

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, June 23, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* Caltech Y is located off 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 Sudan, the War on Terror, death penalty, environmental justice and more.

Sunday, June 26, 2005, 2:00-4:00 PM, *United Nations International Day in support of Victims of Torture Special Event "Truth & Truth Telling About Torture"* Marymount High School, Cantwell Hall, 10643 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles. Features Keynote Speaker, Darius Rejali, Reed College, noted expert on state violence and torture, plus survivor testimonies from "Lost Boys of Sudan," and cultural performances. Sponsored by Program for Torture Victims in Association with Amnesty International USA, and more. For more info: 213.747.4944 ext. 246. Parking at site. Overflow at UCLA.

Tuesday, July 12, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. **The Rathskellar closes in summer so look for us and our sign, outside at a table on the lawn!** This informal gathering is a great for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, July 17, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we discuss Louisa Waugh's account of a year in Mongolia, *Hearing Birds Fly*. (More info below.)

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone. Only a few more days to work and I'll be off for a few weeks this summer. I have a few projects to do at home during this time off and most involve cleaning and organizing! But we hope to do some fun things too. Hope everyone has a nice summer.

Amnesty has been in the news a lot lately. Bill Schultz, the executive director of Amnesty International USA, held a press conference 5-25-05

on the release of AI's annual report. The report denounces high-level government officials, including President Bush, for creating policies that allow torture and ill treatment to occur in prisons in Iraq, Guantanamo, and Afghanistan--calling them the "gulag of our time". The US was also cited for failing to apply standards of international law to prisoners of war. Our government has tried to cover up these practices and has not adequately investigated or prosecuted the guilty parties. Dr. Schultz also announced the launch of AI's campaign "Denounce Torture: Stop it now!" at the press conference. To read the report, visit www.amnesty.usa.org.

Robert Scheer of the LA Times wrote on this subject titled "Blaming the Messenger Fools No One" in his June 7 column on the Bush Administrations' response. Did you see Michael Ramirez's obnoxious cartoon showing Schultz as a clown?

Remember the Lost Boys of Sudan video that we showed last year? Two of the lost boys have written a book, "They Poured Fire," and are speaking Sunday, June 26, Marymount High School. See "Upcoming Events" for details. For more info about the book visit: www.theypouredfire.com.

Robert and I went to the AI Film Festival in West Hollywood the last weekend in May. We saw movies about Bhopal, murders in Juarez, child soldiers, and Olympic-style games in southern Sudan. My favorite was "State of Fear", a gripping documentary about the military repression in Peru during the time the Marxist guerillas, Shining Path were trying to take over the country. There are striking parallels to the situation in the US and the "war on terror"!

Hope to see you soon at one of our meetings.

Take care,

Kathy

aigp22@caltech.edu

USA

Support Patriot Act Sunset Provisions

Amnesty International urges Congress to pass the "Security and Freedom Enhancement Act" (SAFE Act) with strong bipartisan support. The SAFE Act would repeal some of the more problematic aspects of the USA PATRIOT Act that weaken constitutional and international legal protections, while still ensuring that law enforcement officers are able to investigate charges of terrorism.

Amnesty International has supported efforts to mitigate the problematic provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, which was passed by the US Congress and signed into law by the President soon after September 11, 2001. The most troubling aspects of the

USA PATRIOT Act infringe on the human rights and constitutional protections of US citizens and non-citizens and contravene basic protections provided in the U.S. Constitution and various international treaties. The USA PATRIOT Act weakened the system of checks and balances on the law enforcement authority and due process safeguards under the law. The USA PATRIOT Act also created an ambiguous and broad definition for "domestic terrorism" crimes, instituted a lenient roving wire tap law that does not require affirmation of a person's identity before conversations are monitored, allowed for widespread use of sneak and peek searches, and relaxed the standards that law enforcement must meet in order to obtain business and personal records. The USA PATRIOT Act has inspired a proliferation of similar laws throughout the world.

Senators and Members of Congress should pass the SAFE Act, which would begin to restore basic constitutional and international human rights weakened by the USA PATRIOT Act. Specifically, the SAFE Act would:

- Restore the protections afforded to civilians who are not the stated targeted for the roving wiretaps and ensure that the person being monitored is indeed the person under investigation;
- Limit the so called sneak and peek searches – which gave law enforcement the ability to implement search warrants without notifying the target of the search – to specific cases where a loss of evidence, a threat of physical safety, potential intimidation of a witness, or a risk of flight is feared. It also would require that notice of the search be given within seven days, which the court can extend to 21 days;
- Institute greater judicial protections on the ability of law enforcement to secretly request business records by allowing the recipient of such a warrant to challenge the order, and providing notice to the target of the order if the government intends to use the records in subsequent proceedings;
- Increase oversight over national security letters by allowing the recipient to challenge the order and providing notice to the target of the order if the records are to be used in further proceedings– this would increase protections against the compelled disclosure of library and bookstore records;
- Amend the overly broad definition of the crime of "domestic terrorism" so that it does not infringe on the rights of free speech and freedom of association.

Amnesty International USA Recommendations:

- Congress should act quickly to pass the reforms enumerated in the SAFE Act.
- Congress should continue to pass reforms to safeguard individual human rights and revoke aspects of the USA PATRIOT Act that are in breach of the rights protected in the US Constitution and international human rights law.

Write your Senators, Representatives and the White House and urge them to enforce the sunsets currently in the USA PATRIOT Act, co-sponsor and pass the SAFE Act and amend the over broad definition of "domestic terrorism."

The Honorable George W. Bush
 The President of the United States
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
 Washington DC 20500

Senator Dianne Feinstein
 United States Senate
 331 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510-0001

Congressman Adam Schiff
 U.S. House of Representatives
 326 Cannon House Office Building
 Washington D.C. 20515

Dear _____:

I am writing to ask that you enforce the sunset provisions currently in the USA PATRIOT Act and place sunsets on other provisions that infringe on our individual rights.

On behalf of Amnesty International, I urge you to cosponsor and pass the SAFE Act, which will increase judicial oversight over government surveillance and amend the current definition of "domestic terrorism" so it does not infringe on the rights of free speech and freedom of assembly.

I also urge you to act quickly to bring the USA PATRIOT Act in line with the US Constitutional and international human rights law. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

LETTER COUNT	
Urgent Actions	13
Torture	7
Outfront	7
Sudan	7
Total:	34
Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with lwkamp@sbcglobal.net	

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena

Sunday, July 17, 6:30 PM

Hearing Birds Fly

by Louisa Waugh



After two years of working in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, journalist Louisa Waugh moved to the remote village of Tsengel, in the extreme west of the country. This is the story of the year she spent there, living and working with the people who have

made a home in the stark but beautiful landscape. With unflinching honesty, Waugh recounts how she slowly learned to fend for herself in a world where life is dominated by the seasons. The villagers and their culture vividly emerge as she shares her happiness, frustrations, and occasional extreme loneliness and fear. *Hearing Birds Fly* transports the reader from the end of a long, hard Mongolian winter, through a drought-stricken spring, into a lush summer spent in the mountains with a family of nomads. A warm, totally unsentimental account of life in a world where the act of survival is, in itself, a triumph of the human spirit.

CONTROL ARMS CAMPAIGN

Support Fifty Caliber Sniper Weapons Act

It is easier to buy a 50 caliber sniper rifle in the United States than it is to buy a handgun, and once purchased, some of these weapons find their way abroad. Encourage your Senator to support the Fifty Caliber Sniper Weapons Regulation Act of 2005 (S. 935), which more accurately classifies this rifle and imposes strong regulations.

Better controlling the dangerous spread of small arms and light weapons is a central goal of the Control Arms campaign, launched by Amnesty International, Oxfam and the International Action Network on Small Arms in October 2003. The largely unregulated international trade in these weapons and their resulting misuse contributes to grave human rights violations and impedes economic development and access to basic social services. Weapons such as handguns, assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and man-portable air

defense systems (MANPADS) take more than a half a million lives each year. For these reasons, the campaign seeks negotiation and ratification of an International Arms Trade Treaty that would stop weapons sales to governments that seriously violate international humanitarian and human rights law.

But it is not only limited regulation on the international arms trade that leads to innocent people dying, and AI is not just concerned about government-to-government arms transfers. When governments fail to enact effective domestic gun regulation and private persons use domestically purchased guns to commit gross human rights abuses both within and outside a government's borders, it is a human rights concern. According to the Geneva-based think tank Small Arms Survey, gun sales laws in the United States are much more lax than in any industrialized country. Under U.S. federal law, for example, private citizens can sell guns without conducting background checks and thereby circumvent an important legal provision intended to prevent undesirable individuals from purchasing guns. The U.S. domestic sale of military-style weapons such as the 50 caliber sniper rifle is of particular concern for Americans and citizens abroad.

Although the 50 caliber sniper rifle is a firearm that utilizes specific military features designed for combat, this rifle is sold in the United States with fewer federal and state restrictions than those placed on handguns. According to New York City's Police Commissioner Ray Kelly, the 50 caliber sniper rifle "is clearly a weapon of war, a round to be used in a wartime situation." Made specifically for sniping, this rifle is highly accurate from a significant distance. It has a range of up to 2,000 yards. Bullets fired from the 50 caliber can pierce armored personnel carriers, aircraft, rail tank cars, humans, and other structures, which poses a heightened risk of hitting innocent bystanders. In addition, restrictions on these rifles are surprisingly lax as they are classified as "long guns", which make no distinction between a 50 caliber sniper rifle and a 22 caliber target rifle. A youth of 18 years, for example, can legally buy a sniper rifle, but cannot buy a handgun until age 21.

In response to the above regulatory concerns and the below threats, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced the Fifty Caliber Sniper Weapons Regulation Act of 2005 (S. 935) along with two cosponsors on April 28, 2005. If passed, S. 935 would put 50 caliber sniper rifles in the same regulatory category as weapons such as machine guns and sawed-off shotguns. This new classification would require future 50 caliber rifle transfers to comply with the requirements of the National Firearms Act (NFA). Purchasers of NFA weapons must fill out a transfer application and provide fingerprints to be processed by the FBI as part of a detailed criminal background check, including a certification from a local law

enforcement official that possession of the firearm by the purchaser would not violate any laws. The ATF reports that this background check process takes about 60 days.

Amnesty International does not oppose gun ownership; Amnesty International does oppose the sale and distribution of weapons that contribute to gross human rights violations and abuse. It is a government's responsibility to ensure that weapons sales and transfers are adequately regulated.

Sample Letter

Senator Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0001

Dear Senator Boxer:

We need your help to stop the dangerous domestic sale and proliferation of the 50 caliber sniper rifle, which threatens the human rights of citizens around the world. This military-style rifle shoots bullets that pierce armored personnel carriers, aircraft, and rail tank cars. Radical groups such as Al-Qaeda, the Irish Republican Army, and the Branch Davidians have obtained these sniper rifles on the open civilian market in the United States, in some cases using them to shoot at or kill innocent civilians, police officers, and federal agents. I share Amnesty International's concern about the easy availability of the 50 caliber sniper rifle in the United States and the resulting threats to human rights and security around the world. I urge you to cosponsor and actively support the Fifty Caliber Sniper Weapons Regulation Act of 2005 (S. 935), which would address this dangerous threat.

In the last few years, several reports by the Violence Policy Center have shown the significant threats to civilians and government officials posed by the access to 50 caliber sniper rifles in the United States. This military-style rifle, which can pierce armored personnel carriers, aircraft, rail tank cars, and humans, is widely and easily available. According to sworn testimony in 2001, Al-Qaeda bought at least 25 Barrett 50 caliber sniper rifles in the late 1980s in the United States. The Irish Republican Army also used a 50 caliber sniper rifle, purchased in the United States in 1995, to kill a British soldier in 1997.

Abusive armed groups and individuals have also used the 50 caliber sniper rifle domestically. For example, in 1993, Branch Davidian cult members fired 50 caliber rifles at agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) in Waco, Texas. In response, the ATF had to request special military armored vehicles because the rifles were able to penetrate their regular vehicles. In February 2004, Donin Wright shot a 50 caliber rifle at police officers, paramedics, and firefighters from his house in Kansas City, Missouri.

Despite these significant threats and tragedies, this military-type rifle is sold in the United States with fewer federal and state restrictions than those placed on handguns. At the moment, this rifle is classified as a "long gun", which sets the regulation level very low. These rifles are easily purchased from individuals selling on websites as well as from federally licensed dealers. In fact, a youth of 18 years can legally buy a sniper rifle, but cannot buy a handgun until age 21.

I urge you to support the Fifty Caliber Sniper Weapons Regulation Act of 2005 (S. 935), which would re-classify these rifles and tighten regulation of their sales. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

VIETNAM: POC *Brother Nguyen Thien Phung*

This month Group 22 starts work on behalf of our newly adopted Vietnam Prisoner of Conscience, Brother Nguyen Thien Phung (Huan).

We received a message from AI Group 6 in New Zealand, saying they were also just beginning to work on his case. They contacted us because their web search came up with the reference to Nguyen Thien Phung in our previous newsletter. (Grateful acknowledgments to our newsletter editor and our webmaster!) We look forward to some possible cooperative actions with Group 6 in the future, as well as with the AI groups in Australia, France, Spain, Sweden and Canada who have already been working on his case. Let's hope the combined efforts of all of us around the world will be effective!

AI USA currently has an action for Brother Nguyen Thien Phung. This page has detailed background information, suggestions for composing your letter, and additional addresses for appeals. You can go to www.amnestyusa.org/countries/vietnam/reports.do and click on the May 2005 link. Or you can copy the following sample letter or use it as a guide:

His Excellency Phan Van Khai
Office of the Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing about BROTHER NGUYEN THIEN PHUNG (HUAN), a prisoner at prison camp Z30A, Xuan Loc, Dong Nai province. He has been imprisoned in harsh conditions for 18 years, since he was arrested because of his religious activities in May 1987 during raids on Thu Duc monastery, near Ho Chi Minh City.

I call on the authorities to ensure Brother Nguyen Thien Phung receives adequate food and appropriate medical care in accordance with international standards.

I believe that Brother Nguyen Thien Phung was imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of religion and expression by his activities as a member of the Congregation of the Mother Coredemptrix. I urge that he be released immediately and unconditionally.

I encourage the Vietnam government to ensure full implementation of the international human rights instruments which it has ratified. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely, [Your name and address]

Postage for overseas letters is 80 cents.

CORPORATE ACTION NETWORK *Stop Caterpillar Bulldozers Sales to Israel*

The Israeli government continues to use Caterpillar bulldozers, often illegally, to destroy hundreds of family's homes and possessions, in support of Israel's overall policy of forced eviction and demolition of homes of Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and Israeli Arabs in Israel. Recently, Israel announced its intention to suspend its policy of "punitive" house demolitions. However, numerous other homes remain under threat of demolitions.

Recommended Action:

Mr. James W. Owens
Chair and CEO, Caterpillar, Inc.
100 NE Adams Street
Peoria, Illinois 61629-1425

You can base your calls, e-mails, and letters on the following talking points:

I am contacting you to express my concern about Caterpillar bulldozers being used by the Israeli army to commit human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Territories.

- The Israeli army has used Caterpillar bulldozers among others to demolish more than 4,000 homes, vast areas of agricultural land and hundreds of other properties in Israel and the Occupied Territories in the past four and a half years.
- The destruction of these homes, land and other properties have resulted in widespread violations of the right to adequate housing and a decent standard of living for tens of thousands of people.
- Although Caterpillar sells its bulldozers to the US government, Caterpillar has been made aware of the fact – through Amnesty International and many others – that its bulldozers are being sold by the US government through US Foreign Military Sales to Israel.

I urge you to take the following actions:

If the D-9 bulldozers are in fact transferred to Israel through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales Program, as Caterpillar has claimed, it should immediately request the US government stop the transfer of these bulldozers until enforceable guarantees can be obtained that they will no longer be used to commit human rights violations. This suspension should also apply to spare parts, training and other support whether supplied by Caterpillar directly or through the US government.

Caterpillar Inc. should adopt a code of conduct that complies with the United Nations Human Rights Norms for Business (UN Norms).

Caterpillar should appoint an independent committee to determine whether the sale of its equipment to the Israeli military conforms with its Code of Worldwide Business Conduct.

I thank you for your urgent attention to this matter and look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

USA: ABU GHRAIB/GUANTANMO *Call for Independent Investigation*

Last month's newsletter featured an action calling on the U.S. government to conduct a truly independent investigation into the abuses at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and other secret detention centers. This was prior to the release of AI's annual report and AI Secretary General, Irene Khan's "gulag" comments. It's not too late to take action! Here's an encore of the recommended action which you can send to your Congressional representatives and President Bush (see Patriot Act action for addresses).

Dear ____

The U.S. government has failed to conduct a truly independent investigation into the abuses at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and other detention centers. Only enlisted soldiers and a few officers have been prosecuted, while those who designed and authorized a government policy of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment have not been held to account.

Congress must establish an impartial and independent commission to investigate the human rights violations at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and other detention centers. Congress must urge Attorney General Gonzales to appoint an independent Special Counsel to conduct criminal investigations into administration officials, including himself, who are suspected of having authorized or condoned these abuses or had command responsibility for them.

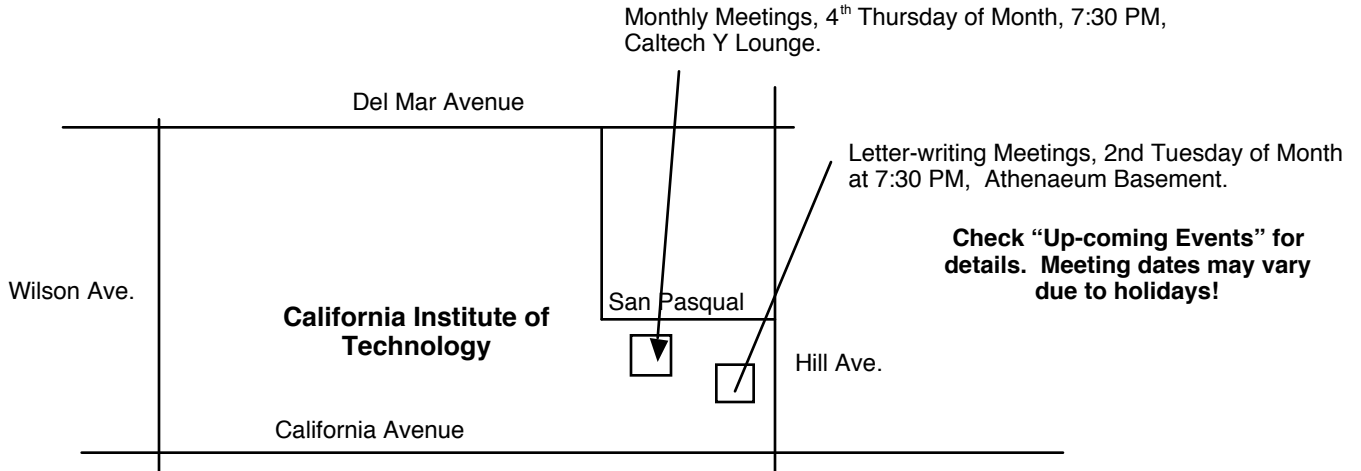
Please let me know where you stand on setting up an independent commission and calling for the appointment of a Special Counsel.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

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
 P.O. Box 50193
 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.