Pinochet Victims Of His Rule Essay, Research Paper

PINOCHET: THE CHILD VICTIMS OF HIS RULE

As the House of Lords considers legal arguments that Augusto Pinochet is immune from prosecution, Amnesty International UK today released details of some of the 80 children under 16-years-old killed or “disappeared” by Chilean security forces during his rule.

In the new report Chile: The Child Victims, Amnesty International gives details of how children as young as two were amongst the thousands of victims of Pinochet’s rule. The evidence is compiled from official Chilean investigations, the results of which have been recognised by the Chilean Government.

Some children were killed or “disappeared” after being deliberately targeted, while others died following the indiscriminate or excessive use of force by security personnel.

Many of these cases are listed in the hundreds of pages of the indictment issued by the Spanish judicial authorities in seeking Pinochet’s extradition to faces charges in that country, for example the case of six-year-old Claudia Valenzuela.

In the early hours of 14 September 1973 police raided Claudia Valenzuela’s home in Talca. She and both her parents, Hector and Hilda, were killed and her younger sister and brother, Paula, 4, and Gonzalo, 2, were wounded.

Police first claimed that Claudia and her parents had been involved in a family suicide and later that they had been killed in a gunfight with police. The official Chilean investigation concluded that the six-year-old Claudia and her parents had been extrajudicially executed .

Amnesty International UK Director David Bull said:

“Amnesty International UK this month launched a campaign on children’s rights, focusing particularly on the importance of upholding these rights during conflict.”

“Amid discussion of legal technicalities and claims about the economic and political situation in Chile at the time, Amnesty International wants to refocus attention on the innocent victims of Pinochet’s security forces.”

“Children need special protection from human rights violations, but in Pinochet’s Chile they were the victims of indiscriminate shootings, extrajudicial executions and “disappearances”.

Midnight shame – USA executes child offender

The execution of Sean Sellers shames the USA and is a further sign of its selective contempt for the international human rights standards it so often claims to support, Amnesty International said today.

Sean Sellers was executed by lethal injection in Oklahoma State Penitentiary just after midnight on 4 February, for crimes committed when he was a 16-year-old boy.

International law prohibits the use of the death penalty against those under 18 at the time of the crimes. It is a principle that is now so widely accepted that no country is exempt from it.

“The USA’s repeated claims that it is the most progressive force for human rights in the world are contradicted by its blatant flouting of the global moral and legal consensus that killing people for their childhood crimes is wrong,” Amnesty International said.

“By executing Sean Sellers, the US authorities have turned their clock back 40 years to the last time a US prisoner was put to death for a crime committed at 16. This cannot be defined as a progressive act.”

The Organisation of American States, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Defence for Children International, the American Bar Association, and Amnesty International were among those who appealed for the execution to be stopped.

On 27 January, the day the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board rejected Sean Sellers plea for clemency, Pope John Paul II challenged the USA to reject the cruelty of the death penalty . However, Oklahoma’s Governor, a Catholic, welcomed the clemency rejection. In television interviews on 3 February he said that the Pope was “wrong” about the death penalty.

“In the end, international law and the global moral consensus was ignored to satisfy perceived domestic opinion,” Amnesty International continued.

“In doing so the authorities have done nothing but deepen the culture of violence in US society. It is time to seek constructive solutions to violent crimes, including those committed by children.”

The execution of Sean Sellers has confirmed the USA as the world’s leading perpetrator of the execution of people under 18 at the time of the crime. It has now executed 10 child offenders since 1990, one more than the rest of the world combined. The nine others killed in the USA were 17 at the time of the crime.

The USA has now carried out the last four executions of child offenders known in the world, having put three such prisoners to death in 1998. Only five other countries are known to have carried out such executions since 1990.

Sean Sellers was the 512th prisoner executed in the USA since it resumed executions in 1977. In the past six years an average of one prisoner a week has been put to death. So far in 1999 the pace has increased to nearly three executions a week. Twelve people have already been killed this year, and at least another 11 are currently facing execution in February.

Background

Against the worldwide trend towards abolition of the death penalty, the USA is not only increasing its own resort to judicial executions but has also contributed to recent retrograde steps on capital punishment in other countries.

The Philippines is due to execute its first prisoner in more than two decades tomorrow, 5 February. In 1997 officials from the Philippines were reported to have visited US execution chambers as part of their research into adopting lethal injection as an execution method.

Similarly, in Guatemala, the lethal injection chamber was imported after a government delegation visited the USA in 1997 to learn about executions by lethal injection. As of February 1999, there are some 35 people awaiting execution on Guatemala’s death row.

On 29 January 1999, the Attorneys General of 12 countries of the English-speaking Caribbean signed a statement in Trinidad advising their governments to withdraw from the Inter-American Human Rights Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, then to re-affirm all parts except those dealing with the death penalty.

This decision follows a meeting in early 1998 between the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and the US Attorney General. Among the topics discussed was the problem Trinidad was having in executing prisoners as quickly as it would like. The US Attorney General reportedly pledged her country’s support in giving any assistance Trinidad required in implementing the death penalty.

Sierra Leone: UN human rights presence reduced as abuses worsen

Plans to reduce the size of the United Nations (UN) peace-keeping mission in Sierra Leone when civilians continue to suffer appalling atrocities are unacceptable, Amnesty International said.

According to information received by the organisation, the UN plans to reduce from five to only two or three the number of human rights monitors in the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL).

“At a time when it is more urgent than ever to monitor human rights abuses in Sierra Leone and to report them accurately and impartially, the UNOMSIL human rights section is being weakened dramatically” Amnesty International said. “Despite the difficulties posed by the security situation in Freetown, there is still much that UNOMSIL human rights officers can do.”

Retreating through the east of Freetown this week, rebel forces have again resorted to mutilating civilians by cutting off their hands and arms. On 18 January, rebel forces were reported to have taken 12 people from a mosque in the east of Freetown and then either killed them or amputated their limbs.

Dozens of people with amputated limbs are now arriving in the centre of Freetown. Some 30 people with amputations have been admitted this week to the Netland Hospital, which was supported by the International Committee of the Red Cross until the remaining international staff were ordered by the government to leave Freetown last week. Others have gone to Connaught Hospital. Neither hospital is able to cope with the thousands of people who have been injured and killed since 6 January.

After rebel forces entered Freetown on 6 January UNOMSIL evacuated to Conakry in neighbouring Guinea. On 12 January the UN Security Council extended UNOMSIL’s mandate for a further two months. While it was expected that the number of UNOMSIL military observers would be reduced, neither the UN Secretary-General nor the Security Council resolution extending UNOMSIL’s mandate recommended scaling down the human rights section.

On 14 January Amnesty International stressed that it was essential that UNOMSIL human rights officers continue their work and publicly called on the international community to support, both politically and financially, the human rights section, which has been effective in monitoring and reporting human rights abuses and which has contributed to the long-term protection of human rights in Sierra Leone.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International is receiving daily reports of atrocities committed by rebel forces. Since they entered Freetown rebel forces have deliberately and arbitrarily killed hundreds of unarmed civilians. Eleven policemen were killed at the ancient Cotton Tree in the heart of Freetown. Rebel forces arrived in Freetown with lists of people to be targeted, including members of the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights. Lawyers and journalists also appear to have been deliberately sought and killed. When rebel forces went to the home of a lawyer in Freetown and failed to find him, they shot his mother.

Large numbers of civilians, including children and young people, have been abducted in Freetown by rebel forces. Some have been used as porters to carry looted goods from Freetown to other parts of the country. Girls and women have been raped.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Freetown and at least 13 foreign nationals, who include seven priests and six nuns, were last week abducted by rebel forces from Kissy in the east of Freetown. Their fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

ECOMOG and Civil Defence Forces (CDF) fighting alongside them have summarily executed captured rebels or people they suspect of supporting rebel forces. ECOMOG forces summarily executed 22 captives on Aberdeen Bridge on 13 January and similar executions are reported to be continuing. Indiscriminate aerial bombardments on areas of the densely populated capital have resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties. Last week the CDF summarily executed six young men alleged to have been rebels at Kingtom in Freetown.

Eight Sierra Leonean humanitarian aid workers are currently being held by ECOMOG, accused of cooperating with rebel forces. Most of them are reported to have been beaten while detained.

CHILDREN ARE DELIBERATE TARGETS OF WAR SAYS NEW REPORT FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK

“Modern warfare is war against children , with one third of the decade’s war casualties being under 18,” says Amnesty International UK as it launches a new campaign on human rights for children with the publication of a book on children in war. The report, In the firing line, is published on 11 January to coincide with the working group on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in Geneva, where the legal age of military recruitment will be debated.

The study outlines the extent to which children have increasingly become explicit targets in warfare. More and more are being deliberately killed, tortured and recruited as combatants. Disturbing statistics show that, during the course of the twentieth century, the proportion of civilians killed in warfare has increased from five per cent at the beginning of the century, to 90 per cent in the 1990s: under 18s make up almost half the civilian population in most of today’s war zones.

Of those who survive, few remain unscathed by the emotional trauma of witnessing violent killing, often of their parents, brothers and sisters, or, of themselves being the victims of violence or torture .

“Children have become one of the fastest growing groups to be on the receiving end of human rights abuses, says Rob Beasley, Campaign Co-ordinator for Amnesty International UK. “Across the globe young lives are becoming tortured lives as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child approaches its tenth anniversary this year. Many experience their lives being shattered by becoming an orphan, a refugee or even a child soldier.”

The report says that:

300 thousand children are active combatants

14 million children are refugees or displaced people and

over a third of modern war casualties are estimated to be children

“Millions of children have seen what no human being should ever have to see. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to do things that not even a trained adult soldier should ever have to do. And every day countless numbers feel the agony, both physical and emotional, that most adults will never know,” says Rob Beasley.

The publication says that of the African and Asian countries to which UK companies have supplied small arms, 69 per cent are involved in conflicts in which it is highly likely that many of the victims will be children.

The report calls for :

the UK government to ensure that small arms are not exported from Britain to countries where they are likely to be used be used to violate children’s human rights;

a new international agreement to raise the minimum age of military recruitment from 15 to 18 and a new convention to the International Labour Organization to prohibit child soldiers.

In the long term the human rights organization will be campaigning for governments to respond to the public abhorrence at the targeting of children in warfare, in the same way as they have done in response to opinion on landmines and chemical weapons.

INDIA: Amnesty International campaigns against rape and sexual abuse by members of the security forces in Assam and Manipur

Amnesty International’s membership is initiating today a campaign to register concern at reports of the rape and sexual abuse of women and children by security forces in the Indian states of Assam and Manipur.

Members of Amnesty International’s specialist women and children’s groups in 30 countries world-wide will be writing to the Central Government and state authorities in India calling on them to take immediate steps to prevent the sexual torture of women and children, to ensure that investigations are carried out, that those found responsible are prosecuted, and that the victims are provided with medical treatment, rehabilitation and compensation.

The cases highlighted in this campaign include children who have been sexually abused and raped by members of the armed forces in Manipur, and women who have been raped by members of the armed forces in both Assam and Manipur, for whom there has been inadequate redress.

While acknowledging that in some cases stern action has been taken to bring perpetrators of rape to justice in recent years, Amnesty International remains concerned at the high incidence of rape with impunity in the two states, and at the manner in which this grave human rights violation is being addressed by authorities.

Amnesty International believes that the impunity of offenders and the difficulties faced by victims in seeking redress are major contributory factors to the continuation of rape and sexual abuse throughout India.

In Assam and Manipur these difficulties are compounded by the existence of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act which not only gives the armed forces widespread powers to to search the homes of civilians, but also grants members of the armed forces protection from prosecution.

Specialist women and children’s group members will be reminding the authorities of commitments India has made in international human rights fora to review legislation facilitating impunity.

Five years ago, the Government of India committed under the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (adopted by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights) to “abrogate legislation leading to impunity for those responsible for grave violations of human rights … and prosecute such violations thereby providing a firm basis for the rule of law.”

It is now three years since the Government of India committed at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women to review national legislation in order to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, emphasise the prosecution of offenders, to adopt or strengthen laws to punish state agents who use violence against women, and to take effective action against such perpetrators.

In addition to judicial remedies for this violation, Amnesty International’s women and children’s specialist groups will be calling for the granting of full redress to victims, including adequate compensation, proper medical care and rehabilitation. Furthermore, Amnesty International groups are urging that full training be given to members of the security forces on their obligations under the international human rights standards to which the Government of India is party.

Background

Human rights abuses are a feature of daily life in Assam and Manipur, where armed opposition groups have long been active. Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns at reports of “disappearances”, extra-judicial execution, and torture by government authorities in the context of security operations. The organisation has also called on armed groups to adhere to the minimum standards of international humanitarian law, by calling a halt to the deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians, torture, ill-treatment and hostage-taking.

Amnesty International regularly receives reports of rape and other forms of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment by the police and members of the security forces in all regions of India. The organisation has repeatedly raised these concerns with government officials.

It is now one year since the Government of India took the welcome step of signing the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment adopted by the United Nations in 1984. In the year of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the Government could consolidate this first step toward providing full legal protection from torture, including rape, for all citizens of India, by ratifying the Convention at the earliest.

International campaign launched against the use of child soldiers

Geneva — A new coalition of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) against the use of child soldiers was launched today in Geneva and New York. According to latest estimates, more than 300,000 children under 18 years of age are fighting in armed conflicts around the world and hundreds of thousands more are members of armed forces who could be sent into combat at any moment. Although most recruits are over 15 years of age, significant recruitment starts at 10 years, and the use of even younger children has been recorded.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has been formed in response to the failure of negotiations within the United Nations to agree a prohibition on keeping children out of armed forces. The Coalition is calling for the adoption and implementation of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to raise the minimum age for military recruitment and use in hostilities to 18 years. The current international minimum age is only 15 years, although most countries do not accept under-18s in their armed forces.

Speaking in Geneva at the launch, the Coalition Coordinator, Stuart Maslen, declared that: The use of children as soldiers has no place in a civilised society and must be stopped. The Coalition is calling upon the international community to ensure children are given strict legal protection against involvement in armed conflict.

The Coalition is being headed by a Steering Committee of six NGOs — Amnesty

International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terre desHommes, International Save the Children Alliance (represented by Swedish Save the Children), Jesuit Refugee Service, Geneva, and Quaker UN Office, Geneva. It will be coordinated by a small Secretariat based in France close to Geneva.

Information on the numbers of child soldiers in the world, including the recruitment ages in governmental armed forces, is also being published on the Internet by Swedish Save the Children(