

30th January, 1970

TO ALL NATIONAL SECTIONS

From the Secretary-General

PRISONERS IN INDONESIA

At the International Council meeting in Geneva in September, it was agreed that in 1970 Amnesty should give the highest priority to Indonesia, where well over 100,000 prisoners have been held in detention on suspicion of communist sympathies for more than four years. In November 1969 the International Executive Committee asked the International Secretariat to prepare a detailed background paper for use by National Sections in lobbying their governments and educating public opinion in their countries on the situation in Indonesia.

We are now sending you this background paper. It outlines the numbers, position and conditions of the detainees, describes Indonesian official policy towards them and puts forward a practical programme for their release.

You will see that it is headed 'not for publication'. The material in the paper is not confidential, but we feel that its general release to the press as an Amnesty report could result in a general publicity campaign, probably most intensive in left wing newspapers. In the delicate Indonesian political situation, where Cabinet opinion is deeply divided on the release of prisoners, pressure from abroad (of the sort mounted on Greece) could well have an opposite effect to what we want, and strengthen right-wing opposition to general releases on the grounds that the Government should not appear influenced by foreign 'interference'.

The Indonesian situation is an exceptionally complex and delicate one in which the welfare of literally thousands of people is at stake. Our purpose is not to gain publicity for Amnesty but to make possible the release and successful rehabilitation of prisoners.

We are therefore asking National Sections to do two specific things:

- send a deputation (perhaps containing members of parliament) to present the attached paper to their government, and to ask that its general approach and proposals should be pressed with the Indonesians ;
- give the paper to serious journalists for use in articles which should ideally be of an educational rather than a 'protest' nature, and should not quote Amnesty as the source of the material.

Sections should bear in mind that the present Indonesian Government is highly anti-communist in its policies, and pressure from the right will be more effective than from the left.

We shall be glad to receive reports from Sections on what they are able to do on this very urgent question.

Martin Ennals