

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, January 19, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena. This month's Martin Luther King Day discussion is co-sponsored by COLORS, the anti-racism group at All Saints Church. We will discuss *The Atlantic Sound* by Caryl Phillips. (See inside for more information.)

Thursday, January 23, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* 414 S. Holliston, Caltech Y Lounge. Help us plan future actions for Tibet, the abolition of the death penalty, campaign against torture and more.

Tuesday, February 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, February 16, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena. This month we discuss *Our Lady of the Assassins* by Fernando Vallejo. (See inside for more information.)

Save the date! Southern California Amnesty activists will once again gather for a day of speakers, workshops and discussion at Calstate Fullerton on March 1. Details in our next newsletter, meanwhile save the date!

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone! Hope you all had a wonderful and restful holiday.

Amnesty recently launched a new campaign aimed at reaching people of all ages, but with the primary focus on youth and education. The "Imagine" campaign is based on John Lennon's classic song of hope. The goal is to inspire individuals to imagine a world free from the torture, "disappearances," and killings that occur around the globe and then to take action to protect human rights. The campaign was kicked off at Venice High School on December 10, International Human Rights Day and featured Patrick Stewart, Gabriel Byrne, Latina singer Joy Enriquez, plus other celebrities. Awards were given to students who were winners in the school's Human Rights Essay Contest, which was

sponsored by Amnesty. Television, Internet, radio and print ads, a music video, CD single, and special events will be used to spread the message. I saw the print ad in a recent copy of the New Yorker magazine-very impressive! It features text on a background of blue sky with faint clouds and photos. More information regarding the Imagine campaign can be found on the Amnesty USA web site, at www.amnestyusa.org or by calling 1-800-AMNESTY.

Amnesty is concerned that the possible military intervention in Iraq has the potential to further exacerbate the human rights crisis there. On October 3 Irene Kahn, Amnesty International's Secretary General, declared a Crisis Alert on Iraq in recognition of the high risk for an upsurge in human rights violations if military action is launched. Since that declaration, Amnesty has increased its research in the region surrounding Iraq, has prepared a Crisis Response Strategy and is actively monitoring day-to-day developments. AIUSA has also been urging the US Government to fully comply with international humanitarian law, human rights law and the UN Charter as it considers military action. Although AI takes no position on the use of force, our central message is to exhaust all peaceful means first. AIUSA is mobilizing its activists to speak out against human rights violations that are inevitable consequences of war. An Iraq Action Guide is available to all members who wish to mobilize on this issue. **Contact:** our regional office (310-813-0450) or visit www.amnestyusa.org/members/crisis-iraq.

January 19, Sunday Group 22's Rights Readers are having a joint book discussion with the COLORS (Christians Offering Love to Overcome Racism in Society-formed after the 1992 uprising) group from All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena. The book, "The Atlantic Sound", by Caryl Phillips, is a journey through the African Diaspora, part travelogue, part history. I have started reading it this week while I'm on vacation, and it is very good (and I don't usually like non-fiction!). All are encouraged to come- even if you haven't read the book-the discussion should be interesting!

Please see the Upcoming Events section for more info re book group, and other activities.

Ciao, Kathy aigp22@caltech.edu

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Stop Forced Return of Chechen Refugees

We need your help to tell Russian officials to stop the forced return of thousands of displaced persons in freezing weather from camps in Ingushetia back to the neighboring Republic of Chechnya. If sent to Chechnya, most of these refugees will not only find their homes looted or destroyed, without conditions for even basic subsistence, but will be put at risk of torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, 'disappearance' and extra-judicial execution.

Write to: President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. A sample letter follows:

President of the Russian Federation
Vladimir Putin,
Kremlin, Moscow
Russian Federation
president@gov.ru

Dear President Putin,

As a member of Amnesty International I urge to halt the expulsion of thousands of displaced Chechens from camps in Ingushetia and forcing them to return to Chechnya in freezing weather. On December 3, Russian forces closed Aki Yurt camp and turned out its Chechen inhabitants. Amnesty International strongly condemns the camp closure. The displaced Chechens must be guaranteed security if returned to Chechnya, where the lives of civilians are put at risk every day by both Russian security forces and Chechen fighters.

I strongly urge your government to comply with international laws and treaties on the issue of the forced closure of refugee camps in Ingushetia. I urge you to ensure that all camp closures are halted and for officials to cooperate fully with officials from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. Please do not return refugees to Chechnya or other parts of the Russian Federation until their safe return is assured and that concerns raised by the UNCHR and other humanitarian organizations have been satisfactorily addressed. Sincerely,

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

DEATH PENALTY

Illinois Commutations, Stop Yemeni Stoning

The new year is off to a landmark start with the commutation of 167 death row sentences to life in prison and the pardon of several inmates whose confessions were coerced through torture. As important as the message this politically courageous act of Gov. Ryan was, there is much work to be done to finish the work of all the Illinois activists who must still convince their legislature of their campaign slogan – the death penalty is “too flawed to fix.” We certainly hope that the news from Illinois will send a signal to other states. Not all the news for the new year is good. Already Texas has 17 executions scheduled and it is unlikely that California will have an execution free year.

This month’s action concerns a Yemeni woman, Layla Radman A’esh, is at risk of execution by stoning and Naji Hizam Abdullah is at risk of flogging after they were convicted of adultery by the Court of First Instance in Aden. Naji Hizam Abdullah has been sentenced to 100 lashes. Layla Radman A’esh and Naji Hizam

Abdullah had appealed against the ruling, however on 22 September 2001, the Appeal Court in Aden upheld their sentences. Layla Radman A’esh’s case is now pending before the Supreme Court for a final appeal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International recognizes the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate violation of the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

Flogging is prescribed for offences of a sexual nature, and in relation to the consumption of alcohol, and slander. Articles 263 and 264 prescribe 100 lashes for fornication, where the offender is not married. In cases of adultery the punishment is death by stoning.

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

- expressing concern at the report that Layla Radman A’esh is to be stoned to death and calling for the commutation of her sentence;
- expressing concern at the flogging sentence against Naji Hizam ‘Abdullah and calling for the sentence not to be carried out;
- seeking assurances that they will be provided with access to family and legal access in detention, as well as regular medical attention as and when it is necessary;
- drawing attention to world trends to abolish or reduce the use of the death penalty, the desirability of which was reaffirmed in Resolution 32/61 of 8 December 1977 of the United Nations General Assembly;
- stating that you consider the use of flogging as a form of punishment to be cruel, inhuman and degrading, contrary to CAT and Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

SEND APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister:
Abd al-Qader Bajamal
Prime Minister of the Republic of Yemen
Sana’a
Republic of Yemen
Salutation; Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

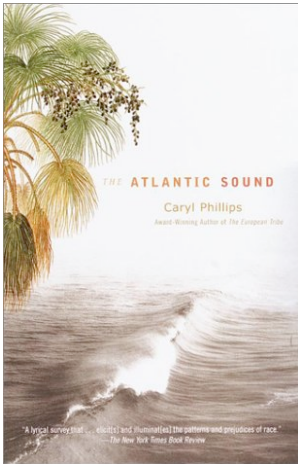
Ambassador Abdulwahab A. Al-Hajjri
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen
2600 Virginia Ave. NW Suite 705
Washington DC 20037

RIGHTS READERS Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

Sunday, January 19, 6:30 PM

Note: If you plan to purchase the book at Vroman's look in the World History section or request it at Will Call..



The Atlantic Sound

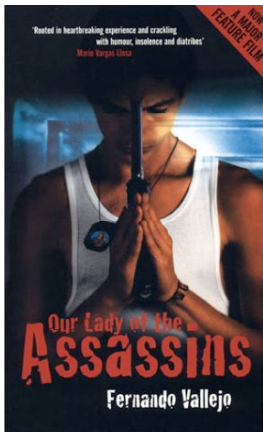
By Caryl Phillips

In this fascinating inquiry into the African Diaspora, Caryl Phillips embarks on a soul-wrenching journey to the three major ports of the transatlantic slave trade.

Juxtaposing stories of the past with his own present-day experiences, Phillips combines his remarkable skills as a travel essayist with an astute understanding of history. From an West African businessman's interactions with white Methodists in nineteenth-century Liverpool to an eighteenth-century African minister's complicity in the selling of slaves to a fearless white judge's crusade for racial justice in 1940s Charleston, South Carolina, Phillips reveals the global the impact of being uprooted from one's home through resonant, powerful narratives.

Sunday, February 16, 6:30 PM

Note: If you plan to purchase the book at Vroman's look in the Fiction section or request it at Will Call. If you wish to read this very short book in Spanish, it is possible to order the Spanish edition on line through amazon.com.



Our Lady of the Assassins (La Virgen de los Sicarios)

By Fernando Vallejo

Fernando returns after several decades to his birthplace, Medellin, to find it transformed into Colombia's 'capital of hate.' A town tottering on the edge of the abyss where taxi drivers are shot dead for

refusing to turn down their radio. As he lovingly insults the country's president, its drug barons, priests, communists, sociologists, television and soccer addicts, Fernando cultivates a passion for Alexis, a young hitman from the shanty-towns. The brutal and the tender fuse in this first translation of an outstanding voice of Latin American literature.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE *Ngawang Pekar, Tibetan Monk*

Our group remains committed to work for the release of prisoner of conscience (POC) Ngawang Pekar (naw-wan pee-kar), a Tibetan Buddhist monk. Pekar has been imprisoned since 1989 after being arrested by Chinese authorities for participating in a peaceful demonstration in the city of Lhasa in support of Tibetan independence.

In general, things appear to have been relatively uneventful regarding Tibet over the past month and there is no significant news to report. As for Ngawang Pekar, the last information we received about him was in December of 1996. At that time, we were informed that his original 8-year sentence had been increased by an additional 6 years after he was allegedly caught trying to smuggle out a list of other Drapchi prisoners to international human rights organizations. Thus, as a result of the above extension, Pekar's total prison sentence became 14 years.

Well, the year is now 2003 and, barring any unknown developments, Ngawang Pekar should be due for release sometime this year. However, as it is hardly unknown for prisoners in China to be kept incarcerated well past their scheduled release dates, it is important that we continue to let the Chinese officials know that we are aware of and concerned about Pekar's imprisonment. This month, we ask that you write to the prison governor of Tibet Autonomous Region Prison No. 1 (Drapchi Prison), where Pekar is still assumed to be held. Below is a sample letter you can either copy or use as a guide in composing your own:

Dear Governor,

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 (layname: Paljor).

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.

Especially in light of the fact that he has now completed his 14-year sentence, I respectfully urge you to request that Ngawang 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:

Jianyuzhang
Xizang Zizhiqu Di Yi Jianyu
Lasashi 850003
Xizang Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China

Overseas postage for a normal letter is 80 cents, 70 cents for an aerogram. Should you receive a reply, please notify Group 22.

LETTER COUNT	
Holiday Card Action:	41
Urgent Action	17
Death Penalty	5
Total:	63
Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with lwkamp@cs.com	

9/11 UPDATE

AI Calls for Review of "Special Registration"

In a letter sent to Attorney General John Ashcroft, Amnesty International expressed concern that the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System enacted by the Immigration and Nationalization Service could violate United Nations and international treaties to which the US is party. AI called on US authorities to review its immigration laws and procedures to ensure that they are administered in accordance with international law.

"Under international standards, targeting individuals on the basis of national origin is tantamount to racial discrimination," stated Dr. William F. Schulz, Executive Director of Amnesty

International USA (AIUSA). "We are concerned that the INS, in requiring that nationals from specific countries submit to this process, is actively engaged in racial profiling."

In its letter to Ashcroft, AI noted that because the "special registration order applies only to immigrants from selected countries while similarly situated immigrants from other countries are not affected .this would appear to be in breach of the right to non-discrimination recognized under international law."

Last month approximately 400 men and boys from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Sudan and Syria were detained, mostly on minor visa violations, after coming forward voluntarily to comply with the first deadline of the special registration process. Many reportedly had pending applications for extensions, or had nearly completed the process for legal residency; some were apparently in compliance with immigration regulations. Nationals of 15 other Muslim and Arab countries, as well as those from North Korea, are required to register over the next two months.

"Those who fail to comply with the registration process face criminal charges and immediate expulsion yet, in many cases, compliance has seemingly led to numerous rights violations," said Benjamin Jealous, Director of AIUSA's Domestic Human Rights Program. "It is deeply disturbing that in the US, following the rules can lead to denial of legal counsel, food and necessary medicine or even to physical mistreatment. We recognize that the INS has bolstered staff and equipment to improve this procedure ? nonetheless, our concerns remain, as devoting more resources doesn't eliminate the underlying issues of discrimination and violating due process."

While Amnesty International does not take issue with the requirement per se of registering immigrants with temporary visas, it is concerned that immigration laws are being applied in a manner that violates fundamental protections against discrimination under international law. Amnesty International also called upon the Attorney General to ensure that persons apprehended as a result of special registration who fear return to their home countries be given the opportunity for full and fair hearings on their claims for protection.

GUATEMALA

Attorney General DeLeon Under Fire"

As the human rights crisis in Guatemala continues unabated, recent developments reveal just how far powerful forces linked to past and present abuses are willing to go to ensure that impunity persists. Today, widespread threats, intimidation and attacks are commonplace against members of Guatemala's legal community, including judges, lawyers, and prosecutors. Recently, on 5 December 2002, an attempt

was made on the life of Guatemala's Attorney General Carlos de León Argueta in apparent retaliation for his efforts to investigate high-profile crimes.

These attacks also target activists and plaintiffs in important anti-impunity initiatives. On 11 December 2002 a group of six men wearing ski masks, armed with machetes and high caliber weapons broke into Egidia Bámaca Velásquez' home, battering her and ransacking her home; Ms. Bámaca Velásquez is slain guerilla leader Efraín Bámaca's sister, and has been active in seeking justice for his "disappearance".

On 12 December, longtime human rights activist Amilcar Mendez was fired upon and robbed, in an attack which may be linked to his anti-impunity efforts. Those willing to go to such extremes to maintain the wall of impunity are thought to be members of the clandestine groups with links to the traditional oligarchy, some "new entrepreneurs," elements of the police and military, and common criminals, who collude to control both lucrative illegal and legal industries in Guatemala. Amnesty International believes that those victimized by these sectors, like the Attorney General, directly threaten the financial and political interests of these people and therefore become targets.

Since coming to office in May this year, Carlos De León Argueta, whose appointment was well received by national human rights groups, has been proactive in seeking to investigate past human rights abuses, as well as organized crime, corruption and drug-trafficking. This particular attack appears to have arisen in response to his work on organized crime and corruption, as it took place the same day that he announced the names of Prosecutors who will be charged with investigating high-ranking military officers accused of involvement in organized crime.

However, many of the same high-ranking individuals involved in organized crime have also frequently been cited as responsible for human rights violations and Amnesty International believes that the attack could also have arisen from his work on important human rights cases.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear Ambassador Arenales,

I write to express my concern at the ongoing series of attacks against individuals involved in the struggle against impunity in Guatemala. In particular, I am alarmed by the December 5, 2002 attack on Attorney General Carlos David De León. As the country's leading prosecutorial officer, De León has sought to investigate past human rights abuses, as well as organized crime, corruption and drug-trafficking. While the December 5 attack may have arisen in response to his work on organized crime and corruption, many of the same high-ranking individuals involved in organized crime have also frequently been cited as responsible for human

rights violations and Amnesty International believes that the attack could also have been a reprisal for his work on important human rights cases.

The assault on Attorney General de León is merely the latest indicator of the fragility of the Guatemalan justice system and the need for the adoption of reforms to protect those involved in prosecuting high-profile cases. Two other recent attacks provide examples of a broader pattern of violence against human rights defenders. On December 11, 2002, six heavily armed men attacked Egidia Bámaca Velásquez in her home. Ms. Bámaca Velásquez is a sister of "disappeared" guerilla leader Efraín Bámaca; this incident and recent acts of intimidation against other family members may have been attempts at reprisal for their participation in efforts to hold the Guatemalan government accountable for its role in Efraín Bámaca's death. On December 12, 2002, human rights leader Amilcar Mendez was fired upon and robbed, in an attack that may have been intended to discourage him from continuing his important work.

In light of these distressing reports, I urge the Guatemalan government to take measures to ensure protection and respect for Carlos De León and all Ministerio Público state prosecutors, so that they may carry out their officially mandated professional responsibilities without fear for their physical security. Furthermore, it is critically important that senior government officials publicly condemn this attack and the threats which preceded it, and that the government implement effective measures to protect the legal community and to investigate all instances of threats, intimidation and attacks against them.

Full and impartial investigations should be undertaken to determine who is responsible for the many other acts of violence and intimidation committed in recent months against human rights defenders, including members of the Bámaca family, Amilcar Mendez, and others. The clandestine organizations responsible for past and current abuses serve as a major obstacle to the peace process, democracy and respect for human rights, and must be immediately and effectively dismantled if the Guatemalan government is to regain credibility in the eyes of the international community.

I thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

SEND APPEALS TO:

Ambassador of Guatemala

Antonio Arenales Forno

Embassy of Guatemala

2220 R St. NW

Washington DC 20008

Fax: 1 202 745 1908

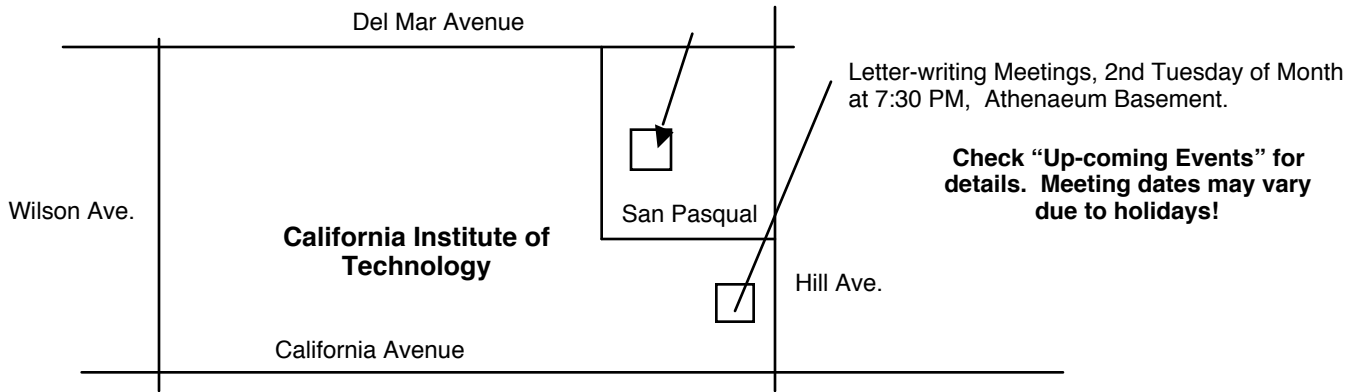
E-mail: ambassador@guatemala-embassy.org

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.



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.