
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 169/93

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
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INDEX: NWS 11/169/93
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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - ALGERIA, DJIBOUTI

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

India - 15 December - PLEASE SEE NEWS SERVICE 159

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Bahrain - 16 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 163/164

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES 1994

Children - 7 January - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

Tunisia - 12 January more details to follow

****USA death penalty - 14 January**** - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

Please note this will now be embargoed for 14 January.

UK - 9 February more details to follow

South Africa - 16 February SEE NEWS SERVICE 159

Kuwait - 24 February more details to follow

Women - 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 161

Saudi Arabia - 10 March more details to follow

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

News Service 169/93

AI INDEX: MDE 28/WU 08/93
17 DECEMBER 1993

ALGERIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ARMED ISLAMIST OPPOSITION GROUPS TO END KILLING OF ALGERIAN AND FOREIGN CIVILIANS

Over 30 civilians have been deliberately killed, apparently by armed Islamist opposition groups over the past ten days.

Twelve Croatian and Bosnian Christians working for an electrical company were stabbed to death on 14 December in Tamezguida (south-west of Algiers). Eight Algerian hospital workers, including the director of the hospital, were shot dead in the house of one of them in Oued Fodha, near Chlef, on 8 December.

These killings have brought to over 150 the number of Algerian civilians deliberately killed allegedly by armed Islamist opposition groups in Algeria over the past year. Those killed have included journalists, doctors, intellectuals, judges, court clerks and other government employees targeted by armed Islamist opposition groups because of their opposition to the political agenda of these groups, or their links to the government. Many of those killed had previously received death threats.

Recently, armed Islamist opposition groups have also been targeting foreigners to put pressure on foreign governments to cut their links with the Algerian government. Some of the more than 23 killed since September had previously been kidnapped and were later found dead. One Islamist group, the *Groupe Islamique Armé*, GIA, (Armed Islamic Group), issued a communique last week claiming responsibility for the killings of foreigners and stating that attacks will continue.

Hundreds of civilians, most of them known or suspected members of armed Islamist opposition groups, have also been killed by members of the security forces this year. The Algerian authorities usually state that those killed died in armed clashes with members of the security forces. However, some of those killed have been unarmed and posed no threat to the lives of the members of the security forces. Others are believed to have been extrajudicially executed, sometimes after arrest by the security forces.

Amnesty International opposes deliberate killings of civilians and those *hors de combat* by opposition groups; it also opposes extrajudicial executions by government forces. The organization is now urgently renewing its call to both sides for an immediate end to such killings.

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News Service 169/93

AI INDEX: AFR 23/WU 02/93
17 DECEMBER 1993

DJIBOUTI: RELEASE OF ALI AREF BOURHAN AND TEN OTHER PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International welcomes the release on 15 December 1993 of Ali Aref Bourhan, a former head of government in Djibouti, and ten other prisoners of conscience imprisoned after a grossly unfair trial in July 1992 on charges of plotting to overthrow the government. Amnesty International considered the charges to have been fabricated. Two others also sentenced in the same trial, but not adopted as prisoners of conscience, were released at the same time. All were pardoned by President Hassan Gouled Aptidon.

The released prisoners were among over 130 members of the Afar ethnic group arrested in January 1991 and accused of plotting to overthrow the government, most of whom were later released. An Amnesty International representative attended the trial by the State Security Tribunal in July 1992, and concluded it was grossly unfair in relation to internationally-recognized standards of fair trial. The majority of judges were government officials, the rights of the defence were limited, and the convictions were mainly based on evidence obtained under torture.

In September 1993 one other person convicted at the trial, who was also adopted as a prisoner of conscience, Mohamed Hassanleh Abakari, died in custody following an operation. Amnesty International urged the Djibouti government to order an inquest into his death and renewed its appeals for the release of the remaining prisoners of conscience.

Amnesty International has been in contact with Ali Aref Bourhan since his release, and he has expressed his thanks to all those who worked not only on his behalf but also on that of his fellow prisoners. Ali Aref was featured as the subject of a Worldwide Appeal in Amnesty International's March 1993 newsletter.

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