by tossing the gold he had received into the Seine.

It would be well for us to keep this little escapade in mind as we contemplate the upcoming Summit of the Americas to be held in Miami December 9-11. When formal democracy was restored in most Latin American countries in the 1980s following years of military rule, hopes were high that the new civilian-led governments would honor their pledges to uphold human rights. And indeed the past few years have witnessed the growth of indigenous human rights organizations in many countries of the Americas; the appointment of formal human rights commissions; the signing of regional and international treaties for the protection of human rights, including, most recently, the Inter-American Convention on the Forced Disappearance of Persons and, in general, the adoption of human rights-friendly rhetoric by most of the leaders of the hemisphere.

The tragic reality is, however, that in case after case these gestures have proven to be little more than "immaterial pictorial sensibility," little more than pure air. The human rights records of far too many of the nations of the hemisphere--including the United States--remain tarnished and dismal. Most discouragingly, it appears as if the whole topic of human rights may receive the shortest of shrifts at the summit. Like Yves Klein, the leaders of the hemisphere are trying to sell us an empty package. Amnesty International insists that they not get away with it.

A good deal of the reason that the human rights situation in the Americas is so abysmal is because it has become entangled with three of the most dangerous myths currently at large in our public thinking.

The first myth is that democracy alone is enough to guarantee respect for human rights. When White House officials were asked some weeks ago why human rights were not explicitly on the agenda of the Miami meeting, they replied, "Why, yes they are. A major topic of the meetings is building democracy." This attitude perpetuates the myth that a multiple-choice ballot and competing political parties are sufficient to protect human rights. But Colombia has been a democracy for years and yet 20,000 people have been killed in Colombia for political reasons alone since 1986. Brazil is a democracy and yet street children, homosexuals and prostitutes are regularly taken into custody and then disappear as part of the government's "social cleansing" of so-called undesirables. Democracy-building is certainly an admirable goal

but "democracy" and "good governance" are empty words if they are not grounded in protection of fundamental human rights.

And the second myth is that free trade alone will eventually bring with it respect for human rights. The fact is that, unless free trade agreements are accompanied by commitments to protect the rights of all people, increased trade may result in even more repression and violence against some citizens, the most notable of whom are trade unionists who attempt to represent labor's interests in a rapidly expanding market. Already in Colombia, for example, the largest trade union confederation reports that 500 union activists have been killed since 1985 and union leaders have been subjected to death threats, harassment and extrajudicial execution in Guatemala and El Salvador. If free trade zones are expanded and trade unions made illegal, workers and their leaders will become even more vulnerable.

And the third myth is that a nation's political stability may require that those who have committed human rights atrocities in the past not be prosecuted. The record of many of the nations of the Americas in this respect is absolutely atrocious. The best known example of course is the massacre at El Mozote, El Salvador, the perpetrators of which today walk free as do those responsible for the Cayara massacre in Peru. One stunning example of impunity comes again, unfortunately, from Colombia where Lieutenant-Colonel Luis Felipe Becerra, back in service to the military after being charged with participating in mass killings of banana plantation workers in 1988, was involved in the murder of thirteen people in the village of Riofrio in October, 1993, and received an honorable discharge from the Colombian military.

Furthermore, those members of the judiciary who have tried to bring human rights violators to justice have often found themselves then to be the target of terror. One striking example comes from Guatemala where three magistrates of the Third Chamber of the Court of Appeals who have been reviewing controversial human rights cases have received death threats, harassment and, in one case, been shot at.

Political leaders often argue that to prosecute perpetrators--particularly when they are in the military--will destabilize the country but the irony is that to permit violators to get away with torture and murder is the most certain way to insure that the people will lose faith in their government and eventually seek change.

These three myths--that democracy guarantees respect for human rights; that free trade inevitably brings with it improvements in human rights and that perpetrators need not always be prosecuted--these three myths undermine the credibility of those leaders participating in the Summit. Nor is the United States immune from human rights violations. Quite the contrary. More than 250 people, including nine juvenile offenders, have been executed in the United States since 1985 and some sixty new offenses made punishable by death, all in contravention of a worldwide trend towards the abolition of the death penalty.

So given all this, how can the people of the Americas, how can the media, best measure the success of the upcoming summit when it comes to human rights? Well, Amnesty International has outlined a series of recommendations in its "Message to the Peoples of the Americas." Here are a five of the most specific recommendations we are making. This is the standard against which we intend to judge President Clinton and his colleagues.

(1) The leaders of the hemisphere must make it explicitly clear that they will not tolerate continued human rights abuses in their countries. President Clinton should denounce impunity for perpetrators in his speech to the Summit and see that the issue is addressed in any documents which emerge from the meeting.

(2) The Summit must commit its participant nations to begin investigations of alleged human rights violations, to conduct trials and, where parties are found guilty, to secure punishment. Of critical importance, the Summit documents must speak specifically to the need to protect an independent judiciary from retribution when they hear and act on human rights crimes.

(3) The United States must commit itself to provide no safe haven for political killers and torturers and must agree that, if those accused of such crimes come to the United States, they will be prosecuted.

(4) The Summit must acknowledge the legitimate role of local human rights activists in the building of democracy. Activists have been targeted, "disappeared" and sometimes killed when they raise their voices for justice but a truly democratic society welcomes its dissenters, its witnesses of conscience, and the Summit must recognize such individuals as integral to a civil society.

(5) Finally the Summit should commit its participant nations to ratification of both the American Convention on Human Rights and the recently adopted Inter-American Convention on the Forced Disappearances of Persons and support for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, including, most importantly, agreement to abide by the decisions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. It is especially vital that the United States ratify both Conventions, offer its support to the Commission and recognize the authority of the Court.

The nations of the Americas are a critical point in their political and economic development. They must decide whether to settle for real action or pure air. They must decide whether they are buying justice or rhetoric. If they choose the latter in the misguided notion that it will advance their economic interests, they will have earned their "gold" at the expense of the tortured and the dead. Amnesty International will do all it can to see that the "sale" not go through.