

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XI Number 2, February 2003

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 27, 7:00 PM. *Monthly Meeting* 414 S. Holliston, Caltech Y Lounge. Help us plan future actions for Tibet, Iraq, the abolition of the death penalty, and more. Note: we are meeting a half hour early this month in order to allow time to view the video "Too Flawed to Fix: The Illinois Death Penalty Experience."

Saturday, March 1, 9:00 AM-5:30 PM. Southern California Amnesty activists will once again gather for a day of speakers, workshops and discussion at Calstate Fullerton. See article below for details.

Tuesday, March 11, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill in the basement recreation area. This informal gathering is a great for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, March 16, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena. This month we discuss *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by Mary Ann Glendon. Not only a great women's history month selection but a timely reminder of the value of international cooperation! (See inside for more information.)

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

This month at letter writing, Group 22 members participated in the Valentines Day Week of Action on the Congo and Diamonds by sending postcards to California Senators Boxer and Feinstein urging them to support legislation eliminating conflict diamonds.

On Saturday, February 15th, Group 22 members Joyce Wolf, Robert Adams, Ido Dooseman, Don Trask and myself along with members of other Southern California AI groups took part in the Hollywood anti-war protest. Members carried AI banners and signs with the AI logo focusing on a peaceful solution to conflict and the potential human rights abuses of a war with Iraq. This is a change in AI policy, for more information and guidelines go to www.amnestyusa.org member's

section, then "Iraq" under countries. AI is also encouraging members to take part in local vigils should war occur. For a list of vigils in the LA area, go to www.icujp.org.

The mini-conference at Cal State Fullerton will be March 1st. Workshops will be held on Iraq, use of the Internet for human rights work, diversity outreach, women's issues and Vietnam. (See below for details) One of the workshops will be a discussion of *The Tattooed Soldier* by Hector Tobar, a novel about Guatemala. Group 22 read this book last year! I thought it was very interesting, as the 2 main characters are Guatemalans living in LA.

Christina Vargas, a Bunche fellow who works out of the Regional Office in LA, is working on reaching out to Latinos and students. She is organizing a conference at UCLA Saturday May 10th titled "Imagine-freedom from discrimination". AI and other NGOs will speak on immigration, the criminal justice system, and death penalty and women's issues. There will also be a student summit at the conference. For more information contact the regional office at 310-815-0450.

For our meeting this month we will be viewing a video about the death penalty moratorium in Illinois. Please note the death penalty action in this newsletter which concerns a Gulf War veteran scheduled for federal execution in March. Also at this meeting we will be continuing our on-going discussions regarding Iraq and Tibet and planning for our annual outreach effort at the Los Angeles County Environmental Education Fair on March 8.

Kathy

aigp22@caltech.edu

ANNUAL MINI-CONFERENCE

Network, Learn, and Take Action in Fullerton

Join us for the Amnesty Mini-Conference on March 1st from 9am-5:30pm on the California State University Fullerton campus. ☐ There will be a continental breakfast at 9am and the admission is **FREE!** ☐ The directions are at the end of this email. The schedule follows however it is subject to change:

9:00 - 9:20am ☐☐ Continental Breakfast

9:20 - 10:20am ☐ Opening Plenary

Michelle Williams - Deputy Director, Western Region

Nguyen Thanh Trang from the Vietnam Human Rights Network

Shiela Dauer of AIUSA's Women's Human Rights Network

10:30 - 11:50am - ☐ Workshops

Domestic Violence is a Human Rights Violation:
 □Russia and the World
 Human Rights in Vietnam
 Introduction to Amnesty International
 12:00 - 12:40pm - Caucuses (informal discussions)
 Death Penalty, Student/Local Groups, AC/SAC
 12:40 - 2:00pm - □Lunch
 2:00 - 3:20pm - □Workshops
 Sex Trafficking - Overthere and Here
 Response to Crisis in Iraq
 Diversification
 Use of the Internet in Human Rights Work
 3:30 - 4:50pm - □Workshops
 Myths About the Death Penalty
 Book Discussion - "The Tattooed Soldier" by
 Hector Tobar
 Group Health, Recruitment and Retention
 Where Did the Mandate Go?
 5:00 - 5:30pm - □Closing Plenary
 (Tentative) Former POC from Vietnam

Directions: Cal State Fullerton is located west of the Orange (57) Freeway in Fullerton. □The university is bordered by Nutwood Avenue to the south, State College Boulevard to the west, Yorba Linda Boulevard to the north, and the 57 Freeway to the east. Coming from either the south or the north on the 57 Freeway, exit at Nutwood Avenue. □Go west on Nutwood. □Turn right at the main campus entrance at Commonwealth Avenue. □Follow E. Campus Drive to Parking Lot F. The registration desk will be **outside University Hall Room 252 at the south end of the building on the 2nd floor.**

DEATH PENALTY

Take Action: Gulf War Veteran to be Executed

Here is an important action that reminds us not only of the vagaries of the death penalty system but of the unanticipated repercussions of war. (Please also visit the AIUSA website www.amnestyusa.org to take action on the Lawrence Jacobs case, previously featured here. Prosecutors are again pursuing the death penalty in this juvenile case.)

Former soldier Louis Jones (m), black, aged 52, is scheduled to be executed by the US Government on 18 March 2003 in the US Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was sentenced to death in October 1995 for the murder of a white woman, Tracie Joy McBride, eight months earlier.

Tracie McBride, a 19-year-old US Army private, was abducted from the Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, Texas, on 18 February 1995. Louis Jones confessed to the crime, and took investigators to where Tracie McBride's body was located. She had been bludgeoned to death and there was evidence of sexual assault.

Since the crime had begun on a US military facility, it was prosecuted as a federal rather than a Texas case. At the sentencing phase of the trial, the federal prosecutor presented reasons for execution, while the defense presented evidence against a death sentence. This mitigating evidence included Louis Jones's lack of criminal record, his remorse, the severe physical and sexual abuse he had suffered as a child, his achievements during his 22-year military career for which he was decorated, and various mental problems, including possible post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of his experiences in the US invasion of Grenada in 1983 and the 1990/91 Gulf War. Following his return from the Gulf War, Louis Jones had displayed significant behavioral and personality changes. He retired from the army with an honorable discharge in 1993, attempted a series of low-wage jobs, and underwent the break-up of his marriage.

Louis Jones faced one of two sentences: a death sentence or life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Due to the kidnapping charge, under federal law he would never be released if the jury voted for imprisonment. However, the judge wrongly instructed the jury that it could vote for death, life without the possibility of release, or a lesser sentence. If they chose the latter, he, the judge, would decide its length. The jury deliberated for a day and a half before returning a verdict of death.

After the trial, two women jurors alleged that there had been confusion and coercion in the jury room. They stated that the judge's instruction had led some of the jurors to believe that if they could not reach a unanimous verdict on either death or life without parole then the judge would impose a lesser sentence. None of the jurors wanted that. After a while, the jury stood at 10 to 2 in favor of death, with the two women who later came forward holding out for a life sentence. One of the two, the sole African American juror, was singled out by the majority for particular pressure. She finally changed her vote, and the other woman followed. The two women later came forward to say that, until the confusion arose about the lesser sentence, as many as nine jurors had been willing to vote for life imprisonment without parole. When Louis Jones's death sentence was upheld by the US Supreme Court in 1999, four of the nine Justices dissented. They said that the jury had been misinformed by the trial judge's instruction, and that there was at least a reasonable likelihood that this had tainted the jury's deliberations. Louis Jones's clemency petition, which is seeking commutation of his death sentence to life imprisonment without parole, raises the claim that he suffers from "Gulf War Syndrome". A leading expert on this issue has submitted that Louis Jones sustained brain cell damage in deep brain structures as a result of exposure to chemicals and

toxins during his military service in the Gulf War in 1990/91. This was not raised at the trial because of the limited medical and scientific knowledge on this issue at the time of his trial. The expert has concluded that Louis Jones's brain damage could explain the marked changes in his behavior and personality on his return from the Gulf War, and may help to offer an explanation about how Louis Jones came to commit such a serious crime.

At his trial, Louis Jones apologized in court to the family of Tracie Joy McBride: "If I live from now until the end of eternity with the pain that I have, it would never scratch the surface of the pain that you have... I took a life that wasn't mine". Seven years later, Louis Jones has written to President Bush accepting his responsibility for the murder of Tracie Joy McBride and expressing his remorse: "I am truly sorry for the terrible pain and suffering I have left with her family and friends, of which they continue to suffer... [O]n countless occasions, I dream of and think of the future that I deprived... Tracie Joy McBride of; I think of her being married to the Marine she was engaged to. I think of the children she could have had. Her son could have discovered a cure for a disease of our time. Her daughter could have been a loving parent who bore children that had children who could have been scientists or explorers to new worlds. Her children go on and on for generations and they could have touched millions and millions of lives. I have seen this dream many many times along with other dreams and thoughts of the wonderful life that this human being, this soldier, this father's daughter could have had, had it not been for the evil acts I committed which ended her future".

In the USA, the President has the power to grant clemency to federal death row prisoners. Timothy McVeigh and Juan Raul Garza were killed in June 2001 - the first federal executions in the USA in 38 years - after President George Bush refused to intervene.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in your own words:

- expressing sympathy for the family and friends of Tracie Joy McBride, and explaining that you are not seeking to excuse the manner of her death or the suffering it will have caused;
- noting evidence that the jurors who sentenced Louis Jones to death came to their decision under an erroneous instruction which four Supreme Court Justices believed tainted the jury's deliberations and should have been cause for a new sentencing hearing;
- noting evidence, not heard by the jury, that Louis Jones sustained brain damage as a result of exposure to toxins and chemicals during the

1990/91 Gulf War, and that a leading expert on Gulf War Syndrome has suggested that this could help to explain why this recently-retired soldier committed such a serious crime;

- noting Louis Jones's long-held remorse, his model record in prison, and his lack of a prior criminal record, and that his clemency petition is seeking commutation to life imprisonment without parole;
- urging the President to take a compassionate approach and one that respects human dignity, by commuting the death sentence of Louis Jones.

APPEALS TO:

President George W. Bush

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

COPIES TO:

Alberto Gonzales, Counsel to the President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena

Sunday, March 16, 6:30 PM



A World Made New:

Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

by Mary Ann Glendon

Unafraid to speak her mind and famously tenacious in her convictions, Eleanor Roosevelt was still mourning the death of FDR when she was asked by President

Truman to lead a controversial commission, under the auspices of the newly formed United Nations, to forge the world's first international bill of rights.

A World Made New is the dramatic and inspiring story of the remarkable group of men and women from around the world who participated in this historic achievement and gave us the founding document of the modern human rights movement. Spurred on by the horrors of the Second World War and working against the clock in the brief window of hope between the armistice and the Cold War, they grappled together to articulate a new vision of the rights that every man and woman in every country around the world should share, regardless of their culture or religion.

Finalist for the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Ngawang Pekar, Tibetan Monk

Happy Losar! Losar is the Tibetan New Year, which falls on March 3 this year. It is 2130, the Year of the Water Sheep, according to the Tibetan lunar calendar. (Check out www.latibet.org for a local event celebrating Losar.) Whether we call it 2130 or 2003, let's hope that this is the year that will finally bring freedom for Ngawang Pekar, Group 22's adopted prisoner of conscience. Ngawang Pekar is a Tibetan monk who was arrested in 1989 by the Chinese authorities for participating in a peaceful demonstration for Tibetan independence. He has been held in Lhasa's notorious Drapchi Prison for nearly 14 years. Group 22 has been working on his case since 1996.

You may remember that we urged you in past issues of this newsletter to take action to support the proposed Tibetan Policy Act, which was introduced by Sen. Feinstein in May 2001. It didn't make any news headlines, but this legislation was passed by Congress and signed by President Bush on Sept. 30, 2002. It got incorporated into the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, H.R.1646, which became Public Law 107-228. Title VI concerns Tibet. You can find the full text by searching at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. Here is one part that is especially relevant to our work:

"SEC. 617. RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND ACCESS TO PRISONS. The President and the Secretary, in meetings with representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China, should-- (1) request the immediate and unconditional release of all those held prisoner for expressing their political or religious views in Tibet; (2) seek access for international humanitarian organizations to prisoners in Tibet to ensure that prisoners are not being mistreated and are receiving necessary medical care; and (3) seek the immediate medical parole of Tibetan prisoners known to be in serious ill health."

The President and the Secretary appear to be somewhat preoccupied with non-Tibetan affairs at the moment, so this month to celebrate Losar let's send a simple letter or card of support to Ngawang Pekar himself. It's doubtful whether he will actually receive our letters, but whatever officials at Drapchi Prison that intercept them will be made aware of international concern for Ngawang Pekar, and who knows, perhaps Ngawang will hear about them somehow and find encouragement in the knowledge that we are thinking of him. Here is some suggested text:

Dear Ngawang Pekar,

We are thinking of you. We admire your courage and strength of spirit. We hope that your health is good, and we wish that you may have peace and good fortune in the coming year.

Please send to:

Ngawang Pekar
Rukhag 5
Xizang Zizhiqu Di Yi Jianyu
Lasashi 850003
Xizang Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China

Postage is 70 cents for a postcard, 80 cents for a letter.

LETTER COUNT

Valentines Day "Conflict Diamonds":	14
Urgent Action	13
Death Penalty	2
POC: Nwang Pekar	6

Total: 35

Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with lwkamp@cs.com

IRAQ and NEIGHBORING STATES

The population of Iraq are in imminent danger of a human rights and humanitarian catastrophe. Military action could trigger a disaster for the people of Iraq and surrounding countries.

Before launching military action, the UN Security Council must think through the effects on the civilian population of serious damage to the country's infrastructure, disrupting food distribution and driving massive numbers of people to flee for survival.

A military attack could provoke a disastrous breakdown in social order, with the danger of attacks on civilians, the use of people as "human shields" and the possible eruption of renewed abuses by Iraqi authorities, armed opposition groups or violence between different ethnic, religious and social groups. The Security Council must also assess the devastating impact of potential attacks with chemical, biological and nuclear weapons which would kill and injure indiscriminately.

The majority of the non-combatant population are women and children who would be at greatest risk from attacks and who would suffer the most from damage to the country's infrastructure and the possible ensuing human rights violations.

The Security Council must accept responsibility for the consequences of its decisions on Iraq, it must do everything possible to protect civilians and ensure accountability for abuses in the wake of its decision. It

should examine and debate in-depth the likely consequences of war on the human rights and humanitarian plight of Iraqi civilians before taking any further action. This debate should be held at an open session of the Security Council in which all UN member states can participate.

This is the appeal of Amnesty International's Secretary General, Irene Khan to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary General of the United Nations, launching a worldwide petition in a bid to avoid a human rights disaster of unprecedented gravity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilians in Iraq and surrounding countries in the event of military action;
- urging the UN Security Council to hold a session open to all member states of the UN and undertake a full assessment of the likely consequences of war, including:
- the potential effects of military action on the human rights of the Iraqi population;
- the effects on the humanitarian situation as Iraqis are already suffering under severe economic sanctions and violations by their government;
- the risk that military action would lead to massive numbers of people being forced into flight;
- potential grave violations of international humanitarian law, including direct attacks on civilians, the use of human shields and the use of inherently indiscriminate weapons;
- urging the Security Council to immediately deploy human rights monitors throughout Iraq to report on human rights abuses by any party.

Please write to two or three of the following:

German Foreign Minister:

Bundesminister Joseph Fischer
Auswärtiges Amt, Werderscher Markt 1
11013 Berlin , Germany
Salutation: Dear Minister

UK Foreign Minister:

Rt Hon Jack Straw MP
Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street, Whitehall
London SW1A 2AH, United Kingdom
Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

US Secretary of State:

Colin Powell
Office of the Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20520
Salutation: Dear Secretary of State

Russian Federation Minister for Foreign Affairs:

Igor Ivanov

Rossiiskaia Federatsia, 121200 g. Moskva
Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 32/34
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii
Ministru IVANOVU I.
Salutation: Dear Minister

Foreign Affairs Minister of the People's Republic of China:

TANG Jiaxuan Buzhang
Waijiaobu, 2 Chaoyangmen Nandajie
Beijingshi 100701, People's Republic of China
Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Beijing, China
Salutation: Your Excellency

French Foreign Minister:

Monsieur Dominique de VILLEPIN
Ministre des affaires étrangères 37, Quai d'Orsay
75700 Paris 07SP, France
Salutation: Dear Minister

Copies to: permanent representatives to un of the five permanent members of the security council:

H.E. Mr. Wang Yingfan
Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China to the U.N.
350 East 35th Street
New York, N.Y. 10016

H.E. Mr. Jean-Marc de la Sabliere
Permanent Representative of France to the U.N.
One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza,
245 East 47th Street, 44th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10017
E-mail: france@un.int

H.E. Mr Sergey V. Lavrov,
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the U.N.
136 East 67th Street
New York, N.Y. 10021

H.E. Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the U.N.
One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
885 Second Avenue
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E-mail: uk@un.int

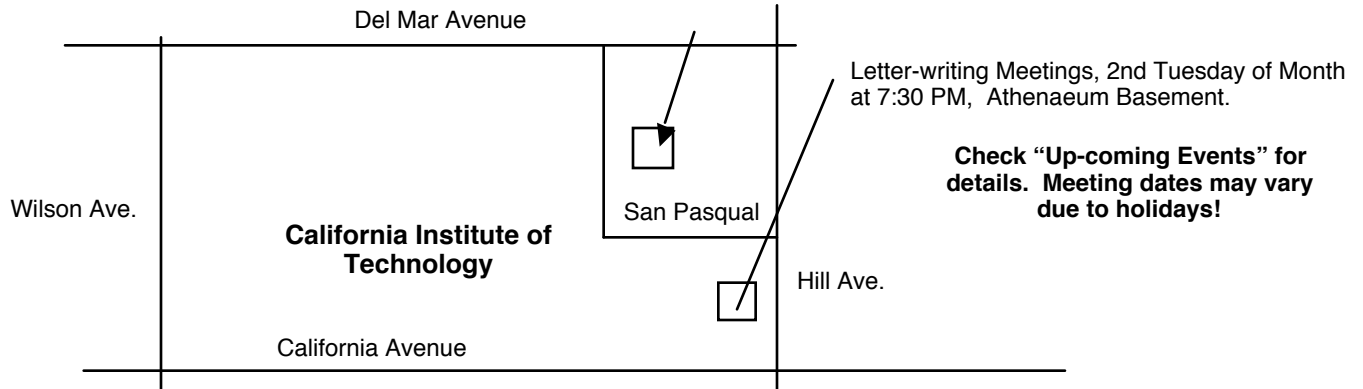
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EDITOR'S LAST WORD:

Read us on line: <http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~aigp22>
Martha Ter Maat, 626-281-4039 / rightsreaders@yahoo.com

Monthly Meetings, 4th Thursday of Month, 7:30 PM,
Caltech Y Lounge, 414 S. Holliston.



Letter-writing Meetings, 2nd Tuesday of Month
at 7:30 PM, Athenaeum Basement.

**Check "Up-coming Events" for
details. Meeting dates may vary
due to holidays!**

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
P.O. Box 50193
Pasadena, CA 91115-0193**

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.