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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 15/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Australia, Myanmar, Uzbekistan and Italy.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Sierra Leone - 29 April (New information)

News release to go with short document on human rights in the wake of war with Liberian rebels. The IS press office expects this to be fairly low-key - the UK and US sections are likely to be working on it but other sections can use their judgement.

Israel/Lebanon - 6 May PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE! (New information)

News release to accompany first detailed report on treatment and conditions of detainees in Khiam prison, South Lebanon.

Please note that the date of this news release has now been brought forward one day, because 7 May is a national holiday in Israel.

Burundi - 13 May

Targeted news release with short document, following recent mission to Burundi.

China (Tibet) - 20 May 1992

A document and news release on repression in Tibet to go with a small-scale campaign. An electronic news release has also been prepared. There will be more details on the report, news release and ENR next week.

Pakistan - 28 May

A document and targeted news release on arrests in Sind.

Annual Report - 9 July

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Thank you for your quick responses to our query about the embargo date. All responses were positive, so 9 July is the confirmed embargo date. We have now sent out a further inquiry about the timing of the embargo, suggesting 1300 hrs gmt (please see note to press officers sent out on 7 April). Thanks to all those of you who have replied so far, and if you have not yet expressed your opinions, please let us know as soon as possible.

POSSIBLE NEWS INITIATIVES, STILL TO BE CONFIRMED

South Africa - date now possibly 10 June

The research team is planning a document, but as yet cannot give a definite date. It will have an international news release and probably a questions and answers - the date has still not been fixed, although it is quite likely to be 10 June.

Turkey

The planned news release on Turkey has been cancelled. A document on past abuses is planned, and weekly update items will keep you up-to-date with new developments. A research mission is planned for this month, with a possible news release to follow, depending on what information the research mission brings back.

NOTE RE: INDIA LAUNCH

It would be really useful for us to compile an analysis of the media coverage of the India Campaign Launch. Please could you assess how good the media coverage was in your country and detail what coverage you think was most important. In particular we are interested in finding out which images from the ENR were used - to improve future ENRs. Thanks to those of you who have responded already.

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2. ASA 12/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
10 April 1992

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE TO ABORIGINAL DEATHS COMMISSION

Amnesty International has welcomed the response of the Australian governments to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into aboriginal deaths in custody.

The human rights organization will be carefully studying the three-volume response of the federal and state governments to the 339 detailed recommendations and will be asking for further details on their specific implementation.

In March, the organization sent a seven-page memorandum to the federal government commenting on several recommendations made by the commission.

In the memorandum, Amnesty International requested that the authorities make public information about deaths in custody since 31 May 1989, including details of investigations and findings, and that it be informed about any action taken against officials who had apparently contributed to a death in custody.

The organization agreed that all deaths in custody should be impartially and publicly investigated, and supported specific recommendations on preliminary investigations, post-mortems and coroner's inquiries made by the commission.

It also supported the commission's view of the importance of bringing human rights violators to justice and of making law enforcement officers aware that they may be prosecuted and subject to disciplinary action if they are responsible for the death or injury of a prisoner.

Amnesty International also supported the commission's recommendation that the government recognize the competence of the United Nations Committee Against Torture to receive and investigate individual complaints. It welcomes the governments' undertaking to affect this recognition.

Amnesty International is sending three representatives to Australia from 12-28 April to gather information about the issue of aboriginal deaths in custody.

They will meet with federal and state officials to discuss the implementation and monitoring of the commission's recommendations. They will also discuss the organization's concerns about deaths in custody, treatment of detainees and prison conditions.

The representatives will also be visiting several prisons and police detention centres and collecting information about ill-treatment of detainees. They will not be looking into the cases of individual deaths in custody.

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3. ASA 16/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL

15 April 1992

MYANMAR: AI VISITS THAILAND TO INTERVIEW BURMESE REFUGEES

An Amnesty International fact-finding delegation is visiting Thailand from mid-April to mid-May to interview political activists, members of ethnic minorities and others who have recently fled Myanmar (Burma) about the most recent human rights developments there.

The delegation hopes to talk to members of political parties which participated in the elections of May 1990, to residents of areas in which the Myanmar armed forces have been conducting counter-insurgency campaigns and to people forced by the armed forces to serve as porters during military operations. The delegation includes Zunetta Liddell and Martin Smith, two Burma experts with extensive experience in interviewing refugees from Myanmar.

This is the second Amnesty International fact-finding delegation to areas bordering Myanmar this year. In February and March, a delegation visited Bangladesh to interview Muslims who had fled the country. Amnesty International will shortly be publishing a full report incorporating results of those inquiries, which documented a campaign of terror and violence against this group.

Following their visit to Thailand, the members of the current delegation will report on their findings to the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International.

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4. EUR 62/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
15 April 1992

UZBEKISTAN: FIRST VISIT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

A delegation from Amnesty International's International Secretariat will begin a five-day visit to the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan on 23 April 1992. The country became a fully independent state in late December 1991, and was admitted to the United Nations at the beginning of March 1992.

The delegation will meet government representatives to introduce the work of Amnesty International and to raise with them Amnesty International's concerns in Uzbekistan, which are chiefly the retention of the death penalty, the lack of a civilian alternative for conscientious objectors to compulsory military service, and reports of the detention under short-term administrative arrest procedures of people involved in unsanctioned meetings and peaceful demonstrations. They will also be seeking information about constitutional and legal reform currently being undertaken.

A membership development officer is joining the delegation in order to promote Amnesty International membership in Uzbekistan.

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5. EUR 30/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
15 April 1992

INTERNAL

This item relates to the information on Italy that AI has provided to the UN Committee against Torture. It will be used as a low-key news release within Italy. This internal note gives background information which you can use to respond to media inquiries, should you get any.

At its eighth session starting on 27 April 1992, the UN Committee against Torture will consider Italy's first report on how it has implemented its obligations under the UN Convention against Torture. Reports from Romania and Luxembourg will also be considered and Uruguay will present written answers to questions posed by the Committee when Uruguay's first report was considered at the last session. Although there is no formal procedure for the 10-member committee of experts to receive submissions from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) about the countries being examined, any information which NGOs can provide informally is generally welcomed. NGO material sometimes forms the basis of questions the experts put to the country representatives.

AI regularly makes external information on countries where it has significant concerns about torture and ill-treatment available to the experts. During the last session information was made available on five countries: Bulgaria, Cameroon, Ecuador, the United Kingdom and Uruguay. This session AI has sufficient concerns and up-to-date information to provide a briefing about Italy.

Details of a memorandum sent to the Italian government in October 1991, of an interim reply sent by the Ministry of Justice in February 1992 and of recent allegations of ill-treatment received by AI are given in Ill-treatment in Italy: November 1991 - March 1992 (AI Index: EUR 30/03/92). Further information about cases of alleged ill-treatment in Italy is given in Amnesty International's Concerns in Europe: May - October 1991 (AI Index: EUR 01/02/91), Amnesty International's Concerns in Europe: November 1990 - April 1991 (AI Index: EUR 01/01/91), Amnesty International's Concerns in Western Europe: May - October 1990 (AI Index: EUR 03/02/90) and Amnesty International's Concerns in Western Europe: March - September 1989 (AI Index: EUR 03/02/89).

EXTERNAL

ITALY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PROVIDES INFORMATION TO THE UN COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

Amnesty International has provided information on the alleged torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners in Italy to the United Nations Committee against Torture.

Amnesty International has received allegations over a number of years that detainees and prisoners in Italy are sometimes subjected to deliberate physical violence, in some cases amounting to torture, and the organization has included such information in a number of reports. These allegations have continued since Italy ratified the UN Convention against Torture in January 1989.

The most common forms of ill-treatment alleged are repeated kicks and punches and prolonged beatings with batons but it has also been alleged that detainees and prisoners have been burned with cigarettes, have had objects inserted in the anus and have been forced to swallow large quantities of salt water. Many of the allegations are supported by medical evidence and most are or have been the subject of judicial investigation. However, a number of these inquiries have lacked thoroughness or have been marked by excessive delays and a lack of cooperation from law enforcement and prison officers; many of the inquiries have ended inconclusively.

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The cases of alleged ill-treatment have almost exclusively concerned criminal suspects and convicted criminals - an increasing number of them immigrants from outside Europe.

In October 1991 Amnesty International presented a memorandum to the Italian Government which contained a selection of cases of alleged torture and ill-treatment arising between 1986 and early 1991 where there had been no news of progress in judicial inquiries for a considerable period of time, and where the organization had been particularly concerned by the persistent failure of the authorities to reply to its requests for information.

The Committee against Torture, which will hold its eighth session in Geneva from 27 April to 8 May 1992, was set up to monitor the implementation of the UN Convention against Torture. On 30 April it is due to review Italy's first report since ratifying the Convention in January 1989.