

***The Wire* June 2001**

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Refugees at risk

Refugees in Guinea have been at the centre of a human rights crisis since cross-border hostilities intensified. AI delegates heard harrowing accounts of their ordeal during recent visits to the region.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees have been caught up in fighting between Guinean security forces and armed groups from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. The country's 450,000 Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees – already vulnerable to killings and abductions by armed groups – have also been made deliberate targets by Guinean security forces since fighting began in September 2000. They were singled out for arrest, killings, torture and ill-treatment after Guinean President Lansana Conté accused refugees of supporting or assisting armed groups from their own countries.

This accusation also incited Guinean civilians, who had previously welcomed and absorbed the refugees into their communities, to turn against them. The refugees had sought safety and refuge in Guinea, some for as long as 10 years, after fleeing their own countries to escape internal armed conflicts marked by killings, rape, mutilation, abduction and forced recruitment. Thousands have now been forced to return to Sierra Leone to escape the violence in Guinea.

Within Guinea refugees have met obstruction, harassment, extortion and deplorable conditions in their attempt to move away from border areas or to leave the country. Refugee camps have been burned to prevent them from returning. Efforts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide assistance and move refugees from volatile border areas have been curtailed by insecurity. Large concentrations of refugees were cut off from humanitarian assistance for several months, particularly in an area known as Parrot's Beak, which is edged by borders of all three countries.

Guinean civilians have also been killed, raped and abducted during cross-border incursions by armed groups. As many as 200,000, possibly more, Guinean civilians have been forced to leave their homes: towns such as Guéckédou and villages were destroyed and almost completely deserted.

By April 2001 more than 50,000 refugees, in desperation, had risked returning to Sierra Leone, many of them on foot through rebel-held areas. Some of those crossing the border into Kono and Kailahun Districts faced further abuse from rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF): women and girls have been raped, some of them abducted, and men and boys have been forcibly recruited to fight or work in diamond mines. Still unable to return to the homes they were forced to leave years earlier, they have once again found themselves in camps, this time in their own country.

When AI delegates visited Guinea and Sierra Leone in March and April 2001, they heard many harrowing accounts from refugees. A 75-year-old Sierra Leonean told how five of his grandchildren, the youngest aged 10 years, were abducted by the RUF when Nongoa was attacked on 9 March 2001. A few days later his son was arrested by Guinean security forces after being denounced by a civilian as one of the rebels. His body was later found with his throat and stomach cut.

One man, aged around 40, who fled Guinea in late December 2000 to return through Kono District, described being separated from his wife by the RUF in Jagbwema: "Women, children and old men were allowed to go, but we [the other men] were held back. The RUF told us: 'Now you are staying

with us, we will train you to be rebels'. I managed to escape after a few days." He also reported that people caught mining diamonds without permission from rebel forces were killed.

AI has repeatedly called for urgent and effective action to protect the many thousands of refugees in Guinea. Failure to move refugees earlier from border areas – where the outbreak of hostilities had long been predicted – contributed to the enormous scale of the disaster. Under international refugee law, the Guinean authorities are obliged to protect refugees and ensure the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee camps. Although conditions for promoting voluntary repatriation to Sierra Leone have not been fulfilled, the crisis in Guinea has forced refugees to choose the “least worst option” and return to Sierra Leone where the situation remains insecure and hundreds of thousands of people are still internally displaced. The international community and UNHCR should ensure that refugees are protected against human rights abuses in Guinea, are able to make free and informed choices on whether to return to their country, and are able to do so in safety and dignity.

Tiananmen Mothers fight for justice

“ A person can make many different choices. I made the choice of documenting death. I have scaled a mountain of corpses and I have floated in the tears of the victims’ families”. Ding Zilin, spokesperson for the Tiananmen Mothers.

Twelve years ago, on 4 June 1989, hundreds of unarmed civilians were massacred in Beijing following peaceful pre-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square and around China. Subsequently thousands of demonstrators were arrested in major cities and provinces. Despite appeals from all over the world, the government still refuses to hold a public inquiry into the events of that day.

A group of more than 130 mothers of victims of the massacre have courageously continued to campaign for justice, despite persistent government intimidation and persecution. Known as the “Tiananmen Mothers”, they have worked to gather details of the deaths on that day, publicly challenged the government’s cover up, and repeatedly called for a public and impartial inquiry as well as compensation for the families of those killed or injured.

As another anniversary approaches, they are again calling on the government to bring those responsible for the killings to justice, and provide compensation for the victims and their families. It was soon after the 1989 massacre, that Ding Zilin, a bereaved mother, decided to break the silence and document the deaths of those who were killed. Ding Zilin, spokesperson of the group, has been repeatedly harassed, detained and put under constant surveillance yet she continues to live in Beijing and fight for justice. Over the years she and the other mothers have managed to compile a list of 155 dead and 65 wounded. The list is nowhere near complete, but it is the most thorough record of Tiananmen’s victims ever made public.

The Tiananmen Mothers have petitioned the Chinese Procurator General and requested dialogue with the government. Their requests have never been granted. Instead the Tiananmen Mothers have faced short-term imprisonment, police harassment and loss of earnings. Overseas humanitarian donations earmarked for the victims’ families have been frozen by the authorities.

In June 2000 the Tiananmen Mothers launched a petition requesting the right to mourn peacefully in public; the right to accept humanitarian aid; an end to the persecution of the victims of the massacre; the release of all people still imprisoned for their role in the protest; a full and open inquiry and an end to impunity for the perpetrators. The petition <http://www.fillthesquare.org> is supported by AI, Human Rights in China and other human rights organizations.

The Tiananmen Mothers still need your support in their fight for accountability, compensation and justice. Send appeals to: President of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zemin Guojia Zhuxi, Beijingshi, People's Republic of China and Premier of the People's Republic of China, Zhu Rongji Zongli, Guowuyuan, 9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie, Beijingshi 100032, People's Republic of China.

Isolation fears over Turkey's new prisons

AI urges the authorities to ensure new regimes in prisons do not lead to torture and ill-treatment of inmates.

A new style of prison in Turkey has sparked fears that prisoners will be put at greater risk of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The old system of large dormitories, which used to hold 60 or more prisoners, is being replaced with smaller cells, mainly in so-called F-Type prisons. Four F-Type prisons are already in use, and seven more are being constructed.

Prisoners, their families, human rights defenders and other civil organizations have been concerned that the new cell-type system introduces regimes of isolation, thus increasing the risk of torture or ill-treatment of inmates.

The move by the Turkish authorities has provoked major protests and clashes in prisons, which were ended by force. Since October 2000, some thousand political prisoners and their relatives have taken part in a hunger strike – which has so far claimed 22 lives.

In December 2000, the Justice Minister promised that Article 16 of the Anti-Terror Law – which lays down the draconian regime of isolation – would be amended before any prisoners were transferred to F-Type prisons. He also pledged to issue regulations for F-Type prisons and a social consensus on how they would be managed. However a few days later security forces moved into 20 prisons and, in an operation during which 30 prisoners and two soldiers died, they transferred hundreds of prisoners to three newly-opened F-Type prisons.

Two weeks later, in early January 2001, AI and Human Rights Watch conducted a joint mission to Turkey in order to investigate the December prison operation and conditions of the F-Type prisons. During their investigations, AI received consistent reports of prisoners being beaten and tortured before, during and after transfer. In the F-type prisons, inmates are held in small cells either on their own or with up to two other prisoners. In the first weeks, they were not allowed outside the cells and some of them had no human contact for days except with guards. Visits from relatives and lawyers have been limited.

Article 16 was finally amended in May 2001 to allow prisoners the right to participate in communal activities such as sport and education and receive unobstructed visits. However, the wording of the law suggests that these rights will depend on individual prison resources and be provided at the discretion of the prison authorities. The communal activities would also be possible only within the “framework of rehabilitation and education programs developed for such prisoners”.

AI is urging the Turkish authorities to take the following measures to bring the situation in Turkish prisons into line with international standards: regimes of small-group isolation and solitary confinement in F-Type and other prisons should end immediately; prisoners should be allowed to spend at least eight hours of the day taking part in communal activities outside their living units; prisoners should never be tortured or ill-treated; an independent and comprehensive investigation should be launched

into the deaths and allegations of ill-treatment and torture during the December operation, the results made public and those responsible for human rights violations brought to justice; prisons should be open to the scrutiny of human rights defenders, including doctors and lawyers, to ensure they are run in accordance with Turkish law and international standards.

Trade unions under fire

As violence in Colombia escalates, trade unionists are increasingly being targets of paramilitary and guerilla group attacks.

Trade union members and activists are being killed, “disappear” and face threats and intimidation as the overall human rights situation in Colombia deteriorates.

At least 112 trade unionists were the victims of extrajudicial executions during 2000. In the first three months of this year, 35 union activists were killed – four times as many as last year – three “disappeared” and five survived assassination attempts. It is believed 300 trade union members also asked the Colombian Government for help in leaving the country.

AI is so concerned about this increase in attacks against Columbia’s trade unionists it is planning to call for a Commission of Inquiry when the International Labour Conference (ILC) meets this month (June 2001).

Colombia’s armed conflict has been characterized by the systematic and widespread violation of human rights, including “disappearances”, extrajudicial executions, torture and forced displacement. Trade unionists are among the most targeted.

The majority of attacks against trade unionists have been carried out by army-backed paramilitary groups, although guerilla groups have also targeted activists they believe to be collaborating with the security or paramilitary forces.

Successive Colombian governments have shown a clear lack of political will to tackle the problem at its roots, dismantling paramilitary groups and bringing to justice all those responsible for attacks on trade unionists.

This failure to act is made even more disturbing by evidence, uncovered by judicial investigations, linking state agents to cases of human rights violations against trade unionists. One example of this was the attempted murder of trade union leader Wilson Borja Díaz in December 2000, in which several active and retired military and police officers were found to be implicated. Immediately after the attack, national paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño admitted responsibility for it.

It is vital that the Colombian government urgently redresses this failure both because of the deteriorating security situation faced by organized labour and the direct responsibility of state institutions in human rights violations. Measures that the authorities should immediately take include providing adequate resources for protection programs; disbanding paramilitary groups and severing their ties with state agents; investigating fully and impartially all cases of human rights violations against trade unionists and bringing those responsible to justice.

Please write, calling on the authorities to take action. Send appeals to: President of the Republic, Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia. Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente.

Opinion piece

“Consensual” executions: One more indicator of the brutalizing futility of the death penalty

Timothy McVeigh was less than a week from execution in May when it was revealed that the FBI had withheld evidence in the case. The execution was put on hold. Convicted of the 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City in which 168 people were killed, McVeigh was due to become the first federal prisoner to be put to death in the USA since 1963.

Apart from illustrating the error-prone nature of US capital justice, the McVeigh case has highlighted another phenomenon. He had refused to appeal his sentence. In so doing, he was joining scores of state-level prisoners who have dropped their appeals and “asked” to be killed by their government. There have been over 90 “consensual” executions in the USA since 1977.

There may be any number of factors behind a prisoner’s decision not to pursue appeals – mental or physical illness, remorse, harsh prison conditions, a quest for notoriety – but whether or not they are deluding themselves about the control they have gained over their fate, the state is guilty of a far greater deception. It is peddling its own illusion of control: that, by killing a selection of those it convicts of murder, it can offer a positive contribution to efforts to defeat violent crime.

“Consensual” cases cast a particular spotlight on capital punishment’s failure as a deterrent. Aaron Foust, for example, refused to appeal his sentence and spent less than a year on death row before being executed in Texas in 1999. He said: “I’ve always been ready to die. George Bush and the state of Texas ain’t taking nothing away that I wasn’t willing to give them. I’ve been ready to give up my life for a long time.” These are not the words of a man who had been deterred by the death penalty, a punishment which Foust said he supported.

Among these cases are several which illustrate a possible counter-deterrent effect. Daniel Colwell shot dead two people in 1996 after he found that he was unable to take his own life. At his trial he demanded a death sentence, threatening the jurors with violence if they did not meet his wishes. He remains on Georgia’s death row. Similar cases have resulted in execution, including of Thomas Akers in Virginia in March. He had long stated his wish to be put to death, even taking to wearing an electric chair pendant shortly before the 1998 crime which resulted in his execution 15 months later. Those who dismiss cases of “suicidal murderers” as statistically insignificant, should also consider evidence of a wider brutalizing effect attributable to the death penalty. For example, research in Oklahoma indicated that that state’s return to executions in 1990 led to a significant increase in the number of murders committed by strangers. Such findings have been repeated in other states.

We should not be surprised if the death penalty generates rather than deters violence. After all, this is a policy that carries with it the official message that killing is an appropriate response to killing. This is the same reasoning said to lie behind the carnage in Oklahoma City in 1995, an atrocity apparently motivated by revenge for killings attributed to the federal government.

Some have expressed concern that Timothy McVeigh’s execution could lead to retaliatory acts by individuals who share his political beliefs. Indeed, other countries have come to realise that in such cases the death penalty risks creating martyrs and fuelling anti-government violence. What is more, a clear majority of countries have recognized the brutalizing futility of a cruel and costly policy which brings no measurable benefit to society and diverts resources from genuine efforts to help the victims of violent crime and their families. The USA is way out of step on this issue.

The McVeigh case, with all its attendant scrutiny, presented the United States with a singular opportunity to announce to the widest possible audience that it would no longer adopt the philosophy of the murderer, but instead would begin to move away from the death penalty. Regrettably, a majority

of US politicians continue to support this policy of symbolic extermination because it is politically easier to do so than to explore the alternatives.

For more information read *The illusion of control: "Consensual" executions, the impending death of Timothy McVeigh, and the brutalizing futility of capital punishment* (AMR 51/053/2001, April 2001).

Worldwide appeals

ARMENIA: Imprisonment of conscientious objectors

Conscientious objectors are still being imprisoned in Armenia - contrary to the spirit of the agreement Armenia reached with the Council of Europe upon its accession to the organization in January 2001.

Karen Yegoian, a Jehovah's Witness, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for refusing to perform military service on religious grounds. He was arrested on 1 February 2001 – just one week after Armenia became a full member of the Council of Europe and agreed to honour the commitment to “adopt, within three years of accession, a law on alternative service in compliance with European standards and, in the meantime, to pardon all conscientious objectors”.

In November 2000, **Rafik Tonoian**, a 20-year-old Jehovah's Witness, was also sentenced to two years' imprisonment for refusing to serve in the army on religious grounds. He had voluntarily presented himself to the authorities on 28 August 2000 and was reportedly beaten and verbally abused by police officers. He subsequently suffered severe pain in his knee joints. It is not known whether any investigation has been opened into his allegations of ill-treatment while in pre-trial detention.

Military service in Armenia is compulsory and the law still offers no civil alternative. AI knows of some 20 prisoners of conscience, several of whom have reportedly been beaten in detention, who are currently in prison in Armenia as a result of their conscientious objection to military service.

Please write calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Rafik Tonoian, Karen Yegoian and others in order to show that the government is honouring the spirit of its commitment as a member of the Council of Europe. Also urge the Armenian authorities to open a prompt and impartial investigation into allegations that Rafik Tonoian was physically and verbally abused by police officers in pre-trial detention.

Send appeals to: President Robert Kocharian, Respublika Armenia, 375019 g. Yerevan, pr. Marshala Bagramiana, 26; Prezidentu Kocharianu R, ARMENIA. Fax: + 374 152 15 81 or +374 152 17 96 or +374 115 11 52.

Viet Nam - Prisoner of conscience held for his religious beliefs

Thich Thien Minh, a Buddhist monk, has been imprisoned since 1979 for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of religion. He is said to have protested to the authorities when the pagoda, where he practised as a monk, was taken over by the government. It was later razed to the ground. He was arrested initially for “attempting to overthrow the government” and given a life sentence.

In 1986 he was given a second life sentence for attempting to escape from prison. Both trials did not conform to accepted international standards; they were held *in camera*, he was not allowed to choose a defence lawyer and had no right to appeal. The UN Working group on Arbitrary Detention declared him to be a victim of arbitrary detention.

He is a member of the unofficial Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV) whose members have long been targeted by the government. Prior to the establishment of the current government in 1976 they ran a variety of social projects such as schools, orphanages, day-care centres and self-help projects as well as being involved in political activities. Since then their activities have been severely restricted and members have been imprisoned and officially harassed.

Whilst being held in a “re-education” camp he is reported to have endured harsh conditions including long periods of solitary confinement, shackling by hand and foot, and “hard labour”. Despite this he has reportedly continued to speak out against the injustice of his detention and the conditions under which he and other political prisoners are being held.

Please write calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Thich Thien Minh and others members of the UBCV held solely for practising their religious beliefs.

Send appeals to: Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, Hoang Hoa Tham, Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; Nguyen Dinh Loc, Minister, Ministry of Justice, 25 Cat Linh, Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Fax: + 844 8254835.

Saudi Arabia: Possible prisoner of conscience held without charge or trial

Dr Said bin Zu‘air, who was head of the Department of Information at Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa‘ud University, was arrested in early 1995 at his home in Riyadh by members of *al-Mabahith al-‘Amma* (General Intelligence). He is held in al-Ha‘ir Prison without charge or trial and has been denied the right to challenge the legality of his detention.

Dr Said bin Zu‘air is regarded as a critic of the state and is believed to be held on these grounds. He is reported to have refused to sign an undertaking to cease political activities in exchange for his release. He has not been allowed access to lawyers.

The government of Saudi Arabia continues to commit grave human rights violations. Since the launch of AI’s campaign against human rights violations in Saudi Arabia in March 2000, the government has made a number of undertakings to improve its human rights record, but continues to deny that there are any political prisoners or prisoners of conscience imprisoned in the country. Political and religious activists continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention without trial. Those brought to trial are invariably convicted and sentenced after secret and summary trials.

Please write, expressing your concern that Dr. Said bin Zu‘air may be held solely for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs and that he may therefore be a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally; asking for details of any charges or trial proceedings against him and urging that he be released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence; and seeking assurances that he is being humanely treated and that he will be granted regular access to lawyer, family and medical attention if necessary.

Send appeals to: His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road, Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Fax: +966 1 403 1185. Telegram: Minister of the Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Update on Néjib Hosni

Néjib Hosni, a Tunisian lawyer and human rights activist, featured in our March 2001 issue, was released last month, on 12 May, after five months detention as a prisoner of conscience.

His imprisonment enraged human rights defenders and the success of the international campaign for his release is a testament to global human rights solidarity. He was released following a presidential pardon which AI understands also annuls the ban on him practising as a lawyer. On his release he expressed his gratitude to all those who have campaigned so successfully on his behalf.

AI remains concerned about the ongoing harassment of human rights defenders in Tunisia.

News in brief

Kenya

It is with sadness that we report that Josephine Nyawira Ngengi died at the beginning of April 2001 after a long illness. An outspoken defender of human rights and prisoner of conscience, she was arrested and tortured in 1994 by Kenyan police. There has never been any investigation into her allegations of torture despite persistent campaigning by AI and other national and international organizations. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Philippines - Death sentences commuted

Since taking office in January 2001 President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has reportedly commuted the death sentences of at least 18 prisoners on death row. In March, newly appointed Secretary of Justice, Hernando Perez, stated that during his period of office he would recommend to the President the commutation of all confirmed death sentences, "except in the most extreme cases". The President was later reported to have stated that it was a matter for Congress to decide whether or not the death penalty should be abolished in law. About 1,700 prisoners remain under sentence of death, mostly for rape, murder or drug-trafficking.

Malaysia -Renewed use of draconian law to silence critics

A human rights defender and nine opposition activists were arrested by police in April under the Internal Security Act, which allows for indefinite detention without trial. They were denied access to relatives, lawyers and the Malaysian Human Rights Commission. More than 9,700 people around the world signed Amnesty International's online petition (www.stoptorture.org) calling for their release and urging that they not be tortured.

Colombia

Peace Brigades International (PBI) have been awarded the 2001 Martin Ennals Human Rights Defenders Award, for their work in Colombia which uses the presence of international volunteers to protect human rights defenders under threat. The annual award, named in honour of AI's first Secretary General, was presented by Hina Jilani, the UN Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders.

Morocco - Section status recognized

AI groups in Morocco have gained section status in recognition of their achievements in the field of protection and promotion of human rights. This will contribute to strengthening the already very active human rights movement in Morocco. The Moroccan Section will continue to play an important strategic role within AI's worldwide movement and will also support the development of AI and the promotion of human rights within the Middle East and North Africa in particular.

Brazil - For torturers it is business as usual

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture presented his report on Brazil to the UN Human Rights Commission in April 2001. The report is a damning indictment of the endemic use of torture throughout Brazil and of the failure of the state at every level to tackle this scourge.

Good News

Friendship beyond bars

In December 1999, East Timorese prisoner of conscience Francisco Branco was finally released. During his eight years of incarceration he formed a unique friendship with AI member Martin Dore. Here Martin, former chairman of Farnham AI Group in the UK, talks of the friendship that inspired them both.

Before the 1990s I knew nothing of Timor. I certainly never knew it was divided into two halves – with the west under Indonesian control and the east a Portuguese colony – or that in 1975 the east was invaded by Indonesia.

Francisco Branco, a loyal East Timorese, was working in the Indonesian civil service but secretly belonged to an independence movement striving for self-determination for his country. In 1991, he was arrested, interrogated, beaten and kept in solitary confinement for more than a year after the massacre of hundreds of Timorese students by the Indonesian army at the Santa Cruz cemetery. Francisco was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for subversion. He was transferred to a prison 1,000 kilometres from home, and his wife was only able to visit twice a year.

I heard about Francisco in a Christian human rights magazine. I decided to write to him, even though the prison authorities would not allow him mail. By some accident, he received one of my letters in August 1994. Frustrated at being unable to reply, Francisco and his fellow prisoners went on hunger strike until the authorities relented and allowed them to have visits from local Christians. In January 1996, to my amazement and delight, I received a reply.

The letter I received had been brought out of the prison by Roman Catholic nun, Sister Caritas Pi, and from then on she carried our letters in and out. At one point, Sister Caritas narrowly escaped imprisonment after bringing in a bag packed with cards and cakes. The prison guards opened the bag and took the cakes, leaving the cards unopened.

A deep friendship developed between Francisco and myself. We have the same Christian faith, with fairly large families who are precious to us. Francisco's wife, Ermelinda, was having to bring up their seven children on the meagre pay of a teacher.

Amnesty International adopted Francisco as a prisoner of conscience, and groups in Sweden and Japan were working for him and writing to him. Francisco made friends by letter all over the world. He told them about the plight of his people – becoming an ambassador in jail!

I spoke about Francisco to several AI groups in the UK, who then began writing to him. His personal, heartfelt replies inspired many young people to become really committed to Amnesty's work.

By 1998 I was in touch by e-mail with a surgeon who was visiting Francisco, and messages passed quickly between us. We managed to get hundreds of Christmas cards to the prisoners. Meanwhile, friends had smuggled a mobile phone into Francisco's cell, and he was now in touch with his home in Dili. He knew what was happening to his family during the horrific violence of September 1999, and sent three letters to me in a matter of days begging for our prayers and support. I heard how his wife and family, sheltering in a nearby convent had to leave before it was attacked, and how they climbed 1,000 feet to safety in the hills under cover of darkness. I heard how the militias had fired mortars at the refugees in the hills. But then came the wonderful letter that told me they were all safe!

Francisco was finally released, after eight years in prison, returning home on 10th December 1999, Human Rights Day.

In February 2000, I visited East Timor for the first time and finally met Francisco and his family. It was a joyous moment. In October of the same year, Francisco and Ermelinda travelled to Britain and Portugal, to meet and thank the many people who had supported them throughout the last few difficult years. It brought home to me how international is the bond of affection between those who stand up for justice!

Terms explained

Impunity

For Amnesty International's purposes, impunity is the deliberate failure of the state to bring to justice the perpetrators of grave crimes under international law, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture, "disappearances" and extra-judicial executions.

International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court (ICC), when it is established will be a permanent international judicial body which will prosecute individuals accused of the worst crimes known to humanity including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Amnesty International is lobbying all governments to ratify the Statute of the Court to bring about its prompt establishment (following the 60th ratification) and to ensure that it has the widest possible jurisdiction.

Universal Jurisdiction

Universal jurisdiction is the ability of a state's courts to investigate and prosecute anyone accused of a crime regardless where the crime was committed, the nationality of the accused or the victim or whether the specific interests of the state were harmed. In order to ensure that there are no safe havens for the perpetrators of crimes under international law, Amnesty International is lobbying all governments to enact legislation authorizing universal jurisdiction for the crimes.

For further information on these issues, please contact the International Justice Project, Amnesty International, One Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW. E-mail: ijp@amnesty.org

Reports and briefings

POL 10/001/2001. Amnesty International Report 2001

AFR 34/003/2001 Liberia. War in Lofa County does not justify killing torture and abduction.

ASA 17/001/2001 Peoples' Republic of China. Tiananmen - 12 years on.