
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 54/95

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **SRI LANKA** (this item is being sent to Sri Lankan media by the research team); **PAKISTAN** (this item is being sent to Asia media); **TOGO** (this item is being sent to mainly Africa Francophone media)

INTERNAL -

PLEASE NOTE - MISSION TO CHECHNYA

We remind section press officers to contact Soraya Bermejo at the IS if they would like to invite any Moscow correspondents to the briefing on Friday, 17 March. She will pass the information on to the team in Moscow who will be contacting the journalists themselves. Please do not issue invitations directly since it is likely to be a small press briefing -- not a full press conference.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

Amnesty International's letter to *The Sunday Times*' editor concerning the article on "Amnesty pays school bills of top staff" was published on 12 March.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95, 37/95, 42/95 & 44/95
Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

EVENTS AND MISSIONS

The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO BURUNDI 13 - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

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PAKISTAN: URGENT MEASURES NEEDED TO END WAVE OF KILLINGS IN KARACHI

Calls by the Pakistan government for police to use "ruthlessness" to curb violence may be seen as the signal that human rights violations -- such as torture and ill-treatment -- will be condoned, Amnesty International said.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has now authorized police to use "ruthlessness" whenever necessary in Karachi to bring escalating ethnic, religious and political violence under control, after the government has failed for months to adopt effective measures.

In a 11 March meeting, provincial government officials were threatened with dismissal unless they succeeded quickly in restoring law and order. Since then, over 300 suspected militants have been arrested.

"Pakistani police sometimes resort to torture and ill-treatment to extract information and confessions, so there is a danger that detainees' human rights may be abused," Amnesty International said.

The human rights organization is asking the government to instruct law enforcement personnel to observe national safeguards relating to detention and the prohibition of torture embodied in the constitution of Pakistan as well as international human rights standards.

Over 300 people have died in targeted shootings in Karachi since the beginning of 1995. Last year, over 800 people died there in deliberate and arbitrary killings by armed groups and extrajudicial executions by law enforcement personnel.

Members of political, religious or minority ethnic groups are at risk of deliberate and arbitrary killing and journalists face similar risks. Police reportedly stood by in some recent instances while armed groups committed human rights abuses with impunity.

Amnesty International is again calling on the Government of Pakistan to take effective measures to protect the lives of members of any group, whether ethnic, religious or political groups, who appear to be at risk.

The human rights organization also urges all armed groups fighting each other in Karachi to end the deliberate and arbitrary killings.

Background

On 25 February, some 22 Shia worshippers were gunned down in attacks on two mosques in Karachi. A leader of the Shia organization Tehrik-i-Jafaria Pakistan was shot dead in Lahore on 7 March. In the following days several members of the Sunni majority were targeted and shot dead. On 10 March, 12 people, including five children, died in a bomb explosion in a Shia mosque in Malir, Karachi.

Several people appeared to have been captured by armed political groups and tortured before being killed. For instance, on 22 February a bullet-riddled body was dropped from a car in Nazimabad, Karachi. Doctors in Abbasi Shaheed Hospital said that the victim had been severely tortured before being killed. Another bullet-riddled body was found on the same day with his hands and feet tied up and his body covered with torture marks.

On 8 March, two American consular staff were shot dead in Karachi when attackers shot at their car in

Karachi. The Karachi offices of the daily newspapers The Nation and Nawa-i-Waqt were ransacked and set on fire by armed activists of sectarian parties. Several journalists were beaten on 25 February. Police was reported to have done nothing to help the journalists or to apprehend the attacks of the US consular staff.

The Pakistan Newspaper and Periodicals Organization in its resolution of 28 February said "The Nawa-i-Waqt building burned for over three hours whilst the local administration and Rangers failed to protect the buildings, the equipment, the archives and the members of the press from armed terrorists and arsonists. ... Many segments of the press believe that this callousness is rooted in the independent stance taken in the editorial columns of the newspaper and its scathing attacks on several government policies."

The government has condemned the attacks on the newspaper offices. A police officer was suspended following the killing of the US consular staff. However, few killings and attacks have been adequately investigated and very few offenders have been charged and arrested.

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SRI LANKA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES SUSPENSION FROM DUTY OF ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS

Amnesty International is calling on the Sri Lankan government to protect witnesses appearing before the newly-established commissions investigating past political killings and "disappearances" in the country.

"Alleged perpetrators of human rights violations should not be allowed to interfere with the investigations currently carried out by the commissions," Amnesty International said today. "Witnesses should not fear violence, intimidation or reprisals."

The organization sent letters last week to the President and the Minister of State for Defence urging them to introduce a mechanism through which the commissions can effectively ensure the suspension from duty of alleged perpetrators during the investigations.

Three presidential commissions of inquiry were established earlier this year to investigate "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions from 1 January 1988. They were each allocated a geographical area of the country and are starting to record evidence from relatives of "disappeared" people and eye-witnesses in those areas.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal and Disappearances of Persons in the Central, North Western, North Central and Uva Provinces started hearing evidence in Kandy town on Monday, 13 March.

In several of the many allegations of "disappearances" reported to Amnesty International from Kandy area in the period 1988 - 1989, eye-witnesses and relatives have named the Counter Subversive Unit of the Kandy police as responsible for arrests and subsequent "disappearances".

"To our knowledge, several members of this unit are still operating in the area and we are concerned that they may be in a position to interfere with the investigations or threaten witnesses and relatives," Amnesty International said.

In the northeast, this particular concern is even more acute as it concerns not only members of the police but also the army, Home Guards and various armed militant groups.

Both the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions provide that persons alleged to have committed these grave human rights violations should be suspended from any official duties during the investigation and removed from any position of control or power, whether direct or indirect.

They also provide that steps should be taken to ensure that all involved in the investigation, including the complainant, counsel, witnesses and those conducting the investigations, are protected against ill-treatment, violence, threats of violence or any other form of intimidation or reprisal.

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TOGO: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS SAFEGUARDS

Two Amnesty International representatives are in Togo from 9 to 16 March 1995 attending the 17th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The delegates are Mr Nicholas Howen, Director of Amnesty International's Legal and International Organizations Program, and Legal Team Officer, Ms Anita Vasisht.

During their stay in Lomé, the Amnesty International's delegates intend to meet with the Togolese Prime Minister, Monsieur Edem KODJO, and the Togolese Minister of Justice, Monsieur Kangni Gabriel AKAKPOVIE, in order to outline Amnesty International's current concerns about the human rights situation in Togo, including the problem of impunity and the government's failure to investigate past human rights violations.

Amnesty International has welcomed the release of a number of prisoners -- some of whom were considered to be prisoners of conscience -- under the terms of a general amnesty law passed by the Togolese government in December 1994. However, the organization is concerned that the provisions of the December 1994 general amnesty law also preclude the proper investigation of past human rights violations and the emergence of the truth about who was responsible for such actions.

Amnesty International is also concerned that, despite an apparent decrease in recent incidents of human rights violations in Togo, effective measures to ensure future respect for, and protection of, human rights in Togo are still lacking.

In view of the seriousness of past human rights violations in Togo Amnesty International is urging the Togolese government to demonstrate its commitment to protecting human rights by allowing no immunity from prosecution for anyone suspected of committing human rights violations. It is also urging the Togolese government to order prompt, thorough and independent investigation into all cases of alleged human rights violations and without exception bring those suspected of being responsible to justice, in order to remove an environment of impunity.

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TOGO: PREOCCUPATIONS D'AMNESTIE INTERNATIONALE DANS LE DOMAINE DE LA PROTECTION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

Deux représentants d'Amnestie Internationale, Nicholas HOWEN, directeur du Programme des affaires juridiques et des relations avec les organisations internationales, et Anita VASISHT, attachée de l'équipe juridique, séjournent au Togo du 9 au 16 mars 1995 pour participer à la Dix-septième session ordinaire de la Commission africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples.

Pendant leur séjour à Lomé, les délégués d'Amnestie Internationale espèrent rencontrer le premier ministre togolais, S.E. M. Edem KODJO, ainsi que le ministre de la Justice, S.E. M. Kangni Gabriel AKAKPOVIE, afin de souligner les préoccupations actuelles de l'organisation concernant la situation des droits de l'homme au Togo, dont le problème de l'impunité et la carence du gouvernement en matière d'enquêtes sur les violations des droits de l'homme commises par le passé.

Amnestie Internationale a salué la libération d'un certain nombre de prisonniers - dont certains étaient considérés comme des prisonniers d'opinion - aux termes d'une loi portant amnistie promulguée par le Gouvernement togolais en décembre 1994. Amnestie Internationale est cependant préoccupée de ce que les dispositions de la loi de décembre 1994 portant amnistie ne permettent pas d'effectuer des enquêtes en bonne et due forme sur les violations des droits de l'homme commises par le passé ni à la vérité de se faire jour sur les responsables de tels actes.

Bien que les violations aient apparemment diminué en nombre récemment, Amnestie Internationale est toutefois préoccupée de l'absence de mesures efficaces permettant de veiller au respect et à la protection des droits de l'homme à l'avenir.

Au vu de la gravité des violations des droits de l'homme commises par le passé, Amnestie Internationale demande au Gouvernement togolais de faire preuve de son engagement à protéger les droits de l'homme en n'accordant aucune immunité contre les actions pénales exercées contre toute personne soupçonnée d'avoir commis des violations des droits de l'homme.

Amnestie Internationale demande instamment au Gouvernement togolais d'instituer une enquête exhaustive et indépendante sur tous les cas de violations des droits de l'homme qui ont été signalés et de traduire les responsables en justice dans tous les cas, afin d'éliminer le contexte d'impunité.

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