

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XII Number 5, May 2004

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, May 27, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* 414 S. Holliston, Caltech Y Lounge. Help us plan future actions on the Patriot Act, Campaign Against Discrimination, death penalty, environmental justice and more.

Tuesday, June 8, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. This informal gathering is a great for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, June 20, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we discuss Ha Jin's *The Crazed*. (More info below.)

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi all,

The big news this month has been the revelations about torture at Abu Ghraib prison. We include in this newsletter an action calling for independent investigations into these cases. Amnesty's viewpoint on this issue is to see it as part of a continuum of alleged abuses extending to Afghanistan and Guantanamo. I encourage you to visit www.amnestyusa.org to read AI Secretary General's open letter to George Bush and the 12 page chronology of Amnesty's concerns about prison abuses. Also be sure to take the "torture test" and learn the legal definition of torture!

After commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide in April, this month we mark the 15th anniversary of the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Join our book discussion group this month as we read a novel by award-winning author Ha Jin set during this tumultuous period. One of many actions on current human rights issues in China is included in this newsletter. See the website for more. Amnesty also recently issued a press release on harassment of the "Tiananmen Mothers." Find out more about this group of women who work to document what happened to their sons and daughters during the 1989 demonstrations at www.fillthesquare.org.

In honor of Gay Pride month (and as the recent outpouring of marital bliss!) we offer an action advocating that the State Department include documentation of human rights abuses based on

sexual orientation in their annual reports. Human rights advocates recently lead a similar successful campaign to ensure that the State Department reports include documentation of women's human rights issues. Let's make these reports truly comprehensive!

I regret to report that Kelsey Patterson, the mentally-ill death row inmate featured in last month's newsletter was executed despite a clemency recommendation by the Texas Board of Parole (ignored by Governor Perry). On a more upbeat note, the Governor of Oklahoma, Brad Henry, did grant clemency to a Mexican national, Osvaldo Torres whose case had been the subject of an International Court of Justice ruling concerning the failure of law enforcement to follow Vienna Convention protocols for the notification of consular officials after the arrest of a foreign national.

Please join us at our meetings this month as we plan further actions in these cases and others!

Take care,

Martha Ter Maat aigp22@caltech.edu

IRAQ

Urge Independent Investigations of Torture Cases

Please visit www.amnesty-usa.org for more information including a chronology of AI's concerns about prison abuses in Afghanistan, Guantanamo and Iraq.

Recent allegations of torture and ill-treatment by Coalition Forces in Iraqi prisons echo the frequent reports of human rights violations received by Amnesty International during the past year. Many former detainees have told Amnesty International that they were tortured and ill treated by US and UK troops during interrogation. There is no indication that calls by Amnesty International, for investigation of these allegations, have elicited meaningful action to remedy the situation. A credible, independent investigation is crucial to help restore public confidence in justice. Urge President Bush to support a thorough, independent and public investigation; to hold accountable all who have committed acts of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and also those who have contributed to a command culture that condones such abuses; and to ensure that all Coalition Forces know that such violations will not be tolerated.

Sample Letter

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

abuses that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world face everyday.

The International Human Rights Equality Resolution (H.CON.RES. 330):

- Recognizes the human rights of every lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individual not as special rights but as rights enshrined in human rights norms as established in international law, including international conventions signed by the US;
- Condemns all human rights violations targeting LGBT people—because of their sexual orientation and gender identity—as violations of internationally recognized norms and law that should be classified and punished as any other human rights violations;
- Calls on the US government to continue to improve its documentation of human rights abuses based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and to give such violations the same concern and consideration in its research and documentation of human rights abuses;
- Calls on the US government to fully integrate LGBT human rights in its efforts to promote human rights globally.

Everyday, women and men around the world are beaten, imprisoned, tortured or killed solely on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation. Many of those who speak up for LGBT rights—regardless of their sexual orientation—become the targets and victims of threats and persecution. In many instances, the police and other agents of the state are the perpetrators of human rights abuses, such as extortion, entrapment and physical assaults. Such cases are rarely investigated, and fewer are prosecuted.

The US Congress can take a stand against violence and abuse perpetrated against LGBT people by supporting the International Human Rights Equality Resolution. Passing this historic resolution will strengthen the US commitment to human rights.

SYRIA

Discrimination Against Kurdish Minority

Here is a sample letter concerning deaths and detention of members of the Kurdish minority in Syria.

His Excellency Nizar al-Assasi
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
al-Nasr Street, Damascus
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
fax: 011-63-11-222-3428

email: moj@net.sy

Your Excellency:

I am extremely concerned by reports that some 25 Kurdish people were shot dead by Syrian security forces on 12 March 2004 in Qamishli, following violent clashes at a soccer (football) match. Hundreds of other Syrian Kurds have reportedly been arrested. Because their whereabouts are unknown, I fear that this puts them at grave risk of torture and ill treatment.

The arrests reportedly followed clashes between Arab and Kurdish fans at a soccer match in the city of Qamishli. Syrian security forces responded by firing shots into the crowd resulting in the deaths of at least 20 people and dozens of injuries. Three children were said to have been killed in a stampede as the crowd tried to escape. Police attacked Syrian Kurdish mourners the next day, resulting in two days of rioting by Syrian Kurds in several towns in the mainly Kurdish northeastern area of Syria. In 'Amouda around 13 March, the head of the town's police station was reportedly beaten by Kurdish protesters. He later died of his injuries. Hundreds of individuals, mostly Syrian Kurds, including children, remain in detention. Most of these are being held in incommunicado detention and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

I urge you to launch an independent judicial enquiry into the clashes between Kurdish protestors and security forces. For justice to be done and to be seen to be done, the truth must be uncovered, and the suspected perpetrators of serious crimes and human rights violations must be brought to justice.

I ask you to undertake an urgent review of the cases of hundreds of Syrian Kurds who have been detained, including 16-year-old Mas'oud Ja'far. I request information about those who were arrested, the reasons for their arrest, and where they are now being held. I urge you to ensure that all detainees are given prompt access to their families, legal assistance and any necessary medical care.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

copy to:

Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic
2215 Wyoming Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
fax: 202-234-9548
email: info@syrianembassy.us

EDITOR'S LAST WORD:

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

Premier of the People's Republic of China:
Premier Wen Jiabao
Guowuyuan
9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie
Beijingshi 100032
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

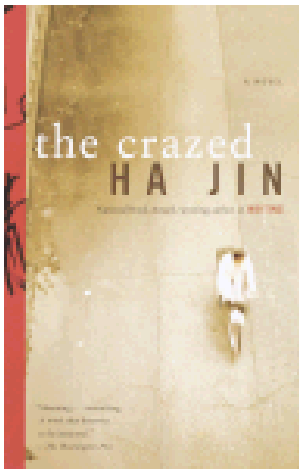
Minister of Public Health:
Wu Yi Buzhang
Weishengbu
1 Xizhimenwai
Xicheng District
Beijingshi 100044
People's Republic of China
Email: manage@chsi.moh.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:
Ambassador Jiechi Yang
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington DC 20008

RIGHTS READERS

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

Sunday, June 20, 6:30 PM



The Crazy

by Ha Jin

In his luminous new novel, the author of *Waiting* deepens his portrait of contemporary Chinese society while exploring the perennial conflicts between convention and individualism, integrity

and pragmatism, loyalty and betrayal. Professor Yang, a respected teacher of literature at a provincial university, has had a stroke, and his student Jian Wan—who is also engaged to Yang's daughter—has been assigned to care for him. What at first seems a simple if burdensome duty becomes treacherous when the professor begins to rave: pleading with invisible tormentors, denouncing his family, his colleagues, and a system in which a scholar is "just a piece of meat on a cutting board."

Are these just manifestations of illness, or is Yang spewing up the truth? And can the dutiful Jian avoid being irretrievably compromised? For in

a China convulsed by the Tiananmen uprising, those who hear the truth are as much at risk as those who speak it. At once nuanced and fierce, earthy and humane, *The Crazy* is further evidence of Ha Jin's prodigious narrative gifts.

OUTFRONT

Support International Human Rights Equality

Urge your Representative to co-sponsor the landmark International Human Rights Equality Resolution (H.CON.RES. 330). Amnesty International USA is working to obtain bipartisan support for the resolution and hopes to get at least 100 Representatives as co-sponsors.

Sample Letter

The Honorable _____
United States Congress
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep _____:

As your constituent, I write to ask that you co-sponsor H.CON.RES. 330, a landmark House resolution addressing the abuses perpetrated against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people around the world.

H.CON.RES. 330 recognizes that the human rights of LGBT people are firmly enshrined in standards defined in international human rights law. It condemns violence against LGBT people, and calls on the U.S. government to give equal consideration to such human rights violations in its documentation on abuses worldwide. It also calls on the government to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat such abuses abroad.

Everyday women and men around the world are beaten, imprisoned, tortured or killed solely on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation. You can take a stand against this senseless violence and abuse targeting a group of people because of who they are.

I urge you, as my Representative, to sign-on as a co-sponsor of H.CON.RES. 330 today. Help pass this historic legislation and strengthen our government's commitment to human rights.

I look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

BACKGROUND

On November 24, 2003, Congressmen Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Christopher Shays (R-CT) introduced the landmark International Human Rights Equality Resolution in the US Congress. The resolution addresses the pervasive and horrendous human rights

repairing their homes. Cheng Fudong's wife, Zhang Qiao, told AFP: "Our home is broken down. Rain pours down from the roof. The government had repaired some of the homes in the village, but neglected the others."

It is unclear what prompted the detention of Kong Wanli, but his wife, Wei Hong, told AFP that he was "among the most outspoken farmers in the village and had previously demanded government help".

According to the report, many local people had been speculating about a visit to the village by the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, which was apparently due to take place on 1 May. It is unclear whether this visit will actually take place, but locals reportedly fear that the men have been detained to prevent them from protesting during the visit.

According to AFP, a police officer at the Shangcai county prison, Yuan Xinmin, stated that the men had been detained for "disturbing government organizations and disturbing government office work". He added that they would be detained for 4-5 days.

In June 2003 at least 18 people with HIV/AIDS were arrested in connection with protests and disturbances relating to lack of access to medical care in Xiongqiao, another village in Shangcai county. Five of them were reportedly beaten in police custody. Two were later released, but the fate of the other three remains unclear. Thirteen others were detained during a violent raid on the village by police wielding metal rods and electroshock batons. At least 12 people were reportedly injured in the raid. Some of the detainees were later released, but around seven of them were reportedly charged. Their fate and whereabouts are unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HIV infections have spread rapidly in China since the mid-1980s, affecting the lives and livelihoods of a vast number of people across the country. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has estimated that by the end of 2001 up to 1.5 million Chinese people were infected with HIV, and has warned that this figure could rise to 10 million by 2010 if no effective countermeasures are taken.

Reports on HIV/AIDS in the official Chinese media tend to highlight intravenous drug use and unprotected sex as the main causes for the spread of the virus. A less well-publicised factor has been the operation of blood-collecting stations in many parts of China during the late 1980s and 1990s, including several villages in Henan and other central provinces. Many of these were run by local

government health departments, while others were illegal blood banks known as "blood heads" (xuetou). They were established rapidly due to a highly profitable global demand for blood plasma. The blood-collection centres failed to implement basic safety checks in handling the blood, and so

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infections soared. Unofficial estimates of the number of people infected in Henan Province alone through their use of such facilities range from 150,000 to over one million.

Over recent months, there have been signs that there is greater political willingness to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS in China. A number of new measures have been announced, including the provision of antiretroviral drugs to the poor and free HIV tests. However, it remains unclear how well these measures are being implemented. Official statistics on the spread of the disease are considered to be gross underestimates and discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS remains entrenched.

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

- urging the authorities to disclose the names of all those detained with Cheng Fudong and Kong Wanli on 27 April, and to provide immediate guarantees for their safety;
- expressing concern that they appear to have been detained solely because of peaceful protests, and calling on the authorities to release them immediately unless they are to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence;
- urging the authorities to give them access to lawyers, their families and adequate medical treatment while they are in detention;
- urging the authorities to fully investigate the extent of HIV/AIDS transmission in Henan and other provinces due to the operation of blood-collection centres and to publish their findings.

APPEALS TO:

Director of the Henan Provincial Department of Justice:

Guo Junfeng Tingzhang
Sifating
8 Jingsilu
Zhengzhou 450003
Henansheng
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am deeply concerned by recent allegations of torture and ill-treatment emerging from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Extensive research by Amnesty International suggests that this is not an isolated incident and that these reported violations have exacerbated an already fragile situation in Iraq. Amnesty International has interviewed former detainees in Iraq and Afghanistan who have reported being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during interrogation and detention, and has repeatedly brought this information to the attention of the US government. US government officials have yet to respond fully to these allegations.

Last year, you stated that, "torture anywhere is an affront to human dignity everywhere" and that "the United States is committed to the world-wide elimination of torture and [is] leading this fight by example." The torture and ill-treatment of Iraqi detainees at the hands of US military personnel runs contrary to your words and the tenets of US and international law. The implementation of US and international laws must be a priority for the United States if the Iraqi people are to live free of brutal and degrading practices. For Iraq to have a sustainable and peaceful future, human rights must be a central component of the way forward.

It is essential that the world community view the investigations as thorough and impartial, and that both those who commit such acts of torture and those in command who condone them are held accountable. For that reason, I urge you to support an independent investigation into these violations and public disclosure of the findings, and to cooperate with the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and others as they gather information on these abuses.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Background

The latest evidence of torture and ill-treatment emerging from Abu Ghraib prison has exacerbated an already fragile situation. Extensive research in Iraq suggests that this is not an isolated incident, but rather evidence of a systemic failure to protect the rights of detainees in accordance with international law. Amnesty International has received frequent reports of torture or other ill-treatment by Coalition Forces during the past year. Detainees have reported being routinely subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during arrest and detention. Many have told Amnesty

International that they were tortured and ill-treated by US and UK troops during interrogation. Methods often reported include prolonged sleep deprivation; beatings; prolonged restraint in painful positions, sometimes combined with exposure to loud music; prolonged hooding; and exposure to bright lights. Virtually none of the allegations of torture or ill-treatment has been adequately investigated by the authorities.

Abu Ghraib prison was notorious under Saddam Hussein -- it should not be allowed to become so again. The Coalition leadership must send a clear signal that torture will not be tolerated under any circumstances and that the Iraqi people can now live free of such brutal and degrading practices. If Iraq is to have a sustainable and peaceful future, human rights must be a central component of the way forward. The message must be sent loud and clear that those who abuse human rights will be held accountable.

Amnesty International is calling for investigations into alleged abuses by Coalition Forces to be conducted by a body that is competent, impartial and independent, and that any findings of such investigations be made public. In addition, reparation -- including compensation -- must be paid to the victims or to their families.

LETTER COUNT

Urgent Action	9
Death Penalty	6
Just Earth	17
Sudan	7
Rwanda	10
Iraq	3
Total	53

Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with lwkamp@sbcglobal.net

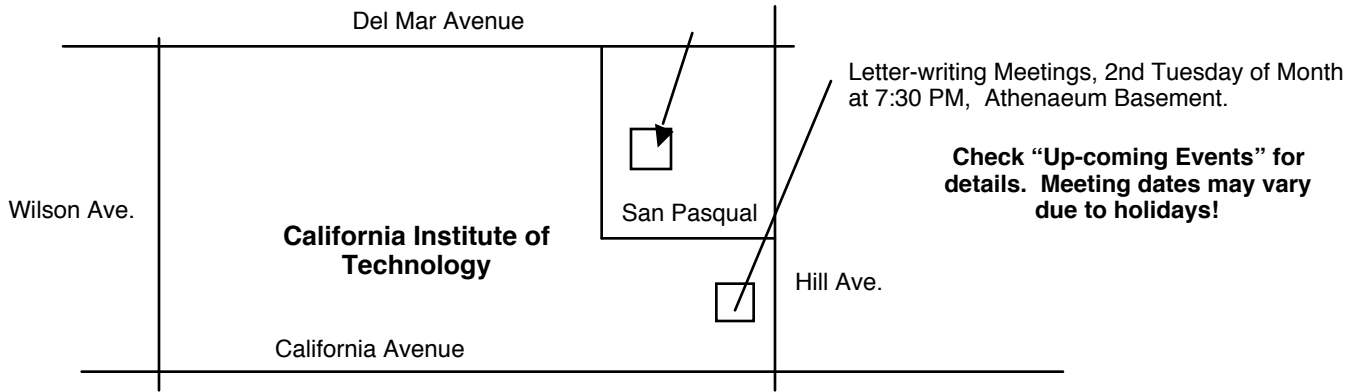
CHINA

Detention of people with HIV/AIDS

At least six people with HIV/AIDS, including the Cheng Fudong and Kong Wanli, have reportedly been detained by police in Henan province, central China, after seeking help from the local authorities. They may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment, and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety.

According to a report from Agence France Press (AFP), the six were detained on 27 April and are currently held in Shangcai county prison, Henan Province. Five of them, including Cheng Fudong, were detained after traveling from their homes in Wenlou village, Shangcai county, to the provincial capital, Zhengzhou, to request government help in

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**



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