

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, October 26, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting*
Caltech Y is located off San Pasqual between Hill and Holliston, south side. You will see two curving walls forming a gate to a path-- our building is just beyond. Help us plan future actions on Sudan, the War on Terror, death penalty and more.

Tuesday, November 14, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. We meet downstairs in the cafeteria. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, November 19, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read Mark Abley's *Spoken Here: Travels among Threatened Languages* (More below.)

Note: The November Monthly Meeting has been moved to November 30 due to Thanksgiving.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everybody! Long time no write column-Martha did the honors the last couple of times... (Thanks for the break, Martha!)

Robert and I attended the Western Regional Conference in Tucson, Arizona last weekend. The title was "Human Rights Have No Borders". Veronica Raymond, another Group 22 member, also attended with a friend of hers. We caught glimpses of each other in passing! There were several great speakers and workshops-we couldn't attend them all, but did pick up lots of literature, flyers, etc. We sold 3 tee shirts and 1 pack of holiday cards! Rob attended workshops on Video, Film and Human Rights Education, and Globalize Justice: An Insider's Guide to the International Criminal Court's Investigations. I went to Prevention, Not Execution: Prohibiting the Death Penalty for Severely Mentally Ill Offenders and Human Rights at the Border. We both attended a discussion on Amnesty's new draft policy on sexual and reproductive rights, and voted on resolutions. Guess who's back! Our "no-circ" friends made another attempt to get their resolution on MGM (male genital mutilation) passed. It failed in the working party as did a resolution to delay Amnesty formulating a policy on reproductive rights issues.

There were many organizations and speakers from immigrant rights groups, addressing the conditions of Mexican migrants. The border is only a few hours away from Tucson and concerns re border patrol

mistreatment of migrants in custody, border patrol intrusion and harassment of Indians on reservation lands (the route from Sonora goes thru the Tohono O'dham lands), criminalization of humanitarian aid (the 2 defendants from No More Deaths had their felony charges recently overturned) and other issues were discussed. Amnesty is trying to develop a policy statement on immigration. To contribute your opinion, go to <http://www.amnestyusa.org/us>.

In the group sales and display room, we saw photographs of an exhibit on Eritrea put on by ASU students called "One Heart Betrayed". They have a website- <http://www.west.asu.edu/amnesty/events/images/eritrea06/> that has pictures of the display and information re Eritrea.

Remember Helen Berhane? She's a young Eritrean gospel singer who has been imprisoned in a shipping container. She has been tortured and was recently taken to hospital. See below for an action AI sent out an urgent action on her behalf.

Kathy aigp22@caltech.edu

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE *Eritrean Estifanos Seyoum*

Instead of writing on behalf of Estifanos Seyoum this month, we offer this action on fellow Eritrean Helen Berhane. We also encourage you to watch a short film about torture in Eritrea which you can find at <http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>.

We have received reports that Helen Berhane was hospitalized at Halibet Hospital in Asmara following severe mistreatment. She has not been allowed any visits by relatives and Amnesty International is concerned she was tortured.

Helen Berhane is a gospel singer and a member of the Rema church, one of several minority churches persecuted by the Eritrean government. She was arrested on 13 May 2004 as part of a government crackdown on Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. She was taken to Mai Serwa camp and detained in a metal shipping container until early 2006. Shipping containers offer little ventilation, are boiling hot during the day and freezing cold at night. Furthermore, there are no washing or toilet facilities in the containers. Helen was recently moved out of the container into a cell in the camp. Helen has refused to abandon her faith and gospel singing, despite promises of release if she does.

Torture is used regularly by Eritrean authorities as a punishment for prisoners such as and the pattern of harsh detention condition and ill- treatment has not

changed over the years, despite multiple appeals by Amnesty International and other NGOs.

Please write to the Eritrean authorities and to the Eritrean ambassador in your country,

- Expressing concern at reports that Helen Berhane was hospitalized due to severe mistreatment
- Calling for her be given adequate medical care
- Calling for her to be allowed visits from relatives
- Calling for her she be released once she has received adequate medical care if she is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards of fairness, and without recourse to the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Mohamed Omar
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 190
Asmara

Mr Semere Beyene
Director, Department of Religious Affairs
Ministry of Local Government
P O Box 225, Asmara, Eritrea

Scott DeLisi, Ambassador
US Embassy
179 Alaa Street, Asmara (PO Box 211)

LETTER COUNT

Postcards/China	5
Eritrea POC	6
Urgent Actions	14
Total:	25
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@sbcglobal.net	

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Vroman's Bookstore

695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena

Sunday, November 19, 6:30 PM

*Keep up with Rights Readers at
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>*

Spoken Here:

Travels among Threatened Languages

by Mark Abley

Within the next couple of generations, most of the world's 6000 languages will vanish, due mainly to the unstoppable tide of English. With an open mind and a well-worn passport, award-winning journalist and poet Mark Abley tells entertaining and vital

stories about why languages matter. From Oklahoma to Provence, aboriginal Australia to Baffin Island, the cultures are radically different, but the problems of shrinking linguistic and cultural richness are painfully similar. Abley's investigation provides a stunning glimpse of the beauty and intricacies of languages like Yiddish and Yuchi, Mohawk and Manx, Inuktitut and Provençal. More importantly, it offers a sympathetic and memorable portrait of the people who still speak languages under threat.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST POVERTY
Justice for Forced Evictions in Zimbabwe

Across Africa, hundreds of thousands of people each year are forcibly evicted. They are removed from their homes without notice or compensation, and in many cases are stripped of their possessions and left homeless. Often they are displaced far from sources of clean water, food, sanitation, livelihood or education.

Forced evictions violate international law, yet many governments justify them on the grounds that they are essential for the development of infrastructure or in preparation for the hosting of international events. The tragic outcome in most of these cases is that the poorest and most vulnerable members of society are placed at even greater risk.

In 2001, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights adopted a resolution condemning the practice of forced evictions, and last year it issued a report condemning Operation Murambatsvina as a violation of international law.

Forced Evictions in Zimbabwe. During May-July 2005, an estimated 700,000 people lost their homes, their livelihoods, or both when the Zimbabwe government forcibly evicted them and demolished their homes and businesses as part of Operation Murambatsvina ("Drive Out Rubbish"). The forced evictions and demolitions were carried out without any advance notice, in violation of standing court orders, and without any provisions for temporary shelter, access to food and clean water. In addition, police used excessive force against dislocated residents, including beatings caught on videotape. The vast majority of the victims have received no assistance with replacement housing since the demolitions, and because they were among the poorest of the poor in Zimbabwe, they have experienced hunger, sickness (including thousands with HIV/AIDS), and psychological trauma.

Five weeks after the mass evictions began, the government of Zimbabwe launched Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle ("Better Life"), describing it as a program to build houses for victims of the mass evictions.

Amnesty International research has found that, far from being a solution, the program has not assisted virtually any of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina. Few houses have been constructed, and even those which have been built are too expensive for victims to afford.

Most of the houses designated as “built” are unfinished, do not have access to adequate safe water and sanitation, and are uninhabited. At least 20 per cent of the houses that have been built are officially earmarked for civil servants, police and soldiers. In reality, far more than 20 per cent of the houses have been allocated to people who did not lose their homes during Operation Murambatsvina.

Despite having destroyed many of the victims’ livelihoods during the evictions, the government demands proof of their income before they are considered for new houses. Many informal vendors and traders who were supporting themselves and their families before Operation Murambatsvina have lost their only source of income, and thus cannot provide any proof of income, even if they were offered the chance to purchase a house.

Un-serviced land plots (residential areas of land without access to water or sanitation facilities) have been allocated to some victims – but there is no assistance for construction of houses. People who lost everything during Operation Murambatsvina are expected to somehow find building materials and rebuild houses on their own.

Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle is the only government response to the gross human rights violations perpetrated under Operation Murambatsvina. No other assistance or remedy has been offered by the government to the hundreds of thousands of victims. Amnesty International considers Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle to be a wholly inadequate to the abuses committed against the victims of Operation Murambatsvina.

Visit AIUSA’s Economic, Social and Cultural Rights resource page: www.amnestyusa.org/escr.

Please write a letter to the Parliament of Zimbabwe urging immediate relief for the victims of Operation Murambatsvina. A sample letter has been provided, but we encourage you to add your own thoughts:

To: Hon. Zinyemba, MP
Chairperson, Portfolio Committee on Local Government
Parliament of Zimbabwe
P. O. Box CY298
Causeway, Harare
Zimbabwe

Dear Honorable Zinyemba,

I write to you today to express my deep concern over reports that an estimated 700,000 people lost their homes, their livelihoods, or both when the government of Zimbabwe forcibly evicted them and demolished their homes and businesses between May and July 2005. I was alarmed to learn that these evictions were part of a government program (Operation Murambatsvina) which targeted poor urban and surrounding areas nationwide.

Amnesty International reports that the forced evictions and demolitions of Operation Murambatsvina were carried out without any advance notice, respect for due process, in violation of standing court orders, mechanisms for individual redress, and without provisions for appropriate relocation measures. The vast majority of the victims have received no help from the government and have been left to find their own alternative shelter. Many are now living in overcrowded and often squalid conditions, and thousands of the victims are still living in the open under makeshift shelters.

I consider the government’s response to the mass evictions wholly inadequate, having been implemented five weeks after the evictions began, and ultimately having failed to reach the majority of victims of Operation Murambatsvina. It is tragic that those targeted by Operation Murambatsvina were among the poorest of the poor, and now, as a direct consequence of the operation, have been driven deeper into economic and psychological distress.

In honor of World Poverty Day, I urge you to do everything in your power as a member of the Portfolio Committee on Local Government to demand that the government of Zimbabwe upholds its obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to adequate housing, as recognized by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In particular, your committee should urge the Ministry of Local Government to revise Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle in order to ensure that it:

- provides security of tenure;
- prioritizes the provision of relief to the most vulnerable;
- addresses the housing needs of the poorest who cannot afford the cost of a stand or building materials; and
- includes plans to ensure adequate access to safe water and sanitation for all housing and stands.

Please give this matter your urgent attention. I thank you in advance for taking action to protect the

human rights of all people in Zimbabwe, including the poor and most vulnerable.

Sincerely, Your NAME and ADDRESS

CORPORATE ACTION NETWORK *10 years in prison for sending an email*

The Western Region of Amnesty International USA has adopted Shi Tao as its "Special Focus" case. We've highlighted his plight before, but here's a refresher on this journalist's plight.

In April 2004, the Chinese journalist Shi Tao used his Yahoo! email account to send a message to a U.S.-based pro-democracy website. In his email, he summarized a government order directing media organizations in China to downplay the upcoming 15th anniversary of the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy activists. Police arrested him in November 2004, charging him with "illegally providing state secrets to foreign entities." Authorities used email account holder information supplied by Yahoo! to convict Shi Tao in April 2005 and sentence him to 10 years in prison.

China's vaguely-worded legal definition of what constitutes a "state secret" gives authorities broad discretion to detain people who peacefully exercise their right to free expression. In a similar case, authorities arrested government worker Li Zhi in August 2003 for allegedly using email accounts through Yahoo! and another company to make contact with a banned political party. Jailed on charges of subversion, Li Zhi is currently serving an eight-year sentence at Chuandong Prison in Chengdu, Sichuan Province.

China has constructed an extensive system of Internet censorship to silence activists and journalists like Shi Tao. All Internet communications pass through government-controlled routers, and authorities are able to block access to many sites, to filter content, and to delete links or web pages considered "dangerous" or "subversive." No list identifying what information is filtered or blocked is publicly available, but a study done by Harvard Law School in 2002 found that more than 50,000 of 204,000 websites tested were inaccessible from at least one location in China. Websites using banned words such as "democracy," "freedom," and "human rights" are regularly blocked, as are the websites of international human rights groups (including Amnesty International) and several foreign news services.

Shi Tao (pronounced "shur taow"), a 38-year-old published poet and essayist, is held at Chishan Prison in Yuanjiang, Hunan Province, where he is reportedly forced to labor under harsh conditions. His family has been harassed by authorities. His wife underwent daily questioning by security officials

and was persistently pressured to divorce Shi Tao, which she eventually did. His uncle and brother have been under surveillance and harassed both at work and at home, and his mother is reportedly monitored and harassed as she petitions for his release.

Amnesty International considers Shi Tao and Li Zhi to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, a right protected in international law and the Chinese constitution.

BACKGROUND. China currently has the largest recorded number of imprisoned journalists and cyber-dissidents in the world. As of July 2006, Amnesty International had documented at least 54 Chinese Internet users believed to be imprisoned for such acts as signing petitions, calling for an end to corruption, disseminating health information, or planning to establish pro-democracy groups. For more information, see Amnesty's report, "Undermining Freedom of Expression in China"

The crackdown on Internet users is part of a broader deterioration in China's human rights policies. Government authorities have demonstrated heightened intolerance of public criticism in recent years, resulting in the detention, "disappearance," imprisonment, beating, intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and others seeking justice.

China is the world leader in executions, with thousands of people sentenced to death and executed each year. The Uighur minority in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region face intensified repression under the guise of China's "war on terror." Freedom of expression and religion continue to be severely restricted in Tibet. Christians not belonging to officially recognized churches must practice their religion underground. Members of banned spiritual groups, including the Falun Gong, face harsh persecution.

Please send politely worded letters to China's Prime Minister, urging him to bring about the immediate and unconditional release of Shi Tao, Li Zhi, and all those imprisoned solely for the legitimate exercise of their right to freedom of expression. Encourage the authorities to amend or repeal vaguely-worded laws or regulations that can be used to persecute individuals who exercise their right to freedom of expression.

Write to:

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China
Wen Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council
9 Xihuangcheng Genbeijie
Beijingshi 100032

SUDAN

Fear for Safety/Torture/Detention

Mohamed Ismail, an internally displaced farmer from the Masalit ethnic group, was arrested by security forces on 25 September with 12 other people near Al Geneina, the capital of West Darfur. Ten are believed to have been released on 3 October. At least one man, Ibrahim Birzi, and possibly a second detainee, are said to have died in custody after being tortured. Amnesty International has grave fears for the safety of Mohamed Ismail, who is held incommunicado in Al Geneina.

The 13 people arrested are all said to have come from Foro Baranga, 200km south of Al Geneina, and to have been arrested on suspicion of being members or supporters of the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M), one of the rebel groups who took up arms against the Sudanese authorities in Darfur. All those arrested are believed to have been tortured by being severely beaten with bicycle chains and leather whips, and by having their heads plunged in water. Ibrahim Birzi reportedly died as a result of torture, and is thought to have been buried secretly in a dried up watercourse (wadi).

Relatives of the detainees, and UN human rights monitors, who reportedly tried to visit the detainees several times, were not permitted to meet with them.

BACKGROUND. Since the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the SLA/M took arms against the Sudanese government in Darfur in 2003, the Sudanese government armed and supported local militias, known as the Janjawid, as a proxy force against the rebels. The Sudanese government and the Janjawid deliberately targeted civilians of the same ethnicity as the rebel groups, as a counter-insurgency strategy. More than 85,000 have been killed, 200,000 have died as a result of conflict-related hunger or disease, and over two million have been displaced. Rebel groups have also committed human rights abuses, including targeting humanitarian convoys and workers.

In large parts of West Darfur, the Janjawid have almost complete control and are gradually occupying the land which was depopulated in 2003 and 2004. The people displaced by the conflict fled either to Chad or to the nearest urban centres, which quickly developed into massive internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The displaced people are virtual prisoners in the camps; they risk being killed, tortured or raped by Janjawid militia if they venture outside of the camps.

The Darfur Peace Agreement, signed on 5 May 2006 by the government of Sudan and one faction of the

SLA/M, states that the parties to the agreement "shall unconditionally release all persons detained in relation to the armed conflict in Darfur" (paragraph 364). However, the Sudanese authorities continue to detain many people on suspicion of supporting groups which did not sign the peace agreement. Detainees are frequently held incommunicado for long periods, and the use of torture is widespread.

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

- calling for Mohamed Ismail to be immediately given access to his family, lawyer and independent medical care;

- calling for United Nations human rights monitors to have immediate access to Mohamed Ismail and all other detainees in Darfur,

- calling for the immediate release of Mohamed Ismail if he is not to be brought to fair trial on recognizably criminal charges;

- calling on the government immediately to set up an inquiry into the death in custody of Ibrahim Birzi and the torture of the 13 men, and to ensure that anyone who is suspected of participating or ordering torture is brought to justice in a fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan al-Bashir,
President of the Republic of Sudan
People's Palace, PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prof. Al-Zubair Bashir Taha, Minister of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Interior
PO Box 281
Khartoum, Sudan

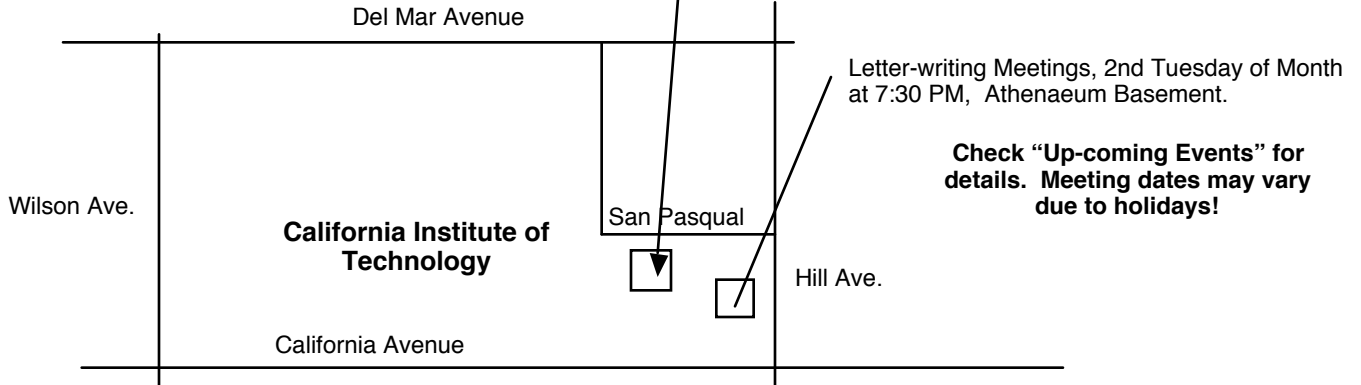
Mr Muhammad Ali al-Maradhi, Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 302
Khartoum, Sudan
Email: info@sudanjudiciary.org

COPIES TO:

Dr Abdel Moneim Osman Taha
Rapporteur, Advisory Council for Human Rights
Khartoum, Sudan
Email: human_rights_sudan@hotmail.com

Ambassador Khidir Haroun Ahmed
Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan
2210 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington DC 20008
Email: kahmed@sudanembassy.org

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



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.