

AMNESTY NEWS

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

February 2009



Free West Papua

Richard Samuelson and Benny Wenda spoke about the situation in West Papua and showed a DVD "The Secret War in Asia".

Benny, who is an ex-political prisoner in West Papua, made the point that his journey from Oxford to Southampton to speak to the Group had been "free" whereas in his country such journeys were not so.

Benny had escaped from his country where his people are not safe. West Papua is the home of the Bird of Paradise and wonderful Rain Forests, but today it is the home of the military. Their cry for freedom and justice has been going on for 45 years.

The Island of New Guinea was conquered in three sections by the British, Germans and Dutch; it was exploited for its great mineral wealth and natural resources. West Papua declared independence in 1961, but was invaded 3 months later by the Indonesian army.

The people of West Papua respected their environment and lived in harmony with the land. But since the invasion there has been indiscriminate cutting and planting. The indigenous peoples of West Papua were terrorised and the girls raped by the invaders. The Indonesian invaders saw them as second class citizens and the Indone-

**Group Meeting
Monday 9th February 2009**

**Update and Letter Writing
on
CENTRAL AMERICA**

Local Group

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

sian children spat on them in schools. They were not allowed to speak their own language.

In 2002 Benny was sentenced to 25 yrs in prison for his work in the Freedom Movement. AI worked on his behalf, and the police questioned Benny about how AI knew about him. Benny considers AI "a hero", "they made me strong".

He would have been killed in his country so he fled to the UK, where he has been allowed to stay.

Benny and his colleagues are now attempting to bring attention to the human rights abuses in his land.

See page 3 for more details of what can be done.

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.

Action for GAZA

What Amnesty is calling for:

- 1) **Protection of Civilians**
- 2) **Relief for Civilians**
- 3) **Protection of Medical personnel, facilities and ambulances**
- 4) **Immediate and unfettered access for humanitarian workers, human rights workers and journalists**
- 5) **Accountability**
- 6) **Human Rights monitors.**

Because of the changing events in Gaza please visit AI's website for the latest information

www.amnesty.org.uk/gazacrisis

Take Action:

Write to your MP expressing concern over the current situation.

Please use the following points in your letter:

*Amnesty welcomes the cease-fire resolution and hopes that a cease fire will provide immediate relief to the civilians of Gaza and the grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

* Amnesty is asking for increased



international efforts to address the concerns listed below and for the Security Council in particular to establish full accountability for crimes committed in Gaza.

Amnesty's concerns regarding action the UK government could be taking but is not are:

*The UK government could use new language and say that evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity is mounting daily.

*Could insist on full accountability for such crimes. They could initiate criminal investigation and carry out prosecu-

tions before their own courts if evidence warrants it.

*UK could suspend all military exports to Israel until there is no longer a substantial risk that such equipment will be used for serious violations of human rights and push for an international arms embargo on all parties to the conflict.

*UK could acknowledge publicly that the Israeli Defence Force's actions have often been reckless and disproportionate and harm civilians and they should abide by the requirements of international human rights and humanitarian law, including not fighting in civilian areas as this endangers civilians.

*Government could call for the establishment of a thorough, independent and impartial investigation of abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law, including Israeli attacks which have been directed at civilians or civilian buildings in the Gaza Strip, or which are disproportionate and Palestine armed groups' rocket attacks directed at Israeli population centers.

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 Meeting

Kulbir and Madeleine (joint chairs) welcomed every one to the meeting: The business issues dealt with as follows:

- ◆ **Romsey Youth Group:** Members of Romsey Youth Group attended the meeting. The outlined a day being held on 23rd January for young people in Romsey to address issues of concern. A request was made for a possible AI speaker to attend.
- ◆ **Gaza Situation:** Kulbir reported on the recent demonstration in Southampton. There will be demonstrations on future Saturdays at 11.00 at the Peace Fountain. Check AI web site for Amnesty's position, more details on page 2 & 4.
- ◆ **Financial Report:** We have sent £400 to AIUK, total for the year so far is £800. The Hall for meetings has been paid until July 2009. Our current balance is £531.93.
- ◆ **Secretary's Report:** Details of the Card Signing Event at Borders had been sent to AI Group News; and we have also suggested a greater

range of Christmas Cards in the future (NB post meeting information, we have had a positive response from AIUK about this issue).

- ◆ Members were reminded of the Concert in March 21st (see flier and below)
- ◆ We have been invited to have a stall at National Association of Probation Conference on 1st May in Jury's Inn Hotel.
- ◆ AI AGM and Annual Conference to be held in Swansea on 3rd to 5th April.
- ◆ We will need new coordinator for "Poverty Campaign", anyone interested please contact one of the officers see "Who's Who".
- ◆ **Outreach:** Veronica reminded the meeting of the UN Association meeting on Saturday 12th in Kell Hall.
- ◆ **Fundraising:** Anne-Marie Frances was thanked for the money that she had raised at various parties.

FreeWestPapua

Genocide in Paradise

A land which is home to the world's second-largest tropical rainforest - and a vicious genocide against its indigenous people.

A land of ancient tribal cultures - whose people are brutalised by occupying soldiers.

A land of stunning and rare wildlife - where raising the national flag is punishable by ten years in prison.

Join the Free West Papua Campaign
www.freewestpapua.org

Courtlye Musick

Present

"Time to Pass with Goodly Sport"

Songs and instrumental music reflecting the vibrant Court of King Henry VIII

Performed in costume on authentic instruments

Saturday 21st March 2009
 St Michael's Church, Bugle Street, Southampton
 Tickets £8 from Tourist Information or at the door.

