

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 22, 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 and more.

Tuesday, April 10, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. We meet downstairs in the cafeteria. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, April 15, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group. Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read the novel *Tracks* by Louise Erdrich (More below.)

Saturday, March 31, 9 AM - 5:30 PM. *Amnesty International Southern California Mini-Conference*, Amnesty International Cal State Fullerton Campus University Hall, Featuring: Lydia Cacho, Mexican investigative journalist and winner of the 2007 Ginetta Sagan Fund award; David Berger, Co-author of AI's report on life in prison without parole for juveniles; Sara Petite, Singer/songwriter and human rights activist; Ali Azizi, AIUSA Board member on his missions to Yemen. With workshops including: Guantanamo Prisoner Group Work, The Death Penalty, Intro to Amnesty International, AI International Congress (ICM) Issues and Resolutions, Stop Violence Against Women, Juveniles in the Justice System, Shi Tao Western Region Special Focus Case, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Uganda. Continental Breakfast Provided at 9am. Meet other activists and those interested in human rights in Southern California. Learn about the work we all do to promote human rights!
Free to the public. For more information please call 310-815-0450. Details including a flyer with map and directions can be found here: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/western/03312007fullertonca.html>

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Greetings! Spring is here and that means we are transitioning from Women's Day to Earth Day at Group 22 Worldwide Headquarters! We got started early with the strong women theme in February with the Pasadena visit of Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking* and death penalty abolitionist extraordinaire. Several of us had the opportunity to hear her speak and even see excerpts from the opera based on *Dead Man* performed. We also campaigned against the impending execution of Texas death row inmate Cathy Henderson, for whom

Sister Helen serves as spiritual advisor. You can learn more about this case and take action on her behalf at www.savecathyhenderson.org.

Among other events and actions for Women's History Month, our book discussion group, Rights Readers, took on the late Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya's recent book, an eye-opener on many levels including many insightful vignettes of the often difficult lives of women and girls in post-Soviet Russia. The book also stands as a memorial to its very brave author. Please note the actions in this newsletter for another Russian activist and for a Bangladeshi journalist.

We're finishing up the month of March with the annual Southern California mini-conference at CSU Fullerton. Always great speakers and workshops—and its free! Check "Upcoming Events" for details.

We continue to track our concern for the situation in the Horn of Africa with our usual action on Eritrean prisoners of conscience and another action focused on the volatile and regionally destabilizing situation in Somalia. We know its tough with so many "hot spots" in the world to give them all their due, but urge you to take a few minutes for these actions, even in this week when we are noting the fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq. Maybe especially in this week... these are the kinds of actions that will help to head off the next war.

Hope to see you at a meeting soon!

Martha aigp22@caltech.edu

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Health Concern for Attorney Mikhail Trepashkin

Mikhail Trepashkin, a lawyer and former security service officer, was convicted in May 2004 of illegal possession of ammunition (Article 222 of the Russian Criminal Code) and revealing state secrets (Article 283). He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in a prison settlement colony (kolonia poselenie) following a criminal investigation and trial that was marred by serious fair trial violations and during which he allegedly was ill-treated. Human rights groups in Russia are convinced that the criminal case against Mikhail Trepashkin was fabricated in order to halt his investigative work into the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow. Mikhail Trepashkin had been working as a consultant to the independent commission set up to investigate these bombings, chaired by Duma Deputies Sergei Kovalev and the late Sergei Yushenkov. In particular, Mikhail Trepashkin had been asked to investigate allegations of security service complicity in the bombings – which had officially been attributed to Chechen separatists. Since mid 2002, Mikhail Trepashkin had also been acting as a legal representative to the family of one of the victims of bombings. His clients have since been granted political asylum in the USA.

On 9 March, a district court in Nizhnii Tagil in the Sverdlovsk Region of the Russian Federation decided that Mikhail Trepashkin should be transferred to a standard prison colony, which has a stricter regime than the open prison colony he used to be in. After his transfer, Mikhail Trepashkin has restricted access to his family, friends, lawyers and supporters. In addition, he may be at risk of further violations of his human rights including the continuing denial of adequate medical treatment which may lead to a further decline of his health.

Amnesty International is concerned that the appeal by the prison authorities to the court to transfer Mikhail Trepashkin to a stricter prison colony for alleged violations of the prison rules is politically motivated and that it is an attempt to prevent him from having access to journalists and to the public.

Mikhail Trepashkin was sentenced in May 2005 to four years' imprisonment in an open prison colony for illegal possession of ammunition and divulging state secrets. During his imprisonment, he has on several occasions been ordered to spend days in a punishment cell for alleged violations of the prison rules.

On one occasion he was punished for allegedly bringing alcohol into the prison colony. According to his lawyer, Mikhail Trepashkin had bought a small bottle (7ml) of eau de toilette on a day when he was allowed to go into the town of Nizhnii Tagil. Upon his return to the colony he had shown the bottle to the guards in order to find out whether it was a permitted item.

On another occasion, he was accused of having sworn at a prison administration official. However, when later questioned in court by Mikhail Trepashkin's lawyers, the official allegedly said Mikhail Trepashkin had not addressed him and had not insulted him but may have murmured a swearword. According to his lawyers, it was these two incidents which formed the basis of the prison administration's appeal for Mikhail Trepashkin's transfer to a stricter prison colony.

Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern about the transfer of Mikhail Trepashkin to a standard prison colony;
- urging the prison authorities instead to send him to hospital immediately in order for him to undergo an exhaustive health check which would then form the basis of his medical treatment;
- reiterating Amnesty International's concerns that Mikhail Trepashkin may have been convicted following an unfair trial;
- reiterating Amnesty International's call to the authorities that Mikhail Trepashkin should be released from detention pending a full review of the case.

APPEALS TO:

Yuri CHAIKA

Procurator General of the Russian Federation
103793 Moskva, Ul. Bolshaya Dimitrovka 15a,
Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Pavel Pavlovich Kukushkin
Procurator
Procuracy of Sverdlovsk Region
Ul. Moskovskaia 21
620219 g. Yekaterinburg
Russian Federation
Salutation: Dear Procurator

COPIES TO:

Yury Ivanovich KALININ

Director

Federal Service for the Execution of Punishments

Ul. Zhitnaia 14

119991 g. Moskva

GSP - 1

Russian Federation

Salutation: Dear Director

Ambassador Yuri Viktorovich Ushakov

Embassy of the Russian Federation

2650 Wisconsin Ave NW

Washington DC 20007

Email: russ-amb@cerfnet.com

ERITREA

Investigate Death of Fessahaye Yohannes

This month we offer this "Freedom Writers" sample letter regarding the death in custody of Eritean journalist Fessahaye Yohannes.

President Issayas Afewerki

Office of the President

P.O. Box 257

Asmara

ERITREA

Dear Mr. President:

I am shocked and deeply saddened by recent reports that Fessahaye Joshua Yohannes, a prominent journalist and playwright, died in prison in January 2007. Joshua, as he was widely known, had been arrested along with many other leading independent journalists in September 2001. Shuffled among various secret detention centers, he was never brought before a judge or charged in a court of law. He was never allowed to see his family or meet with a lawyer.

Judging by what I have read about Joshua, he was a true son of Eritrea. He fought for Eritrea's freedom during the country's long battle for independence from Ethiopia. After the war, he organized a children's traveling circus troupe to teach skills to Eritrean youth and to rally the country in its efforts to rebuild from the devastation of the war. He co-founded and co-edited the weekly newspaper Setit to reach more people who could help Eritrea realize its great potential as a nation. I do not understand how authorities could detain such a man, deny him every freedom, mistreat him, torture him, and allow him to die from lack of medical care.

I urge you to establish an impartial and independent judicial inquiry to investigate the reported death of Fessahaye Joshua Yohannes and that of other detainees who allegedly died at Eiraeiro prison. I ask you to publicly clarify what has happened to Joshua and other detainees. If Joshua is dead, I urge you to return his body to his family for burial. If he is dead, I also ask you to bring to justice those responsible for any criminal actions or negligence resulting in his death. If Joshua is still alive, I call on you to please order his immediate and unconditional release from prison and to do the same for all other prisoners of conscience now detained in Eritrea.

Sincerely,

Your NAME and ADDRESS

copy to:

Ambassador Ghirmai Ghebremariam
Embassy of Eritrea
1708 New Hampshire Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

RIGHTS READERS

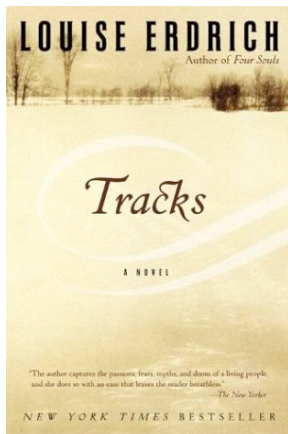
Human Rights Book Discussion Group

*Keep up with Rights Readers at
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>*

Sunday, April 15, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena



Tracks

by Louise Erdrich

Set in North Dakota at a time in this century when Indian tribes were struggling to keep what little remained of their lands, *Tracks* is a tale of passion and deep unrest. Over the course of ten crucial years, as tribal land and trust between people erode ceaselessly, men and women are pushed to the brink of their

endurance--yet their pride and humor prohibit surrender. The reader will experience shock and pleasure in encountering a group of characters that are compelling and rich in their vigor, clarity, and indomitable vitality.

LETTER COUNT

Eritrea	5
Urgent Actions	17
Death Penalty	3
Total:	25
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@sbcglobal.net	

SOMALIA

Somalia Stabilization and Reconstruction Act

Somalia Stabilization and Reconstruction Act Since the overthrow of Siad Barre's brutal 21-year rule in 1991, civil conflict based on clan rivalries and the criminal activity of warlords has torn Somalia apart, leading to a fundamental collapse of both state and economy. In addition, Somalia is vulnerable to severe droughts and floods which contribute to widespread malnutrition and famine. Both humanitarian and human rights crises are dire and pervasive.

By 2006 a group called the Union of Islamic Courts (later the Council of Islamic Courts) emerged from among local Islamic leaders, and for months it served to meet popular demands for basic security--like the protection of women against sexual violence--in the streets of Mogadishu. A counter-movement backed by the U.S. government also emerged, but quickly fell to the CIC. Later, splits between moderate and extremist elements in the CIC itself resulted in the ascension to power of individuals who would restrict Somali citizens social and political rights based on their particular interpretation of Islamic law. These leaders grew increasingly more aggressive, expanding their military operations beyond Mogadishu to Baidoa (the seat of governance for the TFG).

By December 2006 the UN Security Council passed resolution 1725 expressing its support for a regional peacekeeping operation in Somalia. The CIC launched attacks around Baidoa, and Ethiopia sent in troops to prop up the TFG. But by the end of December the CIC had folded before an Ethiopian-led TFG advance, with some CIC leaders and troops retreating south from Mogadishu, while others melted back into that city's population. The U.S. later bombed southern Somalia, twice, in January--ostensibly targeting specific terrorist suspects. Although their primary targets escaped, scores of civilians were reportedly killed in these bombings.

Since January 2007 the TFG has installed itself in Mogadishu, not without significant Ethiopian military backing. Popular opinion about Ethiopia's presence in Somalia is divided, as the two countries have historically been violent opponents in the region, but if Ethiopia withdraws a power vacuum will follow. Though Ethiopia's Prime Minister has threatened to withdraw completely, it currently appears that he is allowing some time for the formation of a regional African peacekeeping force--backed by the U.S. To date, Uganda has committed troops to this force. Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Malawi and several other African countries are also considering troop contributions.

But time is slipping away, Ethiopia won't stay in Mogadishu indefinitely, the TFG is weak and lacking in popular support, and the level of security in Mogadishu, previously maintained by the CIC, has severely diminished--leaving openings for warlords and certain

clan leaders to fill any already emerging vacuum of governance with violence once again.

The people of Somalia need genuine security, unfettered access to humanitarian assistance, support for a politically inclusive government-building process, and long term international commitments to support reconciliation and reconstruction. They also need our vigilance in monitoring human rights conditions during this volatile transition period. The Somalia Stabilization and Reconstruction Act of 2007 (S. 492) is an essential step toward responsible U.S. engagement in the region. We encourage its co-sponsorship and active support.

Sample letter to Senators Feinstein and Boxer:

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

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0505

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I urge you to co-sponsor the Somalia Stabilization and Reconstruction Act of 2007 (S. 492), introduced on February 6, 2007 by Senators Russ Feingold, Norm Coleman, and Amy Klobuchar. This bill would authorize the appropriation of funds to promote stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Somalia, including a regional African peacekeeping force. It also calls on President Bush to establish a Special Envoy for Somalia.

Somalia has endured decades of violence and instability, which threatens the people of Somalia, other countries in the region, and the national security of the United States. Most recently following the collapse of Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) rule in December 2006, Somalia's political, humanitarian, and security situation has again deteriorated. The Transitional Federal Government's imposition of martial law on January 10, 2007 to maintain order also contributes to the violation of human rights. Press freedom and the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons from Somalia are particularly at risk.

The United States and the international community—along with the TFG and Somali religious and clan elders, women, and business leaders—now face a window of opportunity to help alleviate the current humanitarian crisis and offer support for the establishment of peace and security in Somalia. Urgent action is required and your co-sponsorship of the Somalia Stabilization and Reconstruction Act of 2007 is an important step toward a stable, just, and peaceful Somalia. I strongly urge you to co-sponsor S. 492. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely, Your NAME and ADDRESS

JUST EARTH

Urge Support for Bhopal Shareholder Resolution

For a number of years, Amnesty International has campaigned for justice for the victims of the Bhopal chemical disaster. On the night of 2/3 December 1984 toxic gas leaked from a chemical plant owned by Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) in Bhopal, India, killing more than 7,000 people within days. Over the next 22 years exposure to the toxins resulted in the deaths of a further 15,000 people as well as chronic and debilitating illnesses for more than 100,000 others. Despite efforts by survivors, the plant site has not been cleaned up and as a result, piles of toxic waste continue to pollute the environment and the water that surrounding communities drink. Following Dow Chemical's 2001 acquisition of UCC, Amnesty International has been calling on Dow to address the continuing health, social and environmental damage suffered by the people of Bhopal as a consequence of the ongoing contamination of the site.

In our effort to hold the company accountable, we have used a variety of tactics, including shareholder activism. Shareholders enjoy special rights and privileges, since they are considered part owners of the companies they invest in. One of the ways investors can create change is by filing shareholder resolutions that will be voted on at a company's annual meeting. For three years now, Amnesty has filed a shareholder resolution about Bhopal with Dow Chemical to help increase the pressure on the company to address its responsibilities. Each year that a resolution is submitted, it must reach a threshold vote in order to be voted on again the following year. This year, that threshold is 10%. Reaching 10% is challenging, since many shareholders blindly vote the way that management recommends. In the past Dow has recommended a vote against the Bhopal resolution and we expect the same this year. In order to help increase the vote, we are asking activists to send letters to top shareholders to help make them aware of Bhopal and to recommend they support the shareholder resolution.

CIO State Street Global Advisors Sean Flannery
State Street Global Advisors
1 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111

Managing Director Vanguard Group George Sauter
Vanguard Group
100 Vanguard Boulevard
Malvern, PA 19355

CIO, JP Morgan Asset Management Benjamin Gifford
JP Morgan Asset Management
522 Fifth Avenue 12th floor
New York, NY 10036

Senior Vice President State Farm Insurance Paul Eckley
State Farm Insurance Company
1 State Farm Plaza
Bloomington, IL 61710

Dear _____:

As an advocate for corporate social responsibility, I am writing to urge your institution to consider the array of issues Dow Chemical Company (Dow) faces as a result of its 2001 acquisition of the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), among them, the Bhopal chemical disaster.

Specifically, I ask you to support the Dow shareholder resolution on Bhopal, which was submitted this year by a coalition of investors representing more than \$278 million, led by the New York City Pension Funds. The resolution requests Dow management to report by October 2007, at reasonable cost and excluding confidential information, descriptions of any new initiatives instituted by management to address specific health, environmental and social concerns of Bhopal, India survivors.

Often cited as one of the world's worst industrial disasters, the toxic gas leak of a Union Carbide Corporation pesticide production plant on December 2nd, 1984 in Bhopal, India killed more than 7,000 people within days. Over the next 22 years exposure to the toxins resulted in the deaths of a further 15,000 people as well as chronic and debilitating illnesses for more than 100,000 others. Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) became a full subsidiary of Dow Chemical in 2001, and accordingly Dow became responsible for the ongoing contamination in Bhopal as well as the care of the disaster survivors. However, Dow has consistently denied any responsibility for the damage caused by either the gas leak or the ensuing contamination.

Dow's position on Bhopal is not only untenable from a human rights perspective, but also has the potential to cause significant damage to the company's long term economic value. This concern is supported by a 2004 report by Innovest Strategic Value Advisors which downgraded Dow from an AA to a BB ratio after considering the Bhopal disaster, among other issues, as an ongoing concern with significant potential to harm the company's reputation, give rise to material liabilities, and constrain investment in Asia (http://www.innovestgroup.com/pdfs/2004-04_Dow_Report.pdf).

Shareholder proponents of the Bhopal resolution seek to send a clear signal to Dow's management that promises by the company concerning environmental and social responsibility must be matched with action, especially in Bhopal. This is of greater concern in the context of Dow's recently launched "Human Element" campaign, which emphasizes the importance of public health and sustainable water supplies. The resolution presents an opportunity for the company to articulate the relationship between its stated public commitment and initiatives on clean water and human needs and the ongoing contamination in Bhopal.

I note that in the past you have voted against this resolution, sending a clear message to Dow that their

largest investors are not concerned about the company's failure to disclose the significant liabilities associated with the Bhopal disaster. I urge you to contemplate the deeper implications of your vote, and to consider supporting the Bhopal resolution this year.

Sincerely, Your NAME and ADDRESS

FREEDOM WRITERS *Concern for Safety of Bangladeshi Journalist*

Sample letter follows:

Mr. Iajuddin Ahmed
President and Chief Adviser of the Caretaker Government
Office of the Chief Adviser
Dhaka
BANGLADESH

Dear Chief Adviser:

I am very concerned for the safety of the journalist Sumi Khan, who has received death threats and been attacked as a result of her investigative journalism.

Sumi Khan, who is based in the city of Chittagong, has written investigative articles alleging the involvement of local politicians and religious groups in attacks on members of minority communities. She was stabbed in an attack in 2004, and her attackers remain at large. In March 2005 she received a written death threat telling her to retract articles she had written about Islamist groups.

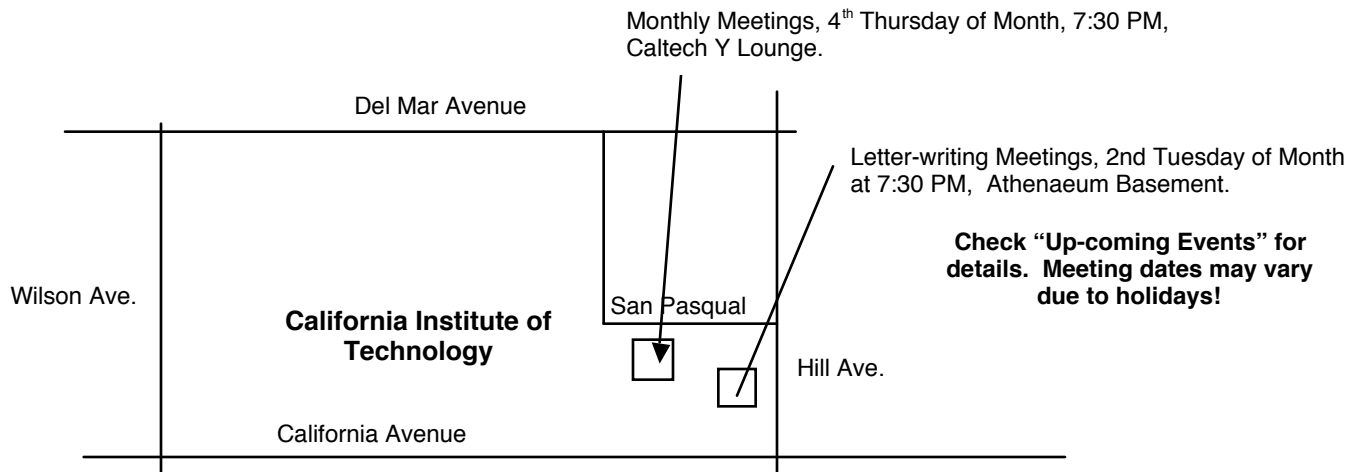
I am aware that other journalists have also been subjected to death threats in the past few years. In December 2005, Sumi Khan and a number of other journalists from Chittagong, as well as police, government officials and magistrates from across the country, were reportedly threatened in a letter to the Chittagong Press Club. The letter, allegedly from the banned Islamist group Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh, was believed to be part of a campaign by some Islamist groups to destabilize democratic society in Bangladesh. The government failed to investigate the death threats or the protection needs of those named in the letter, putting Sumi Khan and others at risk of attack. Sumi Khan has received further threats from unidentified sources, and attacks on journalists have continued nationwide.

I urge you to ensure that there is a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into the threats and attack against Sumi Khan and that the perpetrators are brought to justice. I ask you to take measures to protect journalists who have been threatened as a result of their professional activities.

Sincerely, Your NAME and ADDRESS

copy to:

Ambassador Shamsheer M. Chowdhury
Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
3510 International Drive N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008



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
 The Caltech Y
 Mail Code 5-62
 Pasadena, CA 91125



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.