



# Amnesty International

Orange County

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

April 2006

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## USA: Front Companies Used in Secret Flights to Torture and “Disappearance”

*This article is taken from an April 5, 2006 AIUSA press release.*

Amnesty International today released a new report which exposes a covert operation whereby people have been arrested or abducted, transferred and held in secret or handed over to countries where they have faced torture and other ill-treatment. The report describes how the CIA has used private aircraft operators and front companies to preserve the secrecy of “rendition” flights.

*Below the radar: Secret flights to torture and ‘disappearance’,* shows that the CIA has exploited aviation practices that would otherwise require their flights to be declared to aviation authorities. The report lists dozens of destinations around the world where planes associated with “rendition” flights have landed and taken off—and lists private airlines with permission to land at US military bases worldwide.

Amnesty International has records of nearly 1,000 flights directly linked to the CIA, most of which have used European airspace; these are flights by planes that appear to have been permanently operated by the CIA through front companies. In a second category, there are records of some 600 other flights made by planes confirmed as having been used at least temporarily by the CIA.

The report details the destinations and ownership of specific aircraft linked to people interviewed by Amnesty International who have been transferred illegally. For example one particular aircraft is known to have made over 100 stops in Guantánamo Bay. Another took Abu Omar to Egypt from Germany after he was kidnapped in Italy. Its owners have admitted leasing the plane to the CIA, but have said it is not used exclusively by the agency. There are 488 relevant recorded landings or take-offs between February 2001 and July 2005.

“The US Administration has tried to circumvent the ban on torture and other ill-treatment in many ways. The latest evidence shows how the Administration is manipulating commercial arrangements in order to be able to transfer people in violation of international law. It demonstrates the length to which the US government will go to conceal these abductions,” said Amnesty International Secretary General, Irene Khan.

The report uncovers part of the mystery surrounding the practice of renditions. Secrecy surrounding rendition operations means it is impossible to know how many people have been arrested or abducted, transferred across borders, held in secret detention or tortured in the ‘war on terror’. Information from governments themselves indicates that numbers are likely to be in the hundreds.

Rendition is the illegal transfer of people from one country to another in ways that bypass all judicial and administrative oversight. The aim of rendition in the “war on terror” is usually to facilitate interrogation of suspects outside the reach of the law.

“Renditions are not just about transporting terror suspects from one place to another without red tape. The term sanitises the multiple layers of human rights violations involved,” said Ms. Khan. “Most victims of rendition were arrested and detained illegally in the first place. Many were abducted, denied access to any legal process and have subsequently ‘disappeared.’ All of those interviewed by Amnesty International described being tortured or otherwise ill-treated. The report shows not just how arrest and extradition procedures have been ignored, the ban on torture and other ill-treatment has been disregarded, but also how aviation practices have been undermined: in essence the rule of law has been put aside.”

Amnesty cautioned that states that tolerate these flights landing on their territory and companies that carry them out, may find themselves complicit in serious human rights abuses. The organization called for the transfer of any detainee to other countries to take place with proper safeguards, including judicial oversight, and the use of official aircraft.

“All governments must prevent, investigate and prosecute those responsible for secret detention and rendition,” declared Ms. Khan.

Amnesty International called on the aviation sector to take specific and immediate action to ensure that aviation companies do not lease their aircraft in circumstances in which they may be used in renditions. The onus is on companies to ensure that they are aware of the end use of any aircraft they lease or operate and that they do not facilitate human rights violations.

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### The AC Corner

*From Cathleen Kilgallen, Area Coordinator for the Orange County and Long Beach groups*

I will be attending the AGM in Portland later this month and wanted to ask if there’s anything I can do for you while I’m there. Let me know if there are any workshops or issue areas that you’re particularly interested in so that I can report back upon my return.

We’re also making progress on the website, so if you have pictures or ideas you’d like to share, feel free to contact me or Jacques. Thanks for all your hard work at the Mini-Conference! It was great to see so many of you there.

## From the Executive Director Thoughts On A "Purpose-Driven Life"

This is the last of more than one hundred of these columns that I have written in my twelve years at Amnesty. By the time you read this, I will have only a few days left in my tenure. As you can imagine, these last few weeks have been filled with ambivalent feelings for me.

I have absolutely no doubt that my decision four years ago to step down at this point in my tenure was exactly the right one for me and for Amnesty. Organizations need new vision and new energy and my successor, Larry Cox, will supply those in abundance. I could not be more pleased with his selection. And I need the challenge of setting out on what will probably be one last professional journey before I retire and I need not to travel 70 percent of the time before I drop dead in the Kansas City Airport. I expect to be associated during this coming year with one or more think tanks and/or universities while I consider my next remunerative occupation. Many people have expressed wonderment that I resigned one job before having another in hand (or maybe wonderment is too charitable a word for what they really think) and maybe a year from now I'll agree it was a damn foolish thing to do. But for now I'm able to remain relatively non-anxious about the future five days out of seven.

Moreover, I'm immensely proud of all that we have accomplished together at Amnesty during these twelve years.

By almost all measures, Amnesty International USA is stronger today than it was in 1994 and will be stronger still a decade from now. I'm particularly grateful to my staff colleagues for their competence, support and (usually!) kindness and delighted to be departing before I'm asked to!

So it is the right time to leave but I cannot help but mourn the loss of the community of which I have been so rewarded to be a part and the "purpose-driven life" that Amnesty provides us all and the incomparable platform I've been privileged to occupy. There's nothing quite like visiting with high school or college students, as I've done once or twice a month, and seeing the idealism and devotion they display; nothing like sticking it to some talk show pundit who despises everything we stand for; and nothing like asking the Secretary of State, face to face, to reconsider U.S. policy. I'm sometimes asked why I don't run for Congress but the truth is that the head of Amnesty International USA has a lot louder voice and a lot more influence on public affairs than most back-benchers in the House. So I'll miss all that and I'll miss so many of you.

All that remains, then, is to think about my legacy, even though it's far too late to do anything about it. In New Guinea the Asmat people keep the skulls of their deceased ancestors on their mantels—a practice about which the anthropologist Lyall Watson once wryly said, "It is difficult to convince someone who holds his grandmother's head in a place of honor (keeping her informed of all the latest gossip, introducing her to the new children, and even using her skull as a pillow) that this reverence is wrong and that the Christian thing to do is to let the old lady rot in some swampy grave." Well, I do hope I'll be able to keep up with the gossip and the children but, as for

a pillow, you'll probably prefer a more downy kind.

Maybe a better image comes from a true story of an immigrant from Norway who, for one reason or another, was never able to gain U.S. citizenship, though she lived for forty five years with her common law husband on a farm in Minnesota. When Inge died, her husband and two grown children resisted the notion of registering her death with a government that had never recognized her in life for she was a person who was truly known only to those who loved her. So late one night they took her body out into the middle of the pasture, buried her deep in the good soil, and then covered her grave with a truck full of manure and two bags of fertilizer. And ever afterwards there was one spot in the wheat field where the wheat grew especially green and tall and golden—Olga's small contribution to a more refulgent world.

No jokes now about the fertilizer! Just a heart full of gratitude for the opportunity you have given me to make my small contribution to a more green and radiant world.

William Schulz  
Executive Director

## U.S. Rights Report Has Major Omission

Amnesty International responded to the U.S. State Department's annual release of its report on human rights practices worldwide in March, stating that while the report does provide a comprehensive review of the global situation, it had one glaring omission—a section focusing on the United States' own human right record. The Bush Administration's practice of transferring detainees in the 'war on terror' to countries cited by the State Department for their appalling human rights records actually turns the report into a manual for the outsourcing of torture, AI argued.

"The United States Government considers itself a moral leader on human rights issues, but its record of indefinite and arbitrary detentions, secret 'black sites' and outsourced torture in the 'war on terror' turns it from leader to human rights violator," said AIUSA Executive Director William F. Schulz.

According to Amnesty International's own analysis, the United States is believed to have transferred, "rendered" or disappeared over a hundred detainees in the 'war on terror' to countries that the State Department report cites for torture or ill-treatment. Some detainees are believed to be held in a labyrinth of secret prisons around the globe run by the United States Government with the consent of host regimes that have questionable human rights records.

For example, while the State Department report states that "There were numerous, credible reports that security forces tortured and mistreated prisoners and detainees" in Egypt, Amnesty International has reported that the U.S. Government rendered Mamdouh Habib, an Australian national, to Egypt for six months before transferring him to the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay. Mr. Habib reported that during his detention he was subjected to severe torture, including beatings, threats against his family and being put in a room filled with water, requiring him to stand on his toes to keep from drowning. He was subsequently released and returned to Australia in February 2005.

## March Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### Letter-Writing Actions

The group sent a total of 48 letters. These included letters to the founders of Yahoo! Inc. regarding the case of Shi Tao, a Chinese journalist sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for sending information about a Communist Party decision through his Yahoo email account to a website in the United States. Yahoo assisted Chinese authorities to identify and arrest Shi Tao. Yahoo officials claim that staying in China will in the long run benefit human rights.

#### Todd Anglin Home for Children

The group donated \$50 to the Todd Anglin Home for Children, an orphanage in Nicaragua. Todd was a group member who died at the age of 28 in a motorcycle accident in April 2005. His mother Marie Anglin established the home as a memorial to her son to carry on his legacy of caring.

There will be a fundraiser, "Moonlight, Merlot & Monet: An Art Auction Gala Fund Raiser," on Saturday, April 29, at Bridges at Hidden Valley, 8800 Irvine Center Drive, behind Wild Rivers Water Park, adjacent to Verizon Amphitheater. Admission is \$25 per person, \$40 per couple. Preview is at 6:00 PM with the auction at 7:00 PM. For more information, contact Marie Anglin at (714) 539-6863.

#### Lucile Hartman

Lucile Hartman, wife of David Hartman, one of the Orange group's founding members, passed away on March 29. She had suffered a major stroke in January. Lucile was herself extremely active in the United Nations Association in Orange County.

#### Annual General Meeting

AIUSA's Annual General Meeting is being held in Portland, Oregon, April 28-30. The group discussed one of the resolutions that will be voted on at the meeting dealing with sexual and reproductive rights of women.

#### Artists Village Tabling

The group is set to table on Saturday, June 3, at the Santa Ana Artists' Walk, held the first Saturday of each month.

#### More News

- Cathleen Kilgallen, Orange County/Long Beach Area Coordinator, mentioned that she recently spoke to someone at Chapman University who indicated there might be some upcoming opportunities to table there.
- The group discussed showing the film *Nobility*, perhaps as a fundraiser. The film features Nobel Prize winners discussing the world's most pressing problems.

## March Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### Attendees

Lindsay Canto, Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Joan Jack, Cathleen Kilgallen, Bobbi Kendig, Shean McMahon, Steve Wicke

#### Website News

Cathleen brought us news about the efforts to revamp the Long Beach/Orange County-area Amnesty website. A small group of dedicated volunteers is helping to make this happen. One of the nice features we'll have when it's done is the ability to update the events page ourselves, without having to depend on a webmaster (it will be accessed with a password).

#### Group News

- The group was happy to welcome Joan and Lindsay to the group and hope to see them back in the future. Lindsay expressed interest in the Women's Campaign.
- Kevin reported we have \$400 in our treasury, which is good. But we haven't contributed to national in a while. The group will look into this.
- Mary Kay reported that Naomi Steinfeld would soon be leaving for her volunteer year in Sri Lanka. She will be working for VSO (Volunteer Services Overseas) Canada. We are very proud of Naomi and wish her well, though we'll miss her and her knowledge of so many countries (China in particular) at our meetings. If you would like to support Naomi's efforts and the worthy organization she's volunteering for, go to <http://www.vsocanada.ca/display.aspx?pid=499&cid=608>.
- Norma was very distracted and forgot to write how many letters we sent (LOTS) or take notes about Steve's presentation on the War on Terror Campaign. More next time!

#### 3,000 Members in 30 Days

Amnesty International is currently in the midst of a membership drive. Please support the organization by joining if you haven't already. The annual membership dues of \$25 have not been raised in years and are kept low to encourage strength in numbers. Of course, you don't have to be an official member to help out the cause, attend meetings, write letters, etc.! Also, keep in mind we all have friends and relatives who support Amnesty but don't want to get involved. Encourage them to join to show their support. The main page of Amnesty USA (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/>) has a link where you can join.

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 178  
 P.O. Box 53682  
 Irvine, CA 92618

**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

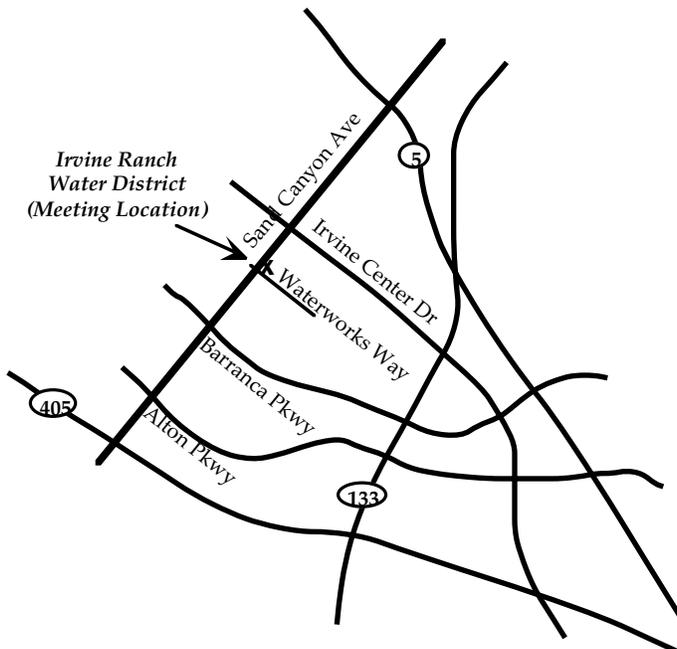
## April

18 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 Kevin Gaffney at [xhusker@aol.com](mailto:xhusker@aol.com).

19 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.



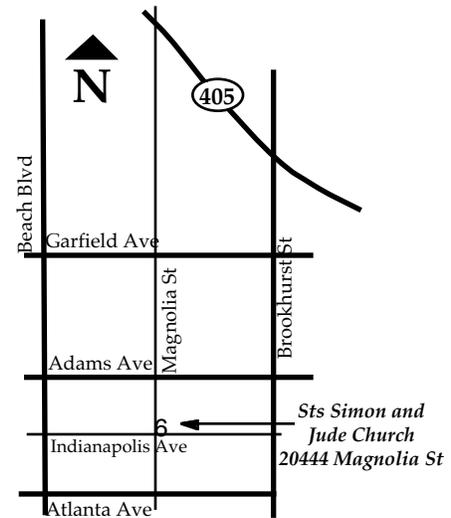
Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

24 Monday 7:00 PM

**Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting** at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. See details on the website <http://www.hbamnesty.com/main.htm>.

25 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 Glen Nielsen at [nielsen-electric@cox.net](mailto:nielsen-electric@cox.net).



Group #596 Huntington Beach Location

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