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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 21/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on China, Thailand, USA, Cambodia, Nepal and Indonesia.

There are a number of weekly update items mentioned below that will be sent to specialist media - in these cases those interested in Asia or Africa. We don't expect press officers to send out all of these weekly update items. Please use the letter sent to you recently which explains the rating system for news items.

1. NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

Lesotho - 2 June (New Information)

Weekly Update item sent in Weekly Update NWS 11/20/92 (last week) to go with document about torture.

Pakistan - 3 June

A document and targeted news release on arrests in Sind have now been sent to you.

People's Republic of China - 4 June (New Information)

Weekly Update item contained in this weekly update to correspond with the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Rwanda - 4 June (New Information)

Weekly Update item coming in an addition to this weekly update later in the week to go with document on Rwanda.

South Africa - 10 June

International news release and possibly two sets of questions and answers to go with publication on security force involvement in torture and political killings since the start of reforms.

Nepal - 17 June

Weekly Update item contained in this weekly update to go with a document on Nepal.

Greece - 24 June

International news release to go with a publication on ill-treatment.

Annual Report - 9 July

The embargo time is confirmed at 1300 hrs gmt. After the event we will be asking you for feedback about how the media coverage was, particularly in the light of the changed time.

The Annual Report summaries have now been sent to you. The updates will be with you in the first week of June.

UNCONFIRMED NEWS INITIATIVES

Côte d'Ivoire - possibly June (New Information)

Possible limited news release.

USA - possibly June/July (New Information)

The research team is working hard on a document about police brutality in Los Angeles. Because of the recent international publicity about the subject, we hope to bring the report out sooner than expected with a news release - though the tentative date of 18 June no longer stands. We are also currently working on a questions and answers on the subject which should be with you next week.

Indigenous People's Campaign

Discussions are currently under way at the IS about the media strategy for the report, which will have an embargo date in September/October. We are currently considering media materials, speakers, how to present the material, etc. As this is the first time we have done a report like this, we would like your input and think there should be an opportunity to discuss problems in advance. If you are interested in a conference call, please let us know.

SECTION NEWS INITIATIVES

US Section - Haiti Refugees news release

The US Section issued a press release last night about the US Government's decision to return Haitian asylum seekers to Haiti without any kind of refugee determination procedures. The Urgent Action team is sending out a UA this afternoon on the subject (AI Index: AMR 51/70/92). If you need a copy of the US Section news release, the IS press office will have a copy this afternoon, so please call us and we can fax it to you.

2. ASA 17/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL
4 June 1992

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: THOUSANDS REMAIN IN DETENTION THREE YEARS AFTER THE
TIANANMEN SQUARE MASSACRE

Three years after the suppression of peaceful pro-democracy protests which resulted in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in Beijing on 4 June 1989, human rights violations continue to be widespread in China. Thousands of political prisoners, including hundreds of prisoners of conscience, remain in detention. Unfair trial, torture, long-term detention without charge or trial and summary executions continue. There has been no attempt to introduce fundamental safeguards to prevent human rights violations, such as the use of torture to extract confessions.

Some prisoners of conscience have been sentenced since 1989 to life imprisonment following trials which fell far short of international standards for fairness. Others have been detained under administrative procedures not supervised by independent judicial bodies. Many political detainees who have been released in the past two years have been subjected to severe restrictions on their basic civil, economic and political rights.

Trials of dissidents accused of involvement in the 1989 protests have continued - between December 1991 and February 1992, ten dissidents were sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to five years, on various political charges. In March 1992 Chief Procurator Liu Fuzhi, referring to the post-1989 trials of dissidents, stated that "the trials are basically over. I would say there are several left". He also reportedly indicated that those whose trials were pending were to be dealt with "quickly and severely".

Detainees awaiting trial in Beijing include Bao Tong, Gao Shan and Wu Jiaxiang, all high-ranking members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and associates of former CCP Secretary General Zhao Ziyang.

Bao Tong is starting his third year in detention without trial. He was arrested in May 1989 and detained without charge for two and a half years. In January 1992 he was charged with "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement" and "leaking state secrets". Bao Tong, aged 59, is reportedly accused of having revealed to a few colleagues the government's plans to impose martial law in Beijing one day before it was announced publicly, on 20 May 1989. Since January 1992 his family have not been allowed to visit him and there are concerns that his health has deteriorated.

Gao Shan, a 34 year-old economist, until 1989 the deputy head of the Research Centre for the Reform of the Political Structure, a CCP think-tank then headed by Bao Tong, has been in detention since late June 1989 and is still awaiting trial. He was charged in January 1992 with "leaking state secrets", allegedly for telling students in Tiananmen Square that martial law would be imposed.

Wu Jiaxiang, a 37 year-old writer and political theorist, was reportedly detained in December 1990, and charged in February 1991 with "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement", though according to later reports he was also charged with "leaking state secrets". He is not known to have been tried and he is believed to have been unable to receive visitors in Qincheng prison, where he is held, since early 1992. His health is said to have deteriorated in recent months, but few reliable details are available.

Amnesty International is concerned that the three dissidents may be tried in secret under the pretext that charges against them include leaking state secrets. Unfair trials are the rule in China, and Amnesty International fears that proceedings held in secret may result in an even stronger bias against the defendants. Prisoners of conscience recently tried in secret include Qi Lin, a 36 year-old journalist, who was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in February 1992 on charges of "leaking state secrets", for telling a Taiwan newspaper about sanctions imposed against a prominent member of China's National People's Congress. Relatives and friends were unable to observe his trial. Qi Lin

reportedly appealed against his sentence, but the outcome of any appeal is unknown.

Chinese official sources have stated that more than 780 political prisoners have been sentenced since June 1989 in Beijing alone. Amnesty International believes that the figure for the whole of the PRC is in the thousands.

Amnesty International is calling on the authorities of the PRC to release immediately and unconditionally all prisoners of conscience, including Bao Tong, Gao Shan, Wu Jiaxiang and Qi Lin, and to account for the thousands of political prisoners who have been detained since the June 1989 crackdown. The organization is also requesting the Chinese authorities to allow international observers to observe the trials of dissidents who are yet to be tried.

3. ASA 39/WU 02/92 EXTERNAL
27 May 1992

THAILAND: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES RELEASE OF PROTESTORS AND REPEATS ITS CALL FOR A FULL INVESTIGATION INTO KILLINGS OF DEMONSTRATORS BY MILITARY

Amnesty International has welcomed the release of protestors detained during recent anti-government demonstrations in Thailand but has expressed concern that an amnesty may be granted to those responsible for the killing of demonstrators by the military in apparent extrajudicial executions. The organization has renewed its call for the thorough and impartial investigation of these killings.

The release of prisoners was announced on the evening of 20 May after King Bhumibol Adulyadej intervened in the country's growing crisis. A state of emergency had been declared on 18 May. Anti-government demonstrations had continued in Bangkok, and on 19 May spread to several other areas, including Songkhla, Phuket, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Tachasima and Si Sa Ket provinces. On 20 May, unconfirmed reports circulated in Bangkok that troops from the north and northeast of the country were moving towards the capital to stage a coup. That evening, the King gave an audience - which was broadcast on state television - to Prime Minister Suchinda Khraprayun, prisoner of conscience Chamlong Srimuang, who had been detained on 18 May for leading demonstrations against the Prime Minister, and Prem Tinsulanonda, former prime minister from 1980 to 1988 and now an adviser to the King. The King urged the Prime Minister and Chamlong Srimuang to negotiate a settlement and ordered the Prime Minister to accede to popular calls for democracy. The Prime Minister later agreed to support constitutional changes demanded by the opposition, which include the requirement that the Prime Minister be an elected member of the House of Representatives. Such an amendment would disqualify the present Prime Minister from the post. He also said that all those imprisoned in connection with the unrest would be released.

Chamlong Srimuang was released immediately; an estimated 3,000 further detainees were released the next morning. Many had been held at the Bang Khen Police School, where witnesses reported seeing them beaten by police commandos.

The number of people killed when security forces fired on demonstrators in recent days is not known. At least 40 people have died from gunshot wounds in hospitals in Bangkok (excluding military hospitals, which have given no figures), and many more are believed to have died on the streets. Their bodies were removed by the military. On 20 May the Prime Minister acknowledged only that 40 people had been killed in total, and 600 injured. Amnesty International believes the true figures to be considerably higher. So far, 589 have been reported as missing to non-governmental organizations who are trying to help victims and their relatives.

Before resigning as Prime Minister on 24 May 1992, General Suchinda Khraprayun signed a decree granting an amnesty to those involved in the violence, including those responsible for the killing of demonstrators. The decree was issued in the name of King Bhumibol Adulyadesj, and has yet to be approved by parliament. On 25 May, parliament referred the decree to a constitutional tribunal consisting of seven members from the ruling coalition, and six members from the opposition. The tribunal is expected to rule on legality of the decree within about one week. Opposition groups continue to call for General Suchinda Khraprayun and others they believe responsible for the killings to be brought to justice. On 26 May, Acting Prime Minister Meechai Ruechupan was reported to have said that General Suchinda Khraprayun and two military officials should stand trial for murder.

4. AMR 51/WU 07/92 EXTERNAL
27 May 1992

INTERNAL

In view of the heightened interest in the USA death penalty recently, this item is a chronological account prepared as additional background information on the most recent execution in the USA.

EXTERNAL

USA: ROGER COLEMAN EXECUTED IN VIRGINIA

Roger Coleman was executed in Virginia's electric chair as scheduled on 20 May 1992. "An innocent man is going to be murdered tonight," he said after being strapped into the chair. "When my innocence is proven, I hope Americans will realise the injustice of the death penalty as all other civilized countries have."

Coleman was convicted of the rape and murder of his sister-in-law, Wanda McCoy, in Grundy, Virginia, in 1981. He steadfastly maintained his innocence throughout his 11 years in prison and his lawyers sought to introduce fresh evidence in support of his claim. But the courts refused for procedural reasons to review the new evidence on its merits. When his lawyers inadvertently filed a notice of appeal one day late the US Supreme Court held that Coleman had forfeited his right to a review of his conviction and death sentence by the federal courts. A final appeal to the US Supreme Court was rejected by seven votes to two. Justice Harry Blackman, who dissented along with Justice David Souter, wrote: "Coleman has now produced substantial evidence that he may be innocent...yet the court turns him away."

Governor Douglas Wilder denied clemency to Roger Coleman on 18 May. Announcing the decision Governor Wilder told a press conference, "I am not convinced he is innocent." He declined to say if he believed Coleman was guilty, but asserted that the execution would do "no substantial injustice." In an editorial comment highly critical of Governor Wilder's action, the New York Times on 20 May said "he has toughened his former clemency standard, which required only a reasonable doubt about guilt."

In a bizarre move, Governor Wilder allowed Coleman to take a lie-detector test on the day of his execution. Coleman failed it. Because such tests are considered unreliable they are not, as a general rule, admissible in a court of law. Coleman's lawyers protested that the emotional stress of his situation distorted the results of the test, which is based on blood pressure measurements. However, Governor Wilder later told the press, "If he had passed...it could have affected what the ultimate result would have been," indicating that he may have been ready to reverse his decision not to intervene. The Governor had the power to grant a stay of execution as well as executive clemency.

The murder of Wanda McCoy went unsolved for five weeks before Coleman was arrested and charged. There were no witnesses to the murder, the murder weapon was never found, and forensic tests left room for doubt as to whether Coleman could have been the perpetrator. Coleman received poor legal representation at his trial: the two court-appointed lawyers later admitted that neither one had ever handled a capital trial before. Owing to their shortcomings, important alibi evidence supporting Coleman's claim that he was elsewhere during much of the time in which the crime took place was not presented at his trial.

According to the prosecution, in a matter of 10 minutes Coleman drove three miles, parked his truck, waded a stream, walked 350 yards uphill to McCoy's home, stabbed her, raped her twice, stabbed her again, then returned by the same route to his vehicle. Although the evidence against Coleman was purely circumstantial, prosecutors insisted there was no doubt about his guilt.

Roger Coleman was the fourteenth prisoner to be executed in Virginia over the past ten years. He

was the 175th prisoner executed in the USA since 1977 when states began to enact their current death penalty laws.

Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1984 (Ecosoc Resolution 1984/50), provide at (4) that "capital punishment may be imposed only when the guilt of the person charged is based upon clear and convincing evidence leaving no room for an alternative explanation of the facts." The circumstances suggest that this standard was not met in the case of Roger Coleman.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. In view of the many doubts raised in the case of Roger Coleman, Amnesty International had urged the governor of Virginia, Douglas Wilder, to take all necessary steps to prevent the execution from being carried out.

5. ASA 23/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
27 May 1992

CAMBODIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION VISITS CAMBODIA

An Amnesty International delegation is visiting Cambodia from 28 May to 7 June for discussions with Cambodian and United Nations officials about the need for greater efforts to improve human rights protection in the country.

The delegation, led by Hervé Berger, Amnesty International's Deputy Secretary General, is seeking the response of officials of the State of Cambodia to Amnesty International's recently published report, State of Cambodia: Human Rights Developments Since October 1991 (AI Index: ASA 23/02/92), which covers human rights events up to 31 January 1992.

This 150-page report details Amnesty International's concerns about: recent political killings; new arrests of apparently non-violent political activists; the continued detentions of political prisoners without charge or trial or after unfair trials; and continuing reports of ill-treatment of political prisoners held by the State of Cambodia. Amnesty International expressed concern in its report that such violations are continuing despite the Cambodian Government's human rights commitments under international law and under the provisions of the Cambodian Peace Agreement of 23 October 1992.

Amnesty International's report makes a number of recommendations to the State of Cambodia about how it can prevent further human rights violations in the parts of the country it administers. The report also includes the findings of an Amnesty International delegation which visited Cambodia in December 1991.

During the current visit, the Amnesty International delegation will be seeking updated information on human rights developments in the country since February. In addition to talks with State of Cambodia authorities, the delegation will seek meetings with leaders of other Cambodian political groups, including members of the country's Supreme National Council. The Amnesty International delegation also hopes to meet officials of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia to discuss the role of the UN in protecting human rights in the country during the transitional period defined by the peace agreement.

Hervé Berger is being accompanied by Derek G Evans, Head of Asia & Pacific Region, Research Department; Donna Guest, also a staff member of the International Secretariat; and Dr David P Chandler, Research Director of the Centre of Southeast Asian Studies at Monash University, Australia. Following their visit they will report on their findings to the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International.

6. ASA 31/WU 01/92 EXTERNAL
17 June 1992

NEPAL: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR FURTHER HUMAN RIGHTS SAFEGUARDS

Amnesty International is publishing a report today reviewing the human rights situation in Nepal since the political changes of 1990 when the country adopted a multi-party system of democratic government.

Amnesty International's report describes a pattern of widespread human rights violations which took place under previous governments during the 1980s and which to date the current government has taken little action to remedy. It also cites several recent reported violations of human rights under the government of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, including torture and extrajudicial killings. The most recent violations reportedly occurred on 6 April 1992, when at least seven people died after police opened fire on demonstrators in Kathmandu. Unofficial sources put the number of dead as high as 24.

In its report, Amnesty International acknowledges the improvement in the human rights situation which took place after the political changes of 1990, and the increased constitutional protection of human rights embodied in the 1990 constitution. However, the organization is concerned that despite constitutional changes and Nepal's accession to international human rights treaties, there have been few changes in the laws and procedures which in the past have facilitated arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

Amnesty International believes the reported recurrence of human rights violations against political opponents highlights the inadequacy of human rights protection in Nepal. The organization makes a series of recommendations to the Nepali Government to increase human rights protection, including recommendations on the prevention of torture, protection of the right to life, prevention of extrajudicial killings and prevention of arbitrary arrests and detentions. The organization is also urging the Nepali Government to carry out independent and impartial investigations into all human rights violations under both the previous and the current government, to make public the findings of the investigation and to bring to justice those responsible for such violations.

7. ASA 21/WU 03/92 EXTERNAL
27 May 1992

INDONESIA/EAST TIMOR: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS CONVICTED OF SUBVERSION

Amnesty International is appealing for the release of five prisoners of conscience who protested against the 12 November Santa Cruz massacre, during which Indonesian troops killed an estimated 100 unarmed participants in a memorial procession. Indonesian state prosecutors claimed that subversion charges against two of the defendants were warranted because of their involvement with Renetil, an organization which peacefully opposes East Timor's integration with Indonesia.

Fernando de Araujo, an East Timorese student aged 26, was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment on 25 May. The following day another student, 36-year-old João Freitas da Camara, was sentenced to a ten-year prison term. Both were charged under Indonesia's vaguely-worded and sweeping Anti-Subversion Law and were brought to trial at the District Court of Central Jakarta. When delivering the verdict against Fernando de Araujo, Judge Wahono Baed reportedly said that the defendant was guilty of undermining the Indonesian Government and "disgracing the nation in the eyes of the international community".

The two men were among five people brought to trial for organizing or participating in a peaceful protest demonstration in Jakarta on 19 November 1991. During the demonstration protesters went to the United Nations offices and read a statement calling for a referendum on East Timor's political future and for inquiries into the Santa Cruz massacre. At least 70 people were arrested at the demonstration but most were released after short periods in detention.

Domingos Barreto and Virgilio da Silva Guterres, two other East Timorese students arrested during the 19 November protest, were charged under Articles 154 and 155 of Indonesia's Criminal Code. The articles define the public expression of "hostility, hatred or contempt toward the Government" as a criminal offence. Domingos Barreto was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on 12 May. The judge reportedly said that the sentence was light because the defendant protested only against the Santa Cruz massacre and not against East Timor's integration with Indonesia. Virgilio da Silva Guterres was sentenced on 19 May to two and a half years' imprisonment. The trial of Agapito Cardoso, also charged with publicly insulting the government during the Jakarta protest, is believed to be in progress. Amnesty International believes that all three are prisoners of conscience.

The Indonesian authorities have justified the suppression of non-violent opposition to Indonesian rule in East Timor on the grounds that integration with Indonesia was achieved by law. Such claims have been regularly disputed within the General Assembly of the United Nations, which has not accepted Indonesian jurisdiction over the territory. Moreover, the expression of non-violent opposition to state policy is a wholly legitimate activity; the right to engage in such activity is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and protected by international human rights law.

Since the military invasion of East Timor in 1975, evidence has emerged of gross and systematic human rights violations by the Indonesian security forces. Violations have included the killing, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary detention of real and suspected political opponents and - most recently - the Santa Cruz massacre. It is a matter of grave concern that efforts to protest against such violations have been construed as evidence of subversive activity.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 21/92

This addition to the Weekly Update includes items on Rwanda, Ethiopia/Eritrea and Pakistan.

1. AFR 47/WU 01/92
4 June 1992

INTERNAL

This item is being sent by the IS with the report to selected international media and UK based correspondents of media interested in Africa.

EXTERNAL

RWANDA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPEALS FOR END TO WIDESCALE PERSECUTION OF THE TUTSI PEOPLE

Amnesty International has appealed to Rwanda's new government of national unity to end widescale persecution of the country's minority Tutsi population.

In a 33-page report published this week, Rwanda: Persecution of Tutsi minority and repression of government critics, 1990-1992, Amnesty International says that more than 1000 Tutsi have been extrajudicially executed since 1990 while dozens of others have "disappeared" or been tortured while detained without trial. Yet those responsible for such violations have been able to act with impunity.

Most of the violations occurred following an armed invasion of northern Rwanda in October 1990 by Rwandese exiles, mostly Tutsi, belonging to the Front Patriotique Rwandaise (FPR), Rwandese Patriotic Front. The FPR committed serious abuses including deliberate and arbitrary killings of captives and civilians, and were met with a violent response by government security forces drawn primarily from Rwanda's majority Hutu population. The security forces, often supported by armed Hutu civilians, attacked Tutsi suspected of supporting or sympathising with the rebels. In the northeast, several hundred Tutsi were reportedly killed in October 1990 in the Mutara region by government soldiers and their Hutu supporters and more than 500 others were killed in the northwest in early 1991. Over 8000 people, mostly Tutsi, were detained without trial, including prisoners of conscience. Some were tortured or ill-treated and dozens "disappeared".

Amnesty International said that virtually all those detained had been released by the end of February 1992 under an amnesty in December 1991 and that only a few were brought to trial and convicted. It had welcomed these releases but said it was looking to the new government to take immediate action to prevent further human rights violations. "It is not enough for the government

simply to release prisoners" Amnesty International said, "action must be taken to hold the security forces to account and to end the impunity which has allowed them to violate human rights for years. We fear that the government is now using the December 1991 amnesty to justify not holding any inquiry and bringing those responsible for human rights violations to justice."

Amnesty International said the most recent reports it had received of killings of Tutsi villagers were in March when at least 150 Tutsi were killed in Kanzenze and other districts south of the capital, Kigali.

"The perpetrators seem to have been armed Hutu gangs but there are disturbing reports that the security forces may have assisted in the killings or at least chose not to interfere and put a stop to them until there was an outcry" Amnesty International said. "We are calling for a full investigation and for the government to affirm its commitment to human rights by bringing to justice soldiers and officials responsible for extrajudicial executions, torture and other abuses."

Amnesty International is also calling for an end to imprisonment and other forms of repression against government critics. Several dozen Hutu and journalists have been targeted for human rights abuses because of they exercised their right to freedom of expression and association.

2. AFR 25/WU 01/92
2 June 1992

INTERNAL

Translations of the document, "Ethiopia and Eritrea: The human rights agenda", AI Index: AFR 25/09/91, November 1991, in Amharic, Tigrinya (for Eritrea, especially) and the Oromo language are now available.

EXTERNAL

ETHIOPIA: EXHUMATION OF VICTIMS OF "DISAPPEARANCES" AND EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

The bodies of thousands of victims of extrajudicial executions committed by the former Mengistu government, overthrown a year ago, have been recently exhumed in Ethiopia. The bodies so far recovered include those of four victims of "disappearances" whose cases had been taken up by Amnesty International: they were exhumed with about thirty other bodies from a secret burial site, an expropriated villa near Addis Ababa used for secret detentions and killings under the Mengistu government. All four - Reverend Gudina Tumsa, head of the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church, Abuna Theopilos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Kassa Wolde-Mariam, former Minister of Agriculture and President of Addis Ababa University, and Haile Fide, former Chairman of the Me'isone Central Committee - had "disappeared" in July 1979. The Reverend Gudina Tumsa had been severely tortured and his limbs were broken before he was killed.

Those exhumed also include former Emperor Haile Selassie, who was murdered in 1975 and his body dumped under former President Mengistu's office; thousands of victims of the official "Red Terror" campaign of 1977-1978 who were killed all over the country; and 60 officials and former officials who were summarily executed in November 1974 and buried in a mass grave in the Central Prison at Addis Ababa. In some towns monuments have been erected to the victims of the "Red Terror".

However, a year after President Mengistu Haile-Mariam was ousted in May 1991, no trials of those responsible for torture or killings have yet opened, either in Ethiopia or Eritrea. The Special Procurator's Office for prosecuting former officials, the creation of which was announced in Addis Ababa in February 1992, has apparently still not started work. Investigations by "Red Terror committees", public denunciations, dismissals and arrests of former officials continue, bringing to over 2,000 the number of those detained in Ethiopia in connection with alleged human rights violations.

3. ASA 33/WU 03/92
2 June 1992

PAKISTAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS OF INDIAN DIPLOMAT DETAINED AND TORTURED BY MILITARY

On 29 May Amnesty International expressed concern to the Government of Pakistan over reports that an Indian diplomat, Rajesh Mittal, had been detained and tortured, apparently by members of the military intelligence service, Inter Services Intelligence, on 24 May in Islamabad.

According to reports in the international press, Rajesh Mittal was abducted on the morning of 24 May and held in detention for several hours during which he was blind-folded, beaten and given electric shocks. When he returned to the Indian High Commission there were reportedly large swellings on his head and face, bruises on his body, and marks on his wrists and ankles where he had apparently been tied up. He is reported to have been in severe pain, unable to walk and only able to talk with difficulty. He said his abductors had also threatened to subject his parents and children to ill-treatment.

Amnesty International pointed out to the Government of Pakistan that the prohibition of torture is a fundamental norm of international law which is enshrined in a number of international human rights instruments. Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". No derogation from this article may be made under any circumstances.

Amnesty International urged the Government of Pakistan to initiate an independent and impartial investigation into the alleged incident of torture and to make its findings public as soon as possible. The organization further urged the Government to ensure that any persons found to have been responsible for torturing Rajesh Mittal are brought to justice.