



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

April 2005

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Rebiya Kadeer Has Been Released!

This article is taken from a March 17, 2005 AIUSA press release.

The release of prisoner of conscience Rebiya Kadeer is a joyful victory, and our joy is only tempered by thoughts of the many others who remain unjustly jailed in China, including those jailed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Rebiya's release demonstrates that no government is immune to the persistent pressure applied by dedicated human rights activists worldwide, and Amnesty International will redouble its efforts to win further releases.

Attention by the US government and the scores of Members of Congress who had called for her release was critical to winning Rebiya's freedom.

Her release indicates that consistent pressure can win concrete progress on human rights, and underscores the need for the US to maintain such pressure. The effectiveness of the US-China human rights dialogue will continue to be measured by the resolution of remaining individual cases and by advances toward the overall protection of fundamental freedoms in China.

Rebiya's daughter Akida Rouzi issued the following statement on behalf of the family: "We are beyond happy. We have waited for this moment for five and a half years and want to thank everyone who worked toward this joyful day."

More on Rebiya Kadeer

Rebiya Kadeer founded and directed a large trading company in northwestern China, championed the rights of the Uighur ethnic group there, and became one of China's most prominent advocates of women's rights. All these activities came to an abrupt halt in August 1999 when police arrested her as she entered a hotel to discuss human rights with U.S. Congressional staff who were visiting China.

Rebiya Kadeer had spent more than five years jailed in a region where prison conditions are notoriously harsh. Prisoners in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region receive poor food, inadequate sanitation, and little medical treatment. Amnesty International had expressed grave concern about reports of Rebiya Kadeer's deteriorating health.

The Chinese government charged Kadeer in September 1999 with "providing secret information to foreigners" even though the local newspapers she was carrying at the time of her arrest were all publicly available, as were the newspapers she had sent to her husband in the United States. Authorities tried her in secret and sentenced her in March 2000 to eight years' imprisonment. In early 2004, authorities reduced her

sentence by one year.

A successful and charismatic businesswoman, Kadeer used her resources to provide fellow Uighurs, the region's predominantly Muslim majority ethnic group, with training and employment. The Chinese government had recognized her contributions by appointing her to its prestigious national advisory group, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The government also appointed her to its delegation participating in the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women. She was a standing member of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Chamber of Commerce, and in 1997, she founded the Thousand Mothers Movement to promote women's rights and economic security.

Rebiya Kadeer's activism in the strategically important, oil-rich autonomous region of Xinjiang and her husband's outspoken criticism of Chinese rule in the mostly Muslim region began to draw government reprisals in the late 1990s. Her husband left China in 1996. The following year, the government confiscated Rebiya Kadeer's passport. Harassment by police was accompanied by further restrictions on her movements. In 1998, authorities barred her from reappointment to the Consultative Conference.

Rebiya Kadeer, 53 at the time of her arrest in 1999, is the mother of 11 children, some of whom live in the United States. More than 100 Members of Congress have called upon the Chinese government to free her.

Background

Since the late 1980s, Chinese government policies and other factors have generated growing ethnic discontent in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. In the past few years, thousands of people there have been the victims of gross human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, unfair political trials, torture, and summary executions. These violations, suffered primarily by members of the Uighur ethnic group, occur amidst growing ethnic unrest fueled by unemployment, discrimination and restrictions on religious and cultural freedoms. The situation has led some people living in the XUAR to favor independence from China.

Crackdowns in the region intensified after September 11, 2001, with authorities designating supporters of independence as "separatists" and "terrorists." Uighurs, most of whom are Muslim, have been the main targets in the region of the Chinese authorities. Authorities have closed down mosques, detained Islamic clergy, and severely curtailed freedom of expression and association.

March Meeting Minutes Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Todd Anglin, Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Bobbi Kendig, Jim Roberts, Naomi Steinfeld, Steve Wicke

New Prisoner Case?

Jim reiterated that our former prisoner of conscience (POC) from Vietnam—Nguyen Dinh Huy, 73, a former English and history professor, founder of the Movement to Unite the People and Build Democracy (MUPBD)—is free from prison but by no means free. He is still being followed 24/7. Jim spoke a little about the realities of life for former POCs in repressive countries. Officially, we have not been let off the case, but we discussed what we want to do next. Jim reported that there are no POCs available for adoption at this time, but groups can double up on existing POCs. The group stated that they would still very much like to work on a POC case. Jim agreed to try to find us a Burma POC case, which would fit in nicely with his expertise as a cogroup member.

In addition to our new upcoming POC case, the group will be participating in the Stop Torture campaign. Thank you, Steve, for agreeing to sign up and be our point person for this important work! We also will wait to see what happens with the Western Region's special focus case, now that Rebiya Kadeer has been released: three cheers! (At last report Ms. Kadeer left China and was in the Amnesty offices in D.C., exhibiting a delightful, grateful, cheerful persona.) Once again, Amnesty works!

More Group News

- The group sent 13 letters to Nepal, seven to Ecuador, and six to the U.S. capital. Some members reported receiving a reply from Senator Dianne Feinstein in response to a previous letter sent on Nepal. Senator Feinstein provided a copy of a letter she sent to King Gyaendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev expressing concern about the situation in Nepal: political prisoners under house arrest, inoperative communications systems, and suspended press freedoms. She urged the King to build on his pledge to restore peace and democracy within three years and negotiate a just and lasting peace with members of the Maoist insurgency. We thank the Senator for her attention to this important issue.
- Some group members didn't know about Amnesty's fantastic Online Action Center. Go to <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/join/>, take a few minutes to sign up, and you will receive all the kinds of actions you want via e-mail. When you are sent an action, you merely enter your e-mail address and Amnesty will send your action. (Of course, you can always edit as well.) See the Web site listed above for more information.
- San Diego Group 471 has put the word out that they would love to see other Southern California groups at their peaceful demonstration at the Chinese consulate on April 15. Demonstrate for human rights in China (Falun Gong,

Uighur activists, Tibetans, etc.). Carry a sign (no longer than 18 inches, i.e., a paint stick) or just come and support the message! A three-member delegation from group 471 has requested a meeting with the Consul General. Join the group's peaceful sidewalk protest, and speak for those who can't speak for themselves! Friday, April 15, 2005, 2:00–4:00 p.m.; 433 Shatto Place, Los Angeles; contact Margaret Wernett at (760) 731-9174 or margiflowr@aol.com for more information.

March Meeting Minutes Group #178 Irvine

Attendees

Jaques Kilchoër, Kris Elali, Erin Callahan, Maung Nyeu, Julie Ralls, Stephanie Jones, Steve Wicke, Liza Vick, Al White, Racquel S-Saboor, Rodger, Nobuhiro Sawamura, Kendra Peavy, and many others.

Letters Written: 83 (everybody made a great effort!)

Group Business

We had a good crowd and a great meeting. We also had several new members, including students ranging from high school to graduate school. Liza Vick handed out member packages to our new members. Erin Callahan, our Western Region Director, was present in the meeting. She spoke of priorities of the Western Region, such as, stop violence against women, war on terror, death penalty, etc. She also said we can borrow movies from the Amnesty library. She is looking volunteers for the Amnesty Film Festival in LA in May 2005. She also answered questions of our members.

Racquel was the speaker on human trafficking. She started with a short video presentation. She spoke of trafficking, migrant smuggling, debt bondage, forced child labor in construction, rock quarries, domestic servants, forced prostitution, etc. She also spoke of resources (federal, local, non-governmental, and other social services) and strategies for combating human trafficking. She also talked about a seminar held in Orange Coast College in March 2004. She donated a document, "Freedom Denied: Forced Labor in California" for the AI Irvine group library. It was followed by Q&A. It was noted that today 800,000 or more men, women, and children are trafficked in this world each year. Some of our members expressed strong interest in making this issue a major priority in Amnesty International.

Julie gave an update on Pat Gerencser and plans to invite Pat to speak on Syria.

We plan to have a workshop on non-violence in fall 2005 for Reverend James Lawson. This workshop will be at the UCI campus and in cooperation with the UCI student group.

Upcoming Meetings

At our April 26 meeting, we will be screening the documentary *Señorita Extraviada, Missing Young Woman*. This 74-minute film tells the haunting story of the more than 350 kidnapped, raped and murdered young women of Juárez, Mexico.

March Meeting Minutes Group #596 Huntington Beach

Erin Callahan, the Western Regional Director for Amnesty, joined in on our Monday night meeting. She spook to the group about what Amnesty has recently been able to accomplish as well as campaigns that Amnesty is currently working on. Raquel S-Saboor and Beth McFarland gave a presentation on human trafficking aboard and in our local communities. They shared with us the different forms of trafficking, what has been done to combat the problem, and how we can try to join in the fight to stop modern day slavery. Raquel S-Saboor will be speaking on human trafficking at California State University, Fullerton on April 8, 2005. For more information contact Raquel at (714) 200-4907.

April Meeting

In April, we will be discussing the final details of our upcoming May 14 AIDS and Human Rights Conference. The conference will take place on the Soka University of America campus from 8 AM to 5 PM. Various topics related to the spread of HIV/AIDS will be discussed in different workshops. Our keynote speakers for the day will include Adotei Akwei, Campaign Director for AIUSA, and Cristof Putzel, Documentary Film Maker of *Left Behind*. This event is free of charge and those interested may contact either Darcie Olson at (949) 742-5524 or Mahsa Abassi at (949) 690-3753 for more information.

From the Executive Director We Win One In The Supreme Court

This article is taken from the April 2005 Connect.

We at Amnesty are not always good at celebrating, but now is the time to do so, if ever there was one. The Supreme Court decision on juvenile executions represents a victory of enormous proportions. Not the least of the reasons for that is that the Court cited "evolving community standards [of decency]" as among the most convincing reasons for its decision.

And that means us! All of the volunteers and staff who worked so hard for so many years to change grassroots and state legislative opinion on this issue, to "evolve" those community standards to a point that the execution of children became self-evidently unjust and unacceptable.

Special plaudits go to those activists in the five states that outlawed the execution of juvenile offenders since the Supreme Court last ruled on the question in 1989. Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, cited that trend as convincing evidence of the direction in which public opinion has been moving. But he also cited the 12 states that have no death penalty at all and the other 13 that had outlawed juvenile executions before 1989 (even though they retain the death penalty) as constituting,

among the 30 states in all, a "national consensus."

So abolitionists in all those states deserve the warmest of accolades too. Congratulations!

Then there is another critical feature of Justice Kennedy's decision—the fact that he referenced international law and practice. "The United States is the only country in the world that continues to give official sanction to the juvenile death penalty," the decision read. "It does not lessen fidelity to the Constitution or pride in its origins to acknowledge that the express affirmation of certain fundamental rights by other nations and people underscores the centrality of those same rights within our own heritage of freedom."

The implications of that statement go far beyond the issue of the juvenile death penalty and can help change American jurisprudence in fundamental ways.

Finally, let me express my warmest appreciation to all our staff members and volunteers, past and present, who have toiled so faithfully (and, we see now, effectively) to restore a bit of honor to the tattered reputation of this country.

A toast to all! And on to the next challenge

William Schulz, Executive Director

World Scoffs At State Department Report

The State Department's annual world human rights report came in for unusually strong criticism and cries of "hypocrisy" when it was released in March. Among those taking aim at the report was Amnesty International, which noted that the Bush Administration has turned over prisoners arrested in the battle against terrorism to some of the same countries it cites in the report for torturing prisoners! Human rights activists have long charged that U.S. intelligence officers resorted to this practice, known as rendition, as a way to avoid U.S. restrictions prohibiting the torture of prisoners by allowing foreign agents to do it instead.

"The State Department's carefully compiled record of countries' abuses may perversely have been transformed into a Yellow Pages for the outsourcing of torture," said William F. Schulz, Executive Director of AIUSA.

"Unfortunately, [the report] once again gives us reason to say that double standards are a characteristic of the American approach to such an important theme," the Russian Foreign Ministry declared after reviewing the report. "Characteristically off-screen is the ambiguous record of the United States itself." Jose Luis Soberanes, President of Mexico's Human Rights Commission, also said the United States lacked moral authority to pass judgment. He compared Washington's criticism of Mexico's record to "the donkey talking about long ears"—the Spanish-language equivalent of "the pot calling the kettle black."

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 shown with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues cover the costs of this newsletter and of stamps used for saving lives. Your address label contains your membership expiration date. Join us!

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Calendar

April

19 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.

20 Wednesday 7:00 PM

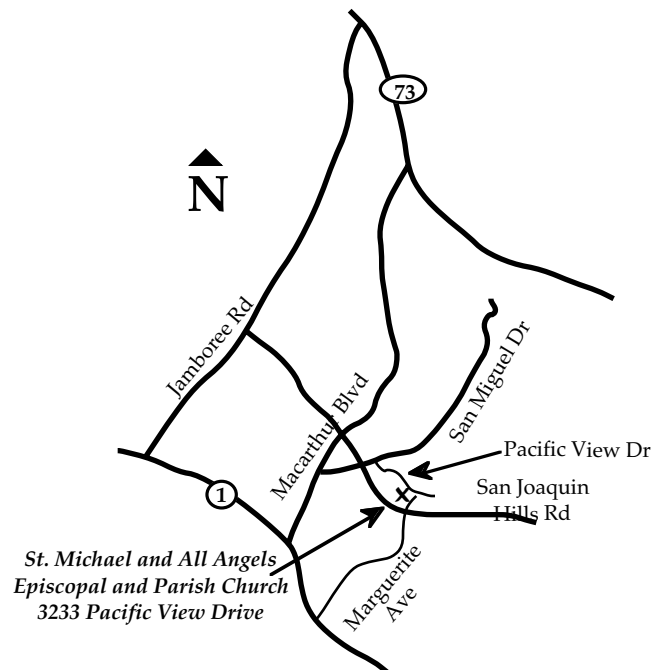
Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

25 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.

26 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, between the 5 and 405 freeways. See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Kris Elali at (714) 724-5811.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

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P.O. Box 14485
Irvine, CA 92623-4484