
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

NEWS SERVICE 146/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - UN HIGH COMMISSIONER, HAITI, JAMAICA

**** PLEASE NOTE **** The enclosed item on the UN High Commissioner will be given to media in New York by our UN office in the afternoon of 4 November, New York Time. We do hope to put some pressure on the UN General Assembly this week, so feel free to give it to media.

The item on Haiti is an eye-witness account of an extrajudicial execution from September 1993, posted to the IS recently. For further information about the cases mentioned in it please see UA 321/93, AMR 36/20/93, 13 September 1993 and UA 329/93, AMR 36/22/93, 17 September 1993.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Venezuela - 10 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 121

Iran - 17 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138

USA - 24 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 132

Pakistan - 7 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137

India - 15 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

**** United Nations **** - 17 November Pierre Sané is scheduled to meet the Secretary General of the UN, Boutros Boutros Ghali, on 17 November 1993. This will be our first official meeting with Boutros Ghali since he was appointed. We expect Pierre Sané to raise the proposed High Commissioner for Human Rights and AI's political killings campaign. Media are always alerted to Boutros Ghali's diary so there could be some interest in the meeting - we will be preparing a news service item next week.

Papua New Guinea - 19 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138

Human Rights Day Speech - 9 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

1994

Tunisia - 12 January

South Africa - 19 January

Colombia - 16 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 123 + UAs AMR 23/56+57/93

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AI Index: IOR 41/WU 18/93
4 November 1993

UNITED NATIONS: PROGRESS STALLED ON HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Amnesty International today made an urgent plea to governments not to let plans to establish a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights founder.

"The call to the UN General Assembly to consider the establishment of this new, high-level post at this session of the General Assembly was one of the key recommendations to emerge from the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights earlier this year," said Amnesty International. "And yet now, barely four months after that conference ended, progress towards setting up the High Commissioner seem likely to run aground, bogged down in endless procedural discussions and destined never to become reality.

"And yet this is a crucial issue for human rights protection and we urgently need to see real progress. Human rights crises in countries such as Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Burundi and Haiti are all being addressed piecemeal by the UN, but urgently need the coordinated, high-level input that a High Commissioner would bring - in other words, it's quite literally a matter of life and death for many thousands of people."

And action is needed quickly - the regular session of the General Assembly meets only once a year and must decide how to proceed on this within the next few weeks.

Said Amnesty International: "There is a desperate need for a High Commissioner for Human Rights within the UN, someone who could react to crises as they are developing and take all possible steps to end potential or emerging human rights disasters at an early stage.

"Just two weeks ago, Amnesty International launched a long-term campaign against political killings and "disappearances", which we believe are one of the gravest threats to human rights in the world today. The UN needs a senior official, charged with directing the energies and attention of the UN, governments, and indeed the entire world, at exactly this kind of human rights problem."

Amnesty International has already joined with several other human rights organizations to reiterate the call for action on the Vienna Declaration and the final document from the Vienna NGO (non-governmental organizations) Forum.

"This is not a political issue," said Amnesty International, "nor should it pit countries in the North against their neighbours in the South. The commissioner would be mandated to look at all human rights issues, economic and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights.

"The reluctance of governments to recognise the importance of a High Commissioner is all that is blocking a potentially dynamic step forward for human rights."

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4 November 1993

HAITI: EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION

Amnesty International has received a letter from a priest in which he gives an eye-witness account from the scene of the killing of Antoine Izméry on 11 September 1993.

Antoine Izméry was a prominent supporter of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and was co-chair of the Committee to Show the Truth, which had launched a program of posting photographs of President Aristide around the country. Antoine Izméry had been arrested several times in the past and his brother, Georges Izméry, was shot dead in May 1992, in a killing that was widely seen as a warning to Antoine Izméry.

At the time of his death, Antoine Izméry was attending a mass to commemorate the fifth anniversary of an attack on Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide on 11 September 1988 while Father Aristide was saying mass at the St John Bosco Church in La Saline, a shanty town on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. The extrajudicial execution of Antoine Izméry took place outside the church of Sacré Coeur de Turgeau in Port-au-Prince.

The following are extracts from the eye-witness letter:

"We arrive at the Sacré Coeur church at 8 O'clock At about 8.45 we hear threats being uttered within the church: `All the blood which will be shed today will be your responsibility, you communists!'

We ask ourselves: what should we do? In this context, is it welcome to celebrate this mass? The attachés were there...

Through the door at the back of the church, we see a military lorry pass by, immediately followed by another. Shortly afterwards, several people barge into the church.

The one that grabs my attention is wearing a red shirt, revolver in hand. He puts his weapon in his belt and marches briskly down the central aisle, accompanied by three or four men. The assembly scatters, running in all directions to escape. We remain there, frozen, observing the scene.

Two attachés grab a photographer by the collar and take him outside. - Afterwards, we will realise that they have mistaken him for Izméry because he had a beard. He was released shortly afterwards. - The man with the gun then takes out his weapon and asks `Who is Izméry? Where is he?' The attaché standing to his right points at Izméry. He was right there, a few metres from me. The attaché approaches him, threatens him with his gun to make him go out. Antoine Izméry hesitates and raises his arms in the air.

The attaché raises his weapon in the air as if he is going to fire, he hesitates, probably realising that he is in a church. He then places his gun on Antoine Izméry's temple, forcing him to go out... I even remember noticing that there were some bullets missing from the barrel. They go outside and we decide to continue

with the mass... Through the side door, I see how the attachés, armed with batons, beat the people who are running away... Then we hear gun shots.

The mass over, quite quickly it is true, the parish priest comes to announce that the body of Antoine Izméry is lying in the street. We go out.. and find the body lying a few feet from the church. Some 40 metres away, lies another man, killed in the same way by a bullet behind the ear... The bodies are still warm, lying in a large sea of blood. I remain there, with another priest, praying for the two dead men. The street is empty...

Nobody thought that the attachés would dare to kill Antoine Izméry so openly. We thought that they had come to arrest him as they had done so many times before.

... an attaché comes and threatens Antoine Adrien... the tension mounts... news arrives that the attachés have encircled the area... Finally, 12 bodies are found around the city of Port-au-Prince on that same day, 11 September, one of which is an old army colonel... the threats become more precise. The attachés are rulers of the land...

This widespread insecurity cannot last. The international community seems decided on giving us a hand to put an end to it. We hope that it won't take too long, because everyday bodies are being found across the country."

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AI Index: AMR 38/WU 06/93
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JAMAICA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES INQUIRY INTO PRISON KILLINGS

Amnesty International has urged the Jamaican Government to hold a full and impartial inquiry into the killings last Sunday of four prisoners on death row in St Catherine's District Prison, near Kingston. Reports alleged that the prisoners - Neville Neath, Rohan Josephs, Ricky Burrell and Arthur Morrison - were shot dead after they had tried to take prison guards hostage. However, two of the prisoners had recently reported receiving death threats from warders which has caused the organization to question the use of deadly force in this case.

Neville Neath and Rohan Josephs were among 26 prisoners named in a recent communication which alleged that they feared reprisals from prison warders after making statements about ill-treatment. Neville Neath was also one of a group of inmates who met recently with prison officials and representatives of the church and the Jamaica Human Rights Association to complain about their treatment and alleged threats made by warders.

Tragically, at least two of those killed last Sunday - Neville Neath and Arthur Morrison - would have had their death sentences commuted following the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council last Tuesday. The JCPC ruled that the prolonged detention of inmates on death row for more than five years in Jamaica was cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Amnesty International is also calling for an inquiry into complaints of ill-treatment and alleged threats made to other inmates at the prison in recent months. Prisoners include Michael Adams who was reportedly hospitalized for three days in June after being beaten on the head by a warder; Anthony Robinson who allegedly had two fingers broken and was threatened by a warder he had tried to report for misconduct; brothers Garfield and Anthony Peart who have alleged receiving death threats from warders after complaining about frequent ill-treatment and Victor Francis who has reported receiving death threats from warders who destroyed his radio, glasses and other cell possessions last September.

Amnesty International said in its letter that it was not in a position to verify the specific allegations but that they appeared to form part of a pattern of longstanding abuse by some warders in the prison. While acknowledging the difficulties faced by prison personnel, Amnesty International said there had been frequent complaints of ill-treatment by death row prisoners over the years, and that similar complaints of threats and beatings had been documented by the Barnett Commission (a government-appointed commission of inquiry into the death penalty) in 1975.

Since 1989 at least twelve prisoners in St Catherine's Prison have died at the hands of warders during prison related disturbances. In December 1992 two warders were charged with murder for their role in the death of inmate, Philip Leslie, during a prison disturbance in 1989.

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