

# AMNESTY NEWS

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

February 2008



## 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.

## Asylum Seekers in UK

At the January meeting two videos were presented:

1) A video from AI which highlighted information on successful campaigns.

2) "Still Human, Still Here-refused asylum seekers in Britain" which highlighted:

- ◆ Many thousand refused asylum seekers in UK.
- ◆ Refused asylum seekers are left in destitution as they have no access to routine healthcare, benefits etc and are unable to work.
- ◆ AI is asking people to put pressure on the government to protect the human rights of these people.

Jilly Cooke, Southampton Group, suggested the following issues should be raised in letters to MPs on behalf of the destitute refused asylum seekers:

- ◆ Continue financial support and accommodation.
- ◆ Grant permission to work.
- ◆ Continue access to healthcare and education.

Help for destitute asylum seekers in Southampton is provided by:

- ◆ SWVG (Southampton & Winchester Visitors Group), this is a charity which aims to provide support for

**Group Meeting  
Monday February 11th 2008**

**Update and Letter Writing  
on  
Central America  
&  
Discussion on  
Group Planning Pack**

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

refugees and asylum seekers who are in particular difficulties or distress, specifically they provide: accommodation, befriending, information, subsistence money, education money.

- ◆ Avenue St Andrews Church, provide: free lunches, rent deposit scheme and meeting rooms.
- ◆ Basics bank provide: clothes and food.
- ◆ The Red Cross and "Groundswell" provide food vouchers.

Members shared their experiences with people in destitution.

Jilly expressed concerns about the new government asylum model which seeks to clear the "backlog" by 2011.

# Bu Dongwei China: Falun Gong practitioner detained without trial

Bu Dongwei, a Falun Gong practitioner who worked for the US-based NGO, the Asia Foundation, is serving two and a half years Re-education Through Labour (RTL) at the Tuanhe facility in Beijing. What did he do? He exercised his right to freedom of religious belief. With no trial, he was sent to RTL for “resisting the implementation of national laws” and “disturbing social order”. The evidence was a verbal confession and 80 copies of Falun Gong literature the police said they discovered in his home.

Seven police officers detained Bu Dongwei in May 2006. His family learned where he was held three months later. They dispute the evidence against him and the claim by the authorities that Bu Dongwei decided not to appeal his assignment. Officials at the facility where he is held have asked Bu Dongwei’s family to contribute around 400 Yuan per month (US\$52) towards his living expenses.

This is not the first time Bu Dongwei has been imprisoned for his



beliefs. After petitioning the authorities to review their ban on Falun Gong in 2000, he was sentenced to 10 months RTL for "using a heretical organization to disrupt the implementation of the law". Amnesty International has been told that during RTL he was deprived of sleep, beaten and forced to sit in a small chair all day – all to make him renounce his beliefs.

RTL is a system of administrative detention imposed by the police without charge, trial or judicial review. Recent efforts to abolish the system appear to have stalled in China’s legislature. Beijing City authorities have extended the use of RTL as a way to “clean up” the city in the run-up to the 2008 Summer Olympics.

**Please write:** Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Bu Dongwei as a prisoner of conscience and call for the abolition of the RTL system.

**Write to:**

Wen Jiabao Guojia Zongli,  
Prime Minister of the people’s Republic of China,  
The State Council General Office, 2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu,  
Beijingshi 100017,  
People’s Republic of China.

Her Excellency Mrs Fu Ying,  
Embassy of the People’s Republic of China,  
49-51 Portland Place,  
London W1B 4JL

## 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.

# January Group

**Chair:** Jenny welcomed all to the meeting.

**Finance:** Giampaolo reported that:

- ◆ We had sold £262.60 worth of Christmas Cards, however they had cost £231.35, leaving a profit of £31.25.
- ◆ We currently have £1100 in the bank, it was agreed that we should send £300 to AI UK.

**Secretary:** Mary reported that:

- ◆ On ITV on Friday at 7.30 pm programme on Human Rights and Olympic Games.
- ◆ Recently received a report regarding change in local Groups. In summary AI UK want to improve communications and strength of local groups as AI UK recognises the good work Groups do. There are a number of concerns:
  - ◆ On quality of materials sent out.
  - ◆ Need to increase the awareness of what Groups do.
  - ◆ Provide more materials to distribute to the public.
- ◆ There are a number of suggestions:
  - ◆ Open up lines of communications be-

tween local Groups and Regional HQs

- ◆ Improve communications and training for campaigning.
- ◆ AI will be moving focus to more e-mail communication relating to Urgent Actions and Individuals work, these e-mails are to be dispersed to Group members by Sub Group co-ordinators.
- ◆ A list was produced for people to register if they would like to receive these messages.
- ◆ Mary reminded the Group of AI AGM to be held at Nottingham University on 4-6 April, if any one would like to represent the Group please let Mary know.
- ◆ Action of the Month: Prisoner of Conscience in Vietnam.

**Outreach:** Veronica raised the following issues:

- ◆ Posters etc for women's day
- ◆ Holocaust day
- ◆ Saturday 19th is UN Day.

## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR) 1948-2008

As citizens of the world:

- ◆ We believe human rights abuses anywhere are the concern of people everywhere.
- ◆ We pledge to harness the power of individuals to galvanise action for justice and equality for all.
- ◆ We are outraged at the betrayal of our leaders, and are determined to hold them to account.
- ◆ We commit ourselves to creating a global culture in which every person can realise their human rights.
- ◆ We will carry the message of hope of the UDHR to every region of the world in the 60th anniversary year.

Irene Khan, Secretary General of AI along with Archbishop Desmond Tutu of The Elders, a group of prominent former leaders including Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi, who aim to get one billion signatures on the UDHR

