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WEEKLY UPDATE SERVICE 53/93

Contained in this weekly update is an external item on China and an internal item on AI Press Officers attending the World Conference.

PLEASE NOTE: A short document about the War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is being prepared. It will be AI Index: EUR 48/03/93 and is due to be sent out in the Weekly Mailing on 26 May.

NEWS INITIATIVES

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

****UN World Conference - 1 June, 1600 hrs gmt****

(New Information)

Please note embargo has been changed to 1 June 1600 hrs gmt. News release on UN World Conference will be launched at 1600 hrs gmt on 1 June at a press briefing at the Foreign Press Association in London (see media advisory item in Weekly Update NWS 11/50/93 for details). Pierre Sané will give a major statement on the world conference.

The news release was sent out to sections yesterday by fax/e-mail/telex - sorry that it is so late. The news release is to go with June Focus article and ENR.

The ENR (also embargoed for 1600 hrs gmt, 1 June) has been sent out to you - on Mon/Tues & Wed this week - so it may be very last-minute. A sub-master copy will be held at a copying house: Dubbs, 25-26 Poland Street, London W1V 3DB, Tel: +44 71 629 0055, Fax: +44 71 287 8796. So please refer TV stations to them if they need speedy copies. The IS Press Office is sending the ENR out to Reuters TV, WTN, BBC WS TV, CNN, Middle East B/C and Worldwide TV on the morning before the launch - so you can also refer journalists to the TV agencies among them. (assuming they use the footage!).

UN WORLD CONFERENCE-RELATED NEWS INITIATIVES ONLY THROUGHOUT JUNE**Annual Report - 8 July**

Annual Report publication, Worldwide Summary, Regional Summaries, Regional Updates, news release. All these materials, except the news release are almost ready and you should receive them early next week.

Indonesia (Aceh) - 28 July

Document and news release to go with action on massive numbers of political killings.

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES**Azerbaijan - 28 May**

Weekly update item to go with document on hostage-taking and section-level action. IS Press Office will send out to selected international media.

Tunisia - 3 June

The summary of a document - Tunisia: Women victims of harassment, torture and imprisonment, AI Index: MDE 30/02/93 - is being faxed to some selected media on 3 June. The report, which is embargoed for 3 June, was sent out in this week's Weekly Mailing. If you need an earlier copy, please contact Donatella at the IS on +44 71 413 5631.

****China - 4 June******(New Information)**

A Weekly Update item contained in this document is a round up of all our concerns in China, which seems necessary after all the media interest recently with the USA renewing China's "most favoured nation trading status". It is not embargoed and may be used at any time or to coincide with the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre on 4 June.

Section Initiatives**British Section - Update on European World Conference Press Briefing in June**

Please note the time, date and place of this press conference.

The Press Conference will be held on Thursday, June 10th, at 11am at the International Press Centre, Boulevard de Charlemagne 1, 1040 Bruxelles.

The two speakers are:

Ken Coates - MEP and chairman of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human rights

Daphne Davies - Amnesty International British Section

We will also be asking someone from a Brussels-based NGO.

A press release will accompany the press conference.

The conference will call on the EC and its member states to adopt a coordinated and focused approach at the World Conference with a view to adapting and improving the UN human rights mechanisms and to promote the proposal to appoint a Special Commissioner on Human rights. In addition the Press Conference will provide journalists with a critique of the EC's own human rights record.

Please will Press Officers in EC Sections contact their media who have contacts in Brussels to let them know about the Press Conference

2. ASA 17/WU 05/93 EXTERNAL
28 May 1993

INTERNAL

Following is a full update of concerns in China. It is not embargoed but is written because the international press is focusing attention on the renewal of China's most favoured nation trade status with the USA, the timing of which coincides with the fourth anniversary of the 4 June 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing. Please refer to Urgent Actions for further updates on Tibet.

EXTERNAL

CHINA: GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONTINUE

Four years after the suppression of the 1989 pro-democracy protests in Beijing, human rights violations continue unabated in China. Thousands of political prisoners remain in jail, hundreds of arbitrary arrests have been carried out during the past year and shocking accounts of torture in police custody continue to emerge. Unfair trials are still the norm and the police continue to use administrative detention to hold political suspects for long periods without charge or trial, in violation of Chinese law. The highest number of executions in four years was recorded by Amnesty International in 1992, many carried out after summary trials.

Despite the apparent official opening on human rights since 1991, which resulted in the visit to China of human rights delegations from various countries, the Chinese government has not made any fundamental change to its human rights policy and practice. There have been no changes to the laws under which human rights violations are perpetrated and no attempt has been made to introduce fundamental safeguards to prevent serious violations, such as torture, from occurring. Political opposition is not tolerated and dissent in any form is repressed. People engaging in activities deemed to be detrimental to the "stability and unity" of the country - such as political dissidents and members of ethnic or religious groups - continue to be harassed by police, detained or imprisoned, and often ill-treated.

Political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience

Though a few political prisoners have been released in the past year, thousands of others remain imprisoned. According to Chinese official sources, about 4,000 convicted "counter-revolutionaries" are imprisoned. This figure refers only to political prisoners tried and sentenced by a court for "counter-revolutionary" offences and therefore does not reflect the real number of political prisoners in China. It excludes people held for political reasons but convicted of other offences, those sentenced without trial to terms of administrative detention and those detained pending trial or a decision on their case. Hundreds of these prisoners are known to be held for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights.

They include people serving heavy prison sentences for their involvement in the 1989 protests, such as Ding Junze, a philosophy lecturer from Shanxi University who is serving a 12-year sentence at Shanxi provincial No.1 prison; Zhang Jingsheng, a worker in Changsha, Hunan province, who was previously imprisoned during the 1980s and sentenced in 1989 to 13 years' imprisonment; Chen Lantao, a marine biologist from Qingdao in Shandong province who is serving an 18-year sentence at Shandong provincial No. 3 Prison; Tang Yuanjuan, an assistant engineer at a car factory in north-east China who is serving a 20-year prison sentence in Liaoning province. Many others have received terms ranging from seven years' to life imprisonment for exercising their right to freedom of expression or association.

A few conditional releases

During the past year, the Chinese authorities announced or confirmed the release of about two dozen prisoners of conscience, including political dissidents and Catholic priests. Some students jailed for their role in the 1989 protests in Beijing, such as student leader Wang Dan, were released on parole in early 1993. These releases were given wide publicity by Chinese official sources, who claimed that all students jailed in 1989 had now been freed. This measure, however, did not include student leaders whom the authorities considered were no longer students at the time of their arrest, or students jailed outside Beijing.

A few other political prisoners were released on parole before the end of their sentence, including some who had become seriously ill in prison and were granted bail on medical grounds after repeated international appeals for their release. Over a dozen Roman Catholic priests and lay people, imprisoned at various times since the early 1980s for their peaceful religious activities, were also released during

the past year, some before the end of their sentence. However, the fate of a dozen others, who have been missing since their arrest in 1990 or 1991, was not disclosed by the authorities.

Prisoners released on parole are subjected to restrictions or bail conditions, including limits on their freedom of movement and speech. Many former prisoners, whether freed on parole or at the end of their sentence, remain under police surveillance and are liable to further sanctions if they engage in unapproved activities. For example, Ma Shaofang, a student leader in 1989 who was released in mid-1992 after serving a three-year prison sentence, is reported to have been arrested by police in Beijing in April 1993 and "exiled" to his home province of Jiangsu because of his contacts with the foreign press in Beijing.

Numerous arbitrary arrests

While the few conditional releases granted during the past year were publicized by Chinese official sources, the numerous arbitrary arrests carried out were neither officially reported nor acknowledged. They include:

- ◆ Scores of political dissidents secretly detained since mid-1992 in Beijing and other cities for taking part in underground dissident organisations, circulating political posters or attempting to stage peaceful demonstrations. Over 40 people are reported to be still held, some having been detained incommunicado for a year. In many cases their families have been denied information about their whereabouts and the accusations against them. Some have reportedly been charged and may go on trial shortly.
- ◆ Scores of Tibetans arrested during the past year in Lhasa or other areas of Tibet for staging small peaceful pro-independence demonstrations. In March 1993, for example, about 30 Tibetans, including monks and nuns, were arrested in Lhasa during a series of small protests. Tibetan activists, including people involved in monitoring human rights, were also arrested in mid-May 1993 prior to the arrival in Lhasa of a delegation of European Community diplomats, reportedly as an attempt to prevent contacts between the activists and the diplomats. Large-scale protests subsequently took place in Lhasa in late May, reportedly involving up to 2,000 Tibetans, some of whom stoned Chinese buildings, including the Lhasa police headquarters. It is not yet clear what triggered the unrest but it is feared that more arbitrary arrests may be carried out as a result.
- ◆ Hundreds of Christians detained in various places for their involvement in peaceful religious activities. A growing number of such incidents have been reported since mid-1992, in Shanxi, Henan, Shandong, Shaanxi, Anhui and other provinces. Many of these arrests were carried out in rural areas following police raids on religious meetings held in private homes. In practically all the cases reported, those attending such meetings were beaten by police during the raids or later while in police custody. Often, their homes were ransacked and personal possessions, including religious books, confiscated. Most were detained without charge for periods varying from a few days to several months and released only after paying heavy fines, some being placed under house arrest after their release. Others were kept in police custody and sentenced to terms of imprisonment or of "re-education through labour". They include over 30 leaders of a Protestant group known as the Jesus Family, who were arrested in June 1992 in Shandong province and sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 12 years.

Torture and ill-treatment

Many cases of torture were reported in the past year. They included at least five different cases of deaths due to torture in police custody reported by Chinese official newspapers. No official comment, however, was made about the many other cases of torture reported by unofficial sources.

The victims included a group of Christians who were severely beaten by police in late March 1993, as a result of which one young man died. According to unofficial sources, the incident occurred on 27 March 1993 in a village of Xunyang county in Shaanxi province when police raided a religious meeting attended by some 30 Christians and, without explanation, started beating them. Five of the Christians were partly stripped, suspended by the arms and violently beaten until they became unconscious. A 22 year-old man named Lai Manping died a few days later, apparently as a result of the injuries sustained during the beatings.

Another recent report concerns Liu Gang, a student leader imprisoned in north-east China, who was said in late April 1993 to be in very poor health due to repeated torture and continuous cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in prison since 1991. Reports that he was being ill-treated started to emerge in late 1991 and his continued ill-treatment was further documented in 1992. The most recent report suggests that the authorities have taken no action to investigate the allegations and ensure his safety.

Though torture is prohibited by Chinese law, few allegations of torture are investigated and the perpetrators often go unpunished. While a growing number of cases of torture and ill-treatment have been reported in recent years, the government has not taken any measure to effectively prevent torture and increase safeguards for prisoners' safety, or to ensure that all allegations of torture are investigated.

Amnesty International will continue to call on the Chinese authorities to release all prisoners of conscience, to account for all political prisoners and grant them fair trials in accordance with international standards, and to introduce fundamental safeguards to prevent human rights violations, such as torture, long-term detention without charge, unfair trials and summary executions, from occurring.

3. IOR 41/WU 08/93 INTERNAL
28 May 1993

UN World Conference on Human Rights

AI Press Team - Internal

This is to inform sections that the press team for the UN World Conference on Human Rights has now been finalized, and will consist of the following press officers:

Felix Adank, Swiss Section (19-26 June)
Dragan Barbutovski, Slovenian Group (9-26 June)
Richard Bunting, IS (7-26 June)
Lars Christensen, Danish Section (9-18 June)
Louisa Coradini, French Section (9-26 June)
Josette Debord, French Section (19-26 June)
Brian Dooley, British Section (9-26 June)
Jean Freedberg, US Section (12-22 June)
Morten Haahr, Danish Section (9-18 June)
Phillippe Hensmans, Belgian Section (9-26 June)
Norma Johnston, British Section (9-26 June)
Gerald Kador, Austrian Section (9-26 June)
Gunnar Köhne, German Section (9-26 June)
Kamal Samari, IS (11-26 June)
Louisa Stannov, Swedish Section (9-18 June)
Anita Tiessen, IS (9-26 June)
Mercedes Momeni, US Section (15-16 June)

All members of the above team are asked to apply for media accreditation directly with the UN, preferably as representatives of their section newsletter or magazine. Any queries should be directed to Richard Bunting in the IS Press office, direct line: +44 71 413 5811.

Spokespeople from the official delegation to the conference are presently being identified.

A press conference is planned for the first day of the conference, 14 June, at which Secretary General Pierre Sané will speak. It is also hoped that Pierre Sané will speak at the patchwork event in the Stephanplatz on the afternoon of 14 June, for which a high media-profile is planned.

Sections organizing events in Vienna are asked to designate media spokespeople for these events.

Please contact Richard Bunting at the IS Press Office, on Tel: +44 71 413 5811 if your dates have changed.