



amnesty international news release

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NR 20/81

AI Index: AMR 22/55/81

Distr: NS/PO/CO

EMBARGOED FOR: 0001 hrs GMT WEDNESDAY

9 SEPTEMBER 1981

ORIGINAL

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON WORLD PUBLIC

TO PRESS FOR END TO KILLINGS AND TORTURE IN CHILE

Eight years after the coup which overthrew Chile's elected government, citizens suspected of non-violent opposition to the present authorities still risk sudden death, torture, imprisonment or banishment to remote areas, Amnesty International said today, (Wednesday, 9 September 1981).

With the approach of the anniversary of the 11 September 1973 coup, the human rights organization called for public appeals to the Chilean authorities to release prisoners held because of their opinions, to halt torture and killings by the security forces, and to account for the estimated 1,500 people who "disappeared" from 1973 to 1977.

Amnesty International said the reports it receives from Chile showed there had been changes in the ways human rights and international standards are violated: there is no longer the epidemic of "disappearances" of earlier years, but there have been several reports over the past year of people killed after arrest or abduction.

Torture still appears to be a systematic part of official policy. There are consistent reports of electric shock being applied for hours to the most sensitive parts of prisoners' bodies after they are tied to metal bedframes and soaked in water. Some prisoners are suspended and beaten. A frequently reported torture is the "telephone" -- blows to the ears with open palms. In other cases, squirting water at high

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Amnesty International is a worldwide movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, sex, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and the death penalty in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of any government, political grouping, ideology, economic interest or religious creed. It is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. Amnesty International has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC), UNESCO and the Council of Europe, has cooperative relations with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, and is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees of the Organization of African Unity.

pressure into body orifices, burning with cigarettes, rape and other sexual abuse are used.

Humiliation, threats and combinations of physical and psychological torture are used to "soften up" prisoners. Some are kept standing, blindfolded, in absolute silence for long periods. Noise may be used to disorient them or they may be forced to listen or be present when others are tortured.

Frequent short-term detention or banishment of political suspects makes it difficult to estimate the number of political prisoners at any one time, Amnesty International said. In 1980, about 2,700 people were arrested for political reasons; all but about 100 were released after a few hours or days. Recent estimates indicated about 250 people imprisoned or sentenced to banishment on politically related charges, and about 50 on bail pending the outcome of trials.

A total ban on political parties and activity has resulted in thousands of arrests since 1973. A new constitution which came into force on 11 March 1981 gives the authorities wide powers to limit individual freedoms. In the first three months after it came into effect, more than 370 people were reliably reported to have been arrested. Most were released after a few days; but some of those released had been tortured while being held incommunicado at secret detention centres.

Arrests typically are carried out without warrants by the secret or regular police.

Banishment to remote areas, whether for three months by order of the Interior Ministry, or for longer periods by court sentence, has been used against human rights activists, students and others who took part in non-violent protests. They are usually sent to isolated villages, often in a harsh climate where they have to support

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themselves far from their families or friends. Amnesty International has received a number of reports of people arrested, tortured and sent with only the clothes they were wearing to cold, wet regions -- all without trial.

Amnesty International said it was aware that some Chilean opposition groups carried out violence which sometimes resulted in deaths of members of the security forces. Under international agreements which Chile has accepted, however, this cannot justify a government derogating from its obligation to protect basic human rights, including the right to life and to protection from torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, the organization said.

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