EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 229/92 (ASA 16/08/92, 9 July 1992) and follow-up ASA 16/09/92 of 3 August 1992 - Death in Custody/Fear of Torture

MYANMAR (BURMA): Mohamed Ilyas
Fazal Ahmed

The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar in Canberra, Australia, has responded to the Australian Section of Amnesty International on the cases of Mohamed Ilyas and Fazal Ahmed.

Regarding Mohamed Ilyas, the letter says he was arrested while attempting to plant mines at a bridge near Buthidaung Gold Course in Rakhine (Arakan) State. "He was 64 years old and was suffering from an acute gastro-intestinal disease and died while undergoing medical treatment. His death was due to his medical condition and therefore, to say that it was due to torture or otherwise during his detention is completely false." Unofficial sources have said that Mohamed Ilyas was in good health at the time of his arrest.

On Fazal Ahmed, the letter says: "He is under investigation in connection with the above-mentioned terrorist action. He is in good health and has never been ill-treated or tortured while in custody."

Amnesty International remains concerned about the health of Fazal Ahmed and the circumstances of Mohamed Ilyas' death, particularly in the light of the gross violations of human rights committed by the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council against Muslims in Rakhine State.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Over 260,000 Burmese Muslims have escaped from Rakhine State and taken refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. They have fled from persistent gross human rights violations committed by the Myanmar military, including torture, ill-treatment, arrests on political and religious grounds and extrajudicial executions.

Reports of human rights abuses against Muslims in Rakhine State by Myanmar security forces rose sharply in early 1991, and they began to leave Myanmar in their thousands to seek asylum in Bangladesh. These numbers increased dramatically in late 1991 and early 1992.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/airmail letters preferably in English or your own language:

- noting that the authorities have said that Mohamed Ilyas died in custody while under medical treatment for "acute gastro-intestinal disease", and requesting full details of any investigation that was held into his death and of its findings, including the results of any post-mortem examination which may have been held;

- requesting assurances that Fazal Ahmed, who is in military custody in Rakhine State, has been granted regular and continuing access to relatives, lawyers and doctors, and requesting information on the dates of these visits.

APPEALS TO:

1) General Than Shwe
Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar
Telexes: 21393 MOFARN BM

Salutation: Dear General

2) Major General Khin Nyunt
Secretary 1
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Telegrams: Major General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar

Salutation: Dear Major General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Major General Mya Thin
Chairman of Rakhine State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon
Union of Myanmar

and to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar (Burma) accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 November 1992.