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Amnesty International
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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 11 APRIL 1991

ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 13/91

1. ASA 11/WU 01/91 EXTERNAL
11 April 1991

AFGHANISTAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SEEKS SAFEGUARDS FOR PRISONERS HELD BY MUJAHIDEEN FORCES

Amnesty International has written to the Mujahideen Afghan Interim Government based in Pakistan urging that people taken prisoner when Mujahideen forces recently captured the city of Khost should be safeguarded from possible torture or execution.

Khost, in eastern Afghanistan, was captured by Mujahideen forces on 31 March 1991. In all, about 2,500 Afghan soldiers and scores of civilians suspected of supporting the government in Kabul are said to have been taken prisoner.

In the past, Amnesty International has received reports of torture and summary executions of soldiers and civilians captured by Mujahideen forces. On 13 and 14 January 1989, a number of government soldiers and at least 20 unarmed civilians were reportedly summarily killed by a Mujahideen group after they took control of a village in Nangarhar Province.

In March and April 1989, during a Mujahideen offensive against Jalalabad, Mujahideen groups were reported to have shot dead government troops after they had surrendered. An unspecified number of soldiers and unarmed civilians were also killed in October 1990 by Mujahideen groups which captured Tarin Kot in Uruzgan Province.

In its letter to Professor Sebghatollah Mujaddedi, President of the Afghan Interim Government - an alliance of Afghan Mujahideen groups in Pakistan - Amnesty International made clear that it condemns the torture or execution of prisoners by anyone, both government and opposition forces. It urged the Afghan Interim Government to do everything possible to ensure that prisoners held by the Mujahideen forces in Khost are protected from possible torture or execution.

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ADDITION 2 TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 13/91

1. NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS - INTERNAL

Update to the note sent to press officers yesterday about news releases on Kuwait and Iraq:

Due to continuing consultations on the Kuwait news release, we have not yet finalized the news release or questions and answers sheet. We would like press officers to have had a chance to read the material before holding a conference call, and have therefore postponed the conference call to 3 p.m. (British time) Wednesday 17 April. The material is expected to be finalized today and will be sent to press officers as soon as possible. One issue to be discussed during the conference call is the question of the killings of babies by Iraqi soldiers during Kuwait's occupation. Several sections have already indicated an interest in the conference call. Any other sections which would like to be participate should get in touch with the press office as soon as possible.

Discussion are also continuing on the statement on Iraq, and we will let you know when have a definite release date.

2. EUR 44/WU 01/91 EXTERNAL
16 April 1991

TURKEY: NEW LAW MAY INCREASE RISK OF TORTURE

Amnesty International welcomes the announced release of some prisoners of conscience and the commutation of all death sentences under Turkey's new Anti-Terror Law but fears the law may also increase the already serious risk of torture facing political detainees.

The law, passed on 11 April, deals with the investigation and trial of people suspected of political violence. It commutes all existing death sentences and will result in the conditional release of up to 40,000 prisoners who have served part of their jail sentences, including a number of prisoners of conscience.

"While we welcome these moves, we are gravely concerned about new provisions in the law, one of which allows people suspected of having tortured prisoners to continue to guard and interrogate detainees while charges against them are outstanding," Amnesty International said.

Police officers who have taken statements from detainees will also be exempted from being questioned in court unless they agree to do so, making it difficult for detainees to challenge the validity of any confessions or other statements made under torture.

"This means courts will not be able to examine the full facts about torture allegations," Amnesty International said.

The organization is also concerned that any trials of alleged torturers will take place before the State Security Court, whose prosecution service is responsible for supervising interrogation procedures in the first place. Trials of alleged torturers can only go ahead with the permission of the Interior Minister, unless the victim has actually died in custody.

"The government should be sending a clear message that it will not tolerate torture," Amnesty International said. "This new law places in question the authorities' will to bring to justice those responsible for torture."

There has been a pattern of systematic and widespread torture in Turkish police stations and gendameries for many years, the organization said. Hundreds of political and criminal detainees and prisoners were reportedly tortured last year, with 10 people dying in custody reportedly as a result of torture since September 1990.

Torture methods reported by victims include being blindfolded and stripped naked, suspended by the wrists, beaten on all parts of the body, hosed with

pressurized cold water and subjected to electric shocks.

Amnesty International is urging that the new provisions relating to the investigation and prosecution of alleged torturers be amended. It also urges the government to reform or repeal the provision in the new law which will allow people to be imprisoned for making "separatist" propaganda, even when this contains no advocacy of violence.

The organization is also disappointed that the new law contains no proposals to shorten the maximum police detention period of 15 days, rising to 30 days in the 10 provinces of southeast Turkey under emergency rule.

"The length of time in which detainees are held incommunicado has played a major role in the persistence of torture in police stations."

And under the terms of the new law, many political prisoners who were sentenced after unfair trials following the 1980 military coup will continue to serve prison sentences of up to 20 years.