

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXVI Number 11, November-December 2018

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, December 11, 7:30 – 9:00 PM.**  
*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, December 16, 4:00 PM.** *Holiday Potluck & Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* This month we read "**From a Low and Quiet Sea**" by Donal Ryan.

NOTE: This month our book group meeting is combined with a holiday potluck and will be held at Joyce's house in Montrose. For information, email [aigp22@caltech.edu](mailto:aigp22@caltech.edu) or phone 818-249-4056 and leave a voicemail.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hello all

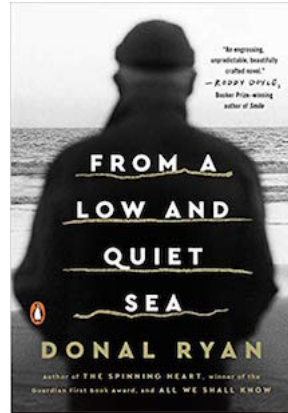
The holiday season is upon us! Hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Rob, myself and my sister Peggy visited with our cousins from my father's side in Seattle. It was cold and raining off and on but it is really green and pretty. One of my cousin's houses is on Puget Sound (sigh). We ate too much, did some sightseeing, and enjoyed seeing our fellow "orphans" (both my parents and theirs have passed away).

On Saturday November 17, we held letter writing at a different location - the Dog Haus restaurant near Old Town, Pasadena. We wrote a whole bunch of letters for Human Rights Day, thanks to all who participated and brought friends and neighbors. It was fun and their food is good, too! I had made several pages of address labels to both government officials and solidarity for the victims of human rights abuses that were featured - there's a lot left over which I will bring to the Dec letter writing at the Athenaeum. We don't have to report the letter count until the end of January, so let's add to it! Bring your cards for the solidarity messages and your return address labels!

It's been awhile since Group 22 participated in the Doo Dah Parade (now in East Pasadena for the past several years), but our friend Ann Lau has been protesting human rights abuses in China in the parade. Group 22's Veronica Raymond has been active with Ann Lau's Visual Artists Guild and was in Doo Dah this year with the group.

There is no Thursday monthly meeting for December, so if we don't see you, enjoy the holidays!

Con Cariño,  
Kathy



## Next Rights Readers Meeting

**Sunday, December 16  
4:00 PM**

**Holiday Potluck at private home in Montrose**

***From a Low and Quiet Sea*  
by Donal Ryan**

## BOOK REVIEW

Posted by BookerTalk, 28 August 2018

<https://bookertalk.com/2018/08/28/from-a-low-and-quiet-sea-by-donal-ryan-book-review/>

Were it not for the Booker Prize I'm not sure I would have ever experienced Donal Ryan's work.

He was long listed in 2013 with *The Spinning Heart*, winning The Guardian first book award the same year. Narrated by 21 victims of Ireland's economic crash; it reveals the impact of the collapse of the Celtic Tiger on the inhabitants of an unnamed rural town. In my review I described it as "technically adroit ... with pitch perfect characterisation."

That same description can be equally applied to his latest novel, *From a Low and Quiet Sea*, which is on this year's Booker Prize long list.

I thought it would be hard to beat *The Spinning Heart* but Ryan has done it with *From a Low and Quiet Sea*.

The cast of characters has been significantly trimmed. We're now focused on three men all of whom have something missing in their lives: a Syrian refugee, a crooked lobbyist and a young man dealing with the heartache of a lost love.

Each man is given their own section in the novel.

Farouk is a doctor who escapes from Syria with his wife and daughter in the hope of finding a more stable, peaceful life in western Europe. Too late, they discover they have been duped and instead of being let to safety are left adrift at sea in the midst of a storm. Ryan apparently wrote this story after hearing a news report about a Syrian doctor who paid what he thought was a high-end smuggler to get him out of the country. Though short, this was an engrossing story in exquisitely evocative prose

*"They speak to each other through tunnels that extend from their roots . . . sending their messages cell by cell . . . If a tree is starving, its neighbour will send it food. No one knows how this can be, but it is . . . They know the rule, the only one that's real and must be kept. What's the rule? You know. I've told you lots of times before. Be kind."*

The style and pace change markedly for section two which features Lampy, a young man who is pining after the girl he loved who dumped him when she went off to college. He works in a care home, occasionally driving the old inhabitants to their medical appointments. He lives with his mother and grandfather Dixie – a man who loves taking people in the pub down a peg of two. Lampy is frequently frustrated by the old man yet also loves him, feeling "a strange thrill of pride. His grandfather was wicked; when he was in form his tongue could slice the world in two."

And finally we get to John, a ruthless man involved in very shady dealings, who is full of remorse for long-ago relationship with a younger woman. He tells his own story through the medium of the confessional, revealing how his family life fell apart when his brother died and he became obsessed with a young woman he met in a bar.

At first it seems these stories have no relationship to each other. It's only in the fourth – and final – section that they are drawn together in a way that surprised me. To say more would be to spoil the experience of this book for other readers.

*From a Low and Quiet Sea* is a brief book but it's one that lingers in the mind. Every character has a unique voice, from melancholy to matter of

fact confession but there is also humour – there's a wonderfully funny scene on the bus where the old people grumble because the vehicle breaks down. It's so good I'm tempted to read it again soon which is something that I rarely do.

I'm not the only blogger to have enjoyed this book. Check out the reviews at *A Life in Books* and *DolceBellezza.net*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By Patricia Harty, Editor-in-Chief  
October / November 2016

<https://irishamerica.com/2016/10/what-are-you-like-author-donal-ryan/>



Donal Ryan is one of Ireland's best new writers. His first novel, *The Spinning Heart*, was published to great acclaim in 2012. It won the Guardian First Book Award, the European Union Prize for

Literature, and Book of the Year at the Irish Book Awards. It was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, and the Desmond Elliott Prize.

Born, in 1976, outside Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Ryan is a keen observer of human nature – the petty class-distinctions and small-mindedness of small-town life, the loneliness and displacement, disquiet and quiet triumphs of a people living in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. Though the downturn in the economy serves as a backdrop to much of his fiction, his stories are timeless in that they concern the emotions of the heart – the core of human nature through the ages.

Ryan himself, faced down numerous rejections before Sarah Davis-Goff, an intern at Lilliput Press, uncovered his *The Spinning Heart* manuscript in a slush pile. (Davis-Goff went on to start her own publishing company). Following the success of *The Spinning Heart*, Ryan's *The Thing About December* (written before *The Spinning Heart*) was published in 2013, also to wide acclaim.

Ryan holds a degree in law from the University of Limerick, where he is now a writer in residence. He lives with his wife, Anne Marie, and their two children in Castletroy on the outskirts of Limerick City. His new book, *All We Shall Know*, was released by Penguin, Random House in September.

## DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

### George Will

George Will is no soft-hearted lefty. In a September 28, 2018, opinion piece in *The Washington Post*, he discusses his reasoning for the abolition of the death penalty. The case he uses is that of Vernon Madison. Mr Madison did indeed murder a police officer in 1985. Since adolescence, he suffered from mental illness and since he's been incarcerated, his condition has deteriorated with a variety of physical problems including Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, dead brain tissue, and urinary incontinence. The state of Alabama wants to execute Mr Vernon.

Bryan A. Stevenson, head of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, has argued his case. Mr Stevenson has pointed out that Mr Madison is unable to remember 'numerous events' over the past 30 years, including his murder of the police officer.

In his opinion piece, Mr Will argues that retribution and deterrence are not adequate reasons to continue the use of the death penalty. He believes that our standards of decency have evolved over the decades. Mr Will comes from a conservative perspective and ends his piece with "Conservatives have their own standards, including this one: The state — government — already is altogether too full of itself, and investing it with the power to inflict death on anyone exacerbates its sense of majesty and delusions of adequacy."

To read Mr Will's op-ed, go to [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/abolish-the-death-penalty/2018/09/28/830ad282-c27a-11e8-97a5-ab1e46bb3bc7\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/abolish-the-death-penalty/2018/09/28/830ad282-c27a-11e8-97a5-ab1e46bb3bc7_story.html)

### LA Times Editorial Board Weighs in on the Death Penalty in California

In an editorial November 23, 2018, the editorial board of the *LA Times* calls for Governor Jerry Brown and Governor-elect Gavin Newsom to work together to put their beliefs about the death penalty into action and law. Both men are opposed to the death penalty and while Governor Brown chose to remain neutral regarding Proposition 66 in the 2016 election,

Governor-elect Newsom was an opponent of the death penalty then and in 2012 when the death penalty was also on the California ballot.

In November, two inmates on San Quentin's death row died by suicide. Since California reinstated the death penalty more than 40 years ago, 27 inmates have died by suicide while another 79 have died from old age or illness. Thirteen inmates have been executed in that time.

Since money is always an issue, it is worth mentioning that in these years maintaining death row has cost California taxpayers more than \$5 billion and according to one report the state would save around \$170 million a year if those sentences converted to life without the possibility of parole.

One number we may want to remember is 164. That is the number of condemned prisoners who have been found to have been wrongfully convicted. This number includes five in California.

While fewer juries are imposing death sentences, we will watch what happens as Governor Brown leaves office and Governor-elect Newsom assumes his responsibilities as governor of California.

To read the entire editorial, go to <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-brown-newsom-death-penalty-20181123-story.html>

### Petition to Governor Brown

Death Penalty Focus has an online petition that asks Governor Jerry Brown to remove as many people as possible from death row before he leaves office. If you'd like to read the petition and perhaps sign it, go to <https://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/628/287/107/>

### Edmund Zagorski and the Electric Chair

You will notice under 'Executions' that we had a recent one via the electric chair. To read more on this case, go to <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2018/11/01/execution-edmund-zagorski-tennessee-electric-chair/1570451002/>

## Exonerations

[Tony Brown](#) - State: FL - Date of Exoneration: 10/16/2018

In 2010, Tony Brown was sentenced to life in prison for the murder and attempted murder of two men in Miami. His charges were dismissed in October 2018 after a new witness came forward and said that Brown was not the assailant.

[Darrell Siggers](#) - State: MI - Date of Exoneration: 10/19/2018

In 1984, Darrell Siggers was sentenced to life in prison for murder in Detroit, Michigan. He was exonerated in 2018 by evidence that he was not the gunman and that the police fabricated ballistics evidence.

[Mubarez Ahmed](#) - State: MI - Date of Exoneration: 10/26/2018

Mubarez Ahmed was convicted in 2002 of two counts of murder in Detroit, Michigan. His charges were dismissed in 2018 after the sole eyewitness to the shootings recanted her trial testimony that Ahmed was the shooter, and it was revealed that a police officer had used false information to create probable cause for Ahmed's arrest.

[Clemente Aguirre-Jarquin](#) - State: FL - Date of Exoneration: 11/5/2018

In 2006, Clemente Aguirre-Jarquin was sentenced to death for murdering two women in Altamonte Springs, Florida. He was exonerated in 2018 by DNA tests and admissions by the real killer.

## Stay of Execution

November

28 Sedrick Clayton TN

**Stay granted** on November 1, 2018 to provide Clayton the opportunity to pursue state post-conviction challenges that are available to all Tennessee criminal defendants.

## Executions

October

29 Rodney Berget SD

Lethal Injection - 1-drug (Undisclosed, likely Pentobarbital)

Years from sentencing to execution: seven

November

1 Edmund Zagorski TN

Electrocution

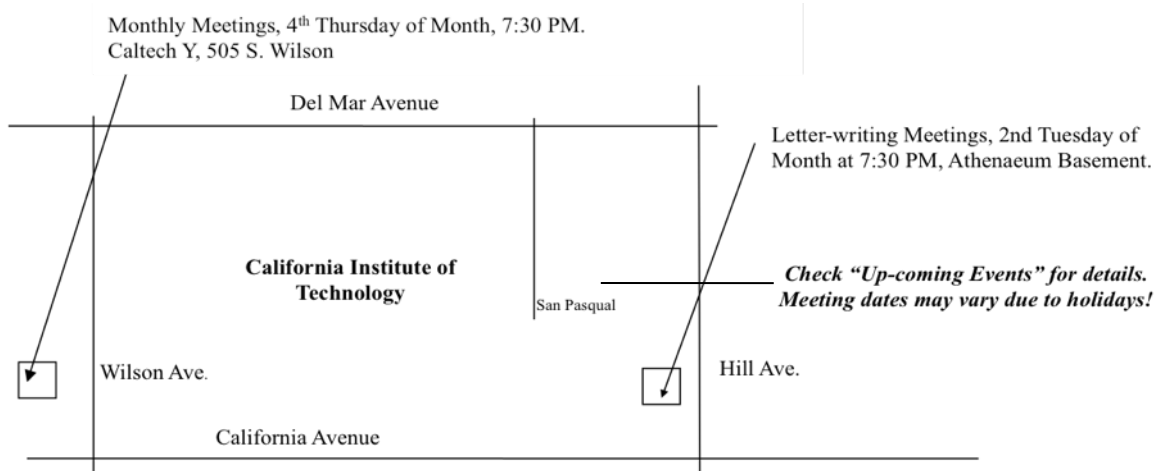
Years from sentencing to execution: 34

14 Roberto Moreno Ramos~ TX

Lethal Injection - 1-drug (Undisclosed, likely Pentobarbital)

Years from sentencing to execution: 25

~ foreign national



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.

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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.