

# AMNESTY NEWS

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

June 2005



## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MEXICO

John Warry, AIUK CASA co-ordinator spoke about the work of CASA, particularly the violence against women in Mexico.

His presentation and the subsequent letter writing on this issue was filmed by "Media 186" who are making a film for the Open University (see more details page 3).

CASA (Central America Special Action) is a very powerful network, which makes impact on Governments because of its international aspect.

CASA is the oldest Regional Network and the Southampton Group has been part of the network for over 20 years.

Since 1993 400 women have been killed in Mexico, particularly in the Chihuahua and Ciudad Juarez areas close to the USA border.

In 2001 eight women were found murdered in a cotton field. One man was sentenced to 50 years in prison by a state court even though the federal government had accepted authority.

Whilst there have been some convictions, AI is not happy with the fairness of the process and there have been allegations of torture in

**Group Meeting  
Monday June 13th 2005**

**REFUGEE WEEK  
Jilly Cooke  
&  
Letter Writing**

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

police custody.

There is concern that the authorities have convicted men because of the international pressure, ie seen to be doing something.

Mexico is not the only concern in the Region, AI has recently sent a memo to the President of Guatemala where at least 489 women have been killed. In addition the memo raised questions of violence and human rights violations in connection with agrarian disputes.

AI is also concerned about the recently formed Central America Free Trade Area and the effect it may have on rights and health issues.

### 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.

## Nailing press myths about refugees

### Suggestions for Letters to the Echo for Refugee week-20th to 26th June

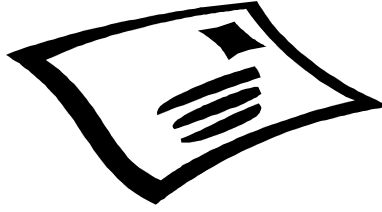
#### Some facts about “illegal refugee”:

A refugee is someone who has applied for asylum and has by law been granted refugee status. “Illegal refugees” do not exist, neither do “illegal asylum seekers”.

The fact that an asylum seeker may have entered the country illegally does not mean that their case lacks credibility-the reverse is often true. It is virtually impossible for people fleeing persecution to reach Britain without resorting to the use of false documents. In recognition of this fact, Article 31 of the 1951 Refugee Convention prohibits governments from penalising refugees who use false documents.

#### Some facts about “access to welfare”:

Asylum seekers cannot claim mainstream welfare benefits. If destitute, they can apply to the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), the Government department responsible for destitute asylum appli-



cants, for basic food and shelter. A single adult is eligible for £38.96 a week, equivalent to 70% of basic income support. In December 2003, around 80,000 asylum seekers were receiving Home Office support, compared with 15.5 million Britons on benefits (excluding retirement pensions), meaning that 0.5% of those claiming government support were asylum seekers. Since 2002, asylum seekers have been barred from working until they receive a positive decision on their claim. Whilst demonised for draining UK public services, asylum seekers are forced to depend on government support, cannot contribute to the UK taxation system and are barred

from using the wealth skills and experience they bring to the UK.

There are numerous barriers preventing asylum seekers accessing NHS services, including a recent change to Government policy which means that unsuccessful asylum applicants are no longer entitled to most free NHS services, apart from emergency care

#### Crime and asylum seekers:

Asylum seekers are too often presented as criminals, whereas in reality they are more likely to be victims of crime. Both the Association of Chief Officers and research recently commissioned by the London Mayor have pointed to links between negative media reporting, increased community tensions, and hostility and violence aimed at asylum seekers.

Very small numbers of asylum applicants have been arrested under anti-terrorism legislation.

#### Letter's to the Echo during refugee week

Refugee week is an opportunity for us to correct the press myths about refugees, some of the myths are nailed above. Please write short letters nailing a myth about refugees to the **Southern Daily Echo** during refugee week (June 20th to 26th).

The address to send letters is:  
The Southern Daily Echo,  
Newspaper House,  
Test Lane,  
Redbridge,  
Southampton, SO16 9JX  
E-Mail: letters@soton-echo.co.uk

# Group News: May Group Meeting

Jenny McConnell, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The first part of the meeting included a talk from John Warry and letter writing about violence to women in Mexico.

This part was filmed by "186 Media" who are making a film on the issue of violence to women in Mexico for the Faculty of Science of the Open University.

"186 Media" consists of Nick Grey, producer/director; Rebecca Fleckney, researcher and Alan Wilson, camera man. Clive Bennett, Lecturer in Human Geography at the Open University acted as their academic advisor.

Becky John, on behalf of The Southampton Group received the following e-mail from Rebecca:

"We've just got back to Manchester and on behalf of the team, I wanted to write to thank you very much for all your time and help yesterday. It was great to finally meet you and I'm sure your contribution will have a real impact on the Open University students. Please would you be kind enough to pass on our thanks to the rest of Southampton Amnesty International Group. We all really admire the excellent work you all do and will be sending you the finished version of the DVD early next year."

There are stills available on the web site.

**Mary Brown (secretary):** The CD of the band providing donations to Amnesty are launching it on 22nd May at Talking Heads from 2.00pm to 10.30pm.

Note we should not send the Women's Campaign on Iraq as it has the wrong information about the President.

**Jilly Cooke (refugee information):** Reminded the Group that Refugee Week is from 20th to 26th June. CLEAR are organising a number of events. There will be a Multi-Cultural Music Evening by PUKAAR at the Nuffield Theatre on Saturday 25th June, 6.00pm to 11.00pm entry free. We will have a stall and help required, please contact Jilly (8058 3749).

**Giampaolo D'Alessandro (treasurer):** We have sent AIUK £400; leaving the Group with a balance of £700.

**Jenny McConnell (Chair):** Thanked Becky for organising this evenings event.

## Refugee Week

To remind people of what it means to be a refugee:

### A POEM

From: Ruvimbo Bungwe aged 14

So I have a new name-refugee  
Strange that a name should take from  
me

My past, my personality and hope.  
Strange refuge this.

So many seem to share this name,  
Refugee

Yet we share so many differences.  
I find no comfort in my new name.  
I long to share my past, restore my  
pride.

To show I too in time, will offer more  
Than I have borrowed.

From now the comfort that I seek  
Resides in the old yet new name  
I would choose  
Friend.

## CALL FOR OFFICERS 2005-2006

Any member wishing to stand for any of the offices of the Group 2005-2006 (as listed in "Who's Who page 4) should contact Jenny McConnell on 8067 1434.

We are particularly looking for volunteers to take up the roles of  
Press Officer  
Parliamentary Officer

You may also be interested in shadowing any other post for 12 months to gain some experience before making a final decision.

**Southampton Group Who's Who:**

**Group Officers:**

Chair:

*Jenny McConnell*

Vice-Chair:

*Becky John*

Secretary & Press:

*Mary Brown*

Treasurer:

*Giampaolo D'Alessandro*

Membership Secretary:

*Jenny McConnell*

Outreach:

*Veronica Tippets*

Parliamentary Officer:

*Frank Capocci*

News Letter Editor:

*John Williams*

**Subgroups & Campaigns:**

CASA/Victor Pineda Henestrosa:

*Frank Capocci*

CHINA:

*Judy Horton*

Administration of Justice (Death Penalty):

*Giampaolo D'Alessandro*

*John Williams*

Refugees:

*Jilly Cooke*

Stop Violence Against Women:

*Becky John*

Business and Human Rights:

*Becky John*

Control Arms Campaign:

*Barbara Lupton*

Korea:

*Avenue St Andrew's Church Group*

- Diary:
- ◆ **Monday 13th June:** Group Meeting: Refugee Week, Jilly Cooke (Southampton Group) & Letter Writing 7.30pm Avenue St Andrews United Reformed Church, The Avenue, All Welcome.
  - ◆ **Saturday 25th June:** Multi-Cultural Music Evening, PUKAAR, Nuffield Theatre, 6.00pm to 11.00pm entry free.
  - ◆ **Monday 11th July:** Group AGM and speaker on Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender HR issues. 7.30pm Avenue St Andrews United Reformed Church, The Avenue, All Welcome.

**Highlights form AI's Web Page**

If you are interested in any of these topics and have access to the internet, dial up to: [www.amnesty.org.uk/news/](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news/)

Zimbabwe: Call on government to end forced evictions and violence immediately.

Governments betraying human rights says Amnesty International Annual Report.

Uzbekistan: New clampdown fears as independent investigation urged.

Trafficking: Leading UK charities call on UK government to sign up to new anti-trafficking convention.

Nepal: Human rights must be restored after lifting of state emergency.

Nigeria: New report finds shocking level of violence against women in the home.

Tasers: Amnesty International briefing.

Vietnam: Catholic prisoner of conscience released after 18 years imprisonment.

Israel/Occupied Territories: Poisoning of Palestinian fields condemned.

UK: Law Lords to decide if "evidence" obtained by torture is admissible.

Fair Trade  
Support Southampton's Fair Trade Shop  
106 Shirley High St  
(opposite Shirley Precinct)  
Free parking in Vincent St Car park  
Distinctive food, crafts and cloths from  
around the world

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