

Should we give up?

The pictures on this page are upsetting.

Normally, we wouldn't publish them. Our advertisements purposely stay away from violent and horrific pictures.

When we publicised the murders of street urchins by Brazilian and Guatemalan police, we spared you the sight of children with their tongues ripped out and eyes burned from their sockets.

When we wrote about Iraq's use of chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians, we deliberately did not use the photographs that made our volunteers cry.

We at Amnesty have no choice but to look at these pictures. And hear the stories that go with them.

The story of Agostinho Neto.

The African doctor's waiting room was full of people when the Portuguese secret police arrived.

about people who were in prison for their political or religious beliefs.

They wrote letters of support and comfort to prisoners, and of protest to their jailers.

Out of this early work grew the Amnesty reports, the letter-writing groups and the urgent action network, which can muster thousands of protest telegrams within hours of a prisoner's arrest.

For three decades Amnesty has campaigned against the terrible things to which the pictures below bear witness.

We've tried to show that turning a blind eye to a government's human rights crimes is both immoral and foolish. (It took the Gulf War to demonstrate this - but we'd been issuing warnings about Saddam Hussein every year since 1980.)

During the last thirty years, we have examined the human rights

A million failures.

Among the files we closed was that of Agostinho Neto, the Angolan doctor who was one of Amnesty's first 'prisoners of conscience.'

In 1975, when Angola won its independence from Portugal, Dr Neto became his country's first president.

Sadly, during his Presidency, his government was accused of imprisoning without trial, torturing and unlawfully killing many of its political opponents. How could such things happen under the rule of someone who had himself suffered so much?

Were we naive to imagine we could make a difference? In the last thirty years, things have not got better, but worse.

In 1961 we believed, didn't we, that the world would never tolerate another genocide? Since then we've had Suharto, Pol Pot, Idi Amin and Saddam Hussein.

We've had Emperor Bokassa who stocked his fridge with human heads. For every prisoner freed, thousands are still in prison. For every

answer. While you make up your mind, here's a poem by Agostinho Neto.

*Next door
someone groans
his fingers edged with blood streaming
from nails broken by the palamatoria*

*He is thinking of victory
and no sleep comes to his prison days
or dreams to fill his solitude*

*There are minutes when the world
is summed up in the torture chamber*

*Oh! Who will sleep
when he hears his best friend go mad
there in the next cell
his spirit is killed by torture?*

War and famine are still, in 1991, devastating the Horn of Africa where, in the past two decades, millions of people have become refugees or have died because of repressive regimes with scant regard for human rights.

So long as such regimes are allowed to rule unchallenged, there will be poverty and disease and famine and war.

Only one power can stop it.

Only one power is strong enough to say to the world's governments 'I will no longer allow this to happen.'



Philippines, 1988. Poor Norberto Gallines, seized and beheaded for no apparent reason by government agents while weeding his field.

They dragged him out of his surgery, past his terrified patients. Ignoring the screams of his wife, they began methodically to flog him in front of her and his young children.

Later, he was flung in jail. There were no charges. There would never be a trial.

The case of Dr Agostinho Neto was one of six which, in 1961, prompted a British lawyer, Peter Benenson to write an article in the Observer.

'Open your newspaper any day of the week and you will find a report from somewhere in the world of someone being imprisoned, tortured or executed because his opinions or religion are unacceptable to his government.'

'There are several million such people in prison - and their numbers are growing. The newspaper reader feels a sickening sense of impotence. Yet if those feelings of disgust all over the world could be united into common action, something effective could be done.'

With these words, he founded Amnesty.

A passion for human rights.

Amnesty began as a small group of lawyers, writers and publishers who shared a passionate commitment to human rights.

From a small office in London, they started gathering information

record of every nation on earth and, regrettably, have had cause to criticise most.

(Each end of the political spectrum thinks we're biased towards the other. In fact we're non-partisan. We speak out for the rights of individuals, whatever their views, and against those who abuse them, whatever theirs.)

In the last thirty years, we have been able to close the files of more than 97 per cent of the cases we had taken up.

No-one can deny that it's an outstanding achievement for a small, chronically underfunded, organisation. Except that it's not enough.

person plucked from the torturers, thousands suffer agonies beyond our imagining. For every life saved, hundreds of thousands have been lost.

Between them, Suharto, Pol Pot, Idi Amin and Saddam Hussein have executed and tortured to death more than a million people. For Amnesty that's a million failures.

All we've done in the last thirty years is bale a few buckets from a sea of human misery.

Should we give up?

So we come to the crucial question. Should we give up?

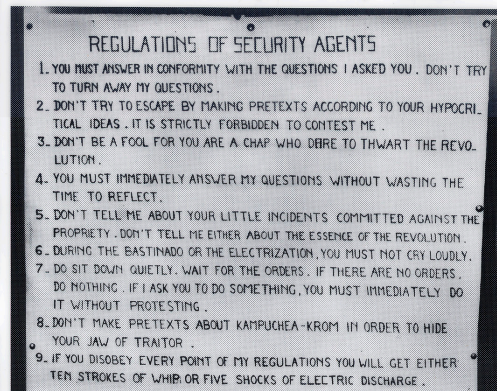
Please think carefully before you



Chile 1984. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights bites the dust yet again.



Peru 1985. A woman holds up a picture of her 'disappeared' husband, in the cruel hope that he is still alive.



Cambodia, 1970s. The 'house rules' at a terror camp where more than 12,000 people were murdered.



Iraq, 1988. 5,000 die when Saddam Hussein uses chemical weapons on Kurds at Halabja. Six months later, Britain doubles his trade credits.

'Who will sleep?' asks Neto. Dare any of us?

Left to themselves, governments will go on imprisoning, torturing and killing, and other governments will go on turning a blind eye.

Until they start respecting human rights there can be little hope of any real political, social or environmental progress.

How can we persuade certain Latin American governments to stop the killing of trees in the rainforest if we can't persuade them to stop the killing of their own street children?

Name a single nation that took positive action when Saddam Hussein gassed 5,000 Kurdish civilians with chemical weapons three years before the Gulf War.

That power brought democracy to Eastern Europe. That power won women the vote.

Western governments did not lift a finger to save the Kurdish people from slaughter until that power forced them to intervene.

That power is public opinion.

'Pressure of opinion a hundred years ago brought about the emancipation of the slaves.'

'It is now for man to insist upon the same freedom for his mind as he has won for his body.'

(Peter Benenson, *The Observer*, 28th May 1961.)

Think twice before saying to us 'No, don't give up.' You cannot ask us to continue, yet do nothing yourself to help.

The strongest voice on earth belongs to you. Use it. Join us.

I wish to be a member of Amnesty International. I enclose £15 Individual
 £20 Family £6 OAP £6 Student, Under 18, Claimant I wish to donate
 £250 £100 £50 £25 £10 Other I enter my Access, Visa,
 Mastercard No. Card expiry date

Signed If paying by credit card
 you should give the address where you receive your credit card bill.

Mr/Ms.
 Address
 Postcode

To: Amnesty International British Section, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1HE.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL