



Amnesty International

Orange County

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August 2005

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Amnesty International Launches SHARE POWER First Comprehensive Grassroots Campaign for Corporate Accountability

This article is taken from an August 2, 2005 AIUSA press release.

Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) today announced the launch of SHARE POWER, the first comprehensive and national grassroots campaign that harnesses the voting power of large shareholders to advance corporate responsibility for human rights. This year long campaign will focus initially on two companies—Chevron Corporation (CVX) and Dow Chemical (DOW)—and will culminate in national days of action around the companies' shareholder meetings in spring 2006.

With socially responsible investment firms and major institutional investors, AIUSA will co-file a shareholder proposal with Chevron addressing its past operations in the Ecuadorian Amazon where contamination is still affecting the residents and indigenous communities and with Dow related to its liability for the 1984 Bhopal gas leak that has so far killed 15,000 people and devastated the lives of more than 100,000. AIUSA's SHARE POWER campaign will connect AIUSA's 350,000 members to shareholders that hold considerable investments in multinational corporations with questionable human rights records.

"No matter who you are, where you live or what you do, you can find your shareholder connection to a large multinational corporation and use that connection to pressure change from the inside," explained Mila Rosenthal, AIUSA's Business and Human Rights Program Director. "Amnesty International and other human rights activists can use their influence with their state and city treasuries, or their university's endowment, or their investment companies to increase support for human rights-related shareholder proposals. This shareholder support will deliver a clear and powerful message to the companies' management."

This summer, as part of the campaign, concerned residents in Olympia, Washington will be pressuring the Washington State Investment Board to vote in favor of the proposals submitted to Chevron and Dow asking them to address their human rights impact in the Amazon and in Bhopal. Activists in Western Massachusetts are already pushing Fidelity Investments on the same issues. In the same way, students at Columbia and Stanford Universities are pressuring their institutions to develop clear proxy voting guidelines for their endowments that will ensure they vote their shares in favor of human rights proposals. All of the information on these and other local campaigns across the country will be posted in an online Forum

for activists. The Forum will be the first online resource documenting how large shareholders use, or don't use, their power to support socially and environmentally responsible initiatives (www.amnestyusa.org/business/sharepower).

SHARE POWER recognizes that governments have the primary responsibility of protecting human rights, but also that companies must respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in their own operations and spheres of influence. SHARE POWER's two main cases illustrate the urgency of corporate accountability for human rights:

The Bhopal Disaster

In Bhopal, India, a gas leak in 1984 killed more than 7,000 people during a three-day span and claimed an additional 15,000 lives in the years that followed. Today more than 100,000 people, disproportionately including the poorest in the city, continue to suffer the devastating effects of the disaster, including chronic, debilitating, largely untreatable illnesses. The leak was from a pesticide plant owned by Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), which is owned today by Dow Chemical Company. Dow denies that UCC has any criminal liability for the leak, despite criminal charges still pending in Indian court. UCC and Dow have stated that they have no further responsibility for the effects of the leak.

Chevron in the Amazon

In the Ecuadorian Amazon, according to environmental studies, during Texaco's two decades of operations, the company dumped more than 19 billion gallons of toxic wastewaters in the Amazonian ecosystem and was responsible for 16.8 million gallons of crude oil spilling from the main pipeline into the region. Contaminated water and crops continue to devastate the health of indigenous people and other residents in the nearby communities. Texaco is now owned by Chevron Corporation, which has refused to acknowledge any link between the public health hazards and the environmental problems caused by its drilling policies and has further denied direct compensation to the affected communities for threatening their health and their economic and cultural survival by polluting their environment.

In connection with the campaign, Amnesty International will release a report in November detailing concerns about human rights abuses tied to oil extraction in Nigeria with a special day of action on November 10, to mark the ten-year anniversary of Nigerian human rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution.

July Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Letter-Writing

The group worked on letters dealing with the murder of Octavio Acuña in Queretaro, Mexico on June 21, a crime that may have been a homophobic hate crime; the tenth anniversary on July 11, 2005, of the Srebrenica massacre, where approximately 8,000 men and boys were killed by Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica in the former Yugoslavia; the US detention facilities at Guantánamo Bay; the increasing number (nearly 1200) of women and girls that have been murdered in Guatemala each year since 2001; and the rape of Makhtaran Bibi, a Pakistani women's rights defender.

July Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

Group Business

The group agreed to use the money that Julie raised towards a speaking fee for Ngawang Choephel to speak at the Western Regional Conference. Kris is to ask other groups if they would be willing to pay part of his fee in order for him to attend.

Next Month's Meeting

Ali Azizi, Board of Directors, will be speaking at our next meeting sharing highlights on his recent trip to Yemen on Amnesty's behalf.

Upcoming Events

September: Dan Noel will be speaking about the Kenneth Clair Death Penalty case in California and the appeals process.

October: Maung is coordinating having Reverend James Lawson come to hold a one-day workshop at UCI in October. He was a civil rights activist and holds workshops on non-violent direct action. The UCI Amnesty group has agreed to host the event.

Early 2006: Kris had been coordinating having Pat Gerencser, Middle East Co-Group member and Syria Country Specialist, speak in the September timeframe. Unfortunately, due to an injury, it has been postponed. She does want to come the early part of next year.

Stop Violence Against Women Campaign

Every day 700 women are raped or assaulted in the United States. On July 7, Amnesty International USA launched "700 Women," a web-based initiative to secure passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that will be up for re-authorization in Congress in September. AIUSA's web page includes personal stories of people involved in the effort and serves as an organizing tool to recruit people in groups of seven, 70, and 700 to contact their member of congress and ask them to support and fully fund a re-authorized VAWA bill.

It is time to break the silence about the crisis of violence against women, and the silence that confronts so many women and girls when they seek safety, justice and rehabilitation. As a global human rights campaigning organization, there is much we can do to help end the silence and stop violence against

women, and to create a world where women and girls are afforded their basic human rights. Across the world, Amnesty International members will unite to work towards making women's human rights a reality.

The Stop Violence Against Women campaign is part of Amnesty International USA's ongoing effort to campaign against discrimination (CAD). In addition to campaigning to stop violence against women, the CAD includes taking action on issues such as racial profiling in the US by law enforcement officials pre- and post-9/11, and police brutality in the US against LGBT communities.

How Our Campaign Will Contribute to Stopping Violence Against Women

Using a human rights framework to oppose violence against women changes the perception of it from a private matter to a public concern that requires action from recognized authorities. It also enables Amnesty International to use international human rights standards and laws to cut across national boundaries, cultures and religions to protest violence against women in all its forms. And perhaps most importantly, it makes it possible to use international remedies to hold governments accountable if they fail to meet their obligations to protect women from violence, regardless of who commits it or where its committed. By providing a global, human rights framework for the struggle to end violence against women, we will make clear once and for all that women and girls have the rights to be protected from violence for the simple fact that they are human.

Throughout the campaign, we will call on governments and armed groups to end impunity for violence against women during times of conflict and post-conflict. For some countries, we will demand that governments abolish discriminatory laws and practices that perpetrate violence against women. In others, we will call for the adoption of new laws and policies to provide women protection from violence. We will support women's human rights defenders, and urge governments to ratify the Treaty for the Rights of Women (CEDAW) and its protocol without reservations. In the US, we will work in support of anti-violence legislation and other national and local initiatives to stop VAW. We will help increase public awareness of violence against women as a global human rights issue, and contribute to efforts to challenge attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate violence against women.

We are hoping for the broadest possible participation in the campaign from both men and women activists of Amnesty International USA. Men also suffer when the women they care about are targets of violence, and many male Amnesty members are already active in condemning and stopping violence against women. A key strength that Amnesty brings to any campaign is membership activism domestically and internationally, and the SVAW campaign is going to require time, energy, resources, and effort from all our members. If women are ever to see the day when the societies in which they live respect, protect and fulfill their rights, its going to take the kind of massive international push for equality and justice that only an organization with Amnestys global reach is capable of. The power of change is in our hands.

**Amnesty International Works!
Turkey: Human Rights Defenders Receive
Protection, Thank Urgent Action Activists**

Three members of the Insan Haklari Derneği (IHD), Human Rights Association, Eren Keskin, Saban Dayanan and Dogan Genc have not received any further death threats following the threatening letters sent to their home and work addresses on April 19, 2005, by an ultra-nationalist group. The Turkish authorities have informed Amnesty International that the Ministry of the Interior is investigating the threats against three human rights defenders and that they have warned all the provincial governors in Turkey to take “the necessary security precautions” to protect the branches of IHD and other non-governmental organizations in case of possible attacks.

Saban Dayanan sent a message to members of the UA network: “We are indebted to all those who thought of us and sent urgent action appeals. We need such solidarity. The reactions to these appeals will prevent these attacks. We believe this from our hearts. We send warm greetings to all those who showed concern for our security.”

Released Guantanamo Bay Detainee Thanks AI

A dual citizen of the UK and Pakistan, Moazzam Begg was one of the first foreign nationals to be detained by the US after September 11, 2001. He was held without charge or trial until his release in January of 2005. Urgent Action #UA 199/03 was issued on his (and other’s) behalf on July 8, 2003 and re-issued several times.

Moazzam Begg told delegates to Amnesty International’s 2005 Annual General Meeting in the United Kingdom that when it came to campaigning, “I think you’re the best people to do it.”

Nepal: Human Rights Defender Freed

Krishna Pahadi, founding chairman of the Human Rights and Peace Society in Nepal, was released on July 4, at the Kathmandu district court. He had spent nearly five months as a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for carrying out his peaceful and legitimate work in defense of human rights. Upon his release, a police official at Naxal gave Krishna Pahadi a box of more than 200 letters and postcards sent by UA network members and Amnesty International supporters around the world, and told him that hundreds more had been received at the detention center. Though Krishna Pahadi did not receive all the appeals directly, he believes that the letters were instrumental in ensuring his safety and eventual release.

“I want to give special thanks to everyone at Amnesty International,” Krishna Pahadi said in a phone call to AI staff. “I wrote many letters for prisoners of conscience [in the past], but now I realize how important it is.” In an email on July 17 he wrote: “ . . . Later I heard that Ai USA alone sent 37400 letters to different authorities of Nepal. Such pressure created [a] different environment and the present regime of Nepal could not [be] sustained, thats why I am taking fresh breath out side prison now.”

USA: Conscientious Objector Freed

Conscientious objector Abdullah Webster was released from prison on April 30, 2005, after serving 11 months of a 14-month sentence for refusing to participate in the war in Iraq on the basis of his religious and moral beliefs.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone at Amnesty International for their prayers and support. Your support really helped me during my time at Mannheim and Fort Lewis. I received many letters from all around the world. To those whose letters were returned without my knowledge, I offer my thanks and I am touched that you took the time to encourage me throughout the past 11 months. We are taught to train soldiers to be Mentally, Physically, and Spiritually prepared for war—I was not mentally or spiritually prepared to partake in an unjust war. My faith forbids me from participating in an unjust war which will result in the taking of innocent life, non-Muslim or Muslim. I truly believe that I would have been held accountable before Allah (God) if I had gone, knowing the war to be unjust. It was not an easy decision, nor one taken lightly, to refuse to go to Iraq.

Sudan: ICC Investigation

In a recent victory for the AIUSA Government Relations Office, the U.S. agreed not to obstruct the UN in referring the crisis in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Government Relations continues to press the government to remain vigilant, engaged and supportive as the ICC prepares to investigate this case. The ICC prosecutor has just announced that investigations of crimes against humanity are under way, despite pressure to delay the process on grounds that such proceedings would meddle with the African Union peace initiative. In meetings and Congressional briefings, AIUSA is making sure that the issue of rape as a weapon of the war remains at the highest priority in the ICC’s prosecution of war crimes.

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

Calendar

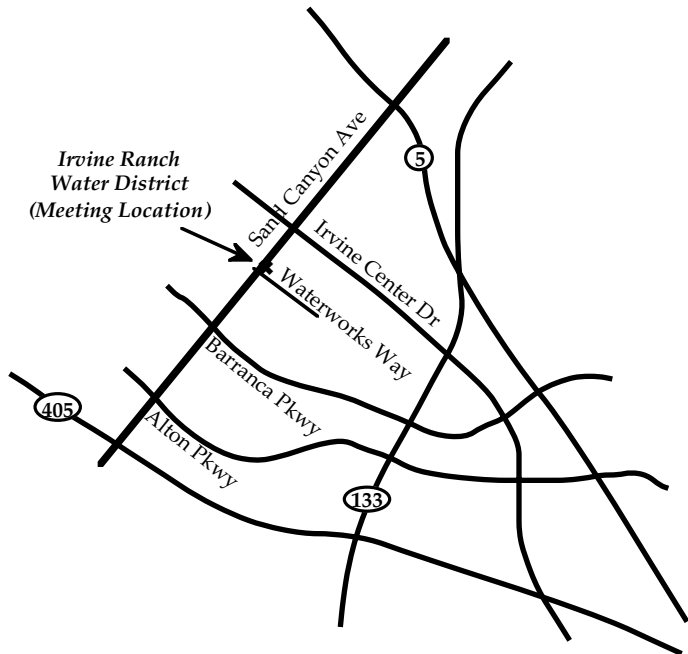
August

16 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.

17 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.



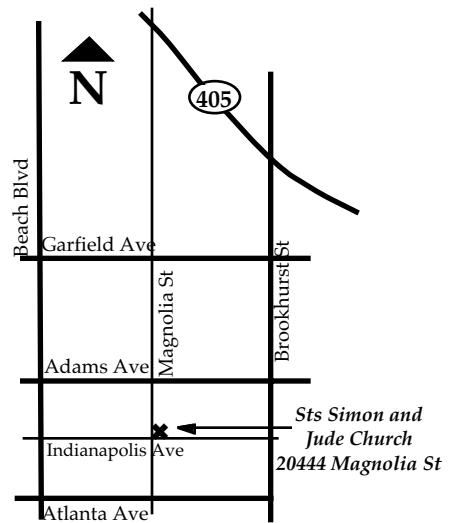
Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

23 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.

29 Monday 7:00 PM

Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. Group #596 meets the last Monday of each month.



Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting Location

Amnesty International
Group 178
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