

April 3, 2022

Hello from Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech!

This is the latest in a series of occasional updates with news from Group 22.

This update includes the following:

- * Upcoming Events for April 2022
- * Recent Letter Writing Meetings and Book Discussions
- * Prisoners of Conscience Narges Mohammadi and Gao Zhisheng
- * Looking Back at 2021

Reminder: Current information about Group 22 upcoming events and a link to Group 22's Facebook page are available at

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/>

Past Updates and Newsletters are at

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/oldnews/>

See <https://amnestyusa.org/ukrainecrisis/> for Amnesty USA resources and actions for Ukraine.

***** UPCOMING EVENTS FOR APRIL 2022 *****

Tuesday, April 12, 7:30–9 pm. Letter-writing.

Contact aigp22@caltech.edu to get a link to the Zoom session.

You can always write letters on your own: go to [https://](https://www.amnestyusa.org/take-action/urgent-action-network/)

www.amnestyusa.org/take-action/urgent-action-network/.

Check the Amnesty USA home page for online actions and updates on current human rights issues such as the Ukraine crisis and ICE detention.

Sunday, April 24, 6:30 pm. Human Rights Book Discussion Group.

(Note: This April we are meeting one week later than our usual third Sunday of the month.)

Our April selection is appropriate for Earth Day: "Fathoms: The World in the Whale" by Australian journalist Rebecca Giggs. Learn about the lives and lore of whales and what they mean for us and our planet.

Author interview at

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/rebecca-giggs-fathoms-interview>

If you are interested in the book discussion, please contact aigp22@caltech.edu in order to receive an invitation to the Zoom session.

[SAVE THE DATES]

Tuesday, May 10. Letter Writing.

Sunday, May 15. Book Discussion. "Light Perpetual: A Novel" by Francis Spufford.

Tuesday, June 14. Letter Writing.

Sunday, June 19. Book Discussion. "Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter Who Revealed It to the World" by Lesley M.M. Blume

***** RECENT LETTER WRITING MEETINGS AND BOOK DISCUSSIONS *****

Many thanks to Kathy and Paula for organizing and hosting our Letter Writing online sessions.

Group Coordinator Kathy reported the Urgent Actions counts for our recent letter writing meetings.

January: 69 Letters, 90 Emails (Randy and Doni alone did 37!), 4 Tweets and 2 Faxes.

February: 38 Letters, 102 Emails, 2 Facebook posts, and 2 Faxes.

March: 33 Letters, 79 Emails, and 1 Fax.

In March we also participated in Amnesty's annual Nowruz (Persian New Year) action and sent 20 cards and posted 3 tweets.

Our Human Rights Book Discussion group continues to meet every third Sunday of the month.

Thanks to Kathy for being our Zoom host and to Stevi for leading the discussions and providing supplementary materials. As always, thank you to Martha for providing suggestions for us to choose our book selections for future months, as she has done for over 20 years now!

These are the books we discussed recently.

January: "A Burning: A novel" by Megha Majumdar.

February: "Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World" by Fareed Zakaria.

March: "The Last Great Road Bum" by Héctor Tobar.

This was really special – the author accepted Stevi's invitation and joined us on Zoom. Yay Stevi! Thank you, Héctor Tobar!

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**** PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE NARGES MOHAMMADI AND GAO ZHISHENG ****

Both of Group 22's adopted Prisoners of Conscience have birthdays this month. In China, missing human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng turns 58 on April 20, and in Iran, Narges Mohammadi marks her 50th birthday on April 21, possibly still on temporary medical furlough from prison.

In addition to their April birthdays, our two POCs share some striking similarities. Both have families in exile; Narges' husband and two children live in Paris, and Gao's wife and two children fled to the USA in 2009. After Gao was released from prison in 2015, he wrote a memoir detailing the torture and abuse he endured. It was published in Taiwan in 2016. He was forcibly disappeared in August 2017 and is still missing. Narges was released from prison in October 2020 and soon published her book about how Iran prisons used solitary

confinement as torture. In May 2021 she received a new prison sentence related to her peaceful protest activities while previously imprisoned, and she was back in prison in November 2021. Both Narges and Gao defied repressive authorities in their countries and used their brief periods of freedom to tell their stories, even though they knew full well the risks they were taking.

The English version of the memoir of Gao Zhisheng is "Unwavering Convictions", published in 2017 by Carolina Academic Press. The book "White Torture" by Narges Mohammadi was printed in Persian by Swedish publisher Baran; an English version will be available in late 2022 from Simon and Schuster. Narges made a film of the same title, which was recently released on Youtube.

Please join Group 22 members in acknowledging these two brave human rights activists on their birthdays. We will put suggested actions on our website.

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/GaoPOC/Gao.html>

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/POC-Narges/Narges.html>

***** LOOKING BACK AT 2021 *****

Amnesty USA Area Coordinators requested Local Groups to provide short narratives that described their human rights work in 2021. A total of 34 groups submitted their stories. In our submission I included a graph of our 2021 letter writing statistics and a list of our book selections for the year.

<https://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/story2021.pdf>

***** LAST WORD *****

Happy Spring! Stay safe and well. Keep working for human rights.
Peace and all good,
Joyce and Kathy and Stevi