

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XVIII Number 10, October 2010

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, October 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, November 9, 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, November 21, 6:30PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "The Blessing next to the Wound" by Hector Aristizabal and Diane Lefer.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

Wow! I can't believe it's almost the end of October...the district merged East area nurses with Central and moved us downtown to Beaudry, a high-rise with 29 floors! I am racking up the mileage (although not getting paid for it, there is no funding at the moment) traveling to my (now 20) schools. I still don't have a desk or my computer set up and none of us have printers, but we're nurses, we're flexible and know how to improvise!! (ha ha). And you thought us public employees weren't doing anything and had great working conditions....

Those of you who plan to attend the Western Regional Conference take note that the venue has changed from the SF Hilton to Hastings Law School due to a labor dispute. We changed our reservation to the Holiday Inn, as we really don't want to cross a picket line!

Our November author, Hector Aristizabal, is having a book signing at Vromans in Pasadena November 12 at 7 pm. Everyone come out and support Hector and Diane!

Con cariño,
Kathy

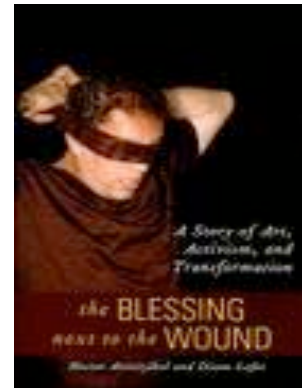
RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

Next Rights Readers meeting:
Sunday November 21, 6:30 PM

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Boulevard
In Pasadena



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Hector Aristizabal was born and raised in Medellín, Colombia when it was the most dangerous city in the world. One of his brothers was seduced by the power of crack cocaine and another by the promises of revolutionary armed struggle. Hector's path was different. He worked his way out of poverty to become a theatre artist and pioneering psychologist with a Masters degree from Antioquia University, then survived civil war, arrest, and torture at the hands of the US-supported military. In 1989, violence and death threats forced him to leave his homeland. Since arriving in the US, he has won acclaim and awards as an artist and also received a second Masters degree, in Marriage and Family Therapy from Pacific Oaks College, leading him to combine his training in psychology and the arts with lessons gained from life experience in his therapeutic work. As an activist, he uses theatrical performance as part of the movement to end torture and to change US policy in Latin America. His nonprofit organization, ImaginAction, taps the power of creativity in social justice programs throughout the US and around the world as far



afield as Afghanistan, India, and Palestine for community building and reconciliation, strategizing, and individual healing and liberation.

Diane Lefer is an author, playwright, and activist whose most recent short-story collection, *California Transit*, was awarded the Mary McCarthy Prize in Short Fiction and published by Sarabande Books. She is also the author of two other collections—*Very Much Like Desire* and *The Circles I Move In*, as well as the novel, *Radiant Hunger*. Her fiction has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the City of Los Angeles, and the Library of Congress. For 23 years she taught in the MFA in Writing Program at Vermont College of Fine Arts and has been a guest artist at colleges, writing conferences and festivals. She has facilitated creative workshops for high school students, adjudicated youth in lockup and on probation, and children in the foster-care system. Diane's ongoing collaboration with Hector Aristizábal includes work for the stage and for the page, and social-justice action workshops. She is a frequent contributor of articles to *LA Progressive*.



REVIEWS

"Here we have a 'must read' as the military base at Palanquero, Colombia is taken over by the United State Air Force. Hector personifies the suffering of the Colombian people. But the biophilic love of life overcomes the necrophilic love of death and power, as the victims of torture, the victims of crass and brutal violence, elevate their suffering by seeing the world through eyes that have not yet been born."—Blase Bonpane, Director, Office of the Americas

"This aptly titled book draws a spiritual path to transcend physical and psychic wounds, whether they come from political persecution, domestic abuse, gang violence, exile, or poverty. In this remarkable and powerful personal narrative, Hector Aristizabal portrays his own transformation—from a torture victim to a spiritual guide strong enough, artistic enough, and, ultimately, blessed enough, to lift other lost souls into the light."—Sue William Silverman, author, *Fearless Confessions* and *Because I Remember Terror, Father, I Remember You*

"Psychologist, internationally known actor, human rights activist. Any of these vocations could be a life's work but Hector Aristizábal's life's work encompasses all three. Here is an intimate view of his coming of age in the complex and violent society of Medellín, Colombia, and how his experiences gave him insight and compassion faced with the complex and violent society he found as an immigrant to the U.S. I have witnessed just a small part of his work: bringing hope and healing to those who—like him—are survivors of torture. This book now offers his dramatic story along with his powerful ideas of healing, art, and advocacy to a wider audience." —José Quiroga, M.D., founder and medical director, Program for Torture Victims

Hector Aristizábal grew up in the barrios of Medellín, Colombia, where he and his siblings had to use all their wit, wiles, and wherewithal to survive poverty, the ever-present allure of cheap drugs and very dangerous money, and the endemic violence from leftwing guerrillas, rightwing death squads, cocaine cartels, and the armed power of the State. As a young actor and psychology student, Hector was seized by the military, held in secret, and tortured. He survived and went on to find meaning in his ordeal as he channeled his desire for revenge into nonviolent activism both in his homeland and during decades of exile in the United States.

While challenging the State-sponsored causes of much suffering in the world, Hector reached out to some of society's most marginalized—at-risk and incarcerated youth, immigrants, and many others—using his theatrical skills and psychotherapeutic training to help people shape their own stories and identities. He sought to understand his own identity as well as that of one brother who was a revolutionary and another who was gay—and how his belief in personal integrity and political freedom might square with the realities of a country under the yoke of toxic ideologies. Hector was forced finally to examine his own motivations and commitments, and begin to heal his own gaping wounds.

Shockingly honest, heartbreaking, and vibrantly told, **The Blessing Next to the Wound** is a passionate and evocative memoir that, amid enormous suffering and loss, is a full-throated affirmation of life.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE GAO ZHISHENG

By Joyce Wolf

Group 22 has committed to work on the case of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng (pronounced Gow Jir-sheng). Gao disappeared for a year after he was detained by police in China in February 2009. He reappeared for a few weeks, but has been missing since 20 April.

The Asia section of the Amnesty blog posted an article on 18 October titled "Human Rights Activists in China Locked Up for Speaking Out". Along with recent Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, Gao Zhisheng is one of the imprisoned activists featured in the article.

<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/asia/human-rights-activists-in-china-locked-up-for-speaking-out/>.

An October 23 report in asia.news.yahoo.com states, "The brother of missing prominent Chinese rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng said Friday he had travelled to Beijing to ask police about his sibling's whereabouts but was turned back without any news." Gao Zhiyi is quoted as saying, "I came to Beijing to find out his whereabouts and to report his disappearance. The Beijing Public Security Bureau told me they needed two months to investigate and verify this issue."

We last wrote to the Director of the Beijing Public Security Bureau in July. Perhaps it's time to do so again and add our voices to Gao Zhiyi's inquiry about his brother. Here is a sample letter that you can use as a guide. Postage is 98 cents.

MA Zhenchuan Juzhang
Beijingshi Gong'anju
9 Qianmen Dongdajie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100740
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Dear Director,

I am deeply concerned about Gao Zhisheng (高智晟), a Beijing-based human rights lawyer who was detained in Shaanxi Province on February 4, 2009. His current whereabouts has been unknown since April 20, 2010.

Although Gao was named one of the top 10 lawyers in 2001 by China's Justice Department, in

2005 the government revoked his license and sent him to jail for three years, during which time he reportedly was tortured. I respectfully urge that the authorities open a full and impartial investigation into allegations that Gao Zhisheng suffered ill-treatment in detention, including beatings and inadequate access to medical treatment, and bring those responsible to justice.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

[Your name and address]

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

By Cheri Dellelo

Yale Pledges Yell Rape Chant

The Yale fraternity DKE is under fire for a pledging ritual. It's not what they did, but what they said. Sometime in the past few weeks, the pledges of Delta Kappa Epsilon's Phi chapter marched through Yale's campus chanting rape-trivializing phrases such as "no means yes, yes means anal." in the area of the campus where most of the first-year female students are housed. In response, the Yale Women's Center immediately issued the following statement—"This action by DKE has made public that they see rape as a joke or, worse, something they support. That these calls may have been made in jest should not distract from the fact that they incite violence." Jordan Forney, DKE president, predictably made a public apology, acknowledging that his fraternity's actions demonstrated "a lapse in judgment and [were] in poor taste." The Yale Daily News published a controversial article that made light of the assault and discredited the Women's Center, with statements such as, "Feminists at Yale should remember that, on a campus as progressive as ours, most of their battles are already won: All of us agree on gender equality. The provocateurs knew their audience's sensibilities and how to offend them for a childish laugh. They went too far. But the Women's Center should have known better than to paint them as misogynistic strangers and attackers among us, instead of members of our community. . . ." I find it difficult to believe that a newspaper on a campus "as progressive as" Yale's would fail to realize that rape is never appropriate joke material and that rapists are often *not* strangers but people we may know, "members of our community."

UN-Backed Troops 'Murdering and Raping Villagers' in Congo

UN-backed Congolese troops have been accused of murdering and raping villagers and looting homes in the area in which rebel militias carried out mass rapes two months ago. In August, details emerged of the mass rape of 303 civilians—235 women, 13 men, 52 girls and three boys—in 13 villages in the Walikale area in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Even in eastern Congo, which has been described as the “rape capital of the world,” such numbers are extraordinary. The UN—which had a base 20 miles from the scene of the attacks—admitted failing to protect the victims. It now faces further embarrassment because it provides logistical support to the Congolese army, which stands accused of compounding terror inflicted by the Rwandan-led FDLR rebels and the Congolese Mai-Mai militia. In response to the mass rapes, the Congo president, Joseph Kabila, ordered a moratorium on mining in the mineral-rich area and sent thousands of army troops to reassert government control. The UN is being urged to impose sanctions against a Rwandan Hutu rebel commander over the mass rapes. Sanctions could include a financial freeze and a travel ban. (Congo’s eastern provinces are under siege by Rwandan Hutu insurgents and Mai-Mai militia who have lingered in the vast, mineral-rich zone since Congo’s 1998-2003 war.)

International Community Broadens Efforts to Help Victims of Human Trafficking

The United Nations has estimated that more than 2.4 million people are currently being exploited as victims of human trafficking. Every year, thousands of women and children are exploited by criminals for forced labor or in the sex trade. No country is immune. Almost all play a part, as countries of origin, transit, or destination.

Recently, the Group of Friends against Human Trafficking, a coalition of 20 countries, held its first ministerial meeting in New York to step up efforts against modern-day slavery. The Group has played an important role in supporting the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Adopted by the General Assembly in July 2010, the Plan urges Governments to take coordinated, comprehensive and consistent steps to combat such trafficking and to adopt a human rights-based approach.

The Plan called for the setting up of a United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking, especially women and children. The fund would help Governments, as well as

intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to protect and support victims of human trafficking so that they can recover from their physical and psychological scars. It would also afford them legal and financial aid. UNODC is currently working towards the establishment of the fund.

The African Union Declares 2010-2020 the African Women’s Decade

Heads of state and government gathered at the XII Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union on October 15 and declared 2010–2020 the African Women’s Decade. The main goal of the Decade is to enhance the implementation of commitments related to gender equality and women’s empowerment. The vision is that the activities undertaken during the Decade will result in tangible positive change for African women at all levels. Under the theme, “Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment,” the Decade emphasizes a bottom-up approach to development. The African Union looks forward to women and entire communities seizing ownership of the Decade and using it to mobilize, to work with their governments and to build institutions that will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Decade. The Decade should also be intended to be an opportunity for sharing good practices, lessons learned, and effective strategies to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.



Women in Liberia: Fighting for Peace Documentary

Last month, I mentioned a documentary called *Women in Liberia: Fighting for Peace* that follows the epic journey of five Liberian women after the war in their country. I thought there were

going to be screening dates or DVDs made available, but I wasn’t able to find any information to that effect on the AI website. However, I was able to find what appears to be the entire documentary on YouTube. It’s only 20 minutes long. Please take a look when you have a few moments—

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61jNG5gnq9M>.

DEATH PENALTY NEWS BY STEVI CARROLL

The death penalty continues. October 10 came and went, but we here in sunny SoCal were unable to join in any of the anti-death penalty activities. Because of location difficulties, All Saints Church was unable to host an event. While we may not have been physically present, many of our hearts were in attendance around the world.

We - the State - do continue to execute, but we - Amnesty members - also have some bright spots shining out there.

Albert Greenwood Brown, Jr.

Last month we were waiting to hear whether Albert Brown would be executed or not here in California. In what seemed to me to be a weird series of events, we were told a judge in Marin County ruled the ban on executions still stood. Then that was not the case. As the time for his execution neared, Mr. Brown was asked to decide if he wanted the one-drug injection or the three-drug death via needle. This reminded me of the 'go cut a switch for your beating' request some people from my mother's generation faced. Mr. Brown refused to make a choice. As the days moved on, we were told the expiration date on the drugs passed so the execution was again on hold. By the first week of October, supporters of the death penalty could give a sigh of relief as we were told that the State had restocked the death chamber shelves with the key execution drug. And Albert Brown? He may meet his fate in 2011.

From the AIUSA website

Drug Company: Stop Using Our Product for Executions

Death Penalty, United States | Posted by: Brian Evans, September 24, 2010 at 10:32 AM

Hospira, is the lone US company that manufactures sodium thiopental, the anesthetic used in all lethal injections (both the three drug and the new one drug methods). Today, the company sent a letter to all states urging them to stop using the drug for executions.

According to Ohio's The Dispatch, which obtained a copy of the letter, Hospira vice president Dr. Kees Groenhout wrote:

Hospira provides these products because they improve or save lives and markets them solely for use as indicated on the product labeling. As such,

we do not support the use of any of our products in capital-punishment procedures.

There is a worldwide shortage of the drug, which is due, according to Hospira, to "manufacturing issues," so its continued use for killing, rather than for its intended medical use, is especially abhorrent. With an execution scheduled in Georgia tonight, and many more scheduled through the end of the year, it remains to be seen how the states, including Ohio, will respond, or, if there is no response, what legal action Hospira could take.

Source:

<http://blog.amnestyusa.org/deathpenalty/drug-company-stop-using-our-product-for-executions/>

Upcoming execution: Jeffrey Landrigan

October 26, 2010, Jeffery Landrigan is scheduled to die in the Arizona death chamber. Two items are interesting in this case: evidence not used in his trial and the drug to be used in his execution.

Mr. Landrigan's lawyer had never handled a death penalty case before and did not introduce mitigating evidence. This evidence included his organic brain damage from fetal alcohol syndrome, abuse at the hands of his adoptive mother, and a 1998 report from a neuropsychologist who concluded he was severely impaired. The judge who sentenced Mr. Landrigan to death now says that if she had been aware of this evidence she would have had 'no choice' but to call for leniency.

Then there are the drugs that will be used on October 26 to execute Mr. Landrigan. Arizona has "acquired the execution drug sodium thiopental from a non-FDA approved source."

By this time next month, we will know whether or not Mr. Landrigan has been executed. For an online action, go to

<http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/siteapps/advocacy/index.aspx?c=jhKPIXPCIoE&b=2590179&template=x.ascx&action=14856>.

Does the death penalty make us safer?

Back in the day of 2008, Jeanne Woodford, former warden of San Quentin, made it clear that the death penalty does not make us safer. The money used for the death penalty in California ("in excess of \$200 million-a-year more than simply condemning people to life without the possibility of parole") could be better spent dealing with the societal problems that lead to homicides and solving homicides thus taking murderers off the

streets. As warden of San Quentin, Ms Woodford presided over four executions and after each one did not believe the world was a safer place. She also noted that in no way is she soft on crime, but she would rather we use our resources to fight crime both before when youngsters are mistreated, abused and neglected and after when pursuing criminals.

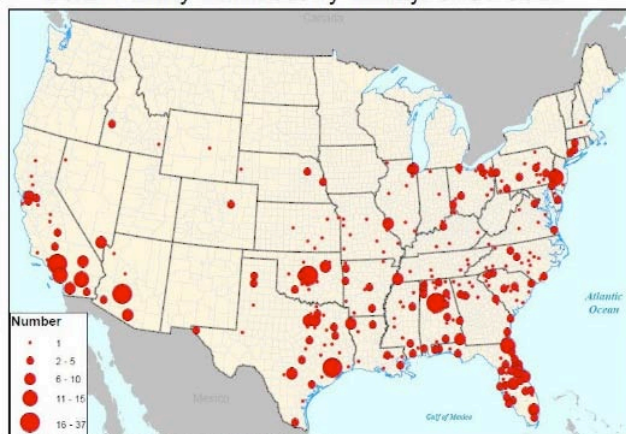
Ms. Woodford concludes her 2008 article with, "To take a life in order to prove how much we value another life does not strengthen our society. It is a public policy that devalues our very being and detracts crucial resources from programs that could truly make our communities safe."

To read the entire article, go to <http://www.deathpenalty.org/article.php?id=294>.

Is the Death Penalty 'cruel and unusual'?

I'd never thought much about what might make a punishment fill the bill of cruel and unusual according to the 8th Amendment. According to an article on the AIUSA website, the fact that since 2004 nine out of 10 counties around the country have NOT employed the death penalty might just bring the cruel and unusual into discussion. Below is a map of those counties that do go for the DP and all the blank space for those that do not. Our great 'liberal' state of California is right up there with the southern USofA.

Death Penalty Sentences by County: 2004--2009



Source: American Judicature Society and tabulations by Charles Hamilton Houston Institute based on published news sources.

Source: <http://blog.amnestyusa.org/>

DNA evidence frees Jerry Hobbs

In Illinois, Jerry Hobbs had been in prison since 2005 until DNA evidence showed that he did not murder his eight-year-old daughter and her nine-year-old friend.

Cameron Todd Willingham: an innocent man executed

In 2004, Cameron Todd Willingham was executed for the death of his three children in a house fire. The case against Mr. Willingham was founded on what was labeled "junk science," but Governor Rick Perry, Texas, went ahead with Mr. Willingham's execution anyway. Presently, Gov. Perry has delayed a court hearing into this case. Should Mr. Williams be found to have been falsely executed, this will be the first time an official in Texas, the nation's most active death penalty state, will admit someone was wrongfully executed.

Source: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/texas-court-inquiry-begins-exploring-whether-executed-man-was-innocent>

Fate of Two Iranian Women

As far as I can tell after searching for information, Zeynab Jalalian and Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, mentioned in last month's newsletter, are still alive. For an interesting article on women and punishment, go to Damsels in Distress: Using Victimized Women as Political Ploys, The Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/beenish-ahmed/damsels-in-distress-using_b_772202.html.

Noble Laureate Elie Wiesel speaks out against the death penalty

Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel will address the death penalty at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, on October 26, 2010. Professor Wiesel spent his teen years in Auschwitz where his mother, father and sister died. The lecture at Wesleyan will be the first time Wiesel has spoken out against the death penalty. His lecture is titled "Building an Ethical Society: The Death Penalty and Human Dignity."

In an article in The Middletown Press, Professor Wiesel is quoted as saying, "With every cell of my being and with every fiber of my memory I oppose the death penalty in all forms. I do not believe any civilized society should be at the service of death. I don't think it's human to become an agent of the Angel of Death."

For any of us who have read Professor Wiesel's writing from his autobiographical Night onward,

we know he has intimate knowledge of the Angel of Death used by the State.

Source:

<http://middletownpress.com/articles/2010/10/22/news/doc4cc1b03a6195e729464675.txt>

Executions

September

23	Teresa Lewis	Virginia
	lethal injection	
27	Brandon Rhode	Georgia
	lethal injection	

October

6	Michael Bengé	Ohio
	lethal injection	
14	Donald Wackerly	Oklahoma
	lethal injection	
21	Larry Wooten	Texas
	lethal injection	

Executions Stayed

September

29	Albert Brown	California
----	--------------	------------

Gov. Schwarzenegger granted a one-day (up to 45 hrs.) reprieve from 12:01 AM on Sept. 29 until 9:00 PM on Sept. 30 to allow more time for appeals on the method of execution. U.S. Dist. Ct. Judge Fogel stayed the execution further to allow time to review the state's new execution protocol and for the supply of a lethal injection drug to be renewed. The state Supreme Court said that review of new execution protocols did not have to be completed before the state's supply of lethal injection drugs expired, thus further insuring a stay of executions until 2011.

October

14	Gayland Bradford	Texas
----	------------------	-------

Stayed by Justice Antonin Scalia to give Bradford's lawyers more time to file a full appeal on the constitutional issues surrounding his conviction and sentence based on claims that Bradford is mentally disabled.

16	Jeffery Matthews	Oklahoma
----	------------------	----------

Federal District Court judge cited the utter confusion on the part of the state in deciding which sedative drug to use as part of the lethal

injection. Matthews stay was continued until Nov. 20, at which time a new date might be set.

19	Kenneth Hairston	Pennsylvania
20	Cletus Rivera	Pennsylvania
20	Roderick Nunley	Missouri

Federal District Court issued a stay to decide if Nunley was entitled to a jury for sentencing. State is appealing the stay.

21	Jerry Chambers	Pennsylvania
----	----------------	--------------

Life Without Parole

September

28	Gaile Owens	Tennessee
----	-------------	-----------

Sources:

<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/upcoming-executions#stays>

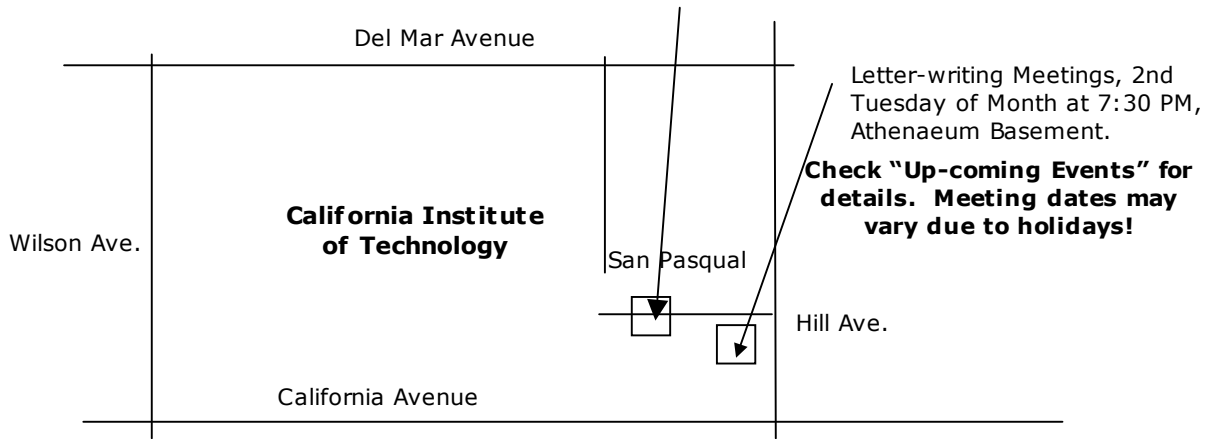
And

<http://www.internationaljusticeproject.org/calendar.cfm?MonthChange=Backward&LastDate=10/22/2010&Action=ShowCalendar>

MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

UA's	19
Total	
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.