

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ORANGE COUNTY

GROUP #141 ORANGE

GROUP #178 IRVINE

Newsletter

December 2002

Special Focus Case Program Update

Amnesty International was launched in 1961 with an appeal published in London's Observer newspaper on behalf of six "prisoners of conscience"—persons imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their beliefs. AIUSA's Special Focus Case (SFC) project parallels that first effort, drawing attention to current prisoners of conscience in need of your help.

SFC Prisoner Released!

Egypt's highest appeal court today ordered a new trial for prisoner of conscience Saad Eddin Ibrahim and his co-defendants. Ibrahim, featured by the Casework Office as a Special Focus Case (SFC) for the Southern Region, was released pending the start of a new trial on January 7, 2003. He is now at home with his family in Cairo. Ibrahim received the good news on the day of his 64th birthday, and many in the courtroom reportedly cheered the decision. Although the new trial in January will be Ibrahim's third on the same charges, this one is expected to be conducted by the civilian appeals court, rather than the State Security Court. Amnesty International welcomes the release of Saad Eddin Ibrahim, but the organization maintains that the charges against him are politically motivated and should be dropped. Ibrahim will remain a Special Focus Case through the new trial.

Freed SFC Prisoners Speak to AIUSA Activists

Two Special Focus Case prisoners who were freed earlier this year visited the United States this fall to thank Amnesty activists for their efforts.

Taye Wolde-Semayat of Ethiopia, who had been the Midwest Region's Special Focus Case, spoke at Amnesty sponsored events in August and September in Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Columbia, Missouri, Hampton, VA, and Washington, DC, garnering media coverage in many of the cities. Staff from the Midwest Regional Office, the Casework Program, the Government Relations Program, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office worked together to arrange the various meetings and speaking engagements, and Dr. Taye, who was freed in May of this year, made a lasting impression on all who met him.

"Because of the international pressure from Amnesty and other groups, they let me go," Taye told Amnesty members. "It was the pressure from the international community that led to my release. That is when the government took my appeals seriously."

In meetings with Congressional members and staffers, Dr. Taye and AIUSA pushed for stronger U.S. pressure on the Ethiopian government to respect the rights of political opponents and trade unionists.

General Jose Gallardo of Mexico was a featured speaker at this year's Western Regional Conference and Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference. General Gallardo had been a Special Focus Case from 1999 until his release this year in February. At both conferences, he was met with standing ovations, and his remarks led to cheers and tears throughout the audience.

"Sometimes when you write a letter, you think it is only a

small thing," he told members. "But those letters were, for me, a spiritual force and current that gave me strength."

Mid-Atlantic activists, who had adopted General Gallardo's case through the Special Focus Case project, were thrilled to have the opportunity to meet with him. In fact, three days before the conference, the general and his son Francisco visited James Monroe High School in Fredericksburg, VA, where Francisco had spoken some 18 months earlier about his father's case. To have General Gallardo himself return to the school to thank them for their work on his behalf was such a huge and triumphant event that the mayor of Fredericksburg was on hand for the occasion, and the general's speech to the students was covered extensively by the media.

Current Special Focus Cases

- **Father Nguyen Van Ly** (Mid-Atlantic Region). A long-time, outspoken advocate for religious freedom in Vietnam, Father Ly was sentenced to 15 years in prison for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and religion.
- **Mamun al-Humsi** (Midwest Region) A member of parliament and a supporter of an emerging human rights movement, Mamun al-Humsi was jailed for speaking out against corruption and political repression in Syria.
- **Leyla Zana** (Northeast Region) An advocate for the rights of Turkey's Kurdish minority, her arrest stemmed from her swearing-in ceremony as a new member of Parliament during which she made a statement in the Kurdish language and wore traditional Kurdish colors.
- **Saad Eddin Ibrahim** (Southern Region) A well-known human rights activist who was sentenced to seven years in prison for his efforts to expose what he saw to be election fraud in Egypt.
- **Rebiya Kadeer** (Western Region) A successful businesswoman who was jailed for her efforts to publicize discrimination and human rights violations against China's Uighur minority.

Orange Group Holiday Party

The Irvine, Huntington Beach, and Long Beach groups will not be meeting this month. However, the Orange group will be holding its annual holiday party on Tuesday, December 17, at 6:00 PM, at the United Nations Center, 2428 N. Grand Avenue, Santa Ana.. **Everyone is invited to attend!** For information, consult the Calendar on the back of the newsletter.

November Meeting Minutes

Group # 141 Orange

Attendees

Ravi Alexander, Kevin Gaffney, Deidre Jackson, Tami Jacoby, Katherine Limon, Melissa Livergood-Li, Priscilla Rocco, and Ernie Solheid.

Letter-Writing Actions

The group sent a dozen letters on behalf of our adopted prisoner of conscience, the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, in Viet Nam, calling for his release from house arrest. Many thanks to Tami for preparing our PoC letters this month.

The group also worked on a South Asia Regional Action Network action asking the government of Pakistan to investigate reports of extrajudicial executions of people suspected of sectarian violence in that county.

New Member

The group welcomed Mel Livergood-Li to our meeting. Mel is a former AI student group coordinator who comes to California from Missouri by way of Brazil.

Human Rights Day Event

Kevin discussed the Oceanside Human Rights Day event, the 14th annual Walk for Human Rights. The event will take place on Sunday, December 8 at 5:00 PM, two days before Human Rights Day. See the article on page 5 of this newsletter for further details. Kevin offered to coordinate carpooling. Contact him at xhusker@aol.com.

Western Regional Conference

Deidre reported on the Western Regional Conference, held last month in Denver. Deidre was the sole Southern California Certificate of Appreciation honoree present when names were announced at the meeting. (See the article below.)

Volunteers Needed for Western Region Committees

Deidre mentioned that the Western Region Standing Committee on Membership Development and the Regional Planning Group are both looking for members.

Design Project

The group has been contacted by a group of students at the Art Institute of California-Orange County who asked to complete some design work for the group for a class project. The students are working on a revision of the Website for the Orange County groups, a brochure with contact information about the groups that could be handed out to prospective members, and an Orange County graphic.

November Meeting Minutes

Group # 178 Long Beach

Attendees

Fernanda DeSauza, Mike Farris, Kevin Gaffney, Lee Janson, Bobbi Kendig, Adriana Lopez, Jim Roberts, and Becky Stahley.

Letter-Writing Actions

We generated 7 letters on behalf of our POC in Viet Nam and 13 holiday cards.

New Members

We welcomed new attendees, Fernanda DeSauza and Adri-

ana Lopez, and returnee Becky Stahley. Adriana described her energetic activities with the AI group which she has organized at Jordan High School in Long Beach. The group issued an invitation for their members to meet with us any time.

Mandate Discussion

We discussed AI's stand on sanctions and entertained some comments on the changes in the AI Mandate. Our January meeting will focus on a discussion of the Mandate, led by Kevin and Deidre Jackson. Kevin informed us that the changes in the Mandate focus on accountability and the opportunity to expand what we can work on, but local groups will not be forced to change our ways.

Human Rights Day Event

Kevin announced a Walk for Human Rights will take place in Oceanside on December 8.

Upcoming Meetings

There will be no meeting in December. The next meeting will take place January 28 at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Long Beach.

November Meeting Minutes

Huntington Beach Group

Attendees

Mahsa Abassi, Dick Carlburg, Don Champine, Darcie Guy, Sarah Keller, Shyamal Leonard, Gabriella Miotto, Andrea and Cliff Rousseue, and Carlos Saltzmann.

Letter-Writing Actions

We did our holiday card writing action (25) and completed 2 petitions.

Special Presentations

We had an awesome presentation from Gabriella Miotto; she discussed her work in Chiapas and Guatemala and the former Yugoslavia.

January Meeting

We are taking a break for December and will be back on track in January.

We discussed our upcoming meeting in January, which will be a female inter-faith panel discussion. The meeting will be held January 27 at 7:00 PM in the Franciscan room at Sts. Simon and Jude. We already have commitments from Sister Maureen (Catholic), Cantor Linda Ecker (Jewish), and at least one woman from the local mosque. We compiled our list of questions for the panel, which we will distribute to the panelists beforehand. We will also use the questions to publicize on the flyer. We are still trying to recruit panelists from the Buddhist and Hindu religions.

medskip

Holiday Card Action Prisoner Freed

Sevil Dalkilic of Turkey, who was originally featured in this year's Holiday Card Action, was conditionally released from prison on medical grounds in mid-November. Ms. Dalkilic, a lawyer who was jailed after investigating possible state involvement in the killing of a Kurdish man, had been the subject of various actions by AIUSA, including direct mail actions, the Freedom Writers Network, and others.

Amnesty International USA Holiday Card Action 2002

"If it were not for these people, for the representatives of international organizations, and for the opposition movement in Belarus, I would not have been released even in a hundred years."

From Andrey Klimov, featured in last year's Holiday Card Action, upon his release from prison in Belarus in March 2002. According to the news agency INTERFAX, he emerged from the labor colony carrying a bagful of letters of support that he had received from people abroad.

Each year during the winter holidays, Amnesty International asks you to send words of support to those who have suffered human rights violations. Holidays mean little to those who believe they have been forgotten by the world. A simple greeting card, however, can bring renewed hope. You can let someone know they are not forgotten.

Tips for Sending Cards

Please send simple messages of goodwill, such as "We are thinking of you." Don't discuss politics or the accusations directed against the prisoners.

The people featured here hold diverse religious beliefs. Please send non-religious greetings rather than Christmas or other religious-themed cards. Note that references to alcoholic beverages could be offensive in some cultures. Do not mention Amnesty International or use AI cards.

Mark your envelope "Airmail." International airmail postage is currently 80 cents for each half-ounce of weight.

If you receive a reply to your cards, please send a copy to: Amnesty International USA, National Casework Office, 131 Ponce de Leon Ave, #220, Atlanta, GA 30308.

Rev. Nguyen Van Ly

VIETNAM

Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly has spoken out for religious freedom in Vietnam for over 25 years. Late in 2000, Father Ly issued a statement criticizing the government's interference in church teaching and its appropriation of church land. He followed this with several appeals for religious freedom and a call, along with other religious leaders, for the release of all prisoners held for their religious beliefs. At the invitation of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Father Ly submitted written testimony in February 2001. His statement was highly critical of the Vietnamese government, which, he said, "has stripped all churches of their independence and freedom." Months later, as he prepared to celebrate Mass on the morning of May 17, 2001, hundreds of police officers appeared at his church and arrested him. Charged with defying a state order of confinement and "undermining the state policy of great unity," Father Ly was brought to trial in October 2001. His half-day trial concluded with conviction and a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment. Political trials in Vietnam do not conform to international standards, and Father Ly reportedly had no legal representation. Amnesty International considers Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly to be a prisoner of conscience and seeks his immediate and



unconditional release.

Rev. Nguyen Van Ly

Trai Tu KA

Xa BA SAO

Huyen KIM BANG

Tinh HA NAM

Tia Xa PHU LY

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

N'sii Luanda Shandwe

CONGO

Human rights defender N'sii Luanda Shandwe has been detained since April 2002 because of his legitimate human rights activities. He fell seriously ill while held in Kinshasa's main prison, the Centre Pénitentiaire et de rééducation de Kinshasa (CPRK). On top of typhoid and acute malaria, he suffered severe stomach pains for which prison doctors recommended he receive an operation and specialist treatment. Prison authorities failed to heed this recommendation for several weeks until finally he was transferred in late September to a clinic, where doctors removed his appendix. Amnesty International fears that he will now be returned to the CPRK prison, where medical care is limited. N'sii Luanda Shandwe has been charged with treason and is facing trial before a military tribunal. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience who has been detained on contrived charges in an effort to curtail his human rights activism. As president of the Committee of Human Rights Observers (CODHO), N'sii Luanda had been detained previously by authorities because of his human rights activities. During his current detention, he has reportedly been questioned about the activities of CODHO and about his recent trip to Geneva to attend sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.



N'sii Luanda Shandwe

c/o CODHO

BP 185

Kinshasa 11

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows

GUATEMALA

CONAVIGUA (Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala), the National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows, was formed in 1988 by indigenous women whose husbands "disappeared" or were killed as a result of government counterinsurgency campaigns in the 1980s. Over the years, the organization's membership broadened to include other women and men as well, and its mandate now also includes opposition to militarization and to all forms of racism and discrimination against the identity, culture and harmony of indigenous communities. CONAVIGUA has actively pressed for exhumations of the many mass graves in Guatemala containing the bodies

Continued on page 4

Holiday Card Action

Continued from page 3

National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows

of victims of massacres committed by the army and the civil patrols. Over the years, many CONAVIGUA members have suffered threats and intimidation because of their work. Recently, there has been an escalation of threats and intimidation directed at human rights defenders in Guatemala, including activists and forensic experts involved in exhumations. In early September, CONAVIGUA member Manuel García de la Cruz was abducted, tortured, and killed in a manner recalling the atrocities committed during the war. Members of CONAVIGUA believe the nature of Manuel García's murder is intended as a warning that they should cease their work for reconciliation, peace and justice in Guatemala. Please send messages of solidarity and support to the members of CONAVIGUA.

CONAVIGUA
8a. Avenida 2-29, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA

Yuri Bandazhevsky

BELARUS

Professor Yury Bandazhevsky, a scientist specializing in nuclear medicine, has spent much of his career focusing on the effects of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion. His research into the effects of the radioactive fall-out on people living in Belarus led to his publishing a report critical of the official research being conducted into the Chernobyl incident, which he claimed had not produced any significant scientific findings. Soon after the report was published, he was arrested on "anti-terrorism" charges. Although he was released conditionally in December 1999, new charges of corruption were brought against him. Following an unfair trial, he was convicted in June 2001 of accepting bribes from students seeking admission to the Gomel Medical Institute, of which he is the former rector. Professor Bandazhevsky adamantly denied the charges against him, and expressed fear that he had been targeted by the state authorities on account of his scientific research into the Chernobyl incident and his open criticism of the state authorities. Amnesty International considers Yury Bandazhevsky to be a prisoner of conscience, who has been sentenced to eight years in prison for exercising his right to freedom of expression. The organization is very concerned at recent reports that Prof. Bandazhevsky's health has deteriorated drastically and that he reportedly is suffering from severe depression.

Prof. Yury Bandazhevsky
Respublika Belarus
220600 Minsk
ul. Kalvariyskaya 36
PO Box 35/21
Bandazhevskomu Y.
BELARUS



Kurban Zakirov

TURKMENISTAN

Kurban Zakirov first attracted the attention of police in January 1999 when the then 17-year-old follower of the Jehovah's Witness faith was caught discussing the Bible in a private home. Detained for 30 days for participating in an illegal religious meeting, he was called up for military service after his release. He petitioned the President of Turkmenistan to excuse him from military service because his religious beliefs did not allow him to serve in the army. Instead, he was sentenced in May 1999 to one year in prison for "evasion of regular call-up." In December 1999 he reportedly was pardoned but was denied freedom because he refused on religious grounds to swear an oath of loyalty to the President by placing his hand on the Koran. Upon completion of his sentence he again was denied release because he refused to swear the oath. Authorities then reportedly fabricated a case, claiming that Zakirov had attacked a prison official. As a result, Kurban Zakirov was sentenced to eight years in prison. Amnesty International believes him to be a prisoner of conscience who has been jailed on account of his conscientiously held beliefs. He is imprisoned at a labor colony where officials are said to put constant pressure on him and other prisoners of minority religions to renounce their faith.

Kurban Zakirov
Respublika Turkmenistan g.
Turkmenbashi BPT-5 p/p V.S.
Zaklyuchennomu Zakirovu Kurbanu
TURKMENISTAN



Felipe Ondó Obiang, Others EQUATORIAL GUINEA

An unfair trial earlier this year of 144 people accused of crimes against the security of the state was designed to eliminate the last peaceful political opponents continuing to resist consistent harassment by the authorities of this central African nation. More than 60 people were convicted, and among those sentenced to long prison terms were Felipe Ondó Obiang and Guillermo Nguema Elá, two leaders of the political party Fuerza Demócrata Republicana (FDR), Democratic Republican Force, who were accused of plotting to overthrow the government. Emilio Ndong Biyogo and Plácido Miko Abogo, members of two other political parties, were also among those convicted. Most, if not all, of the detainees are believed to have been tortured in detention. Amnesty International fears that the life and health of the prisoners are being jeopardized by a lack of food and by wounds caused by ill-treatment. Conditions have reportedly worsened for the prisoners since June 2002 when their relatives were forbidden to visit them and bring them food. Amnesty International considers all of the convicted to be prisoners of conscience, and it seeks their immediate and unconditional release. Please send cards of support to the prisoners named above.

[name of prisoner]
Cárcel Pública de Malabo .Black Beach.
Malabo
EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Western Region Volunteers Recognized

This year the Western Region (at the initiative of its Standing Committee on Membership Development, SCOMD) recognized the leadership and contributions of 26 volunteers.

"The work of AI would be much more difficult without the achievements of these outstanding activists," says Cosette Thompson, Western Regional Director. Two activists, Kris Elali and Hilary Naylor, were selected to receive special Outstanding Volunteer Awards.

Certificate of Appreciation honorees were: Alexi Daher, Tshewang Dorji, Norma Edwards, Sushanna Ellington, Mati Franco, Eugene Friedman, Brent Fulton, Kevin Gaffney, Alessandra Gallo, Tracy Gore, Darcie Guy, Deidre Jackson, Jacques Kilchoer, Kathleen Lockwood, Rasheeda Mullings, Natasha Nummedal, Marco Pinto, Jim Roberts, Norma Roberts, Larry Roman, Judy Shellabarger, Ernie Solheid, Harmon Tip-ton, and Lucille Whelan.

Upcoming Events

Voices from the Inside

The Orange County Coalition Against the Death Penalty and the Orange County chapter of California People of Faith are presenting a panel featuring a different view of the death penalty on Tuesday, December 10, International Human Rights Day. The event will be held at the St. Joseph Center Multipurpose Room, 480 S. Batavia Avenue/La Veta, in Orange. Food will be served 6:30–7:00 PM with the panel beginning at 7:15.

The panel will feature various perspectives on capital punishment.

- **Inside the legal system:** Chuck Patterson, defense attorney for Manny Babbitt, executed 1999.
- **Inside the human mind:** Maribeth Ekey, Psy.D., writer on the human dynamics of hatred.
- **Inside the victim's pain:** Mark Massengill from Catholic Worker, survivor of his son's murder and capital trial.

The event is free but offerings will be gratefully accepted. For more information, visit <http://dentention.la-archdiocese.org/penalty.html> or email cpfocc@yahoo.com.

Walk for Human Rights

The San Diego County Amnesty International groups will celebrate International Human Rights Day on Sunday, December 8, 5:00–7:00 PM, with the 14th Annual San Diego Candlelight Walk for Human Rights. The theme of the event this year is "Women and Human Rights." The event includes speakers, live music, refreshments and the candlelight walk on the pier, including:

- Mangala Sharma, from the Refugee Women Network.
- Akida Rouzi, daughter of Chinese prisoner of conscience Rebiya Kadeer.
- Midge Costanza, Special Assistant to the Governor and Women's Liaison.
- Ms. Alemi Daba, Alliance for African Assistance, who will be presented with the Digna Ochoa Human Rights Defender Award.

The event will take place at the Oceanside Amphitheater, just south of the pier in North San Diego county. From the north, take I-5 south, exit Mission Avenue, go west to the coast in Oceanside, then follow directions to the Pier / Amphitheater). The trip is approximately a 35-minute drive from the El Toro Y in south Orange County. For carpooling from Orange County, email Kevin Gaffney at xhusker@aol.com.

Participants should bring a flashlight and pen and dress warmly for the brief walk on the pier. Also, bring quarters for parking. For more information, call (760) 731-0735.

Iraq: U.S. Must Exhaust All Efforts Toward Peaceful Solution

In light of the risk that military action may result in large-scale human rights violations, Amnesty International USA reiterated its call to the US government that use of force must be preceded by exhaustive pursuit of a solution through peaceful means.

- Military intervention will inevitably exacerbate the already precarious situation of the Iraqi civilian population and result in grave violations of their human rights.
- Human rights must not be used as an instrument in the rhetoric of war. Claims that military action in Iraq is justified in the name of human rights raise questions of selectivity and double standards; the states that claim force is now justified to protect human rights are the very states who supported Saddam Hussein's government during the Iran-Iraq war.
- The economic sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council have resulted in grave violations of the most basic human rights of Iraq's civilian population – the right to life, health, education and an adequate standard of living, including food, housing and medical care.
- Amnesty International calls on the international community to prepare to protect Iraqi refugees. An almost inevitable consequence of military intervention, or even the threat of it, is the likely increase in refugees and asylum-seekers to neighboring countries

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.

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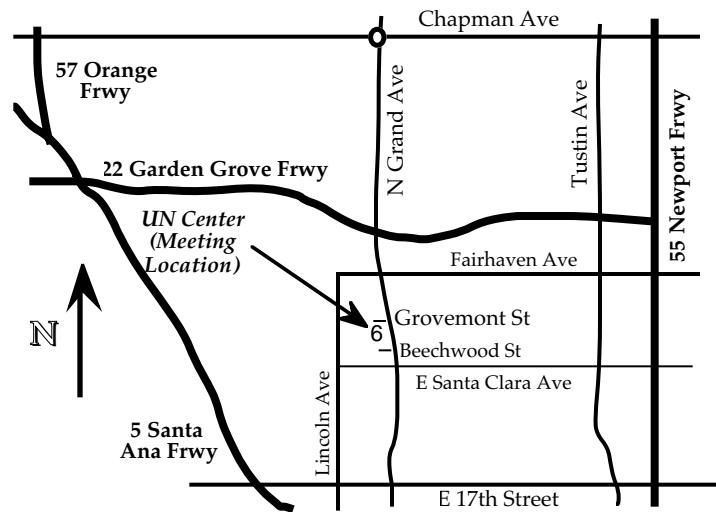
Amnesty International
Group #178 Irvine
P.O. Box 16243
Irvine, CA 92623

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 December

- 8** Sunday 5:00 PM
14th Annual San Diego Candlelight Walk for Human Rights at the Oceanside Amphitheater, next to the pier. For more information, see the article on page 5 of this newsletter.
- 10** Tuesday
International Human Rights Day marking the 53rd anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.
- 10** Tuesday 6:30 PM
Voices from the Inside, a panel discussion on the death penalty, at the St. Joseph Center Multipurpose Room, 480 S. Batavia Avenue/La Veta, in Orange. Food served 6:30–7:00 PM; panel discussion begins 7:15. For more information, see the article on page 5.

- 17** Tuesday 6:00–8:00 PM
Group #141 Monthly Meeting and Holiday Party at the United Nations Center, 2428 N. Grand Avenue, Santa Ana. The center is located in the Grovemont Square shopping center. See the map below. **Please note the special early time!** We will have our annual holiday potluck party in lieu of our regular meeting. Everyone is invited! Please bring a dish to pass. Also bring some greeting cards for Amnesty’s Holiday Card Action. The United Nations Association store will also be open to purchase gifts and UNICEF cards.



Group #141 Orange Meeting Location

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