

AMNESTY NEWS

www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/southampton-city

June 2004



Doing Business with Unpleasant Regimes

Andrew Parish of the New Forest Group and a member of the CBI provided a thought provoking presentation on this topic.

He noted that his views had changed over the years. His current views were governed by two simple questions: "*Write down in one sentence what is your objective*" and "*Can you say if what you are going to do meets the objective*". He argued that few business or political objectives would meet the test. He argued that few people thought what it is they are trying to achieve and they are often profoundly misplaced.

The core of his thesis was that social policy needed to be morally based, whereas trade policies could not be, they are about efficiency. Making wealth is one thing whereas the distribution is a morale issue.

On the whole wealthy countries have a better human rights record than less wealthy ones.

Big businesses, on the whole, are false enemy, business creates prosperity which is a force for good in the long term.

He cited as examples, the business community in South Africa were one of the major forces for change as they realised that apartheid was incompatible with making a prosperous country, as it was totally inefficient.

Support for business in China would provide the engine for change.

**Group Meeting
Monday July 12th 2004**

**AGM
Focus on Human Rights in UK
Working in Partnerships**

**Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
(Use main Church entrance)
7.30pm
ALL WELCOME**

He argued that some of the Oxfam fair trade initiatives often distorted the market and consequently disadvantaged some sections of the world, e.g. Vietnamese coffee growers.

In principle he argued that food subsidies were a nonsense, especially in the European Union, the market was much better at sorting these things out.

He highlighted his concerns when organisations like AI moved into areas where there are different points of view, they are better at dealing with absolutes. AI's energies are better focussed at governments, who are the main human rights abusers rather than businesses.

Andrew's presentation led to lively debate.

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.

Worldwide appeal for: July 2004

AFGHANISTAN: Detained at Bagram

Saifullah Paracha, a Pakistan national, was scheduled to fly to Thailand for a business meeting on 5 July 2003. He rang his daughter from Karachi airport just before boarding his flight but never arrived at the meeting. For the next month his family had no idea of his whereabouts.

Saifullah Paracha's wife made enquiries with the Pakistan and Thai authorities in an attempt to find out what had happened to her husband, but received no answers. After a month the family heard on NBC news that Saifullah Paracha and his son had been detained by the US authorities. Some time afterwards his wife received a letter via the International Committee of the Red Cross explaining that Saifullah Paracha was being held at Bagram, a US air base north of Kabul, Afghanistan. It appears that he had been transferred into US custody without reference to any legal safeguards.

Detainees at Bagram are denied access to lawyers, fami-



*Justice for
detainees at
Bagram*

lies and courts. Former detainees have reported being subjected to prolonged kneeling or standing, hooding, being kept in painful or awkward positions, sleep deprivation and 24-hour lighting. It is not known what the current conditions of detention are. AI has been denied access to Bagram air base.

For further information on detainees in Bagram and Guantanamo Bay see AI's

document "USA: The threat of a bad example - undermining international standards as -war on terror-detentions continue, August 2003 (AMR 51/114/2003)

Please write: asking for justice for Saifullah Paracha and all detainees held at Bagram air base and other US detention facilities in Afghanistan. Urge that they be released immediately unless they are promptly charged with recognizably criminal offences and brought to trial within a reasonable time in proceedings that fully comply with international standards.

Send appeals to:

George W. Bush
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington
DC 20500
USA

E-mail:
president@whitehouse.gov

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.

