



Amnesty International

Orange County

GROUP 141 ORANGE • GROUP 175 LONG BEACH
GROUP 178 IRVINE • GROUP 596 HUNTINGTON BEACH

March 2004

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Amnesty Launches Global Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women

This article is taken from a March 3 AI press release.

Violence against women is a cancer eating away the core of every society, in every country of the world, Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, said at the launch of the organization's global campaign to stop violence against women.

Whether in times of peace or war, women are subjected to atrocities simply because they are women. Millions of women are beaten, raped, murdered, assaulted, mutilated and even denied the right to ever exist. At least one in three women in the world will suffer serious violence in their lifetime.

Unveiling its worldwide Stop Violence Against Women Campaign, Amnesty International called for urgent action by every man and woman to end this outrageous scandal.

"This is not something that just happens over there, it happens here. It is not something that only happens to other people, it happens to you, your friends and your family. Until all of us, men as well as women, say 'no, I will not let this happen', it will not stop," said Irene Khan.

"Violence against women is a human rights atrocity. Human rights are more than sets of laws and obligations, they embody a promise that, in equality, we are all entitled to the same rights. Violence against women is the cavernous rift between that promise and the will of governments, local authorities, religious, business and community leaders to fulfil it."

Amnesty International's report *It's in our hands—Stop Violence against Women* reveals the multiple causes of violence from armed conflict to family violence and harmful traditional practices that seek to control women's sexuality.

"Violence threatens women in multiple forms during conflict. From the female child soldiers who are routinely raped by their own troops and the civilian women and girls who are mutilated, raped and murdered as a weapon of war, to the escalation in violence in the family as troops return home—armed conflict is having a devastating and desperate impact on women that goes far beyond the inherent violence of war."

Also highlighting the global problem of violence in the home and community, Amnesty International points to every country in the world for failing to protect women in their own homes.

"Behind closed doors and in secret, women are subjected to violence by their partners and close relatives, too ashamed and afraid to report it and so seldom taken seriously when they do."

Even where legislation exists to prevent and punish such

violence, the authorities routinely fail to implement it and in some areas, parallel systems of authority such as community and religious leaders actually allow it to persist, Amnesty International added.

"From the battlefield to the bedroom, women are at risk," Irene Khan said. "They are the first to feel the lack of poor social services, the first to be denied education and health care. The effects of economic globalization are leaving more and more women trapped in poverty on the margins of society. Poverty leaves women more exposed to violence, less able to escape it. It severely restricts women's ability to organize and fight for change. In this, as in so many other ways, governments are failing to address the real 'terror' of our world that millions of women face every day."

"As a human rights organization we will mobilize our members and supporters around the world. We will engage men as well as women. Men must play a crucial part if we are to end violence against women."

During the campaign, Amnesty International will:

- Call on all people, men and women, to raise their hands to end violence against women.
- Work for a world in which all cultures, traditions, political and judicial systems regard violence against women as abhorrent.
- Demand accountability and fight impunity for violence against women whether in peace time or during conflict.
- Seek the abolition of laws that discriminate against women, and the enactment and effective implementation of laws and other measures to protect women from violence.
- Hold states individually and collectively accountable under international and domestic laws to prevent, investigate, punish and redress all acts of violence against women whether in peacetime or during conflict.
- Secure effective action to stop violence against women at the community level from local government or religious, traditional and informal authorities.
- Campaign to end impunity for combatants who commit violence against women.

"Violence against women is not normal, legal nor acceptable and should never be tolerated or justified. It can and must be stopped," Irene Khan concluded.

"It is in our hands to make a difference and to bring human rights home."

February Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Letter-Writing

For February we had six people attending. We sent letters to John Ashcroft and Tom Ridge concerning Rodi Alvarado, a Guatemalan woman who was granted asylum under Janet Reno and now Ashcroft has decided to rehear the case. We also sent Urgent Actions to the Punjab area of India.

Death Penalty Vigil

Kevin and Deidre reported about the Death Penalty Vigil for Kevin Cooper at the Orange Circle, which had a surprisingly good turnout (about 40 people throughout the night, including Group #141 members Gordon and Vangee). Upon hearing news that the stay was definitely granted (a little after 9:00 PM), Jan Urban and Dorinda Upham of California People of Faith led us in prayer and we went home. We had one lone death penalty supporter who occasionally heckled us from across the street.

Recruitment Flyer

We will be sending out a recruitment flyer through the LA office this month to try and boost our membership. The office has over 500 names.

February Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Mary Kay Dunn, Mike Farris, Kevin Gaffney, Wesley Goo, Deidre Jackson, Bobbi Kendig, Theresa Lechner, Jim Roberts, Jamie Skaluba, Becky Stahley, Nicoel Stark, Naomi Steinfeld.

We were delighted to welcome the new attendees Wesley, Theresa and Nicoel!

New Student Area Coordinator

Jamie announced that she is beginning her new assignment as the Student Area Coordinator. She is the right person for the job!

Women's Campaign

Jamie shared her photos and impressions from a march in Mexico to bring attention to the plight of women in Juarez, near the U.S. border. In the past decade, since NAFTA brought factories to the region, 370 working women have been murdered while the authorities have done little to investigate. The march to draw attention to the situation was co-sponsored by AI, which is starting a two-year Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women. AI will focus on violence directed at women in post-conflict societies (Iraq and Rwanda), societies in current conflict (Congo and Colombia), and serial murders with insufficient investigations (Mexico).

Death Penalty

Bobbi spoke of attending a talk by Abe Bonowitz (a long-time activist against the death penalty), Bill Pelke (a survivor opposed to the death penalty), and Juan Melendez (who spent years on death row before being exonerated). We discussed the possibility of having a speaker on death penalty issues but decided to put more thought into the timing and publicity for such an event. As a start, at our next meeting Deidre and Kevin will do a training for our group on talking points against the

death penalty.

Prisoner of Conscience

Jim shared a copy of a letter from the daughter of our prisoner of conscience, Nguyen Dinh Huy of Vietnam. He is receiving family visits and is reported to be in somewhat better condition than when we last heard. Jim had learned that a visit to the Vietnamese representative to the United Nations would have to be cleared with the U.S. government.

February Meeting Minutes

Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting

We had over 30 people in attendance at our very informative panel on Afghanistan. We sent out letters on women's rights and reform of the prison system in Afghanistan and signed a petition on women's rights for the country of Iraq. It was a great presentation with Robbie Prepas bringing a berka for all of us to try on.

Missing Women of Juarez Special Event

This month we will be having a special event in place of our monthly meeting: "What has happened to over 300 missing and murdered women of Juarez?" featuring Lorena Mendez from Fox 11 News and the award-winning documentary *Señorita Extraviada, Missing Young Women*. The film tells the haunting story of the more than 200 kidnapped, raped, and murdered young women of Juarez, Mexico (the number is currently estimated at 320). The group will have actions in Spanish and English for those in attendance.

The program is scheduled for Wednesday, March 31, at 7:00 PM, at St. Joachim's Catholic Church, 1964 Orange Avenue, Costa Mesa, in the church hall. For more information, contact Darcie Olson at (949) 742-5524 or Shyamal Leonard at (310) 422-0166.

A Letter From Rio

Poor communities in Rio de Janeiro suffer extreme levels of violence, often at the hands of the police. In April 2003, military police allegedly summarily executed four unarmed young men in Rio's Borel community. AIUSA members sent cards to support the Borel Residents Association as part of the Casework Office's Holiday Card Action. In late December, the Residents Association replied:

"Never will we be able to pay back all the good that you have done for us. Up to now we have received 1,519 cards including one that had a photo of our kid [Carlos] Magno, in which he has the beautiful smile of a child. We even received letters from a school in the Netherlands and from various children, and we're making an effort to reply to them all. It is difficult not to get overcome by all the messages from countries like England, Ireland, USA, Canada, France, Mexico and others, each one a surprise as we open it. We are all very grateful for what everyone from Amnesty International has done in order to help us cope with the pain and the injustice."

New Western Regional Director

February 27 was Cosette Thompson's last day as Western Regional Director. Erin Callahan has just been appointed the new Director and she will also be based in the San Francisco Office starting March 1.

Addressing A Human Rights Scandal

This article is taken from the March 2004 AIUSA Monthly Mailing.

Super Bowl Sunday is not a very good day to be a woman in America. Workers at women’s shelters have long reported that violence against women spikes on that day. In fact violence in the home is the single greatest threat to American women. According to a United Nations Human Development Report, it’s a greater threat than rape, muggings and car accidents combined. But is it a human rights issue?

As far as Charlotte Bunch, Executive Director of the Center For Women’s Global Leadership, is concerned it most emphatically is. And she is ecstatic that Amnesty International is throwing the full weight of its research, organizational acumen and credibility into this issue. Amnesty International launches its first worldwide Stop Violence Against Women Campaign March 5.

“It’s a stretch,” Bunch acknowledges of AI’s latest campaign. “But I think it’s an important stretch. Amnesty stretching in a positive sense to begin to respond more creatively to what the women’s movement has raised about the ways in which human rights have not adequately addressed the primary realities of women’s lives. And no issue exemplifies that more clearly than domestic violence. I think Amnesty brings the ability to conceptualize and develop further what this issue means in human rights terms. If you think about the numbers of people whose ability to exercise their human rights is constrained, if not directly violated by domestic violence, it’s one of the most massive human rights violations in the world.”

In announcing the campaign Amnesty International called violence against women, both in the home and in the political context, a global human rights scandal. Doubly scandalous that it has never been thought of as such.

The World Health Organization reports that up to 70 percent of female murder victims are killed by their male partners. Pakistan’s Human Rights Commission recently reported that more than 1,000 women were the victims of “crimes of honor” in 1999. Among these were women who were murdered by family members, often brothers or fathers, for purportedly bringing shame or disrepute upon a family. The women’s “transgressions” included being raped or refusing to enter arranged marriages.

In Rwanda approximately 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide and, according to a report by the Working Group on Women, *Peace and Security Fact Sheet on Women and Armed Conflict*, released in October 2002, an estimated 5,000 pregnancies resulted from those rapes. The Russian Government estimates that husbands, partners or relatives killed 14,000 women in 1999, yet that country still has no law address-

ing domestic violence.

Meanwhile in Mexico more than 370 women have been murdered in and around Chihuahua and Ciudad Juarez, near the Mexican frontier with the United States in the last 10 years. More than 70 young women are still missing. But the Mexican authorities seem unwilling to recognize the extent or pattern of violence against young women in the border area.

Most of the crimes involve women from impoverished backgrounds with no choice but to travel alone on long bus trips from the poor suburbs into the city to work in menial jobs or attend school. They are abducted, held captive, viciously sexually assaulted and then murdered, their bodies dumped in trash-strewn wastelands. Their assailants apparently remain free.

Simple discrimination may be at the root of the state’s inaction. In 1999 Asma Jahangir, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extra Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, examining the Ciudad Juarez killings said: “The arrogant behavior and obvious indifference shown by some state officials in regard to these cases leave the impression that many of the crimes were deliberately never investigated for the sole reason that the victims were ‘only’ young girls with no particular social status and who therefore were regarded as expendable.”

Getting governments to take their obligations on this issue seriously is one of the overarching goals of Amnesty International’s campaign. “It has taken people a while to think about how do we address human rights violations that are not primarily lodged in state action,” explains Bunch. “There’s a long history of separation of private and public life and it’s taken 25–30 years of the feminist movement to get people to see that these so-called private things aren’t necessarily to be kept in the shadows and aren’t just personal matters. And so moving it into the human rights sphere is a very big public move.”

Amnesty International Secretary Irene Khan concurs. “Human rights are more than sets of laws and obligations, they embody a promise that, in equality, we are all entitled to the same rights. Violence against women is the cavernous rift between that promise and the will of governments, local authorities, religious, business and community leaders to fulfill it.”

Fight for Justice; Read Books

During March, Penguin Publishing (USA) is donating 10% of their net online sales to Amnesty International. Their entire catalog of more than 30,000 titles is now available directly from their website, <http://us.penguin.com>. That means everything—from Cervantes to Al Franken to Aung San Suu Kyi. So if you love to read and have a passion for human rights, Penguin Online is the place to shop in March.

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups, please return this coupon to the address below with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues are used to cover the costs of this newsletter and of letters on behalf of prisoners. Your address label contains your membership expiration date.

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 Amnesty International
 P.O. Box 864
 Orange, CA 92856

For (check one):
 Orange Group
 Irvine Group
 Huntington Beach
 Long Beach

Please make your check payable to Amnesty International. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!

Calendar

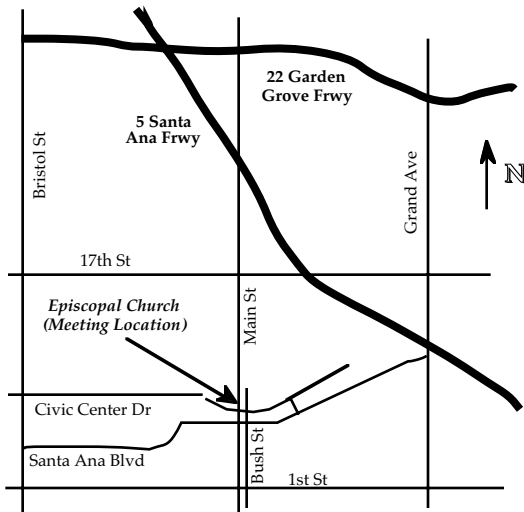
March

16 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting in the choir room at the Episcopal Church of the Messiah, on the corner of Main Street & Civic Center Drive in downtown Santa Ana. Park at the Hands Together Day Care center across the street. Group #141 meets the third Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Deidre Jackson at (562) 430-7381.

23 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. Group #175 meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Bobbi Kendig at (562) 420-1155.



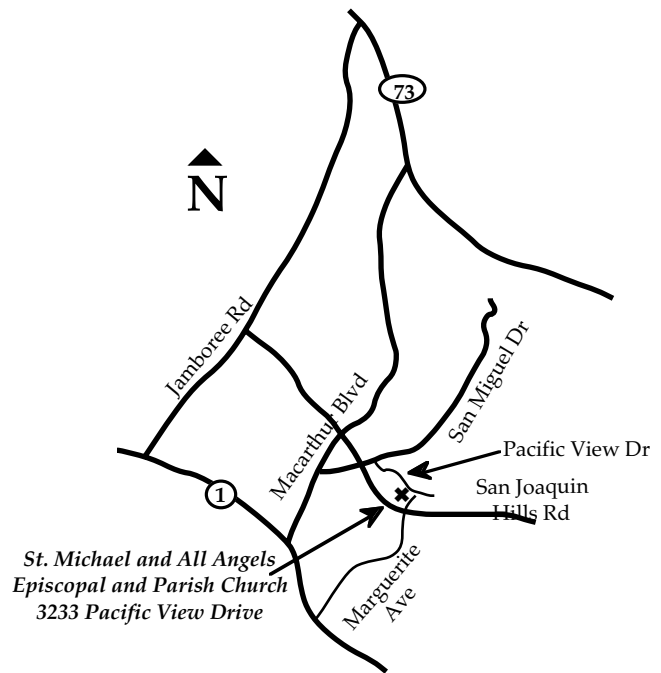
Group #141 Orange Meeting Location

30 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting at St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal and Parish Church, 3233 Pacific View Drive, Corona del Mar. See full details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. Group #178 meets the last Tuesday of each month. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at (714) 557-8427.

31 Wednesday 7:00 PM

Missing Women of Juarez Special Event presented by Group #596 Huntington Beach, at St. Joachim's Catholic Church, 1964 Orange Avenue, Costa Mesa, in the church hall. For more information, see the article in this newsletter.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

Amnesty International Group 178
Post Office Box 14485
Irvine, California 92623-4485