

AMNESTY NEWS

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April 2009



Countries of the Former Soviet Union

Barry Hay, AIUK Country Coordinator for the South Caucasus Region outlined some key Human Rights issues in the former Soviet Union.

Key Concerns: Corruption, widespread torture to gain confessions, general impunity for state officials, appalling prison conditions, retention of the death penalty in Belarus, limits on freedom of expression, persecution of human rights defenders, violence against women which has reached epidemic proportions in Russia, female trafficking, displaced populations (Azerbaijan has one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world), widespread persecution of ethnic minorities and religious minorities and anti-terrorism measures which are often used to justify repression.

Key points of Conflict: Georgia-Russia 2008. In August the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia escalated. Resulting in large scale destruction, 163,000 people forced from their homes, with a great need for humanitarian assistance.

Freedom of expression-Russian Fed: Anna Politkovskaya murdered in 2006, Yuri Grachev, a local newspaper ed badly beaten in 2009, Stanislav Markelov a lawyer and Anastasia Baburova, a journalist, shot on Moscow street in 2009.

Group Meeting
Monday 20th April 2009
(NB date to avoid Easter)

Update & Letter Writing
Business & Human Rights
&
Feedback from AIUK AGM

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

Protection of civilians and accountability for abuse: AI calls for:

- ◆ Deployment of expert international human rights observers to monitor the respect for human rights in all areas.
- ◆ Independent and thorough investigation into allegations of serious violations of HR and humanitarian law.
- ◆ Moratorium on use of cluster munitions.
- ◆ Prosecute those suspected of violations of (inter) national laws.
- ◆ The right of every internally displaced person to return in safety and dignity.
- ◆ Full reparation for unlawful acts.

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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.

El Salvador: Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz

Sisters Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz, then aged seven and three, were captured by the Salvadorean army in 1982 during the internal armed conflict in El Salvador.

The girls have not been seen or heard from since. Twenty-six years on, their family is still trying to find out what happened to them.

UPDATE: 9 MARCH 2009

The Public Prosecutor's Office has taken on board some of the requests made by the private prosecutor acting for local human rights organization Pro-Búsqueda. As a result, two former high-ranking military officers gave testimony as witnesses in 2008.

This was the first time that former or current high-ranking military officers have been called to give testimony in court in El Salvador to account for human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict.

The information that former General Rafael Flores Lima and for-



mer General Juan Rafael Bustillo provided could be relevant in determining the chain of command during the 1982 military operation that resulted in the disappearance of Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz.

Other former high- and mid-ranking military officers may be called to give testimony in the future.

The Public Prosecutor's Office has yet to comply with the request from the judge to ask the President of the Republic for information relating

to the chain of command for the military operation.

Please write: to the President of El Salvador urging an investigation into the disappearance of Ernestina and Erlinda Serrano Cruz and that those responsible be brought to justice.

Please also include in your letter: your deep concern at the failure of the state to fulfill its obligations under the Inter-American Court ruling in this case; urge the setting up of an DNA data base to enable the identification of disappeared people;

Write to:

**Sr. Elías Antonio Saca -
Presidente de la República**
Casa Presidencial
Alameda Dr Manuel E Araujo
No.
5500
San Salvador
El Salvador
Fax: 00 503 2243 9947

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 Meeting

Madeleine Cato took the Chair:

Forthcoming events:

- ◆ 20th March: Redbridge School Conference-Mary has e-mailed some advice etc.
- ◆ 21st March: Concert: Courtlye Musick, volunteers needed. (This was a great success see next months news for details)
- ◆ April: Car boot sale details, including volunteers to be agreed at next meeting.
- ◆ 1st May: request for an AI stall at National Probation Conference in Jury's Inn.

Group Campaigning/Planning Pack:

In the forthcoming year there will be two Global Campaigns: "Stop Violence Against Women" and "Dignity". Other campaigns will be sent via monthly actions: terrorism, business and arms conflict. The details of our sub groups are outlined below.

Feedback on Conference on Terror, Security and Human Rights, 7th March 2009.

The conference included workshops on "Security and

Human Rights Concerns in North Africa"; "Media and freedom of expression under attack in Europe and Central Asia" and "USA's War on Terror over in practise or just in name".

Finances:

All our bills are paid up until July 2009. However we only have £280.94 in the bank.

Secretaries Report:

Initial information received about the European elections on 4th June. There will be opportunities for lobbying, letter writing, meeting candidates and attending hustings.

Monthly Action:

Letter write to our MPs regarding an EDM about death penalty issues in Japan, focussing on a 73 yr old man who is having his 43 rd birthday on death row.

Countries of the Former Soviet Union

(cont)

Campaigning:

Teenagers' 4 years detention-Azerbaijan:

Detained in March 2005 on murder charges. Concern that they are subject to police torture, denied sleep, food and water. Forced to sign confessions. Their Court hearings have been repeatedly postponed. AI is calling for to be released.

Stop Violence Against Women- Armenia:

Women suffer in silence. There is evidence of violence in the family. AI is calling for Armenia to support NGOs combating violence against women; prevent domestic and sexual violence; create nationwide network of crisis centres and shelters to advise and protect women escaping violence.

Good news:

Russian Fed: Ibragim Gazdiev "disappeared" in 2007, his brother thanks everyone for their support. In 2009 the investigation has been reopened.

Azerbaijan: Eynulla Fatullayev, a news paper editor has been in prison for over 8 yrs. He has received over 11000 cards of support from AI members and sympathisers.

Southampton Sub Groups and Campaigns

Terrorism, Security and Human Rights, led by Giampaolo with various people as members of the group

Stop Violence Against Women, led by Trish

China and East Asia, currently no lead but includes Anne as a member of the group.

Business and Human Rights, led by Rob

Death Penalty, led by John, with Giampaolo as a member of the group

Refugees, led by Rapinder, with Jilly as a group member.

Arms Control, led by Chris

Central America, South America, led by Rapinder with Madeleine and Cheryl as part of the group

Poverty, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, led by Rob

