

The Wire

August 2004 Vol 34 No. 07

AI Index: NWS 21/007/2004

Page 1

Still no place of safety

Tens of thousands of people who fled from the fighting in Chechnya are under increasing pressure to return, but many are too frightened to go

Many of the families who lost their homes when they were forced to leave Chechnya because of the armed conflict which began in 1999 are now living in appalling conditions in the neighbouring Russian Republic of Ingushetia.

Initially, many displaced Chechens lived in tent camps, but these have now all been closed down in an attempt by the Ingush authorities to make them go home. Some of the internally displaced families are still living in ruined factories and former farm buildings – which are not fit for human habitation – without adequate shelter or vital services such as water, gas and electricity.

The Ingush authorities say that it is safe to return to Chechnya, claiming that the situation has returned to normal. However, many who would like to return are afraid. They say that their greatest fear is that their children will be abducted during night raids and will “disappear” like so many others in Chechnya.

An AI delegation visited Ingushetia in March and June and met many internally displaced people. They were living in tents which by June had become unbearably hot and airless. Many of the children living in these conditions suffer from tuberculosis or other diseases which can be linked to the conditions in the tents and a poor diet. In one farm building, which previously housed diseased cattle, a strong smell of manure was still in the air. One woman told AI that most of the children had become ill since living there. She said that two of her children had died in the camp.

Sometimes the Ingush authorities promise to provide material for housing, but often the material is delivered and then taken away the next day. In some cases people were not allowed to move into houses built by aid agencies such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Before the closure of the tent camps, local and federal authorities cut off gas and electricity supplies in an attempt to force people to return to Chechnya.

Many of the human rights violations which have characterized the conflict in Chechnya are now spilling over into Ingushetia. In June, Chechen fighters attacked police and government targets in Ingushetia, reportedly killing 92 people. The next day Ingush government forces raided a poorly renovated cowshed where more than 100 people were living and forced them to leave by cutting off their water and electricity supplies.

There are frequent reports of the “disappearance” and killing of Ingush and Chechens in Ingushetia. There are also reports of harassment of those who speak out against the spread of violence.

One man told AI how he had been seized in Nazran earlier this year and taken to a military base. He said that he was tortured for several days until his relatives paid a ransom for his release. AI spoke to several families whose relatives had “disappeared” since the end of 2003.

One mother of seven children was detained by police while on a bus. Her 18-year-old daughter told AI how her mother had gone to sell food from her aid ration to pay for hospital treatment for her one of her daughters who had tuberculosis. For three days the mother was denied access to a lawyer and was accused of trying to take weapons to Chechnya. Her children said that her own bad health meant she would not have been able even to lift the weapon.

AI is seriously concerned that internally displaced people are being put under extreme pressure to return to the Chechen Republic although it is not safe there. They should be provided with adequate protection, shelter and humanitarian assistance and they should be given a real choice, either to stay in Ingushetia or go back to Chechnya.

Women activists under attack in Zimbabwe

“If the police arrest participants, put flowers on police station pavements to remind them that we came peacefully with love in our hearts.” Instruction by Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) to its members participating in a demonstration

Scores of Zimbabwean women took to the streets on 14 February 2003 – Valentine’s Day – to protest against the worsening situation in the country. This was the first public action by the newly formed women’s rights organization, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). Shortly after the marches began, many of the women were arrested; most were later released without charge but some were charged under the repressive Public Order and Security Act (POSA).

POSA gives the police sweeping powers, which they have used to intimidate and detain real or perceived opponents of the government. Since 2002, POSA has been used by the authorities to target human rights activists and to restrict rights to freedom of association and expression. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Zimbabweans have been arbitrarily arrested under POSA.

Despite the arrests, WOZA has continued to organize peaceful demonstrations, regularly taking to the streets in Harare, Bulawayo and other parts of the country. The price the women pay is repeated arrest and detention, often in poor and overcrowded conditions, for periods ranging from a few hours to several days. While in detention WOZA activists have reportedly been threatened and assaulted by police officers, who have also obstructed their access to lawyers.

Police have repeatedly attempted to identify and arrest WOZA leaders. In July 2003, following a WOZA protest against POSA, police tried to isolate and arrest one of the leaders, Jenni Williams. However, 46 other women insisted that they go with her. All 47 women were then charged under POSA with participation in an illegal gathering. Jenni Williams was also charged with organizing an illegal gathering. The women were later released on bail and are currently awaiting trial; they may face prison terms if convicted.

As repression of government critics intensifies ahead of Zimbabwe’s parliamentary elections (due in March 2005) WOZA is under increasing attack. In just one week in June, more than 100 women were arrested. On 16 June, 43 women were arrested while attending a private meeting. Police officers reportedly used whips to beat some of the women on the soles of their feet, before releasing them without charge. On 19 June more than 70 women were arrested in Bulawayo ahead of a demonstration to mark World Refugee Day. Police reportedly arrested many women in the area who had nothing to do with the planned demonstration. Eleven women were eventually charged with the minor offence of blocking the pavement.

AI has repeatedly called on the Zimbabwean authorities to repeal or amend legislation, such as POSA, which violates internationally recognized human rights; to end the political misuse of the police; and to ensure that policing in Zimbabwe upholds the human rights of all Zimbabweans.

Page 2

Argentina’s journalists face death threats and harassment

“Police beatings are very familiar to press photographers. They have already become part of the profession’s everyday reality.” Christian Frolich, photojournalist from the Buenos Aires newspaper *Crónica*

Eduardo Olivares, a journalist for *Radio Dimensión*, a radio station in San Luis Province, was beaten to the ground and kicked by members of the anti-riot squad from the provincial police as he covered a demonstration by municipal employees in March. The police had reportedly been openly hostile to journalists covering the event and had fired rubber bullets at them.

There have been numerous reports of Argentine journalists being physically assaulted by members of the security forces during demonstrations against the government's handling of the economic crisis since 2001. The economic collapse has had a devastating impact on most sectors of the population and many journalists have seen their own human rights violated as they have reported on issues that affect the human rights of their fellow citizens.

Journalists have found that, despite showing their accreditation, they are often deliberately targeted by police and the security forces.

Television, radio and print journalists often face threats, intimidation and physical violence when reporting the alleged corrupt activities of public officials.

Clara Britos, owner and editor of the monthly newspaper *La Tapa* in Buenos Aires Province, has frequently been intimidated and received death threats for her investigations into allegations of corruption involving local officials.

She received repeated phone calls in 2003, during which recordings of screams and gunshots were played and death threats were made against her children. In June 2003 a caller threatened to kill her son, saying: "Do you want to see him with a bullet in his chest...?" There was also an attempt to burn down her house while she, her husband and their four children were asleep inside, despite police guards being stationed in front of the house. They were woken by the smoke and managed to extinguish the fire.

Information from the authorities indicates that official complaints submitted by Clara Britos were investigated. However, no further information has been forthcoming and AI is not aware of their progress or outcome.

AI is concerned about the trend of intimidation and assault against journalists and their families in Argentina. AI is also concerned at the apparent lack of adequate investigation into attacks against the media. This lack of conclusive investigations creates a climate of impunity which undermines the legitimate role of journalists in objective, investigative reporting which should be protected by the authorities.

See *Argentina: Journalists: Press accreditation – the wrong credentials?* (AMR 13/005/2004).

[Picture caption] Dario Santillán is dragged from Avellaneda train station, Buenos Aires Province, June 2002. Sergio Kowalewski, a freelance photographer who took this photograph, received three phone calls on 29 June 2002 warning him that he and his family were going to be killed. The death threats are thought to relate to this photograph and others taken during demonstrations against Argentina's continuing economic crisis which took place in Avellaneda, three days earlier. The photographs, published in the Argentine press, show police involvement in the events leading to the killing of Dario Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki, two protesting unemployed workers. Sergio Kowalewski has also described how he saw a police officer shoot Dario Santillán "almost at point-blank range".

China exploits international 'war on terror' to repress Uighurs

In January last year, a young poet was reportedly arrested after he read a verse during a performance at a concert hall in Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). He was accused of "attacking official policy regarding ethnic minorities" and "destroying the unity between Uighur and Han", something which the authorities regarded as "terrorism in the spiritual form". No further information has become available about his fate, but AI is concerned at this apparent use of "terrorism" to justify the arrest of a peaceful poet with dissenting views.

Repression of alleged “separatists” and “religious extremists” has continued in the XUAR since the early 1990s. The Chinese government has long used the term “separatist” to refer to a broad range of activities, many of which amount to no more than peaceful opposition or dissent, or the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of religion.

AI released a report in July showing how China has used the international “war on terror” as a pretext to intensify repression in the region over the last three years and seeking to raise awareness about the plight of Uighur prisoners of conscience and asylum-seekers.*

One Uighur prisoner of conscience who remains behind bars is Rebiya Kadeer, aged 57, who used to be celebrated as a model businesswoman by the Chinese government; she was part of the official delegation to the UN World Conference on Women in 1995. Then in 2000 the mother of 11 was sentenced in a secret trial to eight years in prison for “providing secret information to foreigners”. It turned out she had sent publicly available local newspapers to her husband, a former political prisoner who went to live in the USA. Following international pressure from AI and others, her sentence was reduced by one year in March this year, but AI is continuing to call for her immediate and unconditional release.

Since the events of 11 September 2001, China has repackaged its repression of Uighurs as a fight against “terrorism” despite official claims that not one incident of explosion or assassination has taken place in the region in the last few years. The government has tightened restrictions on the religious rights of Uighurs, most of whom are Muslims. Tens of thousands of Uighurs are reported to have been detained over the last three years as suspected “separatists, terrorists or religious extremists”.

Many Uighurs have fled to neighbouring countries, such as Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Pakistan. But even then they are not safe, as the Chinese government puts pressure on such countries to send them back. In one recent case, Shaheer Ali was executed in China last year after being forcibly returned from Nepal even though he had been recognized as a refugee by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Nepal. While in Nepal, Shaheer Ali described eight months of torture in a XUAR prison in 1994, including beatings, electric shocks, and having metal nails pushed under his toenails in an attempt to make him confess to various offences. He had requested that this testimony be withheld until he was “in a safe place”.

*See *People’s Republic of China: Uighurs fleeing persecution as China wages its ‘war on terror’* (ASA 17/021/2004).

To take action on these cases go to the website: <http://asiapacific.amnesty.org>

Portuguese prisoners at risk of torture and ill-treatment

On 11 November 2003 Albino Libânio, a detainee in Lisbon Prison, asked again about a food package he was expecting which had not arrived. He behaved – according to a prison officer – in a disrespectful manner. Later that day he was taken to a cell known as “cell 80” to “calm down”. Sometime during the evening Albino Libânio was taken from “cell 80” to a hallway where some 10 to 15 prison officers were lined up in two rows. Albino Libânio was made to walk through them while being pushed, kicked and punched. Another prison officer approached the scene and noticed that a detainee was lying on the ground covering his head with his hands and surrounded by a group of prison officers. This officer took Albino Libânio back to his cell.

This case has highlighted concerns about torture and ill-treatment in the country’s prisons. A prison service report into the beating of Albino Libânio found that he had suffered multiple injuries and was unable to walk steadily as a result of a beating amounting to grave physical ill-treatment.

No medical assistance was given to Albino Libânio following the attack, which came to light the next morning when he told his visitors what had happened and they informed his lawyer. The lawyer reported the attack to the prison service and the Public Prosecutor. Albino

Libânio's injuries were then examined and photographed by prison service investigators. Albino Libânio has since been moved to a different prison.

"Cell 80" was used in Lisbon Prison for a number of different purposes, and as a result it was difficult to exercise control over its use. It was used to house inmates temporarily while in transit, when waiting to be taken to their visitors or to attend judicial proceedings; and for the separate detention of violent and vulnerable inmates. In addition, the prison service report suggested that prison officers sometimes used "cell 80" to isolate inmates they had targeted for assault. The report concluded that by placing Albino Libânio in this cell the attack on him had been facilitated, and that the use of this cell to detain him prior to the assault had been in breach of national legislation and of prison service and Lisbon Prison regulations.

AI has written to the Portuguese government outlining a number of concerns raised by this incident. The circumstances of the attack as described in the prison service report, and the refusal by virtually all the officers at Lisbon Prison to cooperate with the internal inquiry, expose systemic failures by the authorities to ensure that prison inmates are protected from torture and ill-treatment.

AI is also concerned that if Albino Libânio had not seen a visitor on the day after the attack, he would have been left without medical assistance despite his injuries and his injuries may never have been recorded as evidence of the assault. It has raised with the government the failure of the prison authorities to identify and prevent the potential for abuse of inmates arising from the use of "cell 80" as described in the prison service report.

Page 3

Worldwide Appeals

Bulgaria

Children in care home need help

Physical conditions for the children of Dzhurkovo's care home have considerably improved since the winter of 1997 when six children and one 18-year-old died from hypothermia and malnutrition. But clean sheets, warm dormitories and basic medical care are not sufficient for the 69 children of Dzhurkovo, a remote village in the Rodopi mountains. The lack of assessment, treatment and rehabilitation by therapists, psychologists and physicians is profoundly damaging to their development and deprives them of their fundamental right to life with dignity and respect.

Eighteen children have been diagnosed with Down's syndrome and 51 with cerebral palsy. Forty-three are considered "bedridden" and are provided with very little contact or activity. There are three "educators" for the entire institution but even they do not have appropriate training. In June when an AI delegate visited the institution, there was only one "educator", with a degree in chemistry, on duty for all "bedridden" children. Their individual activity plans and rehabilitation reports appeared to be superficial and aimed at complying with regulations rather than addressing the needs of the child concerned. One girl with Down's syndrome who was eight years old and had been observed three years earlier chewing the sides of her wooden cot was found, apparently still reduced to this state by inactivity and lack of attention. A specially equipped playground and a gym, as on the previous visit, did not appear to be in effective use.

The children of Dzhurkovo need appropriate developmental and educational programmes to help them develop their full potential and give them the chance of an independent and full life. This can only be achieved if they are moved from their remote mountain location and provided with appropriate facilities in a major urban centre where they will have access to the specialists they require.

Please write, calling on the authorities to move the children of Dzhurkovo to an urban centre to receive appropriate care, rehabilitation and education, and to take all steps to reintegrate the children into the community as appropriate.

Send appeals to: Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha, Dondukov Boulevard number 1, 1194 Sofia, Bulgaria. Fax: +359 (0)2 981 8170

Equatorial Guinea

Former exile held in isolation without charge

Weja Chicampo was taken away by a group of hooded people who forced their way into his home in Malabo on 4 March. They turned out to be security police who took him to the central police station in Malabo. A few days later he was transferred to Black Beach prison where he was put in a special cell and held incommunicado for several months. Although he has been allowed visits from his family once a week since mid-June, he is still held in isolation and is not allowed to mix with other prisoners or detainees.

Weja Chicampo has not been charged with any criminal offence. It appears that he was arrested for trying to revitalize the Movement for the self-determination of Bioko Island (MAIB), a political party founded in 1993 by the Bubi ethnic group, native to Bioko Island, part of Equatorial Guinea.

According to reports, Weja Chicampo was beaten and had his jaw broken when he was arrested. There are also unconfirmed reports that he has been tortured. He is thought to have been suffering from malaria at the time of his arrest but is not known to have received medical treatment either for this or for his broken jaw.

Weja Chicampo has been arrested several times before, the last time in 1998 following an attempted insurrection by members of the Bubi ethnic group including some members of MAIB. He was released without charge and went into exile in Spain. He returned to Equatorial Guinea in August 2003, following a call by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo for exiles to return to the country.

Please write, calling for Weja Chicampo to be released immediately unless charged with a recognizably criminal offence. Pending his release, call for the authorities to provide him with all necessary medical treatment.

Send appeals to: President General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Presidente de la República, Gabinete del Presidente de la República, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.
Fax: + 240 09 3313 or 3334 (Please note that the 0 before the 9 is part of the new code).

Turkmenistan

Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned

Jehovah's Witnesses Vepa Tuvakov and Mansur Masharipov were arrested in their home town of Dashoguz near the border with Uzbekistan in May and subsequently sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for refusing on conscientious grounds to serve in the army.

AI has received credible reports that conscientious objectors in Turkmenistan have been beaten while in prison and threatened with repercussions if they did not renounce their faith. In April, two conscientious objectors were reportedly threatened with death while held in Seydi labour camp in the east of Turkmenistan.

In Turkmenistan there is no civilian alternative for men who object to compulsory military service on grounds of conscience. Those who refuse conscription face imprisonment under criminal law. AI continues to receive reports of young men imprisoned in Turkmenistan solely for their refusal to serve in the army on religious grounds.

The human rights situation in Turkmenistan has been appalling for years. The government is extremely intolerant of dissent, and has severely limited civil and political liberties. Freedom

of religion has been severely restricted and members of minority religions continue to face harassment and intimidation. No independent political parties or human rights groups can operate freely in the country, while government opponents and civil society activists have been forced into exile or faced imprisonment and persecution.

As a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Turkmenistan has agreed to “consider introducing... various forms of alternative service, which are compatible with the reasons for conscientious objection, such forms of alternative service being in principle of a non-combatant or civilian nature, in the public interest and of a non-punitive nature” (Article 18.4 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document).

Please write, urging that Vepa Tuvakov and Mansur Masharipov be immediately and unconditionally released as they are prisoners of conscience held solely for refusing to serve in the army on religious grounds.

Send appeals to: President Niyazovu, Apparat Prezidenta, 744000 g. Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Fax +993 12 35 42 41/ 39 28 50

Algeria

Freedom of expression under threat

Hafnaoui Ghoul, a human rights activist and journalist, has been imprisoned since 24 May because he criticized local officials in the Algerian press.

A series of defamation suits were brought against him in a matter of weeks by local officials after he publicized concerns about human rights violations and alleged corruption and public mismanagement in the region of Djelfa. In one case, a court sentenced him to two months’ imprisonment and ordered him to pay a heavy fine after he accused a local official of being responsible for recent health scandals and called for an investigation. More than a dozen cases remain to be decided and he may face further prison sentences. AI considers Hafnaoui Ghoul to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for having peacefully exercised his right to freedom of expression, and calls for his immediate release.

Over the past year, freedom of expression has been markedly restricted in Algeria. In particular, there has been a steep increase in the number of court cases brought against journalists and newspaper editors in an apparent attempt to silence the privately owned press. Many of these are defamation cases filed against individual journalists who face prison sentences for reporting allegations of corruption or publicly criticizing officials. Under Algerian law, defamation is a criminal offence. Those found guilty of defaming state institutions may face prison terms of up to one year, in addition to fines of up to 250,000 Algerian dinars (approximately US\$3,200).

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Hafnaoui Ghoul and asking that no more criminal charges be brought against him for defamation of officials.

Send appeals to: M. Tayeb Belaiz, Ministre de la Justice, Ministère de la Justice, 8 Place Bir Hakem, 16030 El Biar, Alger, Algeria. Fax: +213 21 922956 / 921701

Update

Syria imprisons Internet users

‘Abdel Rahman al-Shaghouri (left) was sentenced to two and a half years’ imprisonment by Syria’s Supreme State Security Court on 20 June, on charges of “disseminating false information”, because of his use of the Internet. (See *Worldwide Appeal* January 2004.)

The charges relate to his e-mailing of articles which were mainly from the *Akhbar al-Sharq* Internet site, www.thisissyria.net. The Syrian authorities consider material on the site to be “detrimental to the reputation and security of the nation” and “full of ideas and views opposed to the system of government in Syria”.

'Abdel Rahman al-Shaghouri was arrested on 23 February 2003 and has been held incommunicado since then. He was reportedly beaten in custody before he was moved to Sednaya Prison, on the outskirts of Damascus, where he is now held. His lawyers were not allowed to see all the court documents relating to the case despite making repeated requests.

He is one of several people detained in Syria for exercising their right to freedom of expression through the Internet.

Mas'oud Hamid, a student, is imprisoned reportedly for "unlawful" use of the Internet. He was arrested in July 2003 while sitting an exam at Damascus University. It is believed that he is being held incommunicado in solitary confinement at 'Adra Prison, near Damascus. It seems he has been detained because he allegedly posted photos of a peaceful Kurdish demonstration in Damascus, during which seven Kurds were arrested, on the Internet site www.amude.com. The seven Kurds remain in prison.

Three others, Muhannad Qutaysh, his brother Haytham Qutaysh and Yahia al-Aws, are held in Sednaya Prison on similar grounds. They were arrested over 18 months ago, reportedly for sending articles to an electronic newspaper in the United Arab Emirates.

The Syrian Information Society and the General Directorate for Communications control the Internet in Syria. They block thousands of informational, human rights and other websites, particularly those interested in Syria. For instance, they have blocked the website of *Akhbar al-Sharq*, which specializes in news about Syria. They have blocked the website of the Syrian Human Rights Committee for several years and have recently blocked the e-mail provider (ISP) Hotmail.

To appeal on behalf of those mentioned here please write, calling for their immediate and unconditional release because they are detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Express concern that they may have been tortured while in detention.

Send appeals to: His Excellency President Bashar al-Assad, President of the Republic, Presidential Palace, Abu Rummaneh, Al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syria. Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Page 4

Civilian population is target of massacres in Colombia

Early in the morning of 15 June scores of heavily armed men entered a farm in the municipality of La Gabarra, Norte de Santander department. According to witnesses they overpowered the 34 peasant farmers living there. They tied their hands and feet with rope. They reportedly accused the farmers of collaborating with army-backed paramilitary forces. Then they shot them in the back of the head. Two children were among the dead. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have – according to press reports – claimed responsibility.

This massacre is just one of many to have taken place in recent months in the armed conflict which has ravaged Colombia for the last 40 years. It is yet another example of the blatant disregard for human rights shown by all the armed groups – guerrillas, army-backed paramilitaries and security forces. Such killings of defenceless civilians, as well as government policies that often violate international law, are encouraging the spiralling political violence in Colombia.

Five civilians, including a six-month-old baby, were shot dead in Cajamarca, Tolima department, on 10 April. They were killed during a military operation by troops from the Pijaos Battalion. The soldiers admitted firing on the peasants. According to the army, bad weather and the distance between themselves and the victims led to this error and "they were mistaken for the guerrillas who were lurking in the area".

Statements from soldiers involved in the incident were inconsistent. Ballistic tests indicate that at least one of the victims had been shot at a range of less than 60cm.

Seven police officers and four civilians died in Guaitarilla, Nariño department, in March. They were apparently killed by soldiers when they failed to stop at a checkpoint. According to the army, the policemen shot first at the soldiers who responded with gunfire. The victims appear to have received multiple gunshot wounds, some at close range. Information submitted to Congress indicates that the evidence may have been manipulated.

Investigations into the Guaitarilla and Cajamarca massacres are being undertaken by the military criminal justice system, which is renowned for protecting those responsible for human rights violations, preventing them from being tried or sentenced.

On 18 April, after several days of threats, paramilitaries reportedly raided the community of Bahía Portete, La Guajira department, whose inhabitants are members of the indigenous Wayúu people. They apparently questioned a number of children about the whereabouts of their parents, and killed at least 12 people. They are reported to have tortured a number of adults before killing them. Several of the victims were dismembered. The paramilitaries also abducted several people, including Diana Fince Uriana, Reina Fince Pushinana, aged 13, and another 11-year-old girl. It has not been possible to determine the exact number of people abducted. Their whereabouts, and whether they are dead or alive, remain unknown. More than 500 Wayúu sought refuge across the border in Venezuela.

Suspected paramilitaries also killed 11 peasant farmers in a number of communities in the municipality of Tame, department of Arauca on 19 May. The massacre took place during large-scale military operations in the area carried out by the Colombian army.

These massacres are examples of the tragic reality faced by the civilian population of Colombia every day. They demonstrate that the most vulnerable and defenceless people continue to be the target of all groups involved in the conflict. It is the civilian population which continues to suffer the pain of selective killings, “disappearances”, abductions and massacres. AI urges all those involved in the conflict to put an end to these crimes and, particularly, to respect the fundamental rights of the civilian population.

Young girls beaten and raped in Kosovo

“I was beaten and I was forced to have sexual intercourse ... if we were not willing, they just beat us and raped us.” A woman trafficked into Kosovo

The international community is responsible for the growth of a sex industry based on the abuse of women and girls from some of the poorest countries in Europe who are being trafficked into Kosovo.

Since the deployment in July 1999 of an international peacekeeping force (KFOR) and the establishment of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Kosovo has become a major destination country for women and girls trafficked into forced prostitution.

Although some women are abducted from their home country, many start the journey to Kosovo voluntarily, having been offered work – usually in western Europe – that they believe will enable them to break out of poverty or escape abuse. One young woman said, “A friend introduced me to a woman... she offered me a job abroad and said she would prepare a passport for me for free. I asked if the job was sex-related and she promised that it was not.” According to the International Organization for Migration, a majority of the women and girls from Moldova trafficked into Kosovo had been promised a job in Italy.

Young women and girls are often sold several times while in transit, for prices ranging from 50 to 3,500 euros. Once in Kosovo, they may be beaten and raped. Many are virtually imprisoned, working in bars and cafés during the day and “servicing” 10 or 15 clients each night after being locked up by the man they refer to as their “owner”. They are mostly too frightened to escape.

Some of them find that their promised wages – the reason they were willing to leave their homes – are never paid.

Despite some positive measures by the authorities, trafficked women and girls are often still treated as criminals. For example they are sometimes charged with prostitution following raids by police. If they are sick, they may be denied access to health care. They have no legal status and are denied their basic rights.

International personnel from UNMIK and KFOR enjoy general immunity from prosecution, unless explicitly waived by senior officials. The trafficking of women and girls will never end as long as the perpetrators go free and as long as civilian and military personnel are allowed to commit human rights violations with impunity.

AI called on the authorities in Kosovo to implement measures to end the trafficking of women and girls to, from and within Kosovo for forced prostitution. It also calls on the UN and NATO to ensure that any members of military and civilian peacekeeping forces suspected of criminal offences associated with trafficking are brought to justice.

Since AI's report was published, UNMIK has responded with a 38-page document in which it indicated that it would implement the majority of AI's recommendations.

AI has been involved in discussions at the invitation of the UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, and further collaboration is envisaged.

See *Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro): "So does it mean that we have the rights?" Protecting the human rights of women and girls trafficked for forced prostitution in Kosovo* (EUR 70/010/2004).

‘I feel I’m back home’: Wang Dan thanks AI

Wang Dan, one of the “most wanted” student leaders imprisoned in China following the 1989 pro-democracy crackdown in Tiananmen Square, came to London in June to talk to AI and to thank the organization for its help. “I think my case is a good example to show how effective AI can be,” he said.

Fifteen years ago, Wang Dan, a history student, joined other demonstrators calling on the government for an end to corruption and for political reform. Wang Dan had been involved in organizing “democracy salons” and a hunger strike.

On the night of 3/4 June 1989, the Chinese army opened fire on unarmed civilians demonstrating in Tiananmen Square, killing hundreds and arresting thousands. Wang Dan, who was not at the demonstration that day, told AI how he learned of the massacre when a fellow student came to their university with blood still on his hands. Realizing that he was at risk of arrest Wang Dan fled to southern China with many other student leaders.

Despite being named in 1989 on the government's “most wanted” list, Wang Dan chose to return to Beijing rather than escape into exile in Hong Kong. He was arrested in 1990 and sentenced to four years in prison, for “spreading counter-revolution propaganda”. He spent four months in solitary confinement.

After his release in 1993 Wang Dan continued to speak out in support of democracy and respect for human rights. He was rearrested in 1995 and sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges of “subversion”. Wang Dan was released on medical parole in April 1998 and exiled to the USA.

Unlike many other prisoners in China, Wang Dan said, he was never beaten while in prison, and was allowed the books he requested, although they were censored. He believes that this lenient treatment was the result of international pressure on his behalf, including the work of AI.

When asked about the situation in China today he said that the struggle between reformists and conservatives continues. He said that many high officials think that the events in Tiananmen Square were wrong and that the conservatives were using the 1989 pro-democracy movement as an excuse to attack reformists.

Wang Dan believes that rapid economic growth could bring social crisis in China in the next 10-15 years. He said that in a society with no freedom of information, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could play an important role in bringing about reforms in all sectors of civil society. However, at the moment there is little expertise in forming NGOs which are independent of the government in China. He urged AI to focus not just on the government, but to encourage and support the development of independent NGOs to help strengthen civil society in China.

Wang Dan is currently studying at Harvard University in the USA. He cannot return to China because his passport has run out and the Chinese authorities will not renew it.

Wang Dan thanked AI for its support over the years and encouraged members to continue to put pressure on the Chinese government. As his own story shows, AI's work can make a difference to those who risk their own freedom in the struggle for human rights in China.