

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ORANGE COUNTY

GROUP #141 ORANGE

GROUP #178 IRVINE

Newsletter

August 2002

China: Amnesty International Calls for Release of Rebiya Kadeer

This article is taken from an August 9 AI press releases.

On Sunday August 11, ethnic Uighur businesswoman, Rebiya Kadeer will have been detained for exactly three years simply for sending newspapers to her husband in the USA. She is believed to be in poor health and Amnesty International is once again calling for her to be freed together with all other prisoners of conscience in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

In August 1999, Ms. Kadeer had an appointment to discuss human rights issues with delegates from the U.S. Congressional Research Service in August 1999. The meeting never took place. While she was en route to the appointment, Chinese authorities arrested her and took her to a local prison notorious for torture.

Rebiya Kadeer is among the most prominent members of China's Uighur ethnic group in the largely Muslim Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. She has made significant contributions to securing women's rights in China and founded the "Thousand Mothers Movement" to promote employment for Uighur women. The Chinese government itself recognized her contributions by appointing her to its delegation for the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing.

In September 1999, the government charged Rebiya Kadeer with "providing secret information to foreigners," although the "secrets" turned out to be publicly available local newspapers in her possession. Following a trial held in secret, a Chinese court sentenced her to eight years' imprisonment. Her secretary, arrested shortly after she was taken into custody, received a three-year term of "re-education through labor" for his association with her. He was reportedly beaten in custody and is now in poor health.

"Rebiya Kadeer is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally," Amnesty International said.

This month Amnesty International also issued an international appeal for the release of Uighur historian, Tohti Tunyaz (who writes as Tohti Muzart). Like Rebiya Kadeer, he was detained on 'state secrets' charges after carrying out academic research into Uighur history in the XUAR. He was arrested in February 1998 and sentenced to 11 years in prison in March 1999 for "inciting separatism" and "illegally acquiring state secrets".

Prisons in the XUAR are notoriously harsh, with poor food, inadequate sanitation, and poor standards of medical treatment. Rebiya Kadeer's health has reportedly deteriorated over the last few months.

"If the Chinese authorities are not prepared to free Rebiya Kadeer unconditionally, they could at least consider releasing her on medical grounds for humanitarian reasons," Amnesty

International added.

Political repression has increased over the last year in the context of the "strike hard" campaign against crime launched in April 2001, which in the XUAR has been targeted at so-called "religious extremists" and "ethnic separatists".

The crackdown in the region has intensified further since the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, with pro-independence supporters being branded as 'separatists' or 'terrorists'. Uighurs, who are predominantly Muslim, have been the main target:- mosques have been closed down, Islamic clergy have been detained, and Uighur books have been burnt. Freedom of expression and association have been severely restricted and thousands of people remain imprisoned across the region as political prisoners or prisoners of conscience.

"Jailing community leaders and intellectuals on trumped up 'state secrets' charges and repressing Uighur culture has nothing to do with combatting 'terrorism'," Amnesty International said. "It is a systematic denial of basic human rights."

A Success in Indonesia!

Scott Harrison, Director of the AIUSA Urgent Action Network, recently reported the following:

Thursday, July 25, two young fishermen from a small village in Aceh Province, Indonesia, were arrested and severely beaten by police. They were denied access to lawyers. The next day, AI learned of their condition, prepared a WARN action (a type of off-hours Urgent Action) and issued it early Saturday morning. At the UA office in Colorado, we distributed it for the International Secretariat (IS) to 17 countries that morning. Appeals commenced immediately and continued as the WARN action was issued as an Urgent Action on Tuesday, July 30.

The morning of August 1, the IS researcher learned that the men were moved to the Poldres Pidie police station where they were granted access to a lawyer. The Commander of Polres Pidie informed a local human rights group that he had received appeals on behalf of the two men, including some from Amnesty International members. The human rights group believes that these appeals led to the men being transferred to Polres Pidie, and that the risk of further torture or ill-treatment has been greatly diminished.

Just a small story to remind ourselves that even as we decide the big issues which will form our organizational future, we are not doing so bad today. Weekend or not, with our on-call activists, we can reach out to an island and almost immediately help 19-year-old Zulkarnain Ismail and 25-year-old Abdul Muthaleb Abdullah, two fishermen who are probably scratching their heads right now wondering: Amnesty who?

I was just kidding about the part that this is a small story. For these two guys, this was a major global development.

July Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Attendees

Rukshana Alexander, Joe Azizi, Jeannine Christensen, Kevin Gaffney, Deidre Jackson, Tami Jacoby, Gordon Johnson, Ernie Solheid, Vangee Oberschlake, Pricilla Rocco.

Action File

The Orange group finally received copies of the new Action File. We distributed copies to members to review on their own. Deidre got in touch with Al Jacobsen, the case coordinator of another AIUSA group working on the same prisoner case. He will be submitting a petition in the next *Monthly Mailing* and their group will be approaching Senator Kerry (their Senator). Sen. Kerry is known for his experiences in Vietnam.

The group is looking for an individual(s) to become the case coordinator. Deidre will be posting the job responsibilities on the Yahoo! list as well as bringing copies to the next meeting.

The Long Beach group also has an Action File on behalf of a prisoner in Vietnam, so we hope to work in conjunction with them. They will be having a speaker at their September event . . . more to follow.

Letter-Writing

We wrote letters to prisoners as part of the Summer Postcard Action, a letter on the death penalty in the U.S. and on an action regarding Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Mandate Workshop

On other notes, Deidre and Kevin were going to Washington, D.C. for a follow-up to the mandate issues that Amnesty is going through. They will be presenting what they learned at the August meeting, so be there to see whassup! (Open minds encouraged to attend.)

Money, Money, Money

Yes, the Orange group does have a small amount of money to help cover our expenses. Kevin reported that as of the last meeting the group had approximately \$830 plus a few deposits to make. "What's in your wallet?"

Fundraising is still needed and the group brainstormed about how to raise money. One idea was to look into the possibility (and legality) of selling AI related CDs. More to follow.

Publicity

Our beloved publicity princess, Tami Jacoby, is stepping down to tackle other responsibilities. Therefore, we now have a need to fill her shoes. We discussed breaking down the responsibilities so people can share the work. Jeannine offered to handle reservations for the meeting room as well as notice of our meeting in the *OC Weekly*. Vangee was thinking of offering her services to contact Rep. Loretta Sanchez for the group to discuss how she can help with human rights issues.

Group Responsibilities

Further discussion was held on sharing group responsibilities such as writing letters, bringing postage, and most important, bringing food! Special thanks to Rukshana for starting us off with homemade pastries and other fine foods. See below for further job rotations to continue team-building in the group.

Amnesty Picnic

Speaking of food, don't forget the group picnic on Saturday, August 24, at 12:00-4:00 at Santiago Park and Lawn Bowling Center, 510 E. Memory Lane, Santa Ana (across Main Street from Main Place).

Vangee and Pricilla have offered their cooking skills to prepare food for the picnic, so all the rest of us have to do is pitch in some cash to cover the food. Vangee will let us know how much later on. The theme decided on was good old-fashioned American picnic menu. All groups and individuals are invite to attend. Besides food, we will have games and general good fun. This is a great chance to meet with each other and look back at all the work we have done and will do in the future (and get fat at the same time).

Job Rotations

Write a letter on behalf of our prisoner

August—Kevin Gaffney

September—Pricilla Rocco

Stamps

August—Ravi and Rukshana Alexander

September—?

Snacks

August—Jeannine

September—Tami

October—Ravi and Rukshana Alexander

July Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

We had a small summer meeting for July. Some newer members showed up as well as returning. Signed in attendees include Marla Benoist, John Daniels, Kevin Gaffney and Jim Roberts.

Viet Nam and Burma Discussions

We discussed the human rights situation in Vietnam and Burma. Two new people to the meeting shared their experiences and the work they are doing for human rights on behalf of a particular imprisoned monk. We hope to get them in touch with a local group who has adopted that prisoner.

Also discussed was ways in which we can promote the Long Beach Action file to the community and working with other groups. Since the Orange group also has a prisoner from Viet Nam, we are hoping to build on that. A copy of the Orange Action file was given to Jim to review.

Upcoming Events

We briefly discussed the mandate training/update that Deidre Jackson and Kevin Gaffney will be presenting at the August meeting. In addition the Orange group picnic/BBQ was mentioned (see the event calendar in this newsletter for more information).

The group is still looking forward to having a speaker in September and will provide detail to all AI and other groups who may be interested.

Next meeting is August 27.

July Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

Letter-Writing

At the meeting we wrote 7 postcards for Amnesty International's Summer Postcard Action and 19 letters

Campaign Updates

Ting Huang reported on the latest developments in China.

Jacques Kilchoer mentioned the case of Gambian journalist Guy-Patrick Massoloka, who has since been released.

Julie Ralls has organized a list of officials in Syria, to whom the group will write concerning our prisoner case Dr. Sa'adey. Our aim is to contact every individual on that list.

Julie Ralls and Jacques Kilchoer volunteered to be the group representatives to help with the Irvine Human Rights Film Festival in 2003.

Rhonda Seiter announced that she is the Orange County representative for concert tabling. Anyone interested in tabling at concerts should contact her (through the Irvine Group if you do not know her email address.)

Colombia Letter-Writing Action

As a new government takes over in Colombia, Amnesty International has sent an Open Letter to the new President of Colombia, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, in which the organization stresses the importance of respecting and promoting human rights. Now is the opportunity for President Uribe to address the human rights crisis in the country by taking action to end the human rights violations and abuses being committed by members of the security forces, army-backed paramilitaries and armed opposition groups.

Recommended Action

Write to President Álvaro Uribe Vélez (in Spanish if possible) along the following lines:

Dear Mr. President,

As you take office, now is an important and crucial opportunity for the new Colombian administration to give priority to developing a human rights action plan.

I urge you to take immediate action to implement repeated UN recommendations to end impunity, to confront and dismantle army-backed paramilitary organizations and to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders and other vulnerable sectors of the civilian population.

Amnesty International and the international community are concerned about the impact on human rights of policies which may be introduced by the new administration which

include:

- The creation of a million-strong civilian militia of informers which will fuel the spiral of political violence and will drag the civilian population further into the conflict;
- Reforms of the Constitutional Court which might seriously undermine its role in safeguarding human rights;
- Re-establishing the President's faculty to call a state of siege without due regard for safeguards laid down in international standards;
- The possible curtailment of public rights and freedoms, including that of expression, in the name of security;
- Granting judicial police powers to the armed forces which threatens to strengthen the mechanisms of impunity by facilitating the covering up of responsibility for human rights violations committed by the armed forces and the paramilitaries.

The civilian population is already at risk—human rights defenders, trade unionists, the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations and internally displaced persons continue to suffer serious human rights violations. They must be protected from further such violations from armed opposition groups as well as from Colombian security forces and army-backed paramilitaries.

By giving priority to developing a human rights action plan, based on UN recommendations, and ensuring that human rights organizations play a central role in this process, with the support of the international community, the new Presidency will be making concrete steps towards addressing the long-standing human rights crisis in Colombia.

Addresses

Send letters to:

Dr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez
President of the Republic of Colombia
Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8 No. 7-26
Santafé de Bogotá,
COLOMBIA

Hon. Colin L. Powell
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20520

Hon. Luis Alberto Moreno, Ambassador
Republic of Colombia
2118 Leroy Place, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of Amnesty International Group #141 and Group #178, please return this coupon to the appropriate address with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues are used to cover the costs of this newsletter and of letters on behalf of prisoners. Your address label contains your membership expiration date.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Return to:

Amnesty International
Group #141 Orange
P.O. Box 864
Orange, CA 92856

Amnesty International
Group #178 Irvine
P.O. Box 16243
Irvine, CA 92623

Please make your check payable to either Amnesty International Group #141 or Group #178. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!

Calendar

August

20 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting at the Orange Civic Center, Conference Room C, at 300 E. Chapman Avenue, in Orange. For further information about the group, contact Deidre Jackson at (562) 430-7381.

21 Wednesday 7:30 PM

Music for Human Rights Benefit Concert starring Beth Orton and Aimee Mann at the John Anson Ford Amphitheater in Los Angeles, sponsored by Amnesty International USA. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster.

24 Saturday 12:00–4:00 PM

Group #141 Picnic at Santiago Park and Lawn Bowling Center, 510 E. Memory Lane, Orange (across Main Street from Main Place). Everyone is invited!

26 Monday 7:00 PM

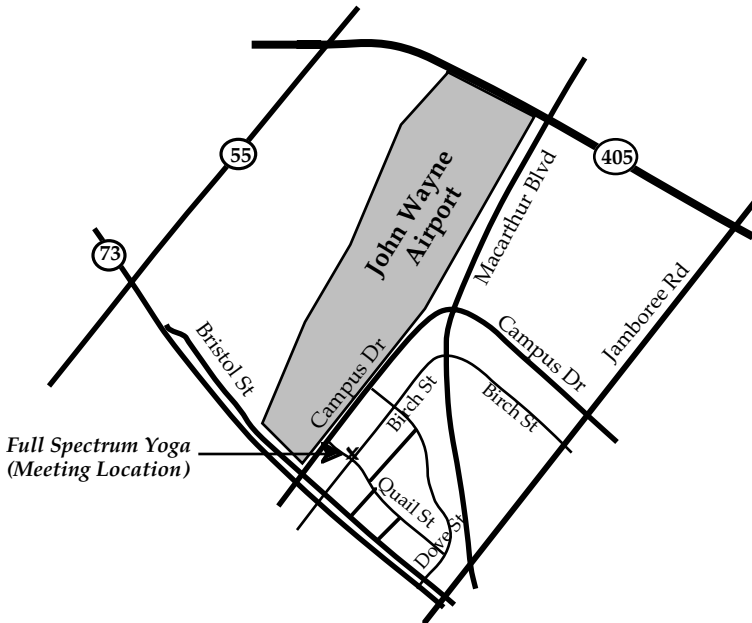
Huntington Beach Group Monthly Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Room 7B, 20111 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. For further information about the group, contact Darcie Guy at (714) 374-5786.

27 Tuesday 7:00 PM

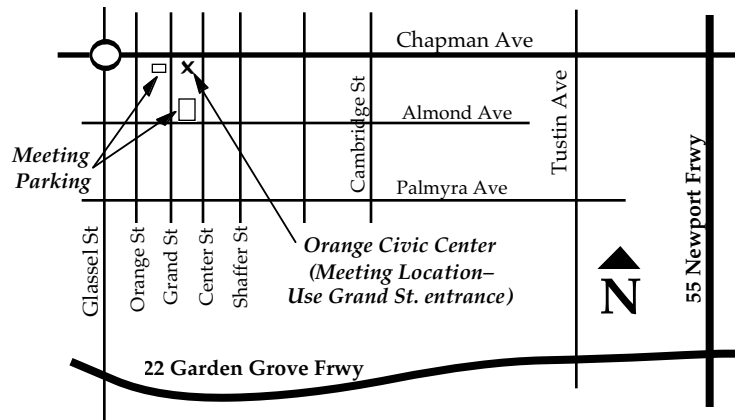
Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. Group #175 meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Bobbi Kendig at (562) 420-1155.

27 Tuesday 7:30 PM

Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting at Full Spectrum Yoga, 2018 Quail Street, Newport Beach (across from John Wayne Airport). Group #178 meets the last Tuesday of each month. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at (714) 557-8427.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location



Group #141 Orange Meeting Location

Amnesty International Group #178
P.O. Box 16243
Irvine, CA 92623