



# Amnesty International

Orange County

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

July/August 2009

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## The 2009 Amnesty International Report

The 2009 *Amnesty International Report*, released May 28, 2009, highlights the fact that the world is in the middle of a human rights crisis. We are sitting on a social, political and economic time-bomb that will explode if human rights concerns are not addressed.

Billions of people are suffering from insecurity, injustice and indignity around the world and while many aspects of this crisis pre-date the economic “downturn”, it is clear that the global financial situation is making the human rights crisis far worse.

More people have been driven into poverty and placed at increased risk of human rights violations. In Africa, the food crisis, a hallmark of 2008, had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups. In Asia, millions of people have swelled the ranks of those already living in poverty, as the cost of food, fuel and other commodities increased dramatically in 2008.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the financial crisis and rising food prices affected those already living in or close to poverty, whilst in Europe, several states required interventions from the International Monetary Fund to support their economies. Across the region, the gap between rich and poor remained vast.

It is also clear that recession has fuelled even greater repression, as protests stemming from poverty, economic disparities or a lack of justice are brutally suppressed.

During 2008 many governments continued to ignore the voices of the poor and the marginalized. In Latin America and the Caribbean—where more than 70 million people are living on less than US \$1 a day—poverty, inequality and discrimination have increased the numbers of Indigenous People denied their rights to health care, education, clean water and adequate housing.

By ignoring human rights governments placed their citizens in peril. In Myanmar, the authorities initially blocked international assistance to 2.4 million survivors of Cyclone Nargis, while diverting resources to promote a flawed referendum on a flawed constitution.

Financial enrichment of business and governments continued to be achieved at the expense of the most marginalized. In Nigeria, in the vast and mineral rich Niger Delta, against a backdrop of killings and torture by security forces in 2008, widespread pollution associated with the oil industry undermined people’s right to an adequate standard of living and the right to health.

By not prioritizing human rights, world leaders have failed to address a central part of the solution for long-term economic and political stability. While the G-20 claims the mantle of

world leadership – its members’ commitment to human rights is unclear and shows a failure to invest sufficiently in human rights. For instance Amnesty International recorded torture and other forms of ill-treatment in 14 of the G-20 countries during 2008.

China increased repression of human rights defenders, religious practitioners, ethnic minorities, lawyers and journalists throughout the country in the run-up to and during the Beijing Olympics. China is also the world’s leading executioner.

In the USA, the Obama Administration made a good start with moves to end torture and long-term secret detention by the CIA and to close the Guantánamo detention facility by January 2010. However EU member states remain unwilling to admit to collusion with the CIA on the extraordinary rendition of terrorist suspects. States such as Denmark, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK allowed unenforceable “diplomatic assurances” as a justification to deport terrorist suspects to countries where there was a risk of torture and ill-treatment.

In Brazil, police operations in impoverished urban communities involved excessive use of force, extrajudicial executions, torture, and abuse. South Africa has blocked international pressure on Zimbabwe to end political persecution. Saudi Arabia locks up political dissidents, restricts the rights of migrant workers and women and uses the death penalty extensively. Russia continues to permit arbitrary detention and torture and, in the North Caucasus, extrajudicial executions as well as harassment and attacks on human rights defenders.

In Japan, the number of executions increased and prisoners faced prolonged periods of solitary confinement and inadequate access to medical care.

The world needs leadership that works for all and not just for the few; that moves states from narrow self-interest to multilateral cooperation.

The world needs a new global deal for human rights. The consequences of the economic crisis can only be addressed with a coordinated global response based on human rights and the rule of law.

World leaders must invest in human rights as purposefully as it invests in economic growth. It is incumbent on those sitting at the world’s table to set an example through their own behaviour. And it is incumbent on us, as citizens, as rights holders, to bring pressure to bear on our political leaders.

Through the launch of its Demand Dignity campaign, Amnesty International hopes to address the world’s worst human rights crisis. We will work together to tackle the human rights abuses that drive and deepen poverty, so that those imprisoned by poverty are empowered to change their own lives.

## June Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### **Present**

Lizette Ashcraft, Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Tony Gabriele, Deidre Gaffney, Kevin Gaffney, JoAnn Kabaar, India Preto, Naomi Steinfeld

#### **Death Penalty**

Mary Kay and Naomi reported back from the conference put on by the L.A. Coalition for Death Penalty Alternatives: "Costs & Consequences: Can We Afford the Death Penalty?" Mary Kay found the testimony by Gloria Killian and Azim Khamisa particularly powerful. Ms. Killian was wrongfully convicted of first-degree murder. Mr. Khamisa is the father of a murder victim and founder of the Tariq Khamisa Foundation: <http://www.tkf.org/>.

We talked about the latest news on Troy Davis and about an editorial by Rep. Bob Barr in the *New York Times* about the disgrace of how Davis' case has been handled. ([http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/01/opinion/01barr.html?\\_r=1&th&emc=th](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/01/opinion/01barr.html?_r=1&th&emc=th))

Naomi also brought to our attention two editorials in the *L.A. Times*: "Terrorism and U.S. Law" (<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/editorials/la-ed-detention7-2009jun07,0,6330781.story>) and "CIA Disclosure: Let a Judge Decide" (<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-ed-cia12-2009jun12,0,5261157.story>), which denounces torture.

June 30 there will be a public hearing in Sacramento to discuss execution procedures. Send comments if you can't go. Chief Timothy Lockwood, CDCR, P.O. Box 942883, Sacramento, CA 94283-0001 or [rpmb@cdcr-ca.gov](mailto:rpmb@cdcr-ca.gov).

With all our budget woes, now is a great time to send a letter to the governor, your representatives, and local papers about the expense of the death penalty. Of course, there are other reasons to end it as well, but would most people in this state want us to spend 20 million dollars a year on death penalty trials, which we could spend instead on crime labs or other important crime preventions that are falling by the wayside? In addition, you may have heard that we need a new death house. Estimated cost so far? \$400 million. Go to [www.deathpenalty.org/LACCDPA](http://www.deathpenalty.org/LACCDPA) (and Amnesty International USA) for more information. Become a Facebook fan at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Los-Angeles-County-Coalition-for-Alternatives-to-the-Death-Penalty/50127154334?ref=ts>.

We sent a letter to L.A. District Attorney Steve Cooley asking him to stop asking for the death penalty in L.A. County trials.

#### **Myanmar/Burma**

We signed a birthday card for Aung San Suu Kyi (June 19), but I found out after the meeting that it was discouraged to send her mail directly as this could adversely affect her situation in Myanmar. There was a site online that registered birthday wishes though.

#### **China/Internet Censorship**

We also signed a birthday card for Shi Tao, our internet POC in China. His birthday is July 25. In addition, we signed and sent a (cardboard) boot to Yahoo! as well as letters imploring them to use their influence to do something.

#### **Group News**

We will be having a garage sale to benefit our group on July 18 at Norma's house. Please start saving your stuff! I will be going out of town, so you won't be able to bring it by until the week before. I will send out another reminder. Good time to clear out the clutter!

## June Meeting Minutes

### Group #178 Irvine

#### **Letter-writing**

We wrote letters about:

- Racial discrimination in the Austrian justice system
- Mahmoud Abu Rideh, Palestinian Refugee in the UK, asking for medical treatment and travel documents
- Use of violence by security forces during recent elections in Iran
- Laura Ling and Euna Lee, two US journalists imprisoned in North Korea, asking for immediate and unconditional release
- Wrote a personal card to Zeng Jinyan, the wife of our P.O.C. Hu Jia

#### **Campaign Updates**

We received in our P.O. box an invitation to join the European Union Regional Action network. Jacques Kilchoer has signed up and we signed our first actions at the June meeting.

#### **Prisoner of Conscience**

We wrote a birthday card to Zeng Jinyan (Hu Jia's wife) and Peggy Thompson has corresponded with Zeng Jinyan via Facebook. All group members are invited to contact her through Facebook.

#### **Upcoming Projects**

The group has decided that we should start a Facebook group as another mechanism to keep group members updated. Jacques Kilchoer will do this before our August meeting.

We will not have a meeting in July because the group leader will be on vacation. Our next meeting will be in August at the regular time. For the fall, we have decided on the following actions:

- Tabling at the UCI Marketplace
- Human Rights movie night showing at a local movie theatre (we already have a tentative agreement from one movie theatre)
- Participation in the National Weekend of Faith in Action against the Death Penalty

Thank you to Julie Ralls for bringing stamps for our mailing!

## June Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### Letter-writing

Many of our letter-writing actions focused on Shi Tao, the Western Region Special Focus Case. The group sent a cardboard replica of a cowboy boot to Yahoo! co-founder Jerry Yang along with letters as part of the "Tell Yahoo! to reBOOT human rights" campaign. Amnesty is targeting Yahoo! since information provided by Yahoo! China resulted in journalist Shi Tao's arrest. We also sent postcards to the Chinese president calling for Shi Tao's release. Finally, we signed a birthday card for Shi Tao, whose birthday is July 25.

We wrote letters to the Chinese embassy asking them to use their influence to obtain the release of U.S. journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in North Korea. We also wrote to Iranian officials expressing concern over the arrest of human rights advocates there, including prominent human rights lawyer Abdolfattah Soltani, in the wake of the disputed elections. In addition, we sent postcards to China as part of the Legacy of the Beijing Olympics action calling for the release of prisoners Ye Guozhu and Huang Jinqiu.

#### News

Kevin discussed Aung San Suu Kyi's trial, underway in Myanmar.

Kevin also discussed Amnesty's actions and press releases on behalf of several human rights lawyers arrested in Iran.

Deidre discussed the current status of the death penalty in California. There is a public hearing scheduled for June 30 in Sacramento on execution procedures. Norma has many of the details in the Long Beach group meeting minutes.

## Amnesty International's Dignity Campaign

In 2009, Amnesty International will launch a global campaign on poverty and human rights. The campaign website is available now at <http://demanddignity.amnesty.org/>. As we approach the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the aspiration for a world free from want as well as fear is unrealized for millions of people living in poverty, routinely denied many if not all of their human rights.

Poverty is not just a lack of income. It is the denial of accountability for rights violators, access to rights for all, and active participation of people living in poverty in processes that affect their lives.

Universal human dignity can only become a reality through respect for the full range of human rights—from ade-

quate housing and physical integrity to access to information. Poverty is not inevitable. It is caused by human beings—it results from decisions made by governments, companies, institutions and others in power.

#### Key Demands

1. **Accountability.** People living in poverty have a right to hold to account those responsible for the human rights violations that affect them. All human rights should be legally enforceable, including economic, social and cultural rights. All those responsible, including governments at home and abroad, corporations and international financial institutions, should be legally accountable for the impact of their activities on human rights.
2. **Access to rights for all.** Governments should promote equality and ensure non-discrimination in their poverty eradication programs at home and abroad. Apparent progress must not mask inequality and exclusion.
3. **Active participation.** People living in poverty should be respected and empowered as the key agents of the fight for their right to live with dignity. Governments, companies and others in power should respect their rights to know, to participate, and to protest.

#### Key Topics

The campaign will focus on three areas that are crucial to the fight against poverty.

1. **Maternal Mortality.** Pregnancy is not a disease, yet one woman dies every minute and many more face long-term debilitating ill-health as a result of conditions related to pregnancy and childbirth. Almost all of these deaths are preventable. Maternal mortality is a crucial issue all over the world: Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, and even the United States.
2. **Slums.** Millions of people worldwide live in intolerable slum conditions, without access to minimum essential levels of housing, clean water, sanitation, health care, security or education – without access, that is, to the objects of a range of basic human rights. Possible focuses for this portion of the campaign include forced evictions, the right to adequate housing for all, gender discrimination in rights to own housing and land, and indigenous peoples' land rights.
3. **The Extractives Industry.** The new scramble for resources is resulting in serious human rights abuses around the world. Key to improving the situation is real—not just rhetorical—commitment to the participation of affected communities and transparency in financial dealings. All responsible actors, including multinational companies, must abide by human rights standards.

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 July

**15** 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 more information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

**18** Saturday 7:00 PM  
**Amnesty Garage Sale** at Norma Edwards' house, 3529 Loomis Street, Lakewood 90712. For more information, see the website <http://www.aiusaoc.org>.

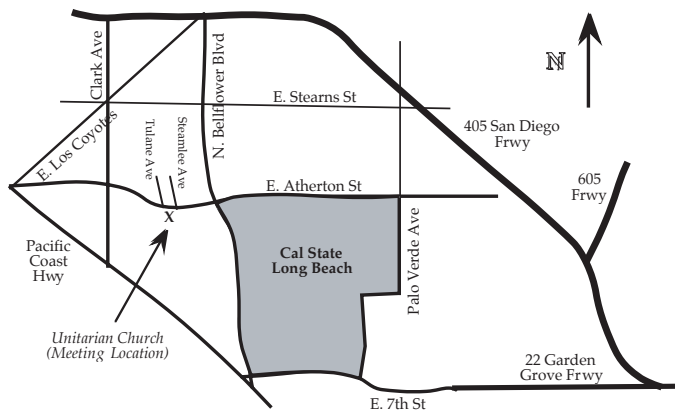
**The Orange and Irvine groups are not meeting in July.**

# August

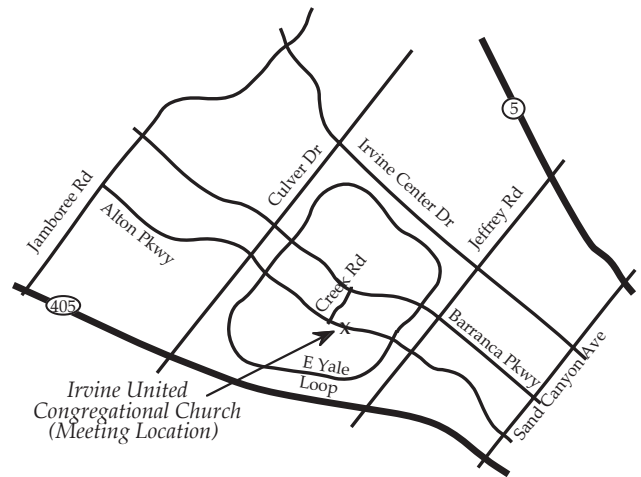
**19** Wednesday 7:00 PM  
**Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting** at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30.

**27** Thursday 7:30 PM  
**Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting** at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at [jacques.kilchoer@aiusaoc.org](mailto:jacques.kilchoer@aiusaoc.org).

**25** Tuesday 7:00 PM  
**Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting** at the Sisters of St. Joseph Center, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. The meeting room is in the Special Events Center located behind (west of) the main building (the Motherhouse). After entering the complex from Batavia Street, drive around the south side of the Motherhouse and park in the lot in the back. Look for the signs directing you to the meeting room. For more information about the group, contact Kevin Gaffney at [xhuskr@aol.com](mailto:xhuskr@aol.com).



**Group #175 Long Beach Meeting Location**



**Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location**

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