

AMNESTY NEWS

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

September 2006



Some Success Stories to Start the Year

AI as an organisation does not claim credit when a prisoner is released, when death sentences are commuted, or when a government changes its laws and practices. However, former prisoners, torture victims and others who have suffered human rights abuses often say that international pressure secured their freedom and saved lives.

Every year AI receive messages of thanks and solidarity that inspire members to keep working for human rights. Such messages show the positive effects AI's work and that, together, we can make a difference. Some examples:

Political Cuban activist Rodriguez Lobaina says "I would like to give my deepest thanks to AI (members) for all the work that they have done to help my release from prison, for having adopted me as a prisoner of conscience..."

Rehab Abdel Bagi Mohamed Ali, an X-ray technician from Sudan says "I was beaten and verbally abused in detention. After a few days, the guards asked me: 'do you know that your name is all over the internet?'" After that, I was treated better by the guards before being released. The appeals sent by Amnesty members definitely

Group Meeting
Monday September 11th 2006

Southampton Group
Death Penalty
Update
Speaker: John Williams
Southampton AI Group

Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
7.30pm
ALL WELCOME

had an affect on my case."

Thich Quang Do, Buddhist monk from Viet Nam says "Just to know that the outside world had not forgotten me and was continuing to work for my release was an immense source of encouragement during those dark days. I know that AI played a leading role in these efforts...I owe you my freedom."

Bertha Olivia de Nativi, coordinator of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras says "We need organisations and people like you who will let the killers know that the entire world sees their actions...They fall under siege when organisations like AI take action"

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

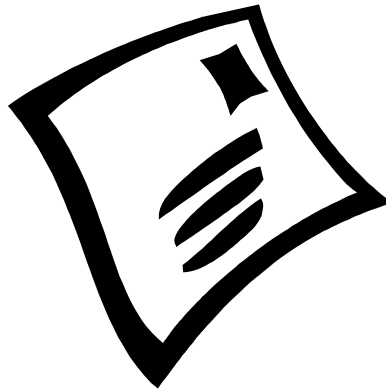
remain those of :
international solidarity,
effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

Israel/Lebanon Conflict

AI calls for full investigation into violations of international humanitarian law by both sides in the conflict.

The following sample letter appears on the AI web site, and can be sent electronically, for those with access to the web. AI recommend that the letter is edited and personalised.

"I write to express my grave concerns that the current ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel includes no reference at all to obligations under international humanitarian law, and most notably the need to establish accountability for human rights violations perpetrated by both sides in the conflict. Widespread and indiscriminate attacks on civilians continued unabated for over a month, and have reportedly resulted in the loss of life of over 1000 Israeli and Lebanese citizens, the forcible displacement of over a quarter of the Lebanese popula-



tion, and the destruction of the civilian infrastructure there.

I urge you to use your influence in the UN Security Council to request the UN Secretary-General to establish immediately an authoritative group of experts to conduct a comprehensive, independent and impartial investigation into violations of international humanitarian law in Lebanon and Israel, including violations which may amount to war crimes.

Please press for such an inquiry to have all necessary financial and technical resources in order for it to carry out an effective investigation, the outcome of which should be made public and should include recommendations aimed at preventing further violations in the future. Anyone against whom there is evidence of war crimes should be brought to justice immediately in proceedings that meet international standards for fair trials.

I look forward to receiving your assurances on this urgent matter."

Write to: The Rt Hon
Margaret Beckett MP
Foreign Secretary
Secretary of State
Foreign and Commonwealth
Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

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.

JULY GROUP MEETING 2005-2006 AGM

- ◆ Jenny (Vice-chair), gave a resume of the year, including meetings, events and highlights.
- ◆ Mary (Secretary), circulated letters to Microsoft, Yahoo and Google as part of the new "Irrepressible Info" campaign.
- ◆ Giampaolo (Treasurer), reported the current bank balance was £645.54. He proposed to make six-monthly payments for the hall in future. As webmaster, he also asked whether we should accept AIUK's offer to bring group websites into line with their own, to facilitate access and management. This was agreed.
- ◆ China: Judy is still not receiving material from the coordinator, but is finding actions on the website. She expects a major campaign leading up to the Beijing Olympics.
- ◆ Central America: Nobody present to report.
- ◆ Refugees: Jenny reported the Pukaar event had been cancelled because of problems over licensing.
- ◆ Stop Violence Against Women: The campaign continues with three main themes:
 - ◆ Jamaica (linking SVAW and Control Arms). Letter to the PM signed.
 - ◆ Challenging attitudes (getting men to speak up).
 - ◆ End VAW in conjunction with local woman's organisations.
- ◆ We can choose all or one of these themes. Jo suggested holding a concert with a group which includes Congolese musicians.
- ◆ Death Penalty: Work had consisted of Urgent Actions, but no specific campaign.
- ◆ Southampton Liaison: Veronica drew attention to 21st September, Peace Day, when AI leaflets will be displayed in the Civic Centre. 2007 is the anniversary of ending slavery, but trafficking of women remains a form of slavery and violence in the city.
- ◆ Programme for 2006/7 discussed.

Film on VAW around the World

This film showed how widespread violence is, amongst other things it showed:

Democratic Republic of Congo: 50 peace groups have been established in villages, teaching women to stand up for their rights and act out the trauma.

Egypt: 35% of women are beaten in marriage.

Guatemala: Woman of over 50 described how she was beaten, twice her husband had tried to kill her. She has now escaped and helps other victims in a refuge with a day centre for children.

Rwanda: Between 25,000 and 50,000 women raped during the genocide.

Liberia: 50% of women have suffered in the conflict.

Israel/Occupied Territories: An Israeli woman reported on Israeli atrocities and persecution; she is one of 450 volunteers who stand at checkpoints and help Palestinians passing through.

Spain: Still machismo and violence, last year 114 women were killed in domestic violence.

USA: On average 40 women are raped every hour.

UK: Only 5.3% of reported rapes lead to convictions.

Conflict Zones: In 85% of conflict zones, women and girls are trafficked.

ELECTIONS 2006/7

Officers re-elected en bloc, ie Chair: Jenny, Vice-Chair: Becky, Secretary: Mary, Treasurer: Giampaolo.

Southampton Group Who's Who:

Group Officers:

Chair & Membership Secretary:

Jenny McConnell

Vice-Chair :

Becky John

Secretary & Press:

Mary Brown

Treasurer:

Giampaolo D'Alessandro

Outreach:

Veronica Tippets

Parliamentary Officer:

Frank Capocci

News Letter Editor:

John Williams

Subgroups:

CASA/Victor Pineda Henestrosa:

Frank Capocci

CHINA:

Judy Horton (023 8077 6198)

Administration of Justice (Death Penalty):

Giampaolo D'Alessandro

John Williams

Refugees:

Jilly Cooke

End Violence Against Women:

Jo Dixon

Business and Human Rights:

Gareth Davies

Control Arms Campaign:

Barbara Lupton

Terror, Security and Human Rights

Fran Stanfield

North Korea:

Avenue St Andrew's Church Group

- Diary:
- ◆ **Monday 11th September:** Group Meeting, Death Penalty Update. Speaker John Williams, Soton AI Group 7.30 pm Avenue St Andrew's.
 - ◆ **Saturday 30th September:** A Walk in the New Forest, an opportunity for exercise and socialising. Details from John Williams
 - ◆ **Monday 9th October:** Group Meeting, DVD "Living in a Globalised World" plus letter write. Avenue St Andrew's at 7.30pm all welcome.

Highlights from Amnesty'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**

Sudan: Crisis in Darfur

The civil war in the Sudanese region of Darfur, and in neighbouring Chad, has created an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Over 300,00 people are believed to have lost their lives since the conflict erupted in February 2003. Around two million civilians have fled from their homes. Some 650,000 are denied access to aid. AI has issued a "crisis response" in an attempt to protect civilian populations of Sudan and Chad.

Free Mohammed Abbou: imprisoned for publishing an article on the internet.

The Tunisian lawyer is serving a prison sentence largely for publishing articles critical of the Tunisian authorities on the internet.

Brazil: important step towards justice following the Baixada Fluminense Massacre.

AI has welcomed the conviction of military police officer, Carlos Jorge Carvalho for his involvement in the indiscriminate killings of 29 civilians on 31 March 2005.

**Walk in the New Forest
30th September**

Meet at BANK (near Lyndhurst) At 10.30

Lunch in

New Forest Inn, Emery Down

(approx 1.00 pm)

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