

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, October 22, 8:00 PM.** Monthly Meeting. We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena. (This is just south of the corner with San Pasqual. Signs will be posted.) We will be planning our activities for the coming months. Please join us! Refreshments provided.

**Tuesday, November 10, 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 15, 6:30 PM.** Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion group. This month we read "Without You There Is No Us" by Suki Kim.

**November 20-22.** AI Western Regional Conference at Sheraton Gateway Hotel near LAX. Registration and agenda are available at <http://amnestyusa.org/events/regional-conferences/west>.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

Is fall finally here? It's nice and cool outside (mid 70s-80s) for a change...

Did you watch the Democratic presidential debate? No matter who you support, you've got to admit they're a lot different than the Republicans!

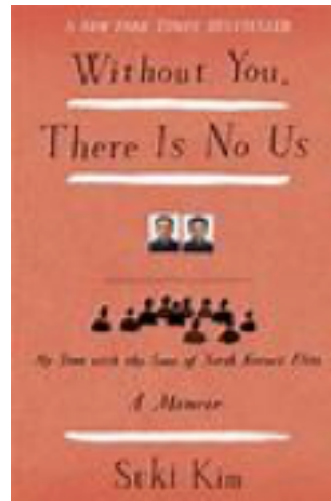
Note the update on our new POC, Narges Mohammadi, by a new contributor to our newsletter. Hopefully we can do some actions on her behalf once Alexi, the case file holder for Narges, returns from her trip.

Kathy

## RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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



**Next Rights Readers meeting:**

**Sunday, Nov. 15, 6:30 PM**

**Vroman's Bookstore**

**695 E. Colorado, Pasadena**

**Without You There Is No Us**

**By Suki Kim**

## BOOK REVIEW

[The New York Times Sunday Book Review]

By Euny Hong, December 11, 2014

## WITHOUT YOU, THERE IS NO US

My Time With the Sons of North Korea's Elite



Caption: *Dear Leader: Paying respects to Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang, 2012. Credit Pedro Ugarte/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images*

Suki Kim's "Without You, There Is No Us," a chilling memoir of this Korean-American author's 2011 stint as a visiting English instructor at a North Korean university, takes its title from a patriotic song extolling the Great General Comrade Kim Jong-il, whose death was announced on what happened to be the day of the author's final class in the Democratic People's Republic. The book reminds us that evil is not only banal; it is also completely arbitrary. Why, for example, do the North Koreans count a sturgeon farm among the 12 "military-first" wonders of their country, as the author reports? And why was it so important that Kim Jong-il be regarded as the earth's foremost expert on every subject? (Not only does he supposedly hold the world record for the most holes-in-one in a single golf game, as stated in his official biography, but he was "even well versed in apple growing," a guide at the orchard declares.)

Of course, all totalitarian dictatorships try to shield their populations from the outside world; that's par for the course — or perhaps 38 below par, as in Kim Jong-il's world-record golf game. But the North Korean regime has achieved a level of irrationality that the post-Caligula world has never seen.

To call North Korea a banana republic — the term historically used to denote little dictatorships with only one export — would be an insult to bananas. For North Korea produces nothing the world needs, and the regime knows it. Kim recounts many examples of how this global uselessness is the regime's own fault. To cite just one, the government has, until very recently, concealed the existence of the World Wide Web.

The most fascinating bits of Kim's book are those that deal with her students' shocking technological backwardness — shocking because the institution they attend is the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. The students do have access to an internal network, or intranet, but it's not connected to the Internet, and they use their computers mostly as dictionaries. The sight of these whiz kids "staring blankly at screens," Kim writes, "was so pathetic that I was seized by a pang of anger, mixed with sadness, and soon left the room."

Pretty much every other major Communist nation in history has tried its best to keep scientists abreast of cutting-edge research and technology. The Soviet Union, even at its most oppressive, still produced Sputnik and gave NASA a run for its money. North Korea, meanwhile, does not seem to have any world-class scientists — or world-class anything else. There is no North Korean equivalent of the Bolshoi Ballet. The country seems unable even to produce a world chess champion, for crying out loud.

Yet Kim's narrative suggests that the regime's stranglehold on information is starting to crack. Kim may have been one of the very few Western journalists to witness what might be the beginning of the end — namely, the introduction of Google to a very limited number of students. The first time they use it, they are bewildered that any given search term could produce hundreds of thousands of results. The students, Kim writes, "were under strict orders not to reveal anything about the Internet, including their access to it." So why would the authorities even permit it?

One can only assume that at long last, North Korea realizes it has no choice. Today's North Korea is not like that of Kim Il-sung, the nation's founder. During most of his reign, North Korea was richer than South Korea. The Eternal President was a scary presence on the world stage, with a Khrushchev-like gravitas and ability to instill fear in his adversaries. Currently, by contrast, North Korea has no allies, and has the worst public relations problem in its history. The current leader, Kim Jong-un, is such a global laughingstock that he is the running gag in a coming satirical film, "The Interview." No dictator wants to be a major character in a movie starring Seth Rogen. Not one.

The most surprising of all the author's anecdotes appears toward the end of the book: For some reason that Kim frustratingly never explains, the North Korean authorities gave Kim and her fellow English instructors permission to show their pupils the films "Avatar" and "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" (the Westerners had brought the DVDs with them in their luggage). I am dying to know how the students could possibly have reconciled these films' state-of-the-art special effects with the fact that they have been taught all their lives that Westerners lead mirthless lives and have spotty access to technology. Before the screening, one of Kim's students asks, "Is Hogwarts a nice place?" Uh-oh. No good can come of such a question.

Kim's description of her former charges is highly sentimental and sometimes gloomy; she can't help wondering whether she has literally endangered them by giving them a sense of hope. "I hope they have forgotten everything I inspired in them," she writes. But whether Kim realizes it or not, her own book suggests that the North Korean authorities, or at least the higher education system, has already surrendered to the future. They seem to take it as a foregone conclusion that "Harry Potter" is as inexorable as the Internet, impossible to keep at bay forever. Can a dissolution of the most closed regime the modern world has ever known be far behind?

*[Euny Hong's book of reportage, "The Birth of Korean Cool: How One Nation Is Conquering the World Through Pop Culture," was published in August.]*

## AUTHOR BIO



Suki Kim is the author of a New York Times bestselling investigative memoir, *Without You, There Is No Us, My Time with the Sons of North Korean Elite*. Her first novel, *The Interpreter*, was a finalist for a PEN Hemingway Prize. Since 2002, she has travelled to North Korea as a writer,

witnessing both Kim Jong-il's 60th Birthday celebrations as well as his death at age 69. Her essays and articles have appeared in the New York Times, Harper's, and the New York Review of Books. She has been the recipient of a Guggenheim, a Fulbright, and an Open Society fellowship. Born and raised in Seoul, she lives in New York.

## SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

By Robert Adams

### The Secrets Are Out on Drones

by Elizabeth Beavers, security with human rights policy and activism coordinator, AIUSA  
October 15, 2015

The secrets are out. Today, *The Intercept* published a series of articles allegedly based on leaked documents that expose the inner workings of the lethal drone program. While we are not in a position to independently verify them, they underscore the Obama administration's long-standing failure to bring transparency to the drones program. Here are three reasons this is such a big deal:

#### 1. There is new evidence that aspects of the drone program may be unlawful.

International law requires that lethal force be used outside of specific recognized zones of armed conflict only when it is strictly unavoidable to prevent an imminent threat to life. But these new disclosures emphasize what Amnesty has long argued: that the administration's policies amount to a radical re-interpretation of established standards governing the use of force. The leaks show that

after strikes are approved, there is a 60-day window for them to be carried out. It is difficult to imagine a truly imminent threat that lasts for two months.

#### 2. There is now even more cause for concern about the identity of those killed in drone strikes.

Amnesty has documented instances of potentially unlawful killings by drone strike, including a woman killed in front of her grandchildren. And journalists have tried to keep count of precisely who dies by drone strikes, but this is a near-impossible task, as the administration has largely refused to identify the victims.

If confirmed, the Intercept's revelations paint an alarming picture. According to the documents, during one five-month stretch, **90 percent of those whom the U.S. government killed by drone strike were unintended targets**. The documents also show that those killed by strikes are considered an "enemy killed in action" even if they were not the intended target, unless evidence emerges after their death to prove otherwise. This is completely inconsistent with the administration's policy guidelines, announced in May 2013, stating that drone strikes will only occur with "near certainty" that there will be no civilian casualties.

#### 3. This sort of information is the type of transparency that President Obama has been saying he supports.

He has promised to make the drones program "more transparent to the American people and the world" because "in our democracy, no one should just take my word for it that we're doing things the right way." Now the Obama administration must own what that the articles reveal: **a lethal drone program responsible for apparently unintended killings, and which appears to operate outside the established international legal norms**.

Today's articles show that the "global war on terror" did not end with the George W. Bush administration. Instead, under the auspices of the wide-ranging 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, the Obama administration continues in many ways to operate as if the entire world is a battlefield. An endless war paradigm persists, and drones are its new soldiers.

## PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

### Narges Mohammadi

By Dominique Razon

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST'S HEALTH WORSENS AS SHE CONTINUES TO BE DENIED URGENT MEDICAL CARE



On August 2, 2015, Narges Mohammadi - an Iranian Human Rights activist who was arrested this past May in Tehran - was taken from the city's Evin Prison to Taleghani Hospital. During examination, doctors insisted she be hospitalized due to signs of neurological paralysis.

Despite the doctor's advice, Narges Mohammadi was returned the next day to Evin prison, without receiving specialized care.

According to her husband, Taghi Rahmani, this is not the first time Narges has been denied medical care. "Since her arrest [on May 5, 2015], Narges has been seen by neurologists three times, and every time the doctors have said that she must be hospitalized to control her illness and prevent it from getting worse," said Rahmani. "Even the prison infirmary's doctor has stressed the need to hospitalize her, but the Judiciary has so far refused to do so." Human rights group Amnesty International added that Mohammadi also hasn't even been allowed to call her two children, who are currently residing with their father in Paris, France.

Denying Narges her medical rights as a political prisoner could prove fatal. "... prisoners are not always provided with actual medical care and instead are simply returned to prison," stated Amnesty in a recent newsletter. This neglect has been attributed to the death of seven inmates in Iran in the past five years. The denial of medical care is in strict violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits torture and other detrimental treatment.

The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners also state that prisoners who require specialized treatment must be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals.

Narges is vice president of the now banned Defenders of Human Rights Center, and founder of Step By Step to Stop Death Penalty, a group fighting to end the death penalty in Iran. Before her arrest in 2015, Mohammadi told Amnesty she was being arrested due to her human rights work, a sentiment that is shared by the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI). Charges brought against her include: membership of an illegal organization whose aim is to harm national security, spreading propaganda against the system, and assembly and collusion against national security.

Little to no attention has been given to Mohammadi's story. As her medical care continues to be denied, Mohammadi's health worsens. With her October 6 trial date approaching, Amnesty has issued an Urgent Action appeal and designated Mohammadi as a "prisoner of conscience". For information about how you can help, visit the Amnesty website, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/get-involved/take-action-now/iran-release-narges-mohammadi-ua-10515>.

#### Update:

Narges' October 6 trial was postponed by the Judiciary. No explanation was given to her lawyers, nor was a new trial date given. Narges continues to serve time at Evin prison. This marks the third postponement of her trial since her arrest on May 5.

## DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

#### Pope Francis in DC

When Pope Francis addressed members of the US Congress, he included his views on the death penalty.

"Recently my brother bishops here in the United States renewed their call for the abolition of the death penalty. Not only do I support them, but I also offer encouragement to all those who are convinced that a just and necessary punishment must never exclude the dimension of hope and the goal of rehabilitation."

#### Kelly Gissendaner

Execution provides the ultimate punishment for heinous crimes, and thus, justice is served. In 1997, Kelly Gissendaner and Gregory Owen conspired to kill Ms Gissendaner's husband, Douglas Gissendaner. Mr. Owen carried out Mr. Gissendaner's murder. During their trial, Mr. Owen's plea deal to testify against Ms Gissendaner rewarded him with life in prison with the possibility of parole for which he will be eligible in 2022. Kelly Gissendaner was sentenced to death.

Pleas to halt Ms Gissendaner's execution came from a variety of people. Amnesty International highlighted her case with both an Urgent Action and a Take Action Now online petition. Pope Francis asked the review board to reconsider her sentence. He said that in no way did he minimize the gravity of the crime but thought "to commute the sentence to one that would better express both justice and mercy." Several women who served time with Ms Gissendaner also supported her because of the help she'd given them and others to resist despair and rehabilitate themselves. Ms Gissendaner's children, Kayla and Dakota Gissendaner, overcame their anger toward their mother for the murder of their father and became steadfast supporters for her clemency. Norman Fletcher, a retired Georgia Supreme Court Justice voted to uphold Ms Gissendaner's sentence 15 years ago. He now regrets his vote. He has come to believe her death sentence did not square with the crime she committed. He also called into question an appeal made by Ms Gissendaner saying it had been 'deeply flawed'.

Despite pleas to halt Ms Gissendaner's execution, she became the first woman executed in a southern US state in 70 years on September 30, 2015. Witnesses said Kelly Gissendaner sang "Amazing Grace" as the lethal injection ended her life.

As Megan Chambers, a former inmate who met Ms Gissendaner in prison and received comfort and help with her own rehabilitation from her, said, "Kelly did that. Prison doesn't help you rehabilitate - prison's a business. ... How could the state kill her when she's more of a benefit alive?" Has justice been served?

### **October 10, 2015 World Day Against the Death Penalty**

Steven W. Hawkins, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA:

"The tally nearly reached four executions in just over a week's time, but for the bungling of an execution in Oklahoma. The state procured the wrong drug to kill the prisoner, only realizing the mistake at the very last minute. Now the state's Attorney General is investigating what went wrong.

**"In fact, just about everything is wrong with the capital punishment system. It's fundamentally broken and should be ended once and for all.**

"Thankfully the death penalty is in decline in the United States and around the world. Last year, executions in the United States were at a 20-year low, and death sentences were at their lowest level since 1976. **What's more, nineteen states plus the District of Columbia have banned capital punishment, and seven other states have not carried out an execution in 10 years.**

"It's really just a handful of states that are still aggressively pursuing executions. Texas, Oklahoma, and Missouri, in particular, are moving further and further away from national standards of decency. Globally, 140 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, and only 22 carried out executions last year.

**"The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The United States cannot practice it and claim to be a human rights leader on the global stage. Now is the time to end capital punishment for good."**

### **The US Supreme Court**

2015 is a year to watch the Supremes. They are scheduled to hear four death penalty cases.

Justices Stephen Breyer and Ruth Bader Ginsburg also have recommended the court look again at the constitutionality of the death penalty. In *The National Law Journal (NLJ)* following his dissent in *Glossip v. Gross*, Justice Breyer said, "You know, sometimes people make mistakes, [executing] the wrong person. It is arbitrary. There is lots of evidence on that." Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, also from the *NLJ*, said, "I've always made the distinction that if I were in the legislature, there'd be no death penalty. If I had been on the court for *Furman v. Georgia*, 1972, invalidating the death penalty, I wouldn't have given us the death penalty back four years later."

Perhaps 2015 will be the year death penalty abolition will have life breathed into it from the US Supreme Court.

### Exonerations

September

4 **Bobby Johnson** CT

In 2007, 16-year-old Bobby Johnson falsely confessed to committing a murder in New Haven, Connecticut and was sentenced to 38 years in prison. He was exonerated after the Connecticut Innocence Project found evidence concealed by police that identified the real killer.

14 **Lewis Fogle** PA

In 1982, Lewis Fogle was sentenced to life in prison for the 1976 rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl in Indiana County, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated after DNA tests obtained by the Innocence Project and the Pennsylvania Innocence Project excluded Fogle and identified the DNA of an unknown male.

18 **Brandon Burnside** WI

In 2011 Brandon Burnside was sentenced to life in prison for murder in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was exonerated after DNA testing pointed to another suspect and eyewitness identifications were shown to be flawed.

30 **Beniah Alton Dandridge** AL

In 1996, Beniah Alton Dandridge was sentenced to life in prison for murder based on false testimony by a jailhouse informant and a crime-scene fingerprint. He was exonerated after independent fingerprint analysis obtained by the Equal Justice Initiative showed that the print belonged to the victim's son.

30 **Damian Mills** NC

Damian Mills, Larry Williams, Jr., and Teddy Isbell and two other men—Larry Wilcoxson and Kenneth Kagonyera—pled guilty to a murder in 2000 in Buncombe County, North Carolina. Wilcoxson and Kagonyera were exonerated in 2011 after DNA linked the crime to three other men. Mills, Williams and Isbell were exonerated in 2015.

October

2 **Richard Lapointe** CT

In 1992, Richard LaPointe was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the rape and murder of his wife's 88-year-old grandmother. He was exonerated because the evidence withheld by the prosecution proved that he had an alibi.

### Sentence Commuted

October

6 Kimber Edwards MO

His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole four days before he was due to be put to death.

source: <http://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration>

### Stays of Execution

September

30 Richard Glossip+ OK  
(originally stayed only until 11/6)

October

6 Abu-Ali Abdur'Rahman TN

7 Benjamin Cole + OK

19 Michael Ballard PA

21 Bruce Earl Ward\* AR

21 Don William Davis\* AR

28 John Grant+ OK

28 Christopher Wilkins TX

### Executions

September

30 Kelly Gissendaner *f* GA  
Lethal Injection 1-drug

October

1 Alfred Prieto~ VA

Lethal Injection 3-drug

7 Juan Garcia TX

Lethal Injection 1-drug

14 Licho Escamilla TX

Lethal Injection 1-drug

*f* female

~ foreign national

+ On October 2, 2015 The Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals granted the Attorney General's request to indefinitely stay all pending executions to allow for review of lethal injection procedures.

\* On October 8, the Arkansas Circuit Court granted a temporary restraining order staying all eight scheduled executions so that already pending judicial review of the state's execution procedures could take place.

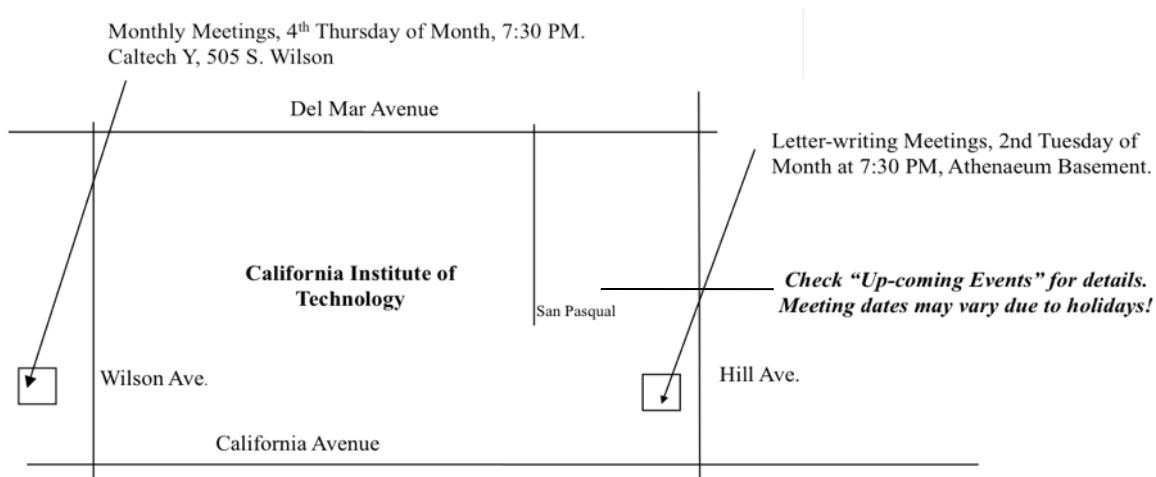
### GROUP 22 MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

UAs 5

POC 16

Total 21

To add your letters to the total contact [aigp22@caltech.edu](mailto:aigp22@caltech.edu)



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 C1-128  
 Pasadena, CA 91125  
[www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/](http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/)  
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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.