
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 58/95

TO: PRESS OFFICERS AI INDEX: NWS 11/58/95
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICEDISTR: SC/PO
DATE: 17 MARCH 1995NO OF WORDS: 3602

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **CHECHNYA** (this item will sent to international media)

INTERNAL - **MINUTES OF 1995 INTERNATIONAL PRESS OFFICERS MEETING; SINGAPORE** - an internal note to PO

INFORMATION ON CHECHNYA MISSION:

Even though the findings from the Chechnya mission were not 'earth-shattering', the team is nevertheless publicizing the information by holding an informal press briefing. The news release will be sent to international media simply for their information -- as a way of illustrating AI's concern in the region. The following press have provisionally accepted their attendance the briefing:

Chris HunterQuaker Peace Service
Sophie ShihabLe Monde
JournalistAFP
JournalistBBC
Fred HyattWashington Post
JournalistReuters
Susanne ScollORF
Alessandro PadroneANSA
Genine BabakyanMoscow Times
Felix CrowleyFreelance/Keston College
Dmitry BalburovMoskovskye Novosti
Vugar KhalilovBBC Russian Service
A. PodrabinekEkspress Khronika
Lev OleynikSegodnya
JournalistKomsomolskaya Pravda
JournalistIzvestiya

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

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 CHECHNYA 8 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 53 & 54

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

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

MISSION TO HAITI 18 March - 3 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 58/95

News Service 58/95
AI INDEX: EUR 46/WU 04/95
17 MARCH 1995

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES TO INVESTIGATE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE CHECHEN REPUBLIC

Following a week long research trip to the borders of Chechnya, Amnesty International is meeting today with Russian authorities in Moscow to call for investigations into reports of people being ill-treated in detention and civilians being shot when trying to leave the Chechen Republic.

During the investigation trip, Amnesty International's three person team met with people who said they had been beaten and ill-treated by Russian forces -- some of them still bore the marks of such treatment.

The research team, which included a medical doctor, also met with medical personnel, government officials and journalists. Doctors interviewed in three hospitals in Nazran, Sleptsovskoye and Malgobek confirmed having treated people allegedly ill-treated while detained by Russian forces.

Alleged victims of ill-treatment were also interviewed by the team out of hospital. Among them was a man who went to Grozny in December to check on relatives. He and seven other men were picked up in a bomb shelter and taken to a food factory in Grozny. There, according to the man's report, masked men brutally beat and kicked him. Later he was bitten by a dog set on him by guards. He was finally released almost two months after his arrival in Grozny. The doctor accompanying the mission examined scars still visible and determined they were consistent with the man's allegations.

Amnesty International remains concerned that, despite concrete evidence of human rights abuses, no one appears to have been brought to account. The procurator of Ingushetia, who met with the research team, said Ingush officials had collected material on such cases -- as they often involved people living in their republic even if events did not happen there -- and forwarded it to the relevant Russian authorities. He did not know of anyone brought to criminal account as a result of the allegations.

Journalists and members of humanitarian aid organizations who met with members of the research team expressed their concern at the difficulty in getting access to Chechnya at the moment. They also knew of specific cases where people had been detained by the Russian police, beaten and then released. Some journalists alleged they were briefly detained in the region of Samshki, in south Chechnya, where their identities were checked and they were told they would be shot if they tried to return.

In the face of these findings, Amnesty International will be urging the Russian authorities today to hold a comprehensive and impartial investigation into allegations of ill-treatment in detention, and of civilians being shot when trying to leave the Chechen Republic. Amnesty International is appealing also to all sides involved in the conflict to respect international humanitarian and human rights law.
ENDS/

INTERNAL NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS: EXECUTION IN SINGAPORE

Amnesty International has learned with deep regret that Flor Contemplacion was hanged today in Changi Prison, Singapore. She was sentenced to death in January 1993.

Two Thai nationals and a Malaysian were also executed at the same time as Flor Contemplacion. **Don Promphinit**, 31, and **Krishna Maikham**, 32, two Thai nationals arrested for drug trafficking on January 10, 1993; and **Nasrul Esyam bin Shamsudin**, a 21 year old Malaysian landscape artist arrested on September 30, 1993 were all executed on the same day.

Also, please note that today in the United States, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women made a statement on Flor Contemplacion's execution. She stated:

"In light of the claims of new information regarding the appropriateness of the sentence of death passed in the case of Flor Contemplacion, especially in the context of the severity and the finality of an execution of the death sentence;

Therefore, the Chair wishes to express the grave concern of the Commission on the Status of Women regarding the scheduled execution of Flor Contemplacion on 17 March 1995, in Singapore."

For background information, please see the recent Urgent Actions issued on this case (ASA 36/06/95, 15 March 1995) and (ASA 36/04/95, 10 March 1995).

MINUTES OF THE 1995 INTERNATIONAL PRESS OFFICERS' MEETING

The International Press Officers' Meeting (10-12 February 1995) aimed to provide press officers with an opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences, develop creative ideas for media work on the Campaign on Human Rights of Women, and provide the official section response to the Worldwide Media Strategy consultation document.

The minutes of the meeting reflect the key areas of discussion to allow press officers to take forward ideas and suggestions in their media work. A few areas were flagged for follow up involving section participation -- these are indicated with a request for sections to volunteer to take the lead in one or more areas.

The specific areas covered are: the brainstorm on the Campaign on Human Rights of Women, the exchange of experiences, the section response to the Worldwide Media Strategy, and a summary of the evaluation by press officers.

MINUTES FROM BRAINSTORM ON MEDIA ACTIVITIES FOR THE CAMPAIGN ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

The brainstorming session on media work for the Campaign on Human Rights of Women covered four areas: key dates for coverage, events, press work, materials, and miscellaneous issues.

These minutes reflect the various ideas floated during the session, some of which are already planned by sections and some of which were just discussed.

KEY DATES

Some of the key dates that section press officers identified for possible media work include:

- 8 March - campaign launch and International Women's Day
- Mother's Day
- Annual report launch -- theme women
- anniversaries -- 50th anniversary of UN
- IGO meetings - UN Committee on the Status of Women and EU meetings

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES

Some of the campaigning/awareness activities identified by section press officers for possible media work include:

- mural painting by arts students
- cooperation with Body Shop (already agreed in UK and Ireland)
- an event with women bringing wooden objects to an organized bonfire, and placing their objects on the fire, to symbolize persecution
- an event featuring balloons, kites or Chinese paper dragons, particularly to make the China connection
- postcards for Mother's Day featuring mothers who are victims of human rights violations or activists
- organized tree planting to commemorate women victims of human rights violations
- a special day when women are encouraged to wear a symbolic piece of clothing, like the handkerchiefs worn by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo
- exploit visits of political leaders from other countries to highlight concerns in that country
- participate in or organize film festivals about or by women, related to but not exclusively about human rights

- work with prominent journalists/national figures to make radio and television spots on appeal cases (already done by British Section)

OTHER MEDIA WORK

- hold briefings on the campaign, especially for women's magazines and journalists attending the UN conference in Beijing

MATERIALS

Some of the materials, in addition to the prepared campaign materials, suggested by press officers include the following. Where a section is already preparing such materials, this is noted.

- special articles/supplements in specialist magazines
- photo exhibition (Dutch Section)
- video (Dutch Section)
- poster
- radio cassettes featuring celebrities highlighting appeal cases (British Section -- scripts already sent in news service)

MINUTES FROM WORKING GROUP FEEDBACK FOLLOWING EXCHANGING EXPERIENCES SESSION

For the Exchanging Experiences session, Press Officers separated into three groups for initial discussion and then came together to report back. The disparity between the different needs of press officers from smaller and larger sections and also the differing media opportunities available to them was stressed throughout the discussion. Issues relating to Communication/Exchanging Information were the other main focus of the discussion.

SMALL/LARGE SECTIONS

Particular problems faced by press officers from smaller/newer sections included establishing media contacts and getting media coverage in countries where there is little awareness of human rights as an issue.

It was suggested that the establishment of a resource-bank would also help resolve the problem faced by press officers from smaller sections in getting up to date information.

Materials - Press Officers from smaller sections stressed their need for more ready-made materials from the IS, as many of them work on a voluntary basis and therefore do not have the time or the resources to initiate their own materials.

It was generally agreed that Opinion Pieces are useful, but many Press Officers from bigger Sections felt that generic articles produced by the IS were unnecessary and that they could adapt IS materials (eg. campaign briefings, Focus articles) to produce their own. However it was felt this would not be possible for those press officers working on a voluntary basis, or those with limited time and resources.

There was general concern from all press officers that reports and briefings need to be made more "reader-friendly" as currently few journalists bother to read them.

Campaigns/Events - All press officers agreed on the need for more creative thinking in the organization of media events. For press officers from larger sections this was largely seen as a means of overcoming the problem that campaigns are generally not perceived as topical/newsworthy by the media. For smaller sections more creative events would also help with fundraising, increasing membership and stimulating the existing membership. It was stressed that big events need to be followed-up otherwise their impact will be lost. However, a number of press officers complained that the limited amount of time allocated to each campaign provided little possibility of doing substantial media work.

COMMUNICATION/EXCHANGING INFORMATION

Press officers felt there should be a greater exchange of ideas/information. It was suggested that as well as utilising the News Service more fully as a means of communication, a resource bank should be established to which all press officers have access. Some of the ideas floated for information to be included in the resource bank* are:

- MSP concerns
- list of possible speakers/survivors
- forthcoming media events
- possible ideas for media events
- updated information on UN resolutions, IGOs, recommendations to governments

Campaigns - It was felt there should be greater communication and cooperation between press officers during campaigns and the possibility of having regular meetings throughout a campaign to encourage the exchange of information and ideas was raised.*

Missions - Press Officers urged for more advance notice of forthcoming missions rather than receiving the information either just before or even after the mission has begun. It was suggested that there should be an advance news release flagging the mission and its purpose before researchers leave.

EVALUATION

Press Officers felt there should be more evaluation of media events, taking into consideration both the successful/unsuccessful aspects, in order to assist with the planning of such events in the future.

* On these items, it was suggested that one or more sections take the lead in coordinating a resource bank and facilitating better communications.

We would ask sections interested in participating in these projects to contact Anita Tiessen at the IS.

MINUTES OF SECTION CONSULTATION ON WORLDWIDE MEDIA STRATEGY

The official section responses to the consultation document "Moving Forward in the Media" were given orally and/or in written form at the International Press Officers meeting. Some sections not represented at the meeting submitted their response in writing.

The purpose of the consultation was to provide sections with an opportunity to comment on the issues and action proposals outlined in the strategy paper in advance of the ICM discussion. The strategy paper has subsequently been revised to reflect the outcome of the consultation.

These minutes reflect both the major issues emerging from the responses delivered at the meeting and those submitted in writing; they do not reflect the comments on the paper received during the IS consultation.

1. Overview of response

The response to the consultation document was generally positive, with broad agreement with the challenges highlighted. There was general agreement on the issues which should be given greater prominence, and those which should be scaled down (as reflected below).

There was an expressed need to clarify the purpose of a movement-wide media strategy, recognize the different capabilities of and challenges for large and small sections, and modify the recommendations to be less proscriptive and better reflect the unique roles of the IS and sections/non-section structures.

2. Role of Worldwide Media Strategy

Many sections said they welcomed a paper that for the first time outlined a specific strategy for the movement's media work, but there was some confusion about the specific role of the Worldwide Media Strategy.

It was clarified that the purpose was to identify at a high-level the specific role of media work in achieving AI's goals, and to establish a movement-wide commitment at the 1995 ICM to improving our media work.

It was also clarified that the paper highlighted broad issues and directions, and did not attempt to address the specific issues in every country or region. The need to further develop the broad goals of the paper in more specific media strategies following the ICM was identified.

3. Issues broader than media work

One of the general comments was that the problems and solutions identified in the strategy paper related to broader issues of AI's priorities and methods of working.

Some of the specific issues raised were:

- we don't reflect a truly activist image in our media work because our campaigning isn't dynamic enough

- it is difficult to do more promotion or debate of human rights in the media without a better understanding of these areas of work throughout AI

- our media message is often boring because the way many AI materials are prepared is boring, and because we don't exploit our interesting activities and actions enough

4. Specific Challenges

The comments on the seven challenges highlighted in the strategy paper include:

a) Promotion - there was a lack of clarity in the paper about whether AI should promote ALL human rights, or those specific human rights within its mandate. While there was concern about the broader approach, there was a general level of interest in promoting those rights within the mandate.

b) Debate - the issue of debate and analysis provoked a great deal of discussion and concern, particularly in addressing broader social and political issues. There was a fear that any analysis of human rights trends would inevitably lead to political analysis, and jeopardize our impartiality.

The discussion on this point showed interest among sections in debating those human rights issues within AI's mandate or involving AI's concerns (ie universality and interdependence) but great reservations about debating other contextual issues.

c) Activism - the need to reflect AI as an active campaigning and membership organization was strongly endorsed, and was seen as the key element in the strategy paper.

The discussion highlighted the need to promote both campaigning activities AND field presence. On the question of campaigning activities, there was concern about whether the movement was activist enough and whether we did organize visually interesting and "media friendly" campaigning activities.

On the question of field presence, press officers stressed that it was important for AI to be seen to be active, and this meant exploiting missions more for media work, quicker turn around on mission reports, and for crisis media work.

While sections felt that our reactions to human rights crises should be more immediate and high profile, they also said that we shouldn't delude ourselves into thinking that we can or should try to resolve every crisis. There was concern that if too much energy was diverted into crisis response our work on other issues, forgotten countries, and individual victims of human rights violations would suffer.

d) Boring - Sections felt that there was room for significant improvement in the way we present our media message, but also said that "packaging" of the message was not the only issue. Information or actions need to be substantive and timely if they are going to be of interest to the media, and changes to the quality of media materials must stem from broader changes in the way we deal with and present our information and concerns.

A number of sections said that sections themselves must take more initiative in adapting approved materials to suit their national media, and reflect their section's priorities and activities.

e) Creativity - The comments were similar to those in "d" above, with the specific comment that improvements in media contacts would not bear fruit if we didn't have interesting information or actions to present to the media.

f) NGO/media changes - There were fewer comments on this challenge than on others. There was enthusiasm for exploiting new technology more effectively, but also comments that some smaller sections still needed basic technology (fax, photocopier) to carry out their media work.

g) Systems and resources - There was strong endorsement for a more integrated approach to planning and carrying out AI's work, with media work integrated from the start. The main concern was on the recommendation for set staffing and budget levels, and it was clear from the consultation that a blanket requirement for one press officer and 10 % of the budget devoted to media work did not reflect the widely different resources of sections.

5. Large/Small section issues

Large and small sections alike provided the views detailed above, and generally endorsed the development of a movement-wide media strategy. It was clear from the consultation, however, that smaller sections in particular would not be able to implement all of the recommendations and that greater emphasis should be given in the strategy paper to supporting and developing media work in those sections.

6. Recommendations

Sections felt that the action recommendations in the strategy paper were too proscriptive, and didn't reflect the different levels of media activity in different sections and the varying ability of sections to expand media work. The general comment was that the recommendations should use each section's current level of media work at the starting point, and propose improved or increased media work on that basis.

As well, sections said that greater clarity was needed in the unique roles of the IS and sections in carrying out media work in the movement.

EVALUATION OF INTERNATIONAL PRESS OFFICERS MEETING

All press officers who attended the 1995 International Press Officers' Meeting were asked to complete an evaluation form to help with planning such meetings in the future. For your information, here is a summary of the comments we have received so far.

EXPECTATIONS

Generally press officers' basic expectations of meeting colleagues and exchanging ideas, experiences and information were fulfilled, but it was felt that in future the meetings should place more emphasis on producing concrete results and establishing a clear process for taking ideas forward.

TOPICS

Media Strategy - Some press officers felt that not enough time had been allowed for proper discussion of the Media Strategy and that the discussion should be continued at the next meeting.

Campaign on Human Rights of Women Session - Although this was found to be interesting many press officers felt that the discussion was too close to the launch of the campaign to be really constructive.

Exchanging Experiences - Many press officers felt that the exchanging experiences sessions would only be really useful if the points raised were followed-up in the future.

ORGANIZATION

The feedback on the organization of the meeting was positive, but some press officers felt that in future there should be more time given for debate and discussion and less time to presentations.

TAKING THINGS FORWARD

Press Officers were asked to suggest ways in which the ideas/issues discussed at the meeting could be taken forward. Here is a summary of some of the points raised:

- Utilise the News Service as a means of regular communication and exchanging ideas between press officers.
- Discuss how to put the approved media strategy into practice.
- Organize training sessions for new/small Sections and groups.
- Organize a resource-bank, it was suggested that this would need to be coordinated at IS level with assistance from Sections.

1996

It was felt that there should definitely be some sort of meeting next year, but the issue of dividing into regional or developed/new Sections was raised in order to cater more specifically to varying needs. Press Officers also felt that in future the meetings should include a review session to check follow-up on the issues raised at the previous year's meeting.