
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

NEWS SERVICE 149/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 10 NOVEMBER 1993 NO OF WORDS: 2778

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - PORTUGAL, EGYPT

CORRECTION: The NS item, UK: AI concerned by unlawful killing of asylum-seeker in Pentonville Prison, AI Index: EUR 45/WU 06/93, sent out in News Service 149 has a mistake. Omasese Lumumba was killed in 1991 (NOT 1981).

PLEASE NOTE: A copyright query has arisen with regards to the footage of Brazilian street children shot near Candelaria Church in Rio de Janeiro on 23 July 1993 in the ENR entitled, "Getting away with Murder". Until further notice this footage must not be made available to external organisations or news media. The IS will provide an up-date on this issue at the earliest possible date.

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Venezuela - 10 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 121/148
Iran - 17 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138/148
Pakistan - 7 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137
India - 15 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

****Egypt - 11 November****

The enclosed item on torture in Egypt is embargoed for tomorrow and will be sent to international media by the IS - Egypt is being looked at by the UN Committee against Torture on Friday.

****Portugal - 15 November****

The enclosed item on torture in Portugal is embargoed for Monday and will be sent to international media by the IS - Portugal is being looked at by the UN Committee against Torture on Tuesday 16 November.

****CANCELLATION: United Nations - 17 November**** - SEE NEWS SERVICE 147

Boutros Boutros Ghali of the UN has cancelled the meeting with Pierre Sané scheduled for 17 November - so no news service item will be written.

Papua New Guinea - 19 November - SEE NEWS SERVICE 138/148
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

EJE3

MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE POLITICAL KILLINGS AND "DISAPPEARANCES" CAMPAIGN

POLAND

The AI Warsaw Group launched the campaign with a press conference at Warsaw University on 4 November, with Brian Phillips and Paula Seager from the IS and Boguslaw Stanislawski from the group. Around 30 journalists attended, including the four main TV channels, several radio stations and some important newspapers. The coverage of the launch was fantastic! The press conference was headline TV news, as was an AI demonstration carried out in front of the Yugoslav Embassy with banners and petitions on behalf of Sinisa Glavasevic (the Croatian case). The story was covered by newspapers and radio before and after the event with comprehensive interviews carried by about eight radio programmes and in the main newspaper - more may follow. The AI Gdansk group is running a concert tour with a Polish Latin American band, which played in Warsaw on the evening of the launch and was well advertised in print and radio and was well attended. The Gdansk group also said that they used the ENR for local TV coverage. The AI Torun group also held a press conference and gained radio coverage on 6 November.

USA

In Los Angeles there was a march to the Argentina, Turkey and Peru consulates and the regional director spoke at an event on Guatemala. In Boston the report was presented to the Venezuelan consulate, in Chicago AI had events at Colombia and Venezuelan consulates and the regional director spoke on Haiti. According to the section there was excellent coverage in the Los Angeles Times and the Boston Globe.

AUSTRALIA

The focus on the campaign was divided in to two stages. 1) The visit of Waly Bacre Ndiaye (UN Special Rapporteur) from 1 - 15 October and 2) Campaign launch.

Re 1: The aims were to raise the profile of the section's campaigning and to build awareness of political killings and "disappearances" and the role of UN, governments, AI and other NGOs in fighting them. On 7 October a forum was held where individuals now living in Sydney (a Kuwaitian woman who's brother was "disappeared in 1991, a Buddhist monk from Myanmar and representatives from East Timorese, Turkish and Aboriginal communities) told their story to Waly Bacre Ndiaye. The section mentions in their media release that this event was the first of its kind in the world and that they have broadcast quality file footage with the peoples' story. It was covered both by radio, TV and newspapers.

Re 2: The launch - "Candle Day" (a fundraising on 22 October) was also well covered by radio, TV and newspapers. The material used were reports, media release and fact sheets outlining the campaign themes.

CANADA

The individual testimonies from Nora Melara-Varela from Honduras and Rose Ndayahoze from Burundi helped the coverage but the reporting was limited because of election day on 25 October. The launch was however covered by CBS radio and CHEZ, a local commercial radio station, a story by Dave Todd on the campaign ("Human Rights - World is Ignoring Killing, Abductions, Amnesty Charges") was run in 17 papers throughout the country on 20 October and the national newspaper The Globe and Mail ran a story based on wire copy on 21 October.

CANADA/FRANCOPHONE

The press conference at the launch was fairly well attended which was surprising due to the coming election. The two main TV stations were present and one interviewed Gabriel Régallet (board member and spokesperson for the campaign) and the other (Radio Canada) did an interview with Dora Montalvo (mother of "disappeared" Elsa Aurelia Aguilar de Lobo from El Salvador) which unfortunately was not broadcasted.

FINLAND

Overall the coverage was quite disappointing. For example only 3 of 40 invited journalist turned up for the launch press conference; luckily they were important ones. The Finnish press officer says that AI

seldom get publicity for campaign launches as they are not considered news, which is what the media wants. Judged by the headlines, kindly translated by the section, the articles seem to cover some of the campaign objectives quite well. For example in the Helsingin Sanomat "Political Murders have become the Biggest Threat to Human Rights" by the section chair Jari Luoto was printed on the leader page. The section say that getting this article printed was the best thing about the launch.

FRANCE

The coverage of the launch was not very good. This was mainly because of other events happening at the same time; among others strike on Air France and an event by another NGO, "Reporters sans Frontiers" - who had a TV-spot which meant that the ENR was not used.

GERMANY

The section say that "the overall coverage was very good". There was coverage in the major daily newspapers and weekly papers took guest columns. Three interviews with Pierre Sané were shown on TV and three news shows covered the launch.

ISRAEL

The section is "excited" about all the attention AI gets in Israel and apparently the coverage has been good. There was coverage on the evening news, watched by 80-90 per cent of the population and on the military radio station.

JAPAN

The media coverage did not go well. However NHK TV, the public broadcasting company, did broadcast 1 minute about the launch using the ENR and there was coverage in Asahi Newspaper.

MEXICO

Mexico had good coverage of their launch press conference. Marina Krauss (campaign coordinator) and Judit Arenas participated and there was focus on the cases from India, Guatemala, South Africa, Iraq and Tadjikistan.

Two out of three national networks had extensive coverage on both 20 and 21 October. On one station the report and ENR were shown every 20 minutes during the breakfast show. A cable channel and channel 11 also used the ENR and material from the press conference. Approx. 20 papers, both national and local, covered AI - 10 of them on the front page. Finally major radio stations covered the launch in the news during the day.

NORWAY

The coverage seems to have been relatively good. On the most seen news programme (approx. 1 million viewers) there was a 6 minute spot on 16 October. This included a dramatized abduction of Jens Stoltenberg who is the well-known Minister for Business and son of the UN mediator in Bosnia. There was also showed footage from the ENR. On 20 October there was coverage on the other national TV station, also using footage from the ENR. Moreover Norwegian radio and 80 local radio stations has covered the campaign. Only one major newspaper has covered the campaign well but several local papers have done so. An article by Stig Michaelsen, the AI press officer, has been printed in the socialist party's weekly paper and it will be covered by 35 other publications as unions', parties' and companies' magazines and pamphlets on the campaign have been distributed to members and employees.

SWEDEN

The section did not have any press conference for the launch, instead they did a lot of outreach work. According to the section the coverage of the launch was amazing. It is especially worth mentioning that Amnesty on 18 October got 14 minutes coverage on the 9 o'clock news which is a 30 minutes program!! But also lots of other major media covered Amnesty. The main stories were about the three Bourequat brothers from Morocco who were in Sweden for the launch. They were disappeared for 18 years and "made even the most experienced journalist cry".

Using these extreme cases of "disappearance" and the individuality of the brothers were apparently a big

success and it has to a high degree fulfilled two of the campaign objectives which are to emphasize the individuality of the victims and overcome the sense of defeat. In the case of the coverage in Sweden it seems obvious how very powerful these individual cases have been. And it seems recommendable for others to use when possible. The Swedish section also mentions that the visit from the three brothers gave the people working for Amnesty a lot of new energy!

POLITICAL KILLINGS AND "DISAPPEARANCES" CAMPAIGN
SECTION INITIATIVES WEEK 44 & 45

NOVEMBER

Italian Section: A special radio programme about the campaign was broadcasted by 150 local radio stations.

4 NOVEMBER

Iceland Section: Concert.

6 NOVEMBER

Canadian Section: A major demonstration and march to various consulates took place in Toronto.

13 NOVEMBER

Belgian Section: The barge arrives in Brussels and there will be a media event.

*

News Service 149/93

AI INDEX: EUR 38/WU 01/93
EMBARGOED FOR 15 NOVEMBER 1993

PORTUGAL: TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT BY POLICE: AUTHORITIES FAIL TO BRING PERPETRATORS TO JUSTICE

"The failure of the Portuguese authorities to bring officers accused of torture and ill-treatment to justice is a major human rights problem in Portugal," said Amnesty International on the eve of the United Nations (UN) Committee against Torture's examination of Portugal's record on torture.

"Despite the Portuguese Government's voluntary accession to the UN Convention against Torture in 1989, public service officers from all branches of law enforcement and prison services are acting with virtual impunity," said Amnesty International.

The United Nations (UN) Committee against Torture (CAT) will tomorrow be examining the Portuguese Government's initial report submitted in May 1993, intended to provide information on measures the Portuguese Government has taken to implement the UN Convention against Torture in the country. Portugal's report is intended to cover the period since 10 March 1989, when the Convention entered into force in Portugal.

Amnesty International has submitted a report published in October to the Committee detailing its concerns regarding allegations of torture and ill-treatment in Portugal and hopes that the Committee will take these into account, when looking at the Portuguese Government's submission.

The most common forms of torture and ill-treatment alleged have been repeated kicks, punches, kneeling, pistol-whipping and beatings with truncheons. In certain cases detainees have reported beatings with rubber and flexible metal hose-pipes. Others have claimed to have had objects forced into the anus and to have been threatened with physical, including sexual, assault. Verbal racial abuse has been common in cases involving ethnic minorities. In most cases allegations have been supported by substantive medical and forensic evidence and in many of them the complainants have been taken by the detaining officers to receive medical attention during their initial period in custody.

Amnesty International's major concerns in summary are:

- the continued allegations of torture and ill-treatment;
- the slowness of the procedures to investigate such allegations;
- the small number of cases where offenders are brought to justice;
- the nominal sentences given in the exceptional cases in which offenders are held accountable for serious crimes of torture and ill-treatment.

Amnesty International is currently investigating allegations of torture and ill-treatment in the judicial districts of Lisbon, Almada, Setúbal, Oporto, Guarda, the Alentejo, Evora, Coimbra, Sintra and Funchal. In some of these places - Lisbon, Almada, Setúbal, Guarda and Oporto - there are multiple complaints.

"If the Portuguese Government is to be taken seriously in its commitment to the prevention of torture, it will have to take a tough stand to speed up the investigation of torture allegations and bring the

perpetrators to justice," said Amnesty International.

Report submitted to the UN Committee against Torture: Portugal: Torture and Ill-treatment: Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns, (AI Index: EUR 38/01/93). Copies of the document are available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

ENDS/

*

News Service 149/93

AI INDEX: MDE 12/WU 08/93
EMBARGOED FOR 11 NOVEMBER 1993

EGYPT: UN COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE EXAMINES EGYPT'S APPALLING TORTURE RECORD

More than seven years after committing itself to the prevention of torture under the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture, the Egyptian Government has failed to stop the systematic and widescale use of torture in Egypt, said Amnesty International today.

The day before Egypt's record on torture will be scrutinised by the UN Committee against Torture (CAT), Amnesty International has challenged the Egyptian government's claims that torture occurs in only isolated incidents and that legislative safeguards exist to prevent torture.

"Despite hundreds of formal complaints of torture lodged each year by defence lawyers, victims and human rights organizations, the Egyptian Government has simply not investigated these allegations promptly and impartially - as it is bound to do under international law," said Amnesty International.

The organization has submitted materials to the UN Committee against Torture that include a report published last month detailing mass trials of civilians in military courts which the organization described as "a travesty of justice in a country which traditionally has had a highly respected civilian judiciary".

Thirty-nine death sentences have been passed by these military courts since December 1992 and 17 executions have now taken place after grossly unfair trials. Virtually all defendants claim they have been subjected to torture to make them sign confessions or other statements which have been used as evidence against them and there is no right of appeal against conviction and sentence.

Two Amnesty International delegates returned from Egypt on 10 September after observing sessions of the trials of two groups of civilians before military courts, which follow an upsurge in political violence in Egypt. The defendants were reportedly tortured systematically by state security officers while held secretly and illegally for weeks or months at state security buildings in Cairo. They are said to have been blindfolded day and night and suspended in painful positions or given electric shocks until they agreed to make statements. Amnesty International has detailed descriptions of the torture methods and forensic medical reports have confirmed that scars on many defendants are consistent with the methods of torture they describe.

The Egyptian Government has allowed the torture of political detainees to continue at the hands of the security police since the re-imposition of the state of emergency following the assassination of President Anwar Sadat at a military parade in Cairo on 6 October 1981.

Egypt voluntarily ratified the UN Convention against Torture in 1986 and tomorrow the UN Committee against Torture will be examining the first periodic report on any new measures and developments that the Egyptian Government has taken to prevent torture since the examination of their initial report in April 1989.

The UN Committee against Torture, entrusted with monitoring how countries implement the legally

binding obligations of the Convention, is currently meeting in Geneva to review reports from Egypt and seven other countries which have ratified the Convention. Amnesty International has submitted four documents on Egypt to the Committee and hopes that it will thoroughly probe all aspects of Egypt's claims and the truth of its record.

Amnesty International is reiterating its call to the Egyptian Government to halt military trials of civilians immediately, to transfer the cases to civilian courts and to investigate all reports of torture. The organization is also calling on the Egyptian Government to introduce effective legislative, administrative, and judicial measures to bring the country's legislation and practice into conformity with the requirements of the UN Convention against Torture and other international human rights treaties.

Amnesty International has submitted the following documents to the UN Committee against Torture:

Military trials of civilians: a catalogue of human rights violations, (AI Index: MDE 12/16/93);

Egypt: Ten years of torture (AI Index: MDE 12/18/91);

Egypt: Security police detentions undermine the rule of law (AI Index: MDE 12/01/92);

Egypt: Grave human rights abuses amid political violence (AI Index: MDE 12/03/93).

ENDS/