

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, October 24, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM *Doo-Dah Sign-making.* 1052 E. Del Mar (between Catalina & Wilson) -- top floor. Please join us for a Doo-Dah work day. We won't be making masks this year, just signs, so we hope this won't take long. Drop by for all or part of the work session.

Thursday, October 28, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* at 1052 E. Del Mar (between Catalina & Wilson) -- top floor.

Sunday, November 7, 7:30 PM. *Human Rights Book Discussion Group* at Borders Books on S. Lake Avenue. This month we will commemorate the arrest and imprisonment of Ngawang Pekar with a book about the demonstrations he was participated in some ten years ago. This is a shorter book for those who may not have been able to find the time for our previous selections and you are always welcome to listen in even if you have not read the book. Remember: 15% discount at Borders on book group selections! More info inside!

Tuesday, November 12, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* in the Athenaeum basement. Corner of California & Hill.

Sunday, November 21, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM *Doo-Dah Parade!* If you are interested in marching with Group 22 in this year's Doo-Dah Parade, please contact Martha at 626-281-4039 or mtermaat@hsc.usc.edu. We will be repeating in our "Animals for the Ethical Treatment of People" guise, this year highlighting the USA campaign and featuring street theater on stun belts. We have obtained funding to waive the entry fee for all who are interested, so there is no reason not to join us!

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

It's been an eventful two months since my last Corner, and I'm freshly energized and inspired from last weekend's Western Regional Conference in San Diego! (Oct. 16-17) This meeting was the annual get-together for AIUSA's Western Region, which covers 13 states and is one of five geographical regions within the US Section of Amnesty International. There were also several Mexican AI groups strongly represented, and the conference itself was bilingual in English and Spanish. Besides myself,

Robert Adams and Martha Ter Maat from our group attended, and I really wish the whole group could have gone! There was such a sense of community there, of being part of a large group of people working together for shared goals we all strongly believe in, even though we might be dispersed all over the place (which makes it especially gratifying to come together and see each other now and then).

Much of the conference was devoted to focused workshops: three sets, each with seven or eight parallel sessions. Needless to say, there was an extreme overabundance of interesting material! I started with a workshop on human rights issues on the Mexico-US border, which gave me a chance to talk with our counterparts in AI Mexico (and stumblingly practice my Spanish, as a bonus). The other two workshops I attended were introductions to the upcoming campaigns on Saudi Arabia and on Human Rights and the Environment. Both of these were excellent presentations, and the campaigns promise to be very dynamic and exciting, and at the same time very thoughtfully planned. We can look forward to hearing much more about them in the year to come!

Another high point of the conference was seeing our group's participation in the Doo-Dah parade last year held up as a model of creative activity by local groups, in a widely circulated draft for AIUSA strategy in the next ten years. A detailed description was given of our street theater and "Animals for the Ethical Treatment of People" costumes. Kudos to Martha for inspiring and organizing this! And don't miss the sequel this year - look in the newsletter for details of how to participate!

For me, the conference was a powerful reminder of what a remarkable organization AI really is, after all. It's a massive institution, with correspondingly massive bureaucratic structures, and over the weekend I'd periodically feel like laughing when I'd recognize some familiar bit of management culture (endless acronyms, committees within committees, vision plans, pilot studies, etc.). But instead of having the goal of exploring other planets, or even making stockholders as rich as possible, all this machinery is dedicated to ending human rights abuses. This goal is always close to the surface. It's a stunningly difficult task, and I'm in awe when I consider the work of finding, organizing and deploying the human and material resources necessary to even begin to address the challenge... and to do it as effectively and

efficiently as possible, because human suffering and human lives are at stake. But somehow, people do rise to the challenge, and the work moves ahead; sometimes clumsily, perhaps, but with great heart and determination. I never cease to be deeply touched that such an institution can exist.

The conference ended with several of us taking an impromptu jaunt across the border to Tijuana, where we informally investigated conditions in several shops and a restaurant before returning.

See you in the monthly meeting!

Cheers,

Larry Romans 626-683-4977
Group Coordinator ljr@ljr.net

USA CAMPAIGN

Stun Belt Survey: Please Participate!

As part of the USA campaign, we are conducting a survey of public knowledge about electroshock weapons. Please take a few minutes to answer a short questionnaire online at <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/USA/survey>. Also, please pass the address on to your friends, acquaintances and colleagues. The more diverse a group of people we have responding, the more representative our results will be. Spread the word! And remember, this is our theme for Doo-Dah this year (see Upcoming Events for sign-up info and marchers should take a little time to become informed about the issue.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Ngawang Pekar, Tibetan Monk

Don't forget our book group discussion on Tibet this month, see flyer elsewhere in this issue!

Our group remains committed to working for the release of prisoner of conscience (POC) Ngawang Pekar (naw-wan pee-kar), an approximately 36-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monk from Drepung Monastery. In 1989, he was arrested by Chinese authorities and sentenced to 8 years in prison for participating in a peaceful demonstration in the city of Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, in support of Tibetan independence. Shortly before he was due to be released, he was sentenced to an additional 6 years in March of 1996 for allegedly trying to smuggle out a list of other prisoners to international human rights organizations. Amnesty International is concerned that Ngawang Pekar has been imprisoned solely for peacefully voicing his conscience and that, during his incarceration, he has been subjected to gross mistreatment.

There remains nothing new to report this month regarding Ngawang Pekar - we can only hope that he remains in good health and is being treated reasonably well. In the meantime, the Chinese repression in Tibet remains as brutal as ever: on 9 July two young monks, Namdrol, aged 21, and Phuntsog Legmon, aged 16, were sentenced to three and four years imprisonment respectively after they staged a pro-independence protest in Lhasa which lasted only a few minutes. Both are now reportedly being detained in Drapchi Prison (Tibet Autonomous Region Prison No. 1).

Unfortunately, while groups and individuals across the globe continue to work to improve the human rights situation in Tibet, this is clearly not a priority for many of the world's largest corporate and media interests. On 29 September, Fortune Magazine and Time Warner, Inc. hosted a gala Fortune Global Forum in Shanghai to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. At this event, Sumner Redstone, chief executive of Viacom media corporation and a potential owner of the CBS broadcasting network, told the gathering that Western media groups "should avoid being unnecessarily offensive" to the Chinese government . . . "We want to do business. We cannot succeed in China without being a friend of the Chinese people and the Chinese government." Meanwhile, Rupert Murdoch, owner of the Fox and Star TV networks and the News Corporation, has made statements critical of the Dalai Lama and has dropped programming and publishing deals that offended Beijing. Further, Gerald Levin, chief executive of Time Warner, introduced President Jiang Zemin as his "good friend" and went so far as to present Jiang with a statue of Abraham Lincoln, with whom Jiang likes to compare himself. In response, during his keynote speech President Jiang threatened force against Taiwan and warned that comments by the West on China's abysmal human rights record were not welcome.

In August, we requested that Congressman Rogan's action be followed up by writing on behalf of Ngawang Pekar to Chinese President Jiang Zemin. As our POC action this month, we request that you direct your letters to the other "head honcho" in China, Premier Zhu Rongji. Please write to Zhu Rongji to inform him that you, and the U.S. Congress, are aware of Pekar's case and urging him to see to it that Pekar is unconditionally released in a timely manner. As always, remember to keep the tone of your letter respectful and that Amnesty International takes no official position on Tibetan independence from China. Below is a sample letter that you can either copy verbatim or, preferably, use as a guide in composing your own letter:

Your Excellency:

As a firm believer in the principles delineated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I am writing to you out of concern for a prisoner being held in Tibet Autonomous Region Prison No. 1. The prisoner's name is NGAWANG PEKAR.

Ngawang Pekar, a Tibetan monk, was arrested in 1989 for participating in a peaceful demonstration in the city of Lasashi and sentenced to 8 years in prison. Subsequently, his sentence was increased by an additional 6 years. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and I am concerned that he has been imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his universally recognized right to freedom of expression. I am further deeply concerned about reports that he has been beaten and denied access to medical care since his arrest and that the 6-year increase in his sentence, following 3 months in an iron isolation cell, was an extremely harsh punishment for keeping a list of his fellow prisoners.

As you may be aware, U.S. Congressman James Rogan recently wrote to President Jiang Zemin to express his concern about Ngawang Pekar's case. In line with Congressman Rogan's concerns, I respectfully urge you to request that Pekar's case be reviewed and that he be immediately and unconditionally released in accordance with the international laws to which China is signatory. I further request that he be allowed access to independent non-governmental agencies so that his current state of well-being may be determined and made known.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter and would greatly appreciate any further information that your office may be able to provide.

Sincerely,

Address your letter to:
ZHU Rongji Zongli
Guowuyuan
9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie
Beijingshi 100032
People's Republic of China

For postage, use a 60-cent airmail stamp. Include your name and mailing address at the top of the letter to enable a reply, and please notify the Group 22 coordinator if a reply is received.

PAKISTAN: MILITARY COUP
Urgent need for comprehensive legal and institutional reforms

Human rights protection must not be ignored by those in control of the country during this current political crisis, Amnesty International said today following the dismissal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government in a military coup.

"All the political forces in Pakistan must make every effort to institute reforms which enable full enjoyment of civil and political freedoms and human rights a reality," Amnesty International said.

While deeply concerned about the military takeover and the bypassing of the constitutional process, Amnesty International believes that the current crisis should be a wake up call to Pakistan's civil society and the international community of the need to halt and reverse the slide into massive human rights abuses for which successive governments must be held responsible.

"This is a time to evaluate where things have gone wrong over the last decades and to urgently put constitutional, legal and institutional reforms in place which will at long last ensure that all people in Pakistan can enjoy the full range of human rights free from discrimination and fear," the human rights organization added.

Amnesty International believes that it is not enough to call for respect for the constitution to be restored when the constitution itself has been grossly distorted over time. Similarly, a call for the restoration of the rule of law is meaningless when the law itself has become flawed and does not ensure the enjoyment of all rights to all, without discrimination.

"Institutions, including the judiciary and the police have been lastingly weakened and made to subserve the executive," the organization said. "Real accountability and genuine respect for the rule of law should be the guiding principles of comprehensive reforms."

The human rights organization calls on the military to take all possible measures to ensure that no one is arbitrarily arrested and detained, tortured or extrajudicially executed.

"The military leadership must guarantee the life and physical integrity of members of the dismissed government, believed to be in the army's 'protective custody', and release them immediately."

Background. The human rights situation in Pakistan has been grave under successive governments as arbitrary arrests, detention of political opponents and the routine use of torture has been widespread — over one hundred people die each year in Pakistan as a result of torture. Reports of extrajudicial executions have risen from all provinces and the use of the death penalty, often imposed by special courts following procedures not commensurate with international standard for fair trial, has spiralled.

Women, children and ethnic and religious minorities have suffered persistent discrimination and inadequate protection. Corruption and lack of accountability at all levels of the state have further contributed to massive human rights violations committed with virtual impunity.

During Nawaz Sharif's tenure, civil society came under increasing pressure as democratic institutions were weakened and the rule of law increasingly disregarded. One of his first moves was to remove the president's powers to dismiss the government and to make it mandatory for parliamentarians to vote in accordance with party policy. The judiciary was weakened making redress for human rights violations more difficult to obtain. The press was intimidated by repeated arrests and threats and non-governmental organization, including human rights

MEXICO: Digna Ochoa y Plácido

A major highlight of the recent regional meeting was the speech given by Digna Ochoa about her important human rights monitoring activities and the death threats and harrassment she and her organization receive. Here's how you can help:

Lic. Samuel Villar
Procurador General de México D.F.
Niños Héroe 61, Piso 3, Col. Doctores
México D.F., C.P. 06720
MEXICO

Dear Attorney General:

It is distressing to learn that members of the human rights group *Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez"* (PRODH) received death threats in September at their offices in Mexico City. Several members have also received threatening telephone calls at their homes.

These threats reportedly are related to the abduction on August 9, 1999, of **Digna Ochoa y Plácido**, a human rights lawyer working with PRODH in Mexico City. She was forced into the back of a car by two unknown men and assaulted. She was later released, but was told she would be killed if she drew attention to her situation. On September 3, PRODH members received three letters threatening them with death. Attached to one of the threatening letters was one of Digna Ochoa's business cards that had been stolen when she was abducted. On September 8, four more letters containing death threats arrived at the PRODH offices. One was addressed to the PRODH legal team, which is headed by Digna Ochoa. All of the letters were unsigned.

I am confident that you share my outrage that human rights defenders in Mexico are being threatened and intimidated on account of their legitimate and valuable work. I am greatly concerned for the well-being of Digna Ochoa y Plácido and other human rights activists working with PRODH, and I urge you to take all necessary steps to guarantee their safety. I further urge you to conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the abduction of Digna Ochoa and the threats made against PRODH. I ask that the findings of this investigation be made public and that those responsible for these crimes be brought to justice.

I thank you for your kind assistance with this serious matter, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

copy to:
Centro de Derechos Humanos
"Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez"
Serapio Rendón 57-B, Col. San Rafael
México D.F., C.P. 06470
MEXICO

WEB TIPS FOR OCTOBER

Race, Rights and Police Brutality in the USA

<http://amnesty-usa.org/rightsforall/police/index.html>

At the September hearings here in Los Angeles on police brutality, Amnesty International announced the release of a new report on police brutality in the US. Find it on line at the AIUSA site.

VISIONS FOR GROWTH: Meeting New Human Rights Challenges

<http://amnesty-usa.org/members.html>

The Visions for Growth Committee has drafted a 10-year strategic plan providing for significant membership and financial growth, and positioning Amnesty International USA to respond effectively to future human rights challenges. Under the plan, which was released in September, significant growth means a 10 percent net increase in membership every year, bringing our total membership to about 700,000 by 2010. For the full text of the report, see the "Members" section of AIUSA's website-- username amnesty, password viaduct -- or e-mail agohl@aiusa.org



Amnesty International Group 22 Caltech / Pasadena presents:



Human Rights Discussion Group

Borders Books & Music

475 South Lake Avenue

Pasadena, California

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 7:30 PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 7:30 PM



Sky Burial : An Eyewitness Account of China's Brutal Crackdown in Tibet

by **Blake Kerr**

In this true story of a young American's encounter with Chinese oppression, Blake Kerr was fulfilling a lifelong dream by visiting Tibet. In Lhasa, Kerr witnessed a series of demonstrations by Tibetan monks that triggered an explosion of pro-independence protests, immediately quashed by Chinese forces. Kerr's account furnished unprecedented first-hand testimony of the tragic threat of cultural genocide facing Tibet.

This discussion commemorates the tenth anniversary of the imprisonment of Ngawang Pekar, a Tibetan monk arrested for his participation in the demonstrations described in *Sky Burial*. Ngawang Pekar is considered by Amnesty International to be a prisoner of conscience, arrested for the non-violent expression of his political beliefs. Campaigning for the release of Ngawang Pekar is an ongoing project of the Pasadena chapter of Amnesty International.



Amazon Journal : Dispatches from a Vanishing Frontier

by **Geoffrey O'Connor**

Blending reportage, history, anthropology, and personal memoir, *Amazon Journal* is a unique and critical look at how cultural differences in the Amazon have resulted in incidents ranging from comic misunderstandings to blatant exploitation, environmental disaster, and even genocide. Beginning by revisiting the period in the late 80's when the "save the rainforest" campaign, the indigenous rights movement, and the assassination of Chico Mendes became the focus of a media storm, O'Connor stuck with his story long enough to tell us what happened when the world turned its attention elsewhere. Peopled by a colorful cast of real-life characters, O'Connor's startling narrative is a journey into a contemporary heart of darkness, a compelling and compassionate look at a vanishing people, and a blistering account of the forces of destruction, both human and environmental, at work within the greatest forest on earth.

EDITOR'S LAST WORD:

Read us on line: <http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~aigp22>

Martha Ter Maat, 626-281-4039 / mtermaat@hsc.usc