



# Amnesty International

Orange County

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

April 2004

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## Sana'a Appeal: End the Illegal Detention of Guantanamo Detainees

*This article is taken from an April 11 AI press release.*

"I'm in a cage like an animal  
No one asked me am I human or not."  
*Former detainee at Guantanamo Bay*

Governments must stop undermining rights they have promised to defend, said Amnesty International at the conclusion of a two-day conference held in Sana'a, Yemen, on April 10–11, on the impact of the illegal detention of Guantanamo detainees and other detainees held after September 11 in the Gulf region.

"The situation at Guantanamo Bay is a major human rights scandal that has widespread implications for the whole world," said Javier Zuniga, senior director at Amnesty International. "This policy promotes a world in which arbitrary and unchallengeable detentions become acceptable."

The harsh conditions of detention of the Guantanamo Bay detainees have had far reaching consequences on their communities and families, including voiceless women and children, whose rights must also be recognized and respected, participants said. Similarly, the continuing arbitrary and illegal detentions of thousands of persons in many countries in the Gulf, represents a fundamental challenge to the rule of law and constitutes a betrayal of fundamental human rights principles.

The conference is the first to gather relatives of detainees in the Gulf, human rights organizations, lawyers from throughout the Middle East and around the world, activists and members of civil society institutions. It was organized jointly by Amnesty International and the National Organization for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms (HOOD).

Stripping detainees from any access to due process of law or even their fundamental entitlement to the most basic human rights standards constitutes an unprecedented human rights scandal," a document released at the end of the conference said. "As human rights defenders, it is our most central belief that every woman, man, and child has inherent rights that belong to them as human beings."

The document entitled the "Sana'a Appeal" criticised the abuse generated by sweeping security measures adopted by many governments after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, and which amounted to "a human rights crisis that poses a threat to people of the world."

The appeal called on the governments of the United States and the Gulf region to end the legal limbo of all the detainees, including those held in undisclosed locations, and to grant

them full access to lawyers, doctors, families and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

"Governments must ensure that all those held are charged and given fair trials or released . . . . They must ensure that detainees are treated humanely and halt the forcible return of foreign nationals to countries where they would face serious human rights violations," the appeal read.

Participants also called on governments to ensure strict compliance with human rights standards in any security cooperation between states, and in all security training programs. They also asked that Amnesty International and other international human rights organizations be granted access to detainees and officials in Guantanamo Bay, Bagram Air Base, and all other undisclosed locations.

"The detention of individuals in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Bagram, Afghanistan, without regard to due process is a major threat to all our freedoms," said Terry Waite, human rights activist and former hostage. "International human rights have been hard-won across the years. I thank God for organisations such as Amnesty International who refuse to allow them to be lost at this point in our global history."

The international community must also ensure that the United Nations (UN) human rights mechanisms urgently address the abrogation of fundamental norms in the detention and treatment of persons in Guantanamo Bay, Bagram Air Base and other undisclosed locations, urged the appeal.

Non-governmental organisations must press their governments to review security legislation against the standards of international human rights law and to seek respect for the fundamental human rights of nationals of their own country held in Guantanamo Bay, and to support and disseminate the appeal.

They are also urged to develop initiatives to educate the public regarding human rights obligations and create and support a mechanism for lawyers and jurists in the region to share information and coordinate efforts on legal appeals for detainees.

"We, the families, honestly need you," said Khaled al-Odah whose son Fawzi al-Odah has been detained in Guantanamo for the past two years. "Organising such conferences will keep this case alive in the conscience of the world community."

## March Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### **Letter-Writing Actions**

We sent about 15 letters to India and our friends in Washington, Secretary of State Colin Powell and President Bush. We're still soliciting for a coordinator for the Violence Against Women campaign.

#### **New Meeting Location**

We will meet at our current meeting location, the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Santa Ana, in April and May, then take the summer months off. Come September we will be meeting at the St. Joseph Center in Orange. In August we will be sending out our recruitment flyer.

### Group #178 Irvine

#### **Next Month's Meeting**

The speaker for the April meeting of the Irvine group, which now meets in Corona del Mar will be Linda Biehl of Newport Beach. Her daughter Amy was killed in the mid-80's by an angry mob of black South Africans. Amy was working for the very people who murdered her. Linda Biehl continues Amy's work to this day for the people of South African. Details about the Amy Biehl Foundation may be found at <http://www.amybiehl.org>. The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM at St. Michael and all Angels Church on April 27.

#### **Improv Fundraiser**

On Sunday, April 18, 1:30-3:30 PM, there will be a very fun fundraiser at the Irvine Improv at the Irvine Spectrum. The event will have a Middle Eastern Theme, featuring local belly dancers and nationally known comedians, including Aron Krader. There's also going to be a silent auction or raffle giving away various prizes. Tickets are \$20 each with a \$5 discount for students, with a two drink minimum. You must be 18 or over. There will be prizes and raffles. Please call Julie Ralls at (949) 673-3134 for tickets as soon as possible. There will be no tickets sold at the door as this is a private function.

### Group #596 Huntington Beach

Our event in March on the Women of Juarez was very successful! We had over 150 people in attendance. Over 190 letters were signed and 35 petitions were filled up! These petitions covered every range of topic from the missing women of Juarez to protecting the women of Iraq to encouraging President Bush to pass the Women's Convention. We were also given over \$400 in donations.

Over 60 letters were signed out of the Spanish only packets (there were 3 letters in each packet) and we distributed 55 packets in Spanish to the participants. Many packets were taken home for others who couldn't attend.

This event has inspired two student groups—the Orange Coast College Amnesty Group (run by Stephanie Ellison and Beth McFarland) and the Fullerton Amnesty group (the campaign is being organized by Mahsa Abassi)—to show the video *Senorita Extraviada* and do their own letter-writing campaign at their colleges.

Thank you to everyone for spreading the word! Special thanks to:

- Bob Lee for helping with the audio and my husband Christian and Ali Qureshi for helping set up and run the audio/visual equipment (they saved the day).
- Beth McFarland and Stephanie Ellison for helping to work the Amnesty table.
- Dominique Lourgouilloux for directing folks into the event site and for providing all of the petitions for signature.
- Mahsa Abassi for directing traffic at the door and collecting donations.
- Jeanne Fobes for doing all the coordination and outreach to St. Joachim's.
- Lorena Mendez and Jackie Joice and David for speaking at the event and making a very long drive to be there.
- Kathy Brown and the LA Amnesty Office for all of their support.
- The unknown individuals that stayed after and helped put away over 150 chairs.
- And lastly Shyamal for arranging the speakers and emceeding the event, as well as giving her creative energy to the Huntington Beach Group!

Our next meeting will be Monday, April 26th at 7:00 PM. We will return to Sts. Simon and Jude and will be discussing the group's focus over the next 4 months. Please join us!

## Ashcroft Keeps Haitian Teen Locked Up

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft is keeping a 19-year-old Haitian youth locked up despite two judicial decisions in the boy's favor. David Joseph still languishes at the Krome Immigration Detention Center in Florida 16 months after his boat washed ashore in October 2002. Soon after his arrival, an immigration judge agreed to release Joseph on bond, recognizing that he posed no danger to the United States. Joseph has an uncle in New York, a U.S. citizen, to live with while his asylum claim is pending.

But the Department of Homeland Security appealed the decision to the Board of Immigration Appeals, which sided with the judge, again ordering David's release. However Attorney General Ashcroft stepped directly in and issued his own decision, using Joseph's case as a precedent, to rule that Haitian boat people must be kept in detention for national security reasons while their asylum cases are pending. Ashcroft implied that Haitians pose a threat to the United States. Meanwhile David's asylum case has been remanded for additional evidence and it appears that the proceedings will take another year before a final decision is reached. Joseph says he was attacked in Haiti, beaten and burned, leaving him permanently scarred.

AIUSA Refugee Program Director Bill Frelick visited Joseph at Krome in February and found him extremely despondent, hardly able to lift his head from the table throughout the interview. "I have had enough of prison. I came here to save my life. It's prison, prison," Joseph told Frelick.

#### **Act Now**

This kid needs your support. Write him a cheerful letter letting him know that many Americans know and care about him. David Joseph, A73 213 378, US ICE Krome SPC, 18201 SW 12 St., Miami, FL 33194. (David can read and write simple English.)

## From the Executive Director Back to our Roots

*This column is taken from the March 2004 AIUSA Monthly Mailing.*

“Our grassroots membership,” we often say, “is the heart and soul of Amnesty International. It’s what makes us unique among international human rights organizations. It is the primary source of our power, our ability to affect change and shape human rights history.” All of that is true; those claims are far from grandiose. But it is also true that, although we have 40 plus years of experience in membership development and mobilization, we must consistently fine-tune our methods to insure we have the strongest activist base possible.

We are poised now to launch a new activist development initiative that will allow us to devote more resources to improving our membership recruitment, servicing and training efforts. That is not to say we have been failing or that what we have done in the past has not achieved results. I know few more devoted souls than those whose jobs are to help service and mobilize our activists.

The problem is that we have simply asked too much of those staff members. We have asked our regional staff, for example, not only to be service providers to our members, but to also run mini-national headquarters in their regions: to organize conferences, track local human rights developments, implement national priorities, be media spokespersons, etc.

And perhaps we have asked too little of ourselves as well, in the sense that we have not required adequate evaluation of our effectiveness. We have not set tangible, measurable growth goals. Nor have we effectively coordinated our regional and national programs and evaluated how effectively we have delivered results to our activist base.

When, upon the recommendation of dozens of staff and volunteers, I appointed Jodi Longo Deputy Executive Director for Membership Mobilization two years ago, she said to me, “Don’t make this appointment unless you’re ready to buckle your seat belt. The time for us to strengthen and grow our membership is here.”

Reflecting upon the 19(!) studies produced over the last seven years of what we need to do to better serve our members, Jodi, in collaboration with her staff and many volunteer leaders, has recently produced a paper called “Back to Our Roots,” the first of three that will outline the Activist Growth and Development Blueprint for change.

“Back to our Roots” focuses on change in our regional of-

fices, which we are beginning to call “field offices:” the need to make GROWTH a top priority, for example; the need to create closer connections between staff and activists; the need for more systematic and wide-ranging activist training opportunities; the need to prioritize and integrate human rights education; the need for better assessment tools; the need to tailor our field staff to the idiosyncratic needs of each region; the need to focus at least two field organizers in every region on assisting our activists develop successful action plans.

The regional office restructuring will be followed by changes in our national membership programs and the creation of the National Activist Development Unit, greater resources for training programs, better delivery systems for resources and communication tools. These changes are the result of multiple membership driven assessments and recommendations preceding them. And membership will be actively involved in evaluating the changes.

If you’re interested in reading “Back to Our Roots” for yourself, go to the members’ section of our website at: [www.amnesty-volunteer.org](http://www.amnesty-volunteer.org), or contact Membership Mobilization Program Assistant Jane Debenham at (202) 544-0200 or [jdebenham@aiusa.org](mailto:jdebenham@aiusa.org).

Ultimately our human rights victories—the very lives of human beings around the globe—depend upon the health and productivity of our members. And that truly is the bottom line. Recommitment to our activist base is a key element in providing an answer. I’m solidly behind the Activist Growth and Development Blueprint. As you learn more about it, I think you will be too.

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## Good News!

### Mauritania: Pressure Leads to Pardons

Mohamed Lemine Chbih Ould Cheikh Melainine, Mokhtar Ould Haibetna and Bouba Ould Hassena were released on August 24, 2003. They were granted pardons by President Maaouiya Ould Sid’ Ahmed Taya. No official reason was given for their release.

Mohamed Lemine Chbih Ould Cheikh Melainine thanked AI which campaigned for his release: “Thanks again, I don’t know what to say. It is the pressure of international organizations like Amnesty International that made my release possible.”

Mohamed Lemine Chbih Ould Cheikh Melainine, Mokhtar Ould Haibetna and Bouba Ould Hassena spent more than two years in prison following a sentence of five years’ imprisonment for association to commit acts of sabotage and terrorism.

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

# Calendar

## April

**18** Sunday 1:30–3:30 PM  
**Improv Fundraiser** at the Irvine Improv. See the article on page 2 of the newsletter for more information.

**20** 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.

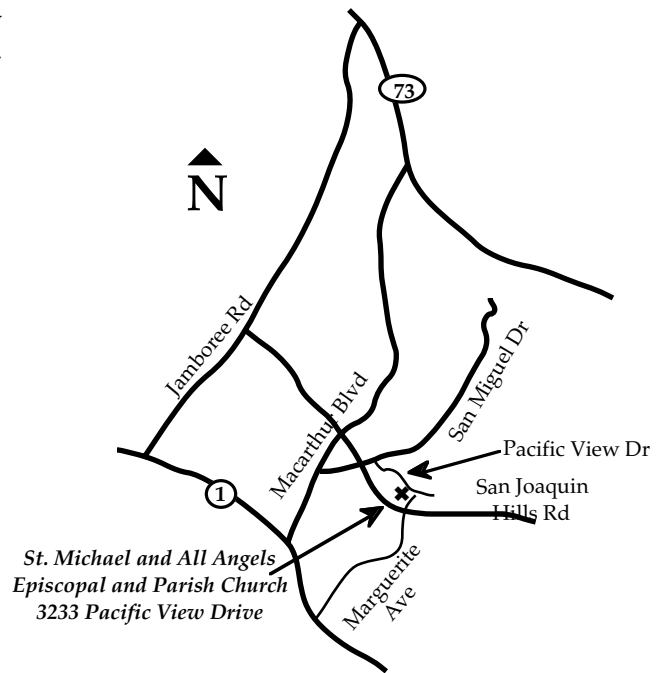
**26** Monday 7:00 PM  
**Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting** at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Room 7A, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. Group #596 meets the last Monday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Darcie Olson at (949) 650-5375.



**Group #141 Orange Meeting Location**

**27** 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.

**27** 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 Kilchoër at (714) 557-8427.



**Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location**

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