

ORIGINAL

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To : National Sections
Chile Coordination Groups/Coordinators

From : Americas Research Department

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
International Secretariat
10 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7HF England

PROPOSAL FOR CHILE ACTION NETWORK

Summary

Attached you will find a proposal for the establishment of a Chile Action Network as recommended by the International Meeting on Argentina and Chile, which was held in February 1982. (See AMR 03/01/82: Report of the International Meeting on Argentina & Chile.)

The aim of the network is to provide a flexible mechanism for acting on AI's concerns in Chile which cannot be dealt with by traditional AI techniques.

It is hoped that the network will become operational at the end of September 1982.

The IS is fully aware of recent moves towards the establishment of regional rather than country action networks. Some discussion took place at the International Meeting on Argentina & Chile, and in the IS, about the establishment of a network combining Argentina, Chile, and possibly other Southern Cone countries. It was felt, however, that it was not immediately appropriate, but should be borne in mind as a possibility for the future.

Distribution

As above.

Recommended Actions

1. National Sections are asked to discuss this proposal for the establishment of a Chile Action Network within their country. NSs where there is a Chile coordination group or coordinator are requested to discuss the proposal with them.
2. Once a decision has been taken as to whether or not your section will be participating please fill in the attached blue form and return it to the IS by 15 September 1982. A space is included in the form for any comments NS/co-groups may have on the proposal.
3. Suggestions for the selection of participating groups are given in the proposal. We have suggested that where there is already a Chile co-group/coordinator that the network coordinator be if possible part of the co-group, and that between one to ten groups are selected.

2 August 1982

PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
CHILE SPECIAL ACTION NETWORK

Introduction

One of the proposals to emerge from the recent International Meeting on Chile and Argentina was the establishment of a Chile Action Network.

Over the past few years, the emphasis of AI's work on Chile has changed as the pattern of human rights violations has altered. There are fewer long-term prisoners of conscience - at the moment there are about 60 adoption/investigation cases, plus the "disappearance" cases which have been taken up. The increase in armed opposition has meant that it is much more difficult to establish whether an individual is a prisoner of conscience. More than half the political prisoners in Chile at the moment have been charged with terrorist offences under the Arms Control Law and/or with belonging to an organization involved in armed resistance.

However, other concerns such as short-term detention of prisoners of conscience and the widespread use of torture require continuous attention and action. It was felt that a small action network would provide a flexible mechanism for different types of actions relating to those concerns for which traditional techniques such as adoption are not adequate.

AI Concerns which would be dealt with by the network

1. Short-term Detention of Prisoners of Conscience

Under transitory provision 24(a) of the 1981 Constitution, once a state of danger to internal peace has been declared, the President, through the Ministry of the Interior, has the power to order the arrest of people for up to five days in their own homes or in places that are not prisons. If terrorist offences with serious consequences occur the period of detention may be extended by a further fifteen days. Since the first state of danger was declared in March 1981, it has been systematically renewed every six months, and the authorities have widely used their powers to hold individuals in detention without charge, usually in secret detention centres run by the Central Nacional de Informaciones (CNI - Chilean secret police) for up to the maximum 20 days.

Anyone suspected of opposing the government in any way - including trade unionists, human rights activists, members of the church, students, relatives of the "disappeared" and political prisoners - risks arrest. Most are released without charge after the period of secret detention.

In most cases, prisoners of conscience who are subsequently committed for trial are expected to be released on bail within six months of their arrest.

Because of the short period of detention the case-sheet is not the most effective technique. In such cases, the network would be asked to make special appeals, or the case would be assigned to one group in the network for a limited period of time.

2. Torture

Torture is one of AI's main concerns in Chile. It is widely and systematically used during the period of secret detention by the CNI following arrest. The Urgent Action technique has been extensively used for appealing on behalf of individuals held in secret detention where they risk torture. However, little follow-up work has been done once the risk of torture is over, and it is believed that the network could be used to call for investigations into the allegations of torture, or by assigning a case to one particular group who would then follow-up all relevant aspects such as the consequences of torture on the victim, results of the judicial enquiry if any, relief for rehabilitation, etc.

3. Relegados

Under transitory provision 24, the President, through the Ministry of the Interior, can order the enforced residence of an individual in an urban locality for up to 90 days, without right to appeal. The individual is not formally charged or brought to trial, simply taken to the place of banishment. Over the past two years, actions on behalf of the relegados - the majority of them prisoners of conscience - have been sent to co-groups, and consist of appeals to allow the person to return home, and the sending of greeting cards to the person banished. The actions have worked well so far, in as much as they have provided moral support for the individuals concerned during their period of banishment. One "relegado" recently reported that he had received more than 80 cards from several different countries. Some national sections/co-groups have already set up a network of groups to participate in these actions. This work would be integrated into the new network.

4. Political Killings Involving Members of Security Forces

Over the last 18 months, there have been a number of incidents in which persons suspected of political activities have been shot dead by security forces in alleged confrontations. Subsequent evidence has given grounds to doubt the official version of the death in some cases, and it is believed the person may not have been armed at the time of his death or that he may have been arrested before being killed. Special actions may be sent out calling for a full investigation into similar cases, or cases may be assigned to an individual group in the network for follow-up investigation type work.

5. Constitution/Legal Developments

Special actions may be initiated related to decrees or articles of the Chilean Constitution which violate international covenants signed by Chile, or which are themselves violated by the Chilean authorities, or related to significant legal developments, such as moves towards the restoration of the right to amparo (similar to habeas corpus).

6. Prison Conditions

Special actions to highlight poor prison conditions or the harassment or ill-treatment of political prisoners by prison guards, lack of medical treatment, etc.

7. Disappearances

As time has progressed, many of the adoption groups who have been assigned "disappearance" cases have become frustrated with the lack of developments in their case. While recognizing the importance of continuing work on their behalf so that they are not forgotten, more and more groups are giving up so that they can work on cases where there is more hope of obtaining the release of a prisoner. The network will therefore have a considerable role to play in maintaining and increasing the level of work on behalf of the "disappeared", either in the form of special appeals on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, or by assigning special cases for a limited period to one or a few adoption groups in the network, or by participating in special appeals when important legal developments occur in connection with particular "disappearances", eg. Lonquen, Yumbel, etc.

8. Preventive Action

Harassment of political suspects by individuals believed to be members of security forces has become very widespread, and often precedes arrest, secret detention, and even death (see point 4 above). Preventive actions may be sent out to groups in the network on behalf of individuals believed to be in danger of arrest and torture, or whose physical safety and possibly life is in danger.

Coordinators

The role of coordinators is crucial to the network since they will be responsible for allocating actions sent out by the IS to the groups, advising and supervising the participants and acting as a communication channel between the groups and the IS.

In sections where there is a Chile coordination group, the network coordinator should, if possible, be a member of the co-group. Otherwise, the network coordinator should work very closely with the Chile coordination group.

In sections where there is no Chile coordination group or coordinator at the moment, but where there is interest in working on Chile, it is advisable initially to establish only one group which could later become a coordinator for the network.

Some Chile coordination groups/coordinators may feel that they are unable to participate at this stage. They will be sent copies of all actions for information.

Participation by Groups

In principle, it is up to the national sections, in consultation with their Chile coordination group/coordinator if there is one, to decide on which groups and how many should be invited to participate in the network. It is essential though that groups have at least working knowledge of Spanish and English. Background knowledge of Chile is not necessary.

The following might be considered for participation in the network:

- a) adoption groups already participating in a network for actions on behalf of the 'relegados';
- b) adoption groups who have previously worked on behalf of a Chilean prisoner and are interested in continuing work on the country;
- c) adoption groups who have or are still working on behalf of a 'disappeared' prisoner;

Professional Contacts/Groups

Because some of the actions sent out may concern legal or medical issues, or be related to particular target sectors, it is hoped that coordinators will be able to draw on contacts from these fields. Where appropriate, actions will also be sent to existing professional group networks in the organization.

Working Methods

1. Background circulars and actions will be sent to network coordinators for distribution to participating groups. Each action will comprise background information to the case and a set of recommended actions. Where possible, all external material will be given on a separate sheet, so that it can be distributed more widely.
 2. Copies of all actions will be sent to all network coordinators and to Chile coordination groups. However, participation may be limited to a certain number of sections, or a certain number of groups.
 3. Some actions will be in the form of immediate appeals as 'one-off' actions, others will involve more systematic follow-up work over a longer period of time (up to six months). The cut-off date will be given in each action.
 4. Recommended Actions will include letter-writing to authorities, publicity, approaches to other organizations (e.g. target sectors), and in some cases information gathering work, approaches to lawyers, relatives of prisoners, etc.
 5. In order to monitor the effectiveness of the action network, particularly at the beginning during the more experimental stages, groups participating in the network should report to their coordinator/coordination group on the activities they have taken on each action, and any response received from contacts or government officials. The coordinators will be expected to send in three monthly reports to the IS.
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To : Amnesty International
International Secretariat
10 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7HF
England
Attention: Virginia Segal, Research Dept.

From :(National Section)

Date :

Our National Section has decided to participate in the establishment of a Chile Action Network (CAN).

The person/group responsible for the coordination of the CAN is:

Name:

Function other than CAN Coordinator:

Address:

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Telephone number:

Action requests for groups should be sent to the following address:

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Urgent messages can be sent to the following telex number:

We plan to involve the following number of groups in the network:

Comments:

