



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

September 2009

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

CIA Detention Program

US Attorney General Eric Holder's announcement on August 25 that he has ordered a "preliminary review" into some interrogations of some detainees in the secret detention program operated by the CIA after the attacks of September 11, 2001, while a welcome first step, does not go far enough, Amnesty International said.

"The USA needs to ensure that every case of torture is submitted for prosecution, whether or not perpetrators claim to have been following orders, and those who authorized or ordered the commission of torture or other criminal abuse of detainees must also be brought to justice," said Rob Freer, Amnesty International's researcher on the USA. "The USA should also establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate all aspects of the USA's detention practices in what the previous administration called the 'war on terror'".

"The establishment and operation of such a commission, however, must not be used to block or delay the prosecution of any individuals against whom there is already sufficient evidence of criminal wrongdoing...

The Attorney General's announcement came on the same day that a 2004 review of the CIA's detention and interrogation activities by the CIA Inspector General was released as part of Freedom of Information Act litigation. Suppressed for more than five years, the report covers the period between September 2001 and October 2003. Parts of it remain Top Secret and have been redacted from the published version.

"The Attorney General's announcement is unquestionably a significant step forward from the years of total denial and the consequent climate of near-zero accountability or remedy that has prevailed to date," said Rob Freer. "But it is not nearly enough to satisfy US obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, including the most basic notions of accountability and remedy for gross and systematic human rights violations."

Allegations of torture, enforced disappearance and other crimes under international law committed as part of the CIA detention program have been in the public realm for years. No one has been prosecuted for authorizing or committing these crimes.

"The USA has a basic legal obligation, expressly provided for by treaties such as the UN Convention against Torture and the Geneva Conventions, not to look away from crimes such as torture and enforced disappearance but rather to bring the full force of the criminal justice system to bear upon them," said Rob Freer. "Refusing to bring to justice perpetrators of torture is simply not tenable if the USA is to live up to its obligations."

New Facebook Group

The Orange County/Long Beach groups have a new Facebook group: Amnesty International USA Orange County CA at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=124677853185. This group is intended to serve Amnesty International members with information about what local groups in Orange County and Long Beach are doing.

Upcoming Events

Movie Screening: The Reckoning

Who: Amnesty International USA Group 178: Irvine, in conjunction with Orange County for Darfur

What: *The Reckoning* follows the prosecutors of the International Criminal Court as they attempt to indict war criminals and perpetrators of crimes against humanity. Ever wonder how *Law and Order* works in real life? What if you were trying to pursue people in another country that are guilty of horrible human rights abuses? What if something like the Nuremberg trials were happening today? Find out how it works in the real world in this exciting documentary!

Where: Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, California 92618-3102

When: Saturday, 19 September 2009, 7:00-9:00 PM

How Much: Free

For more details see http://www.aiusaoc.org/common/the_reckoning_2009.html.

Talk: An Evening with Carl Wilkens

Who: Amnesty International Group 178 is co-sponsoring this event with Orange County for Darfur and other organizations.

What: Carl Wilkens, former head of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Rwanda, was the only American to remain in Rwanda once the genocide began in 1994. Join us to hear Carl's personal and chilling first-hand account of life for the people of Rwanda as their country collapsed. The evening will highlight what we as global citizens have in common, how our commonalities are so much greater than our differences and what that means for our response to violence—from bullying to genocide.

Where: Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine, California 92604

When: Saturday, 10 October 2009, 7:00 PM

How Much: Free

For more details: <http://www.livingubuntu.org/events/2009/evening-with-carl-wilkens/>

August Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Letter-writing

We wrote letters:

- to Pakistani officials expressing concern for the hundreds of individuals who have “disappeared” in Pakistan since the commencement of the “War on Terror.”
- to Chinese officials on behalf of Shi Tao.
- to Myanmar Foreign Minister expressing concern at the recent detention of Aung San Suu Kyi.

News

Jeannine and Ernie received letters back from Congressman Ed Royce discussing recent Congressional efforts aimed at stopping the Lord’s Resistance Army, which is waging a rebel campaign against the Ugandan government.

Jeannine discussed Amnesty’s Counter Terror with Justice Campaign. Even though the Obama administration recently announced the appointment of a special prosecutor to investigate allegations of torture by the CIA during the Bush administration, reports indicate that it is planning to continue the practice of rendition. While they claim they will safeguard against torture, this is the same promise the Bush administration made.

Jeannine also discussed the Troy Davis case and the recent Supreme Court ruling ordering a new hearing for him.

Kevin mentioned that Shi Tao recently spent his 50th birthday in prison in China. In a related issue, Kevin talked about a new program, called Tor, which may protect human rights activists in the future. The program scrambles information and then sends it over the Web, hiding the user’s location and penetrating firewalls. These features have made it popular with activists in Iran and China.

New Prisoner Case

Kevin brought in a list of prisoners of conscience in Myanmar that are available as adoption cases. The group decided on two prisoners, U Saw Naing and U Soe Han, sentenced to 21 years each for publishing a statement that urged the release of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2000. Both men are elderly and in poor health. They are being held in Insein Prison in Yangon, Myanmar’s largest city. On June 12, 2009, it was learned that U Saw Naing Naing and U Soe Han, together with three other political prisoners, had been moved to specials punishment cells, known as “dog cells.” A “dog cell” is a space to keep military/prison dogs.

Commemoration of Deaths in Iraq

Julie reported on a memorial at sea in Seal Beach on August 23 to honor the thousands of military service men and women who have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. The event was sponsored by, among others, Code Pink OC and the Orange County Peace Coalition.

Group News

Kevin reported that the group treasury is down to about \$600 so we may need to consider fundraising in 2010.

July/August Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Death Penalty News

There have been some great death penalty articles and editorials in the last several months:

- June 10: “California Can’t Afford the Death Penalty: eliminating capital punishment would save the state \$125 million a year,” by John Van de Kamp, *Los Angeles Times* (<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jun/10/opinion/oe-vandekamp10>);
- May 31: “Death Penalty Disgrace,” by Bob Barr, in the *New York Times* (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/01/opinion/01barr.html?_r=1).
- There was also an excellent editorial on June 15 entitled “Torture, the Painful Truth,” by Ben Ehrenreich, in the *Los Angeles Times* (<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jun/15/opinion/oe-ehrenreich15>).

In other Death Penalty news, former Death Penalty Focus board member and author Nancy Oliveira has written a user-friendly booklet titled *Writing Wrongs: How to Shift Public Opinion on the Death Penalty with Letters to the Editor*. Check out this booklet for letter writing tips, sample letters, and quick facts on the death penalty. DPF also has a letter-to-the-editor tool that makes submitting letters easy by providing talking points and contact information for the newspapers close to where you live.

Death Penalty Focus organized a Day of Action on the death penalty in Sacramento in June. There were 100+ speakers against the death penalty in a hearing. There were 7,000 comments submitted to legislators on the topic of lethal injection and 5,000 signatures to convert the death penalty to life imprisonment.

CMUs

Lizette presented a follow-up to a story about “CMUs” she had told the group about. CMUs are “Communication Management Units” that were designed to house prisoners viewed by the government as terrorists. According to Democracy Now! “With little public scrutiny, the Bush administration opened two secretive prisons in Indiana and Illinois known as Communication Management Units, or CMUs, that are designed to severely restrict prisoner communication with family members, the media and the outside world. Dozens of Muslim men are still being held at the CMUs, as well as other prisoners, including environmental and animal rights activists.” In June the American Civil Liberties Union filed a legal complaint challenging the CMUs, which they state were established in violation of federal laws requiring public scrutiny and today are disproportionately inhabited by Muslim prisoners—many of whom have never been convicted of terrorism-related crimes. We talked briefly about Amnesty’s past campaign on the Supermax prisons.

Continued on page 3

August Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

The meeting had a delayed start because our regular meeting room was occupied, so we moved to the sanctuary at IUCC. Thank you again to the Irvine United Congregational Church for hosting our meetings. This may happen again for our September meeting.

At our meeting we were happy to have two first-time visitors, a young woman interested in human rights law, and a Romanian Greek Catholic priest who spoke to us about the plight of Romanian Greek Catholics. We hope to hear a presentation from him sometime this year (to read more about this little-known community, visit their website at <http://www.rogca.org>).

Letter-writing

We wrote letters

- for Thodoris Iliopoulos, Greece, medical treatment in prison;
- for 11 Roma families facing forced eviction from the homes, Greece;
- to Iran protesting the use of torture or ill-treatment in the mass trial of over 100 people, including Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Mohsen Aminzadeh, Abdollah Ramazanzadeh, Mohsen Mirdamadi, Behzad Nabavi, Mohammad Atrianfar;
- postcards for the summer solidarity action
 - Nigeria - Patrick Okoroafor
 - Sri Lanka - J.S. Tissainayagam
 - Honduras - Garifuna Community
 - Iran - Ronak Safarzadeh
 - Uzbekistan - Azam Farmonov and Alisher Karamatov

Campaigns

Anne Saxe reported on Darfur:

- US to assume rotating presidency of UN Security Council. The USA should make Sudan a priority.
- Photo exhibit on Darfur will be projected through New York City during the UN General Assembly in September.
- The head of the joint United Nations-African Union peace-keeping mission in Darfur is stepping down. The UN and the African Union are looking for a replacement.
- Darfur peacekeeping mission UNAMID plans to create a unit responsible for monitoring crimes committed against women and children.

Jacques Kilchoer reported on the Europe Regional Action Net-

work:

- 14 July 2009: The Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) voted today to adopt the controversial "Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information". The law will enter into force on 1 March 2010. Sub-section 13 of Article 4 prohibits "Information which agitates for homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relations".
- 3 August 2009: Murder of a Sinti woman in Kisleta village in Hungary. Budapest police say that at least 16 attacks on Sinti and Roma have taken place in the last 12 months. Numerous reports by the Council of Europe and the European Union have pointed out that the Sinti and Roma are victims of discrimination and persecution.
- 7 August 2009: Roma families evicted in Greece.
- 10 August 2009: Amnesty International reiterates its call for an independent public inquiry into allegations of UK complicity in torture.
- 21 August 2009: Thodoris Iliopoulos: health concern, insufficient medical treatment after hunger strike.

Death Penalty News

- Monday, 17 August: the Supreme Court issued an order mandating a new evidentiary hearing for death-row inmate Troy Anthony Davis.

September Meeting

At our September meeting, we will have a teach-in on the death penalty case of Troy Davis. (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/teachin/display.php>)

Group #175 Long Beach Minutes

Continued from page 2

Group News

This summer it was wonderful to see Jamie Skaluba and husband Ned Ash, who were visiting from upstate New York. We were happy to hear that Jamie is now a country specialist for Amnesty, focusing on Zambia.

POCs

Jim presented us with a list of prisoners of conscience from Myanmar/Burma. Many prisoners have been adopted by other groups already. We chose one who had not been adopted yet, Zarganar, a popular comedian/actor. He was arrested on June 4, 2008, after he criticized the government's handling of the cyclone relief situation in interviews with foreign journalists. Zarganar, who had joined the 1988 uprising against military rule, had been previously arrested for his pro-democracy efforts.

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!

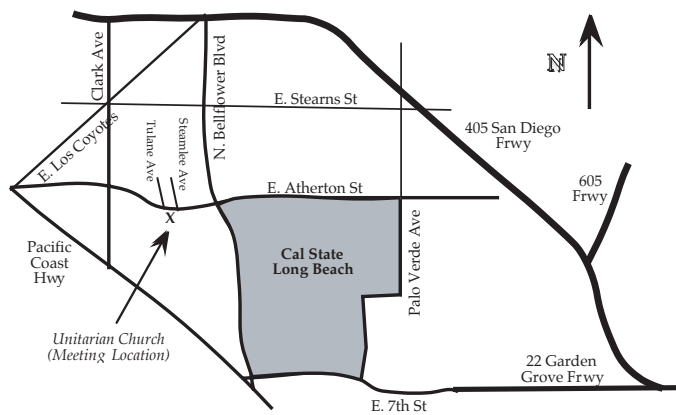
Calendar September

16 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.

19 Saturday 7:00–9:00 PM

Movie Screening: The Reckoning at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine. For more information, see the article on page 1 of this newsletter.



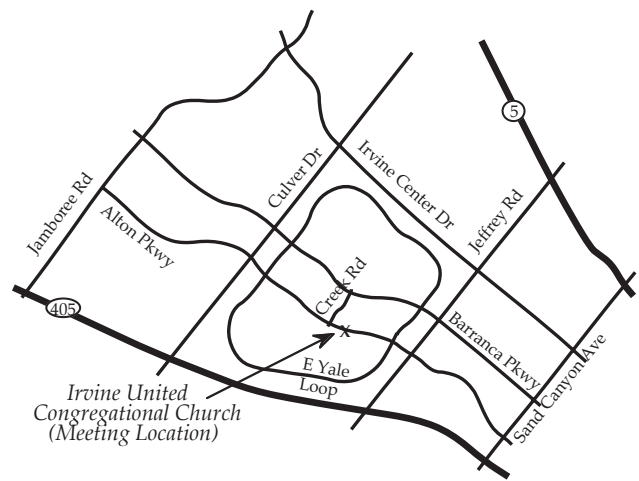
Group #175 Long Beach Meeting Location

22 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.

24 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@aiousaoc.org.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

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