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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 62/93 (2nd today)

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Myanmar (Burma) and the Maldives.

Please note: Just to alert you to a new document on Uzbekistan being issued by the Research Department - there is no media initiative to go with it and it will not be sent to international media. However, it was sent in last week's weekly mailing called: Uzbekistan: Clampdown on dissent, AI Index: EUR 62/09/93, in case you receive any queries.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS(New Information)

PLEASE NOTE: The Dalai Lama has accepted AI's invitation to speak in the AI Tent, in the park in front of the Austria Centre. He will speak at 1800 hrs today - there may be last-minute changes as to where he speaks because the Austrian Government is trying to arrange an alternative room in the Austria Centre and we do not know which he would prefer.

PLEASE NOTE: The following numbers are now working in the Vienna Press Office: Tel: +43 222 219 3574/3573/3572, Fax: +43 222 219 357221.

Amnesty International's press office in Vienna will be based at AI's tent outside the Austria Centre and will be open for 24 hours each day. AI's press team will be staying at Pension Dr Geissler, Postgasse 14, 1010 Vienna. Telephone: +43 1 533 2803.

The strategy team in Vienna will report developments to sections via the IS press office to section press officers. Can press officers ensure that this information is circulated to the relevant people in their section.

General enquiries from press officers should go to Paula and James at the IS Press Office, on Tel: +44 71 413 5562/5810.

The second and third ENRs for the World Conference; Challenge to Governments, (Ref: 1838) and AI Activities Compilation, (Ref: 1840) are ready. Please order copies and refer journalists for copies from: Dubbs Copying House, giving the correct video reference number (as above) on Tel: +44 71 629 0055 or Fax: +44 71 287 8796.

Annual Report - 0006 hrs gmt, 8 July

PLEASE NOTE: It is VERY important that the annual report news release does not get leaked to the media over the next two weeks - in view of the pessimistic reference to the UN World Conference. Please be careful not to let it be seen by too many people until after the World Conference is over.

Annual Report Summaries, Regional Updates, ENR and news release have all been sent to you.

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

Document and news release to go with action on massive numbers of political killings.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 1 July

A weekly update item is being written to go with the document: Saudi Arabia: An Upsurge in Public Executions, AI Index: MDE 23/04/93. The document and weekly update item will be embargoed for 1 July and will be sent out to selected international media by the IS Press Office. Please note that the document has been sent out in the weekly mailing.

Weekly Update NWS 11/62/93

2. ASA 16/WU 04/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR FRIDAY 18 JUNE 1993

BURMESE NOBEL PRIZE-WINNER: A PRISONER ON HER BIRTHDAY

While Myanmar's pro-democracy leader spends her 48th birthday a prisoner in her own home, representatives of the military junta [the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)] who imprisoned her attend the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna as delegates from Myanmar.

Tomorrow (Saturday, 19 June) is the birthday of the detained Myanmar political leader and 1991 Nobel Peace Prize-winner, Aung San Suu Kyi. Amnesty International is organising an international day of action in towns and cities throughout the world to remind people of her continued detention without charge or trial.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been held by Myanmar's military government for almost four years. In 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won more than 80 per cent of the parliamentary seats in the country's elections. The SLORC refuses to hand over power to the NLD and continues to imprison many of its leaders.

Myanmar, under the SLORC, has been among those countries in Asia arguing most strongly against an international idea of human rights - stressing instead regional, cultural and economic differences, and opposing "interference" in "internal affairs."

Amnesty International completely rejects this argument. Such differences can never be used to justify human rights violations. Amnesty International's Secretary General, Pierre Sané has said, "Nowhere has it been demonstrated that in order to develop you need to torture. Governments cannot ask people to choose between bread and liberty. I am deeply concerned that this kind of stance may actually undermine the fundamental human rights which the World Conference ought to be upholding and strengthening."

Amnesty International has identified about 1,500 opponents of the military government who are still being held in Myanmar. Some, like Aung San Suu Kyi, are known to be prisoners of conscience detained without trial, others were sentenced after unfair trials. Security forces continue to commit gross human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture and extrajudicial executions with impunity.

Amnesty International has this week received a message for the chairman of the World Conference written on the back of a shirt smuggled out of one of Myanmar's many prisons. It was written and signed by four political prisoners. The shirt will be on display at the Amnesty International tent in Vienna. The text reads:

"The Honourable Chairman/President of the conference, World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, Austria.

The Honourable Delegates,

We all political prisoners who languish in the prison cells of ---- jail, pay respect to the World conference on Human Rights, which will promote developing in the area of Human Rights all over the world, and congratulates delegates who are attending the conference to give good-will services for human rights and democracy.

We also send this message on behalf of entire Burmese people, for there are no human rights in Burma under the repressive junta.

The Burmese people, who are suffering from the severe violation of human rights by the military dictatorship for over 30 years, hope for the decisions and resolutions to have greater progress in human

rights area, which will be drawn by this "World Conference", which is the milestone in the human history. We realize that, the people of similar nations likewise, who live in the suffocated and unhealthy evil society under the lack of democracy and human rights, will be expecting likely. We all believe that, undoubtedly, this 'World Conference' which is held coincidentally to fulfil the urgent needs of the world situation, will give solutions to the problems related to the human rights violations, which has being occurred in many countries including Burma. We recognize and give thanks for ever to the efforts and good-will of the delegates, for re-affirming the universality of the human rights, which is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Above all, we, on behalf of the Burmese people deeply wish to gain the purposes of this 'World Conference'."

(The letter was signed and dated and the name of the prison mentioned. We have deleted these in the interests of the safety of the authors).

Note to editors: the day of action includes demonstrations - many with Aung San Suu Kyi masks and birthday cakes - outside Myanmar embassies in London, Vienna, Rome, Tel Aviv and Canberra. In Prague, the Czech President Václav Havel is expected to issue a statement calling for Aung San Suu Kyi's release. Amnesty International local and national groups around the world are sending birthday cards and faxes to the Myanmar government protesting at the political leader's continued detention. For details of local events, contact individual Amnesty International Section offices.

Weekly Update NWS 11/62/93

3. ASA 29/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL
EMBARGOED FOR 29 JUNE 1993

MALDIVES: POLITICAL PRISONERS, INCLUDING PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE, STILL HELD AFTER THREE YEARS

Amnesty International today issued a report detailing the cases of over three dozen political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, who have been detained since 1990 in the Republic of Maldives and called on the government to take action to safeguard human rights.

Some were arrested in March 1990 for distributing leaflets which alleged that there had been vote-rigging during parliamentary elections in November 1989. Others were arrested in November and December 1990 in connection with an alleged conspiracy to explode petrol bombs during the fifth summit of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation in the capital, Male', and for planning other acts of violence.

Several people involved in these cases were journalists and writers who had been critical of the government during a period of liberalization which followed the elections. Another group of prisoners whose cases have a political dimension were arrested for attacking the home of the Head of the Police in August 1991. Some of those arrested have now been released, but others remain imprisoned.

Not all the prisoners have been charged or tried and some have been held for long periods without trial. Others were sentenced to periods of imprisonment or banishment after trials which failed to meet international standards for fair trial. For example, at least 15 were charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was passed in December 1990 and applied retroactively. Some were ill-treated while under interrogation by the police.

The ill-treatment suffered by prisoners included being held in solitary confinement for long periods while under interrogation. Prisoners have also described being held in hinged hand-cuffs, which greatly restricted their movement and chafed their wrists, for up to six weeks during their solitary confinement. Some complain of lasting weakness as a result.

Amnesty International delegates visited the Republic of Maldives in November 1991 and October 1992 and talked with government officials about the organization's concerns. The organization's requests to observe the trial of one political prisoner and to visit Dhoonidhoo detention centre and Gamadhoo prison were refused.

Amnesty International is urging the government of the Maldives to implement a series of human rights safeguards to ensure that: people cannot be detained on grounds of conscience; trial procedures conform to internationally accepted standards of fairness; and prisoners are humanely treated. It is also calling for the immediate release of any existing prisoners of conscience, a review of the cases of all other political prisoners who are serving sentences, and for political prisoners detained without trial to be released or promptly charged and tried.