



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

December 2004

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Women's Lives and Bodies: Unrecognized Casualties of War

This article is taken from a December 8, 2004, AI press release.

Women and girls bear the brunt of armed conflicts fought today both as direct targets and as unrecognized “collateral damage.” *Lives Blown Apart*, a new report in Amnesty International’s campaign, Stop Violence Against Women, calls for global action to challenge both the violence and the failure of governments to prevent it.

“Patterns of violence against women in conflict do not arise ‘naturally’ but are ordered, condoned or tolerated. They persist because those who commit them know they can get away with impunity,” said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

The report lays out the global picture revealing a systematic pattern of abuse repeating itself in conflicts all over the world from Colombia, Iraq, Sudan, Chechnya, Nepal to Afghanistan and in 30 other ongoing conflicts. Despite promises, treaties and legal mechanisms, governments have failed to protect women and girls from violence.

“Women and girls are not just killed, they are raped, sexually attacked, mutilated and humiliated. Custom, culture and religion have built an image of women as bearing the ‘honour’ of their communities. Disparaging a woman’s sexuality and destroying her physical integrity have become a means by which to terrorize, demean and ‘defeat’ entire communities, as well as to punish, intimidate and humiliate women,” said Irene Khan.

On top of this it is women and children who are forced to flee their homes. It is women who care for the sick and injured and it is women who have to collect food and water—tasks and situations that put them at further risk of abuse.

Rape survivors suffer not only from psychological and emotional trauma, from the impact on their health and the risk of HIV/Aids, but also from the fear that they will be ostracized by their families and communities if they are publicly identified as a rape victim.

“In the community, they made such fun of me that I had to leave the village and live in the forest . . . I am hungry, I have no clothes and no soap. I don’t have any money to pay for medical care. It would be better if I died with the baby in my womb.” Sanguina was raped twice during the DRC conflict.

Justice is key to stopping the violence and when the International Criminal Court begins its first prosecutions, it will open a new avenue for women to access justice. Justice is not just a technical tool but has a concrete impact. It confirms that rape and sexual violence are crimes, restores dignity and feel-

ings of self worth and it delivers redress. Justice is also a vital step to prevent the crimes from happening again, it sends a signal to those who would commit violence that it will not be tolerated.

“It is absolutely pivotal that one of the first prosecutions by the ICC next year includes crimes of violence against women. A strong global message must be sent that violence against women will be vigorously pursued. Firm action by the ICC will help shame states into promoting action through their national courts,” said Irene Khan.

However the ICC cannot deliver justice without political support. The success of an ICC prosecution will also depend on the cooperation it receives from governments on practical issues, including the assistance it receives during investigations, the sharing of evidence and the protection of witnesses who may be at risk.

“Women’s lives and their bodies have been the unacknowledged casualties of war for too long. Tools to tackle the violence exist, but justice for women victims of war will only be delivered if world leaders are ready to do more than just make pious statements condemning rape and sexual violence. They must adopt an agenda for action, centred on the ICC and complemented by universal jurisdiction through national systems,” said Irene Khan.

The report highlights how the fight for women’s security and human rights is jeopardised by increasing militarization and the introduction of new security agendas to fight global terrorism. US led security doctrines have stretched the concept of “war” into areas formerly considered as law enforcement promoting the notion that human rights can be curtailed in the name of security.

Despite the impact of conflict on women and girls they are still excluded from the peace negotiation tables. Often it is the men who initiated the war who take decisions on how peace should be built and introduced.

“Women have a crucial role to play in re-building secure communities and countries. All over the world women are challenging violence, discrimination and silence. Without women’s active involvement in any peace process there can be no security, no justice and no peace,” said Irene Khan.

“We have to mobilize global outrage—to challenge the violence, support those women who suffer and put pressure on those who can bring about change. It is the power of individual women and men that drives change,” said Irene Khan.

November Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Letter-Writing

We wrote letters to Zimbabwe, Nepal, Viet Nam, Omar, Turkey and to Washington DC.

Western Regional Conference

We discussed at the meeting what had happened at the Western Regional Conference that was held in Salt Lake City. Deidre and Kevin attended the conference and gave a brief update. They attended various workshops such as on the role of military outsourcing of prison protections overseas and speakers about women's Human Rights, as well as the closing plenary discussing racial profiling. An interesting note on that was how the police in DC and Virginia were using profiling while looking for the shooter on the beltway many years ago, but failed to look at any others who did not match their profile. When the man and boy were caught, they did not meet the profile and in fact most likely passed through the checkpoints many times while carrying weapons in their trunk.

A couple of resolutions that were of interest to people that passed to go to the Annual General Meeting include the AIUSA section supporting the Full Spectrum Approach to the mission. This item was and is still being debated in AI worldwide.

Another resolution that passed (overwhelmingly) was also about the mission. There is a concern among many veteran members that we may be losing sight of the individual prisoner. So, a resolution was written and passed that asked to add the following wording to the Integrated Strategic Plan: "Campaign for the immediate and unconditional release of Prisoners of Conscience and protection of the rights of human rights defenders."

Other resolutions that passed at the regional called on AIUSA to oppose discrimination in marriage and another on selecting volunteer leaders.

Next Month's Meeting

At the meeting we also decided to have a meeting in December. We made this decision based on the death penalty event we were sponsoring on December 3 and also with a huge mailing to national members. We will meet and write postcards to prisoners and have a wild holiday party.

Upcoming Events

We also discussed the possibility for next year of having a "Chocolate Happy Hour" during the Artist Walk which is the first Saturday of every month in Santa Ana. Details on that will follow.

November Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Regional Conference: Salt Lake City

Deidre and Kevin both attended the Western Regional Conference in Salt Lake City (and Deidre also led some workshops). On the way to the hotel, their Nepalese cab driver filled them in on worsening conditions in his home country. The theme of the conference was the Stop Violence Against

Women campaign. The opening plenary featured speakers from womens shelters in Utah. Bill Schultz (Amnesty USAs director) spoke about the recent Amnesty trip to Sudan, which he was part of. Kevin filled us in on the war on terror workshop and the resolutions that were discussed, as well as their outcomes (on to the national meeting or voted down).

Special Performance: A Prison of the Mind play

The play *A Prison of the Mind* will be presented Friday, December 3 at 7 PM in the auditorium of the Sisters of St. Josephs Motherhouse. The event will be cohosted by the Orange and Long Beach Amnesty groups and the Orange County chapter of California People of Faith Against the Death Penalty.

Group News

The group tabled at Wild Oats in Long Beach and met some interesting people and got some petitions signed and holiday cards sent.

We decided to meet in December at a restaurant, Saigon Express, in honor of our Vietnamese prisoner of conscience. We will meet there at 6:30 PM. The restaurant is located at 4501 E. Carson Street. It's just east of Lakewood Boulevard (between Lakewood and Clark). (Turn onto Norse Way from Carson. Its near the eastern corner of Carson and Norse Way.)

A productive writing time enabled the group to send 18 letters to Secretary of State (still!) Colin Powell and various ambassadors in the capital, 20 letters to Nepal, three holiday cards, 20 letters to Brazil, six letters to Vietnam, and one letter to Yemen.

We discussed leadership issues (fearless leader Bobbi will step down in December) for the group. We agreed that the group is pretty good about pitching in to do different tasks when asked and talked about switching off leadership or co-leading the group. Norma agreed to be the leader for a trial period of six months.

November Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

We decided to contribute to the cost of the play *A Prison of the Mind*, a one-woman piece on the death penalty, being presented in Orange. We will also make a donation to a December event to benefit victims of human trafficking currently living in Orange County.

We are still waiting for the final word from The Lab in Costa Mesa for our December write-a-thon. Check the website for updates.

We reviewed the goals and objectives for 2005 proposed by the group coordinators for next year, Kristina Elali and Maung Nyeu.

We decided to send a reminder to all recent visitors to our Irvine group about the newsletter and our group meetings.

Finally we determined our plan of action for the next year for our action files and campaigns: Dr. Sa'adey (Julie Ralls), Rebiya Kadeer (Stephanie Jones), West Africa Regional Action Network (WARAN).

Our group will not be having a meeting in December 2004, but we will gather again as usual in January 2005.

From the Executive Director Lambs To The Slaughter

This article is taken from the November 2004 Connect.

The ring tone on the Sudanese minister's cell phone sounded familiar to me when it went off, but at first I couldn't quite place it. This particular minister, with whom the Amnesty International delegation was meeting on our recent trip to Khartoum and Darfur, was one of the most hostile and aggressive we had encountered. He adamantly denied that the government was responsible in any way for the carnage in Darfur and vehemently attacked Amnesty International. But the ring tone on his cell phone was familiar. And then I finally placed it: it was "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Oh, how appropriate, I thought. Leading the lambs to slaughter.

The mission I was privileged to participate on September 13–21, led by our Secretary General, Irene Khan, was the first by an international human rights NGO to visit Sudan and meet with senior members of the Sudanese Government. We also spent considerable time in Darfur itself, in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, in conversation with human rights monitors and NGOs working in the region, and in the National Security Prison in Nyala, the provincial capital of South Darfur.

The good news is that the international pressure, such as that exerted by so many of our activists, is working. Our very presence, which we had been trying to arrange for six months, was evidence of that. The Sudanese Government is deeply divided over how to respond to the global outrage. The government's decision to accede to the latest UN Security Council resolution, including an expansion of the numbers and mandate of African Union (AU) troops on the ground in Darfur, reflects that. For all its bluff and bluster, Sudan is worried about being labeled an international pariah; it may be worried about economic sanctions; and some officials worry about military intervention.

The bad news is that the killing, raping and burning continues. The key to resolving the Sudan conflict is for the African Union to be fully equipped by the international community to do its job properly, to secure the villages so that the 1.4 million displaced people can return to their homes.

The U.S. Congress has appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars to do just that and the U.S. has taken the lead in leveraging the world's conscience, but the great tragedy is that, thanks to the U.S.'s own compromised reputation, it can no longer lead with the effectiveness it once did—even in the face of a humanitarian catastrophe.

"After Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay and the Weapons of Mass Destruction fiasco in Iraq," I was asked repeatedly

in Sudan, "who is the U.S. to tell anyone what to do and why should we believe anything it tells us?"

Which simply reminds us that human rights are all of a piece, that if you violate them in one place, it can come back to haunt you in another, far, far away. We've been saying that for decades of course. Now the United States is learning we were right. The tragedy is that it has taken tens of thousands of deaths and more than a million lives destroyed to teach the lesson.

Despite one official report after another disclosing the widespread use of torture by U.S. military and intelligence, torture has been spoken of only in the most general terms. With slaughter continuing in Sudan, what the U.S. should do about it—equip and transport African Union troops, for example—is a topic absent from the debate. With renewal of the Patriot Act soon to be decided in Congress, the implications of a post-9/11 world for our rights and liberties is far from the forefront of candidates' concerns.

The International Criminal Court is in its nascency but would you know that from those who are running for President? And of course the use of the death penalty, even the juvenile death penalty, is a subject those who oppose the punishment will do almost anything to avoid discussing.

In part this is due to Mr. Bush's stubbornness and Mr. Kerry's cautiousness and Mr. Nader's God-knows-what, but it is also due to the failure of the citizenry to demand answers. It is a reflection of the relatively modest organized constituency pushing for human rights accountability in this country. And it is a call to arms to those of us in Amnesty to see to it that in the time remaining in the campaign, human rights not be relegated to the back burner—at the Presidential or Congressional levels.

Amnesty International takes no position on particular candidates but, through the news media and through direct communications with the candidates and their advisors, we can find out whether, for instance, as the Schlesinger report allowed, torture in Iraq had merely been imported from Guantanamo and Afghanistan. Does that mean that it was acceptable in the latter two contexts, but not the former? Or is it truly unacceptable in all contexts? Schlesinger was strangely silent on the question.

And we can find out whether Mr. Bush and Mr. Kerry, both supporters of intervention in Iraq, would do anything more than we are already doing to stop impending genocide in Sudan. Elections choose leaders who choose agendas for the future. There is no better time than this to do what we can to hold those leaders to account and shape those agendas to our liking.

William Schulz
Executive Director

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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Calendar

December

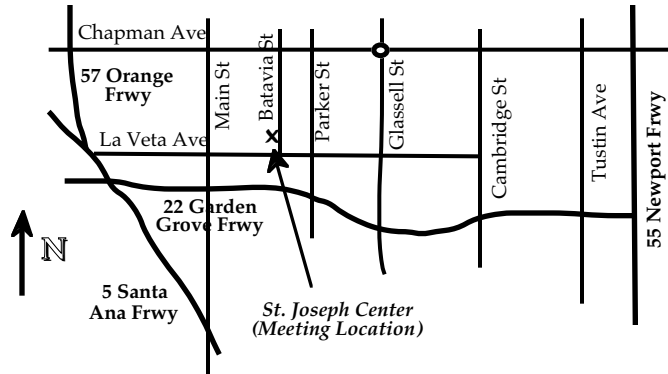
15 Wednesday 6:30 PM

Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at Saigon Express restaurant, 4501 E. Carson Street, Long Beach. See the directions in the meeting minutes on page 2. For further information about the group, contact Bobbi Kendig at (562) 420-1155.

Groups #178 Irvine and #596 Huntington Beach are not meeting this month. They will resume their regular monthly meetings in January 2005.

21 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting in Classroom 3 at the Sisters of St. Joseph, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. Look for the classroom/auditorium building behind the main building. Drive around and to the back. Group #141 meets the third Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Deidre Jackson at (562) 430-7381.



Group #141 Orange Meeting Location

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