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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

BANGLADESH
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National transport workers' seminar held in Dacca

A national seminar for transport workers in Bangladesh was held in Dacca from 25 to 29 January 1982. The seminar was organized by the ITF in collaboration with our local affiliate, the Bangladesh Launch Labour Association, and sponsored by the US Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks. Speakers included M.S. Hoda, ITF Asian Regional Secretary, and Protapuddin Ahmed, the Launch Labour Association's General Secretary, who was responsible for organizing this extremely successful event.

Some 26 officials from unions of seafarers, railwaymen, civil aviation and inland navigation workers attended the seminar, which discussed items such as the ITF and the international trade union movement; the rôle and activities of the ILO; the history of the labour movement in Bangladesh and current legislation affecting workers in the transport industry; collective bargaining; and the use of audio-visual aids in workers' education.

At the close of the seminar, the participants from the non-ITF unions expressed a desire to affiliate to the ITF as a means of expressing their solidarity with transport workers in other countries. They also felt that a national transport workers' federation should be established in Bangladesh to help promote unity among workers in the industry and that the programme of educational activities for Bangladeshi transport workers should be augmented, and asked the ITF and the ILO to offer the greatest possible assistance, including the arranging of further ITF seminars.

In a set of conclusions that was adopted by the meeting, it was further recommended that the pay and conditions of workers in Bangladesh Biman (the national carrier) should be brought into line with those of employees of other international airlines; that a National Maritime Board should be established along the lines of those already existing in India and Pakistan and modern shipping legislation enacted; that recruitment on the railways should be stepped up in order to improve the quality and level of service and reduce the burden on existing staff who were having to work excessively long hours due to the deliberate policy of understaffing; and lastly that the review of the service conditions of inland navigation workers currently being undertaken should be expedited.

TRANSPORT

GERMANY

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Drivers' union seeks voluntary loading and unloading ban

Towards the end of last year, the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) came to an agreement with the Road Haulage Association (BDG) that they should jointly seek to persuade firms voluntarily to cease the practice of using drivers to load and unload heavy goods vehicles. (The OeTV has compiled a list of 200 such companies and has passed copies of it to the BDG.) Only if persuasion fails will our affiliate seek to have a legal ban imposed.

The OeTV has been campaigning^{x)} for the past year for an end to these extra duties on the grounds that they impose an undue strain on drivers of large lorries and also indirectly endanger other road users.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 3, 1981, page 26 and No. 4, 1981, page 40 for details

GREAT BRITAIN

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Record decline in British merchant fleet

The British merchant fleet declined by more than 14 per cent in tonnage terms in the first eleven months of 1981, with the General Council of British Shipping recording an unprecedented loss of 122 vessels totalling 5.1 million deadweight tons. The British-owned and registered fleet now stands at a total of 1,019 ships of 30.5 million dwt, in stark contrast to the peak of 1,614 ships of 50m dwt six years ago. All the signs are that the decline will continue into 1982 and if the ITF's fears that the British government's Employment Bill will encourage the "flagging out" of British ships are realised, then the future of the national fleet looks very bleak indeed. British maritime unions will be quick to demand decisive action from the government, which has already been accused of acquiescing in a shrinking fleet.

MP seeks to tighten up ship safety in UK waters

Earlier this month, the NUS-sponsored MP John Prescott introduced a bill into parliament in an effort to tighten up ship safety in UK waters. If enacted, the bill would require all ships to observe certain minimum safety standards laid down and enforced by parliament and would make compulsory a full public inquiry into all ship losses. It would also place on the master the prime responsibility for ensuring the safety of his vessel and its crew and oblige a master whose ship was in difficulties to accept a tow, thereby removing the growing pressure on masters to put commercial considerations (the salvage of cargo) before human lives. John Prescott also used this opportunity to renew his appeal to the Prime Minister for a full public inquiry into the loss late last year of the Irish-registered coaster UNION STAR off Lands End, so that the various disturbing aspects of the case, including the alleged undermanning of the vessel and the reasons why a vessel should totally lose power on its maiden voyage, might be fully investigated. That was the very least that the crew, who all went down with the vessel and that of the Penlee lifeboat, which went to the coaster's aid and was lost with all hands, deserved.

NETHERLANDS

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KLM opts for two-man flight deck crew on Airbus A310

The Dutch airline KLM is to operate the Airbus A 310 with two pilots only on the flight deck when it enters into service in April of next year. A union suggestion of a phase-in period with a three-man crew has been rejected by the airline, which has described the F/E's rôle on the A310 as "not meaningful". Dutch cockpit unions have been fighting for two years to get KLM to change its mind and have issued a statement pointing out that they will accept no responsibility for any adverse consequences of the decision to fly the aircraft with a reduced crew complement.

TRADE UNIONS

SOUTH AFRICA

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Black workers protest at death in detention of Dr. Neil Aggett

Workers belonging to all the major independent black workers' unions in South Africa staged a 30-minute stoppage on 11 February to give vent to their mingled feelings of grief and anger at the death, a week earlier, in detention of Dr. Neil Aggett, Transvaal Branch Secretary of the Food and Canning Workers' Union. The death of Dr. Aggett, who was found hanging in his cell,

came just over two months after his arrest - together with thirteen other trade unionists - by security police in a series of raids in various parts of the Republic, which flushed out union leaders, both black and white, working for the growing black trade union movement.

Members of the ITF-affiliated General Workers' Union of South Africa, whose General Secretary David Lewis was a close friend of Dr. Aggett, stopped work in the ports of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London on that day as a mark of respect.

Trade unionists in many other countries have undertaken protest action of all kinds in response to a call from the ICFTU, which issued a statement expressing its shock and horror at the death of Dr. Aggett, who was allegedly severely ill-treated during his term of detention. Representations have been made by unions to South African embassies and consulates worldwide, with calls for an investigation into the reasons for his death in custody and for the release of all the trade union detainees. The ICFTU has also cabled the UN Secretary-General Dr. Perez de Cuellar requesting an immediate commission of inquiry into the circumstances leading to the death of a man who was known to have been completely sound of mind and body prior to his arrest for his trade union activities.

Within two weeks of Dr. Aggett's death, four other detainees have been taken to hospital. They include Thozamile Gqweta, President of the South African Allied Workers' Union, who has been admitted to a psychiatric ward. The swift deterioration in his mental condition - he was quite well when visited by his brother at the beginning of February - suggest that the security police are using very dubious interrogation methods indeed in an effort to extract information from their unfortunate prisoners.

A leading official of the Food and Canning Workers has accused the security police of conducting a vendetta against the unions and has blamed the Department of Manpower for condoning it. It would certainly seem that a war of a kind is being waged against the Allied Workers. Following the arrest on 28 January of its treasurer Isaac Ngcobo, virtually all its top officials are now in jail.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRIA

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7.5% increase for road haulage drivers

The ITF-affiliated Austrian Transport and Commercial Workers' Union (HTV) has negotiated an increase of 7.5% on the basic rates of road haulage drivers, effective 4 January. Drivers who have been employed by the same company without a break for more than five years will now benefit from a three-week notice period.

BELGIUM

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Workers resist new government's economic policies

The Belgian Socialist trade union federation (FGTB) called a 24-hour general strike on 8 February to protest against the emergency powers that the country's new coalition government has assumed to enable it to give effect to its harsh economic policies. Approval has been given by the parliament to a plan for rule by decree for the next twelve months, putting the government in a position to carry out its austerity programme with the minimum of consultation with the political parties and the unions.

The one-day strike - in which transport workers' unions affiliated to the ITF played a prominent part - is intended as the opening shot in a sustained campaign of opposition to the government's plans, which include an end to indexation and the imposition of pay rises of roughly three per cent less than the rate of inflation. The government is also empowered unilaterally to amend existing collective agreements between employers and unions.

Higher pay for bus and lorry drivers

Following application of a two per cent cost-of-living award, the rates of pay of bus and lorry drivers went up by two per cent on 1 January 1982. The new rates for bus drivers now range from 218.95 to 265.21 B frs per hour, according to length of service, while the new minimum hourly rates of lorry drivers are: 190.25 B frs (for loads of less than 7 tonnes); 195.15 B frs (for loads between 7 and 15 tonnes); and 202.90 B frs (for loads of 15 tonnes and above).

BERMUDA

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Union fights to save ramp workers' jobs

Some twenty-five ramp workers employed by a local firm, Air Services Bermuda, are due to be made redundant at the beginning of April when a new American-based company takes over the handling of American Airlines and Air Canada operations at the island's airport. The ITF-affiliated Bermuda Industrial Union is doing all it can to save the jobs of its members and has won assurances from the government that it too will encourage the new company to re-employ at least some of these experienced workers.

FRANCE

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Air France simulator staff strike ends in victory

Staff at the Air France simulator centre at Vilgénis have now called off their strike after winning important concessions on all their major demands. They have been informed by the management that three additional staff will be taken on to cope with the increase workload at the centre and have been promised further talks on the possible employment of yet more staff in the future. An agreement acceptable to the unions has also been reached on the question of working hours, and a long-standing union demand for improved facilities at the centre has been met with an undertaking that a rest-room will now be provided.

Much-appreciated assistance was given to our French friends during their dispute by the unions of two other airlines in the Atlas grouping - Lufthansa (OeTV) and Iberia (UGT).

Higher pay for Air France ground staff at Orly and Charles de Gaulle

The salaries of Air France ground staff members of the ITF-affiliated French Federation of Public Service and Port, Maritime and Transport Workers, FO at Orly and Charles de Gaulle were increased by 2.6% with effect from 1 December 1981. Under the new agreement reached with Paris Airports, salaries will go up in line with increases in the cost-of-living during 1982 and special arrangements will be made to improve the position of the lowest-paid. Working hours were reduced by 1 hour on 1 January and will be further reduced by one hour on 1 November next.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Senlac sit-in ends in victory

The five-week-old sit-in^{x)} in Newhaven by members of the crew of the car ferry SENLAC ended on 12 February when British Rail's Sealink subsidiary abandoned plans to withdraw the vessel on reaching agreement with its French counterpart, the SNCF, on the sharing of profits on the Newhaven-Dieppe route. The SNCF has also agreed to the introduction of a new French ship on the route, and it is hoped that this modern vessel will attract more passengers during the forthcoming summer holiday season.

x) see ITF Newsletter No. 1, 1982, page 6 for earlier details

Strike by British Airways ramp staff

Some 2,000 ramp workers handling domestic and European flights at London's Heathrow Airport have been on official strike since 11 February after rejecting radical changes in rostering that British Airways was seeking to impose on them unilaterally without prior consultation with their union, the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union. The TGWU considers that the ramp workers have been effectively locked out for refusing to work the new schedules and has instructed other TGWU members at the airport not to perform ramp work or cross official picket lines.

A number of European unions have acceded to the T and G's request that, for the duration of the strike, they should not perform any work for British Airways - especially in respect of the loading of catering supplies - that they would not usually perform under normal circumstances.

Ramp workers at Edinburgh Airport walked out later in the month in support of their London colleagues.

IRISH REPUBLIC

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National bus strike averted

A national Irish bus strike was averted last month when CIE bus staff agreed to accept a 16 per cent pay offer. This will take the form of a £4-a-week rise backdated to October, followed by 6 per cent from 1 January and a further 5 per cent from August.

The ITF-affiliated Irish Transport and General Workers' Union is one of two unions organizing CIE bus crews.

NEW ZEALAND

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Seamen get 4.6% rise

The current pay agreement covering members of the ITF-affiliated New Zealand Seamen's Union has been extended for a further three months, giving the seamen an immediate increase of 4.56%, applied to basic pay and allowances (excluding the victualling allowance and seniority pay).

NORWAY

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Higher pay for engineers in coastal and overseas trade

New rates of pay came into operation on 1 November for engineers in the Norwegian overseas trade. The following new monthly salary ranges (according to vessel horsepower and length of service) apply:

<u>chief engineer</u>	(tankers)	10,725 - 14,515 kr
	(dry cargo vessels)	10,340 - 13,935 kr
<u>1st engineer</u>	(tankers)	6,785 - 8,480 kr
	(dry cargo vessels)	6,555 - 8,175 kr
<u>2nd engineer</u>	(tankers)	6,445 - 7,825 kr
	(dry cargo vessels)	6,230 - 7,545 kr
<u>3rd engineer</u>	(tankers)	6,210 - 7,480 kr
	(dry cargo vessels)	6,010 - 7,220 kr

Improved rates also came into effect on 1 October for engineers in the coastal trade. Salary ranges (again according to engine strength and length of service) are: chief engineer 7,185 - 8,525 kr; 1st engineer: 6,035 - 6,805 kr; 2nd engineer: 5,985 - 6,630 kr.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The 39-hour week is being introduced in France from this month - 45 years after the statutory working week was last reduced. Some 17 million salaried workers will also get a fifth week's paid leave and, subject to cabinet approval, retirement at 60 on full pension will be possible from April 1983 for all workers who have contributed to state pension funds for more than 37 years.

Great Britain: hire and reward drivers in London and the South East - members of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union - have accepted an improved offer of 7.5% on basic rates, bringing weekly pay to £87.

British merchant navy officers' and ratings' unions have rejected a joint plea from nine short-sea coastal shipping companies for a 12-month pay freeze. The unions recognize that the companies have special difficulties and have indicated their willingness to discuss deals with individual companies.

A new two-year agreement concluded between the ITF-affiliated National Union of Seafarers of India and the National Maritime Board provides for a 15.5% pay rise from 1 February.

A two-day strike by Italian lorry drivers has led to the signing of an agreement on pay and pensions.

Portugal: Lisbon dockers are banning overtime in a dispute over overtime pay. They suspended a one-day strike called for 19 February after provisionally accepting an offer of improved fringe benefits.

Pay rises of eight per cent in each year of a three-year contract have been won for New York tugboatmen by the ITF-affiliated US International Longshoremen's Association.

OBITUARIES

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Manu Robles Arangiz, president for forty-nine years of the ELA-STV Transport Workers' Federation of Spain, died in France in January, aged 87. A founder member of the Federation, Brother Arangiz was elected its president at ELA-STV's second Congress and was active in the fight against fascism in the 1930s and 1940s, suffering periods of imprisonment and exile for his belief in democracy and his opposition to Franco.

R.A. Hamid, President of the Singapore Organisation of Seamen, died on 9 February. Brother Hamid was a member of the Committee of the ITF Seafarers' Section and of the Asian Seafarers' Regional Committee. He also served as his country's seafarers' representative on the ITF Fair Practices Committee.

Albert Pauwels, a national secretary of the Railwaymen's Section of the Belgian Public Service Workers' Union from 1961 until his retirement in 1978, died on 13 February, aged 66. In recent years, Brother Pauwels, who had devoted his entire life to the trade union movement in his native Belgium, had been actively campaigning on behalf of retired railwaymen, whose interests he represented on the union's national executive at the time of his death.

PERSONALIA

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Svend Fønsskov, chairman of the Metal-Søfart Section of the Danish Metal Workers' Union, has been chosen by his union to sit on the government appointed North Sea manning committee. His deputy will be Karl Madsen of the same union.

Gustaf Klang, former vice-president of the Swedish Seamen's Union, celebrated his 60th birthday on 12 February. Brother Klang is a former member of the Committee of the ITF Seafarers' Section.

José Miguel Leunda has been appointed president of the ELA-STV Transport Workers' Federation in succession to Manu Robles Arangiz, whose death is reported above.

Karl Rebsamen of the Swiss Transport and Commercial Workers' Union (VHTL) celebrated his 60th birthday on 12 February. Brother Rebsamen is Vice-Chairman of the ITF Inland Navigation Section and a member of the Committee of the Dockers' Section. He also represents Switzerland on the ITF Fair Practices Committee.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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|--|------------------------------|
| Executive Board | - Sydney, 16-17 March 1982 |
| Seafarers' Section Training Committee | - London, 21 April 1982 |
| Seafarers' Section Conference | - London, 22-23 April 1982 |
| Road Transport Workers' Section Conference | - Stockholm, 18-20 May 1982 |
| Travel Bureau Section Conference | - Stockholm, 14-16 June 1982 |
| Fair Practices Committee | - London, 2-3 June 1982 |
| Inspectors Seminar | - London, 4-5 June 1982 |

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER
INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS
NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST
FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SEEKS TO DRAW WORLD ATTENTION TO THE PLIGHT OF THE "DISAPPEARED"

Ever since its establishment twenty years ago, Amnesty International has been working to combat the violation of human rights, and of late has become increasingly concerned that more and more governments are using methods, illegal even under their own laws, to abduct and kill their own citizens. Amnesty insists that governments should accept responsibility for such "disappeared" persons and has decided to launch an international publicity campaign to focus on the problem of extrajudicial killings and to win support for its efforts to make the offending governments accountable for these actions both before the United Nations and in the eyes of the world.

Amnesty International's report for 1981 (covering the period 1 May 1980 to 30 April 1981), while it obviously reviews all of the organization's wide-ranging activities in the area of human rights, includes a great deal of detailed information on the subject of "disappearances".

The problem is perhaps at its most marked in Latin America, where thousands of opponents of tyrannical régimes have been pulled in by the military and then simply never seen again, in many cases for years, and friends and relatives, while suspecting their fate, have not been allowed to know whether they are still being held (and if so where or, and what is more likely, whether they have been killed and their bodies secretly buried since their disappearance. Relatives and members of human rights groups working on behalf of such persons are themselves often harassed, arrested and even made to "disappear" as well. They have little chance against military governments that seem to fear no international outcry and are known to have cooperated with others of like mind, whose security forces are quite willing to help dispose of the enemies of a neighbouring dictator.

In Argentina, for example, Amnesty's report records a total of 6,800 persons registered as "disappeared" by the national human rights organization. No attempt has been made by either the outgoing administration of President Videla or that of the new head of state General Viola to account for them, and high-ranking military authorities have repeatedly stated that they will not tolerate any inquiry into these cases, which they claim were caused by the internal disorders. Amnesty itself has investigated the cases of 91 "disappeared" prisoners without being able to find out their place of detention. The UN working group that was set up specifically to deal with the issue of disappearances analyzed five times as many cases and came to the conclusion that in all probability these abductions must have been carried out by official agents of the government. The group also asked the Argentinian government for information on 65 cases where it had a detailed description of the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and the people involved had been identified. No details were provided by the government and writs of habeas corpus filed by distraught families over the past six years have yet to lead to any victims being discovered, alive or dead. Amnesty says that it is not aware of a single case in which an alleged abductor has been brought to justice, and appeals to the

authorities to publish their own list of the "disappeared" have met with a firm refusal.

El Salvador is a country in turmoil and people from all sectors of Salvadorian society have "disappeared" or been murdered. Amnesty believes that the majority of all reported violations have been inflicted by various branches of the security forces on people not involved in guerrilla activities. The report catalogues a disturbing list of persons who have been kidnapped and then ill-treated and/or killed. It includes teenagers of both sexes, who have been assumed hostile to the government on the grounds of youth alone, tortured and killed; priests and lay workers who have denounced atrocities by Salvadorian soldiers; refugees from the fighting who have been detained in Honduras with the aid of Honduran troops and forced across the border back into El Salvador, where they have subsequently disappeared; the managing editor and a photographer from the *la Crónica del Pueblo* newspaper, which refused to submit to self-censorship (their bodies were found the next day hacked to death); an American journalist who disappeared from his hotel room in December 1980 and has not been seen since; a Venezuelan film director, abducted from his hotel by 18 heavily armed members of the security forces in plain clothes, who said on his release that he had been beaten and drugged during interrogation at a military barracks; a leader of the teachers' union, kidnapped from the operating theatre in a hospital in San Salvador; medical personnel and first-aid workers; and members of human rights groups, especially the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador. Amnesty International launched 58 separate appeals during the year on behalf of 472 persons believed to have been detained or who have disappeared.

In respect of Bolivia, where a military coup was staged in July 1980, Amnesty published during the year an eye-witness account of the abduction by rampaging troops of 900 persons from a mining town, whose inhabitants were suspected of political opposition to the country's new military leaders, while in Chile the report refers to Amnesty's continuing efforts to trace political prisoners who disappeared between 1973 and 1977 and also mentions that attempts to bring to justice members of the armed forces, who were identified by investigating judges as having been responsible for the deaths of prisoners have foundered on the Amnesty Law of 1978, which has allowed them to get off scot-free.

In Guatemala, there has, to Amnesty's knowledge, been no satisfactory investigation by the government into the circumstances in which Guatemalan citizens have been killed or have "disappeared" in recent years. Arrests without warrant are rarely acknowledged by the authorities and those detained frequently disappeared or were subsequently found dead bearing the clear signs of torture. Amnesty's annual report includes a list of 615 people who have disappeared since President Romeo Lucas Garcia took office in July 1978. Government-controlled death squads have abducted an alarming number of persons, including a trade union leader at the Guatemalan Bottling Company, whose bullet-ridden body was found later the same day; and a US agricultural assistant, whose body was subsequently discovered in Antigua with multiple head injuries and signs of torture. Others who have disappeared, and whose present circum-

stances are unknown, include two foreign missionaries detained after participating in May Day demonstrations in the capital in 1980; 100 campesinos (peasants) arrested for taking part in a strike for an increase in the minimum wage; and 100 men and boys taken by the army and police from three villages in mid-1980.

Amnesty International has launched 44 action appeals on behalf of approximately 252 people who have disappeared in Guatemala or been kidnapped or arrested over the year. 41 disappearance cases have been assigned for investigation by Amnesty International groups and three campaigns by members of Amnesty's medical groups have been initiated on behalf of medical personnel detained or disappeared in Guatemala. In addition, Amnesty conducted an international campaign during 1981 to focus attention on the abuse of human rights by international businesses operating in Guatemala, which had stood by as employees were kidnapped or killed. Its most notable success was in respect of the multinational soft drinks giant Coca Cola where the local management was replaced after Amnesty -- with the assistance of the international trade union movement -- had drawn attention to the appalling manner in which trade unionists at a bottling plant who were seeking basic union rights had been systematically victimized and even killed.

Other countries with records of similar abuses include Paraguay, which abducted two Communist party officials from Argentina where one of them have been living for 22 years, and Uruguay where 2 persons (one with children) were kidnapped from Brazil in late 1978, imprisoned and subsequently adopted by Amnesty as prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International also issued urgent appeals on behalf of Uruguayan prisoners who have been removed from jail to unknown destinations.

Human rights abuses of this kind are by no means confined to Latin America and there is cause for considerable concern in parts of Asia, where political opponents of various governments have been hounded by the authorities. In East Timor, for example, large numbers of East Timorese citizens opposed to the five-year-old Indonesian occupation of that country have disappeared after being taken into custody by the occupying forces. Amnesty has

written to President Suharto appealing for an investigation into the circumstances of their cases, but the government has replied that it is unable to use its limited resources to investigate such cases further. Amnesty has also asked that the International Committee of the Red Cross be permitted to try to trace these missing persons and to visit them in prison. Other cases are reported from the Philippines, with 230 persons recorded as having disappeared between 1975 and 1980; five of these have also been referred to UN Working Group.

From the foregoing, it is clear that all too many governments are making systematic attempts to remove their opponents - real or imagined - one by one in a manner which must count among the most abhorrent abuses of fundamental human rights. Although the international community is becoming more aware of the problem of disappearances - not least because of Amnesty's persistent and

fearless work in exposing such deeds in all their horror - there is an urgent need to step up the pressure on governments to account for those they have made to disappear and to ensure that the despicable practice of depriving people of life and freedom, without recourse to the law, is brought to an immediate end. We in the ITF hope that Amnesty's campaign to highlight the issue of disappearances will have the success it deserves. The "disappeared" have few friends and their situation few remedies. Amnesty is working to put that right.

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