



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

June 2007

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Leading Human Rights Groups Name 39 CIA “Disappeared” Detainees

This article is taken from a June 7, 2007 press release.

In the most comprehensive accounting to date, six leading human rights organizations today published the names and details of 39 people who are believed to have been held in secret U.S. custody and whose current whereabouts remain unknown. The briefing paper also names relatives of suspects who were themselves detained in secret prisons, including children as young as seven.

In a related action, three of the groups filed a lawsuit in U.S. federal court under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) seeking the disclosure of information concerning “disappeared” detainees.

The 21-page briefing paper, *Off the Record: U.S. Responsibility for Enforced Disappearances in the “War on Terror,”* includes detailed information about four people named as “disappeared” prisoners for the first time. The full list of people includes nationals from countries including Egypt, Kenya, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, and Spain. They are believed to have been arrested in countries including Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan, and transferred to secret U.S. detention centers.

The list—drafted by Amnesty International, Cageprisoners, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of Law, Human Rights Watch, and Reprieve—draws together information from government and media sources, as well as from interviews with former prisoners and other witnesses.

Off the Record highlights aspects of the CIA detention program that the U.S. government has actively tried to conceal, such as the locations where prisoners may have been held, the mistreatment they endured, and the countries to which they may have been transferred.

It reveals how suspects’ relatives, including wives and children as young as seven, have been held in secret detention. In September 2002, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed’s two young sons, aged seven and nine, were arrested. According to eyewitnesses, the two were held in an adult detention center for at least four months while U.S. agents questioned the children about their father’s whereabouts. Similarly, when Tanzanian national Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani was seized in Gujarat, Pakistan, in July 2004, his Uzbek wife was detained with him.

The human rights groups are calling on the U.S. government to put a permanent end to the CIA’s secret detention and interrogation program, and to disclose the identities, fate, and whereabouts of all detainees currently or previously held at secret facilities operated or overseen by the U.S. government

as part of the “War on Terror.”

In a related action, Amnesty International USA, CCR and the International Human Rights Clinic of NYU School of Law today filed a lawsuit in U.S. federal court under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) seeking disclosure of information concerning “disappeared” detainees, including “ghost” and unregistered prisoners. AIUSA, CCR and the NYU International Human Rights Clinic filed FOIA requests with several U.S. government agencies, including the Departments of Justice and Defense, and the CIA. These FOIA requests sought information about individuals who are—or have been—held by, or with the involvement of, the U.S. government, where there is no public record of the detentions. Though a few departments produced documents containing little relevant information, no agency provided a list of secretly-held detainees or an assessment of the legality of the secret program.

The documents that the groups are seeking are known to exist. President Bush publicly acknowledged the existence of CIA-operated secret prisons in September 2006; 14 detainees from these facilities were transferred to Guantánamo, and the U.S. Department of Justice has issued an analysis concluding that the secret detention program is legal.

Yet information about the location of the prisons, identity of the prisoners, and the types of interrogation methods used, has never been publicly revealed. This prevents scrutiny by the public or the courts, and leaves detainees vulnerable to abuses that include torture and other ill-treatment.

The secrecy surrounding the program also means that no one outside the U.S. government knows exactly how many prisoners have been detained and how many remain “disappeared.” The April 2007 transfer of Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi from CIA custody to Guantánamo indicates that the program continues to operate, although some prisoners may have been transferred to prisons in other countries, possibly as a form of proxy detention. *Off the Record* indicates that some missing detainees may have been moved to countries where they face the risk of torture and where they continue to be held secretly, without charge or trial.

Interviews with prisoners who have been released from secret CIA prisons indicate that low-level detainees have frequently been arrested far from any battlefield, and held in isolation for years without legal recourse or contact with their families or outside agencies. Those who have been released have received no acknowledgment of their detention or any legal or financial redress.

All Eyes on Darfur: AI's Satellite Project Launches

Amnesty International's "Eyes on Darfur" micro website launched on June 1. Eyes on Darfur, a grant-funded project of AIUSA's Crisis Prevention and Response Unit, utilizes satellite imagery and other geospatial technologies to achieve a 360 degree, and near real-time, picture of events on the ground in the Darfur Region. View it at <http://www.eyesondarfur.org>.

May Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Attendees

Amol Aggarwal, Susanne Arriaza, Jeannine Christensen, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Christa Solheid, Ernie Solheid.

A warm welcome to Amol and Susanne, attending their first group meeting!

Letters

The group sent a total of 46 letters, including letters to Myanmar on behalf of Ma Khin Khin Leh, a teacher sentenced to life imprisonment in December 1999 for peacefully protesting government policies; to Iran on behalf of a group of women activists imprisoned for calling for the reform of legislation discriminating against women; to China regarding Ye Grozhu, imprisoned for trying to organize a demonstration in Beijing protesting evictions for construction for the Olympic Games to be held there; to Rep. David Obey regarding violence against native American women; and to Senators Feinstein and Boxer regarding the Habeas Corpus Restoration Act.

Abortion Rights

Deidre reported that the International Council Meeting next month will be examining the abortion issue in connection with protecting women's access to abortion in cases of rape and incest.

Other News

Jeannine discussed the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act, a bill pending in the U.S. Senate, which seeks to prevent the U.S. using or exporting cluster bombs with high dud rates and from using such weapons in civilian-populated areas.

Two Indonesian prisoners of conscience recently featured as part of AIUSA's Holiday Card Action have written expressing their astonishment and thanks after receiving scores of cards of support from people, including schoolchildren, from all over the United States and elsewhere. The two trade unionists, who remain in prison, recently sent the following message to Amnesty International:

"We have received so many postcards which have really given us strength, but there is no way that we can reply to them all. It's so important to us to say thank you so much to everyone for all the care and support you've given us. We feel so much in debt to you all but only God can repay you all what you have done for us, and may he bless you all."

Deidre and Kevin also talked about the upcoming AIUSA Leadership Summit, scheduled for August 10-12 at Denver University in Denver, Colorado.

May Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Kevin Gaffney, Jim Roberts, Linda Veazey, Steve Wicke

2007 Leadership Summit: August 10-12, Denver University, Denver, Colorado

Kevin told us about the upcoming Leadership Summit for training new and "seasoned" members. Kevin and Deidre, who have been volunteering as trainers for years, are interested in going, and the group talked about supporting them in this. Also, if anyone else thinks they might be interested or would like more information, contact Kathy in the local office: kbrown@aiusa.org.

ChChChChChanges

The group talked about Larry's (Cox, our Executive Director) announcement of a new Amnesty structure. Some departments in New York will be eliminated or folded into other departments, and a new org chart will be in place. Some employees will be let go. Amnesty has repeatedly asked for feedback throughout the process of coming up with a new strategic plan. Keep up to date in the members' section of amnestyusa.org.

Guantánamo Radio Program

Linda recommended checking out the "Habeas Schmabeas 2007" episode of This American Life [one of my all-time favorite radio programs-Norma]. If you are not already podcasting this show, you can buy this episode for 95 cents from the iTunes store or download it for free for a limited time at http://www.thisamericanlife.com/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=331.

Extracurricular Summer Fun and Business!

The group is due for a planning session, and Kevin suggested we combine our planning with a summer outing to a pub. (Some would think that a pub and planning don't mix, but apparently Long Beach has a long tradition of this.) Kevin will look for a suitable location that is not too loud and crazy. This will probably take place on a Sunday in July. A date will be picked and announced at the June meeting.

What does a well-structured group also need? Money! (Especially with the new postal increase: ouch!) In that vein, Norma brought up the idea of coming to her house to make cards to sell at the regional conference. Linda was all over the idea (and actually has some skill at making things) and assured Norma that it could be fun and make some money as well. We will probably schedule this activity for August at Norma's house. More details to come.

- Thank you to Linda for agreeing to host the meeting in June, when Norma will be out of town.
- The May meeting was small but productive, however, without our unofficial stamper/counter Deidre present, the letters went uncounted as Norma totally forgot to do so at the post office.

May Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

New Members and Visitors

We were happy to meet Dean Inada who is a committed activist in Orange County. Kevin Gaffney and Deidre Jackson, local AI activists, honoured us with their presence at our new meeting place.

West Africa

Jacques spoke on the death penalty in Guinea. In the case of the 23 prisoners on death row held in Kindia and Conakry, all the death sentences were passed in the last 6 years, and almost half in 2006, showing an increase in sentencing. Some of these trials did not meet international fair trial standards and some prisoners may have confessed under torture. In addition one child is among those sentenced to death. Guinea has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child that prohibits use of the death penalty on children. We are asking Guinea to adopt a moratorium on executions, to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and to abolish the death penalty.

Uganda

We have invited Dr. Ochan Otim (see his website <http://www.friendsforpeaceinafrica.org>) to speak at an upcoming meeting about the severe human rights crisis in Northern Uganda that has been ongoing for two decades. This is the same presentation that was made at the AI southern California mini-conference in March 2007. He is tentatively scheduled for one of our upcoming meetings in the next three months.

Membership Issues

To promote our group at our new meeting location, the Irvine United Congregational Church, we will try to have our meetings mentioned in the church newsletter announcement sheet, and on the church bulletin board.

Guest Kevin Gaffney suggested an automated e-mail reminder to regular group members about our meetings. This will be put in effect starting in June 2007. Also Glen Nielsen suggested a telephone reminder for the regular members that do not use e-mail.

Announcements

Kathy Smith from San Diego asked us to remind local groups of the Friends for Peace in Africa International Peace Conference in San Diego, Saturday and Sunday 30 June & 1 July 2007. See <http://www.friendsforpeaceinafrica.org> for more details.

AI Says "Politics of Fear" Creating a Dangerously Divided World

This article is taken from the June 2007 AIUSA Connect.

Powerful governments and armed groups are deliberately fomenting fear to erode human rights and to create an increasingly polarized and dangerous world, said Amnesty International as it launched its annual assessment of human rights, *Amnesty International Report 2007*, worldwide on May 23.

"Through short sighted, fear-mongering and divisive policies, governments are undermining the rule of law and human rights, feeding racism and xenophobia, dividing communities, intensifying inequalities and sowing the seeds for more violence and conflict," said Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan. "The politics of fear is fuelling a downward spiral of human rights abuse in which no right is sacrosanct and no person safe."

Scarred by distrust and division, the international community was too often impotent or weak-willed in the face of major human rights crises in 2006, whether in forgotten conflicts like Chechnya, Colombia and Sri Lanka or high profiles ones in the Middle East. The UN took weeks to muster the will to call for a ceasefire in the conflict in Lebanon in which approximately 1,200 civilians lost their lives.

"Darfur is a bleeding wound on the world conscience. The UN Security Council is hampered by distrust and double dealing of its most powerful members. The Sudanese Government is running rings around the UN. Meanwhile 200,000 people have died, more than ten times that number have been displaced, and militia attacks are now spreading to Chad and the Central African Republic," said Khan.

Five years after 9/11, new evidence came to light in 2006 of the way in which the U.S. administration treated the world as one giant battlefield for its 'war on terror', kidnapping, arresting, arbitrarily detaining, torturing and transferring suspects from one secret prison to another across the world with impunity, in what the United States termed 'extraordinary renditions.'

Amnesty International called on governments to reject the politics of fear and invest in human rights institutions and the rule of law at the national and international level.

The U.S. Government predictably dismissed the AI report as biased. "It's pretty clear that Amnesty International thought that we make a convenient ideological punching ball. And that is something that is not, unfortunately, new," said Tom Casey, a State Department spokesman. "I think if you look at the report, unfortunately, it reads more like a political document than an honest review of human rights around the world," Casey said.

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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 P.O. Box 17186
 Irvine, CA 92623-1718

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

June

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 Kevin Gaffney at xhuskr@aol.com.

20 Wednesday 7:00 PM

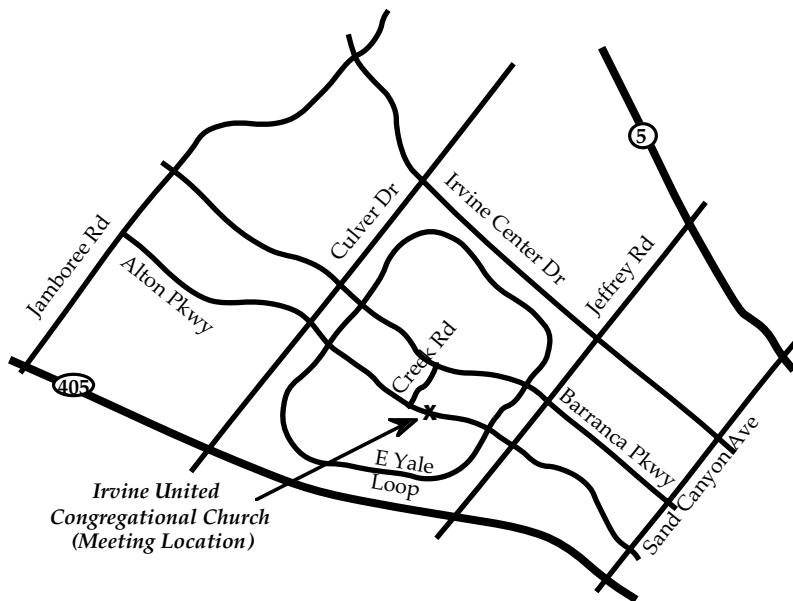
Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00-7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

25 Monday 7:00 PM

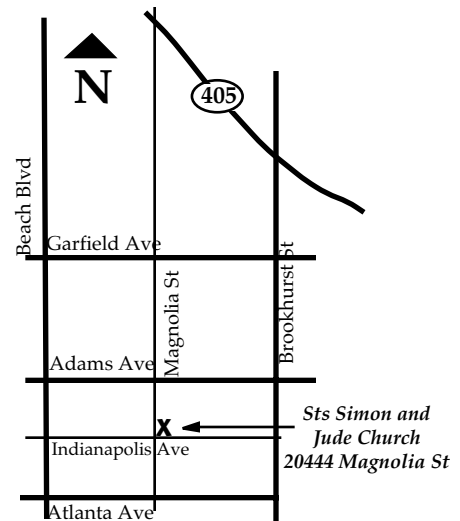
Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. For more information, email c_olson@onebox.com.

28 Thursday 7:00 PM

Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine. **Please note the new meeting location and day!** See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Glen Nielsen at nielsenelectric@cox.net.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location



Group #596 Huntington Beach Location

Amnesty International
Group 178
P.O. Box 17186
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