

BOUGAINVILLE: INTERNATIONAL ACTION ESSENTIAL AS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE

SYDNEY—On February 24th, Amnesty International released a press release urging all to support the Bougainville people in the Pacific to put a stop to the “deliberate and unlawful killings and disappearances that continue unabated in the province of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (PNG).”

“Previous promises from the PNG Government to halt the violations have proved empty,” Amnesty International said. “It’s time the international community called on PNG to account for the actions of its defence forces.”

Amnesty International has compiled a 50-page report based on their first research trip to the province. The organization, however, was denied permission from the authorities to travel to the island of Bougainville itself.

“After eight years of conflict in Bougainville between the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) and the armed secessionist Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA), the PNG Government is doing little or nothing to stop the human rights violations in the province” Amnesty International reported.

The group knows of only one case since 1989 that has been thoroughly investigated by the authorities and no case that has been prosecuted.

The PNGDF and members of the government-backed paramilitary Resistance Forces were responsible for at least 44 unlawful or indiscriminate killings or disappearances in 1996 alone.

“Poor discipline, a weak

chain of command and an unwillingness to hold individuals responsible for their actions have created a culture of impunity in Bougainville and contributed to the continuing cycle of violations,” the watch group said.

Another concern of the group is that the PNGDF and the Resistance Forces operate virtually free from public scrutiny because of restrictions imposed by the PNG authorities on access to the media and independent human rights monitors.

Amnesty International is calling on the governments represented at the forthcoming 53rd Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on March 24 to April 11 to pressure the PNG authorities to bring an end to the violations in Bougainville, prosecute the offenders and provide justice for the victims. Although previous resolutions of the Commission have not been fully implemented by the PNG Government, Bougainville was not discussed at the 1996 session.

“The people of Bougainville have a right to justice. The international community cannot close its eyes to the contempt of the PNG Government to human rights on Bougainville,” Amnesty International said.

The UN Meeting will be held at the UN headquarters in New York, N.Y., 10017, USA.

At the same time, the group’s report also documents deliberate and arbitrary killings committed by the BRA. Other organizations are enjoined to condemn these abuses and to urge the BRA to uphold international humanitarian law, cease holding

prisoners as hostages and prevent deliberate or arbitrary killings.

Source: Amnesty International Homepage via Internet E-mail: abarnes@amnesty.org.uk / <http://www.amnesty.org>

PEACE PETITION FROM WOMEN OF THE WORLD TO GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD

As of end-February, the petition initially co-sponsored by the CCIA-World Council of Churches and the International Peace Bureau, and sent worldwide by the International Women’s Tribune Centre, had more than 60 organizational co-sponsors representing every world region. The Women of the World Peace Petition to Governments of the World was launched on March 6 at a special International Women’s Day event at the United Nations on “Women at the Peace Table.”

Signatures for the petition reproduced below will be collected until August 30 when a more formal presentation will be made to the next President of the UN General Assembly at the opening of the 52nd Session. (The petition is also circulated on Internet via GlobalNet, and available in French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.)

Petition From Women of the World to the Governments of the World:

We are horrified at the levels of violence witnessed during this century and that women and children are the primary victims of war and poverty. On behalf of society at large, we, the undersigned women of the world, demand that annually for the next five

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years, at least five percent of national military expenditures be redirected to health, education and employment programs. By doing so, one-half billion dollars a day would be released worldwide for programs to improve living standards.

We also demand that war, like slavery, colonialism and apartheid, be delegitimized as an acceptable form of social behavior, and that governments and civil society together develop new institutions that do not resort to violence for the settlement of disputes.

Together we commit ourselves, as half of the world's population, to use our power to ensure that these demands, which will promote international peace and security, are met through legislation and action. We resolve that we will inaugurate a new century that rejects warfare and promotes well-being, justice and human rights.

Petition Co-sponsors:

(as of 28 February 1997)

1. Arab Lawyers Union (Egypt)
2. Asian Women's Human Rights Council (Philippines)
3. Association de Solidarite des Femmes Rwandaises (Rwanda)
4. Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region (Cyprus)
5. Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation (Canada)
6. BATIS Center for Women (Philippines)
7. Body Shop (UK)
8. CADEF (Mali)
9. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women in Nova Scotia
10. Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, Catholics for a Free Choice (USA)
11. Catholic Institute of Education (South Africa)
12. CCIA of World Council of Churches (Geneva) Change (UK)
13. Centro de Investigacion Social Formacion y Estudios de la Mujer-CISFEM (Venezuela)
14. Coordination of Women's Advocacy (Geneva)
15. Development Action for Women Network (Philippines)
16. Enda Inter-Arabe environnement & developpment du monde arabe (Tunisia)
17. Fundacion Servicio, Paz y Justicia (Argentina)
18. Grandmothers for Peace International (USA)
19. Initiatives des Femmes Africaines de France et d'Europe (France),
20. International Association for Women's Rights and Solidarity with Iranian Women (France)

21. International Peace Bureau (Geneva and New York)
22. International Solidarity Network of Women Living Under Muslim Laws (France)
23. International Women's Tribune Centre (New York)
24. Isis/Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Uganda)
25. Israel Women's Network (Israel)
26. Kyandondo Young Single Mothers' Group (Uganda)
27. LILA Pilipina (Philippines)
28. Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (Sierra Leone)
29. Mira Senteret (Norway)
30. National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape (USA)
31. Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace (Canada)
32. Peace Action (USA)
33. Quilombo-Centro Ecumenico Feminino da Diaspora Negra (Brazil)
34. Quixote Center (USA)
35. SAFTINET/Domestic Violence Center (New Zealand)
36. Sisters of Loretto (USA)
37. Society of the Sacred Heart (Australia, Canada, Kenya, New Zealand, and Uganda Provinces)
38. Sociologists for Women in Society (USA)
39. Stichting Vrouwenhuis (Netherlands)
40. Swiss Peace Foundation
41. Taller Salud (Puerto Rico)
42. 31st December Women's Movement (Ghana)
43. Trickle Up Program (USA)
44. Union de Mujeres Negras (Venezuela)
45. WAND-Women's Action for New Directions (USA)
46. WEDO-Women's Environment and Development Organization (USA)
47. Women Cell-Humanity Association (India)
48. Women of Faith Net Worker Society (Canada)
49. Women's Human Rights Group (Croatia)
50. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Aotearoa-New Zealand and Australia)
51. Women for Peace International Department (Netherlands)
52. Women for Women's Human Rights (Turkey)