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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 49/93

Contained in this weekly update are external items on Saudi Arabia and Trinidad and Tobago and an external item for response only on Iran.

PLEASE NOTE:

A short document about the War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is being prepared. It will be AI Index: EUR 48/03/93 and is due to be sent out in the Weekly Mailing on 26 May.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Guatemala - 19 May

Document with a news release on a full range of recent human rights violations (in the past year or so) in Guatemala.

Egypt - 26 May

Document and news release on all our concerns in Egypt. These include very high numbers of prisoners and torture.

UN World Conference - 2 June

News release on UN World Conference to go with June Focus article and ENR.

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE

Annual Report - 8 July

Annual Report publication, Worldwide Summary, Regional Summaries, Regional Updates, news release.

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

Document and news release to go with action on massive numbers of political killings.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Malawi - 18 May

Please note the embargo date has been changed back to 18 May. Document on human rights violations and the referendum will be sent to international media by the IS Press Office.

Azerbaijan - 28 May

Document on hostage-taking and weekly update item to go with section-level action. IS Press Office will send out to selected international media.

World Conference: Video Material

A video setting out our agenda for the World Conference is currently in production. It will be a development from the conventional ENR format and will be available in four languages. It will be distributed to sections and embargoed for 2 June.

Video compilation tapes are also in preparation for use at the time of the World Conference. One will include footage of human rights violations to illustrate the challenge to governments; another will focus on AI's own work. These tapes will be edited on 4 June and will be embargoed for 14 June.

Section Initiatives

European World Conference Press Briefing in June - Please check with British Section for date

The British Section Press Office has been talking to the EC project office and the Francophone Belgium Press Officer about holding a European press briefing in Brussels for MEPs and for journalists who will be covering the World Conference. The aim will be to look at the EC's role as a whole in terms of its internal shortcomings (Asylum issues, etc), external policies - aid/development, etc, and also to look at Europe's role within the UN.

Although the idea has been suggested by the British Section, it is hoped that all European Section Press Officers will be interested in being involved. For further information please contact either Daphne Davies, in the British Section Press Office or Johannes in the EC project office.

"Caravan of Conscience" - 16 to 25 May

The Irish Section's convoy of buses through Europe to the borders of Serbia and Croatia left Ireland on Sunday. You were sent a weekly update item on Friday 14 May - please contact the Irish Section for further information.

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2. MDE 23/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL

18 May 1993

SAUDI ARABIA: ARREST OF CDLR SPOKESPERSON

Dr Muhammad 'Abdullah al-Mis'ari, the spokesperson for the recently founded Lujnat al-Difa' 'an al-Huquq al-Shar'iyya (Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights-CDLR) in Saudi Arabia was arrested by al-Mabahith al-'Ammah (General Investigations) officers on 15 May 1993. Amnesty International considers Dr Muhammad al-Mis'ari to be a prisoner of conscience arrested solely for the peaceful expression of his conscientiously held beliefs. The organization has written to His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz, Minister of the Interior, urging the immediate and unconditional release of professor al-Mis'ari.

Dr Muhammad al-Mis'ari is a 49-year-old Professor of Physics at the King Saud University in Riyadh and had been acting as the spokesperson for the CDLR. He was reportedly arrested at his living quarters on the university campus on 15 May and taken by al-Mabahith al-'Ammah to an unknown location. Amnesty International has also received reports that at least two members of CDLR and scores of its supporters have been summoned for questioning by al-Mabahith al-'Ammah in Riyadh and Qassim.

The CDLR was founded in Riyadh on 3 May by six prominent Saudi Arabian religious scholars and professionals. The group reportedly announced the aims of the organization to be the "alleviation of injustice...and the defence of the human rights decided by the Shari'a (Islamic law)". On 11 May the Council of Higher 'Ulama (religious scholars), the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia, issued a statement expressing surprise at the establishment of such an organization stating that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had no need for human rights organizations since it was ruled in accordance with the Shari'a.

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3. AMR 49/WU 01/93 EXTERNAL

18 May 1993

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF 11-YEAR-OLD BOY

Amnesty International has expressed its grave concern to the government of Trinidad and Tobago about the case of an 11-year-old boy who was sentenced to receive a flogging of 20 strokes on 23 April 1993. The sentence was immediately carried out and the magistrate further ordered for the boy to be confined until 30 April and that he should receive no visitors.

The boy had pleaded guilty to a charge of being in possession of cocaine. He was allegedly given a very small sum of money to carry the drugs from one adult to another.

"With this sentence Trinidad and Tobago has violated international human rights standards which prohibit torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, including corporal punishment," Amnesty International said.

Trinidad and Tobago has ratified the three international conventions which prohibit torture and ill-treatment: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The latter convention says that if children are deprived of their liberty, they will have the right to maintain contact with their families through correspondence and visits. In this case these rights were not respected.

International instruments will only be effective if those countries which have committed themselves to the obligations acquired on ratification actually fulfil them. "Trinidad and Tobago is violating human rights instruments to which it has made a commitment before the international community" Amnesty International said.

The human rights organization called on the government to introduce legislation to end the use of corporal punishment, both as a sentence of a court of justice and as a punishment for disciplinary offences in prison.

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4. MDE 13/WU 02/93 EXTERNAL FOR RESPONSE ONLY
18 May 1993

INTERNAL

Following reports of the formation of a human rights committee in Iran, Amnesty International has been approached by the media for its reaction.

If sections receive similar inquiries, they may like to use the following text for response.

EXTERNAL

IRAN: REPORTS OF NEW HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE FORMED IN IRAN

As a matter of principle Amnesty International welcomes the formation of independent human rights groups wherever they may be formed. Amnesty International does not have detailed information about the new committee in Iran, but will monitor developments closely.

Among other things, Amnesty International hopes that the committee will examine, as a priority, the basic human rights safeguards contained in important human rights treaties to which Iran is a state party - such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) - with a view to bringing Iranian law and human rights practices into conformity with these minimum standards for human rights.

The ICCPR guarantees the right to life, protection from torture and the right to fair trial, in addition to freedom of opinion, expression and religious beliefs.