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International Secretariat
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TO: PRESS OFFICERS

FROM: PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 29/92

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Iran and China.

1. SECTION INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 9 July

The Annual Report seems to have been a big media success and we'd like to confirm this by gathering all the international press clippings that we can - particularly in the light of the changed embargo time.

If you have not already done so, please would you send copies of your national media coverage to the IS Press Office.

Syria Q&A - correction

Please note that the AI Index of the Syria questions and answers should be "MDE 24/20/92".

Good News Video - Correction

Please note that in the script of the Good News Compilation 1991-1992, which was distributed recently together with the 1992 Annual Report Electronic News Release, the first two lines of the second paragraph of statement 7 (Ibrahim Serfaty) should read: "Personally, the first letter came to me from a group in western Austria" (ie. not "Western Australia").

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Uganda - 9 September

A report, news release and FOB (fold out brochure) to go with a campaign focusing on extrajudicial executions, detention and torture.

Indigenous People's Campaign - 7 October

Discussions are currently under way at the IS about the media strategy for the report. 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 telephone conference call, please let us know.

Myanmar - 28 October

(New Information)

A report and news release on Myanmar, to go with a campaign to coincide with the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Targeted and Limited News Releases

Somalia - 29 July

(New Information)

A limited news release is being prepared to go with a short document *Somalia: A Human Rights Disaster*. The document deals with a massacre of civilians in April 1992 and other human rights violations in the context of the civil war. The news release will be with you by the end of the week and the document is being faxed to sections which have a co-ordinator on Somalia. If any other sections wish to have the document, please contact the IS. Sorry for the short notice, but as Somalia is currently in the news, we felt it was worth the rush.

Haiti - 26 August

The embargo date of this targeted news release is now confirmed at 26 August. The document is about human rights violations since the coup last September.

Weekly Update NWS 11/29/92

2. MDE 13/WU 05/92 EXTERNAL
22 July 1992

IRAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR FAIR TRIALS FOR POLITICAL DETAINEES

Amnesty International is issuing a nine-page report this week entitled Iran: Unfair trials of political detainees (AI Index: MDE 13/15/92), describing its long-standing concerns regarding political trials in the Islamic Republic of Iran. (The report will be available in Farsi in September).

Political trials in Iran fall far short of internationally accepted standards for fair trial. Trial hearings are almost always held secretly inside prisons. Proceedings are summary and there is no possibility for the detainee's family or even his/her lawyer to attend. There is no right of appeal to a higher tribunal. Thousands of political prisoners have been executed and an unknown number sentenced to prison terms following unfair trials which often lasted only a few minutes.

A new Parliamentary Act on detainees' access to legal counsel was approved in October 1991, but it fails to guarantee fundamental safeguards provided in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a State Party. Amnesty International knows of no political trial, since the Act came into force, where detainees have been given access to legal counsel, and no provision appears to have been made for the re-trial of those political prisoners who have been tried without the benefit of legal counsel.

Amnesty International considers it to be a fundamental principle of any meaningful defence that lawyers are allowed to carry out their professional duties without fear of intimidation and pressure from the authorities. The absence of an independent association of lawyers in Iran undermines this principle in practice and adds to Amnesty International's concerns about unfair trials procedures in Iran.

Recently, the organization expressed its concerns regarding mass arrests, unfair trials and summary executions following riots and demonstrations in a number of Iranian towns, including Mashhad, Shiraz, Arak and Bukan. At least eight people were executed and five others sentenced to death in connection with the riots. Amnesty International fears that the actual number of executions may be considerably higher. That some of the sentences were passed and carried out within 10 days of arrest leads the organization to conclude that the defendants are unlikely to have been given sufficient time to prepare their defence or to appeal against the verdicts, and that other vital safeguards for fair trial in capital cases, provided for in international human rights treaties, were

lacking.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce basic legal safeguards as a matter of urgency, so that every political detainee's right to a fair trial, in accordance with Articles 6, 14 and 15 of the ICCPR, is guaranteed in law and practice. Amnesty International's concerns, as described in Iran: Unfair trials of political detainees, have been conveyed on numerous occasions to the appropriate authorities in Iran, most recently in a letter dated 29 April 1992. By mid-July 1992 Amnesty International had received no response to its latest communication. Previous responses to some of the organization's requests for clarification have not allayed Amnesty International's fears regarding continuing serious human rights violations in Iran.

3. ASA 17/WU 05/92 EXTERNAL
22 July 1992

CHINA: SENIOR COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIAL BAO TONG IS MADE SCAPEGOAT FOR
1989
PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS

Bao Tong, a close associate of the deposed Chinese Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang, was tried behind closed doors in Beijing on 21 July 1992 and sentenced to seven years imprisonment after being found guilty of "leaking state secrets" and "counter-revolutionary incitement".

Before his arrest on 28 May 1989, Bao Tong was a member of the Chinese Communist party central Committee (CCPCC) and Director of the now-disbanded CCPCC Research Centre for Reform of the Political Structure. He is the most senior official to have been arrested in connection with the 1989 pro-democracy protests and later accused of having contributed to the so-called "counter-revolutionary turmoil" in Beijing in May and June 1989.

According to various reports, Bao Tong's trial lasted four or five hours and was closed to the public. Bao Tong was represented by two defence lawyers but his family was barred from the court except for ten minutes at the end of the trial when a panel of three judges announced the sentence. Scores of plainclothes and uniformed security officers ringed the court where he was tried and kept onlookers at bay. No official information has been made public about the proceedings followed at the trial or the nature of the evidence on which the charges were based.

The charges against Bao Tong are believed to be based solely on private political comments which he made to some associates during the tense period which preceded the imposition of martial law in Beijing on 20 May 1989. To the best of Amnesty International's knowledge, there is no evidence that he "incited" others in relation to the student protests taking place at that time. Bao Tong was arrested eight days after the imposition of martial law in Beijing and illegally held without charge for over two and a half years. In January 1992, he was finally charged with "leaking state secrets" and "counter-revolutionary incitement".

Amnesty International believes that Bao Tong is a prisoner of conscience held solely for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights. The organization has called on the Chinese authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally. It is also calling for full details of the trial proceedings and the evidence on which the charges are based to be made public.

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ADDITION TO WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 29/92

Contained in this weekly update is an internal item on Nicaragua.

NEWS INITIATIVES

IMPORTANT - Somalia - Embargo change

Unfortunately there have been some delays at the approval stages of the Somalia report and news release - which was planned to be embargoed at short notice for Wednesday 29 July. On Monday afternoon the IS Press Office will be informed of when the documents are likely to be ready and a new embargo date will be decided on accordingly. Please expect a note to press officers to update you.

1. AMR 43/WU 03/92 INTERNAL FOR RESPONSE
24 July 1992

UPDATE -
NICARAGUA: AI CONCERNED AT PROPOSED TIGHTENING OF LAWS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Follow up to AMR 43/WU 02/92

Amnesty International wrote on 30 June 1992 to President Chamorro of Nicaragua to express concerns at a proposed amendment to Article 205¹ of the penal code which AI fears could allow for the imprisonment of people for advocating homosexual rights or for homosexual acts in private between consenting adults.

The proposed legislation has been neither ratified nor vetoed by the President, although the deadline (15 days following receipt from the National Assembly) has passed. The National Assembly is authorised to publish the legislation, thus bringing it into force, once the ratification deadline has passed. However, the Assembly is currently in recess and the legislation has not been published.

Sections will be informed as soon as there is any change in the status of the legislation.

1 As result of the proposed amendments, former article 205 becomes article 204 of the reformed Penal Code.