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Private Group Seeks to Protect Political Prisoners in Vietnam

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PARIS, Nov. 2—An effort to protect political prisoners in Vietnam, whose fate under a future cease-fire has become a matter of increasing concern, was begun today by Amnesty International.

The private organization, which has played a prominent role in drawing attention to the plight of victims of dictatorships both on the right and the left, made public a proposed agreement that it will try to get all parties in the Vietnam conflict to sign.

The proposal seeks to extend to civilian political prisoners in Indochina—including activists of the Vietcong and other guerrilla groups whose military status may not be recognized—the same guarantees the Geneva convention now grants to prisoners of war.

Prisoners Put at 200,000

The draft agreement was presented at a news conference here by Sean MacBride, who is chairman of Amnesty and a former Foreign Minister of Ireland.

Mr. MacBride said that although there was no accurate way to calculate the number of political prisoners held in

North and South Vietnam and in Laos and Cambodia, Amnesty was using a rough estimate of 200,000.

Most of these he said, were held by the Saigon Government.

Under the terms of the agreement a supervisory authority consisting of one or more neutral governments, or possibly an organ of the United Nations, would be set up. All the signatories would cooperate in drawing up lists of their prisoners, opening their camps to the authority, and cooperating with the authority in arrangements for protection of the prisoners and their early release.

Mr. MacBride indicated that he had had no assurance that any of the parties involved would actually sign the agreement, which is being sent to the United States Government, to North and South Vietnam, the Vietcong, the Laotian and Cambodian governments and insurgent authorities, and the governments of South Korea, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand.