

AMNESTY NEWS

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

April 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.

Human Rights in Guatemala

Tony Campbell of The University of Southampton spoke on Human Rights in Guatemala at the March meeting.

Key points:

Some improvements since the civil war:

- ◆ 1960-1996 Civil War, Government versus Marxist insurgencies.
- ◆ In civil war, indigenous activities seen as helping guerillas by the military.
- ◆ Since the end of the civil war, 1998, Mayan ceremonies allowed.
- ◆ Government has allowed greater freedom.
- ◆ Since 1990's building of new schools.
- ◆ Government has given land rights to indigenous peoples.

However:

- ◆ Guatemala has one of the highest poverty levels in Central America.
- ◆ West sees popular groups, ethnic indigenous groups as enemy of neo-liberalism/globalization
- ◆ Not all peasants have land rights, many disputes with land owners.
- ◆ Cultural reforms are cosmetic.
- ◆ Government decides which NGO's get World Bank Aid; usually compliant organizations.
- ◆ Canadian Mining Co removing

Group Meeting Monday April 14th 2008

Terrorism, Security & Human Rights

With letter writing
&

Feedback from AIUK AGM
Various members of Southampton Group

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

7.30 pm

ALL WELCOME

people from the land.

- ◆ Conflict with environmentalist because the indigenous people want to farm the land.
- ◆ 54 political murders March-October 2007.
- ◆ Total for the year 6000
- ◆ Military numbers increased from 15000 to 30000.
- ◆ 2500 women killed since 2001.
- ◆ Only 20 sentences handed out.
- ◆ Six former Guatemala Officials face genocide charges.
- ◆ Death squads are still present and political killings still occur.
- ◆ Until presence of hidden groups ie death squads are recognized no progress possible.
- ◆ Intimidation of Human Rights Groups common.
- ◆ Guatemala has still a long way to go.

China:

Free Tibetan Monks

15 Tibetan monks were reportedly detained on 10 March for staging a peaceful demonstration: there is no information of their current whereabouts or of any charges brought against them.

According to information published by the Tibetan Center on Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), 15 Tibetan monks were detained on 10 March for staging a peaceful demonstration in Barkhor, Lhasa, the capital of Tibetan Autonomous Region. There is no information of their current whereabouts or of any charges brought against them. They are at high risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Background information

On Monday 10 March hundreds of monks began a march from Drepung Monastery towards Barkhor. Another group, which included the 15 monks now in detention, began their march from Sera Monastery, but were soon detained. The monks had been demanding that the government ease a “patriotic re-education” campaign which forces them to denounce the Dalai Lama and subjects them to gov-



ernment propaganda.

Protests began in other monasteries in support of those detained. On Friday the protests became violent, with some protesters specifically targeting and setting fire to Chinese-owned businesses and attacking people from other ethnic groups.

The Chinese government has the right and duty to defend all individuals and property from

violence. At the same time international law requires that the authorities handle such crises in ways that uphold fundamental human rights and the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force. For example, firearms should only be discharged as a last resort and when lives are at risk.

The Chinese authorities have imposed a near-total block on information leaving Tibet and surrounding areas.

Please send an appeal: to the Chinese authorities calling for the release of the 15 monks and all others detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly

Write to:

Hu Jintao Guojia Zhuxi
President of the People's Republic of China
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China

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.

March Group

Mary (Secretary):

- ◆ **Monthly Action:** Letter concerning use of cluster bombs and tasers, to be sent to MPs and Foreign Secretary
- ◆ **4 Major Campaigns:** China, Violence against women, Human rights and poverty, and Arms control.
- ◆ **Group Profile Questions:**
 - ◆ How many national members?: 8
 - ◆ Contacts with other organizations?: Churches, October Books.

- ◆ Most effective actions?: Fundraising

Giampaolo (Treasurer):

- ◆ £862 in the bank.
- ◆ No Sainsbury's collection
- ◆ No further news on Death Penalty.

Veronica (Outreach):

- ◆ 14.03.08 giving a talk to the Fabian Society

Taken from AI Web site (full report *China: The Olympics countdown - crackdown on activists threatens Olympics legacy* available on the web site)

China: Silence of the International Olympic Committee and world leaders is tacit endorsement of abuse, says Amnesty.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and world leaders, including Prime Minister Gordon Brown, must speak out strongly and in public against human rights abuses in Tibet and elsewhere in China or risk giving 'tacit endorsement' to human rights abuses being committed in preparation for the Olympic Games, Amnesty International said today in a new report. (posted 01.04.08)

The report, *China: The Olympics countdown - crackdown on activists threatens Olympics legacy* (PDF), shows a human rights situation that is getting worse, not better, in the run-up to the Olympics. In Tibet and the surrounding areas, the police and military crackdown on demonstrators has led to serious human rights violations in recent days. In and around Beijing, the Chinese authorities have silenced and imprisoned peaceful human rights activists in the pre-Olympics 'clean up'. Promises of 'media freedom' have not been honored, with reporters denied free access to Tibet. Reports suggest that information controls are also being extended to cover SMS text messaging in Beijing.

Amnesty is calling on the Chinese authorities to immediately end repressive measures against Chinese human rights defenders in Beijing and other parts of China, as well as against protesters in Tibet and surrounding regions.

Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to:

- give immediate access to Tibet and surrounding areas to UN investigators and other independent observers
- cease arbitrary detention, intimidation and harassment of activists
- end punitive administrative detention
- allow full and free reporting across the whole of China for all journalists
- free all prisoners of conscience
- reduce the number of capital crimes as a step towards abolition.

Amnesty International UK Campaigns Director Tim Hancock said:

'The muzzle on protesters and activists, in Tibet and in Beijing, is getting tighter and tighter as the Olympics get closer.'

