



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

September 2005

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Amnesty International Investigation: ExxonMobil-led Oil Deal in Chad and Cameroon Threatens Law

This article is taken from a September 7, 2005 AIUSA press release.

Amnesty International today urged the governments of Chad and Cameroon and an ExxonMobil-led consortium to revise the legal agreements on the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline—the largest foreign investment project in Africa and backed by the World Bank—to protect human rights and hold corporations accountable for their actions under local, national and international law.

“The current pipeline contracts, which have been sanctioned by the World Bank, virtually give the oil consortium license to operate outside the rule of law,” said Mila Rosenthal, Director of the Business and Human Rights Program with Amnesty International USA. “These contracts limit countries from protecting human rights to preserve ExxonMobil’s profits. The World Bank must demand that the ExxonMobil-led consortium and the governments of Chad and Cameroon immediately amend the pipeline contracts. Human rights abuses linked to the pipeline have already been reported in Chad and Cameroon, and this 70-year project has just begun.”

In a new report released today, *Contracting Out of Human Rights: The Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project*, Amnesty International outlines how the oil pipeline agreements threaten human rights and prevent Chadians and Cameroonians from obtaining justice for pipeline-related abuses. The report finds that the legal agreements governing the project place a ‘price tag’ on human rights by creating financial disincentives for the governments of these countries to protect human rights. Under the agreements, it is extremely difficult for Chad and Cameroon to punish company malpractice and for individuals adversely affected by the pipeline to obtain justice. Amnesty International’s report also outlines how the legal agreements were kept secret and shielded from public scrutiny until after they were passed into law.

This investigation is part of a new Amnesty International effort to address how state-investor agreements impact international law, human rights and development.

“This report documents how the agreements between a state and a corporation—largely hidden from public view—can go even further than publicly acknowledged laws and treaties to constrain the government and cast a shadow over its legitimate activities,” said Peter Rosenblum, Columbia University Law Professor of Human Rights and an advisor to AI on the report. “Amnesty International shows how the companies

rely on contract provisions that insulate the project from the current and future laws of Chad and Cameroon and from the reasonable grievances of their populations. Respect for rights shouldn’t rely on the discretion of ExxonMobil.”

According to local NGOs, the operation of the oilfields and pipeline has already led to human rights abuses against many poor farmers in the Doba region of Chad, who were denied access to their land, which ExxonMobil refused either to compensate them for or to return to them. Several villages have reportedly been denied access to their sole safe water supply and the Kribi fishermen who work off Cameroon’s coast have had their livelihoods seriously threatened by the pipeline. The project’s contracts open the door for further similar abuses for the duration of the project. Meanwhile, critics of the pipeline, including journalists, have already been arrested and intimidated.

“This project must not continue without changes that guarantee that corporations will be held accountable and that the rule of law will be upheld,” said Mulenga Trish Katyoka, Africa Advocacy Director for Amnesty International USA. “The people of Chad and Cameroon could pay the price for 70 years if these contracts aren’t revised to protect human rights.”

Background

Since July 2003, a consortium of oil companies led by ExxonMobil has been extracting oil from the Doba oil fields in southern Chad and transporting it by pipeline to Cameroon’s Atlantic coast. The Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline project is a sizable investment for the World Bank, which pledged that the project would bring development to Chad and Cameroon’s people. But unless the oil pipeline contracts are revised to safeguard human rights, Amnesty International fears that the widespread corruption, conflict and human rights violations linked to resource extraction in other parts of Africa may be repeated in Chad and Cameroon. For example, in Nigeria, Africa’s leading oil producer, the government’s failure to protect human rights during oil exploration and production has fueled abuses, including seizure of land without adequate compensation and violence and intimidation to silence criticism. Protests under military governments in the early 1990s were suppressed with force, and the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists from the Ogoni ethnic group attracted worldwide condemnation of the role of the oil companies in human rights violations.

August Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Attendees

Ruckshana Alexander, Jeannine Christensen, Kevin Gaffney, Deidre Jackson, Priscilla Rocco, Ernie Solheid, Max Strickland, Rachel Strickland.

Letter-Writing

The group sent a total of 46 letters including:

- 23 letters to officials in Jordan and Yemen calling for an end to torture and secret and incommunicado detentions in the "war on terror;"
- 5 letters to Russian president Putin asking for prosecution of allegations of violence against women;
- 6 letters to Chinese officials calling on them to abolish "re-education through labor" camps;
- 5 letters to the Indiana governor asking him to commute the death sentence of Arthur Baird on mental health grounds.

Responses to Letters

Jeannine and Kevin received responses from the mother of conscientious objector Army Lieutenant Miguel Orlando Munoz Guzman, to whom we had written a card as part of one of Amnesty's actions. Her son is in the military and is missing and her family is being harassed.

The Constant Gardener

Deidre and Kevin attended a screening of the film *The Constant Gardener*. The film was shown to draw attention to Amnesty's Corporate Accountability Campaign. In the question and answer following the film, the producer mentioned that he was so moved by the plight of the villagers in Kenya where the movie was filmed that he started a foundation to help them, which has established a school for the tribes. Deidre and Kevin discussed Amnesty's Corporate Action Network and the new campaign.

Next Month's Meeting

The group will be screening the video *Schools in the Cross-fire*, a powerful documentary depicting one of the many impacts of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. It highlights the plight of school children and teachers in the countryside who bear the brunt of the insurgency and shows the deteriorating education system in Nepal in a very powerful way.

Artists Village Tabling

We will have a table at the Saturday, October 1, Santa Ana Artists Village Open House. The Artists Village Open House is held on the first Saturday of each month, 7:00-10:00 PM, rain or shine. Anyone wanting to help table is welcome. We will be near the Gypsy Den on the Plaza of the Arts. It is an evening when the galleries stay open late and there are lots of people out walking. The following link shows a map of the area: <http://www.grandcentralartcenter.com/gcacPages/Maps.html>

Parking can be found in the Artists Village Parking Structure at Third Street and Broadway. Walk through the galleries and studios, see a live performance or just hang out and enjoy the music, all for free.

August Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Bobby, Mike, Mary Kay, Naomi, Jim, Steve, Norma, Deidre, Kevin.

Letter-Writing

The group sent 7 letters to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, 7 letter to Myanmar, and 7 postcards.

The Constant Gardener

Deidre and Kevin talked about the new movie *The Constant Gardener*. They had been to a preview showing that Amnesty International had in L.A. Both enjoyed the movie and the Q&A afterwards. Rachel Weisz talked about how she had never been an activist (except for on the \$\$ side) and how moved she was with the people she worked with on location. A must-see movie in that you will be saddened, angry, and uplifted all during the same film.

ICM Discussion

We continued to talk about the overall movement of AI after discussing the recent International Council Meeting (ICM) in Mexico. It seems that even with the push for a broad Full Spectrum Approach (FSA) to Amnesty's mission, the movement is still somewhat divided on an international level. The decisions from the ICM were just released and will be discussed at the next meeting. The troubling item that was brought up was the budget. It seems like cash flow is very low and AI could be in financial trouble. We then discussed possibilities that may come about from the move to FSA regardless of the finances or perhaps slowing progress, as funds are low. We do not have the answer, but as volunteers it was good to discuss. The question we will be watching is how the International Secretariat will balance the movement and the cash flow.

Further discussion about the ICM included talks about AI taking a stance on armed intervention and abortion. It was noted that AI Secretary General Irene Khan stepped outside her role in AI to speak out for armed interventions. Such a venture could cause division within the organization. These are the following issues we had results on from the ICM.

- Armed Intervention: passed
- Reproductive Rights: passed
- Resolution to re-dedicate ourselves to the Prisoner of Conscience: passed
- FSA: no vote

Myanmar Update

Jim discussed some events taking place in Myanmar and how oil prices are making things worse there, causing malnutrition and poverty. Many projects are dependent on oil companies. Jim also noted that Japan is not using diplomacy to help Myanmar and make it difficult to get money to build state projects such as dams and roads.

It seems like there are more cabinet changes happening in Myanmar. The Minister of Education and Agriculture had been ousted. This may not be a big blow, but speaks of the instability in the region. It was also noted that an action file in which a 3-year-old girl (yes, 3 years old) had been arrested

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August Meeting Minutes

Group #596 Huntington Beach

It was our first meeting with Vincent Mapili as our new group leader and he did a great job!

Guantanamo Report

We spent some time writing actions for the Summer Postcard Action and letters to President Bush on Guantanamo detainees. Additionally we read an Amnesty Report: *Guantanamo: Trusting the Executive, Prolonging the Injustice*. This was followed by a discussion about international laws and treaties and just how the U.S. has gotten around the Geneva Convention, etc.

Group Reorganization

We discussed the re-organization of the group and our upcoming focus. The group's new leadership committee is:

Vincent Mapili, Group Leader
Darcie Olson, Secretary
Sarah Bennett-Keller, Treasurer
Cheri Heirbaum, Special Projects (Webpage)
Steve Wicke, December 10th Human Rights Day Event

Group Email and Newsletter

The group has a brand new email: amnesty596@gmail.com. Please feel free to contact us at this email. All of us have access to this email and so you should receive a speedy response.

We are also trying to shift as many members as possible from the hard copy newsletter to an email version. We will be emailing an electronic version of the newsletter out each month until the website is set up and then we will house the newsletters there and we will just send out a reminder and link to the website. We hope this will make it very convenient for everyone! We will still make a hard copy of the newsletter available upon request with a donation of \$10.

Upcoming Conferences

There was also discussion about the upcoming Regional Conference in San Francisco and the Annual General Meeting that will be held in Portland, Oregon in spring 2006. At the regional conference in San Francisco Vincent Mapili and Kristeen Khwaja will be helping to organize an AIDs and Human Rights Workshop (with a focus on Africa). Kristeen and Vincent will be emceeding the workshop and have solicited two wonderful speakers to facilitate the discussion. They will run hands-on exercises about the human rights issues on the continent of Africa, how this is contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS, and actions we can take to make a difference. We hope that folks will come to the regional and show your support for our Orange County Amnesty members. More information about their workshop will follow.

Next Month's Meeting

Our discussion topic at our next meeting will be Culture and the Universality of Human Rights. For background, consult the article *Human Rights as Cultural Practice: An Anthropological Critique* online at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v018/18.2preis.html.

This article was published by Ann-Belinda S. Preis, an Assistant Research Professor at the Institute of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. Basically, this month's discussion is aimed at unraveling the impasse between culture and human rights. While reading this article, we must try to find out whether:

1. Human rights are universal and under what criteria do these rights qualify to become universal?
2. Is the "universality" of human rights applicable to all cultures?
3. The enforcement of human rights is hampered by culture and in what ways?
4. What is the "traditional African societies'" view on human rights?
5. What conclusions can you make from reading this article?

Long Beach Minutes

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along with her ill mother. The daughter was released when it was pointed out to officials what had happened. Good news on a bad situation.

Good News

We also discussed other good news, including a letter some of us had received from the mother of Army Lieutenant Miguel Orlando Munoz Guzman, to whom we had written. Her son is in the military and is missing and her family is being harassed. Thank you for those who wrote a card last December/January. It's proof again that letters have a deep impact.

The concert ladies who have been organizing tabling opportunities at concerts nationwide reported having collected 10,000 signatures at the R.E.M. tour for Aang San Suu Kyi and 7,000 for other Myanmar POCs.

Walk for Hope

Once again Amnesty International will be tabling at the wonderful Walk for Hope put on by Be The Cause. The Walk for Hope will take place September 24 at El Dorado East Regional Park, 7550 E. Spring Street, in Long Beach. We will need volunteers in the booth from 9 AM-1:30 PM. Event parking is \$5. Please see www.bethecause.org/walk/ for more information about the event. To volunteer, either let your group leader know, or contact Norma Edwards at beachykeeno@yahoo.com or (562) 425-4353.

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!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Return to:

Amnesty International
Group 596
P.O. Box 5368
Huntington Beach, CA 92615

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

September

20 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.

21 Wednesday 7:00 PM

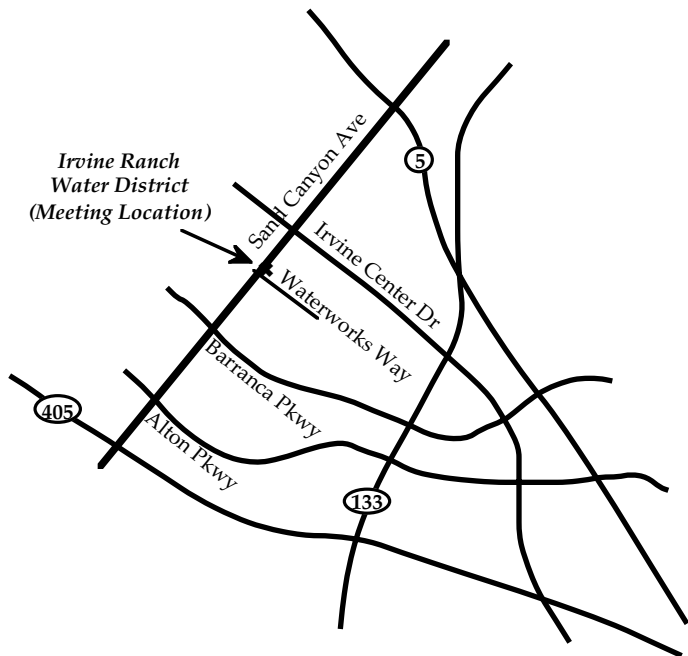
Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

26 Monday 7:00 PM

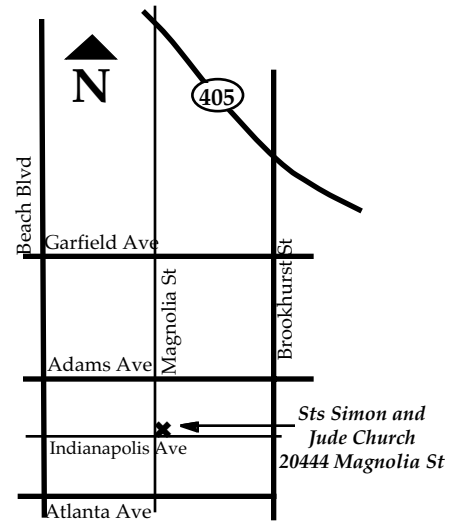
Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. Group #596 meets the last Monday of each month.

27 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



Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting Location

Amnesty International
Group 596
P.O. Box 5368
Huntington Beach, CA 92615