
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 230/94

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 3 OCTOBER 1994 NO OF WORDS:1241

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **LEBANON** (This item is for response only), **ESTONIA** (This item is not being sent to international media by the IS press office. Please would section press officers bring the item to the attention of section refugee coordinators.)

PLEASE NOTE: An overall "Human Rights Plan" for Haiti is being drafted for release this week. This document will summarize and expand upon many of AI's previously stated human rights concerns in Haiti. This document will be sent to press officers soon to give them a concise overview of AI's position on what needs to be done in Haiti to protect and promote human rights. It should also be passed on to campaign coordinators in the sections for their information and use.

PLEASE NOTE: We still have not received comments on the proposals for an international press officers meeting in February 1995 outlined in News Service 163/94. Please would you send your comments to me as soon as possible so that we can finalize the content and timing of the meeting. Many thanks - Dina S. (Please see news service 172/94 for further information.)

INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

** France - 0001 hrs GMT 12 October** - PLEASE NOTE EXACT EMBARGO TIME SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

** Rwanda - 14 October ** - Because of the recent controversy about human rights violations by the new government in Rwanda, the Central African research team wants to speed up publication of a further report with clearer evidence of human rights violations committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Therefore, we will be sending you a news release this week and mailing the report out to press officers as soon as the text is finalized and approved for publication.

** Burundi - 21 October ** - News release to mark the anniversary of the massacres.

Algeria - 25 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

APEC - 3 November -SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

Iraq - 29 November - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL RELEASE. (It was originally put in the targeted section by mistake) SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

** Turkey - DATE TO BE CONFIRMED ** - THE EMBARGO DATE OF THIS NEWS RELEASE HAS BEEN CHANGED, I WILL LET YOU KNOW THE NEW DATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

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AI INDEX: MDE 18/WU 03/94
3 OCTOBER 1994

LEBANON: DETENTION OF POSSIBLE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International has not yet received any response from the Lebanese Government about the detention of five Lebanese citizens whom the organization fears may be held as prisoners of conscience, and who were allegedly tortured when held in incommunicado detention in the Ministry of Defence.

Hikmat Dib, Huda Yamin, Lina Ghurayeb, Muna Shkayban and Aleftari Atanasio were arrested between 9 and 12 September by unidentified forces apparently on suspicion of distributing leaflets expressing opposition to the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Accusations made against them include state security offenses. The five were arrested together with about fifteen others who have since been released.

Amnesty International has sought full details of the reasons for their arrest from the Lebanese Government, and called for their release if held as prisoners of conscience. The organization has also called for an immediate investigation into the allegations of torture, and for anyone found responsible for such abuses to be brought to justice.

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AI INDEX: EUR 51/WU 01/94
3 OCTOBER 1994

ESTONIA: NO ACTION YET TAKEN ON DETAINED ASYLUM SEEKERS

Around 100 asylum-seekers, mostly Iraqi Kurds, currently detained in Estonia still have no recourse to any procedure that examines their reasons for seeking asylum, nor has there been any hearing to examine whether their detention is legitimate under international standards.

Amnesty International previously raised this concern with the Estonian authorities in June. At the beginning of September, the organization was informed by the Vice-Chancellor of the Estonian Interior Ministry that a detailed response to its June letter was being coordinated by the Foreign Ministry and should be finalized by the end of September. This response has not yet been received by the organization.

Amnesty International also expressed its concern that the majority of the asylum-seekers, approximately half of whom are women and children, had begun a hunger-strike on 19 September in protest at their detention, and that some of them had allegedly been denied medical treatment for conditions caused or aggravated by the hunger strike.

Guards in Maardu and Parnu prisons, where male asylum-seekers are being detained, have reportedly refused to summon the prison doctor to attend the prisoners. Female and juvenile asylum-seekers, who are under lesser forms of restriction in Harku prison, have no medical services available to them other than those provided by a Finnish non-governmental organization granted limited access to the detainees.

In its September letter to the Ministers of Foreign and Internal Affairs, Amnesty International stated that the lack of medical provision is a clear contravention of a number of international instruments. These include the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty and the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.

Amnesty International urged the Estonian authorities to take immediate steps to provide all necessary treatment for the asylum-seekers detained in Maardu, Parnu and Harku prisons and to examine, as a matter of urgency, all possible ways of remedying the grievances which led the hunger-strikers to take this drastic action in protest against their continued detention and the refusal of the Estonian authorities to examine their requests for asylum.

International standards state that the detention of refugees and asylum-seekers should normally be avoided, and that the necessary distinction should be made between the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers and that of other non-nationals.

In its June letter to the Estonian authorities, Amnesty International stated that it opposes the detention of asylum-seekers unless they have been charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or unless the authorities can demonstrate in each individual case that the detention is necessary, that it is on grounds prescribed by law, and that it is for one of the specified reasons which international standards recognize

may be legitimate grounds for detaining asylum-seekers.

Amnesty International also raised with the Estonian authorities its concern that the asylum-seekers are neither having their claims for protection properly considered by the authorities, nor being treated fully in accordance with the relevant international standards for the protection of asylum-seekers.

The human rights organization acknowledges that setting up a system for examining each individual's asylum claim places a major administrative load on governments, especially where no such system has existed before. But international standards provide for situations where states are faced with the task of providing for asylum-seekers in large numbers and where there is not a situation in place for examining each individual asylum application, or where the existing system for examining applications is not adequate to cope with the numbers involved.

Asylum-seekers should be treated in accordance with basic minimum standards, and in particular should not be penalized or treated unfavourably solely because their presence in the country is considered unlawful; their movements should not be restricted except in so far as is necessary in the interest of public health and public order; they should enjoy fundamental internationally recognized civil rights; and they should be granted all necessary facilities to enable them to obtain a satisfactory durable solution.

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