



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1989 VOLUME XIX • NUMBER 11



Bede-Mariam Mekonnen, before his arrest in 1974

ETHIOPIA

Freedom for prisoners of conscience

Three grandsons of former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie have been released after 15 years' detention without trial.

Bede-Mariam, Michael and Wossen-Seged Mekonnen—the last members of the former royal family still imprisoned—were among many prisoners of conscience released in an amnesty on 2 September 1989. The amnesty freed 900 prisoners, including 87 political prisoners. AI has welcomed the releases.

Several women prisoners of conscience detained since 1980 were freed — Namat Issa, whose son, Amonsissa, stayed with her after being born in prison; Tsehai Tolessa and Martha Kumsa; Zegeye Asfaw, former Minister of Law and Justice, and Berhanu Dinka, formerly Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, detained in 1986.

Many other prisoners whose cases were described in an AI report issued in August 1989, *Political Imprisonment in Ethiopia*, were also released.

■ In early September the government announced the establishment of a military tribunal to try 170 generals and other officers arrested after an unsuccessful coup attempt on 16 May 1989. No date was set for the trials. □

SAUDI ARABIA

Kuwaitis executed in public

Sixteen of the 29 Kuwaiti nationals tried by a Shari'a court on charges connected with two bomb explosions in Mecca in July were sentenced to death and publicly executed by beheading on 21 September.

Four others were sentenced to prison terms and flogging: Yahya Qamber 'Ali al-Ja'far received 20 years' imprisonment and 1,500 lashes to be given in 30 instalments; and Muhammad 'Abbas Baqer, Mahmud 'Abdullah Hussein al-Kadhim and Hussein Habib 'Abbas Hussein each received 15 years' imprisonment and 1,000 lashes in 20 instalments. Nine were acquitted and released.

Some of the Kuwaitis were allegedly tortured while in detention. Two of these—Sayyid 'Adnan 'Abdul-Samad and Hassan Habib al-Salman—were reportedly admitted to Riyadh's military hospital for treatment. They were later acquitted and released.

In early September AI urged the Saudi authorities to investigate the allegations of torture and sought assurances that the detainees were being treated humanely and had

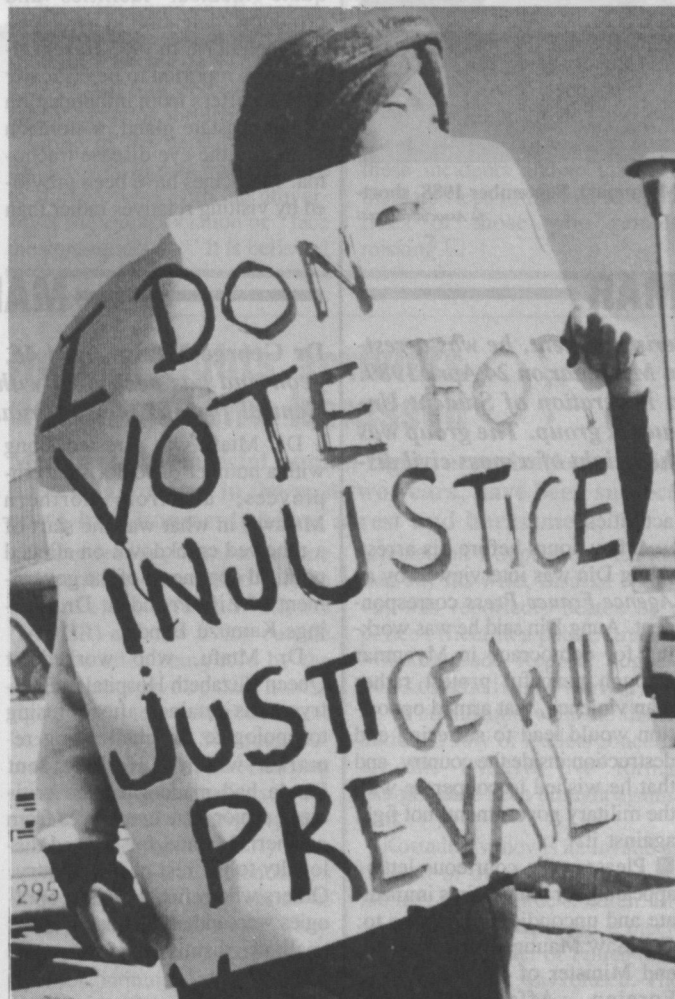
access to relatives and lawyers.

AI expressed deep regret at the execution of the 16 and urged that the floggings not be carried out as they constitute a gross violation of international law prohibiting cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

■ Ten people convicted of criminal charges were beheaded on 29 September. Six found guilty of kidnapping and sexual abuse of minors, highway robbery and drinking alcohol were executed in Riyadh. Four were convicted of murder and executed in Al-Baha. □

STOP PRESS

Banned: AI's November 1988 report *Turkey: Human rights denied* has been banned by the Turkish authorities. So have the March and May 1987 issues of AI's *Newsletter*. Importing or distributing these publications is an offence punishable by up to one year's imprisonment.



A protester urges people to boycott South Africa's September elections (See page 8) © Associated Press

USA

Death sentence commuted

Two weeks before Ronald Monroe's scheduled execution on 30 August, the Governor of Louisiana commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment without parole.

The case had attracted widespread publicity because of doubts about Ronald Monroe's guilt. A borderline mentally retarded black man with no previous criminal record or history of violence, Monroe was convicted in 1980 of stabbing to death a neighbour. Defence lawyers presented evidence suggesting that the victim's ex-husband was a far more likely suspect.

Announcing his decision to commute the death sentence, Governor Roemer said: "In an execution in this country, the test ought not to be reasonable doubt. The test ought to be is there any doubt." □

CAMPAIGN FOR PRISONERS OF THE MONTH



Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In *no* circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.



Pro-democracy march in Burma (now Myanmar), September 1988, shortly before martial law was introduced

© Associated Press

MYANMAR

Aung Din: a 26-year-old engineering student, he was arrested by the martial law authorities in Myanmar on 24 April 1989. He is a leader of the All-Burma Federation of Student Unions, the country's best-known student group. The group was founded on 28 August 1988, at the height of a mass civil disobedience campaign.

In 1988 extensive civil unrest erupted in Myanmar (then Burma) after 26 years of military domination of the political process. Largely peaceful street demonstrations, mostly led by students, called for an end to one-party rule by the Burma Socialist Programme Party of U Ne Win, a retired army general.

On 18 September 1988 the army declared martial law over the whole country. The activities of opposition groups were subsequently suppressed by the use of martial law orders and emergency and preventive detention laws. After sporadic arrests in late 1988 and early 1989, the tempo of arrests increased as legal opposition groups attempted to step up their

activities.

A few hours before his arrest, Aung Din was interviewed by an *Agence France Press* correspondent. Aung Din said he was working for democracy in Myanmar through peaceful protest rather than violence, that armed opposition would lead to suffering and destruction inside the country, and that he wished to cooperate with the military government, not fight against it.

■ Please write courteous letters appealing for Aung Din's immediate and unconditional release to: Gen Saw Maung/Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and of Foreign Affairs/Ministers' Office/Yangon (Rangoon)/ Union of Myanmar (Burma) □

SYRIA

Hakem Sultan al-Faiz: a 56-year-old Jordanian national and former member of the National Command of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, he has been detained without charge or trial for over 18 years in al-Mezze military prison in Damascus.

He is one of a group of people arrested in 1970 and 1971 following the November 1970 coup which brought President Hafez al-Assad to power.

Eighteen remain in detention. All those arrested served in or were connected with the 1966 to 1970 government of the Syrian Ba'ath Party. None has been charged or tried and all were reportedly detained for their refusal to cooperate with the present government.

Some were allegedly tortured after their arrest, and all are said to be in poor health due to inadequate medical facilities and prolonged detention in harsh prison conditions. In 1983 Hakem al-Faiz was reported to be critically ill. He suffers from inflammation of the prostate gland, a stomach ulcer and the eye disease trachoma. Medicines have been provided by visiting relatives rather than

by the prison administration.

In 1967 Hakem al-Faiz was elected as a member of the Ba'ath Party's National Command. He left Syria after the 1970 coup and went to Lebanon. He was abducted from his home in Beirut by Syrian security forces on 13 July 1971 and moved to Damascus.

After seven months in incommunicado detention, he was allowed family visits once a month for one hour in the presence of an intelligence officer.

The Syrian authorities have not replied to AI's numerous appeals for his release. During AI's visit to Syria in June 1989, his case was again raised with officials. To date no response has been received.

■ Please send courteous appeals for the immediate release of Hakem Sultan al-Faiz to: HE Muhammad Harba/Minister of Interior/Ministry of Interior/Merjeh Circle/Damascus/Syria □

MALAWI

Dr George Mtafu: aged 46, he is Malawi's only neurosurgeon and has been held without charge or trial at Blantyre Central Prison since February 1989.

Dr. Mtafu was arrested along with a number of senior state employees, all from northern Malawi, in what was the start of a renewed crackdown on alleged political opponents of the government of Life-President Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

Dr Mtafu, who worked at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Blantyre, was detained after refusing to apologize for challenging remarks which Life-President Banda had made when he criticized senior state employees from northern Malawi for alleged disloyalty to the rest of the country. Others who refused to offer apologies were either detained without trial or dismissed from state employment.

Since shortly after independence in 1964, when Life-President Banda accused Malawi-

ans from the north of plotting to dominate the rest of the country, the government has criticized and sometimes discriminated against northerners, the most prominent of whom have fled the country. Others have been imprisoned without trial, often incommunicado in poor conditions where torture and deliberate ill-treatment are frequently reported. In 1988 and 1989, a number of detainees from northern Malawi died in unacknowledged detention, reportedly from torture and ill-treatment.

■ Please send courteous letters appealing for the release of Dr George Mtafu to: H E The Life-President/ Ngwazi Dr H Kamuzu Banda/ Life President of the Republic of Malawi/ Office of the President and Cabinet/P. Bag 388/Lilongwe 3/Malawi □



FOCUS

amnesty
international

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 1989

Extrajudicial executions

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
REPORT
1989

The introduction to the *Amnesty International Report 1989* focuses on the continuation worldwide of extrajudicial executions — political killings by government or government-backed forces which take place outside any legal process and in contravention of international law.

Extrajudicial executions are reported in at least two dozen of the 133 countries covered in the annual

report, which covers AI's work during 1988. They ranged from large-scale massacres to the killing of individuals in custody. The report also shows that international awareness and monitoring of extrajudicial executions have increased during the 1980s, and that more action is being taken to counter this gross violation of human rights.

Tens of thousands of people were deliberately killed in 1988 by government agents acting beyond the limits of the law. They were victims of executions that evaded the judicial process.

Alleged opponents of governments, or people targeted because of their religion, ethnic group, language or political beliefs, were killed in full public view, in secret cells and remote camps. Some were shot down near battlefields, others in places of worship, hospital beds, and busy city streets.

Prison cells and courtyards, police stations, military barracks and government offices were all sites of political killing by agents

of the state. Many people were killed in their homes, some in front of their families.

Victims were assassinated by snipers, blown up by explosive devices or gunned down in groups. Others were stabbed, strangled, drowned, or poisoned. Many were tortured to death. In Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador and the Philippines victims were often severely mutilated before they were killed.

A state of armed conflict was frequently the pretext, as well as the context, for government campaigns of extrajudicial execution of those they considered undesirable. Warfare makes it easier to evade accountability: not only is access by independent observers limited but the dead can be characterized as combatants killed in encounters or as the unavoidable civilian casualties of war.

In Afghanistan forces of the Afghan Government and the USSR summarily killed civilians and captive guerrillas. In Ethiopia troops combatting guerrilla movements in Eritrea and Tigray carried out mass executions of civilians accused of supporting the guerrillas. On one occasion hundreds of people were reportedly forced into a shallow ditch and then crushed by army tanks.

In Burma (now Myanmar) measures to control people in areas of insurgency included sum-



In Guatemala, people campaigning for investigations into human rights violations were themselves victims of such abuses. Some "disappeared", others received death threats or were apparently extrajudicially executed.

Members of the *Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo por el Aparecimiento con Vida de Nuestros Familiares (GAM)*, Mutual Support Group for the Appearance Alive of Our Relatives, formed in 1984 to campaign for inquiries into the whereabouts of relatives who had "disappeared", themselves received death threats.

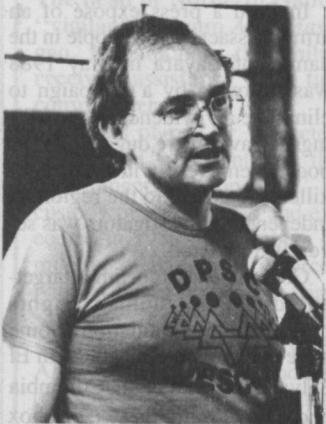
In August *GAM* members Juan Ajanel and Sebastiana Ramos, who had been pressing for the exhumation of the bodies of three relatives summarily killed and secretly buried in the early 1980s by members of the local civil patrol, were reportedly threatened with death by local military officials in Pachoj village, El Quiché.

The bodies were eventually

exhumed in June (see picture above), but no efforts were made to bring to justice those responsible for the killings or for threatening the dead men's relatives.

Members of the *Consejo de Comunidades Etnicas ("Runujel Junam" — CERJ)*, Council of Indigenous Communities ("We are all Equal"), also faced death threats issued in the name of so-called "death squads", "disappeared" or were apparently extrajudicially executed.

In September Valerio Chijal, one of its local organizers, was shot dead in his home. He was killed shortly after he had reported receiving threats from local civil patrol and military officials because of his membership of *CERJ*.



South African civil rights activist David Webster was shot dead outside his home in May 1989 by an unidentified gunman. © IDAF

mary, illegal executions of those found outside their communities or in possession of quantities of food or other goods. In Peru massacres and summary executions largely replaced imprisonment and trial by the courts in counter-

insurgency zones where civilian government has been replaced by military rule.

Many people became victims simply because they lived in an area where the whole population was seen as the enemy. In Iraq

Massacre in Burundi

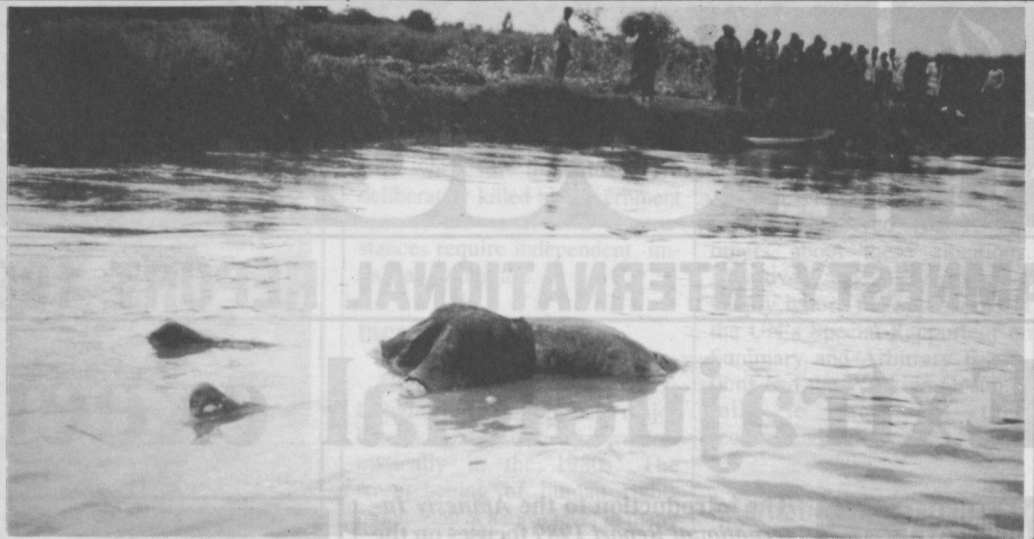
Thousands of unarmed civilians were killed by soldiers in northern Burundi in mid-August 1988 following intercommunal violence.

Most of the victims belonged to the majority Hutu community, whereas most members of the armed forces, the government and others in power come from the minority Tutsi community.

The intercommunal violence began with killings of Tutsi by Hutu. Government sources claim that as many as 5,000 people lost their lives.

However, AI received reports that when the army moved into the area, soldiers killed thousands of unarmed Hutu men, women and children.

Many people, including wom-



Hundreds of corpses floated down the Nyabarongo River from Burundi after the massacre

en and children, were said by eye-witnesses to have been killed by soldiers while fleeing. Others were reported to have been killed after being herded

into huts which were then set on fire.

Medical examinations of Hutu civilians who sought refuge in Rwanda revealed that many had

bayonet or gunshot wounds in the back, apparently caused by weapons of a type used in Burundi only by the armed forces.

Kurds were attacked with chemical weapons; survivors were arrested and summarily executed. In Somalia government forces bombarded and strafed fleeing refugees in the north killing thousands, and executed hundreds of other members of the Issaq clan, which was associated with a guerrilla opposition movement.

In Sri Lanka, both Sri Lankan and Indian troops were responsible for deliberate killings of non-combatants in their efforts to sup-

press armed opposition groups (see box page 5). They were also responsible for "disappearances" — secret, unacknowledged arrests which often resulted in execution.

Mass killings were also carried out outside the immediate context of armed conflict. In Burundi tensions between the dominant Tutsi minority and the majority Hutu community led to the reported massacre by Tutsi-dominated troops of thousands of unarmed Hutu (see box above)

In Guatemala people were killed each month for their political beliefs. During the 1980s tens of thousands of Guatemalan civilians have been killed by agents of the government's security services. Among those executed, apparently because they were deemed subversive, have been teachers, community leaders, trade unionists, human rights workers and peasant farmers active in community life (see box page 3).

In many countries prisoners died as a consequence of torture. Many governments used methods that are inherently life-threatening, such as beating, electric shocks, drugs, immersion and hanging. In 1988 deaths after torture were reported in Turkey, El Salvador, Indonesia, Iraq, China, India, Syria, Burma, the Israeli Occupied Territories and elsewhere.

The violence and killing practised by armed opposition groups often provided the background to extrajudicial executions by government forces. The torture and murder of captives by opposition groups in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Peru, Colombia and elsewhere were a grim part of the context of human rights abuse.

As an organization concerned particularly with prisoner-related human rights and dedicated to the abolition of torture and the death penalty, AI condemns the torture or killing of prisoners by anyone, including political groups engaged in armed conflict.

It does not, however, treat such groups as though they had the status of governments in the sense of international human rights law. Nor does it address them unless they have the essential attributes

of a government, including the exercise of effective power over substantial territory and population.

Extrajudicial execution on a large scale often arises in the context of international and internal armed conflict, inter-communal violence, economic crisis, or even rampant drug-related criminality. But this does not excuse gross human rights abuse, or justify setting aside the norms of international law concerning governmental obligations to respect human rights.

Evidence concealed

Although governments often claimed deliberate killings were a result of law enforcement or armed conflict, they often made enormous efforts to conceal or destroy evidence of the deaths. Corpses were burned, placed in quicklime, buried in secret graveyards or dumped in the sea or in dense jungle. Arrest records were destroyed.

In Peru a press exposé of an army massacre of 28 people in the hamlet of Cayara in May 1988 was followed by a campaign to eliminate all evidence of the killings. Graves were dug up and the bodies removed, witnesses were killed and access to the region by independent investigators was severely restricted.

Governments sometimes targeted domestic human rights defenders for liquidation. Some have been killed outright — in El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia and the Philippines (see box page 5). Others have been subjected to persistent death threats or have survived assassination attempts in public places.



Three unarmed members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) were shot dead in Gibraltar in March 1988 by soldiers of the Special Air Services regiment of the British army. Eye-witnesses alleged that Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage had not been challenged and that no attempt was made to arrest them (see AI Newsletter July 1989)

China deaths

At least a thousand people — most of them peaceful demonstrators and passers-by — were killed and several thousand injured by troops firing indiscriminately into crowds in Beijing between 3 and 9 June 1989.

Government forces moved into Tiananmen Square in Beijing on 4 June to put an end to peaceful pro-democracy protests. The government justified its decision to use lethal force by claiming that a "counter-revolutionary rebellion" had occurred.

The reality, however, seems to have been that a decision was taken to put a stop to peaceful protest even if this meant widespread killing (see *Amnesty International Newsletter* August 1989).



A young Chinese protester pleads with army officers to stop the killing in Beijing in early June 1989

© Associated Press

Governments' methods of murder often help them evade accountability. Killings are carried out at night, when the victims are alone, or in remote rural areas where even large-scale troop movements can be undertaken unobserved. In urban areas specialized squads are trained to function in secrecy and are authorized to conduct operations in areas under curfew and police control.

Some of those killed were among the "disappeared",

although efforts at concealment sometimes broke down. In Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines and elsewhere the bodies of "disappeared" prisoners were periodically found in remote mass graves and dumping grounds.

One way for governments to deflect criticism is to attribute responsibility for killings to private citizens "taking the law into their own hands". Assassination may appear more acceptable to the

public when represented as the spontaneous action of righteous or zealous civilians compensating for a breakdown in law and order.

"Death squads"

In Colombia since 1981 the authorities have attributed killings by the security forces to mysterious civilian "death squads" — groups they say cannot be controlled. Military courts which claim jurisdiction over such cases have refused to take action even when civilian legal authorities have identified police and military personnel as responsible. Governments are often the first to attribute killings of their critics to shadowy "death squads".

In many parts of the world conventional security services operate jointly with part-time civilian auxiliary services organized in paramilitary formations. Paramilitary forces responsible for extrajudicial executions sometimes have both official status and an identity of their own. Some are built around religious sects — as in the Philippines; some are part of ethnic groupings — as with the forces raised by officials of South Africa's "homelands".

Civilian militias often provide the framework for part-time irregular forces to be incorporated into government service. In the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador and Peru, official civil defence or civil self-defence



The head of Norberto Gallines, beheaded by members of the "vigilante" group *Alsa Masa* in sitio Luyang, barangay Oringao, Kabankalan, the Philippines. *Alsa Masa* is banned but receives assistance and tacit support from local military commanders.

Dozens of real or suspected critics and opponents of the government "disappeared" in custody or were seized and executed in 1988 by members of military or paramilitary forces without being brought to trial.

Among those killed were several human rights activists. Andres Rio, a journalist and district chairperson of the Human Rights Advocates of Leyte, was shot dead together with his companion, Manuel Dotollo, by soldiers from the 43rd Infantry

Battalion in the village of Himacugo, Hindang district, on 30 January 1988.

The soldiers later claimed the two had been shot in an armed encounter, but local residents said they had been arrested, burned with cigarettes and stabbed before being shot dead by the soldiers.

Between mid-1988 and April 1989 six human rights lawyers were killed either by military forces or by members of paramilitary or vigilante groups.

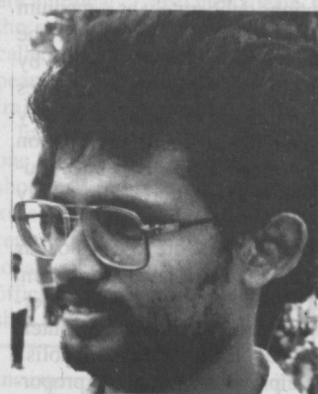
Sri Lanka: continuing violations

Kanchana Abhayapala was shot dead at his home in Colombo on 28 August 1989 by unidentified gunmen. He had filed many *habeas corpus* petitions on behalf of the "disappeared" and people alleging illegal arrest in southern Sri Lanka.

An anonymous telephone caller who had claimed responsibility for the killing of Charitha Lankapura in early July 1989 repeatedly threatened Kanchana Abhayapala and another human rights lawyer with death if they continued their legal work.

AI has asked the government to investigate these killings and the threats, and to ensure that both cease.

An AI report published in May 1989 — *Sri Lanka: Continuing Human Rights Violations* — documented allegations of human rights violations committed in the south and northeast of the island by both Sri Lankan



Kanchana Abhayapala

security forces and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (see *Amnesty International Newsletter* August 1988 and August 1989).

© Paul Ross



Hugo Bustíos Saavedra, a Peruvian radio journalist and correspondent for the magazine *Caretas*, who had received death threats for his human rights reporting, was killed by masked gunmen near Huanta.

The authorities attributed the killing to guerrillas of the *Partido Comunista del Peru* "*Sendero Luminoso*", Communist Party of Peru "*Shining Path*". However, statements from eyewitnesses suggested the attack had been carried out by members of the armed forces or by civil defence forces under their command.

Apparent extrajudicial executions, threats and bombings, for which armed forces personnel

were believed to be responsible, occurred in a new pattern in Peru's urban areas.

The authorities attributed unprecedented attacks on journalists, lawyers, academics and others to a clandestine "death squad", which sometimes mimicked Shining Path methods. However, most extrajudicial executions in Peru continue to be carried out by uniformed troops of the Peruvian army.

militias participated in joint operations with conventional forces. The governments in question evaded accountability for routine extrajudicial executions by blurring the official status of the forces involved.

Sowing terror

Blaming phantom "death squads", outraged private citizens or intercommunal violence for killings often goes hand in hand with policies to publicize such executions deliberately as a medium of terror. Whole sectors of the population are intimidated by "death lists" naming candidates for imminent elimination and by manifestos pledging annihilation of political critics. Bodies of mutilated victims may be publicly displayed to sow terror.

Many deliberate killings occur in the context of law enforcement but are at the margin of the permissible use of lethal force. International legal norms establish principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of legal force.

Secret executions after secret, summary trials flout international standards of due process and fair trial. They may blur the distinction between judicial and ex-

trajudicial execution or make it almost meaningless.

The killing of more than 1,700 prisoners in Iran in late 1988 was summary and arbitrary — but government secrecy has made it impossible to determine whether some form of trial preceded them or if they were carried out without any recourse to the judicial process.

Orders issued to security personnel, as well as their implementation, were in question in many countries in which unarmed civilians were shot dead during demonstrations in 1988. They included Israel and the Occupied Territories, where nearly 300 Palestinian civilians were killed (see box below); Algeria, where at least 176 demonstrators died; Tibet, where armed Chinese police killed dozens of pro-independence demonstrators; and Burma, where troops normally assigned to counter-insurgency operations killed thousands of demonstrators calling for an end to military rule.

Circumstances of killings by government personnel have often been disputed, such as those in the 1988 shooting of three unarmed members of the Irish Republican Army group in Gibraltar by Unit-

ed Kingdom security forces.

Sometimes there is no clear political background, as in the killing of several hundred villagers during operations against cattle rustlers in Madagascar in 1988. But whenever individuals are deliberately killed by government agents, the cause and circumstances require independent, impartial evaluation.

Increased monitoring

International awareness of extrajudicial executions as a major human rights issue has grown dramatically in the 1980s. The strengthening of human rights monitoring at a local level in many countries and concerted efforts by international human rights organizations — both governmental and non-governmental — have helped turn this awareness into action.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has developed important mechanisms to counter extrajudicial executions. Its Special Rapporteurs and Representatives appointed to deal with particular countries have confronted the crisis of deliberate political killings head-on, notably in Afghanistan, El Salvador and Iran. Its Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has investigated thousands of cases of "disappeared"

prisoners, showing that many of the "disappeared" have been secretly executed.

However, the Commission has balked at subjecting to the scrutiny of a Rapporteur the extreme situations in Colombia, Iraq and Peru, despite the copious testimony it has received from AI and others about these situations. Moreover, too many countries simply ignore the approaches of the UN's Special Rapporteur on Summary and Arbitrary Executions and the Working Group or fail to act on their recommendations.

International opinion

The 1980s have been marked by an extraordinary level of mass killings and individual assassinations by government forces — and by a significant change in the way they are viewed by international public opinion. The fact that reports of extrajudicial executions now rapidly become known around the world is a new element in international relations.

In the 1990s the impact of public opinion and the remedial action of the international community should make it more difficult for governments that aim to carry out killings which are murder by any other name. □

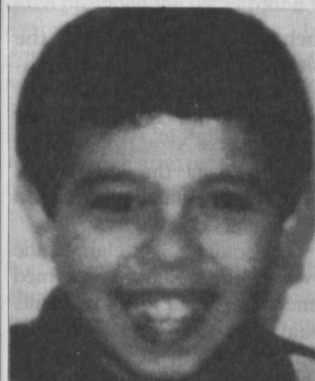
Intifada killings continue

The number of Palestinian civilians killed by gunfire by Israeli forces during the uprising in the Occupied Territories had reached 440 by the end of July 1989. Almost half were aged 18 or below.

Many were killed even though they apparently posed no threat to the security forces or others when they were shot. Investigations into possible abuses relating to these incidents have led to few prosecutions and to light sentences.

AI is concerned that the Israeli

authorities are condoning if not encouraging the excessive use of force knowing that it can result in the death or injury of thousands. It has repeatedly called for a judicial inquiry into human rights violations by Israeli forces since the beginning of the Palestinian uprising.



Thirteen-year-old Maher Shalbek (left) and Milad Shahin, 12, were killed this year in separate incidents in the Occupied Territories by Israeli soldiers. Maher was shot in April in Jenin as he was walking home. There were apparently no disturbances nearby and it was reported that a soldier deliberately aimed at the boy. Milad was killed in May in Bethlehem. He had been throwing stones at soldiers and was shot in the abdomen when he moved away from a wall he had been hiding behind.

Jordan: About 60 political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, were released in Jordan in early September.

They had been arrested following riots in April 1989 and were held without charge or trial in al-Swaqa Prison. At least two other political prisoners—Mustafa Khmayyes and Yusuf Ghayshan, a poet—who were arrested at the same time, remain in detention. □

Hungary: Two important laws concerning human rights have been passed by the Hungarian legislature.

On 30 June parliament approved changes to the military draft law to allow conscientious objectors to military service to perform civilian alternative service. Around 80 conscientious objectors were released from prison in March and AI believes all conscientious objectors adopted by the organization as prisoners of conscience have now been freed.

On 1 June parliament abolished the death penalty for crimes against the state.

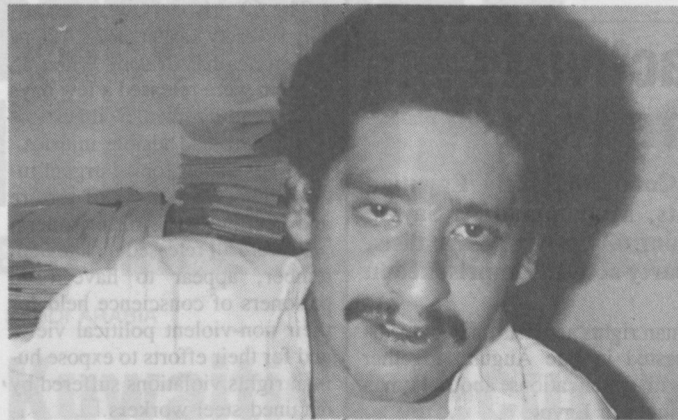
Responding to a letter from an AI group in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Hungarian Minister of Justice, Dr Kalman Kulcsar, referred to the parliament's decision as "an important step towards abolition of the death penalty". □

Morocco: Six possible prisoners of conscience, imprisoned since 1984, remained on hunger-strike throughout September despite a continuing deterioration in their health.

Three were protesting against their torture while in incommunicado detention. Two were kept strapped to their beds, sedated and force-fed by guards in Averroes Hospital, Casablanca. The third, Moulay Tahar Douraidi, was transferred to 'Ain Borja Prison where he remained on hunger-strike and is now said to be back in a hospital. The three began their hunger-strike in 1985.

The three others, who were protesting about inadequate medical treatment and harsh conditions in Laalou Prison, launched their hunger-strike in June 1989 and by September were in Avicennes Hospital, Rabat.

Abdelfattah Boukourou, a 33-year-old diabetic, was in a critical condition. One other hunger-striker, Abdelhaq Chbada, died in Avicennes Hospital on 19 August. □



Iván Ernesto González Fuentes, "disappeared"

GUATEMALA

Seven university students found dead

At least 13 staff and students from the University of San Carlos (USAC) in Guatemala city were abducted between 9 August and 11 September in the most serious wave of abuses directed at people connected with the university since Guatemala's civilian administration took office in 1986.

Seven of those abducted have since been found dead, including Víctor Hugo Rodríguez Jaramillo and his wife Silvia María Azurdia Utrera. They were seized on 23 August in the presence of neighbours by eight to 10 heavily armed men in plain clothes. Their bodies were found on 10 September along with two other USAC students abducted on 8 and 9 September. All four bodies bore apparent signs of torture.

Some of the dead or missing had received threats warning them to stop working with the university's student association or "face the consequences." It is believed

that others may have been abducted because of their support for the national teachers' strike, which ended in August.

Some victims were abducted by men whom witnesses said appeared to be official security force agents. The families and friends of other university staff and students who have gone missing fear that they too may have been taken by security force personnel.

AI has called on the Guatemalan Government to investigate these incidents and to take immediate steps to try and save the lives of those who remain missing. □

BULGARIA

Human rights activists detained and harassed

Members of unofficial human rights organizations, which have been formed in the past two years, have been subjected to imprisonment, house arrest and harassment.

Three leading members of the Independent Association for the Defence of Human Rights (IADHR) are now living outside Bulgaria after being told by the authorities to give up their human rights work, leave the country, or face prison terms. Six other human rights activists, all belonging to unofficial organizations, were released on bail in early September, after spending nearly four months in pre-trial detention in Sofia, apparently as a result of their human rights work. They may still face trial as the authorities are continuing investigations.

The most recent case concerns Kostadin Ivanov, a factory worker from Mihailovgrad, who was

arrested on 1 September. Earlier that day his wife, Biserka Ivanova, was reportedly beaten by a police officer in a public street in Mihailovgrad. Reports suggest that Kostadin Ivanov's arrest may be in connection with the distribution in July of leaflets concerning the IADHR. No formal charges have been brought against him.

Kostadin Ivanov is an invalid as a result of the amputation of his left leg. He has three children. Biserka Ivanova requested a meeting with the Chief of Police on 4 September but it was refused. The only information she has obtained is that her husband is being held in Vratsa prison. □

Prisoner news

AI learned in September 1989 of the release of 176 prisoners under adoption or investigation. AI took up 98 cases.

INDIA

Lethal torture in Bihar

AI has documented further detailed reports of police torture and deaths in custody in the state of Bihar in a study published in September entitled: *Continuing Reports of Human Rights Violations in Bihar**. Many of the victims belong to Bihar's tribal community or are members of the scheduled castes (formerly known as "harijans" or "untouchables").

Among them are an 18-year-old tribal girl who was stripped naked and beaten by the Dhanbad police until she lost consciousness, and three men believed to have died as a result of torture by the police. Another is a Congress (I) party worker who claims he was beaten by the police while hanging from a tree.

In September AI wrote to Satyendra Narain Sinha, Chief Minister of the State since March 1989, asking for independent, impartial inquiries to be held into the alleged abuses. It also reiterated its request to visit Bihar to discuss its concerns including those described in a report published in November 1988.

In response to the earlier AI report, some state officials said investigations would be held, but it is not known whether these have taken place. The government did, however, press for prosecution of eight policemen accused of raping women prisoners and has appealed against a court's judgement which acquitted them on technical grounds.

AI has welcomed the government's stated determination to ensure that those responsible for rape in police custody are punished, but is not aware that any policemen have been convicted for human rights abuses.

*Available from AI national sections or from the International Secretariat in London. □

Death penalty

AI has learned of 86 people being sentenced to death in 11 countries and of 222 executions in eight countries during August 1989.

EGYPT

Human rights activists and workers tortured

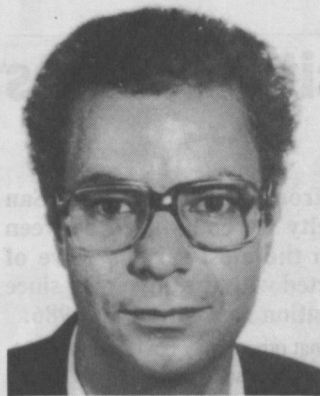
Two members of the Executive Committee of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, Muhammad Al Sayyid Sa'id and Amir Salem, were among 63 lawyers, journalists, trade unionists and opposition party activists imprisoned in late August.

The 63 were detained in connection with forming what the authorities describe as a "secret communist organization".

They had actively supported hundreds of steel-workers arrested after the suppression of a sit-in protest at the Helwan steel-works southwest of Cairo on 2 August. Some had campaigned for the release of the workers who, they said, had been imprisoned unfairly after taking part in a peaceful protest within the law.

Opposition to the government's treatment of the steel-workers grew when reports that some had been tortured came to light in mid-August. Documents containing detailed reports of the torture were seized from the homes of the hu-

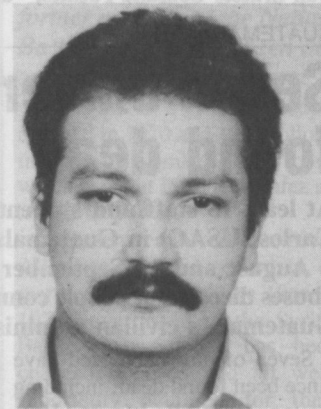
man rights activists and others arrested in late August, together with publications about human rights in Egypt.



Muhammad Al Sayyid Sa'id

The 63 prisoners were reportedly severely beaten on 28 August in Abu Za'bal Prison. When 35 of them were released a few days later pending further investigation, many had visible injuries.

AI has called for an urgent inquiry into the reports of torture and beatings. The 63 prisoners, who were all released by late September, appear to have been prisoners of conscience held for their non-violent political views and for their efforts to expose human rights violations suffered by detained steel-workers. □



Amir Salem

SOUTH AFRICA

Peaceful defiance repressed

In early August the Mass Democratic Movement, a broad coalition of organizations encompassing the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and church denominations, launched a campaign of non-violent defiance against South Africa's race laws and the September general elections, from which the majority was excluded.

In response, the authorities detained large numbers of prominent human rights activists including some already under restriction orders, such as Thiswalandi Rejoice (Joyce) Mabudafhasi. Several leading members of the UDF, itself a restricted organization, as well as trade unionists, were among an estimated 256 people being held without charge or trial under state of emergency legislation in early September 1989. One of them, Willie Hofmeyr, immediately began a hunger-strike which led to his eventual release under restrictions.

There were also widespread reports that security forces deliberately used excessive force against protesters and demonstrators, most notably in the Cape Town area on polling day, 6 September 1989. Church leaders allege that 23 people died as a result of police action that day, though official sources disputed this figure. One "Coloured" (i.e. mixed race) policeman, Lt Gregory Rockman, accused white riot police of behaving like "wild dogs". Following internal and international protests, the new government headed by State President F.W. de Klerk permitted peaceful demonstrations to be held from 13 September and banned the use of "quirts" (whips) by police against demonstrators.

An internal police inquiry was set up to investigate the 6 September deaths, headed by a senior police officer who previously led inconclusive inquiries into the killing of David Webster, a prominent human rights activist, and bombings of offices occupied by anti-apartheid organizations.

AI is calling for an independent, impartial and competent judicial inquiry. □

BENIN

Prisoners amnestied

A wide-ranging amnesty for political prisoners, announced by the ruling party in Benin on 30 August 1989, has led to the release of more than 50 prisoners of conscience.

Also freed were more than 30 people arrested after strikes in January and February 1989 and 30 prisoners convicted of involvement in coup attempts in the 1970s.

Some of those released had been reimprisoned after being freed in an amnesty in August 1984. The practice of detaining prisoners of conscience without charge or trial resumed soon after the 1984 amnesty. Among those freed this August were at least six arrested in late 1984 and early 1985. They were imprisoned outside the framework of the law and many were tortured.

In April 1989, a few days before an AI delegation visited Benin, 50 prisoners of conscience were released. Further releases occurred between April and August. All prisoners of conscience known to AI now seem to have been freed. However, more than 20 people arrested in connection with unsuccessful coup attempts or conspiracies in 1988 remain in detention, some without trial. □



Vincent Cheng, pictured above with his brother and niece, has spent over two years in solitary confinement

SINGAPORE

Cheng still detained

Vincent Cheng, the former secretary of the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission in Singapore, has been detained in solitary confinement since his arrest in May 1987 under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

His case was heard by the Singapore High Court from 11 to 15 September 1989 after he had filed a *habeas corpus* petition.

The Singapore Government alleged that Vincent Cheng masterminded a "Marxist conspiracy" to subvert the state. His detention order was renewed for one year in June 1989 when a previous two-year detention order expired. He is a prisoner of conscience.

In submitting his case to the High Court, Vincent Cheng's defence counsel affirmed that he had "on all occasions afforded to him under the ISA protested his innocence of the general allega-

tions". Vincent Cheng, who was barred from appearing in court by Justice Lai Kew Chai, submitted affidavits stating that he had been hit repeatedly by security officers and forced to sign prepared statements admitting to the existence of an alleged "conspiracy", saying they had been made under duress, coercion and intimidation and the threat of prolonged detention while he was held incommunicado. He also retracted the heavily edited videotaped "confession" broadcast on Singapore television shortly after his arrest.

After the hearing Justice Lai Kew Chai reserved judgment. □