

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, October 25, 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 12, 7:30 PM. Letter-writing Meeting. **Location TBA.** This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, November 18, 5:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group. Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read Jason Elliot's *Mirrors of the Unseen: Journeys in Iran*. (More below). **Note time change for this meeting only.**

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Dear friends,

Somehow I doubt this will be my last column for Group 22 (and in any case you can still keep up with me on the Rights Readers blog: <http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>), but my departure for the Midwest seems a good time to reflect on the history of our little band of activists and what keeps us going.

Seeing the saffron-robed monks marching in the streets of Burma, reminded me of Group 22's very first special event featuring a young Burmese actor-activist who performed a one-woman play about the plight of the Burmese. That event was successful in inaugurating our on-going dialogue with the Caltech/Pasadena activist community and one of the many refugee/human rights solidarity groups present in the Los Angeles area. But as our worst fears about a Burmese government crackdown on present-day activists appears to be coming true, it's easy to become discouraged about the intractable nature of some of the issues we have worked on over the years.

Of course Burma wasn't my first human rights passion-- that would be China. Back in college in the seventies, before I knew about Amnesty International, I watched with excitement as

Chinese activists like Wei Jing Sheng built "Democracy Wall" and then was saddened and angered when Wei was imprisoned for speaking out for human rights, his sentence stretching into the 1990s. Early on, Group 22 worked on a post-Tiananmen China campaign, built its own Democracy Wall at Caltech, and had the opportunity to meet Wei Jing Sheng after his release. And we worked slowly, steadily and ultimately successfully on the Prisoner of Conscience case of the Tibetan monk Ngawang Pekar. Just now we find ourselves focused on highlighting the cases of Falun Gong practitioners and blogger/journalist Shi Tao, most recently reaching out to Senator Boxer's office (see Rights Readers blog for details), trying to throw a spotlight on their imprisonment even as the world prepares to celebrate the 2008 Beijing Olympics. With China our victories in one case are frustratingly replaced by new cases that need our attention.

So how do you keep going as an activist when sometimes progress is measured in a case here or there or as with Burma, time just seems to stand still? I have the answer: tails!!! Back in 1998 as part of the 50th anniversary campaign for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we marched down Colorado Boulevard in the Doo-Dah parade as Animals for the Ethical Treatment of People, dressed as friendly critters in masks and sporting lovely tails along with our signs celebrating the UDHR. I was reminded of what fun we had spreading this message of our shared humanity in an admittedly silly package when I saw my activist friends donning tails for my farewell party. Sure, we could sit at home with no one to wag a tail at and crank out those letters to statesmen and senators as individuals, But, one Burmese monk didn't make that sea of saffron and one Chinese dissident didn't construct Democracy Wall. Our own collective efforts may be merely in homage to these courageous men and women, but the shared struggles, linked arms (and paws!) and cherished friendships are what keeps us all going.

Stay in touch with me via the Rights Readers blog. Communities really know do boundaries these days!

Martha aigp22@caltech.edu

ERITREA

Prisoners of Conscience

Group 22 continues to work in behalf of Estifanos Seyoum, Haile Woldetensae, Ogbe Abraha and other Eritrean prisoners of conscience who were arrested in September 2001. We had some special activities during the past month to mark the sixth anniversary of their arrest. At our September meeting we watched a short presentation in tribute to Fessahaye Joshua Johannes, an Eritrean journalist and prisoner of conscience who reportedly died while in detention. We also collected about 20 signatures on our Eritrea POC petition.

Probably our most important activity was a meeting on Oct 15 with a representative from Senator Boxer's Los Angeles office, at which we discussed our group's work on Eritrea (other topics were China POC Shi Tao and the Darfur crisis). Paula, Lucas, Martha and Joyce (that's me) participated. Many thanks to Paula for her efforts in arranging this meeting.

We were told that Senator Boxer would be more likely to help with our request if she received inputs from constituents on the topic. Therefore we ask that you contact Senator Boxer and let her know that you are concerned about the Eritrea POCs. You can use the following sample letter as a guide. If you prefer to send email or phone or fax, the contact information is available at her official website, <http://boxer.senate.gov>.

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Boxer,

I am writing to ask your help to get information about the status of Estifanos Seyoum, Haile Woldetensae, Ogbe Abraha, Petros Solomon and other Eritrean prisoners of conscience who were arrested in September 2001. These former government officials, often referred to as the "G-15", have been detained without charge in secret locations for more than six years simply for proposing peaceful political reforms.

I am sure you are aware of the distressing human rights situation in Eritrea. Despite frequent appeals from Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, the Eritrean

authorities have not disclosed the whereabouts of these prisoners, nor have they released any information about their condition. Several have reportedly died while in detention because of torture and denial of medical treatment.

I ask your assistance in ascertaining the status of these prisoners of conscience. I hope that you might find the opportunity to urge the government of Eritrea to act in accord with the human rights provisions in the Constitution of Eritrea and in the international agreements to which they are party. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
[Your name and address]

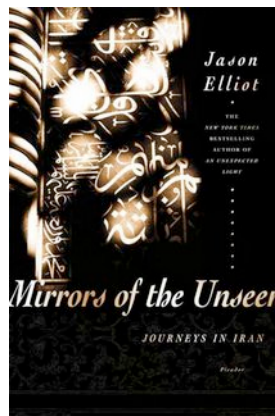
RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

Sunday, November 18, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena



Mirrors of the Unseen:
Journeys in Iran

By Jason Elliot

Filling a long-neglected gap in the travel writing of the region, *Mirrors of the Unseen* is a rare and timely portrait of the nation descended from the world's earliest superpower: Iran. Animated by the same

spirit of exploration as its acclaimed predecessor, *An Unexpected Light*, and drawing on several years of independent travel and research, this thought-provoking work weaves together observations of life in contemporary Iran with history, politics, and a penetrating enquiry into the secrets of Islamic art. Generously illustrated with the author's own sketches and photographs, *Mirrors of the Unseen* is a rich, sensitive, and vivid account of a country and its culture.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Join Fellow AI Activists in San Francisco!

Amnesty International USA
Western Regional Conference

November 9-11, 2007
Holiday Inn Golden Gateway
San Francisco, California

The Western Regional Conference of Amnesty International USA is an opportunity for activists, scholars, communities, and students to come together to learn about, discuss, and act upon some of the most important human rights issues facing our world today. All Amnesty group members and anyone interested in human rights are encouraged to attend!

Traveling from Southern California? Looking for cheaper alternatives to flying? We recommend contacting other Amnesty groups about carpools, or check out www.megabus.com for inexpensive (as low as \$1 each way) and, according to the L.A. Times Travel section, comfortable bus travel from Los Angeles or San Diego (with a connection in L.A.).

Buy your tickets early, because the \$1 tickets sell out quickly and prices go up as time goes by.

Remember: OCTOBER 15 is the DEADLINE for

- Early-bird conference registration: Register early to pay the lowest registration fee! (You'll still be able to register after the 15th, but it'll cost more!) Online registration available!
- Hotel guest room reservations: Book your room with the the hotel by the 15th to get our special rate of \$124 per night.
- Ideas Fair registration: If you or your Amnesty group has ideas, a project, or a success story you want to share with others, sign up for the Ideas Fair! Space is limited!

Keynote Speakers

- Naomi Roht-Arriaza, Author, "The Pinochet Effect: Transnational Justice in the Age of Human Rights"
- Riane Eisler, Macrohistorian, Author of "The Real Wealth of Nations" and "The Chalice and the Blade"
- Larry Cox, Executive Director, Amnesty International USA

Other conference highlights include

- Friday night movie
- Workshops
- Saturday evening concert!
- Policy-making sessions

And more!

The full conference schedule, list of workshops, and other information are available online at

www.amnestyusa.org/events/western/regionalconference

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED. Would you like to learn more about the inner workings of a Regional Conference? Would you like your conference registration fee waived?

If so, why not sign up to be a volunteer at the conference. A minimum of four hours is requested. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Kathy Brown ASAP at kbrown@aiusa.org or 310-815-0450.

Questions? Call 310-815-0450 or email aiusaLA@aiusa.org.

We hope to see you in San Francisco!

BURMA

PROTECT DEMONSTRATORS FROM A VIOLENT CRACKDOWN

"May we be free of torture, may there be peace in hearts and minds as our kindness spreads around the world."

This was the chant of pro-democracy protesters in Burma (Myanmar) this past week. Security forces have begun a violent crackdown on the protests, led by 30,000 red-robed monks. The military government's forces clubbed and tear-gassed protesters, fired shots into the air, and arrested dozens if not hundreds of monks. Several people were reportedly shot to death.

When the people of Burma last staged mass pro-democracy protests back in 1988, the military junta murdered thousands.

Ask President Bush to urge the UN Security Council members, especially the Permanent members like China, to immediately deploy a UN Security Council mission to Myanmar (Burma). This mission should act to resolve the human rights crisis and avert the risk of further violence and bloodshed. The Council should also consider the possibility of imposing an arms embargo and to address the dire human rights situation in Myanmar. The peaceful mass demonstrations taking place compare in scale to those in 1988, when security forces broke up massive pro-democracy demonstrations with deadly violence, killing thousands. Sample letter follows:

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, DC, 20500
Email: comments@whitehouse.gov

Dear President Bush,

We ask you to take immediate steps to work with the UN Security Council members, especially the permanent members like China, to deploy an urgent UN Security Council mission to Myanmar (Burma). This mission should assess the situation on the ground and engage urgently with authorities to avert further violence and bloodshed. This Security Council should impose an arms embargo on Myanmar.

As you are aware, Myanmar is now witnessing killings and other abuses on a scale not seen since 1988, when security forces broke up massive pro-democracy demonstrations with deadly violence killing thousands. There are long-standing human rights violations in Myanmar, including the ongoing detention of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and well over 1,160 political prisoners. During the current crackdown hundreds if not thousands were arrested and detained.

The Burmese government has blocked the Buddhist monks in their monasteries. According to international news reports thousands of monks detained may be sent to prisons. Also, at least some of the monks have been reportedly disrobed and shackled. An unknown number have been killed. Failure to act may result in more killings and other human rights abuses.

Peaceful demonstrations that were first sparked by a sharp increase in fuel prices have now grown in size and number. Buddhist monks have led many of the peaceful protests calling for a reduction in commodity prices, the release of political prisoners, and national reconciliation.

I ask you to work urgently with all the UN Security Council members to deploy a UN Security Council mission to Myanmar. Thank you.

Sincerely (your name and address)

BURMA URGENT ACTION

26 September 2007
UA 250/07 Fear of torture or ill-treatment/health concern

MYANMAR Myint Myint San (f), National League for Democracy (NLD) member
Paik Ko (m), NLD Member of Parliament, Pakokku
Par Par Lay (m), comedian
Zargana (m), also known as Ko Thura, comedian
Tin Aung (m), NLD Member of Parliament
Tin Ko (m), NLD youth member in Meiktila
U Win Naing (m), politician
Up to 300 others, including Buddhist monks

Around 300 people were reportedly arrested in a crackdown on anti-government protests launched by the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in the evening of 25 September in the former capital Yangon, the second-biggest city, Mandalay, and also Meiktila, Pakokku and Mogok. Amnesty International was told that a number of people had gone into hiding. Some were reportedly arrested in the evening of 24 September, but most were seized during the following 36 hours, as the crackdown by security forces escalated. Among those arrested were between 50 and 100 monks in Yangon.

Parliamentarian Paik Ko and at least one other member of parliament from the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which is led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, several other NLD members and other public figures, including the famous comedian and former prisoner of conscience Zargana ere also reported to have been arrested. Amnesty International believes these and other detainees are at grave risk of torture or other ill treatment. Officials confirmed to journalists that at least three monks were killed in Yangon: one was shot and two were beaten to death. Unofficial sources told Amnesty International that up to 50 monks had been injured.

Despite the high tension, thousands of people continue to take to the streets in continued anti-government protests, led by monks, who have reportedly asked ordinary civilians to stay away, in an apparent effort to protect them. The security forces have reportedly beaten demonstrators with batons, used teargas to disperse crowds defying a recent ban on gatherings of more than five people, and fired warning shots into the air.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peaceful demonstrations began in August in response to sharp increases in fuel prices.

They have grown rapidly in size and number. Buddhist monks, who took the lead in the protests after reports that monks had been injured by security forces in the town of Pakokku, have called for a reduction in commodity prices, the release of political prisoners and a process of national reconciliation to resolve deep political divisions. In the evening of 25 September, the authorities began a crackdown on the protesters, introducing a 60-day 9pm- 5am curfew and issuing public warnings of legal action against protesters. Human rights violations in Myanmar are widespread and systematic. They include the use of child soldiers and forced labour. There are laws that criminalize peaceful expression of political dissent. At the end of 2006 most senior opposition figures were imprisoned or administratively detained, among more than 1,160 political prisoners held in deteriorating prison conditions. People are frequently arrested without warrant and held incommunicado; torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are common, especially during interrogation and while in custody awaiting trial. Judicial proceedings against political detainees fall short of international standards for fair trial: defendants are often denied the right to legal counsel and prosecutors have relied on confessions extracted through torture.

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

- expressing concern at reports that hundreds of monks and other peaceful protesters, including well-known comedian Zargana and member of parliament Paik Ko have been detained;
- urging the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with recognisably criminal offences;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that, while they remain in custody, all the detainees are held only in official places of detention, and are given immediate access to lawyers, their families and any medical treatment they may require;

- calling on the authorities to ensure that the detainees are not subjected to torture or any other ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all people in Myanmar are able to peacefully exercise the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly without fear of harassment, intimidation or arbitrary detention, in line with international human rights standards.

APPEALS TO:

State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)
 Senior General Than Shwe
 c/o Ministry of Defence, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
 Salutation: Dear General
 Foreign Minister Nyan Win
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear Minister
 U Aye Maung
 Attorney General
 Office of the Attorney General, Office No. 25, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear Attorney General
 Brig-General Khin Yi
 Director General, Myanmar Police Force, Naypyitaw, Union of Myanmar
 Salutation: Dear Director General

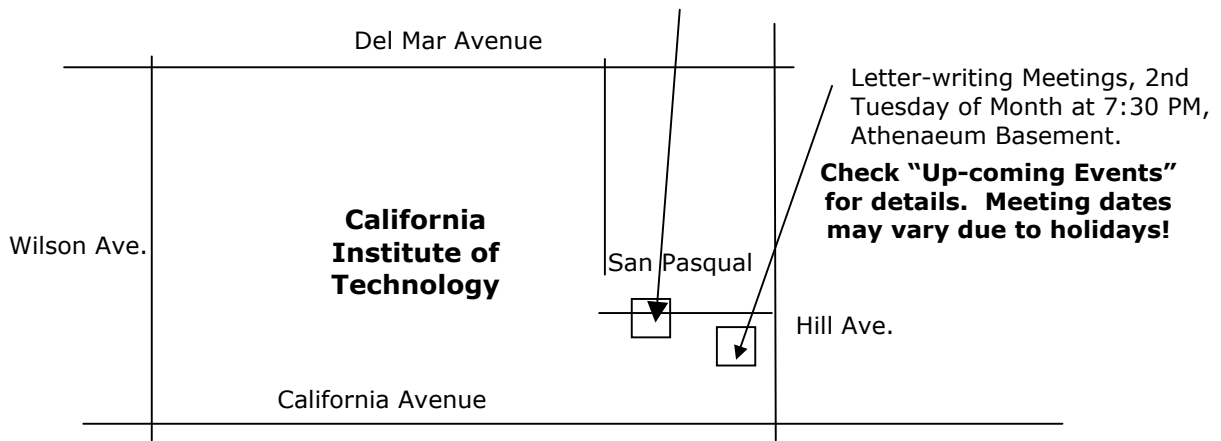
COPIES TO:

Mr. Myint Lwin, Counsellor Minister
 Charge D'Affairs Ad Interim
 Embassy of the Union of Burma
 2300 S St. NW
 Washington DC 20008
 Email: info@mewashingtondc.com

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.
 Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 6 November 2007.

LETTER COUNT	
Urgent Actions	17
Eritrea	
Total:	17
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@gmail.com	

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



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
The Caltech Y
Mail Code 5-62
Pasadena, CA 91125
www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>



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.