

AMNESTY NEWS

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

November 2007



ERITREA

At the October meeting Janet Mellor gave a talk covering four key aspects of Eritrea:

- ◆ Political, geographical & historical
- ◆ Daily life
- ◆ The HR situation
- ◆ The feelings of Eritreans who stay and those who leave the country.

The regime is totalitarian and very punitive, not much is reported because of reprisals. AI seems unknown there and many NGO's have been expelled. It is the "top" country for asylum seekers and is reckoned to be the most mal-nourished in the world.

Italy created Eritrea (Abyssinia). In WW2 the battle against Italy was hugely important because the Allies gained access to the Suez and Red Sea. The Communists took over and there followed 30 years of war after which Eritrea got independence. Peace was short lived as Ethiopia attacked and the two countries are still officially at war. The population is about 4 million, about the size of England; 80% subsistence farming with vast differences in life between cities and rural villages. It is a deeply religious country 50/50 Coptic Christians and Muslim. Very low AIDs figures. Village houses are mud huts, only 20% of the countryside has running water and electricity. Women's role is very inferior, menstruating women are not allowed in Coptic Churches. New brides must spend 40 days in bed ready for sex at

Group Meeting
Monday November 12th 2007

Workshop on China:
Human Rights & the Olympics

Led by:
Ros TOPLEY
AI Regional Trainer

Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton

7.30 pm
ALL WELCOME

any time; FGM is 80% in rural areas, with a great resistance to change, perinatal death rate is very high. Only 120 trained doctors in the country. However, villagers appear to be happy compared with the town dwellers. Industry now defunct and universities closed, no manufacturing, so no exports. Imports are limited, but the Chinese are moving in and investing.

All young men do military/national service, the state can send them to work anywhere. Some escape abroad and send money home. People do not talk about politics, any resistance is ruthlessly put down, involving imprisonments and disappearances of participants.

Not many foreign workers, and NGO's were expelled following the imposition of UN sanctions.

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

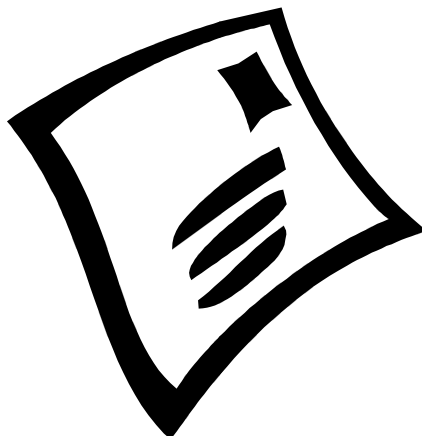
remain those of :
international solidarity,
effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

Worldwide Appeal: Japan: Executed in Secrecy

On 23 August, three men in their 60s were hanged in Japan. The three – Takezawa Hifumi, Iwamoto Yoshio and Segawa Kousou – had been convicted of murder and sentenced in the 1990s.

At the trial of Takezawa Hifumi, born in 1937, both the prosecution and defence found that he was mentally ill. At his appeal, his lawyer argued that Takezawa Hifumi had apparently suffered a significant personality change as a result of a stroke, which made him paranoid and aggressive. Despite this, the judge rejected the appeal. It is not known whether Takezawa Hifumi had received any medical treatment for his mental illness during his nine years on death row.

Japan has a record of executing prisoners with mental disabilities. The harsh conditions on death row mean that many prisoners held there develop mental illness. Extreme secrecy surrounds the implementation of the death penalty in Japan. Families and lawyers are usually not informed until after the executions and prisoners are often



hanged at very short notice. Executions usually coincide with parliamentary recesses or national holidays in order to avoid parliamentary or media scrutiny.

It is believed that 104 people remain under sentence of death in Japan; some have spent over three decades on death row expecting to die at very short notice.

Ten men have been executed since former Justice Minister Nagase Jinen assumed office in October 2006. His predecessor, Sugiura Seiken, did not sign a single death penalty warrant because of his personal beliefs.

Please write, expressing concern at the resumption of executions since October 2006, calling for an immediate moratorium on all executions and urging the authorities to end the secrecy surrounding the death penalty and begin a public and parliamentary debate on its abolition.

Send appeals to:
Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo
Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
2-3-1 Nagata-cho
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-0014
Japan

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

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.

October Group

Jenny welcomed all to the meeting

Chair's Report (Jenny):

Jenny welcomed a new member-David Rawlinson.

08.11.07 at 6.00 pm meeting at the University when John Denham MP will speak on human rights, democracy and rule of law.

19.10.07: invitation to UN Day flag raising ceremony

Secretary's Report (Mary):

Action of the month: "Arms Trade, close loopholes".

Actions: Burma and arms control.

Developments in Urgent Action Format. From January 2008 Groups will receive UA's according to Group themes by e-mail, in case sheet format. This will be quicker and more informative.

Majority of UA's will focus on death penalty, the Group needs to decide how to use these.

The Greeting Card Campaign will have children

friendly leaflets.

Some future events:

Salisbury AI: "Slavery Alive and Kicking" 03.11.07.

Salisbury Arts Centre: Music & Dance from Algeria 24.10.07 at 8.00 pm

Portchester Parish Hall: Valerie Ager "How information is researched and verified" 23.10.07 at 7.30 pm.

Finance (Giampaolo):

Currently £1600 in the bank; agreed to send AI £600. Received 2007 Annual report.

Press (Cheryl):

Southern Echo sent information about Burma

Outreach (Veronica):

Referred to Columbia petition.

BURMA

Free Aung San Suu Kyi

Amnesty International calls for Aung San Suu Kyi to be freed

"Aung San Suu Kyi should be serving the people of Burma as their national leader. Instead she is serving a prison sentence imposed by the country's repressive military junta.

As of today, Aung San Suu Kyi has spent 12 of the last 18 years in detention.

Until she is released unconditionally, there can be no genuine improvement in the human rights situation in Burma."

See AI web site to see how you can join this campaign:

www.amnesty.org.uk

An additional source of information about Burma is

"The IRRAWADDY"

The Irrawaddy News Magazine Online Edition (Covering Burma and Southern Asia)

www.irrawaddy.org

