

# AMNESTY NEWS

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

May 2007



## Report on 2007 Conference and AGM

The 2007 Conference and AGM took place at Herriott Watt University in Edinburgh, a beautiful location for the gathering of around 500 active Amnesty members. This year was notable for the high proportion of youth and student members, who between them made up a quarter of those present, including 50 youth members aged between 14 and 17, all of whom participated fully in all aspects of the weekend.

The Conference was officially opened by Mirza Tahir Hussein, who had been on death row in Pakistan for 18 years until his release in November, and his brother Amjad Hussein, who had campaigned tirelessly with Amnesty for Mirza's release. The two of them served as a fantastic reminder of what Amnesty can and does achieve, and the difference it makes to individual lives.

We were also very lucky to have as our keynote speaker Gege Katana, from the organisation SOFAD (featured in the 2005 and 2006 greetings campaigns) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She spoke on the desperate human rights situation facing women in that country, and the amazing work that SOFAD are doing to try and improve things. Later on there was a panel session on human rights in Africa, which featured speakers from Amnesty sections in Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone, and

**Group Meeting  
Monday May 14th 2007**

**Letter Writing  
China & Central America**

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

provided a fascinating insight into the work that other Amnesty groups are carrying out around the world. There was the usual fantastic selection of workshops, including one run by Ellis Brooks, previously of the Southampton Group, on the ways Amnesty International makes its policy decisions. I also attended a workshop on destitution among asylum seekers in Britain, which was quite heart rending-watch this space for future Amnesty action on this issue.

This year the most controversial issue at the AGM were the motions up for debate concerning the issue of sexual and reproductive rights. After a very interesting and well managed debate, three motions were voted on.

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### 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.

## Amnesty International-Worldwide Appeals

### ZIMBABWE: Systematic repression of trade unionist



On 13th March Gilbert Marembo and Michael Kandukuti, officers of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), were assaulted by members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police during a search of the ZCTU offices. The police had a warrant to seize all “subversive materials” found on the premises. The assault was witnessed by lawyers from the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights who arrived to find the police officers searching the offices, having detained ZCTU staff and visitors.

Members of ZCTU have been systematically harassed by the authorities for several years. They have been arbitrarily arrested and detained and some have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated while in custody.

Lovemore Matombo, Wellington Chibebe and Lucia Matibenga, leaders of the ZCTU, were three of 15 members arrested in September 2006 while peacefully protesting

against the deteriorating social and economic conditions in Zimbabwe. They were taken to Matapi Police Station where they were systematically tortured. The beatings were so severe that Lucia Matibenga suffered a perforated eardrum as a result. Medical care was only provided after pressure from their lawyers.

Doctors confirmed that the group’s injuries were consistent with beatings with blunt objects heavy enough to fracture hands and arms. Eight of the activists appeared to have been tortured by a method called falanga (beatings on the soles of the feet) which leaves a victim permanently unable to walk normally.

The ZCTU called on its

members to stay away from work from 3 to 4 April in protest at the government’s failure to take steps to address the economic meltdown and to provide basic services to the people of Zimbabwe. Although the actual protest was relatively peaceful, it is feared that in its aftermath, the authorities will target those who they believed organised and participated in it.

**Please write**, calling on the authorities to allow ZCTU members to exercise their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Call for an end to arbitrary detention and intimidation of trade unionists.

**Send appeals to:**

Police Commissioner  
Augustine Chihuri  
Zimbabwe Republic Police  
Police Headquarters  
PO Box 8807  
Causeway  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
Salutation: Dear Police Commissioner

#### 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.

## April Group Meeting

Jenny welcomed all to the meeting.

### 1) Updates on Campaigns:

- i. **Death Penalty:** no particular issues to report, except noting the new AI report.
  - ii. **Refugees:** Main issues have been destitution, arbitrary nature of decisions and issues of people being employed.
  - iii. **CASA:** Held a good letter writing session recently, Honduras-homosexual individual; Guatemala- farmer who had been thrown off his land in a land dispute; El Salvador-woman beaten by soldiers, issue of military not being brought to justice.
- 2) **Concert:** Paul reported that this is most likely to be held in June.

3) **Outreach:** Veronica reported on the blood diamonds debate; Parkhouse has a add saying that they sell conflict free diamonds.

A local Woman's forum has been established.

4) **Secretary's report:** Mary introduce the months letter regarding Israel and the Occupied territories, particularly focussing on crossing places.

Conference on Middle East and N Africa on 9th June, to be held in HR Action Centre, Mary has the details.

All the planning information has been sent off.

### EILEEN SHARP

Jenny informed the meeting that sadly Eileen died on Maundy Thursday. Her funeral was held on Thursday 19th April at the Woodland Burial Site Christchurch.

Eileen will be really missed by all who had the pleasure and privilege of knowing her. She was a great supporter of Amnesty and a loyal and much loved member of the Southampton Group.

Eileen was also a great supporter of other humane causes throughout the city.

Her work on behalf of her fellow human beings both in her professional capacity and latterly as a volunteer for many good causes was an example to us all.

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## Report on 2007 Conference and AGM

The first motion, calling for Amnesty to support decriminalisation of abortion, access to quality services in the case of complications arising from an abortion and access to abortion in cases of incest, rape and risk to a woman's life was passed by a fairly small margin. The second motion, calling for access to abortion to be available for all women, fell by a fairly large margin. And the third motion, calling for Amnesty to remain completely neutral on the issue of abortion, passed as well. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this left the AGM with a contradiction that the board will have to resolve, as the first and third motions, both passed are in direct opposition to one another. The issue will now pass to the International Council Meeting in Mexico in July.

Other motions were less contentious, including ones calling for increased campaigning on asylum seekers, internet repression, torture in Egypt, the 2008 Olympics in China and the ongoing situation in Burma, all of which passed. Also passed was a motion calling for Amnesty to support calls for an International Criminal Court inquiry into alleged war crimes committed by governments of the USA and UK, during the war in Iraq.

Thanks to Gemma Davies for an informative and interesting report on the Conference and AGM

**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:**

Stop Violence Against Women:

*Jo Dixon*

Terrorism, Security and Human Rights

*John Williams*

Long-term Action File

*Mary Brown*

Death Penalty:

*Giampaolo D'Alessandro*

Control Arms Campaign:

*Barbara Lupton*

Refugees:

*Jilly Cooke*

Central America:

*Paul Humphrey*

China & East Asia:

*Judy Horton*

- Diary:
- ◆ Monday 14th May: 7.30 pm Group Meeting: Letter writing on China and South America. Avenue St Andrew's. All welcome
  - ◆ Monday 11th June: 7.30 pm Group Meeting: Refugees at Hasler. Speaker: Michael Woolley. Avenue St Andrew's. All welcome.
  - ◆ 17th-24th: Refugee Week (tbc)
  - ◆ Monday 9th July: 7.30 pm Group Meeting: Southampton Group AGM.

**Issues from AI Web Page**

Check "www.amnesty.org.uk" for more details

- ◆ Iran: Stop child executions.
- ◆ Chad: Amnesty's Kerry Smith reports on the crisis in eastern Chad.
- ◆ Sudan: Arms continuing to fuel human rights violations.
- ◆ Torture: AI's "Tools of Torture" report highlights the trade in torture.
- ◆ Iraq: "Honour killing" of teenage girl condemned as abhorrent.
- ◆ Sudan: War crimes suspects must be brought before International Criminal Court.
- ◆ China: New incidences of human rights abuses in run-up to the Beijing Olympics revealed.
- ◆ Worldwide: New report shows world wide executions down, but "disturbing revival" amongst minority of countries.
- ◆ USA: Authorities fail to protect indigenous women from shocking levels of sexual violence.
- ◆ Afghanistan: Taliban attacks against civilians are increasing and are systematic.

**PROTECT THE HUMAN**

Amnesty International-  
a movement of ordinary people  
from around the world  
standing up for humanity and  
human rights.

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