

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, March 27, 7:30 PM.** Monthly Meeting. We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena. (This is just south of the corner with San Pasqual. Signs will be posted.) We will be planning our activities for the coming months. Please join us! Refreshments provided.

**Tuesday, April 8,** Letter writing meeting at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

**Sunday, April 27, 6:30 PM.** Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "On Saudi Arabia" by Karen Elliott House.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi All

Spring is officially here and I'm looking forward to a few more months of school, then summer! Mild weather and increased daylight hours mean more errands can get done after work, and I can go to the pool to exercise in the evening!

Easter falls on the same date as our April book groups meeting, so note the date change: we moved it to the last Sunday in April.

Con Cariño,  
Kathy

## RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

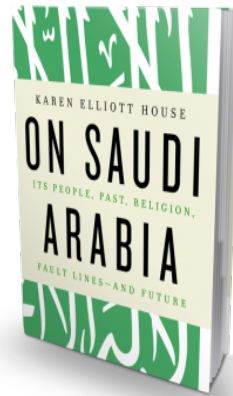
Keep up with Rights Readers at  
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>

Next Rights Readers meeting:

**Sunday, April 27, 6:30 PM**

**Vroman's Bookstore**

**695 E. Colorado, Pasadena**



**Book Review:**  
from the New York Times

By Michael J. Totten,  
November 16, 2012

**ON SAUDI ARABIA:  
Its People, Past, Religion,  
Fault Lines — and Future**

By Karen Elliott House

In Peter Berg's whodunit "The Kingdom," a young F.B.I. agent boarding a plane to Riyadh asks a seasoned colleague what Saudi Arabia is like. "A bit like Mars," replies the more experienced man.

It's not Mars, exactly, but for most Americans Saudi Arabia is probably more like another world than any other inhabited part of this one. It is about as distinct from the freewheeling United States as a country can be — not a modern totalitarian "republic" like Communist North Korea, but another kind of dictatorial regime, a fanatically conservative society self-oppressed by thousand-year-old rules, regulations, prescriptions and prohibitions. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is, as Christopher Hitchens once described the occluded realm ruled by the Kim family in Pyongyang, a place "where everything that is not absolutely compulsory is absolutely forbidden."

The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Karen Elliott House has been visiting the kingdom for more than 30 years, and in her new book, "On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines — and Future," she skillfully unveils this inscrutable place for regional specialists and general readers alike. "For millennia," she writes, "Saudis struggled to survive in a vast desert under searing sun and shearing winds that quickly devour a man's energy, as he searches for a wadi of shade trees and water, which are few and far between, living on only a few dates and camel's milk. These conditions bred a people suspicious of each other and especially of strangers, a culture largely devoid of art or enjoyment of beauty."

Religious edicts are crushingly enforced by state, mosque and society. Movie theaters are banned, as are concerts and just about

everything else related to entertainment. Women, even foreign women, must cover themselves in public. Unrelated women and men aren't allowed to mix anywhere. Even Starbucks coffee shops are segregated by gender.

Men have it rough, but women have it much rougher. According to Wahhabi Islam, men must obey Allah and women must obey men. "Fortunately for men," House writes, "Allah is distant, but unfortunately for women, men are - omnipresent."

Western women like House, though, have an advantage, despite the fact that they're forced by the Muttawah, the religious police, to cover themselves. In Saudi Arabia they are treated as "honorary men," so House was able to interview whomever she liked — men *and* their wives, women *and* their husbands — something no foreign man or Saudi citizen of either gender is ever allowed to do.

She describes the society as a maze "in which Saudis endlessly maneuver through winding paths between high walls of religious rules, government restrictions and cultural traditions." The labyrinth is not just a metaphor. Cities are claustrophobic places where even men but especially women live as shut-ins, socializing strictly with family. Walk down a residential street and in every direction you'll see not porches and yards but walls "that block people from outside view but, more important, separate them from one another."

And the country as a whole is riven with virtual walls. The sterile interior highlands of the Nejd are at odds with the relatively cosmopolitan Hejaz on the coast of the Red Sea. In the Eastern Province, where the country's oil reserves are concentrated, Shia Muslims live under the boot, denounced by Wahhabis as heretics. The Ismailis in the destitute south, with their historic links to Yemen, are not-so-benignly neglected. Each of these regions in turn is divided by tribe, and each tribe is divided by family. Most Saudis marry one of their cousins. Hardly any of them marry outside their tribe, let alone region.

But the highest wall of all — the information barrier restricting knowledge of the wider world and its ways — is crumbling fast. Thanks to the Internet, the young (and 60 percent of Saudis are 20 or younger) know all about life in less cloistered Arab societies and in the West. And

they're not buying into the Saudi system the way their parents and grandparents did.

"Our minds are in a box," a middle-aged businessman explains to House. "But the young are being set free by the Internet and knowledge. They will not tolerate what we have." A single man in his 20s tells her: "Facebook opens the doors of our cages." And a university official says: "A young man has a car and money in his pocket, but what can he do? Nothing. He looks at TV and sees others doing things he can't do and wonders why."

Even if their elders, the government and the religious establishment ease up and give young people a little additional space, there's a more serious problem that won't be so easily solved. What on earth will Saudi Arabia do when the wells run dry, when oil can no longer pay for the lavish welfare system that provides subsidized goods and free services to the middle class?

#### **Related Times Topic: [Saudi Arabia](#)**

Millions of new jobs will need to be created in the coming years just to keep the economy from collapsing. Yet the education system, in the firm grip of Wahhabi fundamentalists, is spectacularly unable to prepare Saudis for professional jobs. And since most refuse blue-collar and service work, 9 out of 10 private sector jobs are held by foreigners.

The entire country, as House so clearly shows, needs a radical overhaul. But where is it going to come from? Not from the cautious and self-interested government, at least not with the current royal cohort in charge.

The Saudi state is an absolute monarchy, but it has a quirk of its own. Sons of the state's founder, Abdul Aziz bin Saud, who fathered 44 boys, have been ruling the kingdom since his death in 1953. The throne keeps passing from brother to brother instead of from father to son. But the number of brothers is running out. The current king, Abdullah, is in his late 80s. Until this year, the next in line was Crown Prince Nayef, but he died in June, at the age of 78. The youngest brother is in his 60s. At some point, possibly soon, someone from the next generation will take charge.

House repeatedly — and convincingly — compares the Saudi regime to the Soviet Union

in its final days when Ronald Reagan said of the various premiers before Mikhail Gorbachev, "They keep dying on me." The country's calcified government, its sullen populace, its youth bulge, its outdated religious requirements and prohibitions, the collapse of the information bubble and the dying off of the current line of geriatric rulers are all bound to coalesce into a perfect storm sooner or later.

But we should not expect liberalism, not now, not in this place. "For all their frustrations," House writes, "most Saudis do not crave democracy. . . . What unites conservatives and modernizers, and young and old, is a hunger not for freedom but for justice; for genuine rule of law, not rule by royal whim."

Justice and the rule of law aren't at all likely to develop in a system that is not democratic. If House is right, then whatever happens, a new or post-Saudi Arabia may end up like post-Soviet Russia, at least in one way. A spring-like revolution for freedom, where human rights, justice, and the rule of law replace toppled labyrinth walls, will be a dream deferred to generations unborn.

*Michael J. Totten, a contributing editor at World Affairs and City Journal, is the author of "The Road to Fatima Gate" and "Where the West Ends."*

### Author Biography



Karen Elliott House, 64, retired in 2006 as Publisher of The Wall Street Journal, Senior Vice President of Dow Jones & Company, and a member of the company's executive committee. She is a broadly experienced business executive with particular expertise and experience in

international affairs stemming from a distinguished career as a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter and editor.

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE Gao Zhisheng by Joyce Wolf

April 20 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng. For nearly a decade China has subjected him to arrest, torture, enforced disappearances and prison. He is now serving a 3-year sentence in remote Shaya Prison in western China, but his family has had no contact with him for over a year and is extremely concerned about his health and safety. Calling attention to his plight, Jared Genser wrote an article titled "Demanding Justice for Gao Zhisheng," published Feb. 27 in the Wall Street Journal.

<http://www.freedom-now.org/news/demanding-justice-for-gao-zhisheng/>

"A prominent legal activist has disappeared into the Chinese security system again. Gao Zhisheng, one of China's most prominent and courageous human-rights lawyers and prisoners of conscience, has again disappeared into the bowels of the Chinese state's security system. For more than a year, his family has desperately tried to access him in Shaya prison in Xinjiang, a remote province in western China. But all these efforts have been rebuffed and no one has seen or heard from him since January 2013." [You may remember that this last permitted family visit occurred just after Gao Zhisheng's case was featured in Amnesty's Dec. 2012 Write-a-thon.]

Jared Genser goes on to say, "The international community, including the United States and United Nations, must demand proof from the Chinese government that Mr. Gao is alive and insist that his family be granted monthly access to him as is required by Chinese law. The world must urge Mr. Gao's immediate and unconditional release. At a minimum, foreign leaders should press Beijing to release Mr. Gao on time instead of finding renewed excuses to extend his detention, as it has done in other cases." [22 August 2014 is the scheduled date for Gao Zhisheng's release.]

Please join Group 22 in sending birthday greetings in April to Gao Zhisheng in Shaya Prison. We will also have sample letters to Chinese government officials regarding his case. At our upcoming March meeting, a DVD of the film "Transcending Fear: The Story of Gao Zhisheng" will be available to view or borrow.

# SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

by Robert Adams

## In the Age of the Selfie, Privacy is Still Paramount

By Ann Burroughs, Amnesty International USA  
Chair of the Board of Directors  
March 19, 2014

As Americans and people around the world grow increasingly wary of the U.S. government's mass surveillance program, it is our obligation to speak up.

As a [former prisoner of conscience in South Africa during the apartheid era](#), I know from personal experience just how important it is to protect our fundamental freedoms. And make no mistake: **the right to privacy is absolutely fundamental to a free society.** True, many of us broadcast selfies and personal details of our lives on social media every day. But that is our right and our choice. It does not give the government the right to collect and store every piece of data about us, without our consent.

The [cost of widespread government surveillance is steep](#). The knowledge that everything we do can be monitored will change the way we act and what we say. This is how governments create a climate in which people fear the consequences of expressing themselves openly and worry their beliefs and activities can be used against them.

It turns ordinary, waking life into an Orwellian nightmare. It undermines our rights to freedom of expression, information and association, which are essential to a democracy.

**The sheer scale of mass surveillance challenges our basic human right to liberty.** It places every moment of our lives under scrutiny, and that is simply not acceptable. If the government has probable cause to believe that a crime has been committed, it has the legal right to intrude on our privacy to the extent necessary. But otherwise, our lives are our own.

In the past year, growing awareness of the scope and proximity of mass surveillance has caused a public uproar and fundamentally changed the way we think about the systems our

government uses to protect us – but has it elicited any change in policy?

Not yet. To the contrary, last fall the FISA Improvements Act was introduced, which, if approved, would actually codify unconstitutional NSA programs, including mass surveillance and data collection. This bill also enables unidentified “law enforcement agencies” to conduct investigations without warrants. For me, that’s a nonstarter.

The United States is one of the most powerful and influential nations in the world. It is absolutely crucial that we demonstrate to the global community that we value human liberties, including privacy. Our elected officials must steer away from ineffective, intrusive programs and focus on respecting the human rights of the people they were elected to represent and protect.

A few weeks ago, Amnesty International USA joined a campaign called, [“The Day We Fight Back Against Mass Surveillance.”](#) The campaign was endorsed by a wide range of politicians, technology companies including Google and Twitter, and human rights and civil liberties organizations.

Tens of thousands of phone calls and hundreds of thousands of e-mail messages were delivered to Congress in support of the [USA Freedom Act, a bipartisan bill that will end bulk data collection of our phone calls](#) and require greater transparency from the Obama administration regarding surveillance. The bill is not perfect and fails to fully uphold the rights of people outside of the U.S. – who make up 95 percent of the world. But it is a small, significant step in the right direction.

Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), who introduced the bill, was also the primary author of the [USA Patriot Act, parts of which seriously threatened human rights and civil liberties](#). Yet, even he says the NSA ignored legal restrictions, abused the public’s trust, and assumed authority never imagined by Congress.

Elected officials should turn away from pushing legislation that jeopardizes fundamental liberties, and instead support the USA Freedom Act. Rather than exchanging freedom for safety, it guarantees that the two operate together, maintaining national security without sacrificing human rights. This USA Freedom Act isn’t simply a reaction to NSA spying; it is a recommitment to protecting the right to privacy.

# DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

## Glenn Ford

March 11, 2014, is a day Glenn Ford will always remember. On that day, he walked out of the Louisiana State Prison at Angola a free man after spending 30 years on death row. His case underscores the need for a lengthy and thorough appeals process. The following reasons, posted on the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty site, contributed to Mr. Ford's conviction and death sentence.

- He was represented by two attorneys chosen from an alphabetical listing of the local bar association. One attorney was an oil and gas lawyer that had never worked civil or capital cases. The second attorney was an insurance defense lawyer who had received her law license less than two years prior and had never participated in a jury trial before;
- His attorneys did not hire experts because they were under the impression that they would have to pay for the experts themselves;
- The prosecutors withheld key evidence and hired faulty forensic "experts" who misled jurors about the facts of the case;
- Despite the fact that the main witness tying Mr. Ford to the crime recanted her own testimony on the stand in front of the jury, an all-white jury found him guilty of killing Isadore Rozeman in 1982.

In 2013, a confidential informant for the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office said Jake Robinson told him he killed Isadore Rozeman, not Mr. Ford.

With 144 people exonerated of all charges and released from death row since 1976, we need to consider the ramifications of limiting or speeding up the appeals process in capital cases.

Welcome to freedom, Glenn Ford. You cannot reclaim the 30 years you spent on death row, but I dearly hope the remainder of your life will allow you joy and tranquility.

"Glenn Ford's First Day of Freedom After 30 Years on Death Row" (The Atlantic Magazine) can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/glenn-ford>.

## Cameron Todd Willingham's Exoneration Continues

Members of the Innocence Project continue to work for the exoneration of Cameron Todd Willingham, executed February 17, 2004, in Texas. Since Mr. Willingham's execution, the

Texas Forensic Science Commission has found problems with the arson investigators' opinions in the case. A number of leaders in the field of fire investigation have concluded that no foul play was present in the fire and that his conviction was based on erroneous forensic analysis.

Additionally, the jailhouse snitch who said Mr. Willingham confessed to the murders recanted his story in writing in 2000, but that Motion to Recant Testimony was not put in Mr. Willingham's case file; therefore, no one representing Mr. Willingham knew about the recantation.

Should the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles agree with the advocates for Mr. Willingham regarding his exoneration, Governor Rick Perry has the final decision. Governor Perry has referred to Mr. Willingham as "a monster" who killed his children. If this case goes into 2015, Governor Perry's successor will consider the case.

Mr. Willingham's family members watch the case closely. His stepmother, Eugenia Willingham is thrilled and hopeful while his cousin, Patricia Cox has said that should exoneration occur, the family will not press for damages. Ms. Cox said, "We're not asking compensation. We're asking justice."

## Executions

### February

26 Michael Taylor Missouri  
lethal injection - 1-drug pentobarbital

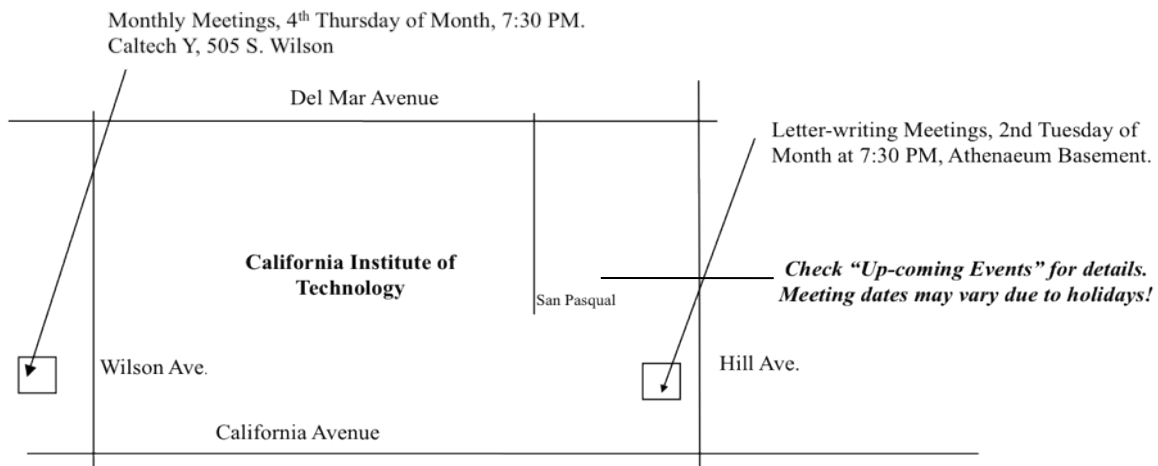
26 Paul Howell Florida  
lethal injection - 3-drug w/ midazolam  
hydrochloride

### March

19 Ray Jasper Texas  
lethal injection - 1-drug pentobarbital

20 Robert Henry Florida  
lethal injection - 3-drug w/ midazolam  
hydrochloride

GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT	
UAs	29
POC	5
DP	2
Total	36
To add your letters to the total contact <a href="mailto:aigp22@caltech.edu">aigp22@caltech.edu</a>	



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 C1-128  
Pasadena, CA 91125  
[www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/](http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/)  
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>



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.