



# Amnesty International

Orange County

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

September 2007

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## AI Charges China's Human Rights Record Risks Blighting Olympics Legacy

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

With one year to go before the Summer Olympics open in Beijing August 8, 2008 Amnesty International said time is running out for the Chinese Government to fulfill its promise to promote human rights as part of the Olympics legacy. In August Amnesty International released a new progress report: *China: The Olympics Countdown—One Year Left to Fulfill Human Rights Promises*, which focuses on four key areas of human rights relating to the Olympics: death penalty, detention without trial, human rights activists and media freedom.

“Unless the Chinese authorities take urgent measures to stop human rights violations over the coming year, they risk tarnishing the image of China and the legacy of the Beijing Olympics,” said Irene Khan, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

Amnesty International members and other activists gathered in front of the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC on August 8 to call on Chinese officials to improve their human rights record. China had agreed to improve its human rights record as a condition to receiving the bid.

The new report looks at China’s progress toward its promised human rights improvements ahead of the Games. Amnesty International found that several Beijing-based activists continue to face ‘house arrest’ and tight police surveillance, while some activists in other parts of China are encountering heightened patterns of abuse as attention is focused on Beijing in the run-up to the Olympics. The briefing also highlights an ongoing crackdown on journalists, which has extended recently to the closure of certain Chinese civil society and development publications.

“The crackdown on human rights defenders and domestic media continues to overshadow more positive reforms with regard to the death penalty and foreign media coverage in China,” said Khan. “Not only are we not seeing delivery on the promises that the Olympics would help improve the human rights situation in China, but the police are using the pretext of the Games to extend the use of detention without trial.”

The report also highlights the continued use of detention without trial as part of the government’s ‘clean up’ operations of Beijing ahead of the 2008 Games. The crackdown comes despite the fact that substantial reform or abolition of methods of arbitrary detention, including ‘re-education through labor,’ has been on China’s reform agenda for many years.

Amnesty International welcomes recent statements by Chinese Supreme Court officials expressing the need for greater

transparency on the death penalty and unified criteria for imposing death sentences. However, AI urged the authorities to broaden this approach by increasing access to information on individuals facing the death penalty, particularly for lawyers and members of their families, and by publishing full national statistics on death sentences and executions.

“The application of the death penalty in China—the world’s top executioner—remains shrouded in secrecy,” said Khan.

### August Meeting Minutes

#### Group #596 Huntington Beach

Eight people attended our monthly meeting. The group adopted a prisoner of conscience, Magdalena Garcia Duran, an indigenous rights activist in Mexico. The group wrote letters of concern to the Mexican government and letter of support to Magdalena.

The other focus of our meeting was on torture and the war on terror. The group received a fact sheet on the prison at Guantanamo Bay, and we watched the docudrama *The Road to Guantanamo*. We signed a petition and wrote letters to President Bush calling for closure of the facilities at Guantanamo.

### Walk for Hope: September 22

Amnesty International will once again participate in the Walk for Hope. It will again be held in beautiful El Dorado Park in Long Beach, located just off the 605, near the 405 freeway. The Walk for Hope is a reminder of the things that matter most in life. The entire 5 kilometer route is decorated with hundreds of inspiring quotes, and interactive activities are placed along the walk route. This wonderful event is free but can be used to raise money for your group! Go to <http://www.bethecause.org/walksite/> to sign up as a walker. You and/or your friends can choose to give a donation to Amnesty. Write your group number on the check, and it will go directly to your group! Whether you donate or not, the event is free and includes free food and a T-shirt.

Amnesty will also have a table at the event, which takes place from 9:00 AM–1:00 PM. Please email or call Norma Edwards at [beachykeeno@yahoo.com](mailto:beachykeeno@yahoo.com) or (562) 425-4353 if you can volunteer to sit at the table.

## August Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### Letters

The group sent letters to Sri Lankan officials regarding "disappearances" committed by Sri Lankan security forces in connection with the war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the insurrection in the late 1980s by the People's Liberation Front, as well as letters to officials in Saudi Arabia protesting the execution of minors there. The group also worked on the Summer Postcard Action.

#### Tabling

Jeannine reported that she has still had no response from the national office about insurance for tabling at the Artists Village Walk in downtown Santa Ana. The group is hoping to get it in time to table on Saturday, October 6.

#### Resolutions

Kevin discussed the AIUSA membership resolutions process. There is a new resolutions discussion board online. Kevin will bring a copy of the resolutions packet to the September or October group meeting for the group to discuss in advance of the regional meeting in San Francisco on November 9-11.

#### Yahoo Groups

Kevin reported that Amnesty is moving all of its online groups from Yahoo to Google because of Yahoo's actions in the Shi Tao case. Shi Tao is a Chinese journalist sentenced to a 10-year prison sentence for engaging in pro-democracy efforts that the country's authorities deemed subversive. Yahoo and its former subsidiary, Yahoo Hong Kong, helped the investigation by providing China's authorities with personal information culled from the e-mail accounts and other online activities of Shi Tao and another journalist, Wang Xiaoning.

#### New Area Coordinator

Julissa Gomez, the Western Region Field Organizer, recently roped in Wendy Marshall to serve as the Area Coordinator for the Orange County and Long Beach groups. Wendy has been an Amnesty member for 20 years, first getting involved while in high school.

#### Planning Meeting Next Month

The group will be spending part of next month's meeting on planning for 2008. Kevin distributed some documents for members to look over before the meeting.

## August Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### Attendees

Norma Edwards, Mike Farris, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Bobbi Kendig, Jim Roberts, Linda Veazey, Steve Wicke

#### War on Terror Campaign

Steve said that he would like to send a mini constitution to every member of Congress and U.S. senator. He also suggested maybe we could have a constitution teach-in as part of educating people on human rights. He mentioned that with one of Bush's latest executive orders, part of the Patriot Act, the government has the power to seize the assets of any broadly defined terrorist. (<http://www.aclu.org/natsec/emerg>

powers/14444leg20021206.html) Steve also mentioned Senator Leahy bringing up the closing of Guantanamo. We talked a little bit about the fate of the Uighurs who are still stuck in Guantanamo. They can't be sent back to China and no one else will take them. (<http://www.uhrp.org/categories/Issues/Uyghurs-in-Guantanamo/>)

#### Resolutions

Linda told us we can join discussion groups on the resolutions. Go to the members section of Amnesty's home page. If you are going to the Western Regional Conference in November in San Francisco, be sure to drop by Friday night for "Cheesecake and Resolutions." Find out all about the ways members are trying to change and improve the organization, and put in your two cents. The Resolutions Committee will also make a presentation at the regional about the improvements they are trying to make to the system.

#### Group News

The group sent some summer postcards and letters to Alberto Gonzalez (then Attorney General) asking that the federal government not execute the mentally ill. We also sent letters to China, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia.

## August Meeting Minutes

### Group #178 Irvine

#### Letter-writing

We wrote letters to California senators asking them to fund peacekeeping operations in Darfur. We also continued the summer postcard action with several people commenting on how beautiful the Switzerland postcards were.

#### Finances

No change since last month. We made our monthly donation to the Irvine United Congregational Church to thank them for providing us with a meeting room.

#### Upcoming Events

- We encouraged our members to participate in the Walk for Hope on Saturday, 22 September 2007, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM, at El Dorado Park in Long Beach. This event is sponsored by Be the Cause. The Amnesty groups will have a table there. For more information, see: <http://www.bethecause.org/walksite/>.
- In September, instead of hosting a presentation by Dr. Otim, Jacques and Felicity will try to arrange a speaking engagement for Liza Smith, the volunteer from Peace Brigades International, who has returned from Columbia in May 2007 and would like to describe her trip to local organizations. She is available on Sunday, 23 September 2007, and we will invite her to speak at the Peace Vigil organized by the Irvine United Congregational Church (IUCC) on that day. The IUCC Peace vigil will start at 7:00 PM, Sunday, 23 September, at the corner of Culver and Alton in Irvine.

#### Actions

We discussed last month what we would be doing for the Weekend of Faith in Action against the Death Penalty (19-21 October 2007). Jacques will host a table at his church, the Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church (OCUUC) and, iGlen Nielsen said he might be able to do the same at the IUCC.

## AC/Group Meeting

Wendy Marshall was just recently chosen as the Area Coordinator for the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups. She met on September 6 with most of the group coordinators and sent this report of the meeting.

I wanted to recap our meeting for those that weren't there and to make sure I've covered everything for the ones that were. Thank you very much for spending time with me and sharing your goals and expectations. I am looking forward to being part of your team in meeting both your individual group goals as well as the goals for the area. I am planning to attend two monthly meetings each month, so I look forward to continuing to cross paths with you in your group meetings.

I will continue to communicate updates, etc., via e-mail—please feel free to e-mail or call me at (714) 269-0993 whenever you'd like.

### Top Interests

#### Website

There is interest in developing the website further. The content is in good shape, but we would need to continue to update the content to keep it current and interesting for those who visit. It would be great to have all groups in the area on the same site and currently the Huntington Beach group has their own site. We could merge that site into an "area" site, or simply link if that is preferred by the Huntington Beach group. Wendy will look into the preference of HB.

There had been an opportunity to have someone work on the site and Jacques is looking into that. If they are no longer interested, we will look into other options—including Wendy looking for someone who might be willing to donate time in developing it and also looking into a Special Initiatives Fund (SIF) grant.

#### Membership

Increasing active members is a common goal of all of the groups. We discussed the idea of going to where people are, in addition to having monthly meetings. The end goal is that we have more people actively supporting AI work and objectives, so mom groups, coffee houses, etc., might be another way to get people involved (writing letters, for example). We will continue to explore "non-traditional" options. Wendy is going to start with some of the "mom clubs" in Huntington to see if this kind of an approach will indeed get more people actively participating in AI efforts, and ultimately participating in group/volunteer events and opportunities as well.

#### Upcoming Events

**September 22: Be The Cause Walk for Hope.** Norma

shared brochures for the 6th Annual Be The Cause Walk for Hope. It will be at El Dorado Park from 9:00 AM–1:00 PM. The event includes a 5K walk, free snacks, t-shirts, and entertainment. It is a fund raising opportunity and AI will have a table starting at 8:30 AM or so.

**December 10: Human Rights Day.** We discussed Amnesty's annual Global Write-a-thon in observance of Human Rights Day (December 10). An areawide write-a-thon is being discussed for December at the Artists Village. If we are to go that route, we will need insurance and there has been difficulty in getting that coverage from AI. Wendy will look into this and report back. Another option is the Lab in Costa Mesa.

**Quarterly events.** The idea of having quarterly events or meetings was discussed—perhaps write-a-thons at the Lab. Norma will contact Monet Quick at the Lab to follow up with her and see if using the large table at the Lab for meetings/write-a-thons is a possibility.

**GLAD Meetings.** The group discussed the GLAD meetings that were held in the past for the Los Angeles and Orange County groups. These fizzled out but there was interest in participating in them again. Wendy will follow up with Julissa, the Western Region Field Organizer, to see if she will orchestrate these.

**Mini-Conference.** Another area-wide large event is the one-day conference held at Cal State Fullerton in March. The conference includes workshops and speakers.

**Holiday Party.** Interest was expressed in a holiday party this year and Norma volunteered her house. This is a good way to enjoy the social aspects of volunteering and also bring in new "friends of friends" and hopefully expand the active participants.

#### Next Steps

Next meeting suggested for mid-November, after the Regional Meeting. Let's shoot for Tuesday, November 13, and adjust as the date gets closer if need be.

## August Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine *Continued from page 1*

Jacques will be hosting a monthly table at the OCUUC between services to encourage people to write letters on Amnesty International actions.

#### Special Presentation

We had planned to have a special presentation on the issue of Blood Diamonds but technical difficulties with our projector prevented us from doing so. We hope to have these issues resolved by the next meeting.

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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**Return to:**  
Amnesty International  
Group 178  
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

## September

18 Tuesday 7:00 PM

**Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting** at the Sisters of St. Joseph, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. Look for the classroom/ auditorium building behind the main building. Drive around on the south side of main building and park in the back. Look for the signs for the classroom number. For further information about the group, contact Kevin Gaffney at xhuskr@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.

22 Saturday 9:00 AM–1:00 PM

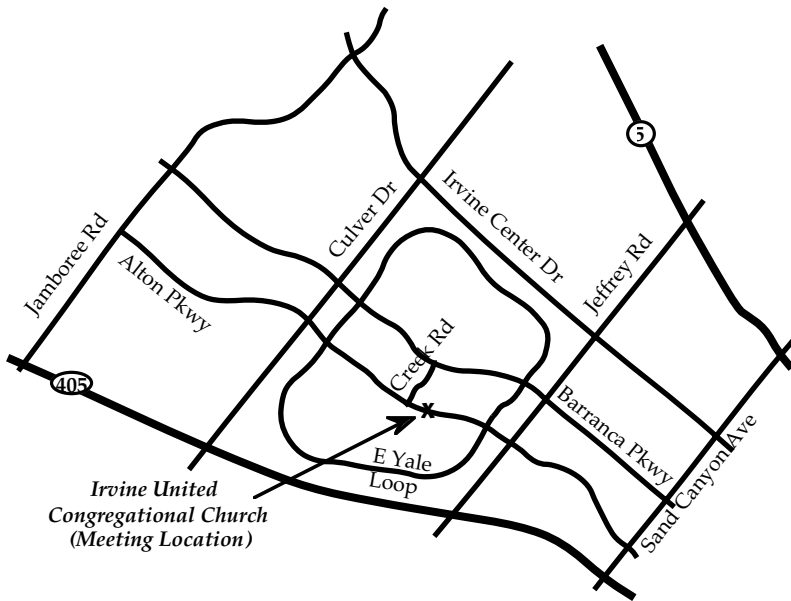
**Walk for Hope** at El Dorado Park in Long Beach. For more information, see the article on page 1 of this newsletter.

24 Monday 7:00 PM

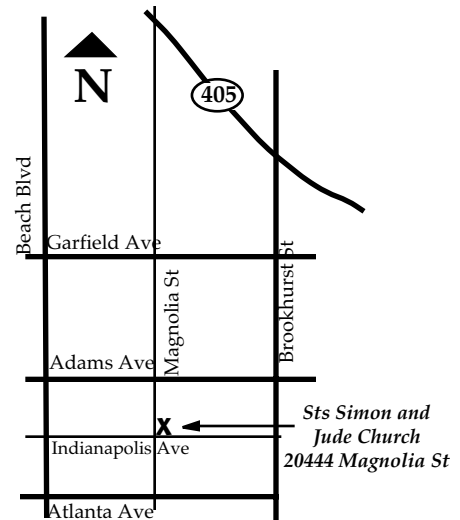
**Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting** at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. For more information, email Anne Saxe at annegalan56@hotmail.com.

27 Thursday 7:00 PM

**Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting** at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine. 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

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P.O. Box 17186  
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