

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XV Number 3, March 2008

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, March 27, 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, April 8, 7:30 PM.** *Letter writing meeting* at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

**Sunday, April 20, 6:30 PM.** *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read "The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears", by Dinaw Mengestu, a novel about Ethiopia.

Homenaje a la Mujer is showing at Ave 50 Gallery in Los Angeles from March 8-April 6, 2008.

Now the "shameless advertising" department: be sure to check out Lovebirds, a bakery/café one block east of Lake on Colorado Blvd. "Geezer Chick", AKA Group 22's Stevi Carroll, has a photo exhibit there. You must see this for yourself! It's very cool.

Another event of interest is on Saturday March 29. The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Cesar Chavez Walk will start 10 am from Olvera Street in downtown LA. A great way to honor the legacy of Cesar Chavez! (If you're a middle or high-school student reading this, honor Cesar by staying in school the week before the walk and getting an education. You can go to the walk on Saturday!) Si, se puede!

Con cariño,

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

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,

I am enjoying the light spring weather, and desperately needed rest and relaxation this week while I am off for "spring break"! Thankfully, the dreaded RIF (Reduction in Force layoffs due to proposed state budget cuts for teachers, school nurses, and other certificated personnel) notice did not come in the mail by the legal deadline, March 15! Others may not be so lucky (I have 20 years seniority), but please take a moment to write Governor Schwarzenegger re the proposed state budget cuts, which will affect education, health care, and services to the poor, elderly, and disabled (pick on somebody your own size, Arnie!). Our children are our future!

"Paid political announcement" over, what's new with Group 22? We're watching closely the recent developments in Tibet. Amnesty has come out with a press statement calling on the Chinese authorities to allow an independent UN investigation of the last week's protests in Tibet and to lift the long-term restrictions on human rights monitoring in the area. We wonder if our former POC, Ngwang Pekar, has been picked up by the authorities and imprisoned again. There is an urgent action in this newsletter regarding the situation in Tibet.

March is Women's History Month. In keeping with that theme, AIUSA's Stop Violence Against Women campaign has partnered with a local gallery to celebrate women. Aliados: Presente!

## ERITREA POC

Group 22 continues to work in behalf of our adopted Prisoner of Conscience Estifanos Seyoum, held incommunicado along with 10 other former government officials since they were arrested in 2001. Other AI local groups are also working for Eritrean POCs. You can learn about their activities on the newly updated AIUSA country page for Eritrea. (Go to <http://www.aiusa.org>, click on Our Priorities, select By Country and click on Eritrea, then click on Read More.)

Group 612 in northern California with POC Petros Solomon called attention to the recent opinion issued by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. The press release and the opinion can be found at <http://www.awate.com/portal/content/view/4777/6/>. What is really interesting is the Eritrean Government's Response, also available at this site. Here's a quote from the letter written by the Eritrea Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

"The allegation that the 11 persons were detained for 'peaceful expression of their political opinions' is factually unfounded and perpetrated by involved groups and their cohorts to cover up the grave crimes committed against the national security of the country at war time. It is otherwise well known that expressing one's opinion or belief is not a crime in Eritrea for any citizen, let alone

for senior government officials who were also members of the National Assembly."

Since the Ministry goes on to state that all the detainees are treated humanely and have access to medical treatment, let's write to the Ministry and ask if they will confirm that the detainees are still alive. Here's a sample letter that you can use as a guide. Postage is 90 cents.

Minister Osman Saleh  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
P O Box 190  
Asmara  
Eritrea

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you about ESTIFANOS SEYOUM. (His name is sometimes spelled Stefanos Syuom.) He was a Brigadier General and head of the Inland Revenue Service until August 2001. He was arrested on 18 September 2001, along with ten other former Eritrean government officials, including Petros Solomon. Their current whereabouts and condition of health are unknown.

As you know, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention recently considered the case of these 11 detainees. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea said in a letter to the Working Group (29 August 2007), "The detainees are humanely treated and have access to medical treatment."

I urge the Eritrean authorities to make known whether these 11 detainees are all indeed alive. Several of them are alleged to have died in custody.

The opinion of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, issued on 29 November 2007, concluded with the following statement: "The Working Group believes that under the circumstances the adequate remedy would be the immediate release of Mr. Petros Solomon and the ten others."

I look forward to your response concerning the status of Estifanos Seyoum and Petros Solomon and the other detainees.

Sincerely,  
[your name and address]

## RIGHTS READERS Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

**Next Rights Readers meeting:**

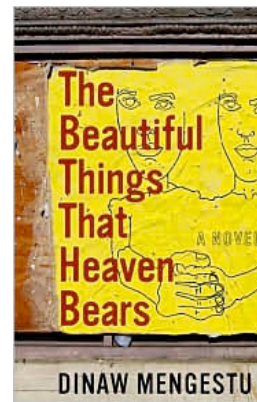
**Sunday, April 20, 6:30 PM**

**Vroman's Bookstore**

**695 E. Colorado Boulevard  
in Pasadena**

"The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears"

By Dinaw Mengestu



### From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Barely suppressed despair and black wit infuse this beautifully observed debut from Ethiopian émigré Mengestu. Set over eight months in a gentrifying Washington, D.C., neighborhood in the 1970s, it captures an uptick in Ethiopian grocery store owner Sepha Stephanos's long-deferred hopes, as Judith, a white academic, fixes up the four-story house next to his apartment building, treats him to dinner and lets him steal a kiss. Just as unexpected is Sepha's friendship with Judith's biracial 11-year-old daughter, Naomi (one of the book's most vivid characters), over a copy of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Mengestu adds chiaroscuro with the story of Stephanos's 17-year exile from his family and country following his father's murder by revolutionary soldiers. After long days in the dusty, barely profitable shop, Sepha's two friends, Joseph from Congo and Kenneth from Kenya, joke with Sepha about African dictators and gently mock his romantic aspirations, while the neighborhood's loaded racial politics hang over Sepha and Judith's burgeoning relationship

like a sword of Damocles. The novel's dirge-like tone may put off readers looking for the next Kite Runner, but Mengestu's assured prose and haunting set pieces (especially a series of letters from Stephanos's uncle to Jimmy Carter, pleading that he respect "the deep friendship between our two countries") are heart-rending and indelible.

### **About the Author**

Dinaw Meng Estu was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1978. In 1980, he immigrated to the United States with his mother and sister, joining his father, who had fled Ethiopia during the Red Terror. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and Columbia University's MFA program in fiction and the recipient of a 2006 fellowship in fiction from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

### **SUPPORT I-VAWA DURING MARCH**

March is Women's History Month and March 8 was International Women's Day. The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) is a groundbreaking unprecedented effort by the U.S. government to take leadership in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls worldwide. The Act creates a comprehensive five-year international strategy to reduce violence against women and girls in 10-20 poor and developing countries. It allocates more than \$175 million in U.S. assistance per year to fund programs that prevent violence, encourage legal reform, change public attitudes that condone violence and promote women and girls' access to economic opportunity, education and health. The Act requires the U.S. government to develop emergency measures to respond to critical mass violence against women and girls in armed conflict and refugee situations. This is your opportunity to make life better for women and girls around the world!

Violence against women and girls represents a global health, economic development, and human rights problem of epidemic proportions and cuts across all countries, social groups, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes. In fact, at least one out of every three women worldwide are beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with rates reaching 70% in some countries. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation that causes physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering, including rape, domestic violence, acid burning,

dowry deaths, so-called honor killings, human trafficking, and female genital cutting. It devastates the lives of millions of women around the globe.

Now, for the first time, the United States has an historic opportunity to raise this issue in its diplomatic work and have an impact on the suffering of millions of women and girls.

The bill was introduced by Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE) and Richard Lugar (R-IN), Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on October 31, 2007.

Current Co-Sponsors:

Sen. Thomas R. Carper (D-DE) Sen. Robert Mendez (D-NJ)

Sen. Robert P. Casey Jr. (D-PA) Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski (D-MD)

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA)

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT) Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)

### **SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR SENATOR:**

Senator Diane Feinstein  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Or

Barbara Boxer  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein or Boxer,

Thank you for your outstanding leadership to end violence against women around the world. Because of your support, the historic piece of legislation known as "The International Violence Against Women Act," will help to end violence against women around the world.

As you know, at least one out of every three women globally will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries and every year, around the world, violence in the home and community devastates the lives of millions of women and girls and their families. Now, for the

first time, through your leadership on the International Violence Against Women Act, the United States has a historic opportunity to raise this issue in its diplomatic work and have an impact on the suffering of millions of women, while contributing to other US foreign policy goals like fighting HIV/AIDS, ending poverty and enhancing stability.

Your bill has the power to help women and girls around world to be free from rape, domestic violence, acid burning, dowry deaths, honor killings, human trafficking, female genital cutting and other harmful practices.

You have provided real leadership on a major problem of our times to end violence against women and girls.

Thank you. (your name and address)

## **UA 76/08 FEAR OF TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT**

### **CHINA**

**Samten** (m), aged 17, Lungkar Monastery, Qinghai Province;

**Trulku Tenpa Rigsang**, (m), aged 26, Lungkar Monastery, Qinghai Province;

**Gelek Pel** (m) aged 32 Lungkar Monastery, Qinghai Province;

**Lobsang** (m) aged 15, Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Lobsang Thukjey** (m), aged 19 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Tsultrim Palden** (m), aged 20 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Lobsher** (m), aged 20 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Phurden**, (m), aged 22 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Thupdon** (m), aged 24 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Lobsang Ngodup** (m), aged 29 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Lodoe** (m), aged 30 Onpo Monastery, Sichuan Province;

**Thupwang** (m), aged 30, Darthang Monastery;

**Pema Garwang** (m), aged 30, Darthang Monastery;

**Tsegyam** (m), aged 22, Kashi Monastery;

**Soepa** (m), aged 30, Mangye Monastery

According to information published by the Tibetan Centre on Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), 15 Tibetan monks were detained on 10 March for staging a peaceful demonstration in

Barkhor, Lhasa, the capital of Tibetan Autonomous Region. There is no information of their current whereabouts or of any charges brought against them. They are at high risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

On Monday 10 March hundreds of monks began a march from Drepung Monastery towards Barkhor. Another group, which included the 15 monks now in detention, began their march from Sera Monastery, but were soon detained. The monks had been demanding that the government ease a "patriotic re-education" campaign which forces them to denounce the Dalai Lama and subjects them to government propaganda.

Protests began in other monasteries in support of those detained. Demonstrations also involving lay people then followed across Lhasa, in other parts of Tibet and in areas of the neighboring provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan with large populations of Tibetans. On Friday the protests became violent, with some protesters specifically targeting and setting fire to Chinese-owned businesses and attacking people from other ethnic groups.

The Chinese authorities urged the protesters to give themselves in by Monday 17 March at midnight, Beijing Time, and promised that those who did would be treated leniently.

As of today, the streets of Lhasa were reported to be largely quiet and empty. Police and soldiers are reported to be conducting house to house sweeps in Lhasa. Some eyewitnesses have reported individuals being dragged from their homes. There continue to be reports of unrest in neighboring Sichuan and Gansu provinces. There are also reports that some Chinese police and soldiers have used excessive force, including lethal force, against Tibetan demonstrators in Lhasa and elsewhere. With large numbers of troops now deployed in the region further human rights violations may be committed.

The Chinese authorities have imposed a near-total block on information leaving Tibet and surrounding areas. Permits for journalists to enter Tibet were stopped from 12 March. Foreign journalists have been barred or removed from districts in Gansu, Sichuan and Qinghai provinces, where the unrest has spread.

The Chinese government has the right and duty to defend all individuals and property from violence. At the same time international law requires that the authorities handle such crises in ways that uphold fundamental human rights and the principles of necessity and proportionality in

the use of force. For example, firearms should only be discharged as a last resort and when lives are at risk.

TCHRD has obtained pictures of fourteen of the detained monks. The portraits are on their website at:

<http://www.tchrd.org/press/2008/p001.html>

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

- urge the authorities to release the 15 monks named above, as well as all others detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly;

- urge the authorities to fully account for all those detained during the demonstrations, ensuring they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, have access to lawyers and medical care, are brought promptly before an independent court and are able to challenge their detention;

- ensure that those prosecuted are charged with internationally recognizable offences and tried in proceedings which meet international fair trial standards;

- allow full and unimpeded access to Tibet and other Tibetan areas to journalists and other independent observers

- allow independent UN investigation into the events of the last week, including full access to scenes of confrontation, eye-witnesses, and detainees, and allow similar access to independent observers, including journalists and human rights NGOs.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the People's Republic of China  
HU Jintao Guojia Zhuxi  
The State Council General Office  
2 Fuyoujie, Xichengqu  
Beijingshi 100017  
People's Republic of China  
Salutation: Your Excellency

Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional  
People's Government  
Qiangba PUNCOG Zhuren  
Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu  
1 Kang'angdonglu  
Lasashi 850000, Xizang Zizhiqu  
People's Republic of China  
Salutation: Dear Chairman

Minister of Public Security of the People's  
Republic of China  
MENG Jianzhu Buzhang

Gong'anbu  
14 Dongchang'anjie  
Dongchengqu, Beijingshi 100741  
People's Republic of China  
Fax: 011 86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:**

Mayor of Lasa Municipal People's Government  
Tibet Autonomous Region  
LOBSANG Gyaincain Shizhang  
Lasashi Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu  
16 Jinjulu, Lasashi 850000, Xizang Zizhiqu  
People's Republic of China  
Salutation: Dear Mayor

Ambassador Wen Zhong Zhou  
Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
2300 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008  
Fax: 1 202 745 7473

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

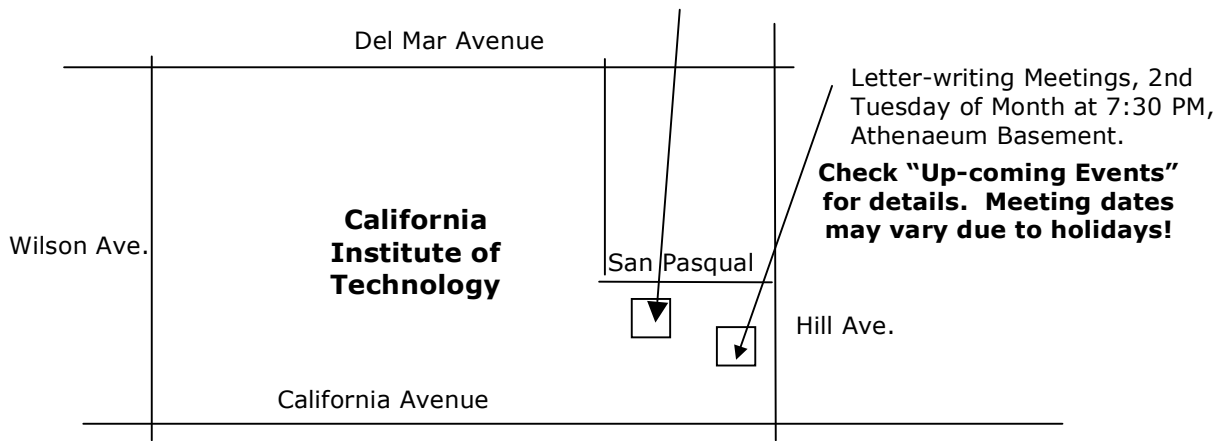
Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 29 April 2008.

**LETTER COUNT**

Urgent Actions	13
Eritrea	7
Total:	20
To add your letters to the total contact <a href="mailto:lwkamp@gmail.com">lwkamp@gmail.com</a>	

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Monthly Meetings, 4<sup>th</sup> 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://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.*