

AMNESTY NEWS

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

January 2007



Sexual and Reproductive Rights-Taken from AI Magazine

What policy should the global Amnesty movement develop on sexual and reproductive rights? The key issues as identified by AIUK:

1) Why is AI debating it now?

Conversations around AI's policies on sexual and reproductive rights began before the start of the Stop Violence Against Women campaign at AI's 2003 International Council Meeting. It was suggested that AI would need to look at its policies in this area because members would be working on survivors of rape. AI would be called upon to say what it thought and what options governments should provide for such women.

2) Did any other issues come to the fore?

AI research identified other cases which posed challenges in this area eg women imprisoned in Nigeria on abortion-related charges. AI had taken action only when these women had been sentenced to death, AI was not able to comment on whether these women should be in prison. For these reasons, it was felt AI would need to have discussions around sexual and reproductive human rights policies, including the issue of abortion.

3) So what does the consultation involve?

At the ICM in 2005 representatives from AI sections worldwide decided to reaffirm the movement's commitment to sexual and reproductive

**Group Meeting
Monday January 8th 2007**

Refugees & Asylum

**Speaker from
Winchester Visitors Group**

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

rights. They also decided to consult members globally to decide whether AI should recognise that a woman's right to physical and mental integrity includes her right to terminate a pregnancy within reasonable limitations, and that abortion should, therefore, be legal, safe and accessible for women. The July Chairs Forum supported the idea of developing policy in three areas: decriminalising abortion, access to services for abortion-related complications, and abortions in cases of rape, sexual assault, incest and risk to a woman's life.

4) What do members need to do?

i) AIUK is carrying out its consultation in the lead-up to next year's AGM in March. Members are asked to consider whether we can call for access to safe abortions (cont p3)

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.

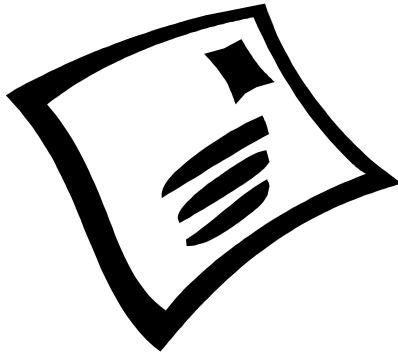
AI's CORE VALUES

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.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Child Soldiers

The conflict in the DRC started in August 1998. It is estimated that over three million people have lost their lives as a result of the fighting and or effects of the conflict (disease or malnutrition). The main focus of the conflict is in eastern DRC where over three quarters of the killings have taken place. Children are singled out for recruitment by armed forces and group commanders because they are easy to manipulate and often unaware of the dangers they face. Some children are recruited by force, while others enrol themselves, primarily in a search for food, protection, clothes and money and a desire to escape extreme poverty.

A peace agreement was signed in 2003 and a programme that aimed to get children back to an ordinary life was formed. This was called the DDR programme "Disarmament; Demobilisa-



tion; Reintegration.

AI is requesting members take part in actions; if you get a response please contact Kristyan Benedict on 0207 033 1585 or by e-mail at "kristyan.benedict@amnesty.org.uk"

Letter writing:

Please write a letter to the President of the DRC: Joseph Kabila, making the following points:

Urge President Kabila to ensure that:

*The national DDR programme is continued until all children have been re-

leased from the armed forces and groups.

*The thousands of girls who are so far missing from the DDR programme are traced.

*Children are protected on return to their communities and are not returned to areas where they risk being re-recruited.

*Demobilized children are provided with educational and vocational opportunities.

*A plan is created for the introduction of free elementary education.

Start your letter: Dear President

Send your letter to:

Son Excellence Joseph KABILA

President de la Republique
Presidence de la Republique
Palais de la Nation
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
Republique Democratique du Congo.

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.

December Group Meeting

Mary (who took the Chair, in Jenny's absence), welcomed every one to the meeting.

- ◆ **Group Activity:** "Greetings Card Campaign", members wrote a number of Greetings Cards.
- ◆ **Finances:** Giampaolo reported on our current finances: We sold £180 worth of Christmas Cards at the University; the "Goodies for Christmas" event raised £470 (a big thank you to Mary); the Munday-Turner Concert raised £230 from raffle and food and £500 from ticket sales, (many thanks to Fran). We now have £1750 in the bank. Agreed we should send £1000 to AI.
- ◆ **Secretary's report:** We had received greetings from Richard Wimbury in Darlington. In January, the film "Blood Diamonds" is on at

Harbour Lights, we are planning to have a stall. We had received thanks from the Regional Reps for all our help at the Regional Conference.

- ◆ **National Conference and AGM:** This will be held at Heriot Watt University on 23-25th March, we are seeking delegates, anyone interested please raise at Group Meeting.
- ◆ **Tin Rattle:** Frank announced that the next Tin Rattle will be at Waitrose, Portswood on 3rd March.
- ◆ **Annual Subscription:** Please arrange to pay this years subscriptions, you know who you are (including me, Ed!!!)

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (cont from page 1)

as a remedy in cases of abuses of sexual and reproductive rights, as a matter of right, or whether there should be limited circumstances where we can do this.

ii) The consultation involves members discussing the issues and then completing the questionnaire. The questionnaires will be collated and the results monitored on an ongoing basis so that the Board can update the international movement on views expressed through the consultation.

iii) In the UK, consultation results will also inform discussion at the AGM. The deadline for members to submit resolutions to the AGM is 22 January 2007. The deadline for the consultation is 2 February 2007, so that a report can be prepared for the AGM.

5) What else do members need to know?

Obviously, this is a complex and sensitive issue for us, and we need to be aware that there will be different views and experiences among members. The consultation exercise is not asking you to change your personal views, but to think about what course of action is best for AI and for those whom we work.

At the global level, AI's Executive Committee has altered its timetable. The Committee will seek further views from the Chairs Forum in March 2007. In April it will decide on what resolution to make to the ICM. This timetable will allow the UK Section to share the full UK consultation outcome and AGM discussion with the IEC.

If any Group members would like to participate in the consultation the questionnaire can be downloaded from the web site: www.amnesty.org.uk/consult. For those without access to the internet, please ask at the Group meeting.

Some facts in this area: **Turkey:** Abortion is available on request during the first ten weeks of pregnancy; married women must have their husband's consent though this is waved if her life is in danger.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Rape survivors have to finance their own healthcare.

Philippines: Abortion is illegal, with a maximum penalty of six years imprisonment; 750,000 women use backstreet abortionists, and around 500 women die in the process.

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:
- ◆ TBC: Greeting Cards Event at film "The Blood Diamond" Harbour Lights.
 - ◆ Monday 8th January 2007: Group Meeting: "Refugees and Asylum" speaker from Winchester Visitors Group. Avenue St Andrew's. All welcome.
 - ◆ Monday 12th February 2007: Group Meeting: "Israel & the Occupied Territories", speaker: John Lilly. Avenue St Andrew's All welcome.
 - ◆ Thursday 8th March: International Women's Day.
 - ◆ Monday 12th March 2007: Group Meeting: Letter writing on Women. Avenue St Andrew's. All welcome

2006/7 SUBSCRIPTIONS

IF YOU HAVN'T
CAN YOU PAY UP
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
PLEASE!

Or else this is goodbye to
your Amnesty News
for this year!!

Contact Giampaolo or Jenny
(I am going to!)
THANK YOU

Greetings Card Campaign 2006
The Campaign runs from November 1st to
31st January
There will be information at our Group
meetings or visit the AI web site
www.amnesty.org.uk

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- Issues from AI**
- ◆ Close Guantanamo see web site for more information:
www.amnesty.org.uk
 - ◆ Ban Cluster Bombs: take action:
www.amnesty.org.uk/israel
 - ◆ Darfur: New offensive drives vil-
lagers from their homes:
www.amnesty.org.uk/darfur
 - ◆ HR in Russia/Chechnya:
www.amnesty.org.uk/gcc