
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 103/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERSAI INDEX: NWS 11/103/93
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICEDISTR: SC/PO
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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - NICARAGUA, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, EQUATORIAL GUINEA, CHINA

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Nicaragua - 20 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 102

Translation into English of Spanish item enclosed. Another item is being written following tit-for-tat hostage-taking by the other side.

Trinidad & Tobago - 23 August

Item enclosed has been sent to Caribbean and British media.

Saudi Arabia - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

Sudan - 29 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Yemen - 26 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 95

North Korea - 1 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Myanmar - 8 October (international).

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October (international)

Venezuela - 10 November (international, linked to EJEs & Disappearances)

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AI INDEX: AMR 43/WU 02/93 (English Translation)
20 AUGUST 1993

NICARAGUA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS HOSTAGE-TAKING BY "RECONTRA" GROUP

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the taking hostage of a group of about 40 people, among them government officers and members of the National Assembly, by group 3-80 of the "recontras", (former "contra" rebels who had fought against the previous Sandinista government). This group refused to accept the programme of demobilization which, under international supervision, took place following the coming to power of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in 1990.

The incident took place in Quilalí, department of Nueva Segovia, on 19 August 1993, when a delegation of government officials and representatives were negotiating economic conditions prior to the demobilization of the "recontras" with group 3-80. The delegation had travelled to Quilalí from the capital Managua at the request of the Special Disarmament Brigade.

Among those kidnapped are Carlos Gallo, President of the Human Rights Commission of the National Assembly; Doris Tijerino, member of the National Assembly and of the Human Rights Commission of the Nicaraguan Parliament; Mario Garache, Vice Minister of Labour; Nora Argüello, Vice Minister of Social Welfare; and Lieutenant Colonel Jorge Ernesto Sosa, Head of the Military's Special Disarmament Brigade and its deputy head, Captain Iván Portocarrero.

According to information received by Amnesty International, the motive for the kidnapping is to blackmail the government of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. The group has told the government that they intend to kill the hostages if their demand for political changes are not met.

Amnesty International unreservedly condemns human rights abuses such as hostage-taking and deliberate and arbitrary killings by armed opposition groups. The organization therefore urges the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages.

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AI INDEX: AMR 49/WU 02/93
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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGENTLY APPEALS TO GOVERNMENT TO HALT
TOMORROW'S EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International has today written to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago urgently requesting them to stop the hanging of two men due to be executed tomorrow, Tuesday 24 August.

Death warrants were issued last Thursday to the two men, Michael Bullock and Irvin Phillips, who have been under sentence of death for murder since 1983 and 1988 respectively. Amnesty International is concerned that Trinidad and Tobago is renewing attempts to resume executions - the last execution in Trinidad and Tobago was carried out in 1979.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally and believes that premeditated killing by the state can never be justified. It is wrong in all cases.

In November and December 1992 five other prisoners came very close to being executed. They filed a constitutional motion arguing that to execute them years after their appeals had been exhausted would be a violation of due process, and that such delay was "cruel and unusual" punishment in violation of the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution. The motion was dismissed by the High Court and the Court of Appeal, but an appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) in London, Trinidad and Tobago's final court of appeal, for a final decision is pending.

Furthermore, a decision is still pending at the JCPC on the case of two Jamaican prisoners under sentence of death who are appealing on the grounds that to execute them would be unconstitutional as it would constitute cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, in view of the time they have spent on death row. The decision of this appeal would apply to cases in Trinidad and Tobago and other countries which maintain the JCPC as their final court of appeal.

A Trinidad and Tobago Commission of Inquiry which reported to President Noor Hassanali in September 1990 recommended that the death sentences of prisoners sentenced over 10 years ago be commuted to life imprisonment. While the previous government had accepted the recommendations, the present government reportedly rescinded their acceptance. At least one prisoner who should have benefited from this recommendation - Michael Bullock - is facing imminent execution.

Amnesty International was shocked by the killing of Commissioner of Prisons Michael Hercules on 14 August, reportedly when robbers attempted to steal his car, and is aware of the increase in the crime rate. But while expressing its sympathy for the victims of these crimes, the organization stresses that killing more people is not the solution and calls on the government to take measures which will deal effectively with the problem.

Amnesty International fears that the execution of Michael Bullock and Irvin Phillips after 14 years might lead to other hangings in Trinidad and Tobago. It has urged the government to follow the courageous example of the Government of Grenada which two years ago this month commuted the death sentences of 14 former military and government officials, sentenced to death for the murder of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and others in October 1983.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago not to resume executions and calls on the international community to condemn in the strongest possible terms the intention to execute these two men and any others in the future.

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AI INDEX: AFR 24/WU 01/93
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EQUATORIAL GUINEA: SECURITY FORCE KILLINGS ON ISLAND OF ANNOBON

Amnesty International is concerned that at least two people were extrajudicially executed on 13 August by a member of the Equatorial Guinean security forces on Annobon, a tiny island of 2,000 inhabitants situated 670km from the capital, Malabo, on Bioko island.

The killings occurred in the wake of what the government termed "a rebellion", when between 20 and 30 people were reportedly arrested, severely beaten and taken to Bata, the capital of the mainland province of Río Muni, where they are being held in the central prison.

According to reports, the killings occurred after an argument in a bar between two government officials and a group of civilians. One official, a soldier, is said to have assaulted a member of the group and then reached for his gun. Other members of the group, which was not armed, overpowered and disarmed the officials. News of the scuffle reached the military barracks and shortly after about a dozen soldiers arrived at the scene shooting indiscriminately to disperse the crowd.

One soldier pursued Manuel Villarrubia, shot him in the leg, followed him onto the beach and shot him several times at close range. After killing Manuel Villarrubia, the same soldier reportedly shot dead Simplicio Llorente outside the front door of his house.

That evening, the Malabo authorities sent the Bata-Malabo ferry to Annobon carrying approximately 200 armed members of the youth wing of the ruling *Partido Democrático de Guinea Equatorial*, (PDGE), Equatorial Guinea Democratic Party, also known as the "Antorchas" (Torches), and other security personnel to quell the "rebellion". On landing, they reportedly went on the rampage, burning houses and crops and killing animals. On 15 August the ferry returned to Bata carrying the detainees.

The government issued its own version of the incident on 17 August. It claimed that a group of 50 armed agitators sent from Malabo by certain opposition political parties and the Spanish Government, had tried to kidnap, and had severely beaten, the governor of Annobon. The official version goes on to say that two people were killed during an exchange of fire between the soldiers and the intruders. Both the opposition and the Spanish Government have categorically denied involvement.

Unrest on the island is not new. In the past two years the people have protested on many occasions that the government has left them in a state of abject poverty. These protests reportedly led to arrests in June 1993. The situation is said to have deteriorated recently as no food or medical supplies have reached the island for over a year.

This is the latest in a series of incidents involving arrests and ill-treatment of political opponents of the government since July 1993 when the government announced that the country's first multi-party elections would be held in September 1993. Elections have since been postponed.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Equatorial Guinea for a full and impartial inquiry to be made into the killings, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

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CHINA: DISSIDENT FORCED INTO EXILE AFTER BEING REFUSED ENTRY INTO CHINA

A former prisoner of conscience, Han Dongfang, has been refused permission to go back to China after being allowed to leave the country to receive medical treatment in the United States.

Han Dongfang has reportedly had his passport revoked by the Chinese authorities and is effectively stateless. Amnesty International is concerned that he is being forced into exile and that this is a violation of his right to return to his own country.

Han Dongfang was detained without trial for 22 months after the Chinese government's suppression of the pro-democracy movement in June 1989. A former railway worker, he founded the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation, a union which supported the student-led movement for democracy.

Han Dongfang left China on 1 September 1992 to be treated for tuberculosis which he contracted while in detention. On 13 August 1993, using a valid passport, Han Dongfang flew back to China, to Guangzhou, in Guangdong province. However, the following day he was reportedly arrested by public security bureau officers and taken by train to Lowu in Hong Kong where he is now awaiting a decision from the Chinese authorities. The Hong Kong government have granted Han Dongfang a one-month temporary visa enabling him to stay in Hong Kong.

According to The New China News Agency (NCNA), China's official news agency, Han Dongfang had broken promises he had made to the authorities before he left China. NCNA stated that "Han Dongfang was released on probation to seek medication by the authorities last September. Before he left he promised not to undertake any activities against the Chinese Constitution or that will damage the National interest. But since Han arrived in the United States he broke his promises completely. Because of this, the concerned authority of the Chinese Government, in accordance to the Law, decided not to let him enter into Chinese territory".

According to earlier reports, however, Han Dongfang is not on probation - NCNA had announced on 29 November 1991 that all charges had been dropped against Han Dongfang and that he would be "exempt from prosecution" because he had "turned himself in" to the authorities in June 1989.

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