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Amnesty International
International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
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United Kingdom

TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

DATE: 28 AUGUST 1991

WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 32/91

Contained in this weekly update are an external item on Jordan and an internal item for response on Lebanon.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

ICM - 29 August to 7 September

Information should be sent to you next week covering all media aspects of the ICM. In the meantime, if you get any queries please refer them direct to the ICM press office in Yokohama (tel +81 45 2236031, fax +81 45 2236032). Please note that the meeting is strictly internal and journalists are only allowed to attend the inaugural session.

Sri Lanka - 11 September
ASA 37/14/91

An international news release was sent to you in the last Weekly Update. Please note the embargo date.

Mexico - 18 September
Mexico - Torture with Impunity AMR 41/04/91

News release and questions and answers on a report on torture in Mexico will be sent to you next week. The main point in the report is that anyone who is arrested in Mexico is at risk of torture and that the government has done little to bring police or others responsible to justice.

China - 26 September

Report on administrative detention - news release and possible questions and answers.

USA - 9 October

USA - The Death Penalty and Juvenile Offenders AMR 51/23/91

International news release to accompany the external document.

Egypt - 23 October

Egypt - Ten years of torture MDE 12/18/91

News release to go with an external document on torture, including strong individual cases and photo material.

Weekly Update NWS 11/32/91

2. MDE 16/WU 01/91 EXTERNAL
28 August 1991

JORDAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION

Two Amnesty International delegates, both staff members of the International Secretariat, visited Jordan between 10 and 21 August 1991, to conduct research and meet government officials to discuss matters relevant to the organization's work on Jordan.

Following up discussions held with government officials in March 1990, the delegation met the Prime Minister, Taher Masri; the Ministers of Justice, the Interior and Foreign Affairs; the Director General of the General Intelligence Department; and the Military Advocate General.

The delegation welcomed continuing human rights reforms in Jordan, but expressed concern that crucial safeguards against torture or ill-treatment of detainees have not yet been introduced, including prompt access to lawyers and a judge for all detainees, as well as prompt access to families and independent medical doctors.

Weekly Update NWS 11/32/91

3. MDE 18/WU 01/91 INTERNAL (FOR RESPONSE)
28 August 1991

LEBANON: REPORTS OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TALKS WITH HIZBOLLAH

In the last few days the news media have been carrying reports on AI having talks with the pro-Iranian Hizbollah Islamic group in Lebanon. These reports have emanated from Hizbollah and are not entirely correct. This internal statement clarifies the role of an AI representative who is currently in Lebanon. This information may be passed to journalists in response to any inquiries.

A Reuters report on August 24 states that: "An envoy of the human rights watchdog Amnesty International has held talks in Beirut with the pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) on Arabs held by Israel, whose fate is linked to that of Western hostages in Lebanon. Aziz Abdul Hussein, the Middle East representative of Amnesty held talks with Hizbollah on the issue of about 400 Arabs detained without trial by Israel and its client militia in south Lebanon....Most of the Arabs are held at Khiam prison in south Lebanon and Amnesty has regularly voiced concern about their detention and treatment. The [Hizbollah] spokesman said Abdul-Hussein did not raise in the talks the question of 10 Westerners missing in Lebanon....The Amnesty representative discussed Lebanese prisoners who Hizbollah and Lebanese captives' relatives say were handed to Israel by the right-wing Christian Lebanese Forces militia, the Hizbollah spokesman said."

In response to queries on this subject you may confirm that AI does currently have a representative in Lebanon, who since June 1991 has been in Lebanon gathering information about human rights issues of concern to AI. His work has involved identifying the various political forces responsible for holding prisoners, as well as the local and international non-governmental organizations in Lebanon, and contacting them. In this context it would have been routine for him to meet Hizbollah officials. He was given a clear and limited brief and the IS is confident that he has not exceeded it. That brief included making it clear in all contexts that he is not authorized to make public statements on behalf of AI.

AI's concerns on the detainees held in Khiam detention centre are a matter of public record and have appeared in successive Annual Reports (see ARs 1986 to 1991). Amnesty International is concerned that they have been held without charge or trial and that there have been persistent reports of torture of detainees. Some reports have said that Israeli military personnel were present at interrogations at which prisoners were tortured. The Israeli authorities have categorically denied these reports. AI has called on both the Israeli authorities and the South Lebanon Army which runs Khiam to investigate the reports of torture. It has also called for the ICRC to be granted access.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 32/91

Contained in this addition to the weekly update are an external item on Indonesia and an Advice to Editors on the UK.

Weekly Update NWS 11/32/91 add

1. ASA 21/WU 02/91 EXTERNAL
29 August 1991

INDONESIA: SEVEN POLITICAL PRISONERS FREED - HUNDREDS REMAIN IN JAIL

Seven Indonesian political prisoners were released between April and August 1991, some of them after more than 20 years in prison. Amnesty International welcomes these releases, but notes that at least three of those freed, and possibly all seven, had been prisoners of conscience who should never have been in custody. At least two had been arbitrarily imprisoned for more than three years beyond the legal expiry of their sentences. All had been sentenced in trials which Amnesty International believes were unfair.

Hundreds of other political prisoners, many of them prisoners of conscience, continue to serve lengthy terms in Indonesian prisons. They include scores of Islamic activists, hundreds of people accused of pro-independence activities in Aceh, East Timor and Irian Jaya, a number of university students and journalists and more than 30 people imprisoned in the late 1960s for their alleged involvement in an attempted coup in October 1965.

Three of the seven prisoners released had been in jail for more than

20 years for their alleged involvement in the 1965 coup attempt or for membership of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI - Partai Komunis Indonesia). In April 1991, Drs Susilo, a veterinary surgeon aged 53, was released after serving 23 years in prison for subversion; a death sentence imposed in 1971 was commuted to 20 years in 1981. Those released in July were Rewang, aged 63, and Marto Suwandi, aged 69, both former members of the PKI arrested in 1968. They were due for release in 1988 and 1987 respectively. Amnesty International believes that the three had been sentenced in unfair trials and may have been prisoners of conscience.

Most of the thousands arrested after the 1965 coup attempt had been released by the late 1970s but more than 30 remain in prison more than 25 years later. Like Rewang and Suwandi many are being held beyond the expiry of their prison sentences. Amnesty International considers their continued detention to be arbitrary and in contravention of basic principles of Indonesian and international law. It is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained beyond the expiry date of their sentences. Seven PKI prisoners remain under sentence of death and at least 22 have been executed since 1985. Amnesty International has repeatedly urged the government to commute all outstanding death sentences.

Among four political prisoners released on 17 August 1991 were three Muslim activists: Professor Dr. Oesmany al Hamidy, aged 77, a professor at a religious training college in Jakarta (PTDI), Hasan Kiat, aged 41, a Muslim leader, and Ratono, a student at the PTDI. They had been sentenced to between six and seven years in prison in 1986 for delivering "seditious" and "inflammatory" sermons. Amnesty International considered Oesmany al Hamidy and Hasan Kiat to be prisoners of conscience and was investigating the allegations against Ratono to determine whether he too had been imprisoned solely for his non-violent religious or political beliefs.

Also released on 17 August was David Dias Ximenes, an East Timorese aged 42, who was imprisoned without trial for more than three years before being sentenced to 15 years for his alleged links with Fretilin, which has been fighting for East Timor's independence since the territory was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. Amnesty International believed that he may also have been a prisoner of conscience.

Amnesty International considers that political trials in Indonesia and East Timor have not met international standards of fairness. Defendants are often compelled to testify against themselves and are generally presumed to be guilty rather than innocent until proved guilty. The links between the executive branch and the judiciary in Indonesia have tended to undermine the impartiality of the judges. Some political prisoners have been convicted on the basis of testimony extracted under duress and sometimes under torture. Political trials have also been marked by a lack of access to counsel of the defendant's own choosing, inability to summon witnesses on the same terms as the prosecution, and inadequate time to prepare the defence.

Weekly Update NWS 11/32/91 add

2. EUR 45/13/91 EXTERNAL
29 August 1991

INTERNAL

The following is an Advice to Editors concerning the first ever Urgent Action on Northern Ireland. It was sent out this morning to the British and Irish media and international agencies:

UNITED KINGDOM

Amnesty International last night issued an Urgent Action on behalf of a Northern Ireland youth reportedly ill-treated in Castlereagh police interrogation centre in Belfast. Although the organization regularly reports on its human rights concerns in the United Kingdom -- most recently in a 66-page report issued in June 1991 -- this is the first ever Urgent Action issued on a case in Northern Ireland. Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the seriousness of the youth's allegations -- supported by medical evidence -- and the reported death threats against him by his interrogators.

An Urgent Action is launched by Amnesty International in any case of imminent danger of torture or ill-treatment, execution or medical neglect of a prisoners. The organization calls on it worldwide membership to contact the authorities of the country concerned urgently appealing on behalf of the victim.

The text of the Urgent Action follows:

Amnesty International is concerned about the reported ill-treatment and threat of further ill-treatment of Damien Austin, a 17-year-old Catholic youth from Belfast. The organization has received reports that he was ill-treated while in custody at the police interrogation centre in Castlereagh (Belfast) on two separate occasions in recent months. He was first arrested by Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) at his home in the Falls Road area of Belfast (a Catholic area of the city) on the afternoon of 7 May 1991. He was taken to Castlereagh police interrogation centre and held under Section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act until 10 May. Damien Austin was one of 18 young people arrested in connection with the investigation into the death of an RUC officer, Stephen Gillespie, in a rocket attack carried out by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) on 1 May 1991.

During the time Damien Austin was in Castlereagh interrogation centre, he alleges that he was verbally abused, punched, slapped, and spat upon by detectives. He has said that he was also burned on the face with a cigarette, that his trousers and underpants were repeatedly pulled down, that a cigarette lighter was held toward his pubic hair, and that death threats were made. In the period following his release and before his second arrest, Damien Austin claims to have been regularly harassed by the

police.

He was arrested for the second time on Saturday, 17 August - again under Section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act - and was taken to Castlereagh, where he was examined by a doctor upon arrival. The doctor noted that there were no marks on his body, but that there were four stitches in his right ear from a previous injury. During three interrogation sessions on 17 August (each lasting between three and a half and four and a half hours), Damien Austin alleges that he was regularly punched in the stomach, the throat, on the arms, and the back of the head. During the final session of the day, he alleges that a detective placed his boots between his legs and applied pressure to his testicles. He claims that when he attempted to pull back from this particular assault, he was pushed forward and punched by one of the detectives. He also claims that during this same session, his neck was held so tightly in an armlock that he was choking and felt that he would pass out. He has said that although he requested access to a doctor throughout the day, his request was never met.

On the following morning, Sunday, 18 August, Damien Austin was seen by the doctor then on duty at Castlereagh. The doctor noted bruising and stated that he would be prepared to testify to this effect in court on Damien Austin's behalf. The doctor also provided him with pain killers and two inhalers for his asthma. Damien Austin has said that the detectives refused to allow him to use these inhalers during his interrogations. The ill-treatment allegedly continued throughout the day. In one session, a detective reportedly made a death threat and then pulled Damien Austin's ears very hard. This apparently caused his injured right ear to bleed and resulted in two of his stitches coming out. Another request to see a doctor was refused. During a subsequent interview, he alleges that he was again subjected to pressure on his genital area which he said resulted in bleeding.

When the Castlereagh duty doctor examined Damien Austin again on the morning of Monday, 19 August, he noted marks and bruising. Damien Austin claims that the beatings which allegedly took place during the previous two days continued and became even more severe on Monday, 19 August. When Damien Austin's solicitor saw him late that morning, he also noted injuries and advised his client to request an examination by his own doctor. Damien Austin's own doctor was allowed to examine him that evening, recording both bruising and the two opened stitches in his right ear. In an affidavit filed in the High Court, Damien Austin's doctor has stated that he

"...examined him in detail and found evidence of severe assaults to his body. In addition to the physical injuries he appeared dazed and apprehensive...I can confirm that Damien Austin is being subjected to severe ill-treatment and the Police Doctor agreed with me on this".

Following this examination on the evening of 19 August, Damien Austin claims that he received threats of further arrest and even execution by a loyalist paramilitary group. He has said that he was told: "You can complain all you want. It's going to get worse".

On Tuesday, 20 August, after further questioning sessions where the beatings allegedly continued as before, he was released without charge. As he was leaving Castlereagh, Damien Austin has claimed that the sergeant said "See you again soon".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Allegations about ill-treatment of suspects while in police custody have frequently come from Northern Ireland. People arrested under anti-terrorist legislation are taken to the police interrogation centres in Castlereagh (Belfast), Gough Barracks (Armagh) and Strand Road (Londonderry). The record shows that existing procedures and safeguards are inadequate to prevent the ill-treatment of detainees. Further details on the issue of allegations of ill-treatment can be found in Chapter One of United Kingdom: Human Rights Concerns.