



Amnesty INTERNATIONAL

November 1999 Vol. 29 No. 6

NEWS

AFGHANISTAN

**AFTER 20
YEARS, NO
END IN
SIGHT TO
AFGHAN
TERROR**

EVERY THREE HOURS or so, another child is blown up in Afghanistan. The legacy of super-power involvement in Afghan politics is not only a brutal civil war, but also around 10 million landmines.

The scale of human suffering in Afghanistan is hard to measure, difficult to contemplate and impossible to comprehend. More than one million Afghan men, women and children have been killed. The devastation has contributed to the deaths of an estimated four million children from hunger and disease.

Next month marks 20 years of conflict. For a decade, Soviet and Afghan government troops fought against armed Mujahideen fighters backed by the USA, its European allies, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The communist government finally collapsed in 1992, but then the various Mujahideen groups started fighting each other. Afghanistan plunged into lawlessness. At the end of 1994, a new political and military force – the Taliban – emerged. It now controls around 80 per cent of Afghanistan.

No one has been able to escape the violence, and the children of Afghanistan bear the emotional, as well as the physical scars. A UNICEF report from Kabul in 1997 revealed that almost all had seen acts of violence, three quarters had lost a close relative and 90 per cent believed they would die during the conflict.

Thousands of children have died in the rubble of their bombarded homes and schools. Girls, and sometimes boys, have in the past been raped and abducted by local warring commanders, either for their own sexual purposes or to be sold into prostitution.

Education has been disrupted as schools have been destroyed and teachers forced to flee. In recent years the Taliban has banned education for girls and prevented female teachers from working.

Increasingly, the violence appears to be directed at particular ethnic groups. Taliban guards are reported to have systematically killed thousands of ethnic Hazara civilians after taking over the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif in August 1998. "They shot my son twice... he died on

the spot. He was just 19." A Hazara woman, now sheltering in Pakistan, described how her husband and son were shot dead by Taliban guards. People were killed in their homes, in the streets, or taken away at night to be executed. Women, children and the elderly were shot while trying to escape. Similar stories of systematic ethnically based killings emerged from the province of Bamiyan in May 1999.

For the civilian population of Afghanistan, who have taken no part in the fighting, the nightmare goes on. Children, women, members of ethnic minorities, human rights defenders and refugees are all targeted. Outside interference in Afghan politics has fuelled the conflict, yet other countries are doing little or nothing to stop the suffering. It is time they started to use their influence over the warring factions to promote greater respect for human rights, and to contribute the necessary sums for vital UN relief and development work.





Members of AI Germany demonstrating against the death penalty

USA CAMPAIGN

CLINTON TELLS AI, 'I'M GRATEFUL FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP'

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL's year-long campaign against human rights violations in the USA, "Rights for All", entered its final phase in October 1999.

Thanks to the efforts of AI activists in all regions of the world, our concerns resonated throughout the country. In a letter to AI, President Bill Clinton said: "Protecting the human rights of all Americans and those beyond our border remains one of my highest priorities. As we continue working toward this goal, I'm grateful for your leadership."

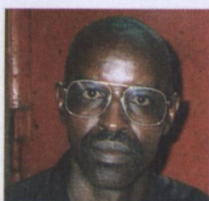
Despite these words, the US authorities have yet to address many of AI's concerns. There have, however, been several important advances over the last year in some of the issues highlighted by the campaign.

Police brutality was given an unprecedented profile countrywide, with AI holding a series of widely publicized meetings to highlight the issue. In June President Clinton made a speech condemning the "deeply corrosive practice of racial profiling" (where police target motorists from ethnic minorities when carrying out searches for drugs) at a discussion on the topic that included

members of the federal government, civil leaders and police.

Campaigners for women's rights were pleased to receive the long-overdue news that several states had introduced legislation to protect female inmates from sexual abuse by guards, and that other states had amended their policies regarding use of restraints on pregnant female prisoners. After reading AI's report, *The findings of a visit to Valley State Prison for Women, California*, the Head of the Department of Corrections in California wrote: "Your organization's valuable findings and recommendations are considered when implementing new policies and procedures for female inmates... I look forward to continued cooperation with AI."

There is little doubt that US authorities have felt considerable discomfort at the scrutiny they have been receiving from AI members across the world. One US activist told AI, "It gives us endless glee and a measure of hope to have our politicians and prison administrators receive [protest] letters from all over the world... We appreciate your work as never before."



RWANDA

DEATH ROW INMATE RELEASED

LÉONIDAS NDIKUMWAMI, who spent over two years under sentence of death after an unfair trial, has been released from prison following his acquittal.

He was among the first wave of people to be tried in Rwanda for participation in the genocide which claimed as many as one million lives in 1994. His death sentence was passed during a January 1997 trial at which he was denied access to a lawyer.

In May 1997 the Court of Appeal ordered further investigations into the charges against him, but he had to wait two years for the final verdict. During this time 22 other people were publicly executed for their part in the genocide – several had been tried at around the same time as Léonidas Ndikumwami.

He was acquitted on 28 May 1999 on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence of his participation in the

genocide. He was finally released on 7 July and has now returned to Burundi, his home country.

Léonidas Ndikumwami, who was the subject of an Urgent Action and a May 1997 *Worldwide Appeal*, has since expressed his gratitude to all those who participated in AI's action. He said that the knowledge that the organization was acting on his behalf had been a great source of comfort to him during his time in prison. He wished AI success in its campaign for an end to the use of the death penalty worldwide.

BELARUS

THE COST OF OPPOSING A PRESIDENT

WITH THE LEGITIMACY of the Belarus government under sustained fire, the country's authorities have been using increasingly draconian measures to crack down on opposition activists.

In the eyes of the Belarusian opposition and a large part of the international community, Belarus President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's tenure in office officially came to an end in July 1999. He refused to stand down, however, arguing that a November 1996 referendum extended his presidency until 2001. The opposition argue that this referendum was not freely held, and violated the constitution.

Their protests have met with stubborn and often violent resistance. Those involved in the unofficial, opposition-organized, May 1999 presidential elections have been particularly targeted. Former Prime Minister Mikhail Chigir, who would have stood as a candidate, was arrested in March. In May Yury Zakharenko, former Minister of the Interior, "disappeared".

As opposition protests continued into July, AI received reports of several hundred arrests of peaceful political activists. Oleg Volchek, chairman of the committee investigating Yury Zakharenko's "disappearance", was arrested and beaten unconscious at a Minsk police station on 21 July. The next day, human rights activist and former member of parliament Valery Schukin was arrested and sentenced to 10 days' imprisonment.

The Belarusian Criminal Code – and in particular the charge of slandering a public official – has been used as a tool to silence and intimidate those who have dared to oppose the authorities. Irina Halip, editor of an independent newspaper, was arrested on 22 July for publishing an allegedly slanderous article. Since December 1998, prominent human rights lawyer Vera Stremkovskaya has been charged on three occasions with this same offence.

AI calls on the Belarusian authorities to release all prisoners of conscience, and to immediately cease the intimidation of members of Belarus' peaceful opposition.

Police blocking path of demonstrators, Minsk, Belarus, July 1999



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(Front)
Munitions expert explains shells, rockets and the elimination of mines to Afghan children in Kabul, Afghanistan. © AP

WORLDWIDE appeals

CHINA

POLITICAL ACTIVISTS TARGETED FOR REPRESSION

ZHA JIANGUO and GAO HONGMING's trial before the Beijing No. 1 Intermediate People's Court in August 1999 lasted just three hours. During this time they were sentenced to nine and eight years' imprisonment respectively.

They are just two of those who have been caught up in the Chinese authorities' clamp-down on dissidents, religious and other activists – a campaign which intensified in the lead-up to the 50th anniversary in October of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Both men were sentenced under harsh "national security" provisions which were added to the Criminal Law in 1997 and are in breach of

international standards. Both had been active in calling for justice for those killed in the events around Tiananmen Square in June 1989, and in supporting other dissidents.

Gao Hongming and Zha Jianguo were both members of the Chinese Democratic Party (CDP), the most prominent of many unofficial groupings that are emerging throughout China. In July 1999 prison sentences were given to three other CDP members: Yue Tianxiang (10 years), Guo Xinmin and Wang Fengshan (two years each) for attempting to set up a workers' rights organization. Two further CDP members were sentenced in August: She Wanbao

received 12 years' imprisonment for "subverting state power" and Liu Xianbin received 13 years on charges relating to "subversion".

✉ Please appeal for all the above-named men to be immediately and unconditionally released.

Send your letters to: ZHU Rongji Zongli, Guowuyuan, 9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie, Beijingshi 100032, People's Republic of China (fax: c/o Ministry of Communications, + 8610 6 529 2345).



Zha Jianguo (above) and Gao Hongming (top)

UNITED KINGDOM/NORTHERN IRELAND

'OFFICIAL COLLUSION' IN KILLING OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

PATRICK FINUCANE, an outspoken human rights lawyer, was in his kitchen with his wife and children in February 1989 when two hooded gunmen burst in and shot him 14 times. Ten years on, his family are still awaiting an independent inquiry into his death.

A confidential report handed to United Kingdom (UK) and Irish governments in February 1999 alleged that members of the intelligence branches of the police and the army actively colluded with Loyalist paramilitaries in Pat Finucane's death.

Although the authorities have known about this for the last nine or 10 years, they have refused to bring any

prosecutions, contributing to allegations of an official cover-up. These fears were heightened in April when a senior UK police officer announced a criminal investigation into the killing of Pat Finucane amid concerns that this was intended as a substitute for an independent judicial inquiry.

Concern about systematic intimidation and harassment of lawyers in Northern Ireland has been raised for years by AI and other non-governmental organizations. In a report published last year, the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers concluded that the Northern Ireland police force was engaged in activities

"which constitute intimidation and harassment" of lawyers, and called for an independent investigation into these practices.

✉ Please write, urging the UK government to implement the Special Rapporteur's recommendation for an independent inquiry into the killing of Patrick Finucane. Ask also that it institutes an independent judicial inquiry into allegations of intimidation of defence lawyers.

Send letters to: The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA, United Kingdom (fax: + 44 171 925 0918).



Patrick Finucane

TUNISIA

PERSECUTION OF GOVERNMENT OPPONENT CONTINUES

ABDELMOUMEN BELANES has been sentenced to a total of five and a half years' imprisonment in the latest chapter of his persecution by the authorities for his political beliefs.

His arrest in February followed a depressingly familiar pattern. His wife told AI how the police beat him in front of her before taking them both to Bouchoucha police station. Again he was badly beaten on his legs and feet – they were already damaged from the torture he suffered during his detention in 1995.

His wife was subsequently released, but Abdelmoumen Belanes was charged with having links with a criminal gang and, on 17 August 1999, after a grossly

unfair trial, he was sentenced for his association with the *Parti communiste des ouvriers tunisiens* (PCOT), Tunisian Workers' Communist Party.

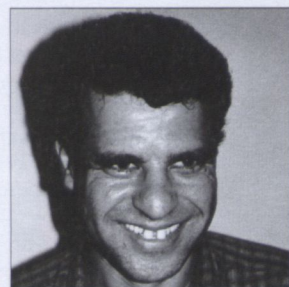
Abdelmoumen Belanes, a former prisoner of conscience, was first imprisoned for membership of an unauthorized left-wing party in 1992. In March 1997 he was arrested and charged with disturbing public order and sentenced in April 1997 to one year's imprisonment. He was released in March 1998.

Government opponents and critics face systematic repression in Tunisia. Over the past year thousands have been detained for the peaceful expression of their beliefs. They are often tortured

or ill-treated, especially in the days immediately after arrest, when they are held in secret detention.

✉ Please write, asking for Abdelmoumen Belanes' immediate and unconditional release, and expressing your concern at the imprisonment and harassment of government critics in Tunisia.

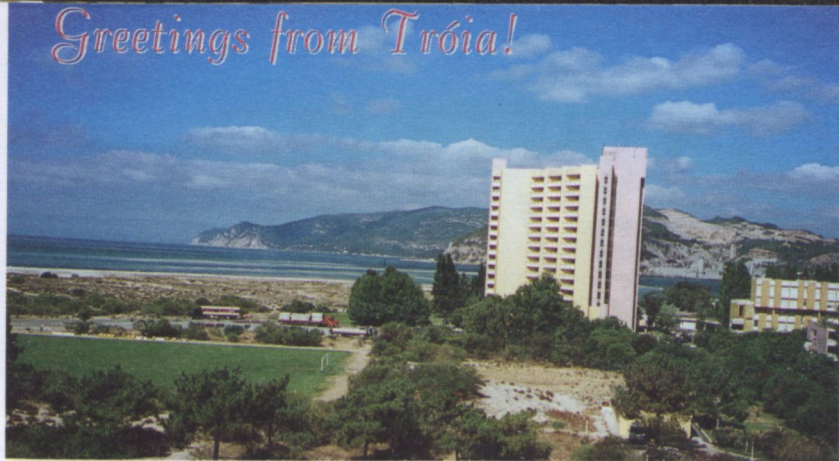
Send appeals to: M. Abdallah Kallel, Minister of Justice, Ministre de la Justice, Ministère de la Justice, 31 Boulevard Bab Benat, 1006 Tunis, Tunisia (fax: + 216 1 568 106).



Abdelmoumen Belanes

Remember:
AI members should
not work on cases
from their own
countries.

Greetings from Tróia!



A POSTCARD FROM AI'S INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING...

Dear AI members,
Greetings from Portugal!

It was here that the seeds were sown for the creation of Amnesty when the unjust imprisonment of two students so enraged lawyer Peter Benenson he had to take action. Now, almost 40 years on, I can't think of a more fitting place in which to help shape the future of the movement.

Over the past few days, the sandy peninsula of Tróia has been host to over 400 delegates from AI sections around the globe attending AI's biennial International Council Meeting (ICM).

The ICM, which was opened by the President of Portugal, approved both AI's strategic plan and budget for the next four years. AI now has extra funds to highlight human rights violations against women, children and refugees; to campaign for an end to impunity; to enhance the diversity of our movement; and for an extra fundraising push.

There was perhaps no greater motivation to take us forwards than the

words of delegates from Tunisia, Sierra Leone, Venezuela, Algeria and Togo, all of whom have faced danger and intimidation on a daily basis.

ICMs are about democracy and decision-making; they are about talking about the issues that bind us all together. The hours were long and discussions intensive, but this was a wonderful chance for AI members to meet each other directly – we were particularly pleased to welcome delegates from AI structures in Yemen, Albania and Bolivia, all at their first ICM. Some form of communication was also reached through the language of football, the global sport; ours may not have been a "beautiful game", but enthusiasm and (some) skill were apparent as Europe overcame the Rest of the World 9-3 in a thrilling contest.

I'm off for a bit of much-needed sleep...

Best wishes,

A very bruised member of the
International Secretariat

TOGO CRACK-DOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES the Togolese security forces have enjoyed complete impunity for grave human rights violations including extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", arbitrary arrests and torture.

In May 1999, as part of its campaign to expose this pattern of violations to the world, AI launched a report, *Togo: Rule of terror*. The Togolese authorities reacted violently to the report, calling it a "pack of lies" and announcing that they would sue AI. Local media was banned from publishing excerpts, and a high-level AI mission was prevented from entering Togo.

In the resulting crack-down, human rights defenders in Togo, including AI members, have been harassed and detained by the authorities. Some have been forced into hiding, while others have fled the country with their



Ameen Ayodele

families. Ameen Ayodele, a member of AI Nigeria, was arrested at the border of Ghana and Togo and held in solitary confinement, naked and deprived of food, for nine days. He told AI how he was beaten and tortured, and how guards threatened to execute him.

Nestor Tengué and François Gayibor, two leading members of the *Association togolaise pour la défense et la promotion des droits de l'homme*, and Antoine Koffi Nadjombe, a Togolese AI member, were arrested in May. The three men were accused of sending false information about human rights violations in Togo to international human rights organizations, including AI. They were provisionally released on 18 June, but the charges against them still stand while the investigation into the case continues.



Nestor Tengué

You can help by urging the authorities to drop all charges against Nestor Tengué, François Gayibor and Antoine Koffi Nadjombe, calling for immediate guarantees for the safety of AI members and other human rights activists in Togo. Write to: Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma, Président de la République, Palais Présidentiel, Avenue de la Marina, Lomé, Togo (fax: 00 228 21 1897, e-mail via: www.republicoftogo.com).

MALAYSIA GOOD NEWS!

LIM GUAN ENG (*AI News* Sept 1999) has been released. However, AI continues to call for his conviction to be overturned so that he can again practise as an accountant and re-enter parliament. Thanks to all who sent appeals.

GUATEMALA

MOTHER OF 'DISAPPEARED' CHILDREN'S QUEST FOR THE TRUTH

ROSAURA AND GLENDA were staying at their grandfather's house in Guatemala City when their mother Adriana came to collect them. She found only army and police officers.

Hours before, witnesses had seen nine-year-old Rosaura and 10-year-old Glenda being forced, crying and begging for help, into a vehicle by four plain-clothed armed men. Also abducted were three other members of their family, Rosa de Portillo, Edilsa Guadalupe Alvarez Morales, and 18-month-old Alma Argentina Portillo, a half-sister of Adriana. That day the girls' grandfather, Adrian Portillo Alcantara, was abducted from his office.

These events took place on 11 September 1981, during the Guatemalan security forces' "counter-insurgency" campaign in which as many as 100,000 people were estimated to have been killed or to have "disappeared". People involved with opposition groups, like the Portillo family, often found themselves singled out by the security forces.

None of the six members of the family has been seen since. Although Adriana returned to her own house in Jutiapa, she often went back to Guatemala City to roam the streets, looking for her

children. For over 15 years she remained silent about the "disappearances", in fear for her own safety and that of her husband and other children.

It was only after the signing of Guatemala's Peace Accords in December 1996 that Adriana came forward to publicize her family's story, telling reporters, "The worst thing which could happen to me is never finding out what happened – this is the perfection of torture."

The family's case is mentioned in the February 1999 report of Guatemala's Historical Clarification Commission (a body established under the Peace Accords), which concluded that forced "disappearance" was systematic practice during Guatemala's civil conflict. However, no investigation into their "disappearance" has yet taken place.

You can help by asking for information about the fate of the above-named members of the Portillo family. Write to: S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen, Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala (fax: +502 221 4537/230 1508, e-mail: alvaroarzu@guate.net).



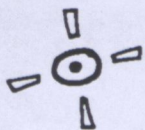
Glenda



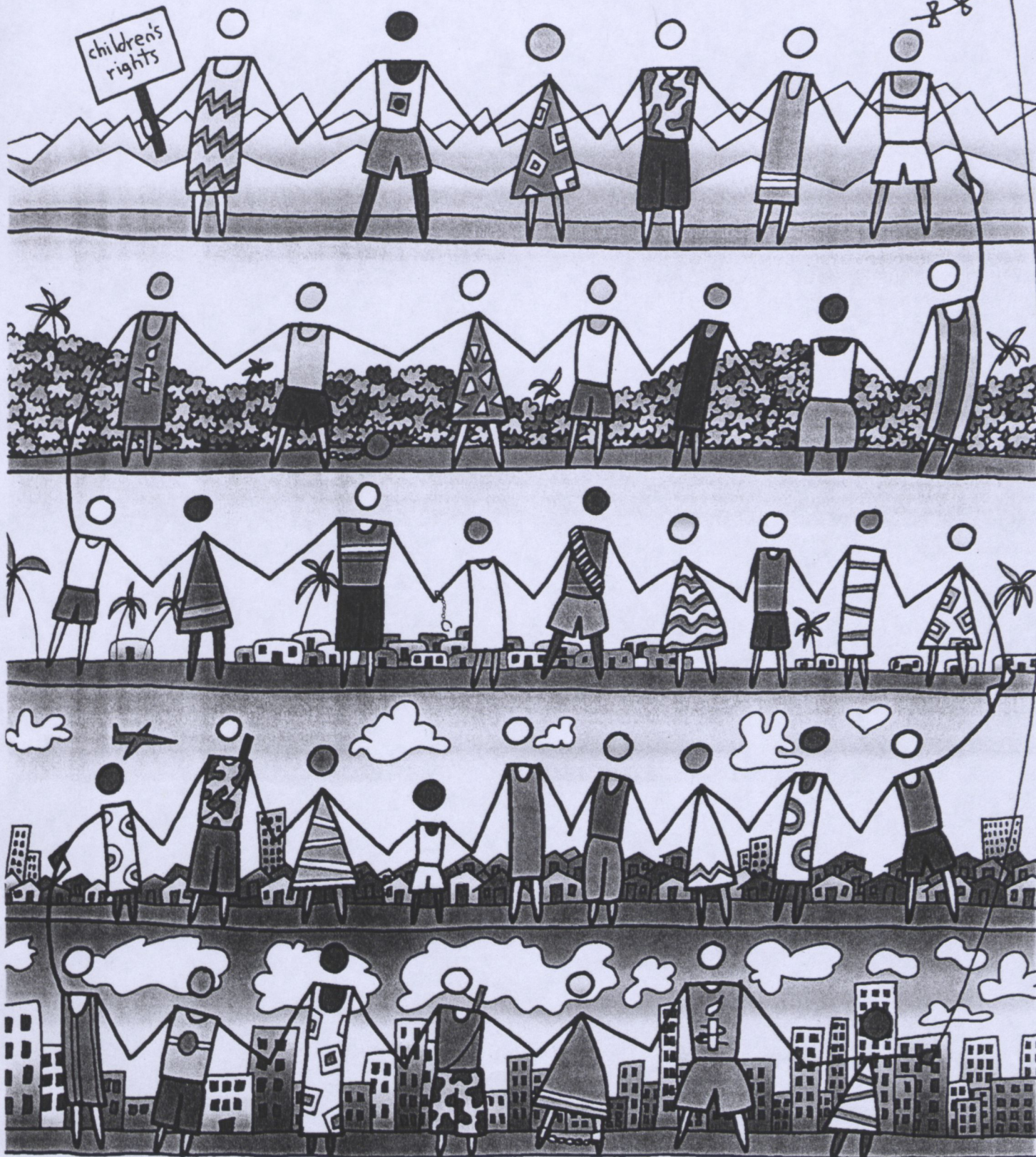
Rosaura



Alma



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Amnesty International, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom. Website: <http://www.amnesty.org>


**children's
action '99**

FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

BURUNDI

Children accused of 'rebellion' arbitrarily detained and tortured

Odette Nzeyimana, a 16-year-old girl, and Budari, a 13-year-old boy, have been held in Mpimba Prison, Bujumbura, for more than seven months. Like many of the other children held with them, they have been accused of collaboration with armed opposition groups. Many are unaware of the offence they are alleged to have committed, and only very few have been tried. Children are also being held alongside adults, putting them at an increased risk of violence.

Both Odette and Budari are reported to have been tortured in detention. Odette was forced to undress and remain naked for hours in front of members of the security forces.

You can help by writing to the Burundian government, urging them to put an immediate end to the arbitrary detention and torture of children in Burundi, and to investigate the cases of Odette and Budari.

Send faxes to: Terence Sinunguriza, Ministre de la Justice (00257 222148); and to: Eugène Nindorera, Ministre des Droits de la Personne Humaine (00257 217549).

MYANMAR

'I would like to go to school again'

Thirteen-year-old "Mi Mi" spent her days working for the military in Nwa La Bo relocation centre, Loikaw township, where she cut grass and carried heavy stones used for road-building.

Sixteen-year-old "Ma Aye" worked in a military outpost near Paw Tha He village, building fences and military barracks.

They are just two members of Myanmar's ethnic minorities who have been taken from their home villages by Myanmar's military government and forced to work against their will on so-called development projects. "I would like to go to school again", "Mi Mi" told Amnesty International.

Both girls come from the Karenni ethnic minority. They are among thousands of men, women and children belonging to Myanmar's ethnic minorities who have been forcibly used by the Myanmar authorities as unpaid labour.

You can help by calling on the Myanmar government to stop the system of forced labour, and in particular the use of children.

Write to: Lt Gen. Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1, State Peace and Development Council, c/o Ministry of Defence, Signal Pagoda Road, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.

COLOMBIA

The death of innocence

There are currently estimated to be at least 6,000 child soldiers in Colombia.

They are used by armed opposition groups as advance troops, and as a result are often killed in combat. Although the Colombian army has taken steps to end its recruitment of child soldiers, army-backed paramilitary forces frequently abduct children – some reportedly as young as eight years old – to use in battle. All sides continue to use children to gather intelligence.

The use of child soldiers has only added to the cycle of violence by brutalizing a new generation.

You can help exclude children from Colombia's conflict by urging the Colombian President to prevent anyone under the age of 18 from taking part in the conflict, and to promote the recovery and reintegration into society of all children who have been involved in the armed conflict.

Write to: Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia (fax: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351).

Send copies to the People's Ombudsman: Dr. José Fernando Castro Caycedo, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo, Calle 55 No. 10-32, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia (fax: 57 1 346 1225/285 6908).

If the governments named on this page had kept the promises they made to their own people and to the international community, none of these tales of suffering and injustice would ever have happened.

Sixteen-year-old Lal Jamilla would still be alive; Sohrab, Salar and Sardar would have their freedom. "Mi Mi" and "Ma Aye" would not have been forced to trade their education for unpaid labour; Romani children in Central Europe would not have been persecuted because of their ethnic background.

Odette and Budari would have escaped torture, while future generations in Burundi and Colombia would have been excluded from the bitter conflicts that have been tearing their countries apart.

Their rights should have been guaranteed because they, like 96 per cent of the world's children, live in countries that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention, founded on the notion of the "best interests" of the child, seeks to protect children by laying out fundamental principles such as the right to protection from torture and abuse, to education, to freedom from discrimination, and to protection from armed conflict and exploitation. It is the most widely accepted human rights treaty in history, with only Somalia and the USA failing to ratify it.

It is 10 years since the Convention was adopted by the UN. Yet children across the world continue to be routinely denied their rights. Why? Because not enough pressure is put on governments to make the rights contained within the Convention an everyday reality in their countries. Be part of AI's campaign to make governments take their commitments to children's rights seriously, and take action on these cases now.

IRAN

Children held in exchange for their father's freedom

The Iranian military are holding three children and their mother hostage in an attempt to force the children's father to return to Iran.

The father, an air force pilot, fled Iran with a military helicopter in May 1995, fearing his arrest on political charges if he stayed in the country. Shortly afterwards, his wife Soheila Bigzadeh and their three sons, Sohrab, Salar and Sardar – then aged 14, 13 and six – were arrested. The family were reportedly held under armed guard until late 1996, after which they were transferred to an army camp in Esfahan.

The family now live under constant surveillance and are escorted by guards whenever they leave the camp. They have still not received official notification of why they are being detained.

You can help by calling on the government of Iran to release Soheila Bigzadeh and her children Sohrab, Salar and Sardar.

Write to: His Excellency Hojjatolislam Val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran.

PAKISTAN

"Traditional values" and the abuse of children's rights

Millions of women and children suffer human rights abuses in Pakistan because of traditional perceptions of honour. And every year, hundreds of those who have supposedly transgressed social norms are the victims of honour killings. Their killers are rarely prosecuted, but even when they are convicted they frequently receive light sentences because of the judiciary's bias against women.

Sixteen-year-old Lal Jamilla Mandokhel was repeatedly raped in March 1999. Her uncle filed a complaint about the incident with the police, and police officers detained her attacker. Lal Jamilla was handed over to her tribe. She was shot dead on orders of her tribe's council of elders, who decided it was the only way to overcome the shame she had brought on them.

You can help by writing to your government's ministers for foreign affairs and for aid and overseas development, expressing your concern about the honour killings of children in Pakistan and asking that they urge the Pakistan government to introduce meaningful legal and educational reforms to protect the children of Pakistan.

CENTRAL EUROPE

Born as second-class citizens

Fourteen-year-old "Yosef" was arrested in an early morning police raid on Romani homes in the Slovak village of Hermanovci in October 1998. Officers locked him in the boot of a car to take him to a police station, where they kicked him and beat him with truncheons. He was interrogated without a lawyer or family member present, and was reportedly coerced into making a confession.

Fifteen-year-old "István" was hit in the face and racially insulted by police officers in Hajdúhadház police station, in Hungary, in March 1999.

Reports of police brutality against Romani children such as "István" and "Yosef" are numerous throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Yet governments across Europe have failed to ensure that human rights violations against Roma are properly investigated.

You can help by writing to the embassies and consulates of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia in your country, urging them to protect Romani children and suggesting that a police education program could be one way to achieve this.

the
future
starts
here

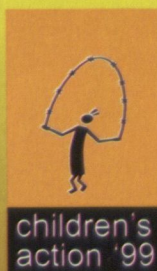
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celebrates 10 years of the
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children's
action '99