



# Amnesty International

Orange County

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

October 2007

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## AI Releases New Report Detailing Human Rights Abuses Associated With Lethal Injection

*This article is taken from an October 4 AIUSA press release.*

Amnesty International released today a new report examining the use of lethal injection worldwide and called on health care professionals to sign a declaration stating that they will abstain from participating in executions. The report follows the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision to examine the constitutionality of the three-drug cocktail execution procedure most commonly used in the United States.

"The ugly truth is that lethal injection is not the 'humane' method of execution that it was proclaimed to be. The numerous recent botched executions have shattered the myth that lethal injection is a gentle process," said Sue Gunawardena-Vaughn, director of Amnesty International USA's Program to Abolish the Death Penalty. "If lethal injection doesn't call medical ethics into question, what does? Health professionals are charged with saving lives, not ending them. We can now clearly see the corrosive effect that lethal injection has had on the medical profession, which finds itself reluctantly conscripted to play a role in state-sponsored killing."

The Amnesty International report, *Execution by lethal injection: a quarter century of state poisoning*, examines the legal and ethical implications of the use of the lethal injection across the world. Since 1982, at least 1,000 people have been executed by lethal injection globally—three in Guatemala, four in Thailand, seven in the Philippines, more than 900 in the United States and up to several thousand in China (where the number of executions is a state secret).

Lethal injection involves a combination of three chemicals, including: sodium thiopental to rapidly induce unconsciousness; pancuronium bromide to cause muscle paralysis; and potassium chloride to stop the heart. If inadequate levels of sodium thiopental are administered, the anesthetic effect can wear off before the prisoner's heart stops, placing him at risk of excruciating pain during cardiac arrest. Due to the paralysis induced by pancuronium bromide, he would be unable to communicate his distress.

In one such case, Angel Diaz of Florida "appeared to be moving 24 minutes after the first injection, grimacing, blinking, licking his lips, blowing and appearing to mouth words," according to a press report. A second dose of lethal chemicals had to be administered to complete the execution. In another case, Joseph Clark of Ohio had to wait for 22 minutes while execution technicians tried to find a vein. Shortly after the start of the injection, the vein collapsed and Joseph's arm began to

swell. He raised his head off the stretcher and said "it don't work, it don't work." The curtains surrounding the stretcher were then closed while the technicians worked for 30 minutes to find another vein.

On September 25th the U.S. Supreme Court announced that it would hear a case questioning the constitutionality of the common lethal injection procedure. The case could have significant implications for the future of lethal injection in the United States. The state of Texas, however, has indicated that it intends to continue pursuing executions despite the pending case. More than half of U.S. executions in 2007 have been in Texas, and more than 360 individuals are currently under a death sentence in the state.

With the decision of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals on October 2nd to stay the execution of Heliberto Chi, it appears that courts are thwarting Texas' efforts to continue executions.

"Ironically, Texas law prohibits veterinarians from using pancuronium bromide to euthanize cats and dogs; meanwhile the state uses it with remarkable frequency in executing human beings," said Rick Halperin, Amnesty International USA's state death penalty abolition coordinator for Texas. "Texas' adamant pursuit of continued executions in the midst of all the ethical, medical and legal controversies surrounding lethal injection is truly unconscionable."

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### Amnesty International Deeply Concerned by Another Bush Denial: "This Government Does Not Torture"

Larry Cox, Amnesty International USA's executive director, issued the following statement in response to President Bush's October 5 statement that the United States does not torture people:

"The Bush administration continues to astonish. Its own State Department has labeled waterboarding torture when it applies to other countries. Yet in President Bush's legal wonderland, waterboarding is renamed an enhanced interrogation technique. President Bush continues to assert that his administration is complying with U.S. and international law, yet every available fact has proven the contrary. Torture by any other name is still torture—a new name does not make the practice acceptable or even palatable."

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## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #178 Irvine

We were happy to have Christine and Ameena visit us from the UCI Amnesty International group. The UCI group meets every Wednesday, 17:00–18:00 (5:00–6:00 PM) in Crescent Bay room B (A 124) in the Student Center.

#### Letter-writing

We wrote urgent action letters for Mohamed Saleh Osman al-Bajadi (Saudi Arabia); Myint Myint San, Paik Ko, Par Par Lay, Zargana also known as Ko Thura, Tin Aung, Tin Ko, U Win Naing and up to 300 others, including Buddhist monks (Myanmar); Ibragim Mukhmedovich Gazdiev, Ingushetia, Russian Federation; and Sudanese refugees in Egypt.

#### Finances

The national organization has sent a request for \$50 to cover the costs of supporting a local group. We all expressed surprise at this low amount (in the past the requested donation was closer to \$500) and our treasurer will contact the New York Office to ask why the suggested local group contribution has changed. Our group has approved a contribution of up to \$500 depending on the response from New York.

#### Campaigns

- For the Western Africa Regional Action Network, Jacques brought us an action deploring the Nigerian government's response to the latest outbreak of violence in Port Harcourt in August 2007.
- Dean wants to learn more about the Corporate Action Network's new Share Power Campaign and if the amount of work is not too intimidating he may sign up to be the campaign contact for our group. The Share Power campaign is to hold all kinds of corporations accountable for human rights violations within or connected to their operations. These abuses can take many forms, such as forced, slave and child labor; discrimination in employment; repression of labor unions; profiteering from war crimes; forcible evictions of indigenous peoples; and many others.

#### Recent Events

- The Irvine group hosted a table at the Walk for Hope in Long Beach. This year's event saw a rare Southern California downpour so not many people stayed after the end of the walk, but fortunately the rain had stopped during the walk and before it many people came to our table. The IUCC also happened to have a table there with some of our group members at that table.
- Our group helped arrange a speaking engagement for Liza Smith (from Peace Brigades International - see last month's newsletter for more details) at the IUCC Peace vigil on Sunday 23 September. She livened up the Peace Vigil with her guitar and singing.

#### Upcoming Events

- For the national Weekend of Faith In Action against the Death Penalty, on Sunday 21 October, Dan Noel (AI member in Costa Mesa) and Jacques will be hosting a table at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Costa Mesa, with the sermon topic addressing the death penalty issue; Glen and Felicity are going to have actions at a table at the IUCC.

- Our group has put Orange County for Darfur in touch with Felicity who has arranged for them to have a postcard signing at the IUCC. Jacques has also arranged for Orange County for Darfur to have a postcard signing at the Unitarian Universalist church in Costa Mesa on 28 October.
- Dr. Otim will not be available to speak about Uganda; instead the new CEO of friends for Peace in Africa, Charlie Lakony, is willing to come and do a presentation. We will suggest the date of 4 November at the IUCC after their Sunday service.
- For Human Rights day, our members suggested having some additional items to attract crowds at our AI table (wherever it will be). Peace cranes! Free cookies! More stuff!

#### Next Month's Meeting

- Julie Ralls will investigate the fate of our old Irvine group photocopier. She also volunteered to bring snacks next month.
- Jacques will give a special presentation on the Western Africa Regional Action network.

## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #596 Huntington Beach

There were approximately eight attendees present. We welcomed new group member Milagros Dias!

#### Upcoming Events Recap

We discussed some of the recent human rights events, including the Walk for Hope put on by Be the Cause. We also talked about the upcoming events including Human Rights Day on December 10th, the holiday party, the regional conference in November and the mini-conference in March at Cal State Fullerton.

#### Action Items

In keeping with issues the group has decided to focus on, we talked about some action items pertaining to denouncing torture/the war on terror. Group members were encouraged to make their voices heard about their wish to close Guantanamo by visiting <http://www.tearitdown.org/>. In addition, the upcoming 86 Days campaign, an effort by AI to protest the existence of Guantanamo was brought to the group's attention.

Other action items focused on Darfur and our prisoner of conscience. Attendees received information on how to call the 1-800-genocide hotline to get the attention of congress focused on this issue. We also filled out and signed the "Enough" cards provided by Orange County for Darfur.

Additional background information on the group's adopted prisoner of conscience, Magdalena Garcia Duran, was distributed. Attendees received a sample letter supporting Magdalena and addresses of the appropriate contacts for the letter.

#### Video Viewing

The bulk of the meeting was spent watching *God Grew Tired of Us*, a documentary on the lives of several refugees of the civil war in Sudan. The group chose this video in keeping with our focus on Sudan and our efforts to understand the conflict in Darfur.

## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### Letter-writing

The group sent a total of 30 letters. These included letters to Russian officials enquiring about cases of “disappearances” in Chechnya; to Senators Boxer and Feinstein asking them to co-sponsor Senator Harkin’s bill which would close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility in 120 days; to Nepalese officials concerning the case of Saujv Kumar Karra, a student who was arrested in October 2003 for his membership in a group aligned with the Communist Party of Nepal and who subsequently “disappeared”; and to the Louisiana governor regarding the case of Gary Tyler who received a life sentence for a 1974 shooting and about whose guilt serious questions have been raised.

#### Planning Meeting

The group spent most of the meeting time discussing our goals and activities for the coming year. The group decided to focus our attention in three areas next year:

- (1) Our adopted prisoner of conscience the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang,
- (2) The upcoming China Campaign, and
- (3) The War on Terror Campaign.

The group decided on the following goals:

- Arrange for a contingent from the group to meet with our congressional representative. The purpose would be to gain support for Amnesty’s causes and to let the representative know about the group’s existence.
- Recruit five new members. In order to accomplish this goal, the group will try to liaison with area student groups with the goal of helping student members transition to community groups. The group also plans to continue tabling efforts, at Amnesty sponsored events as well as at area concerts.
- Write 500 letters over the course of the year. Publicize letters from released prisoners.
- Get the revision of the AI Orange County website up and keep it current and maintained.
- Send a group member to either the regional or national conference. Although the group has not organized any fundraisers recently, it is still pretty healthy financially with about \$900 in our treasury. Sending a member to a conference could cost quite a bit.

#### Meeting Day Change

The group discussed changing our meeting day from the third Tuesday of each month to a day earlier in the month,

possibly the second Tuesday or Wednesday, beginning in January. Since the other Orange County and Long Beach groups meet during either the third or fourth week of the month, this would separate our meeting from the others to accommodate members attending other meetings in addition to ours.

## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

No notes were taken at our last meeting, which Linda Veazey graciously hosted due to Norma attending her son’s open house at school. There were about 25 letters written and a few last postcards to prisoners.

The weekend following our meeting, we participated in the Walk for Hope by setting up a table for Amnesty. At one point the table was swarmed with young activists, which was a great feeling. We had lots of letters and petitions signed and educated some caring people about our wonderful human rights organization. Even at events where you are “preaching to the choir,” it is amazing to discover that there are people who haven’t yet heard of Amnesty and what we do. And yes, once again, the Laker girls were there to start the day off with some exercises. A fun day was had by all, even when it started raining again toward the end of the event.

## Stop the Death Penalty

On October 10, this year’s World Day against the Death Penalty, Amnesty International called on the world’s governments to vote for the UN resolution on a global moratorium on executions, which will be introduced at the current session of the UN General Assembly.

“There is a real momentum towards abolition of the death penalty,” said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International. “A total of 133 UN member states, from all regions in the world, have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. Only 25 countries carried out executions in 2006, 91% of them in just six countries: China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the USA.”

Recorded executions worldwide fell by more than 25 percent in 2006, with a drop from at least 2,148 in 2005 to at least 1,591 in 25 countries in 2006. At least 3,861 people were sentenced to death in 55 countries in 2006.

The US stands alone as the only state in the Americas to have carried out any executions since 2003. The US itself is slowly turning against the death penalty. The 53 executions carried out in 2006 represented the lowest annual total for a decade, and death sentences continue to drop from its peak in the mid-1990s.

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 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

## October

16 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.

17 Wednesday 7:00 PM

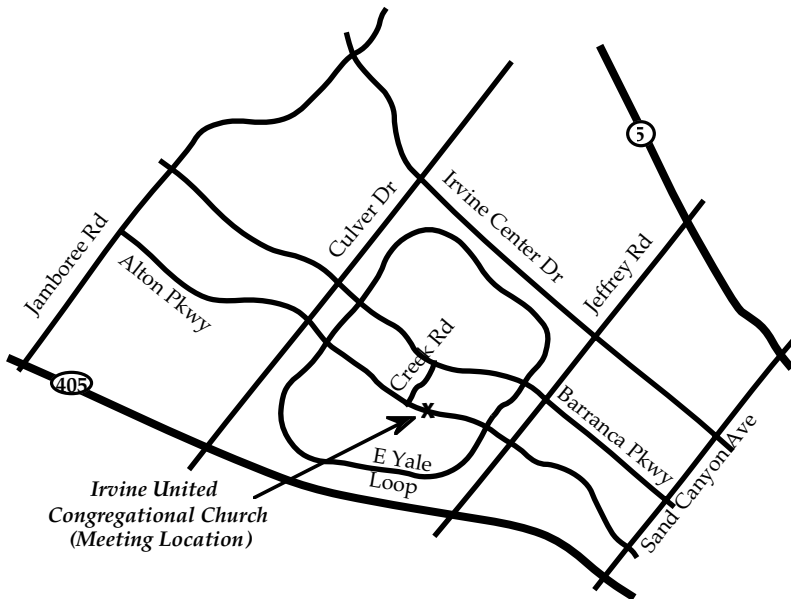
**Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting** at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00-7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

25 Thursday 7:00 PM

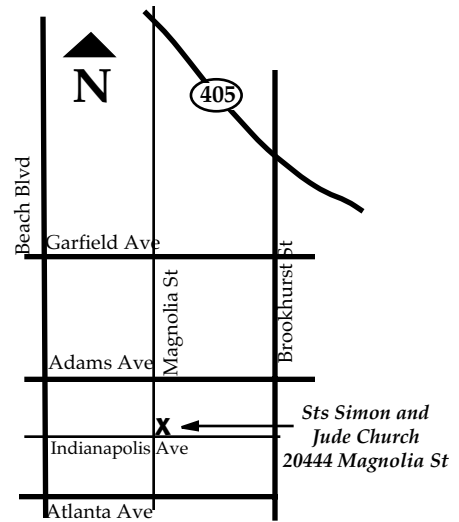
**Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting** at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine. See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Glen Nielsen at nielsenelectric@cox.net.

29 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.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location



Group #596 Huntington Beach Location

Amnesty International  
Group 178  
P.O. Box 17186  
Irvine, CA 92623-1718