

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XI Number 6, June 2003

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, June 26, 7:30 PM.** *Monthly Meeting* 414 S. Holliston, Caltech Y Lounge. Help us plan future actions for Tibet, the Patriot Act, Just Earth campaign and more.

**Tuesday, July 8, 7:30 PM.** *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. In the summer our usual basement meeting area shuts down. Look for us on one of the patios, or the lounge. We'll put up a sign at our table. This informal gathering is a great for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

**Sunday, July 20, 6:30 PM.** *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we discuss *The Dressing Station*, by Jonathan Kaplan. (More info below.)

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone! Summer is almost here. I'm looking forward to a lighter work schedule, a watercolor class at Descanso Gardens, Italian language course, and a first-time trip to Hawaii! Hope everyone has a great summer.

Our group will still have our regular meetings. The July and August book selections look very interesting. July's selection, which we hope to do in conjunction with All Saints Church's Health Care Ministry (of which I am a participant), is by a physician who has served all over the world in wartime situations and tells of his experiences. In August, we read a novel set in Cuba and Miami. Hopefully, since it's summer, more of you will be able to participate and read the books!

We have some ongoing projects that we will be working on during the summer, such as working with the Coalition for Civil Liberties (CCL) on getting the Pasadena City Council to pass a resolution against the US Patriot Act as many other cities have done and making cards to sell for fund-raising.

Lucas Kamp heading up our involvement with the Patriot Act project. He reports that the CCL has met with 3 Pasadena City commissions and the Board of Trustees of PCC. All responded positively. The plan is to get the Pasadena City Council to pass a resolution in August. On July 29,

at All Saints Church, Erwin Chemerinsky, law professor at USC and well known champion of civil liberties (most recently arguing a three-strikes case before the Supreme Court), will speak. More details later!

Our creative genius, Martha Ter Maat, is designing cards that we can make and use as a fund-raiser at conferences, etc. She brought the sample designs to a recent meeting, and they looked very good (Japanese theme). We plan to have a "card-making day" sometime this summer. All are invited.

Did anyone make it to the AI film festival held the last week of May? We saw one film (the other was sold out!), "Discovering Dominga", about a Guatemalan woman living in the US who has repressed her past life as a small child whose family was killed in a massacre in Guatemala. The movie is about how she discovers the past and struggles to right the injustices that still remain in her native country. It airs on the PBS P.O.V. series on July 8. We saw fellow group member, Martha Ter Maat there, plus some folks from the SF Valley and Santa Monica groups.

AIUSA has ended its Iraq Crisis Response but information and actions will continue to be available on the website, [www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org) re the continuing problems (security, justice, detainees, humanitarian situation, refugees, unexploded ordnances, etc). Meanwhile pressing concerns in other parts of the world command our attention: Congo, Cuba, Burma, Iran, Liberia.

I just received an email from Adriana Gonzalez, a woman who started attending our group last year who had emigrated from Columbia with her daughter. She was fleeing political persecution because of her human rights work and was granted asylum in the US. She has recently moved to Florida. We will miss her and the insight she brought to our group (as well as the Spanish, she used to laugh at my pronunciation!).

Kathy

[aigp22@caltech.edu](mailto:aigp22@caltech.edu)

## CONGO/UGANDA

### *Take Action on Deteriorating Situation in DRC*

Dozens of detainees may be at imminent risk of extrajudicial execution or torture, following a failed attempt to overthrow the leadership of an armed political group operating in the Ituri province of north-eastern DRC. The detainees are being held incommunicado in metal containers and several have been tortured. At least four people are thought to have already been executed in the wake of the failed coup.

The attempted coup was directed, in his absence, against Commander Jérôme Kakwavu, leader of an armed group known as the *Forces armées pour le peuple congolais* (FAPC), Armed Forces for the Congolese People, which controls the town of Aru on the Congolese border with Uganda. The commander returned to Aru on 22 May, escorted by soldiers belonging to the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF - Uganda's national army), and immediately began a brutal crackdown on those suspected of involvement in the coup. At present Amnesty International has the name of only one of the persons executed – a commander named Mboyo – but reports suggest that at least three other people have also been executed. Two of those executed were reportedly arrested at Aru airport on 22 May and executed on the spot.

Since 22 May, dozens of people, including both soldiers and civilians, have been arrested and are detained in metal containers. The conditions in these containers, in which it is very hot and difficult to breathe, constitute cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The detainees include Léopold Leti (known as Appo), a high-ranking member of another armed group, the *Union des patriotes congolais* (UPC), Union of Congolese Patriots, who was repeatedly stabbed in the back and the nape of the neck, as well as being beaten, following his arrest. Like all the other detainees, many of whom have been detained since 22 May, he has had no access to medical treatment or to food.

Other detainees include a driver for a local college faculty, Leti, reportedly arrested on the grounds that the mutineers had seized his car in mounting their coup, Jean-Filbert Tshombe (also a prominent member of the UPC), Avoti, Jimmy Banga, and Donatien Kanyi-Ngiya, the Administrator of Aru, who was arrested on 27 May. Around eight other suspected mutineers are being held in UPDF custody across the border in the Ugandan town of Arua. A small number of detainees have been released, including Father Jean Dhebo and Aru's Bishop, Emile Aiti. They were arrested on 22 May, apparently because some of the mutineers had used hotel accommodation owned by the church. Father Dhebo was severely whipped in detention.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION.** Ituri province has been the scene of appallingly high levels of human rights abuses, often directed against the civilian population, since the outbreak of war in the DRC in 1998. It is estimated that some 50,000 people have been killed and over half a million displaced from their homes since 1999. Uganda has played a pivotal role in the region,

providing arms and logistical support to all of the armed groups currently operating in Ituri province, as well as maintaining UPDF forces in the region until their official withdrawal on 6 May 2003.

The *Forces armées pour le peuple congolais*, which is directly supported by the UPDF, is a relatively new splinter group of the *Union des patriotes congolais*, an armed group led by Thomas Lubanga which is in control of Ituri's capital town, Bunia. The underlying motive for the attempted coup against the FAPC leadership was reportedly a dispute over the sharing of profits derived from exploiting the area's natural resources, including gold. The desire to control and profit from eastern DRC's natural resources has become the biggest single factor driving the continuing fighting in the region and has led directly to horrendous human rights abuses against the civilian population.

Amnesty International is supporting calls for the rapid deployment to Ituri of an international peace-keeping force, explicitly mandated by the United Nations to protect civilians at risk and to prevent further bloodshed.

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

- urging the Ugandan authorities to intervene urgently to prevent further detainees held by the FAPC in Aru from being extrajudicially executed;
- pressing for the detainees held by the FAPC in Aru to be immediately removed from the metal containers, where the conditions amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment;
- pressing for the detainees in Aru and also the eight or so detainees held by the UPDF in Arua to be granted immediate access to their families, to lawyers, and to any medical treatment they may require;
- pressing for concrete action to be taken against any FAPC or UPDF members who are suspected of having been involved in extrajudicial executions or acts of torture, beginning with their immediate suspension from their duties pending legal proceedings against them;
- seeking assurances the rights of all the detainees will be fully respected, including their right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, their right to legal representation, and their right to a fair trial which conforms to international standards of fairness;
- urging the Ugandan government to take all practical steps it can to support and facilitate the deployment of a UN-mandated peace-keeping force to Ituri, including by ceasing all arms

transfers and other logistical or financial support to armed groups in Ituri known to have been responsible for human rights abuses.

**APPEALS TO:**

*Minister of Defense:*  
Hon. Amama Mbabazi  
Minister of Defense  
Ministry of Defense, Bombo  
P.O.Box 7069  
Kampala, Uganda

*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs:*  
Hon. James Wapakhabulo  
Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Embassy House, Parliament Avenue  
P.O.Box 7084  
Kampala, Uganda  
Email: [mofa@starcom.co.ug](mailto:mofa@starcom.co.ug)

*Army Chief of Staff:*  
Nakibus Lakara  
Chief of Staff, Uganda People's Defense Forces  
C/0 Ministry of Defense, Bombo  
P.O.Box 7069  
Kampala, Uganda

*Arua Resident District Commissioner:*  
Mr Okoth Nyalulu Thomas  
Resident District Commissioner of Arua  
P.O.Box 1 Arua, Uganda

**COPIES TO:**

Ambassador Edith Grace Ssempala  
Embassy of the Republic of Uganda  
5911 -16th St. NW  
Washington DC 20011  
Email: [ugembassy@aol.com](mailto:ugembassy@aol.com)

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|---|----|
| <b>LETTER COUNT</b>   |    |
| Death Penalty   | 1  |
| Urgent Action   | 17 |
| Prisoner of Conscience: Ngawang Pekar   | 18 |
| Total:  | 36 |
| Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with <a href="mailto:lwkamp@cs.com">lwkamp@cs.com</a> |    |

**CUBA**

*Urge Commutation of Death Sentences and Release of all Prisoners of Conscience*

On April 11, 2003, Cuban authorities ended a three-year de facto moratorium on executions by sending three men to their deaths before a firing squad. There is grave concern that 52 people currently on death row may face imminent execution. In addition, a wave of mass arrests and

summary trials of at least 77 Cuban dissidents began on March 18th. Send a message to Dagoberto Rodriguez, Chief of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, DC that the execution of Cuban citizens by the government violates international norms, and urge the Cuban government to release all political prisoners.

**Background information:** On April 11, 2003 three men were sent to their deaths before a firing squad, thereby ending the three-year *de facto* moratorium on executions. The three men along with several others were imprisoned after they had hijacked a Cuban ferry on April 2 with the intention of escaping to the United States. This incident had marked the third hijacking in two weeks and ended without any bloodshed after several days of standoff with Cuban security forces. The hijackers were convicted under toughened anti-terrorism legislation passed in December 2001, which allows for the use of the death penalty in the most extreme cases. Their appeals to the Supreme Court and the Council of State were rapidly dismissed and they were executed within a week of the start of their trial. Four of the hijackers received life sentences and four others received shorter prison terms. Currently at least 52 people are in death row. Given the moratorium's end, Amnesty International is concerned that these people may also face imminent execution.

In addition, in the past 14 months there have been a number of large-scale arrests of political dissidents by Cuban authorities. On February 27, 2002, 21 Cuban men were arrested after they hijacked a bus and attempted to enter the Mexican Embassy to request asylum. This incident set off a chain of arrests and numerous other dissidents were also detained in sweeps conducted by state officials. On December 6, 2002, another 17 were arrested after they had attempted to meet in Havana to engage in a discussion on human rights and to reportedly form a grassroots project for the promotion of these rights. Following these mass arrests the Cuban government continued to detain large amounts of dissidents throughout the Island.

Beginning on March 18, 2003 a new wave of targeted arrests was initiated and which culminated in the detention of at least 77 Cuban citizens for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. These incidents have amounted to the biggest crackdown in over a decade in which independent journalists, members of human rights groups, political activists and other perceived nonconformists have been detained in a major police operation.

In an official statement issued by the Cuban government after the March 18 arrests, the detained

were accused of being linked to 'acts of conspiracy' through their contact with

James Cason, the Head of the US interests in Havana. James Cason was assigned this post in 2002, and has been accused of undiplomatic behavior by the Cuban government after he made a high-profile visit to a meeting of dissidents and spoke with international journalists gathered there. Since this incident he has continued to meet with opposition members and has been sharply criticized by Fidel Castro for doing so.

At least 33 of the latest dissidents arrested have received sentences ranging from 14 to 27 years and those that are still awaiting trial could face equally harsh penalties. These prisoners were convicted under the *Ley de Protección de la Independencia Nacional y la Economía de Cuba*, Law for the Protection of the National Independence and Economy of Cuba passed in February 1999. The law permits sentences of 7 to 15 years imprisonment for passing information to the United States that could be used to bolster anti-Cuban measures such as the US economic blockade, and increases the punishment to 20 years if the information is acquired surreptitiously. The legislation also bans the ownership, distribution or reproduction of 'subversive materials' from the US government, and proposes terms of imprisonment of up to five years for collaborating with radio and TV stations and publications deemed to be assisting US policy.

Sample letter:

Mr. Dagoberto Rodriguez  
Chief of the Cuban Interests Section  
2630 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20009  
Dear Mr. Rodriguez,

I am greatly alarmed by the recent summary trial and execution of Lorenzo Enrique Copello Castillo, Barbaro Leodan Sevilla Garcia, and Jorge Luis Martinez Isacc, and by the mass arrests of citizens that began on March 18, 2003. In addition, I am extremely disappointed by reports that the subsequent trials were unfair and resulted in exceptionally long sentences. In particular, I am troubled over Amnesty International's report that the appeals before the Supreme Court of the three men executed, were hastily and improperly dealt with. I fear that this same fate might unjustly await the 52 Cuban prisoners currently on death row.

I am deeply disappointed that the Cuban government decided to end its *de facto* moratorium on executions instituted in April of 2000. I had considered this unofficial moratorium a critical and welcomed step towards the abolishment of the death penalty in Cuba. The return of executions

marks a gross violation of international norms and a giant step back for Cuba's progress in the field of human rights.

I understand that among the large numbers of dissidents recently detained are independent journalists, human rights activists, owners of private libraries, and pro-democracy members of illegal opposition parties, and that at least 15 of those have been declared prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International.

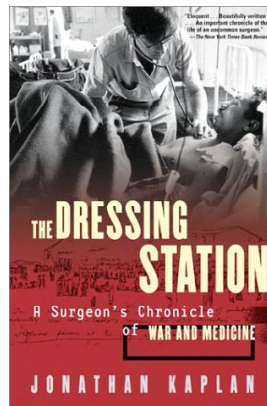
Based on the information I have received, I am deeply concerned that those who have been arrested have been detained merely for the non-violent exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association. I call on you Mr. Rodriguez, and on the Cuban government to commute the death sentences of those facing capital punishment, to immediately and unconditionally release political prisoners, and to stop massive arrests from taking place.

Sincerely, YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS

## RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group  
Vroman's Bookstore  
695 E. Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena

**Sunday, July 20, 6:30 PM**



## The Dressing Station: A Surgeon's Chronicle of War and Medicine

by Jonathan Kaplan

*The Dressing Station* is a searing portrait of devastation on the battlefield. From treating the casualties of apartheid in Cape Town to operating on Kurdish guerrillas in northern Iraq at the end of the Gulf War, Jonathan Kaplan has saved (and lost) lives in the remotest corners of the world in the most extreme conditions. *The Dressing Station* is a haunting and elucidating look into the nature of human violence, the shattering contradictions of war, and the complicated role of medicine in this modern world.

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Ngawang Pekar, Tibetan Monk

Group 22's adopted prisoner of conscience, Tibetan monk Ngawang Pekar, is scheduled to complete his prison sentence sometime in 2003. He was arrested for participating in a peaceful demonstration for Tibetan independence at Lhasa in 1989 and given an 8 year sentence, which was later

increased by an additional 6 years. Here is the story as told by Phuntshok Wangchuk, a fellow prisoner now in the Tibetan exile community in India:

"The prison officials at Drapchi were always worrying about news of the atrocities there getting out, and any prisoner who tried to communicate what was happening to the outside world was dealt with ruthlessly. Towards the end of January 1996, Ngawang Pekar from the Old Unit and Kelsang Gyaltsen from the New Unit were caught recording the names and details of all the prisoners. As a result Ngawang Pekar was put in solitary confinement and after a few days transferred to Utritru Prison's solitary confinement. At a later date he was brought back to Drapchi and again put in solitary confinement. As a punishment for recording the names and details of the prisoners, his sentence was increased by 6 years. He was also not given proper clothes to wear, or sufficient food to eat."

Visit <http://www.guchusum.org/testimony> to read the rest of Phuntshok's story about life and death in Drapchi Prison. The site also has the stories of 20 other former Tibetan prisoners. Go to <http://www.tchrd.org/photos/released.html> to see photos of many released prisoners. Let's hope that we'll soon find Ngawang Pekar on that page!

Last month we wrote to the newly appointed Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region. There's also a new Chairman of the T.A.R., so let's welcome him as well with letters about Ngawang Pekar. You can copy the following letter or use it as a guide in composing your own.

Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional  
People's Government  
Jampa Phuntsok  
Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu  
1 Kang'angdonglu  
Lasashi 850000,  
Xizang Zizhiqu  
People's Republic of China

Dear Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as

Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional  
People's Government.

I am writing about a prisoner 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. Later his sentence was increased by an additional 6 years. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of

conscience since he has been imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his universally recognized right to freedom of expression.

I am extremely concerned about reports that while in prison Ngawang Pekar was beaten and denied adequate food and clothing and that he did not have access to needed medical treatment.

Ngawang Pekar has now nearly completed his 14-year sentence, and I respectfully urge you to request that his case be reviewed and that he be considered for immediate release. Many people in the U.S.A. and in other countries of the world are concerned about Ngawang Pekar and are anxious to know his current status. I would be very grateful to you and to your government if you could please give some information about Ngawang Pekar's present state of health to Amnesty International or to another human rights organization.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely, (Your name and address)

Overseas postage is 80 cents. If you receive a reply, please notify Group 22.

## DEATH PENALTY

### *Update: Percy Walton Receives Stay*

*Great news on the action we featured last month! We will keep you posted if additional action is needed.*

Percy Walton, black, aged 24, who was scheduled to be executed on 28 May, has been granted a stay of execution on evidence that he may have mental retardation. In June 2002, in *Atkins v Virginia*, the US Supreme Court ruled that the execution of people with mental retardation was unconstitutional.

A federal judge issued the stay on 25 May following an appeal based on evidence that Percy Walton had been assessed as having possible mental retardation. The state appealed to the higher US Court of Appeals to overturn the stay, and when that failed, it appealed to the US Supreme Court, which refused to overturn the stay.

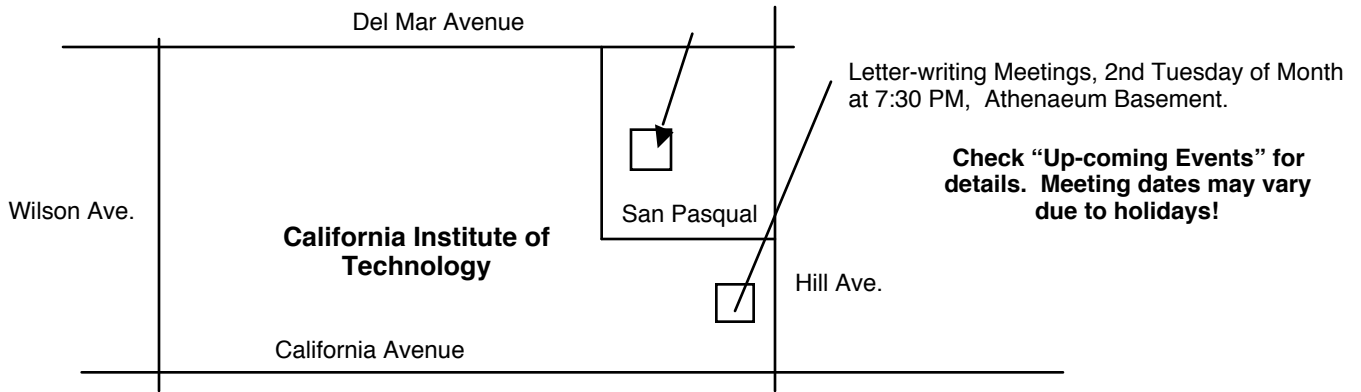
The issue will now be heard by the federal judge who granted the original stay of execution. If the judge finds that Percy Walton is not protected by the Supreme Court's decision on the *Atkins* case, and if his finding is not overturned on appeal, Percy Walton could face a new execution date. In that event, it is possible that there may be a claim that Percy Walton, who has a serious mental illness, is legally insane and that it would therefore be unconstitutional to execute him. The US Supreme Court banned the execution of the insane in 1986.

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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](mailto:rightsreaders@yahoo.com)

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



**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.*