

# AMNESTY NEWS

[www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/southampton-city](http://www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/southampton-city)

April 2005



## 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.

## Female Refugee Experience in UK

The Group was privileged to hear from a refugee from Afghanistan and her daughter.

She described in a very moving story how she had left Afghanistan and arrived in England in August 2000. The family had fled Afghanistan because under the Taleban life had become very dangerous for them.

As a family of four, her husband and three children, they had first had to walk for many hours and then travel for one and a half months. This included spending long periods in the back of a lorry with no food and only dripping rain water to drink.

When they arrived in England they were picked up walking on a motor way and taken to a police station, where they were treated very well.

She was a teacher in Afghanistan before the Taliban regime. She and her daughters were not allowed to work or attend school, her sons were allowed to go to the Mosque school

She said that she and her family were very happy in England.

Her daughter spoke eloquently about her enjoyment at school, although when she came to this

**Group Meeting  
Monday April 11th 2005**

**Letter Writing  
&  
Feedback from AIUK AGM**

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

country she could not speak English. She said that her ambition was to become a doctor.

Their current status was they had a four year visa, which ended next month and they will need to appeal to stay. Refugee Action had been very helpful to them. Although the money had been small they had survived. There were some other Afghan families in Southampton.

She said she would never go back to Afghanistan as she felt it was still very dangerous, she knew of examples of people being killed for money.

All of those present were deeply moved by this wonderful story of human courage.

## COLOMBIA: Women's bodies used as a battleground

Terror and exploitation have made women's bodies a battleground in Colombia. All sides in the 40-year internal armed conflict; the security forces, army-backed paramilitaries and armed opposition groups; have sexually abused and oppressed women, both civilians and their own combatants. Sexual violence has indelibly marked Colombian women's lives.

Women are targeted for a number of reasons—to sow terror within communities, to force people to flee their homes, to wreak revenge on opposition forces and to accumulate “trophy of war”.

Women and girls have also been persecuted and subjected to attacks, including rape and sexual abuse, by armed opposition groups who accuse them of fraternising with members of the security forces or alleged paramilitaries.

Armed opposition and paramilitaries compete to be the



guardians of traditional sexual morality. They impose intrusive rules of conduct and conduct “social cleansing” operations to demonstrate their power. Clothing considered provocative and sex outside marriage have been punished with rape and sexual abuse, floggings and mutilation. Women from the poorest communities, Afro-descendent and indigenous women, peasants and shantytown dwellers, are particularly at risk.

### Take action:

Urge the Colombian government to:

\*acknowledge that violence against women is an integral part of the serious human rights crisis facing Colombia and publicly express strong condemnation of this violence.

\*guarantee the protection of women and respect for women's rights by implementing recommendations by human rights monitoring bodies of the UN and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and international human rights standards.

\*investigate all reports of sexual violence committed by members of the security forces, paramilitary groups and armed opposition groups, and bring to justice those responsible in accordance with international standards of fair trial.

\*ensure truth, justice and reparation for victims and survivors of sexual violence.

### Send your appeals to:

The President of the Republic of Colombia,  
 Senor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez,  
 Presidente de la Republica,  
 Palacio de Narino,  
 Carrera 8 No. 7-26  
 Bogotá,  
 Colombia

### 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: March Group Meeting

Jenny McConnell, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1. Mary Brown (secretary):** Information from AIUK: Change of address of AIUK: "Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA; Tel: 020 7033 1500; Fax: 020 7033 1503; Textphone: 020 7033 1664.

Monthly Action: Colombia (see page 2 for letter writing action).

Death of Peter Benenson, (see letter from Kate Allen below)

Group Profile: Questionnaire completed at the meeting.

AGM: Materials available

Women's Day Cards: Cards for Sudan and Iraq.

**2 Giampaolo D'Alessandro (treasurer):** Segalula concert raised £465.99 (£360 net gain after expenses). Thanks to Waitrose for donating drinks.

Current balance £1200, so far given £1100 to AI this year. Agree at next meeting how much money to send to AIUK.

Noted the LGBT speaker moved from May to July meeting.

**3. Becky John (Vice Chair):** A film crew from Manchester on behalf of the Open Uni are in-

vestigating the killings of Mexican women, they have been told about the Amnesty letter writing campaign. They would like to visit our Group as one of the most active CASA groups to film us letter writing at the June meeting.

**4 Jenny McConnell:** Thanked those who helped at the Segalula concert and those who took photos.

**5. Fran Stanfield:** An e-mail sent correcting the information in last months News regarding our decisions about our future commitments, the item should have read: "Arms Control was committed to by Barbara and Eileen; Business and Human Rights committed to by Gareth and Becky; Administration of Justice (Death Penalty) committed to by John and Giampaolo; CASA committed to by Frank and Richard and to continue with Mexico Action File (tbc); N Korea Action File committed to by Fran, whilst Action File is held by the subgroup run at Avenue St Andrews; China as a CAP committed to by Judy" (apols for inaccurate reporting in last News Ed)

## Letter from Kate Allen (Director AIUK Section):

You will have seen the news that Peter Benenson, the founder of Amnesty International died on Friday February 26th after a long illness. Few people have left such a legacy to the world. Today, forty four years after Peter wrote an article in the Observer we are a movement of almost two million people devoted to standing up for justice. Amnesty International has dealt with over 50,000 cases, has achieved a global convention against torture and contributed to the establishment of an International Criminal Court amongst our other many achievements. Peter was an extraordinary man and a visionary. One of his last acts for Amnesty was to write a message launching the capital appeal for this wonderful building we now occupy. In that message Peter said "Forty one years ago, I could not have envisaged how far we were all to come on this shared journey of ours. It gives me enormous hope and satisfaction to know that Amnesty International is taking its struggle for freedom and justice to a new level and creating a focal point for activists in the UK". He said "...it is ultimately about much more than bricks and mortar. It's about building a better future for human rights."

That is the challenge that Peter has passed on to us. We are talking with the International Secretariat about a memorial service and will let you know once arrangements are in place. In the meantime I have asked the press office to circulate the obituaries and press coverage of this remarkable man.

**Southampton Group Who's Who:**

**Group Officers:**

Chair:

*Jenny McConnell*

Vice-Chair:

*Becky John*

Secretary:

*Mary Brown*

Treasurer:

*Giampaolo D'Alessandro*

Membership Secretary:

*Jenny McConnell*

Outreach:

*Veronica Tippets*

Press Officer:

*Mary Brown*

Parliamentary Officer:

*Frank Capocci*

News Letter Editor:

*John Williams*

**Subgroups:**

CASA/Victor Pineda Henestrosa:

*Frank Capocci*

CHIRAN:

*Judy Horton*

Death Penalty:

*Giampaolo D'Alessandro*

*John Williams*

Refugees:

*Jilly Cooke*

Korea:

*Avenue St Andrew's Church Group*

Southampton University Link:

*tbc*

**Fair Trade**

Support Southampton's Fair Trade Shop

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Free parking in Vincent St Car park

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around the world

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**Diary:**

◆ **Friday 8th to Sunday 10th April:** AIUK  
AGM in Lancaster

◆ **Monday 11th April:** Group Meeting:  
Letter writing and AIUK feedback.  
7.30pm Avenue St Andrews United Re-  
formed Church, The Avenue. All Wel-  
come

◆ **Monday 9th May:** Group Meeting.  
7.30pm Avenue St Andrews United Re-  
formed Church, The Avenue, All Wel-  
come.

◆ **Saturday 14th May:** Fund-raising walk  
plus Pub Lunch in New Forest (more de-  
tails next month)

**Highlights from AI's Web Page**

**If you are interested in any of these  
topics and have access to the inter-  
net, dial up to:**

**[www.amnesty.org.uk/news/](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news/)**

**China: Release of top Uighur pris-  
oner welcome, but timing tactical.**

**UK: International Arts competition  
launched to commemorate executed  
writer Ken Saro-Wiwa**

**Multi-billion dollar trade puts  
women in the firing line.**

**Zimbabwe: Fresh warning that free  
and fair elections impossible amid  
human rights violations.**

**Israel/Occupied Territories: New re-  
port reveals misery of Palestinian  
women's lives under occupation.**

**Sudan: Refer crimes to ICC but grant  
no immunity.**

**Nepal: Amnesty UK Director appeals  
for UK action to expose abuses.**

**Cuba: Two years after crackdown,  
prisoners confined to tiny cells and  
beaten**