
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 36/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - UNITED NATIONS, TADZHIKISTAN

PLEASE NOTE: TV CAMERA CREWS ON RESEARCH MISSIONS

Recently there have been a few requests from sections to the Research Department for crews from national TV stations to accompany research missions. All such requests are coordinated by the Media Unit (Adam Lloyd) in the IS; could you please ensure that requests are not made directly to the relevant research teams.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Kuwait - 24 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 170
Women - 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161/26

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

European Parliament & Political killings/"disapps" Handbook - 23 Feb

SEE NEWS SERVICE 22/94 - Update - Pierre Sané's speech to the European Parliament and the press conference organized by Johannes at the AI EC office in Brussels are both going ahead as planned. I will distribute the speech via the news service as soon as possible. For the press conference Johannes will be using the news service item on the handbook launch (see News Service 25/94) plus a news release he has prepared based on parts of Pierre Sané's speech, which he has distributed to EC member sections.

****South Korea - 9 March**** - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/94

****South Africa (Bophuthatswana) - 11 March**** - A document will be coming in the weekly mailing and there will be a news service item to accompany it.

****Turkey - 6 April**** - SEE NEWS SERVICE 26/94

****Hong Kong - 21 April**** - This is the launch date of a report calling for a Human Rights Commissioner for Hong Kong. There will be a news release to accompany this report and a press conference will be held by the Hong Kong section attended by members of the IS Hong Kong research team.

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Colombia - 16 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56+57/93

South Africa - 31 March - POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

Saudi Arabia - 10 May - NOTE CHANGE OF DATE - more details to follow ****Burundi - 16 May**** - This is the date of the launch of the press release for Burundi week.

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AI INDEX: IOR 41/WU 02/1994
18 February 1994

UN Commission on Human Rights
50th Session
Agenda Item 10 Delivered: 17 February 1994

UNITED NATIONS: ORAL STATEMENT ON THEMATIC MECHANISMS

Chairperson,

In addition to the country mechanisms, the thematic mechanisms are among the most worthwhile tools that the Commission has created in its attempts to halt persistent and grave human rights violations around the world. They are particularly valuable in that they allow investigation, including by on-site visits, and discussion of grave human rights violations in many countries, including those which the Commission has failed to put under full scrutiny under Item 12 of its agenda.

In the case of **China**, for example, Amnesty International has submitted information over the last year to the Special Rapporteurs on torture, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and religious intolerance, and the Working Group on arbitrary detention. Hundreds of people, including political dissidents and members of ethnic and religious groups have been arbitrarily detained for the peaceful exercise of their fundamental human rights. Some have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment after unfair trials while others are held under administrative regulations which provide for long-term detention without charge or trial. Torture, which is prohibited in law, continues to be widespread, sometimes resulting in death. In the last two years the death penalty has been increasingly used for non-violent offences. Amnesty International recorded 1,250 executions for all offences carried out between January and November 1993 but believes that the actual number is much higher. Amnesty International calls on the government to cooperate with the relevant theme mechanisms and enable them to visit the country.

In **Peru**, since the introduction of wide-ranging anti-terrorism legislation in May 1992, at least 2,000 people have been arbitrarily detained with the vast majority being kept incommunicado for at least the first 15 days of their detention. Until the legislation was amended in November 1993, the filing of habeas corpus petitions in favour of those detained was prohibited. These circumstances led to reports of scores, probably hundreds, of detainees being tortured, and to their "confessions" being used against them in cases heard in camera before civilian and military tribunals. The report [published in November 1992] of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, following his visit to Peru, documents the prevalence of extrajudicial executions in recent years. Amnesty International calls on the government to invite the Working Group on arbitrary detention and the Special Rapporteur on torture to visit to investigate this new pattern of human rights violations.

In other cases, the work of the thematic mechanisms can serve to inform the Commission more fully on situations that are considered elsewhere on its agenda, such as **Zaire**, which was the subject of a resolution under item 12 last year. In Zaire, the security forces and supporters or allies of President

Mobutu Sese Seko have killed thousands of civilians with impunity since 1990. During the same period, thousands have been arbitrarily detained, many of them subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment. Dozens have "disappeared" in custody or after abduction by people suspected to be members of the security forces. President Mobutu and those responsible for the security forces have neither condemned the horrific abuses nor responded to appeals for their end. In the absence of any investigation into these violations by the government, the Commission should call on the Zairean authorities to invite the appropriate thematic mechanisms to visit the country.

The point has repeatedly been made that the thematic mechanisms can only be effective if governments cooperate fully with them and, in particular, implement their recommendations. In the case of **Sri Lanka**, for example, the government's invitation to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit in 1991 and 1992 is to be welcomed. However, many of the Working Group's recommendations, particularly those dealing with the investigation of "disappearances" which occurred prior to 11 January 1991 and the prosecution of those responsible for "disappearances" and other human rights violations, have yet to be fully implemented. To deal with situations such as this, and to strengthen the functioning of the thematic mechanisms, Amnesty International has proposed that the Commission create a new sub-item on its agenda to monitor governments' progress towards implementation. It is not recommendations that end human rights violations, important though these are, but action by governments - and in too many cases governments will not take that action unless they are persistently urged by the international community to do so. It is also highly important that the Commission takes strong measures to ensure that all governments respond to requests from the thematic Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups for information. In this year's reports, as previously, the mechanisms have identified those governments which have not replied as well as those, notably Indonesia, which have ignored proposals that they issue invitations for on-site visits.

Chairperson,

Another area which urgently requires action from the international community is human rights violations against women. Amnesty International strongly supports the call last year for the Commission to appoint a Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The need for the UN to take stronger action on human rights violations against women was recognized by the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action and is borne out by the work of the many NGOs working in this area, including Amnesty International. During 1993, our organization took action to stop human rights violations against women in over 50 countries, in all regions of the world. The Commission should call on the Special Rapporteur to integrate her work with that of the Commission on the Status of Women, particularly in connection with the preparations for the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing, China in 1995.

Other steps are needed if the Commission is to demonstrate a serious commitment to halting violations against women. Firstly, all the Commission's thematic and country mechanisms should take much greater account of the characteristics and practice of violations that are specific to or primarily directed against women or to which women are particularly vulnerable, and include full information on this in their reports. On-site visits should include delegates with expertise in women's issues, and wherever possible use female interpreters to facilitate the collection of sensitive information from women.

Secondly, the Commission must ensure that the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, as well as the other mechanisms established by the Commission, have adequate human and financial resources to carry out the tasks with which they are entrusted by the Commission. Particularly during the last year, the thematic mechanisms have been restrained in fulfilling their mandates by the inadequate resources available to them in the Centre for Human Rights. With the growing number of mechanisms, it is also important that the Centre has the resources to ensure proper coordination between the mechanisms. It is imperative that they be given the material resources as well as the active support of the Commission if they are to effectively deal with the persistent and widespread incidence of human rights violations.

Thank you

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TADZHIKISTAN: REPORTS OF "UNOFFICIAL" PRISON CAMPS HOLDING AND EXECUTING "DISAPPEARED" PRISONERS

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at reports of "unofficial" prison camps in at least three locations in central and southern Tadjikistan and that people who have "disappeared" in the country are being held in such camps.

Paramilitary forces acting with the knowledge of the government of Tadjikistan are reported to be running the prison camps and Amnesty International fears that detainees held there are at risk of torture and extrajudicial execution.

The camps are said to be located at or near Tursunzade (formerly Regar), west of Dushanbe, the capital; at Shambary in Gissar district, southwest of Dushanbe; and on the banks of the Vaksh river between Kalininabad and Kurgan-Tyube in Khatlon Region, southwest Tadjikistan.

There are no reliable estimates of the number of people detained in the camps, but it is alleged that the detainees are people who have "disappeared" since late 1992.

The civil war in Tadjikistan began in May 1992. In the period immediately after the capital was retaken by pro-government forces in December 1992, hundreds of residents were extrajudicially executed or "disappeared". The victims were mainly from the Garm district and the Pamir region, which were identified with the opposition to the government.

It has been alleged that recently the paramilitary forces operating the camps have begun systematically emptying them by executing detainees.

Amnesty International knows of two cases where people who "disappeared" are feared to have been killed after possibly being held in the Tursunzade camp: At the end of January 1994 the body of Mirzonazar Imomnazarov, who "disappeared" in December 1992 following arrest by pro-government paramilitary forces and was last seen being taken in the direction of Tursunzade, was found in Dushanbe. He had been killed recently, suggesting that he had been held alive in secret detention for over 13 months. In late 1993 the identity papers of Kurbonbek Nazarshoyev, who "disappeared" in March after being taken by paramilitary forces from outside his home in Dushanbe, were found in Tursunzade and returned to his family, who concluded that he was no longer alive.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Tadjikistan to make an immediate investigation into these allegations and, if they are found to be true, take formal responsibility for the camps and ensure that all detainees are released unharmed. The human rights organization also urges that the organizers of the unofficial camps be brought to justice in accordance with international standards. Amnesty International is also calling on the Tadjikistan Government to investigate all allegations of extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

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