

# Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXVII Number 8, August 2019

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, September 10, 7:30-9:00 PM. Letter Writing meeting** at the Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. (In summer we meet outdoors at the "Rath al Fresco" on the lawn next to the building.) This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty.

**Sunday, September 15, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.** For September we read "**American Prison: A Reporter's Undercover Journey into the Business of Punishment**" by Shane Bauer.

**Thursday, September 26, 7:30 PM. Monthly Meeting.** We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hello All,

This past week school started for LAUSD and other districts. It has been pretty crazy and I'm still trying to get used to getting up earlier after flaking of all summer, lol. Those of you who don't get the summer off are thinking "world's smallest violin!", but it wasn't that long ago that we didn't get paid during the summer until November and I had to work at least 6 weeks or the whole summer at the year-round schools to make ends meet! It was good to see nurse friends at opening day meeting Monday and my colleagues from the Visually Impaired Program the rest of the week. This is my last year as I plan to retire June 2020. As of that time, I will have given the district 32-plus years of my life!!

The Western Regional Conference for this year will be held in Seattle at the University of Washington (or "U Dub" as Seattle natives like my cousins call it!) The dates are Saturday November 9th and Sunday November 10th. Early bird rates are available until 11:59pm EST September 30 and online registration closes 11:59 PM EST 10-28-19.

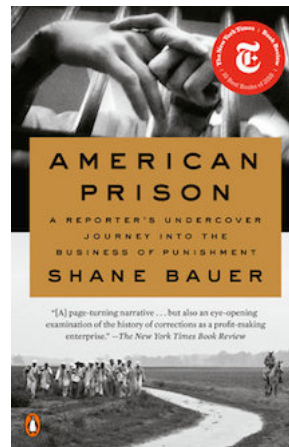
Amnesty doesn't have the agenda on their website yet but one can keep checking at [amnestyusa.org](http://amnestyusa.org) and click on "regional conferences" at the top, then select western regional conference.

Protests in Hong Kong against the proposed extradition law (all prisoners to be tried in

mainland China) continue. Amnesty has made statements to the press and sent a letter to Mike Pompeo expressing concern over use of violent tactics by Hong Kong police (despite the protests being largely peaceful) and the extradition bill itself. There are press releases, and actions on the AI website. Some are older but there are plenty regarding the 2019 protests. As far as I know, our government hasn't taken a stand either for or against the protests and the issues involved.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/search/?q=hong+kong+protests&sort=relevance>

Con carino,  
Kathy



## Next Rights Readers Meeting

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

**Vroman's Bookstore  
695 E. Colorado Blvd  
Pasadena**

***American Prison*  
by Shane Bauer**

## REVIEWS

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/553182/american-prison-by-shane-bauer/>

A ground-breaking and brave inside reckoning with the nexus of prison and profit in America: in one Louisiana prison and over the course of our country's history.

In 2014, Shane Bauer was hired for \$9 an hour to work as an entry-level prison guard at a private prison in Winnfield, Louisiana. An award-winning investigative journalist, he used his real name; there was no meaningful background check. Four months later, his employment came to an abrupt end. But he had seen enough, and in short order he wrote an exposé about his experiences that won a National Magazine Award and became the most-read feature in the history of the magazine Mother Jones. Still, there

was much more that he needed to say. In *American Prison*, Bauer weaves a much deeper reckoning with his experiences together with a thoroughly researched history of for-profit prisons in America from their origins in the decades before the Civil War. For, as he soon realized, we can't understand the cruelty of our current system and its place in the larger story of mass incarceration without understanding where it came from. Private prisons became entrenched in the South as part of a systemic effort to keep the African-American labor force in place in the aftermath of slavery, and the echoes of these shameful origins are with us still.

The private prison system is deliberately unaccountable to public scrutiny. Private prisons are not incentivized to tend to the health of their inmates, or to feed them well, or to attract and retain a highly-trained prison staff. Though Bauer befriends some of his colleagues and sympathizes with their plight, the chronic dysfunction of their lives only adds to the prison's sense of chaos. To his horror, Bauer finds himself becoming crueler and more aggressive the longer he works in the prison, and he is far from alone.

A blistering indictment of the private prison system, and the powerful forces that drive it, *American Prison* is a necessary human document about the true face of justice in America.

*"American Prison is both the remarkable story of a journalist who spent four months working as a corrections officer, and a horrifying exposé of how prisoners were treated by a corporation that profited from them. . . . It's Bauer's investigative chops, though, that make American Prison so essential. He dedicated his time at Winn to talking with prisoners and guards, who were unaware that he was a journalist. . . . Based on his first-hand experience and these conversations, he paints a damning picture of prisoner mistreatment and under-staffing at the prison, where morale among the incarcerated and the employees was poor. The stories he tells are deeply sad and consistently infuriating. . . . An enraging, necessary look at the private prison system, and a convincing clarion call for prison reform."* — NPR.org

*"Riveting. . . . Bauer himself was held in an [Iranian] prison for two years, so he knows what it feels like to be on the inside, yet he brings to the text a journalist's purview and draws a direct line between*

*American slavery, the founders of the prison corporations and the job he is hired to do. In a fascinating tightrope walk, Bauer shows that, in this so-called industry, the financial bottom line comes at a high human cost."* — Oprah.com

*"A penetrating exposé on the cruelty and mind-bending corruption of privately run prisons across the United States. . . . Nearly every page of this tale contains examples of shocking inhumanity. . . . A potent, necessary broadside against incarceration in the U.S."* — Kirkus, starred review

### Book trailer for *American Prison*

<https://youtu.be/eykrYVwya0s>

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shane\\_Bauer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shane_Bauer)



Bauer grew up in Onamia, Minnesota[2] and he is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley.[3]

In July 2009, Bauer and two companions (Joshua Fattal and Sarah Shourd) were arrested by Iranian border guards after straying into Iran while hiking in northern Iraq near the Iranian border.

The three Americans were held in prison in Iran on bogus espionage charges for more than two years before their release in September 2011. They subsequently co-authored a memoir of their experience (*A Sliver of Light*), as well as the cover story ("Kidnapped by Iran") for the March–April 2014 issue of *Mother Jones* magazine.

Bauer has worked as a foreign correspondent, reporting from Iraq, Sudan, Chad, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. His work has appeared in *The Nation*,[4] *Salon.com*,[5] the *Los Angeles Times*,[6] and the *Christian Science Monitor*. [7][8]

In 2015 he worked as an undercover journalist for *Mother Jones* while employed for six months as a prison guard at the Winn Correctional Center, a private prison in Winn Parish, Louisiana managed by the Corrections Corporation of America (now known as CoreCivic).[9]

# DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

## Federal Death Penalty

US Attorney General William Barr must be feeling pretty frisky since he's been at work for the Trump administration since February 14, 2019. On July 25, 2019, AG Barr informed the Federal Bureau of Prisons to include executions in its basket of punishments. He told the prisons bureau to schedule five inmates for execution.

As always, we in Amnesty International do not condone the crimes these people are convicted of committing, but we do question the use of the death penalty. As Bryan Stevenson executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative says, "The death penalty is not about whether people deserve to die for the crimes they commit. The real question of capital punishment in this country is, 'Do we deserve to kill?'"

## Exonerations

[Christopher Tapp](#) - State: ID

- Date of Exoneration: 7/17/2019

After giving a false confession, Christopher Tapp was convicted in 1998 for the rape and murder of Angie Dodge in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He was exonerated in 2019 after a DNA sample from the crime scene was matched to the actual attacker.

[Chester Hollman III](#) - State: PA

- Date of Exoneration: 7/30/2019

In 1993, Chester Hollman III was sentenced to life in prison without parole for murder in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was exonerated in 2019 based on evidence that two witnesses admitting they lied at his trial and police and prosecutors withheld evidence of other suspects.

[John Miller](#) - State: PA

- Date of Exoneration: 7/31/2019

In 1998, John Miller was sentenced to life in prison without parole for a robbery and murder in Philadelphia in 1993. He was exonerated 2019 because the witnesses against him admitted they falsely implicated Miller in the crime.

## Stays of Executions

July

10 Karen M Jackson OH  
Reprieve granted by Gov. Mike DeWine on March 7, 2019, and execution rescheduled for January 16, 2020

16 William Rivera PA  
Legally premature death warrant. Stay granted by the US District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on June 6, 2019, to permit Rivera to pursue federal habeas corpus review to which all state prisoners are entitled as a matter of law.

31 Ruben Gutierrez TX  
Warrant withdrawn. New Death warrant issued rescheduling execution for October 30, 2019

August

14 Gregory Lott OH  
Reprieve granted by Gov. Mike DeWine on March 7, 2019, and execution rescheduled for March 12, 2020.

15 Dexter Johnson TX  
Stay granted by the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on August 14, 2019

19 Jason Reeves LA  
Legally premature death warrant. Stay granted by the US District Court in Louisiana on August 9, 2019, to permit Reeves to pursue federal habeas corpus review to which all state prisoners are entitled as a matter of law.

## Executions

August

15 Stephen Michael West TN  
Electrocution (3rd in TN since Nov)  
Years from sentence to execution - 32

21 Larry Swearingen TX  
Lethal Injection 1-drug: Pentobarbital  
Years from sentence to execution - 19

22 Gary Bowles FL  
Lethal Injection 3- drug: Etomidate  
Years from sentence to execution - 23

## SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

By Robert Adams

### CRITICISM OF ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES ARE FREE SPEECH, NOT ANTI-SEMITISM

08/15/2019

Responding to Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and minister of Interior Arye Deri, denying entrance to two U.S. members of Congress and U.S. President Donald Trump's tweets referring to the members of Congress as anti-semitic, Amnesty International Israel and Amnesty International USA issued the following statement:

Molly Malekar, Amnesty International Israel's director said:

"The Israeli government allows free entry to world leaders accused of gross violations of human rights, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, such as Myanmar's generals and Duterte of the Philippines, proudly embracing leaders identified with supporting neo-Nazi and anti-semitic groups such as Hungary's Orbán or Brazil's Bolsonaro, but automatically calls anti-semitic anyone who dare criticize it.

"Israel bars entry on the basis of political views to those who critique it. Criticizing Israel's policies isn't violence."

Philippe Nassif, the advocacy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International USA said:

"Donald Trump continues a pattern of divisive rhetoric that inflicts great harm on those standing up for their basic rights. Free speech is a basic human right. Opposition to a government's policies or abhorrence to grave human rights abuses is neither anti-semitism nor a hatred towards a country or its people. We expect all people who support human rights to stand up and speak out against abuses, wherever they occur."

Amnesty International Israel and Amnesty International USA have been calling for an end to illegal settlements, an end to unjustly detaining Palestinian activists including children, and for respect for the rights to freedom of movement and expression in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

#### Background

The "anti-boycott law" of 2011, formally known as the Law for Prevention of Damage to State of Israel through Boycott, makes it a civil wrong to

call for a boycott of any entity because of its affiliation to Israel or to a territory under its control, including entities operating in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A 2017 amendment to the Entry to Israel Law prohibits granting an entry visa to Israel (and therefore to the Occupied Palestinian Territories which are under Israeli control) to anyone who knowingly published, or operates within an organization who knowingly published, a call for a boycott as defined under the 2011 law. Both the Law for Prevention of Damage to State of Israel through Boycott of 2011 and the 2017 amendment to the Entry to Israel Law contravene Israel's obligations under international human rights law.

Amnesty International does not take a view on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign and has never called for or endorsed specific boycotts. It is up to individuals and organizations to determine which peaceful strategies to use in furtherance of human rights. Advocating for boycotts, divestment and sanctions is a form of free expression that must be protected. Advocates of boycotts should be allowed to express their views freely and take forward their campaigns without harassment, threats of prosecution or criminalization, or other measures that violate the right to freedom of expression.

#### GROUP 22 AUGUST LETTER COUNT

UAs	18
POC Narges Mohammadi	13
POC Gao Zhisheng	19
Total	50

#### PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Narges Mohammadi  
and Gao Zhisheng

By Joyce Wolf

Thanks to Group 22 Co-coordinator Kathy for organizing letter-writing efforts for both our group's adopted prisoners of conscience. Nineteen letters for Gao might set a monthly record for us. And thirteen letters for Narges is not too shabby either! A special thank-you also

to group member Candy for her generous contribution towards postage to mail all our letters.

I have not been able to find any updates about **Narges Mohammadi** since last month's newsletter. As always, you can check Twitter #FreeNarges. You can find a selection of inspirational quotes from Narges at [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Narges\\_Mohammadi](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Narges_Mohammadi)

Here are some sample quotes:

"As a human rights defender, like millions of Iranians, I hate the death penalty; I despise discrimination and injustice against women; I protest against the imprisonment and torture of political and civil rights activists in solitary confinement; and I will not be silent in the face of human rights violations."

"Thoughts and dreams don't die. Belief in freedom and justice does not perish with imprisonment, torture or even death and tyranny do not prevail over freedom, even when they rely on the power of the state."

Narges is a brave woman and she can really write!

It's been two years now with no word on the whereabouts or status of **Gao Zhisheng** since he was "disappeared" in August 2017. Amnesty has marked this sad anniversary with the publication of an article about Gao, written by his friend and fellow activist Teng Biao:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/08/bravest-lawyer-china-gao-zhisheng/>

Here is an excerpt from the above article:

"The Bravest Lawyer in China" – Gao Zhisheng  
By Teng Biao – Legal scholar and friend of Gao Zhisheng  
13 August 2019, 07:55 UTC

Gao Zhisheng is a prominent human rights lawyer in China. Over the years, he has been persecuted, kidnapped and sentenced to prison. In August 2017, he went missing again and has not been seen since.

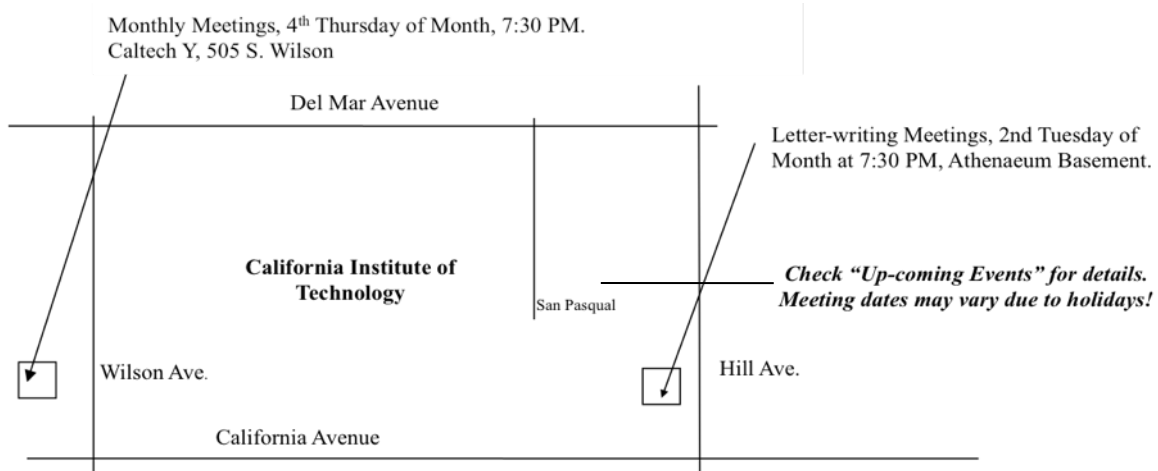
In 2004, I noticed an open letter to the National People's Congress calling attention to the issue of Falun Gong, a religious group in China. By then, practitioners of Falun Gong had been subjected to large-scale persecutions for five years, but nobody dared to speak up for them. It was very courageous for a lawyer to openly speak about the issue, so I took note of his name: Gao Zhisheng.

The human rights movement in China was just beginning to take off. Active human rights lawyers totaled no more than 20 people. I was eager to meet Gao and was lucky to be able to do so within a few weeks of the open letter. He was tall, spirited and features that radiated with health. I remembered him to be friendly and humorous, and his laughter echoed throughout the room. Nothing angered him more than injustice. We chatted late into the night and, very soon after, began working on human rights cases together.

The first case was that of Cai Zhuohua, a pastor at a house church in Beijing who, together with members of his family, was arrested for operating an illegal business after printing multiple copies of the Bible. It was the first time I witnessed Gao's grace and eloquence in court. The court disrespected the lawful right of Cai's mother to observe the hearing, and Gao denounced the judge with fervent conviction. After that, Gao and I would often attend services at house churches in Beijing and he even got baptized later.

Another case we took on was the case of Shaanxi Oil. At the time, one of the lawyers on the case, Zhu Jiuhe, was arrested and imprisoned at the Shaanxi Yulin Detention Centre. We went to represent him and took pictures at the entrance before we left. Not long after, more than a dozen armed policemen rushed towards us and interrogated us for taking those pictures. They thought they could frighten us, but we were experienced in such interrogation and firmly rebutted them. After that, Gao lamented, "If this is how they treat lawyers in suits, can you imagine what they'd do to the people living around here?"

On the way back, we stopped by Gao's home in Jiaxian and squatted in the courtyard eating noodles. I will never forget his cave home, his taciturn brother and the dry and barren land that surrounded us.



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.

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[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.