

AMNESTY NEWS

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

September 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.

A message from the Group Chairs, Kulbir and Madeleine

Hello everyone, and welcome, as we start yet another year of the Southampton Amnesty International Group.

This is actually the Group's 45th year but, we have now achieved a "first" in electing two of us to be joint Chairs.

I am Kulbir Chahal, and I joined Amnesty in December 2007 because I strongly believe that every human being should have basic human rights.

My co-Chair is Madeleine Cato, who has been a member of the Southampton Group (on and off!) for 25 years.

We hope that between us, our enthusiasm and experience will enable us to maintain Jenny McConnell's high standards as she stands down as Group Chair after 5 years.

Many thanks Jenny for your superb contribution.

By coincidence, Amnesty International UK is also mirroring us this year in terms of "new" and "experience". It is the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December; and at the same time Amnesty launches a Poverty & Human Rights Campaign as part of its new work on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Our Group is looking forward to participating in that Campaign.

**Group Meeting
Monday September 8th 2008**

**Southampton Group
AGM
People Trafficking
A Speaker
from the Medaille Community**

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

To give you an idea of the other things the Group will be involved in please have a look at our Activities Calendar- it is packed with interesting events and speakers to motivate us all in Amnesty's mission for human rights, to help us raise money and awareness, and to enjoy ourselves whilst we are at it!

We look forward to seeing you all at the Group meetings, starting on September 8th.

NB Enclosed with this mailing is a subscription form for 2008/9. It would be great if you could please return it duly completed, and accompanied by payment.

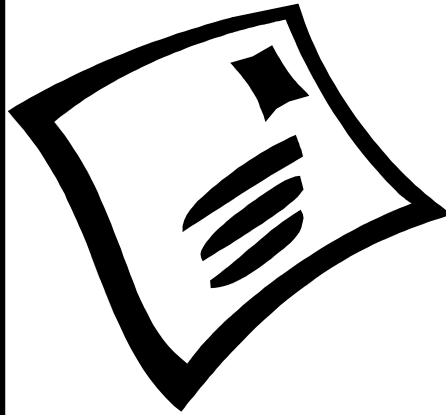
Enforced disappearances: Pakistan government must live up to its promises

Background

Some individuals have been returned from US detention or have “reappeared” in Pakistan but the whereabouts of hundreds of others remain unknown.

There looked to be progress in 2006 when the Supreme Court of Pakistan took up regular hearings of petitions filed on their behalf. However, these hearings came to an abrupt end the following year when a state of emergency was declared by President Musharraf, who then deposed many judges who had taken keen interest in the issue. During this time an amendment to the Army Act was passed which allowed civilians to be tried by court martial, and meant that victims of enforced disappearance might be also be subject to unfair trials.

Following the victory of opposition parties in the general elections last February, a coalition government comprising the Pakistan People’s Party, the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), the Pashtun secularist Awami National Party (ANP) and the Jamiat Ulema-i-



Islam (JUI) was sworn in. The leaders declared their commitment to restoring the Constitution of 1973 and to jointly take measures to reinstate the judges. Government officials have also pledged to resolve the status of persons subjected to enforced disappearance. Amnesty believes that the new government should urgently address the issue of enforced disappearances and end years of state culpability, complicity and concealment.

Since Pakistan became a key ally in the US-led “war on terror” in late 2001 thousands of people, both Pakistani and foreign nationals, have been arbitrarily detained in Pakistan, denied access to lawyers, families and courts, and held in secret places of detention.

Placed outside all protection of law, they are victims of enforced disappearance. Several hundred of them have been unlawfully transferred into foreign, particularly US, custody and many of them have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

Action:

Send a letter to the Pakistan government calling on them to live up to their election promises.

Write to:

Prime Minister Gilani
Prime Minister of Pakistan
Pakistan Secretariat
Constitution Avenue
Islamabad
Pakistan

Fax: +92-519213780

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.

July AGM

Jenny (Chair): Welcomed all to meeting.

The following officers were elected for the year 2008/9

Chair: Co Chairs appointed: Kulbir Chahal and Madeleine Cato.

Membership Secretary: Kulbir Chahal.

All other posts the current officers agreed to

stand for a new year.

The various sub groups reported on their activities during 2007/8.

Thank you all for yet another successful year.

See you all on September 8th 2008.

Protest zones in China – yet another broken promise

On 23 July this year the Chinese authorities announced that they would set up protest zones in three parks around Beijing where individuals would be allowed to express their grievances during the course of the Olympic Games. Everyone is of course still required to obtain advance permission from the police to protest in the zones but the point was, the Chinese authorities were promoting these parks as a tangible example of them meeting promises to improve human rights in China.

Liu Shaowu, director for security for the Beijing Olympic organising committee stated at a news conference "We will invite demonstrators to hold their demonstrations in designated places". "People or protesters who want to express their personal opinions can go to do so". Ni Jianping, director of the Shanghai Institute of American Studies, who lobbied Chinese leaders to set up the protest zones said "This will allow people to protest without disrupting the Olympics... We're giving people a platform to express their views."

So why have we not seen any protests in any of the 3 designated parks? Is it the case that people in China do not have anything to protest about? Hardly, in 2005 there were some 86,000 known demonstrations in China alone. Is it the case that they are too scared of what the consequences will be for them if they do apply for permission?

What we do know is that the protest zones remain empty. Some individuals who have started the process of applying for permission have been verbally told that their applications would not be successful and have been placed under surveillance. The police have also detained several individuals who have applied for official permission.

For example Zhang Wei, a Beijing resident was detained at her home on 6 August, some days after she and some 20 of her former neighbours filed an application to protest against the demolition of their homes to make way for an urban redevelopment project. The police informed Zhang Wei's relatives that she would be held for 30 days for "disturbing social order". So far, the police have not allowed her family to visit her in detention.

What is absolutely clear is that the Chinese authorities continue to betray the Olympic values as these abuses continue despite official promises to improve human rights. The authorities' "protest zones" is yet another broken promise. It is an empty gesture that has failed to enhance rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. In fact, it has raised expectations among Chinese activists and the international community, which have not been fulfilled.

