



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

November 2007

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Myanmar: New Evidence of Mass Detentions, Hostage Taking, Deaths in Custody and Disappearances

This article is taken from an November 9 AIUSA press release.

Amnesty International has today written to Myanmar's authorities with a briefing paper outlining grave and ongoing human rights violations committed since the start of September's crackdown. The briefing comes ahead of next week's visit to Myanmar by the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on human rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro.

"Widespread arbitrary detentions, hostage taking, beatings and torture in custody and enforced disappearances clearly disprove any claims from the Myanmar Government of a return to normalcy," said Catherine Baber, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific program director. "Instead of protesting about interference in sovereignty, the Myanmar authorities must honor their promises of 'full cooperation' with the U.N. through full access for Mr. Pinheiro and full delivery of concrete human rights improvements identified by the U.N. Human Rights Council and Security Council."

Amnesty International's key concerns include:

- The continued detention of some 700 political prisoners including at least 15 individuals sentenced to prison terms of up to nine and a half years;
- An official policy of taking family members and friends as "hostages" to force others to turn themselves in;
- Deaths in detention due to severe beatings and other forms of torture;
- Appalling detention conditions including the denial of adequate food, water and sanitary facilities as well as the keeping of detainees in "dog cells";
- Enforced disappearances since the crackdown, including at least 72 individuals whose whereabouts the authorities have failed to account for;
- Failure by the Myanmar authorities to account for the number of people killed during the crackdown;
- Evidence of marksmen atop military trucks and bridges using live ammunition to target individual demonstrators during the crackdown resulting in the death of at least two students and the serious wounding of others;
- Ambulances being denied access to victims on the streets during September's demonstrations and private medical clinics ordered not to treat the injured.

Amnesty International is repeating calls for Myanmar au-

thorities to account for all those killed and those who have disappeared. The authorities must also provide the Special Rapporteur with a full list of all those detained and sentenced since the crackdown as well as full and unrestricted access to all detention facilities and crematoria.

As Aung San Suu Kyi Marks 12th Year of House Arrest AI Demands Release

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Myanmar's (formerly Burma) National League of Democracy, marked her 12th year under house arrest on October 23, the day the United Nations celebrated its 62nd birthday. Amnesty International again called for her unconditional release and for the immediate release of the thousands of people detained for participating in recent peaceful protests, as well as freedom for other long-standing prisoners of conscience, including U Win Tin. AI also urged government officials to free senior opposition figures, such as U Khun Htun Oo.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is an iconic symbol of Myanmar's political resistance. Her unconditional release would be a significant step forward," said Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan.

"The international community must maintain pressure and vigilance to ensure that the Myanmar authorities produce concrete actions and tangible results, such as the release of all prisoners of conscience. Such releases are also absolutely crucial in gauging how serious the Myanmar authorities are in terms of cooperating with the United Nations."

The current secret detention of political prisoners, the widespread reports of ill-treatment and torture, and sentences in grossly unfair trials behind closed prison walls make a mockery of the commitments made by the Myanmar authorities to cooperate with the United Nations. The United Nations Security Council has called for the early release of all political detainees in Myanmar.

"Human rights improvements in Myanmar cannot wait for the conclusion of a political process. The Myanmar authorities must immediately release all prisoners of conscience, open detention centers to independent observers and stop sentencing people who have only participated in peaceful protests," said Khan.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Lizette Ashcraft, Norma Edwards, Mike Farris, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, Bobbi Kendig, Glen Nielsen, Elizabeth Petras, Jim Roberts, Linda Veazey

Burma/Myanmar

Jim, the U.S. country specialist on Burma for Amnesty International USA, has been very busy for the last couple of months due to the unrest in Burma. He was featured as an expert on KPFFK on October 4 and did Amnesty proud and helped explain the situation to the general public. At our meeting he gave us more background. As of our meeting, since the unrest there were about 3,000 arrests. The government has said that all but 500 have been released, but any numbers are not confirmed. Unfortunately, the government is still hunting down dissidents. Amnesty provided almost daily updates on the situation and is still monitoring it.

Resolutions at the Western Regional Meeting

As you probably know, Amnesty is truly a grassroots organization, and you can make your voice heard. (Of course, with every "democracy," there are flaws!) Resolutions are a part of this process. Members bring resolutions to the regional meetings, and if they are passed, they go to the annual general meeting. If passed there, they go to the board of AIUSA. From there, they can make it to the worldwide organization. We are lucky enough in our group to have the Western Regional representative on the process, Linda. She led us through the resolutions (without voicing her opinions!), and the group discussed them. We were able to vote, and Kevin and Deidre will be able to vote for our group at the regional meeting in San Francisco.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) April 25–28, 2008

Linda just returned from a trip to DC to help plan the AGM (she's on the planning committee). She said it looks like it is going to be quite exciting and productive. The site will be the Crystal City Hyatt near the Ronald Reagan Airport. There will be workshops directed toward new and newer members and more targeted, specialized workshops for the old-timers. Those who can stay until Monday will make visits to their Congressional representative, with the help of the DC office, who will set up the visits and provide guidance beforehand.

Letter-writing

The group sent at least 40 letters, mostly to Burmese authorities and to the ambassador.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

Letter-writing

We wrote urgent action letters concerning the forcible ejection of Tzeltal Indigenous families in Mexico; encouraging the French, Italian, Ghanaian and Indonesian permanent missions

to the UN to support peacekeepers in Darfur; asking for support for the Habeas Corpus Restoration Act; asking the US President to work to deply an urgent UN Security Council mission to Myanmar.

Finances

Currently still near the \$2000 mark. Jacques called the AI office to find out why they only asked groups to donate \$50. The office said this number seemed more realistic but of course we are free to give more. The group voted to send \$500 as usual. Also \$25 (along with a signed card) to the IUCC to thank them for the meeting room and \$50 for the Great American Write-In on 5 April 2008 at the Lakeview Cener in Irvine. We received a \$20 donation for postage from group member Dean. Thanks Dean!

Jacques investigated the cost of doing a postcard announcing the existence of the local group to people in Irvine. The national office gave us 282 names for Irvine zipcodes. Postage would be approximately \$78 and 500 postcards were about \$100 to \$150. We will be attempting this postcard publicity action the next time we have a "big" event to announce.

Announcements

The Democratic Club of West Orange County s hosting anti-death penalty activist and actor Mike Farrell at its annual dinner on Sunday 4 November in Huntington Beach.

Campaigns

For the Western Africa Regional Action Network, Jacques made the first part of a special presentation on the West Africa Regional Action network. He did not complete due to lack of time but we had fun filling in a map to name the countries of West Africa. This exercise is always a useful way of showing how this small countries are rarely in the news and easily fall off the radar of US attention.

Upcoming Events

- We mentioned the Western Regional Conference. Glen Nielsen will be attending and representing the Irvine group. We did not review the resolutions presented at the regional, but we will review resolutions being presented at the AGM in our group meeting before the AGM.
- Glen Nielsen will try to organize a "Ghosts of Abu Ghraib" House Party (amnestyusa.org/houseparty/ghosts) in conjunction with the Irvine United Congregational Church. It was suggested that we involve moveon.org because moveon.org has a large mailing list. Glen Nielsen will ask the Los Angeles office if we can co-sponsor with moveon.org
- We will try to invite Charlie Lakony to speak about Uganda in January of 2008.
- If there is a Human Rights Day event around 10 December, for example at the Santa Ana Art Walk (www.santaanaartwalk.com), our group will of course participate. Our area coordinator is trying to get insurance for the local groups to table at the Art Walk.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Letter-writing

The group sent a total of 15 letters this month, including letters to Egypt officials concerning the case of Karim Amer, a student sentenced to four years' imprisonment for allegedly criticizing religious and government authorities; to South Korean officials on behalf of Lee Si Woo, a journalist awaiting trial for publishing information about the U.S. military presence there; to the Ukraine asking for improved protection for women exposed to domestic violence; and to Vietnamese officials on behalf of our adopted prisoner of conscience, the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang.

Meeting Day Change

The group decided to move our meeting day to the fourth Tuesday of each month beginning in January 2008.

Help End the Use of Child Soldiers

Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Sam Brownback (R-KS) have introduced legislation in the Senate to restrict U.S. military assistance to governments that recruit or use child soldiers in their armed forces or associated armed groups in conflict. The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007 (S. 1175), introduced in April, also urges the United States to expand its efforts to help remove and rehabilitate children from armed forces and militia groups around the world and to work with the international community to bring to justice those who have kidnapped children for use as soldiers.

Approximately 250,000 children are serving in situations of armed conflict in 20 countries around the world. These "child soldiers" include boys and girls, sometimes as young as six years old, serving as combatants, sex slaves, porters, and mine detectors. Urge your senators and other senators to co-sponsor and support this key legislation.

Resources, such as a petition to your Senator, an on-line action, and a PowerPoint photo exhibit, are available on AIUSA's website at http://www.amnestyusa.org/Children/Child_Soldiers/pag.do?id=1051047&n1=3&n2=78&n3=1270.

AIUSA's Annual General Meeting 2008

Mark your calendars and plan to attend AIUSA's 2008 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Washington, DC April 25-28. Here is your chance to mingle with other members from coast

to coast, meet AIUSA staff, and prominent human rights activists and other international guests. There will be interesting panel discussions, workshops to hone your activist skills and plenty of opportunities to discuss AIUSA's human rights work. You can also take part in "AGM Amnesty Lobby Day" April 28. We're mobilizing 1,000 members to speak directly with Members of Congress and other influential leaders about AIUSA's priorities.

Registration begins mid-November and will be available online at: www.amnestyusa.org/agm. Make sure to register for this dynamic event with the world's premier human rights organization.

Diana Redhouse—Pioneer and Designer

Diana Redhouse, Amnesty International pioneer and designer of the international human rights organization's iconic "Candle in Barbed Wire" emblem, passed away on October 19. She was 84.

Born in London in April 1923, Diana made a lasting contribution to the work of Amnesty International after she read AI founder Peter Benenson's famous 1961 *Observer* article, "The Forgotten Prisoners." That article in effect launched the movement. Redhouse immediately wrote Benenson expressing a wish to become involved in the campaign to, in her words "do something." She founded one of the first Amnesty International groups in the world.

But Redhouse is best remembered for designing AI's logo in 1961 at the request of Benenson. Her enduring legacy is a design that reflects Amnesty International's mission and is a sign of defiance in the face of repression. Virtually unchanged since she initially drew it, the "Candle in Barbed Wire" has become possibly one of the most instantly recognizable logos in the world.

Redhouse based the candle on the Chinese proverb, "better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Benenson lit the first Amnesty International candle on Human Rights Day, December 10, 1961 during a ceremony at the Church St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London. More than 45 years later, Amnesty International's famous candle still mobilizes people of all religions, cultures and walks of life.

Diana spent her final days with her family. They say she remained extremely proud of her association with AI until the end.

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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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 November

20 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.

21 Wednesday 7:00 PM

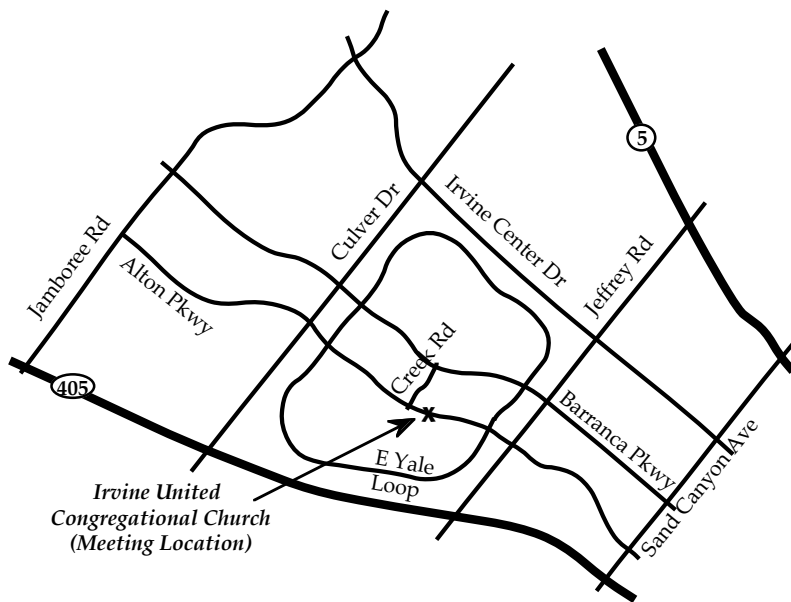
Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00-7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

26 Monday 7:00 PM

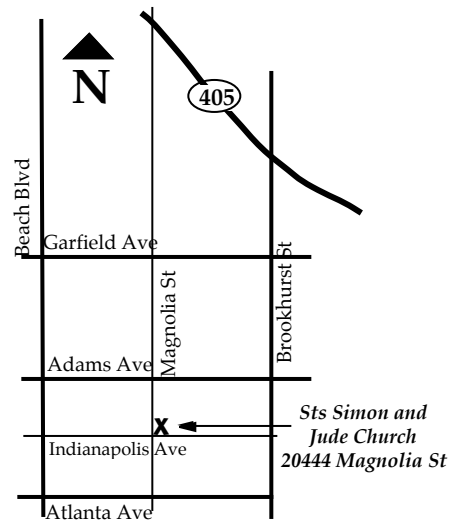
Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. For more information, email Anne Saxe at annegalan56@hotmail.com.

29 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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Group 178
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