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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 09/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Angola and data protection in the EC.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Malawi - 6 March 1992

A weekly update item to be sent to targeted press with a document on prison conditions, cruel punishment and detention without trial has been sent to you. The document has been sent in the weekly mailing.

CSCE - 23 March 1992 (Europe and North America only) (New information)

News release to accompany Finnish Section press conference on the day before the start of the Helsinki meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The IS press office will be mailing this news release only to European contacts, and Frank Johansson (Finnish Section press officer) will be making it available for the conference. European and North American press officers can use their own judgement about how they wish to deal with it. More information is contained in an internal item in last week's Weekly Update, NWS 11/08/92.

India - 25 March 1992

An international news release to go with publication for the campaign against rape, torture and deaths in custody. A launch is planned for London.

As well as the news release and document, the IS press office will be sending out the text of the Focus article on India, due to appear in April's International Newsletter, to most media contacts. Obviously, you may decide to do the same - but unfortunately the printed version will not be sent out to you until the week beginning 9 March 1992 which may be too late. However, many of you will already have received the text of the

article - if you need it and don't have it, please contact the IS press office and we will send it to you as soon as possible.

Togo - 8 April 1992

A document and targeted news release about impunity are scheduled for 8 April 1992, to coincide with the anniversary of a massacre on 10 April 1991.

Sudan - 15 April (New information)

A document is expected to be ready for 1 April weekly mailing. It will be accompanied by a news item, either a news release or a weekly update which the IS press office will be sending out to press contacts in Africa and the Middle East. More details when they are confirmed.

Turkey - 7 May (New information)

A document on increasing extrajudicial executions in Turkey, accompanied by a news release.

China (Tibet) - 20 May 1992

A document and news release to go with a small-scale campaign. More information when we get it.

POSSIBLE NEWS INITIATIVES, STILL TO BE CONFIRMED

South Africa - date probably end of April (New information)

The research team is planning a document, but as yet cannot give a definite date. It will have an international news release - we will keep you informed of a date, which currently seems likely to be the end of April. We hope to have more definite news of the embargo by next week.

Yugoslavia

The research team is currently working on a document on torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings in the war zones, following a recent mission. We will be considering a news release when the text is finalised.

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1. AFR 12/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
5 March 1992

ANGOLA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION VISITS ANGOLA

Two Amnesty International representatives are visiting the People's Republic of Angola in March 1992 for the first time since the country's independence in 1975. They will be inquiring into matters relevant to the protection of human rights within Amnesty International's mandate.

The delegates, Dr Belisário dos Santos Júnior, a Brazilian lawyer, and Gillian Nevins, a staff member of the organization's International Secretariat, expect to meet government officials as well as representatives of the Uniao Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, and other political parties. They will also be meeting representatives of non-governmental organizations and others involved in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The delegates will be seeking information about the current human rights situation in Angola. In particular, they will be making inquiries about the release of political prisoners and about recent reports of politically-motivated killings. They will also collect information about recent measures to protect human rights, including those introduced into the Angolan Constitution in 1991 and those guaranteed under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Angola acceded to in 1990 and 1992 respectively.

In accordance with the normal policy and procedures for such a visit, Amnesty International's delegates may speak publicly about the work of Amnesty International in general but they are not authorized to make any public statement about the content of their discussions in Angola. On their return they will report on the results of their visit to the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International.

Anyone requiring further information about Amnesty International's work in Angola should contact the Press Office at Amnesty International's International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, telephone (44)(71) 413 5500.

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1. DOC 22/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
5 March 1992

INTERNAL

This item is of particular interest to sections in EC countries. The IS press office has already received a couple of queries about the proposed EC data protection legislation, and has responded along the lines of the information in this item. However, we are still lobbying at the EC and at this stage do not wish to seek publicity about our concerns, as it may hamper our lobbying. So please feel free to use this item if you get inquiries, but don't actively seek coverage yet. Thanks.

EXTERNAL

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: AI CONCERNED ABOUT PROPOSED DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Amnesty International is very concerned about new data protection legislation, currently under discussion by the European Commission (EC).

At the moment, the International Secretariat of AI, based in London, is subject to the UK's data protection laws and sections in certain countries are subject to their national data protection laws. Amnesty International has also had its own policy on data protection since 1985. Now the EC plans to bring in EC-wide, stricter legislation, affecting the IS and all EC-based sections.

The proposed legislation contains very strict regulations about what information can be held and sent out about individuals, aimed at protecting personal privacy. While we welcome this EC-wide initiative on data protection, unfortunately the new laws, if passed as they currently stand, do not take human rights concerns into account and would seriously hamper the work of Amnesty International.

AI has been lobbying the EC for some time about the proposed legislation, through detailed submissions and meetings with the Commission, with Members of the European Parliament and with national authorities. However, the latest report on the proposals makes the situation for Amnesty International worse, rather than better.

The main issues are as follows:

There is no recognition of the need to collect and use personal data in the interests of human rights. Human rights organizations are not mentioned at all and no exceptions are proposed for them.

AI could not hold information about individuals (prisoners/victims of HR violations) without their consent. It would normally be impossible and often dangerous to the individuals to get this. The holding of "sensitive" data, such as details of criminal convictions, political affiliation and medical state, is specifically

prohibited. AI cannot operate without the ability to keep this type of information about prisoners and other individuals it has concerns about. This affects sections and groups as well as the IS.

People have unlimited right of access to files held about them. It may not always be in AI's interests to provide this access and could, for example, put sources at risk.

Personal data may not be transferred to other countries where there is no similar data protection legislation in force. This would mean, for example, that we could not send urgent actions (which contain personal information about individuals) to most Sections.

Extensive powers are given to national data protection authorities. These could possible lead to undue interference in our work.

We have also had concern about limitations on direct mail which could have major impact on fundraising. However it seems that these concerns are largely dealt with in the latest draft document.

If enacted in its present form, this legislation would bring Amnesty International's work to a standstill within the European Community.

Amnesty International believes that the EC should take account of human rights concerns when drafting its legislation, and will continue to lobby the EC to do so.