

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, September 28, 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, October 10, 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!

**October 13-15, Western Regional Conference,** "Human Rights Have No Borders" Tucson, Arizona. For more info, call the Regional Office at: 310-815-0450 or visit <http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/western/regionalconference.html>.

**Sunday, October 15, 6:30 PM.** *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read Uzodinma Iweala's novel about child soldiers, *Beasts of No Nation* (More below.)

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

The odd things that one remembers. On September 11, 2001, after taking in the news early in the morning I went to work as usual. I parked my car and walking past Los Angeles Central Juvenile Hall on the way to the office, I encountered a parent and child headed away from the building. Looking relieved, they told me the courts were closed. Their judgment day, maybe their own family tragedy, had been postponed by our national tragedy. Mostly what I remember though, is that Group 22 had a letter-writing meeting that evening. Because Caltech closed its campus, regrettably, we had to cancel it. Some of us obeyed the instinct to be in community during a time of loss and gathered at our favorite discussion spot, Vroman's Bookstore, to debrief the day's events over coffee, but I think we would have felt even better if we had been writing. For this reason, I think I will always associate 9/11 with Amnesty letter-writing.

Sometime later, I observed that even though many felt the world changed on that day, for our then prisoner of conscience case, a Tibetan monk, nothing changed at all. He was still in prison and the shift in geopolitics wasn't going to affect him. We still needed to make sure he wasn't a "forgotten prisoner," the kind of prisoner Peter Beneson, Amnesty's founder, formed the organization to assist. Now we have adopted a different prisoner of conscience case, Eritrean Estifanos Seyoum. In his case,

the world did change that week, but not in a way that the rest of us noticed. He was arrested on September 18, 2001 and although never officially charged or brought to trial, he has been held incommunicado since that time. We still need to make sure he isn't forgotten, even as we are still grappling with the human rights fallout of 9/11. We can remember Estifanos Seyoum and other Eritrean prisoners swept up in that September 2001 purge through the action below. Please take the time to help us with this important action!

Hope to see you soon at one of our meetings!

Martha

aigp22@caltech.edu

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE *Eritrean Estifanos Seyoum*

In September 2001 the Eritrean Government detained without charge or trial eleven former members of Parliament (known as the G-15), ten journalists, and hundreds of other men and women. All were accused of committing or aiding "treason" because they had called for democratic reforms or reported on political debates of concern to the Eritrean public. Less than one year later, the government began detaining without charge or trial members of minority religious groups, including approximately 2000 evangelical Christians, four Orthodox priests, 31 Jehovah's Witnesses, and 70 Muslims. Most of the several thousand political and religious prisoners in Eritrea are held incommunicado in secret security or military prisons, without being charged or taken to court. Amnesty International considers they are prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their opinions and criticism of the government. It is renewing its ongoing appeals for their unconditional release, as well as the release of all other prisoners of conscience, including those imprisoned on account of their religious beliefs.

A recent publicly circulating report said to be written by escaped prison guards has alleged that several of G-15 prisoners and journalists have died in detention on account of the harsh conditions and denial of medical treatment. Among them is General Ogbe Abraha, said to have died in July 2002 of injuries related to a suicide attempt. The other deaths allegedly occurred in later years after detainees fell ill. The Eritrean authorities have refused to comment on these allegations. By failing to provide any information whatsoever on the prisoners, the Eritrean government has essentially authorized their disappearance. Despite numerous appeals over the years and international concern about their detentions, the authorities have never disclosed their whereabouts or conditions in detention or allowed access to them. Nor has the government permitted independent investigation of the conditions facing religious prisoners known to be held in secret prisons and military camps, at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Amnesty International therefore calls on the government of Eritrea to form an independent and impartial inquiry team to visit the secret prison where the G-15 and journalists are held, interview them privately, and report publicly on their situation and conditions of detention and health. Amnesty International again urges that the detentions should be brought within the framework of Eritrean constitutional and legal provisions, as well as the international human rights treaties which Eritrea has ratified, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR prohibits arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners, and unfair trial. Amnesty International also urges the government to disclose the conditions of all religious prisoners of conscience. The ultimate goal remains the release of all prisoners of conscience and the government's observance of both the Eritrean Constitution and international human rights guidelines.

**ACTION.** Please copy, paste, print, and sign the following letter and submit it via regular mail and/or fax to President Issayas Afewerki. You may also send copies to the Peoples Front or Democracy and Justice main office, and the Embassy of Eritrea.

Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice  
 PO Box 1081  
 Asmara, ERITREA  
 Fax: +291 1 129 848

Embassy of Eritrea  
 1708 New Hampshire Avenue NW  
 Washington DC, 20009  
 Fax: 202-319-1304

His Excellency  
 President Issayas Afewerki  
 Office of the President  
 PO Box 257  
 Asmara  
 ERITREA  
 Fax: +291 1 126 422

Your Excellency,

Five years after the detention without trial or charge of eleven former members of Parliament and ten journalists, we remain deeply concerned about their whereabouts and well-being. Amnesty International considers the journalists and former government officials to be prisoners of conscience, held incommunicado and at risk of torture and ill-treatment for their political opinions. In light of recent allegations that some of these prisoners have died in a secret prison location, we call upon your government to address the situation of the "disappeared." In particular, we call for the formation of an independent and impartial inquiry into the conditions of the secret prison where the G-15 and journalists are held. We further urge you to abide by the framework established in the Eritrean Constitution and the international human rights

treaties which Eritrea has ratified, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Finally, we urge your government to disclose the conditions facing the several thousand religious prisoners of conscience held since 2002 and provide for both the exercise of justice and ultimate release of all prisoners of conscience in Eritrea.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely, [Your Name and Address]

## **SUDAN** *Seek Protection for Refugees*

*Continuing with the "100 Days of Action" on Sudan, we offer this sample letter to the Chadian Ambassador requesting Chad's cooperation in protecting refugees...*

Mahamoud Adam Bechir  
 Ambassador Embassy of Chad  
 2002 R Street, NW  
 Washington DC 20009

Your Excellency:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the safety of civilians in Eastern Chad. While I recognize your government's need to address continuing attacks by Janjawid and rebel groups in Chad, I appeal to you to give the same level of attention to providing meaningful security and humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons along the border.

I therefore call upon the Government of Chad to ensure that: Uprooted civilians are protected from Janjawid attacks and recruitment by rebel groups; Conditions in Eastern Chad are secure enough for international aid organizations to have access to all refugee camps and IDP communities to help to save lives Chadian refugees in Sudan are able to return voluntarily to Chad and resume their lives in safety.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns,

Sincerely, [Your Name and Address]

<b>LETTER COUNT</b>	
Eritrea POC	7
Urgent Actions	20
<b>Total:</b>	<b>27</b>
To add your letters to the total contact <a href="mailto:lwkamp@sbcglobal.net">lwkamp@sbcglobal.net</a>	

## **BANNED BOOK WEEK** *Russian Editor Harassed*

*During Banned Book Week (Sep. 23-30) Amnesty highlights the plight of jailed and persecuted writers. For more actions visit: [www.amnestyusa.org/bannedbooks](http://www.amnestyusa.org/bannedbooks)*

Stanislav Dmitrievskii is Executive Director of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society (RCFS), which monitors human rights violations, and the editor-in chief of the newspaper Rights Defender. He was sentenced after

publishing articles calling for a peaceful resolution of the Chechen conflict.

For publishing non-violent articles written by the late Chechen separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov and his envoy, Akhmed Zakayev, Stanislav Dmitrievskii was given a two-year suspended sentence and a four-year probationary period on 3 February 2006.

The prosecutor stated that the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society director used the society's monthly newspaper to publish criticism of the Kremlin's policies in Chechnya and the Northern Caucasus - criticism that amounted to fomenting hatred. While the RCFS has been denouncing human rights violations in Chechnya, there have been numerous cases of alleged torture and ill-treatment, "disappearances," and extrajudicial executions of its own members since 2000.

The persecution of Stanislav Dmitrievskii is part of a pattern of harassment of human rights defenders. In January 2006, President Putin signed a new law granting excessive powers of scrutiny and discretion to government authorities in monitoring non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The new law may have a stifling affect on civil society: human rights organizations will be hampered in their work, while many innocent civilians will be subject to arbitrary authority.

Believing that the prosecution of Stanislav Dmitrievskii on "race-hate" charges constitutes a violation of his right to freedom of expression, Amnesty International is calling for the sentence to be overturned.

Please send politely worded letters to the Procurator General of Russia, urging him to free Stanislav Dmitrievskii from the charges against him, end harassment of human rights defenders, and amend the new law on NGOs to bring it in line with international standards.

Vladimir V. Ustinov  
Office of the Procuracy  
Ul. Bolshaia Dmitrovka 15a  
Moscow  
125993  
Russian Federation

Ambassador Yury V. Ushakov  
Embassy of the Russian Federation  
2650 Wisconsin Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20007

### **GOOD NEWS!** *Honduran POCs released!*

Leonardo Miranda, the last of three Honduran prisoners of conscience on whose behalf AIUSA has campaigned for the past year through its Special Focus Case project, was freed on August 15, 2006. Leonardo's brother Marcelino was freed on July 12, 2006, following a decision by the Honduran Supreme Court in June that acquitted Marcelino and Leonardo of a 2001 murder for which they

were wrongfully imprisoned. On August 15, a lower court commuted Leonardo's sentence on another charge, resulting in his release. Amnesty believed the two brothers and another indigenous rights activist, Feliciano Pineda, were jailed in connection with their efforts to secure communal land titles for their communities in Montaña Verde. Pineda was released from detention in February 2006.

### *Cluster Bomb Transfer to Israel Suspended!*

Thanks to hundreds of phone calls to U.S. Senators from Amnesty International USA members, the U.S. Department of State reportedly suspended the transfer of rockets armed with cluster munitions to Israel and is investigating Israel's use of previously supplied U.S. made cluster munitions to Israel. Because of their indiscriminate nature, Amnesty International has opposed the use of cluster bombs in the past, especially in civilian populated areas.

## **RIGHTS READERS**

### *Human Rights Book Discussion Group*

#### **Vroman's Bookstore**

695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena

**Sunday, October 15, 6:30 PM**

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

### ***Beasts of No Nation***

*by Uzodinma Iweala*



This startling début by a young American-Nigerian writer follows the fortunes of Agu, a child soldier fighting in the civil war of an unnamed African country. Iweala's acute imagining of Agu's perspective allows him to depict the war as a mesh of bestial pleasures and pain. As seen through Agu's eyes, machetes sound like music, and bodies come apart on roads so cracked that you can see "the red mud bleeding from underneath." Agu has a child's primitive drive that enables him to survive his descent into hell, and, despite the brutality he witnesses and participates in, to keep hold of something resembling optimism. The contrast between his belief in the future and the horrific descriptions of the world around him makes Agu a haunting narrator. -- *The New Yorker*

## **OUTFRONT**

### ***Threats Against Salvadoran Gay Rights NGO***

Members of the Between Friends Association (Asociación Entre Amigos), including the organization's director, William Hernández, have received death threats and are apparently under surveillance. This may be an attempt to

halt the organization's work on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in El Salvador.

At 7.30pm on 1 June, William Hernández was threatened at gunpoint outside the office of the Asociación Entre Amigos, in the capital, San Salvador, soon after the police officer assigned to protect him had left him for the day. An unidentified man approached William Hernández from behind and put a gun to his neck, saying, “No voltees a ver. Tenés que dejar de joder en la Asamblea. Deja de hacer babosadas en la calle por que ya sé que estás organizando mierdas para este mes. Ya busqué dentro y no encontré nada y aquí voy a encontrar lo que busco; deja de joder o antes de que te cases te mato” (“Don’t turn around. Stop fucking in the Assembly. Stop doing stupid things in the street because I know you are organizing some shit for this month. I already looked inside but didn’t find anything. Here I’ll find what I’m looking for. Stop fucking or I’ll kill you before you get married”). The unidentified man grabbed a briefcase which William Hernández was holding, and ran off.

Two days before this attack took place, the office of the Asociación Entre Amigos had been raided. On 30 May, William Hernández and another member of the organization's staff arrived at the office to find that three windows had been broken, their files had been searched, and two threats had been written on pieces of paper and left in the office. One note read “culeros se mueren”, (“fags’ die”), and the other “esto es su merecido”, (“this is what you deserve”). No valuable office equipment was stolen in the raid, but a number of documents were taken, including a hand-written program of the organization's activities planned for June to celebrate sexual diversity. One of the activities was a demonstration in front of the Legislative Assembly opposing the ratification of a constitutional reform banning the marriage of same-sex couples and the adoption of children by lesbians and gay people.

Since the raid, the Asociación Entre Amigos has moved to a new office, but staff believe that they may be under surveillance. A number of unidentified men have been noticed outside the office, apparently keeping watch, for four to five hours each day.

The opposition Christian Democratic Party, (Partido Demócrata Cristiano, PDC) and the Catholic Church in El Salvador are campaigning for an amendment to the constitution that would make it illegal for same-sex couples to marry and adopt children. The amendment was approved by the Legislative Assembly in 2005 but now has to be ratified by the new parliament, elected in March. The Asociación Entre Amigos has been lobbying members of the legislative assembly and campaigning against this amendment.

**BACKGROUND.** The Asociación Entre Amigos provides sex education to LGBT people, as well as to the wider public. It has also spoken out about human rights

violations against LGBT people and the failure of the authorities to investigate such abuses.

LGBT people in El Salvador regularly faces attacks and intimidation. The Asociación Entre Amigos has reported seven raids on their offices during the last five years. Although in all cases the incidents have been reported to the authorities, investigations into the incidents have proved superficial, and nobody has been brought to justice. William Hernandez still receives some police protection during his working hours following earlier threats against him (see UA 159/99, 12 November 1999, and follow-up).

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send letters:

- expressing grave concern for the safety of William Hernández, Director of the Asociación Entre Amigos, Between Friends Association, and other members of staff at the organization;

- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of the Asociación Entre Amigos staff, in accordance with their own wishes, and to provide additional security measures for William Hernández, in accordance with his wishes;

- calling for a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the death threats against William Hernandez, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice;

- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals;

- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to end the intimidation of LGBT people.

**APPEALS TO:**

Ministro de Gobernación  
Sr. Rene Figueroa  
Centro de Gobierno  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
Email: mariana.orellana@gobnacion.gob.sv  
Fiscal General  
Lic. Félix Garrid Safie  
Fiscalía General de la República  
Colonia Flor Blanca  
49 Avenida Sur  
Edificio 8-B  
San Salvador, El Salvador

**COPIES TO:**

Ambassador Rene A. Leon  
Embassy of El Salvador  
2308 California St. NW  
Washington DC 20008

# CONTROL ARMS

## *Help Stop US Production of Landmines*

On August 1, 2006, U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy and Arlen Specter introduced the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006 (S. 3768) to freeze the U.S. procurement and production of landmines that are victim activated. Victim activated landmines fail to distinguish between civilians and combatants, detonating when any man, woman, or child triggers it. The United States has said it will continue to develop landmines, including victim activated mines, despite the risks of using such indiscriminate weapons. The Pentagon also requested over \$1 billion for the production of new landmines starting in fiscal year 2006.

Amnesty International has joined many other non-governmental groups around the world in opposing the use, production, and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines because of their indiscriminate nature and threat to countless men, women, and children. It is estimated by the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines that there are between 15,000 and 20,000 new casualties caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance each year. Most of the casualties are civilians and most live in countries that are now at peace. Landmine blasts causes deaths and injuries such as blindness, burns, destroyed limbs, and shrapnel wounds. Those who survive and receive medical treatment often require amputations, long hospital stays, and extensive rehabilitation.

Many of the landmines that have contributed to so much death and injury have been victim activated. Victim activated mines detonate when any person touches or triggers a mine, failing to discriminate between the foot of a soldier and a civilian. The use of these types of mines violates the prohibitions on the use of indiscriminate weapons contained in the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols. The 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons also encourages governments to take "all feasible precautions" to protect civilians from the effects of indiscriminate weapons.

In February 2004, the Bush administration announced, "The United States will continue to develop non-persistent anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines," which could include victim activated mines. The Pentagon is requesting \$1.08 billion for the production of new landmine systems between fiscal years 2006 and 2011 as well as \$688 million for research into these systems. The Pentagon recently issued a contract for initial production of a new high-tech munition system, Spider, which is capable of victim activation.

The Victim-Activated Landmine Act of 2006 (S. 3768) would ensure that the U.S. government only procures command activated weapons as opposed to victim activated weapons. Command activated munitions are detonated by human decision through remote-controlled

means, requiring a user to identify a target first in order to ensure that they are not a civilian or a friendly force.

Experts say that command activated as opposed to victim activated mines will have little effect on military strategy. In addition, the former commandant of the U.S. Army War College said "the antipersonnel types of mines have not been planted by U.S. troops in well over a decade and are not particularly useful on the modern battlefield."

Recommended Action: Urge your Senator to cosponsor this important bill.

We have provided a sample letter, but please be encouraged to add your own thoughts:

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0001

The Honorable Barbara Boxer  
United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-0505

Dear Senator,

I urge you to cosponsor the Victim-activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006 (S.3768), introduced on August 1, 2006, by U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy and Arlen Specter. This bill would put a freeze on the U.S. procurement and production of landmines that can be activated by a victim and could help reduce the potential use of these indiscriminate weapons.

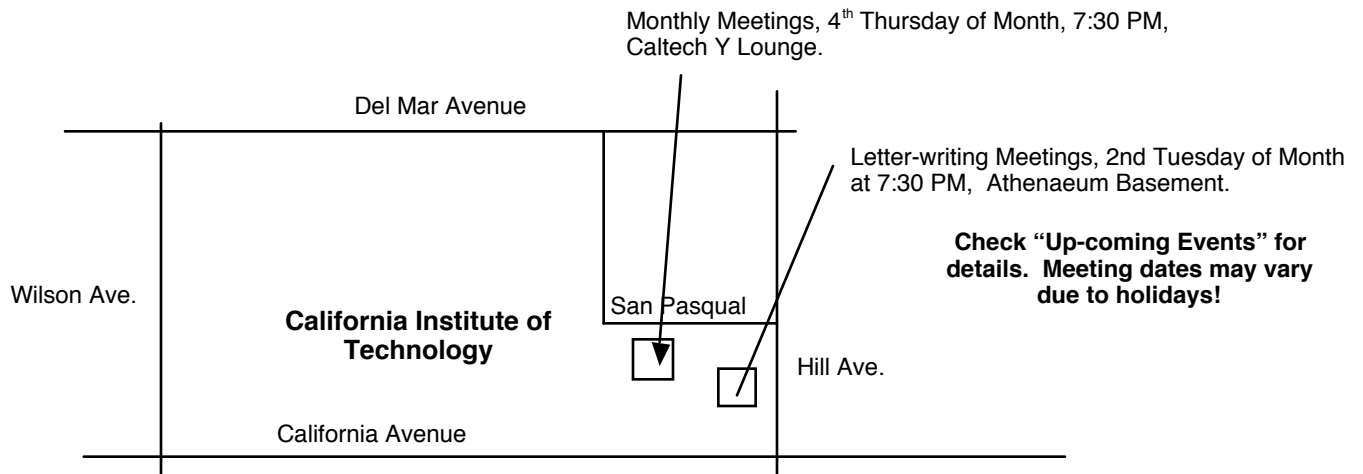
According to the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 are killed or injured from landmines and unexploded ordnance annually around the world. Many more suffer from the psychological and economic impact of these weapons. Dozens of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have also been injured by accidentally triggering landmines.

Despite the risks of using these mines, the United States has said it "will continue to develop nonpersistent anti-personnel and anti-tank landmines." Reversing a U.S. practice of not producing landmines since 1997, the Pentagon requested over \$1 billion for the production of new landmines starting in fiscal year 2006.

S. 3768 would ensure that the United States refrains from purchasing mines that are victim activated and fail to distinguish between civilians and combatants. The bill would also prevent the United States from procuring "smart" or "non-persistent" mines, which despite improvements still fail to explode, threatening any person that touches the unexploded mines.

In order to help prevent the potential use of weapons that have contributed to so many accidental deaths or injuries around the world, I urge you to support the Victim-activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006.

Sincerely, [Your Name and Address]



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.*