

AMNESTY NEWS

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May 2004



Central America Special Action (Update)

Chris Blake, Becky John and Richard Green (members of Southampton AI CASA sub group) provided an update on various human rights issues in Central America.

Chris provided the background information from 1954 on, highlighting the key strategic location; the importance of the Panama Canal; and the role of the USA in its "backyard". Examples included: the overthrow of Arbenz in Guatemala; US's backing of military rulers in El Salvador; Contras trained by US to overthrow Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the removal of Noriega by the US in Panama.

Becky highlighted the key human rights issues in Guatemala. Behind the smokescreen of fighting communism, military groups trained and funded by the US killed 200,000 mostly indigenous people and destroyed 440 Mayan villages. More than a million people were uprooted from their homes and over a quarter million became refugees. The consequent unequal distribution of land remains a major problem, with 2% of Guatemalans controlling 75% of land resources. Re-militarization, encouraged by the USA, has led to renewed HR violations. Since 2000, Guatemala has witnessed a sharp rise in violence and intimidation directed at Union leaders, HR activists and journalists. The free trade policies encouraged by the USA have resulted in privatisation of health care, putting medical care out of the reach of poor

Group Meeting
Monday 11th June 2004

"Doing Business with Unpleasant Regimes"
Andrew PARISH
(CBI member and AI Lymington Group Member)

Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
7.30p.m.
ALL WELCOME

women and families. The Maquilla workers (mainly young women) work longer hours than men and are paid half of men's wages.

Richard highlighted the violence against women in Mexico. It is almost 11 years since the brutal cycle of abductions and murders of young women began in Northern Mexico. AI has serious concerns, particularly the absence of any judicial review of abuses, such as torture, resulting in apparent miscarriages of justice and impunity; insufficient action to integrate gender perspective into every element of preventative and investigative measures to combat violence against women. In 2003 AI made three recommendations: immediate intervention by federal authorities; independent judicial review and respect for dignity of people working for women's rights.

AI's VISION

is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

AI's MISSION

is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

AI's CORE VALUES

remain those of : international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

This News Letter is produced by The Southampton Group of AI. It may not necessarily represent the views of Amnesty International.

More details from
John Williams Editor

Death Penalty in China (see page 3 for addresses)

Please write letters including a selection of the issues raised below:

General Points:

*Express an interest and concern with legal reform in China.

*Acknowledge and welcome the progress China has made in changing its domestic laws in response to human rights concerns—e.g. abolition last year of the system of custody and repatriation, particularly those facing the death penalty

*Express profound concern at the levels of executions in China and urge the imposition of an immediate moratorium on the death penalty.

Specific Points:

***Torture**—this is widely used in China as a means to extort confessions from detainees. China has ratified the **Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)** in 1988. Express concern that by not taking appropriate measures to comply with the Convention, China is failing in its obligations.

***Extended and incommunicado**



AI Action

Death Penalty in China

detention. Acknowledge and welcome China's continuing effort to eliminate detention. Underline that people continue to be held incommunicado severely limiting potential for full and fair trial. Urge China to abolish incommunicado detention and to guarantee immediate access to legal representation for all people in detention.

***Access to lawyers.** China has not guaranteed detainees immediate access to legal representation or to a family member upon detention. Urge China to enact legislation and procedural safeguards to guarantee immediate access to legal representation for all detainees.

***Presumption of Innocence.** Point out that contrary to international standards there is no specific provision for the presumption of innocence under Chinese Law, that without that provision a defendant's chances of receiving a fair trial are severely limited.

***Trial Proceedings.** In practice, defence lawyers have limited access to their clients and to documentary evidence against their clients collected by the prosecution, which undermines the right to a fair trial. Point out that fabricated and incomplete evidence is used to sentence people to death.

***Independence of the judiciary.** Urge China to introduce safeguards to ensure that there can be no political interference in the judicial system.

Letter writing guide

*Always be polite. This rule is essential and invariable. Your aim is to help, not to relieve your own feelings. Governments don't respond to abusive or condemnatory letters (however well deserved!)

*Always write your letters on the basis that the Government concerned is open to reason and discussion.

*It is important where possible to stress a country's reputation for moderation and justice, to show respect for its constitution and judicial procedures, and to demonstrate an understanding of current difficulties. This will give you more scope to point out ways in which the human rights situation can be improved.

*Follow strictly the instructions given by AI.

*Never use political jargon. Don't give the impression that you are writing because you are ideologically or politically opposed to the government in question. It is far more effective to stress that your concern for human rights is not politically based in any way, but in keeping with basic principles of international law.

*If appropriate, explain who you are and what you do. It shows your letter is genuine, and that people from varying walks of life are following events in the country concerned.

Group News: May 2004

Business meeting: Veronica Tippetts welcomed all to the meeting.

1. 26th June (International Day for Torture Victims) 3.00 to 3.30 we will be tying ribbons on the AI Tree, hopefully with the support of one of our MPs.
2. 26th June Southampton Group will celebrate its 40th Birthday with a party at Franc Capocci's house, 104 Upper Shirley Avenue.
3. Balloon Festival: all places have been taken, and therefore we probably will not have a stall this year.
4. Frances reported on the International Meeting on North Korea and KOJARAN (Koreas and Japan Regional Action Network). The present campaign on North Korea is entitled "Starved of Their Rights", which is one of the first economic and social rights campaigns.

5. The New Vision and Mission will shortly become a reality for Groups, information should be available by June. China is one of the key countries AI will be focussing on.
6. Action post cards "Support HR Defenders" and "Women HR Abuse", will be included with this News.
7. Monthly Action on Belarus, 2 letters on behalf of Trade Unionists
8. Mary has a flow chart available on "Whose who" in AI.
9. European Elections: we will be writing to 2 candidates and sending AI's manifesto. Our target potential MEPs are Miriam Kennet (Lib Dem) and Ashley Mote (UKIP).
10. Totton Charity Market stall raised £67. Thanks to all those who helped.
11. Southampton Interfaith Link Peace walk will be on June 20th.

CHINA Government Authorities Addresses for letter write action.

President of the People's Republic of China
HU Jintao Guojia Zhuxi
The State Council General Office
Yongneixijie
Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency.

Premier of the People's Republic of China
WEN Jiabao Zongli
Guowuyuan
9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie
Beijingshi 100032
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic
Li Zhaoxing Buzhang
Waijiaobu

2 Chaoyangmen Nandajie
Beijingshi 100701
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China
ZHANG Fusen Buzhang
Sifabu
10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie, Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi 100020
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China
ZHOU Yongkang Buzhang
Gong'anbu
14 Dongchanganjie
Beijingshi 100741
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

