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Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 8DJ
United Kingdom

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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 19/93

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on Japan.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Japan - 0500 hrs gmt, 17 March (New Information)

Please note that there is an item enclosed in this weekly update which gives AI's answer to the Japan Government's response to AI's report. Please use it in conjunction with the news release.

Please note the embargo is confirmed for 0500 hrs gmt, 17 March for this document on refugee issues and we anticipate a high level of media interest in this news release.

The Japanese Section is holding a press conference in Tokyo to launch the report on 17 March. IS staff member, David Petrusek, who wrote the report, is going to Tokyo to help with media there. The Japanese Section will be inviting international media to attend the press conference and the IS will also inform international media of the launch. Details of the conference will shortly be available from the IS press office if you need them.

An Electronic News Release (ENR) is being prepared at the last minute to go with the report. Unfortunately, resources and time will not allow the IS to distribute it to sections. However, it will be given to Japanese TV at the press launch and the IS is giving it to WTN, VISNEWS, BBC World Service TV and CNN - so please refer your media to these. The master copy is held at Dubbs, 25-26 Poland Street, London W1V 3DB - Tel: +44 71 629 0055. Media who urgently require the full ENR may order copies direct from Dubbs, paying the copying costs only.

Chad - 21 April

Please Note

The document to go with this campaign has been sent out to sections dated February. Please inform your section campaign coordinators and anyone else who may receive it that it is EMBARGOED FOR 21 APRIL.

Chad Campaign, document, news release, Q&A and ENR. More details to follow shortly.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Morocco - 14 April

Document and weekly update item - more info soon.

Brazil - 15 April

Document on prison massacre, including new forensic information. Weekly update item to go with it. More info soon.

Section Initiatives

French Section - European Press Officers' Meeting

The second European Press Officers' meeting will take place in Paris this year. The registration forms have not arrived yet, but when they do please send them to Luisa de Soriano or Josette Debord at the French Section Press Office before the end of February. The date of this meeting is now fixed for 15 and 16 May as the majority of you asked for. It will be focused on two themes: Audiovisual work (production and TV experiences) and how to improve it; and the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. The French Section Press Office will send the program to all participants during the last week of February. Many thanks.

Weekly Update NWS 11/19/93

2. ASA 22/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR 0500 HRS GMT, WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 1993

JAPAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REITERATES ITS CONCERNS FOLLOWING JAPANESE
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Japanese Government has responded to Amnesty International's report *Japan: Inadequate Protection of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers*, by maintaining that it is in full compliance with its international obligations towards refugees and asylum-seekers. It has also indicated that it believes a number of statements Amnesty International makes in the report are based on a misunderstanding of certain facts. The government's response on other points suggest that it is unwilling to accept that its policy and practice towards refugees and asylum-seekers needs to be thoroughly reformed.

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that the government has responded so quickly to the report, and hopes that this indicates a willingness to treat seriously the issues raised in the report. We also welcome the government's assurances on some points, in particular that no citizens of Myanmar (Burma) who are in Japan and who have requested protection have been forcibly returned to Myanmar. However, after carefully considering the government's reply, Amnesty International does not believe that the observations the government has made provide any new information which would justify changing any of the conclusions set out in its report or any of the recommendations it has made to the government.

In its response the government makes several points. It maintains that: there is no obstruction of the right to submit an application for asylum; asylum-seekers are given advice and guidance on the procedures to be followed; detained asylum-seekers are not prevented from seeking legal advice; and those involved in questioning asylum-seekers do not apply an unreasonably high standard of proof or resort to improper questioning. However, Amnesty International remains concerned about these points and urges the government to implement Amnesty International's recommendations aimed at addressing these concerns: that the authorities make public the instructions for dealing with asylum-seekers given to immigration officers at ports-of-entry; provide asylum-seekers (especially those in detention) with lists of lawyers and organizations working with refugees; and ensure proper training for officials involved in questioning asylum-seekers.

In its response, the government also refuses to accept that it should respect decisions made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as to who is entitled to protection. Furthermore, the government response appears to deny the authoritative role of the UNHCR Handbook in guiding those making decisions on refugee status. Amnesty International believes that such responses show the government's reluctance to treat refugee protection as a human rights matter -- regulated by the UN and international standards -- and rather emphasize the narrow domestic approach taken by the government.

Amnesty International believes the government's confidence in the fairness of its procedures is not borne out by the facts. It reiterates its call for the government to immediately establish an advisory body -- composed of impartial experts -- to examine these procedures.