

The logo consists of the lowercase letters 'fyi' in a bold, serif font. The 'f' and 'y' are connected at the top, and the 'i' has a dot. The entire logo is enclosed in a dashed rectangular border.

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For Your Information

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Cambodians: an Endangered Species

In the latest issue of Time magazine, British author Anthony Burgess notes that brutality has become so commonplace that it no longer has the capacity to shock ordinary people.

Yet, in citing a number of examples in support of this view, such as the Moro kidnaping in Italy and the terrorism in the Middle East, even this perceptive and sensitive observer fails to mention what is the most shocking display of brutality in the world today—the slaughter of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Cambodians by their Communist masters.

The world knows of the barbarity, yet its conscience has scarcely been disturbed. Cambodia's fanatical and xenophobic rulers have allowed few outsiders to visit the nation that they now grotesquely call "Democratic" Kampuchea.

The dimensions of the tragedy have been gleaned from the lucky few of the nation's 7 million inhabitants who have managed to escape.

The fugitives tell fearful tales: families torn apart, their members forced from their homes into indoctrination centers or work camps in inhospitable regions; many thousands dead of disease or starvation resulting from the social turmoil; many more thousands executed for the slightest infractions of the new order imposed after the Khmer Rouge guerrilla victory in April, 1975. In just one example offered by Amnesty International, a father was executed because he admonished his 6-year-old daughter for singing a revolutionary song.

Even the forms of execution are brutal. Some victims are said to have been buried in the ground up to their necks, then clubbed to death.

The mass dislocations undertaken immediately after the Khmer Rouge takeover have been completed, but the repression continues, and the border war between Cambodia and Vietnam has added fresh misery to the burdens of the Cambodians.

Many of them fled during the fighting to Vietnam, where they are being kept, near starvation, in primitive camps. But at least in Vietnam they are safe from the slaughter. The Vietnamese allowed them to stay after learning that many of those whom they previously forced to return to Cambodia were killed by Cambodian soldiers. Thailand reportedly has also forced some Cambodian refugees to return to certain death.

The world has responded to the plight of the Cambodians with little more than a few words. President Carter has made a speech, calling Communist Cambodia "the worst violator of human rights in the world today." The Canadian Parliament has passed a resolution condemning Cambodia's rulers for acts of genocide.

In the only United Nations action on Cambodia thus far, its Human Rights Commission in February authorized the U.N. secretary general to ask the Cambodian government to respond to the allegations against it. Amnesty International has sent a similar request. Phnom Penh has ignored both requests.

The feeble action taken by the United Nations mocks its charter and other declarations that supposedly commit the world body to the preservation and enhancement of human life and dignity. The scale of oppression in Cambodia demands far greater action by the United Nations, and it can start by using its powers to make certain that no one who succeeds in escaping from Cambodia is forced to return to that tragic land.

People outside the United Nations can help, too. The endangered human beings of Cambodia deserve as much support as do endangered animal species. And they are certainly a worthy cause for all of us for whom the suffering of the Indochinese peoples was a large part of our opposition to American participation in the Indochinese war.