



# Amnesty International

Orange County

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

February 2007

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## Renditions in the EU: Fact, not Fiction

*This article is taken from a February 5 AIUSA press release.*

Prosecution authorities in EU countries are issuing arrest warrants and asking for the indictment of individuals suspected of involvement in the US led programme of “rendition”; an unlawful practice in which numerous men have been illegally detained and secretly flown to third countries, where they have suffered additional crimes including torture and enforced disappearance. It is now time for the European Union and European governments to admit that renditions in the EU are fact—not fiction, and to do all in their power to hold to account those responsible for human rights violations in the context of renditions.

With just over a week left until the European Parliament votes on the Report on the alleged use of European countries by the CIA for the transportation and illegal detention of prisoners, Amnesty International asks MEPs to send an unequivocal signal: that EU governments must acknowledge their responsibility in the violations that have taken place and conduct independent and impartial investigations domestically.

### **Khaled el-Masri: Arrest Warrants Issued**

On January 31, 13 arrest warrants were issued for suspected CIA operatives, reportedly involved in the abduction and rendition of Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen who was abducted from Macedonia in December 2003 and eventually flown to Afghanistan. There he was held incommunicado in solitary confinement for four months and allegedly subjected to ill-treatment during interrogation. Amnesty International—which first wrote to the CIA and other US authorities in August 2004 raising Khaled el-Masri's case, but without response—welcomes this move towards holding accountable those suspected of involvement in Khaled el-Masri's abduction and rendition. The organization calls on the US and German authorities to co-operate fully with investigations by German prosecutors into the involvement of US and German officials in the rendition of Khaled el-Masri.

### **Abu Omar: Extradition Requests Issued**

In December, Italian prosecutors asked for the indictment of 26 US citizens, 25 of whom are suspected CIA operatives reportedly involved in the abduction and rendition of Abu Omar, a man who was abducted from Milan in 2003 and flown to Egypt, where he remains in detention. Abu Omar alleges that he has been tortured in detention in Egypt, including being hung upside down and having electric shocks applied to his testicles.

Prosecutors also asked to indict nine Italian citizens, primarily operatives of the Italian security service, SISMI. In July

2006, prosecutors also issued extradition requests for 26 US citizens; however, the Italian government has failed to forward these requests to the US authorities. While Amnesty International welcomes developments towards holding both Italian and non-Italian citizens accountable for the abduction and rendition of Abu Omar, it calls on the Italian authorities to forward the extradition requests for the 26 US citizens. The organization also calls on the US and Italian authorities to co-operate fully with investigations by Italian prosecutors into the rendition of Abu Omar.

European Union Member States cannot continue to deny their responsibility. They must ensure that victims of renditions are provided prompt and adequate reparation—including restitution, rehabilitation and fair and adequate financial compensation. All Member States must put in place measures to prevent renditions taking place in the future.

Amnesty International therefore calls on EU Member States to:

- Not transfer anyone to the custody of the agents of another state, or facilitate such transfers, unless the transfer is carried out under judicial supervision and in line with international standards;
- Ensure that no one is arbitrarily detained, secretly or otherwise, on their territory or any territory under their jurisdiction;
- Initiate and continue judicial and parliamentary investigations and co-operate fully with them, including by providing them with access to all relevant people and information;
- Refuse access to airspace and airfields of aircraft operators whose planes have been implicated in rendition flights if detailed information is not provided as to the status, destination and legal basis of each passenger;
- Ensure that the fate and whereabouts of all victims of secret detention and rendition are established and provide them with prompt and adequate reparation.

Amnesty International calls on the European Council to:

- Affirm unequivocally that the practice of “rendition” is unacceptable and violates human rights, as well as the founding values of the European Union;
- Encourage the US authorities to disclose the location and identities of all persons who have been or are detained as part of the renditions programme and to cooperate fully with all investigations into renditions.

## January Meeting Minutes

### Group #178 Long Beach

#### **Attendees**

Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Mike Farris, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Bobbi Kendig, Genevieve McClain, Shean McMahan, Glen Nielsen, Jim Roberts, Linda Veazey, Steve Wicke

#### **Strategic Plan/Amnesty Changes**

The group spent some time discussing new directions Amnesty might take following the work of a consulting firm (La Piana and Associates) with the organization. Recommendations included in a strategic plan include streamlining by consolidating or eliminating committees, changing management structure, and providing a slate of candidates to run for the board. Jim encouraged everyone to check out the proposal and voice opinions on the plan to the board and the Amnesty committee in charge of the plan (Strategic Planning Committee).

#### **War on Terror Campaign**

Steve told us that eight U.S. attorneys have been fired (or asked to resign: [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/politics/2003561402\\_webmckay07.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/politics/2003561402_webmckay07.html)). No explanations have been given but it has been said that under the Patriot Act, new attorneys can be appointed without hearings or review. Steve promised to try to find us an action for the next meeting (not about the attorneys but in regards to our campaign). It's hard not to feel powerless lately, but we need to stand up for human rights, which perhaps we in the U.S. have taken for granted.

#### **Myanmar in the News**

Jim told us that there have been five releases of former 1988 student uprising prisoners. No word on whether our prisoner of conscience, Ye Htut, was released. His term expired in 2002, but he was not released then, probably because he did not sign a promise to "be good" and not a "troublemaker" anymore.

The United Nations Security Council vetoed a resolution against Myanmar. China and Russia blocked the Security Council from demanding an end to political repression and human rights violations in military-ruled Myanmar, rejecting a resolution proposed by the United States. (South Africa, in its first vote, joined China and Russia.) [http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2007/01/13/china\\_russia\\_veto\\_myanmar\\_resolution/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2007/01/13/china_russia_veto_myanmar_resolution/).

#### **Group News**

The group produced scads of letters, as per usual, but Norma forgot to count them up before she mailed them. Note to everyone: It was the president of Turkmenistan ("oddball dictator," as one article called him) who died, so I decided not to send those letters so as not to insult the new government! Sorry for all that extra writing. (See the obituary at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6199021.stm>.) As for the letters to Gov. Perry of Texas, those were good to go because the person on death row we wrote for is not yet scheduled for execution (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon/pdf/USAPanetti.pdf>).

## Southern California Mini-Conference

The 6th Southern California Amnesty Mini-Conference will be held on Saturday, March 31, at the California State University, Fullerton campus. The conference will run all day and will feature invited speakers, workshop, and caucuses.

Conference organizer Harmon Tipton sends this message: "We're on our way with the Mini-Conference. I do need some help and I'm wondering if anyone has some time/ideas for me. We're in the process right now of putting together workshops and filling speaker slots and I need ideas and help contacting people. If any of you can step in and take the lead with contacting and confirming for a few of the workshops that would be lovely. As it stands I have a few ideas, but only a couple slots confirmed."

If there are any workshops you would like to see or any you would like to present or you can help out in other ways, please contact either Harmon at [harmonysong@earthlink.net](mailto:harmonysong@earthlink.net) or Jacques Kilchoer at [jacques.kilchoer@aiusaoc.org](mailto:jacques.kilchoer@aiusaoc.org).

## Good News! Claude Yabanda Released!

Amnesty International is pleased to report that Claude Yabanda was released from prison in December 2006. He has left the Central African Republic and is now living in Europe. Thank you to all who sent Claude messages of support during his imprisonment. No further action is required.

#### **Background**

Claude Yabanda, a senior member of an opposition political party called the Patriotic Front for Progress, has been detained since April 2006 on account of his peaceful political activities. Mr. Yabanda was arrested on April 29, 2006 in the capital, Bangui, and accused of endangering the internal security of the state, a charge which carries the death penalty in the Central African Republic (CAR). On arrival at Ngaragba central prison, guards forcibly shaved his head with a used razor blade, putting him at risk of infections such as HIV. The prison is overcrowded, with poor sanitation and little food for prisoners. Medical treatment is available only if detainees or their families can pay for it.

Since February 2006 the CAR government has been cracking down on its opponents. Many have been arrested, especially those suspected of having links with leaders of armed political groups or the former government. Claude Yabanda's family has connections with members of the former government. The authorities have accused him of collaborating with armed groups trying to overthrow the current government. Amnesty International considers Claude Yabanda a prisoner of conscience and has called for his release.

## Holiday Card Action Update

In late October the Indonesian Government released three of six trade unionists featured in AIUSA's 2006 Holiday Card Action. Akhen Pane, Safrudin and Suyahman were freed on October 24, in conjunction with the Muslim holiday of Eid al Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan. While Amnesty International welcomed the releases, it continues to call for the release of the other imprisoned unionists: Robin Kimbi, Masri Sebayang, and Sruhas Towo.

## From the Executive Director

### A Tradition of Change

*This article is taken from the February 2007 AIUSA Connect.*

Amnesty International has always been about change—changing the way the world thinks about human rights, changing government practices and policies, changing for the better the lives of people whose rights are being denied. In this battle we have always been willing to change our techniques and strategies, our governance, even our mandate. We have seen change not as an end in itself but as a way of better helping those whose lives are at stake. Making our work more effective for those who suffer the most has been the driving force behind every change we’ve made; from the introduction in the 1970s of thematic campaigns and urgent actions, to our work in the 1980s on extrajudicial executions, to changing our mandate in the 1990s to include the rights of people oppressed because of sexual orientation, and more recently, our move from a mandate to a mission that includes economic and social rights. The debate on these changes—none of which came easily or without great concern and argument - has always been about how to make Amnesty International better equipped to save, protect and enhance the lives of human beings around the world.

And so it is now. At AIUSA we are now discussing a strategic plan that calls for dramatic changes in order to meet the growing and serious challenge, not only to the quality of human rights, but to the very idea of human rights; a challenge coming not just from tyrants far away—but this time right here at home from the government of the world’s most powerful democracy. Meeting this challenge, which goes right to the heart of all we have worked to achieve over the last half century, is at the center of all of our strategic planning discussions.

The answer given by the strategic plan is to greatly expand the number and the power of our volunteer activists. The plan calls for new structures and systems to empower activists to be, not just better AI leaders, but to be the human rights leaders in their communities, workplaces and schools across the country, building a mass movement for human rights. It also calls on us to find ways to utilize the expertise and experience of activists to better inform decisions of board and staff rather than allowing process, as sometimes happens, to impede good decision making.

Ella Baker once said, “Give light and people will find the way.” For over 45 years, thanks to our inspiring members and supporters, Amnesty has provided a strong light for the oppressed and forgotten. In order to continue to “give light” we must do everything in our power to focus our energy on

how best to combat the challenges of our time.

The strategic plan process has revealed a strong consensus that changes at Amnesty International USA are urgently needed. There will be - and there should and must be—a good debate and discussion on whether the changes proposed by this plan are the right ones, but in the end the goal has to be to strengthen the changes we need to make rather than to block them. For what is at stake is what has always been at stake—the very lives of people around the world who look to Amnesty International for hope and for help.

Larry Cox, Executive Director

## Condemn Shooting and Torture of Tibetan Refugees in China

On September 30, 2006 a group of approximately 70 unarmed Tibetans who were trying to flee China were shot at by the Chinese border control troops at Nangpa pass in the Himalayas. The Nangpa pass is a commonly used escape route for those fleeing China to Nepal. The shooting was witnessed by an international group of mountaineers who videotaped one person, a 17-year-old nun Kelsang Namtso, die at the scene and two others fall. At least 25 members of the group, 10 of whom were children, were taken into custody while the rest managed to escape to Nepal. According to one of the detainees who later managed to flee from Tibet, those detained were first taken to a detention centre in Dingri but were transferred to Shigatse after a few days. Altogether they were kept in custody for periods ranging from several days to several months, and some may still remain in custody. Parents of the children were allowed to collect them from detention for a fee between 100 yuan (US\$12) and 500 yuan (US\$60). In Shigatse, the younger children were assigned to do cleaning work and the older teenagers and adults were assigned to construction work.

To learn more about this case, read or print AIUSA’s full Urgent Action sheet at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/actioncenter/actions/action8021.pdf>

## AI Urges New Jersey to Heed Commission

Amnesty International reacted quickly to a New Jersey Commission report in early January that called on the state to abolish the death penalty. “The commission’s recommendation to abolish the death penalty is a welcome development,” said AIUSA Executive Director Larry Cox. “The arc of justice is bending toward eliminating this inherently flawed system. We now urge the New Jersey Legislature to end the death penalty once and for all. Amnesty International endorses the report’s finding that the death penalty does not help victims’ families.”

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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Group 178  
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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

## February

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

21 Wednesday 7:00 PM

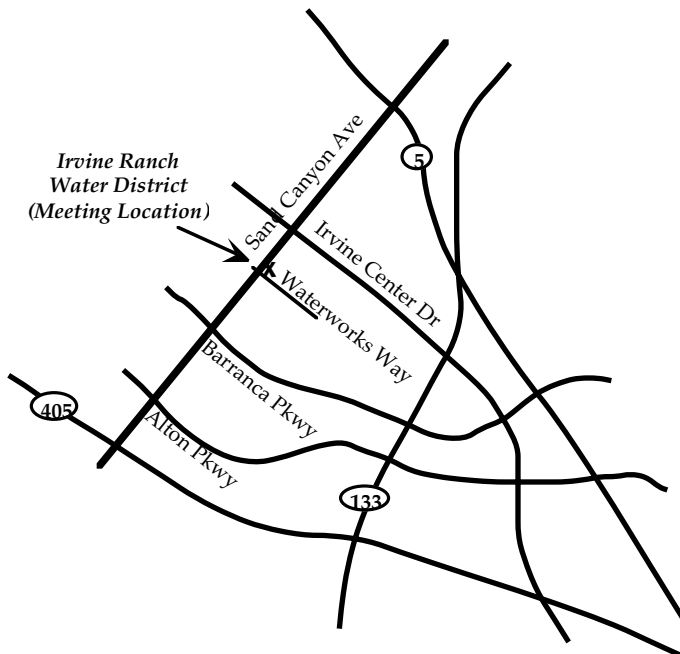
**Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting** at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

20 Monday 7:00 PM

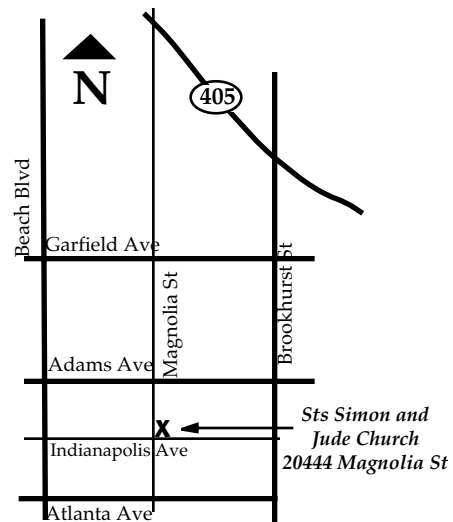
**Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting** at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. See details on the website <http://www.hbamnesty.com/main.htm>.

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



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location



Group #596 Huntington Beach Location

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