

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXIII Number 8, August 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS

PLEASE NOTE: WE ARE NOT HAVING THURSDAY MONTHLY MEETINGS FOR JULY AND AUGUST. Meetings will resume on **September 24**.

Tuesday, September 8, 7:30 PM. Letter writing meeting at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. In the summer we meet outdoors at the "Rath al Fresco," on the lawn behind the building. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty.

Sunday, September 20, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Indonesia Etc.: Exploring the Improbable Nation" by Elizabeth Pisani.



Next Rights Readers meeting:

**Sunday, Sept. 20,
6:30 PM**

**Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado,
Pasadena**

***Indonesia Etc.:
Exploring the
Improbable Nation***

By Elizabeth Pisani

BOOK REVIEW

[The New York Times Sunday Book Review]

By JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

AUG. 1, 2014

This year, three of the world's largest democracies are holding national elections -- vast polls spread over several days and thousands of miles of territory, involving more than a billion voters. Two of these elections have attracted intense media coverage, or will. India's national elections, which took place in May, swept out of office the long-ruling Congress Party and handed government of a rising economic and political power to the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. Brazil's elections, which will be held in October, are coming on the heels of the World Cup, one of several high-profile events that have marked the country's emergence as the second giant of the Americas.

The third election, Indonesia's presidential vote on July 9, has been mostly ignored by the international media, even though Indonesia, with a population of about 250 million, ranks as the fourth-largest country in the world, as well as the biggest economy in Southeast Asia.

In "Indonesia Etc.: Exploring the Improbable Nation," Elizabeth Pisani, a journalist, epidemiologist and on-and-off resident of Indonesia, readily acknowledges the archipelago's feeble presence on the global stage; her friends back in London look at her quizzically when she mentions the country. Though she had flirted with Indonesia for decades, she finally tires of the world's ignorance and chooses to take a break from

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

School started last week (the early start calendar) and we are up and running with Tdap (vaccine required for 7th grade entry)! So far our region is in the lead with 96% of 7th graders in compliance!

Hope you all had a nice summer. I didn't work this year and it was nice to relax and have the time off.

AIUSA has closed the case for Gao Zhisheng so we are in the process of obtaining another prisoner of conscience. Alexi is looking into cases in Cuba and Iran.

Kathy

[**Breaking News.** Group 22 just received a case dossier on Iranian prisoner of conscience Narges Mohammadi. Here's a link to the Wikipedia article about her:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narges_Mohammadi]

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

work to travel the islands, offering a primer and a quick history lesson on this awakening powerhouse.

Through her journey, too, she hopes to understand not only how a country as diverse and far-flung as Indonesia — at least 13,000 islands, many with their own unique cultures — has stayed together but also why, despite having had an average income similar to Malaysia's and Singapore's 60 years ago, it now lags badly behind. Today, some 105 million Indonesians live on less than \$2 per day, though much of the country is blessed with fertile volcanic soil, rich fishing grounds, abundant natural resources and a demographic dividend, in which the country has a high ratio of working-age people to elderly. And in an era when authoritarian China is poised to become the world's largest economy and democracy is floundering throughout the developing world, perhaps Pisani's study of Indonesia can help answer the question of whether democracy is even compatible with the high growth needed to foster development in these emerging giants.

Pisani knows that the only mental images outsiders may have of Indonesia hail from Java, the island containing nearly 60 percent of the country's population: Wayang shadow puppets moving behind a translucent screen, luminous batik cloths and the grim-faced former dictator Suharto, who ruled between 1967 and 1998. From the time of independence in 1949, Javanese elites have monopolized politics, the military and other major institutions.

Pisani's strategy for countering Java's dominance is to explore the other Indonesia — the forgotten parts of a forgotten country. Her journey spans a year and 26,000 miles, and she rarely takes comfortable vehicles. She jumps five-daylong ferries to the most obscure islands and cadges journeys along rutted roads on the backs of motorbikes, which leave one's bottom bruised. Her rule for the trip, she declares, is "just say yes" to any invitation.

She not only visits Indonesia's forgotten areas; she clearly identifies with their residents, writing with passion and telling detail. On the island of Sumba, near northern Australia, she is adopted by the matriarch of one village, and moves in with the woman's family for a time. Eventually, Pisani becomes so involved in the rituals of this Sumba village that she finds herself carrying a squawking chicken to a local

mystic, who will kill it, read its entrails and tell her fortune; later, she joins a massive animal sacrifice on Sumba in honor of a recent death. Her book is loaded with such anecdotes in places that seem the opposite of cookie-cutter Southeast Asian megacities. She watches supposedly forbidden whale hunts on the island of Lembata, near East Timor. She is suddenly swept into the wedding of a friend's brother. She stumbles into a revivalist Christian congregation in Ambon, amid the fabled Spice Islands, a congregation that seems to have been airlifted from a Texas megachurch.

For someone who focuses on Indonesia, like myself, these anecdotes are tasty morsels, and rare. I had heard almost nothing, for example, about the sparsely populated Sangihe islands, between Sulawesi and the southern Philippines, where tuna fishing is the only industry. Here, Pisani says no to an offer for once, with good reason -- it's a chance to join a four-day fishing trip on the open Pacific in a rickety outrigger with only a shoddy tarpaulin for cover.

Unfortunately, these anecdotes rarely cohere into more than collected stories about Indonesia's outer provinces. Pisani introduces some broad themes that could help explain the country's simultaneous survival and failure, but she doesn't expand on them effectively. Indonesia, she suggests, has "welded so much difference together" through collectivism in villages and clans -- collectivism that makes people more secure in their daily lives. Its citizens have generally fostered a level of cultural tolerance rare in such large nations. Yet, she suggests, it has failed to change the byzantine bureaucracy, feudal political hierarchies and entrenched corruption left by the Dutch colonizers and then the Suharto regime.

At times, she also tries to introduce the nonexpert to the country's myriad cultures but stumbles with strange analogies, calling Indonesia a "Bad Boyfriend" -- it excites your senses but then angers you with its flaws. For the most part, she remains content to drift back into anecdotes rather than pull them together.

Worse, though Indonesia certainly is more than just Java, the book does not really grapple with Java or several of the other populous Indonesian islands. Mostly ignoring the bigger islands means that Pisani's picture of Indonesia, though different from those of many Indonesia

specialists, is badly skewed in another way. She basically leaves out any discussion of about three-quarters of the country's population, and makes only passing mention of Jakarta's governor, Joko Widodo, the winner of the July presidential elections and the first post-Suharto era politician to run Indonesia. It's as if someone tried to write a book about America but ignored 40 of the states.

Javanese elitism or not, it is simply impossible to understand the staggering changes Indonesia has undergone since the end of the 1990s, including decentralization, a rapid transition to democracy and growing relationships with both China and the United States, without truly considering how decisions are made in Jakarta and other major urban centers. Instead, Pisani falls back on easy clichés about Jakarta, reform and the population itself. She deplores the rapid change and construction in the seemingly soulless capital, without seriously examining the positive aspects of all this growth, a strange omission for a public health specialist. She disdains the pork-barrel politics that come with greater direct democracy, as politicians jostle to deliver projects to their districts and sometimes skim a percentage for themselves. But this kind of patronage is necessarily curtailed by the transparency of democracy, and in the long run far healthier than the opaque and unreconstructed Suharto period. (Pisani herself acknowledges that in the latter part of Suharto's time, "all the growth" went "into a handful of pockets," though she still paints a fairly rosy picture of the Suharto era.) She too often portrays Indonesians as accepting their fate in life, a fatalism not apparent in this spring's parliamentary elections, when Indonesian voters tossed out about half the incumbents.

In the end, Pisani rediscovers her Bad Boyfriend idea, in a thin epilogue that again attempts to boil down what she has learned about Indonesia but soon turns into another anecdote. And another opportunity to know the unknown giant is lost.

AUTHOR BIO

Elizabeth is an epidemiologist who has spent over a decade working on the defining epidemic of our age – HIV. She's done research and worked as an advisor for the Ministries of Health of China, Indonesia, East Timor and the Philippines, and has also provided analysis and policy advice to UNAIDS, the World Health

Organisation, the World Bank, US Centres for Disease Control and many others. She is especially interested in trying to ensure that HIV prevention programmes are guided by sensible analysis of high quality information. In 2010, she founded the public health consultancy Ternyata. For more information about her life as a nerd, please go to her professional site: Ternyata – Public Health Consultancy



In a previous existence, Elizabeth was a foreign correspondent for Reuters, The Economist and the Bangkok-based Asia Times, posted in Hong Kong, New Delhi, Jakarta, Hanoi and Brussels. She covered everything from conflicts (Tiananmen Square, the Aceh civil war) to markets (Asian stocks, currencies and commodities, EU trade policy). One of her first features for Reuters tracked the effect of the 1986 stock market crash on the fortunes of night-club hostesses in Hong Kong. You can read some of her writings here.

Her education was somewhat scattered, but she ended up with an MA in Classical Chinese from Oxford, an MSc in Medical Demography from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a PhD in Infectious Disease Epidemiology, also from London.

Elizabeth loves to gossip, and can do so in French, Spanish and Bahasa Indonesia; she fakes Mandarin Chinese well enough, too. She travels more or less constantly, retreating as often as possible to the southwest of Ireland, where she indulges an enthusiasm for sea kayaking.

Elizabeth welcomes discussion on the issues raised in this blog and in her book *The Wisdom of Whores*. You can comment directly on the website, or e-mail her through the Contacts page.
<http://www.wisdomofwhores.com/elizabeth-pisani/>

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Connecticut May Not Execute Death Row Inmates

This month the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled in *State v. Santiago* that “(t)he court declared that following the prospective repeal of the death penalty, execution of prisoners no longer comports with contemporary standards of decency and no longer serves any penological purpose.”

As more states opt not to execute and others abolish the death penalty, I have to wonder along with Sam Wright, “a dyed-in-the-wool, bleeding-heart” public interest lawyer when he asks, “is *Santiago* a sign that the end of the death penalty is near?”

Hooray for the Connecticut Supreme Court and the state’s ACLU and may many more states, including our own California, follow the example.

People of Faith & the Death Penalty

A meme that sometimes floats around the internet says a variation on “Lord, protect me from your followers.”

As we see ‘religious’ people commit acts of violence from murdering doctors who, along with other medical work they do, perform abortions to blowing up mosques to demeaning and degrading people who do not worship the same way they do, we can begin to scratch our heads and come to believe that yes, we need protection from ‘true believers’.

Enter the death penalty. In May of this year, lawmakers in Nebraska voted to make the state the 19th one to ban the death penalty. While many secular activists worked tirelessly to secure this ban, people of faith were also actively involved in moving people’s thinking along the road the abolition.

Leaders of many faiths, including Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, evangelical Christians and Episcopalians, spoke to their congregants in sermons, homilies, and bulletins.

Rev. Lauren Ekdahl, a minister at the First United Methodist Church in Gering, argued that he sees the death penalty as a sin that punishes one death with another death. He said, “...murder is murder in God’s eyes...”

An article titled “The Growing Faith-Based Movement To End The Death Penalty and Protect Prisons”

(<http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2015/07/14/3680096/faith-movement-prisoners/>) noted that the United States’ largest religious group, Christians, is founded on the belief in Jesus Christ, who himself was executed and whose execution is recalled during religious holidays, in many sermons, and with the symbol of the faith, the cross upon which Jesus was killed.

For Catholic Christians, Pope Francis was clear in March when he said the death penalty should be abolished. He said, “Today the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed. ... The death penalty is cruel, inhuman and degrading. ... It does not bring justice to the victims, but only foments revenge.”

Even as faith leaders speak out on behalf of the abolition of the death penalty, their followers hold different positions. Two-thirds of mainline Protestants, over fifty percent of Catholics, and seventy-one percent of white evangelical Christians still publicly endorse the death penalty.

For both those sentenced to death and those who believe death is justified perhaps the words of Sr Helen Prejean will prove true: *People are more than the worst thing they have ever done in their lives.*

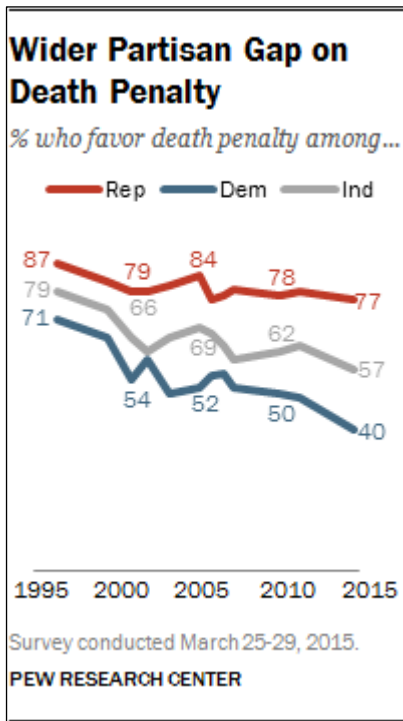
Our work to transform hearts and attitudes, and abolish the death penalty continues.

Bernie Sanders and the Death Penalty

May 1, 2015, during an interview on “The Thom Hartmann Show,” a caller asked Bernie Sanders about the execution of mentally ill people. In response, Mr. Sanders was clear not only on his position regarding the death penalty used to kill mentally ill people but others in general. He said, “I think people have been executed who were not even aware of what was going on, and that’s not something that a civilized nation should be engaged in. But in general, this is what I think. Look, there are people who commit horrendous, horrendous, horrendous

crimes: we all know that. And we are furious at them, we can't understand their barbarity. But I think, as with so much violence in this world today, I just don't think the state itself, whether it's the state government or federal government, should be in the business of killing people. So when you have people who have done terrible, terrible things they're gonna spend the rest of their lives in jail, and that's a pretty harsh punishment. But I'm against capital punishment."

While as mentioned above, many people in the US support the death penalty, a Pew Research Center survey from March 2015 shows a decline among those who favor it with political party affiliation perhaps guiding attitudes.



Stays of execution

August

13	Tracy Beatty	TX
27	Maurice Patterson	PA (stay likely)
28	Hector Morales	PA (stay likely)

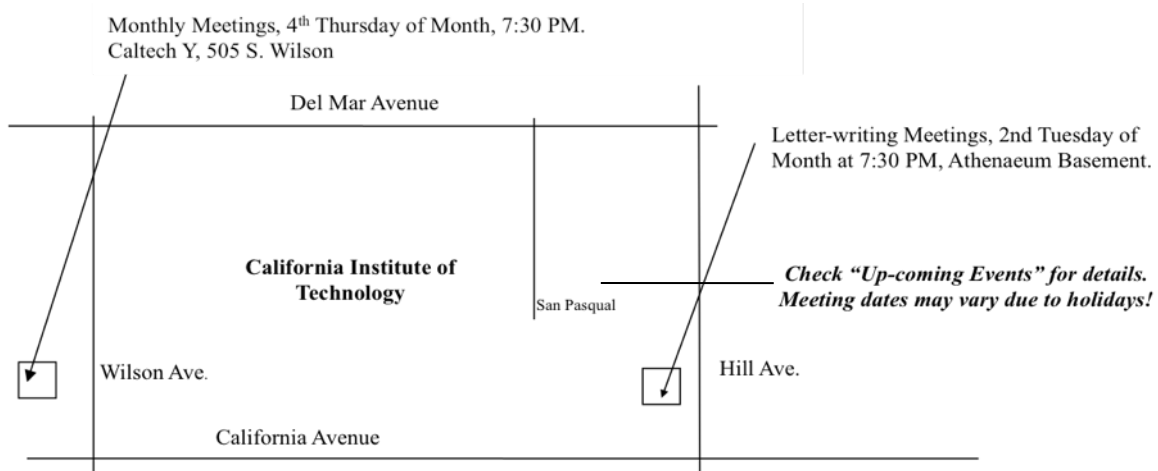
Execution

August

12	Daniel Lopez*	TX
	Lethal Injection 1-drug (pentobarbital)	

*volunteer - an inmate who waived ordinary appeals that remained at the time of his or her execution

GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT	
UAs	18
Total	18
To add your letters to the total contact aigp22@caltech.edu	



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
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<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.