

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, January 27, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* Caltech Y has moved. Just around the corner from our old meeting place, we moved to San Pasqual between Hill and Holliston, south side. You will see two curving walls forming a gate to a path-- our building is just beyond. Help us plan future actions on Tibet, the Patriot Act, Campaign Against Discrimination, death penalty, environmental justice and more.

Tuesday, February 8, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. This informal gathering is a great for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, February 20, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we discuss Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. (More info below.)

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi all,

Hope you had a good winter holiday and are ready to start the New Year. Robert and I went to Oregon for 10 days to visit family and enjoyed cold but relatively dry weather only to return to LA and encounter a monsoon! Luckily my leaking window in my home office stayed dry.

Our new prisoner of conscience, Ngawang Gyaltzen, was released last year and we are in the market for a new one! Come help us decide at one of our monthly meetings--do we want to have another Tibetan prisoner or from another country? Unfortunately, there are many to choose from!

A few weeks ago Group 22 members saw the film "Hotel Rwanda", which is based on a true story of Paul Rusesabagina, the manager of a four star Belgian hotel in Kigali. He is Hutu, and his wife is Tutsi. He saved 1268 refugees by sheltering them inside the hotel during the April 1994 genocide when the Hutus killed 800,000 plus Rwandans, mostly Tutsis. I would highly recommend this film as the acting is excellent (especially Don Cheadle who plays Mr. Rusesabagina) and it is very suspenseful. Hopefully this film won't be forgotten when they pick the Oscar winners!

Our February book, "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie, is now available at Vromans in the will call dept (ask for the 20% discount slip). Start reading it now, because it is really long! 533 pages!! I have never read anything by Mr. Rushdie before, but he had me laughing already in the first few pages!

This year's Annual General Meeting for USA will be in Austin, Texas April 8-10. For further info, go to the AIUSA website at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/agm/> or call the Western Regional Office at: 310-815-0450. Subsidies are available to help offset travel costs. More info on subsidies can be obtained from the Western Regional Office--ask to speak to Kathy Brown, the administrator or kbrown@aiusa.org. I've heard Austin is very nice, and would love to go, but there's a very important event on April 16 that I don't want to miss!

Further along the line, the Western Area Regional Conference will be in San Francisco November 11-13, 2005. I hope we can all make it to this event, as it is much closer!

Take care,

Kathy

aigp22@caltech.edu

EARTHQUAKE/Tsunami *Human Rights at Risk in the Aftermath*

In the aftermath of the tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean, Amnesty International (AI) is monitoring the relief effort to ensure that fundamental human rights are respected. These include the principle of non-discrimination in aid provision, principles guiding protection of human rights in situations of internal displacement and the right to protection from physical or mental abuse, including violence against women.

AI is calling on all those involved in the relief effort to respect international human rights and humanitarian norms. Assistance should be provided on the basis of need, without discrimination based on the race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status of recipients.

AI is looking into reports of adverse discrimination, with a focus on groups with particular protection needs, such as indigenous and disadvantaged communities, children, migrant workers and women in vulnerable situations. The organization is also concerned that relief should not be used as cover to forcefully relocate populations, in order to clamp down on or undermine support for opposition groups. Any relocation of internally displaced persons from camps or other accommodation must be voluntary, and should not be coerced in any way, including through the suspension of assistance to those persons.

Human rights are most in jeopardy in situations of crisis and emergency. It is therefore critical that governments and

other actors recognize and support the central role of human rights defenders, including those engaged in humanitarian work and those monitoring violations, in the relief and reconstruction process.

Specific areas of concern:

Aceh

Even before the earthquake/tsunami, the Indonesian province of Aceh had been seriously affected by a conflict between the armed group Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) and the Indonesian military. At least 3000 people have been killed in this conflict since the declaration of a military emergency in May 2003. Access for international humanitarian and human rights agencies was also severely restricted throughout that period. It will be important to ensure that the situation is not exploited by either party to perpetrate further human rights abuses.

AI is monitoring the Indonesian response to the current crisis, including the leading role played in relief efforts by the Indonesian military. AI is closely monitoring any alleged human rights abuses associated with the continuing conflict in Aceh.

Sri Lanka

Of particular concern are the emerging reports of sexual violence against women in camps for the displaced. AI's ongoing campaign to Stop Violence against Women has highlighted the specific risks faced by internally displaced women and the need for concrete measures to prevent sexual violence and investigate such complaints immediately, thoroughly and independently.

AI is also concerned by reports from Sri Lanka that orphaned children may be recruited as soldiers by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in the north and east of the country and is monitoring this closely. Recruitment of children by the LTTE has been a longstanding concern. The organization is continuing to appeal for an immediate halt to this practice and is urging that those children recruited to date are returned to their families or communities.

There were initially some positive signs of co-operation between the LTTE and the government; however there appears to be increasing disagreement between the two parties over the distribution of aid. Amnesty International is concerned that these disagreements should not delay or obstruct delivery of essential aid and continues to monitor developments.

Thailand

AI is investigating reports of harassment by the Thai police of Burmese migrants who have lost their identity cards.

Action

A sample letter regarding the proposed lifting of sanctions against the Indonesian military to the US Secretary of State follows:

U.S. Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington DC 20520

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to express my concern over the reported plans by the United States Department of State to furnish foreign military financing (FMF) to Indonesia in the Administration's fiscal year 2006 budget request. I am opposed to any consideration of FMF for Indonesia at this time, because of the poor human rights record of the Indonesian military.

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of grave human rights violations in the province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalm (NAD) since the declaration of a military emergency in May 2003. Amnesty has collected evidence of unlawful killings of civilians, torture, rape, arbitrary detention, and unfair trials. Although the military emergency was downgraded to a civil emergency in May 2004, military operations are continuing and human rights violations continue to be reported.

In August 2004, the convictions of four Indonesian military and police officers were overturned on appeal. They were found guilty of involvement in committing crimes against humanity in East Timor in 1999. The State Department noted it was "profoundly disappointed with the performance and record of the Indonesian ad hoc tribunal," the special institution that was created in the wake of the murder of more than 1,400 East Timorese.

Madam Secretary, I feel that the provision of FMF for Indonesia in the fiscal year 2006 would exacerbate ongoing violations and corruption by rewarding such behavior.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

LETTER COUNT

Urgent Actions	33
Holiday Card Action	53
Total	86

Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with lwkamp@sbcglobal.net

REFUGEE NETWORK

Protest Forcible Return of Former Child Soldier

Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem, Estifanos Solomon and two army officers were reportedly forcibly returned from Djibouti to Eritrea on 28 December 2004. They are being detained without charge at an unknown location and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem is a member of the Afar ethnic group which inhabits areas in both Djibouti and Eritrea. He was born in Djibouti, although his family live in Eritrea. On 26 December he and the three other men drove from the southwest Eritrean town of Assab to Obock town in Djibouti, where they were detained by the Djiboutian army. Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem was refused permission to stay in Djibouti, despite being a Djiboutian citizen.

The three other men reportedly requested asylum in Djibouti but were summarily handed over to Eritrean military officers on 28 December, who forcibly returned them to Eritrea the same day. The three were denied the right to have their asylum application properly determined or to contact the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Djibouti.

Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem was unlawfully conscripted into the Eritrean army as a child soldier in 1997 when he was 14 years old. He had unsuccessfully applied recently to be demobilized on medical grounds after receiving eye injuries and shrapnel wounds during the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia. His health is poor and he may require medical treatment for these injuries.

Other Eritrean asylum seekers, including many attempting to avoid or escape conscription, have previously been forcibly returned from Malta, Libya and elsewhere in recent years. Several hundred are still detained incommunicado without charge or trial (see UA 232/04, 28 July 2004 and follow-up).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern for the safety of four members of the armed forces - Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem, Estifanos Solomon and two officers – who were detained after being forcibly returned to Eritrea on 28 December from Djibouti;
- calling for assurances that they will not be tortured or ill-treated;
- urging the authorities to reveal their whereabouts and clarify their legal status immediately, and calling for them to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or released;

Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem, a Djiboutian citizen, was forcibly returned to Eritrea on 26 December 2004, where he had been unlawfully conscripted into the Eritrean army as a child soldier at the age of 14. concern that the three men who had applied for asylum in Djibouti were denied access to procedures to determine their refugee status;

- noting Mahmoud Ahmed Chehem's ill-health and calling for him to be given access to medical treatment;

- calling for all four men to be given access to their lawyers, families and any medical attention they may need.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Issayas Afewerki
President of the State of Eritrea
Office of the President
P O Box 257
Asmara, Eritrea

General Sebhat Ephrem
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
PO Box 629
Asmara, Eritrea

COPIES TO:

Ms Fawzia Hashim
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 241
Asmara, Eritrea

Ambassador Girma Asmerom
Embassy of the State of Eritrea
1708 New Hampshire Ave NW
Washington DC 20009

TURKMENISTAN *Sample letter for Prisoner of Conscience*

President Saparmurad A. Niyazov
Prezident Turkmenistana
Apparat Prezidenta
744000 Ashgabat
TURKMENISTAN

Dear President:

I am deeply concerned about the continued forced confinement in a psychiatric hospital of 63-year-old prisoner of conscience Gurbandurdy Durdykulyev.

On 3 January 2004 Gurbandurdy Durdykulyev sent a letter to you and to a regional governor, urging you both to authorize a two-day peaceful demonstration on the main square of Balkanabad on 18 and 19 February. The purpose of the demonstration was to protest government policies and to urge authorities to alter those policies. I am aware that Mr. Durdykulyev has been an outspoken critic of the government who has advocated the formation of an opposition political party. While his comments may not always be welcomed by your government, he should be free to make such observations. Freedom of expression is a basic human right that is protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Turkmenistan is a state party.

On 13 February 2004, Gurbandurdy Durdykulyev was taken from his home in Suvchy and forcibly confined to a psychiatric hospital in the town of Balkanabad. Shortly

afterwards he was transferred across the country to a psychiatric hospital in Garashsyzyk district, where he was officially diagnosed as suffering from "wild paranoia in an aggressive form." However, several medical staff of the hospital in Garashsyzyk reportedly told Mr. Durdykulyev's relatives that they had not found any sign of mental illness but that authorities had pressured them to diagnose him as mentally ill.

Gurbandurdy Durdykulyev is believed to be in a poor state of health, suffering from fever and severe stomach pains. He continues to be affected by the aftermath of a heart attack he had had before his confinement to the psychiatric hospital.

Amnesty International considers Gurbandurdy Durdykulyev to be a prisoner of conscience who has been forcibly confined to a psychiatric hospital to punish him for peacefully expressing his right to freedom of expression. I urge you to grant his immediate and unconditional release.

Sincerely,

copy to:

Ambassador Meret Bairamovich Orazov
Embassy of Turkmenistan
2207 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
email: turkmen@mindspring.com

CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE *Syrian Deported from US, Tortured by Syria*

Amnesty International is concerned about the US sending people to countries where they may face torture, in violation of the UN Convention Against Torture. Maher Arar is a Canadian citizen of Syrian descent who was detained at JFK airport in New York while trying to get to a connecting flight back to his home in Canada. After holding Mr. Arar for ten days, the US deported him to Jordan, and Jordanian officials then transported him to Syria where Arar says he was held and tortured for ten months. He was then freed and allowed to return to his family in Canada.

Urge Attorney General Ashcroft to launch a full, impartial investigation into its treatment of Mr. Arar and the role of the US government or its agents in his removal to Jordan and Syria. Ask that such deportations stop.

Background Information

Despite US stated policy not to hand over suspects to countries where they may face torture, there have been persistent reports and rumors of detainees in US custody being secretly "rendered" to countries with a record of abusing suspects in order to extract information. This action contravenes both domestic US law and international treaties. Under the UN Convention Against Torture, the United States is prohibited from deporting

someone to a country where it is more likely than not that s/he will be tortured.

Such countries are alleged to include Jordan, Morocco and Egypt. A senior intelligence official, speaking anonymously, was quoted in the Washington Post on November 5, 2003 as stating that there have been "a lot of rendition activities" since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Officials have been reported in earlier press articles to have openly stated that the USA may deliberately send some detainees to countries where they would be subjected to abuse during interrogation.

Maher Arar is a Canadian citizen of Syrian descent who was detained at JFK airport in New York while trying to get to a connecting flight back to his home in Canada. According to reports from Arar and his attorney, US officials detained him and interrogated him, holding him for eight days before contacting the Canadian consulate and denying him access to an attorney during questioning. After holding Mr. Arar for ten days, the US deported him to Jordan, and Jordanian officials then transported him to Syria where Arar says he was held and tortured for ten months. He was then freed and allowed to return to his family in Canada.

According to officials in the US government, the deportation order was signed by the Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson in his capacity as acting Attorney General, declaring that to send Arar back to Canada as Arar requested would be "prejudicial to the interests of the United States."

Amnesty International has conducted several interviews with Mr. Arar since his release. He has also made a number of public statements. We are gravely concerned by accounts he has given of being tortured in Syria and held for months in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions. He was also allegedly beaten in Jordan. His testimony, together with other credible reports of the treatment of prisoners in Syria and Jordan, reinforces our concern that the US government was in breach of its obligations under international law in deporting Mr. Arar directly or indirectly to Syria.

Sample Letter

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Gonzales:

I am very concerned about the allegations of rendering and torture in the case of Canadian citizen Maher Arar. Mr. Arar was detained while in transit at JFK airport on his way back to Canada. He was held for days by US authorities, denied basic rights such as access to an attorney and consular notification, and then forcibly deported to Syria through Jordan, against his wishes. According to officials in the US government, the deportation order was signed by the Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson in his capacity as acting Attorney General, declaring that to send

Arar back to Canada as Arar requested would be "prejudicial to the interests of the United States." Mr. Arar alleges he was held and tortured in Syria for ten months before being freed and allowed to return to Canada.

The US government's actions in deporting Mr. Arar appear to be in gross violation of its obligations under international law as well as its own stated policy. Article 3 of the Convention against Torture prohibits the transfer of anyone to another state where "there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture." Mr. Arar reportedly told US officials of his own concern that he would be subjected to such treatment if sent to Syria and refused to depart voluntarily on this ground.

In view of the very disturbing concerns outlined above, we urge that the United States Government to instigate a full, impartial investigation into its treatment of Mr. Arar and the role of the US government or its agents in his removal to Jordan and Syria. The findings of such an inquiry should be made public and any officials found responsible for violating his rights held accountable. We also urge the United States to abide by its obligations under US and international law and ensure that individuals are not sent to countries where they may face torture.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

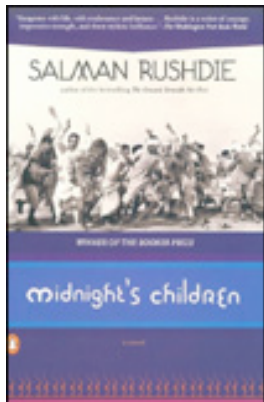
RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena

Sunday, February 20, 6:30 PM



Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie

Winner of the 1981 Booker Prize and the "Booker of Bookers" (awarded to the best Booker Prize winner of the award's first 25 years)

Saleem Sinai was born at midnight, the midnight of India's independence, and finds himself mysteriously "handcuffed to history" by the coincidence. He is one of 1,001 children born at the midnight hour, each of them endowed with an extraordinary talent — and whose privilege and curse it is to be both master and victims of their times. Through Saleem's gifts — inner voices and a wildly sensitive sense of smell — we are drawn into a fascinating family saga set against the vast, colourful background of the India of this century.

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sample letter for Kenyan Woman

Maj. Gen. M.H. Ali
Commissioner of Police
Police Headquarters - Vigilance House
Harambee Avenue
PO Box 30083
Nairobi, KENYA
email: info@kenyapolice.go.ke

Dear Major General:

I wish to express my deep concern at reports that Margaret Muthoni Murage was severely beaten in police custody, after which she suffered a miscarriage. I am dismayed to learn that no investigation has taken place to bring to justice those responsible for her torture.

Margaret Muthoni Murage was six-months pregnant when she was arrested on 4 May 2004 in Nairobi. Accused of stealing gold jewelry from her employer, the 17-year-old was taken to a police station for questioning. She described to Amnesty International how one of the interrogation officers repeatedly beat her. She said, "He first kicked me on the side then knocked me on the wall, my stomach facing that wall. Then he took me to the counter and pushed me under it." Shortly afterward, she found herself in severe pain and, after repeated requests, was eventually taken to an office where she suffered a miscarriage. "I was given a paper bag, and I was told to put my fetus in the bag and all that in a cardboard box," she said.

Margaret Murage was taken to a hospital and her baby placed in the mortuary. She was then brought back to the police station and released the following day. On 10 May she returned to the station to make a statement against the police regarding the beatings and torture. Refusing to take her statement, they arrested her again and detained her overnight. She was subsequently charged with the alleged theft, and is currently free pending the trial.

Although police promised Amnesty International that they would investigate, no action appears to have been taken. When Amnesty followed up in October 2004, they were told that investigations had still not been completed. I urge you to see to it that authorities swiftly complete their investigations and bring to justice those responsible for the torture of Margaret Muthoni Murage.

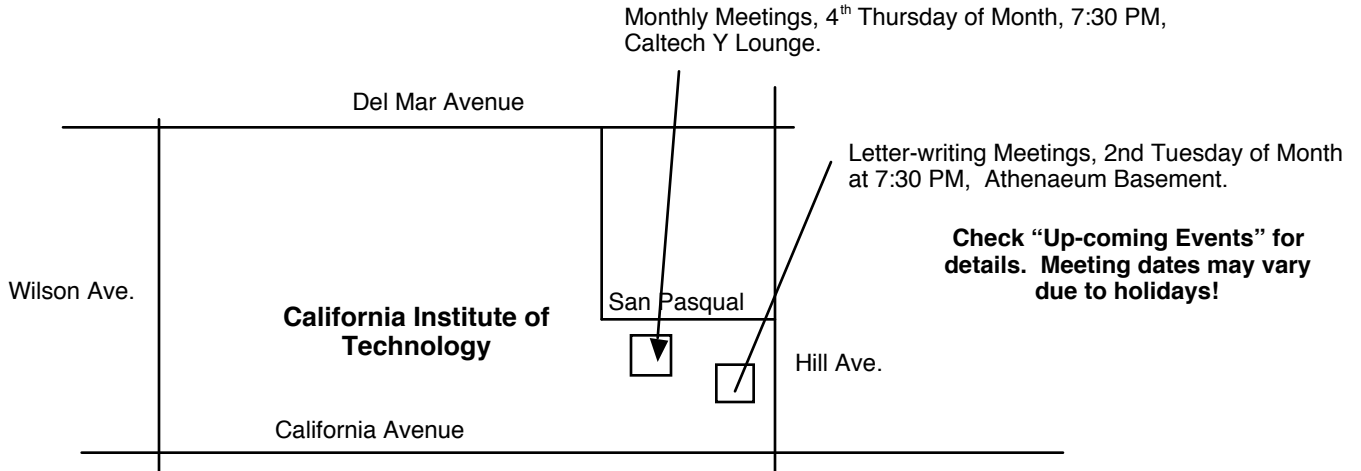
Sincerely,

copy to:

Ambassador Leonard Ngaithe
Embassy of the Republic of Kenya
2249 R Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
email: leonard.ngaithe@kenyaembassy.com

EDITOR'S LAST WORD:

Read us on line: <http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~aigp22>
Martha Ter Maat, 626-281-4039 / rightsreaders@yahoo.com



From the 210 exit on Lake Avenue, head south, turn left on Del Mar
 From the 110 continue on Arroyo Parkway north, turn right on California
 Street parking is generally available.

Amnesty International Group 22
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Pasadena, CA 91115-0193



Amnesty International'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.