

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XV Number 9, September 2008

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 25, 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, October 14, 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, October 19, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we read "The Reluctant Fundamentalist" by Mohsin Hamid.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,

I am enjoying the mellow Indian Summer days even though school has started again and the craziness has begun! I have been working at a large and very busy elementary school in South LA with a new nurse the past 3 weeks. The commute is around an hour each way and I am exhausted! So forgive me if this column is not up to its "usual standards!"

We have an election coming up in 46 days and although I can't give my opinions here, it has been very interesting with the latest addition to McCain's cast!

Don't forget the Western Regional Conference, which will be held at the Pasadena Hilton Nov 7-9. Early bird registration (which is discounted) ends October 17th, so don't forget to send yours in. The form is available online at:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/western/regionalconference>

The conference theme is "Breaking Borders: 60 Years of Human Rights" and the featured speaker will be Mia Kirshner, author of *I Live Here*. The film *Jihad for Love* will be shown at the conference.

There are two death penalty cases mentioned in this newsletter: that of Jack Alderman, who has already been executed and Troy Davis, whose

execution is scheduled this coming Tuesday, September 23rd.

Con cariño,

Kathy aigp22@caltech.edu

ERITREA: YET ANOTHER SAD ANNIVERSARY

September 18 was the seventh anniversary of the arrest of Estifanos Seyoum, the Eritrean prisoner of conscience adopted by Group 22. He was detained in 2001 along with 10 other senior government officials and a number of independent journalists in a general crackdown by the Eritrea government. None of these prisoners has ever been charged or tried. Some are reported to have died in prison but Eritrea refuses to confirm these reports or indeed to reveal anything at all about the status of these prisoners. Amnesty International issued the following statement to mark this sad occasion:

AI Index: AFR 64/007/2008 (Public)

Date: 18 September 2008

Eritrea: Prisoners of conscience remembered on 7th anniversary of mass detentions

Seven years ago, on 18 September 2001, the Government of Eritrea detained hundreds of former government leaders, private-media journalists and civil servants. Today, as we mark the seventh anniversary of this detention, most are still believed to be held in incommunicado detention.

Amnesty International considers these detainees to be prisoners of conscience, detained for the peaceful expression of their political views. The Eritrean government has never disclosed the location of those detained, and has repeatedly failed to provide a verifiable response to allegations that a number of those detained have died in detention, in spite of persistent appeals from Amnesty International members worldwide.

The Government of Eritrea is doing all that they can to ensure that these prisoners are forgotten. They are still denied family visits. No-one has been charged or brought to court. They are also believed to be denied medical treatment and are in many cases are likely to be detained in harsh conditions and subjected to torture, or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. The family and friends of those detained

in Eritrea for the last seven years also face persecution when they speak out against detention of their loved ones. Arbitrary detention in Eritrea continues and has led to the detention of thousands of others, detained for their opinion or beliefs, who are currently suffering the same harsh conditions and treatment.

On this seventh anniversary, Amnesty International reiterates its call to the Government of Eritrea to unconditionally release all of those arrested 7 years ago, still being held incommunicado without charge or trial. We call on the international community not to forget these prisoners, but instead to use all possible diplomatic means to secure their welfare and release.

Amnesty International's call to the Government of Eritrea

- Amnesty International demands that the Eritrean Government immediately release all prisoners of conscience imprisoned in Eritrea for their opinions or beliefs.
- Amnesty International calls for the Eritrean government to disclose the status and condition of the thousands of individuals that are reportedly held in arbitrary detention, and grant them access to their families, lawyers and medical personnel.
- Amnesty International demands that the Eritrean government end the persecution and threats against the family member of prisoners of conscience detained in Eritrea.

[End of AI statement]

Please join Group 22 and take action in behalf of the Eritrean prisoners of conscience. You can use the following sample letter to the Eritrea Ambassador as a guide.

His Excellency Ghirmai Gebremariam
Ambassador of Eritrea
1708 New Hampshire Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Ambassador,

September 18 marked the seventh anniversary of the arrest of Estifanos Seyoum, former Brigadier General and head of the Inland Revenue Service until August 2001.

Estifanos Seyoum and 10 other senior government officials and a number of independent journalists have been held incommunicado without charge or trial since 2001. These detainees are prisoners of conscience,

imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their political views. Some are alleged to have died while in detention because of torture and ill treatment and denial of medical care.

Aster Fissehatsion, Ahmed Sheriffo, Beraki Gebreselassie, Berhane Gebregziabeher, Haile Woldetensae, Hamad Hamid Hamad, Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo, Ogbe Abraha, Petros Solomon, Saleh Kekiya, and Estifanos Seyoum are not forgotten. I call upon the Eritrea authorities to make known their status.

I urge that the Eritrean government immediately release all those imprisoned in Eritrea solely because they peacefully expressed their opinions or beliefs. I call upon the Eritrea authorities to disclose the status of the thousands of individuals that are reportedly held in arbitrary detention and allow them access to their families and lawyers and medical care. Furthermore, it is imperative that the Eritrean government end the persecution and threats against the family members of prisoners of conscience detained in Eritrea.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
(your name and address)

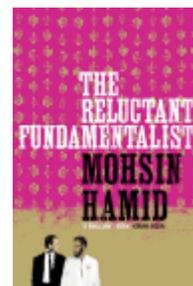
RIGHTS READERS Human Rights Book Discussion Group

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

Next Rights Readers meeting:
Sunday, October 19, 6:30 PM
Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Boulevard
in Pasadena

"The Reluctant Fundamentalist"

By Mohsin Hamid



Review

From the author of the award-winning *Moth Smoke* comes a perspective on love, prejudice, and the war on terror that has never been seen in North American literature.

At a café table in Lahore, a bearded Pakistani man converses with a suspicious, and possibly armed, American stranger. As dusk deepens to night, he begins the tale that has brought them to this fateful meeting. . .

Changez is living an immigrant's dream of America. At the top of his class at Princeton, he is snapped up by Underwood Samson, an elite firm that specializes in the "valuation" of companies ripe for acquisition. He thrives on the energy of New York and the intensity of his work, and his infatuation with regal Erica promises entrée into Manhattan society at the same exalted level once occupied by his own family back in Lahore.

For a time, it seems as though nothing will stand in the way of Changez's meteoric rise to personal and professional success. But in the wake of September 11, he finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned, and his budding relationship with Erica eclipsed by the reawakened ghosts of her past. And Changez's own identity is in seismic shift as well, unearthing allegiances more fundamental than money, power, and perhaps even love.

Elegant and compelling, Mohsin Hamid's second novel is a devastating exploration of our divided and yet ultimately indivisible world.

"Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America. I noticed that you were looking for something; more than looking, in fact you seemed to be on a mission, and since I am both a native of this city and a speaker of your language, I thought I might offer you my services as a bridge."

—from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Author Biography



Mohsin Hamid grew up in Lahore, attended Princeton University and Harvard Law School and worked for several years as a management consultant in New York. His first novel, *Moth Smoke*, was published in ten languages and was a

winner of a Betty Trask award, a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway award, and a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. His essays and journalism have appeared in *Time*, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, among others. Mohsin Hamid currently lives, works and writes in London.

DEATH PENALTY UPDATES

URGENT ACTION APPEAL

- From Amnesty International USA
17 September 2008
Further information on UA 254/08 (12 September 2008) –
Death penalty / Legal concern
USA (Georgia)
Jack E. Alderman (m), white, aged 56

Jack Alderman was executed in Georgia on the 16 September. He was sentenced to death in June 1975 for the murder of his wife, Barbara Jean Alderman, in 1974. He had been on death row for more than 30 years.

On 15 September, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Melvin Westmoreland issued a stay of execution, ordering that Jack Alderman's death sentence not be carried out until he had had a "meaningful" clemency hearing from the state Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP). Prior to this, the BPP had refused to reconsider Jack Alderman's case after denying him clemency in October 2007. In June 2008, his lawyers asked the BPP to hold a clemency hearing, but it had refused.

Following Judge Westmoreland's ruling, the BPP agreed to hold a hearing on 16 September, after which it denied clemency. Jack Alderman was put to death by lethal injection shortly after 7pm local time. The execution took about 14 minutes.

There have been 21 executions in the USA this year, three of them in Georgia. Since 1977, when the USA resumed executions, 1,120 men and women have been put to death, 43 of them in Georgia.

No further action by the UA network is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

MARCH HELD FOR TROY DAVIS IN ATLANTA

Article from the Atlanta Journal Constitution:

Protests held downtown over Troy Davis execution

Lethal injection scheduled for Tuesday; 7 witnesses have recanted in murder case
Associated Press Friday, September 19, 2008

More than 250 anti-death penalty protesters marched Thursday in downtown Atlanta to call for a new hearing for Troy Anthony Davis, who is condemned to die next week for the murder of a Savannah police officer 19 years ago. The group also held a prayer vigil at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

In addition, one protestor has taken up a vigil in a chair at Marietta and Fairlie streets to fast and protest the planned execution. Steve Woodall said he will remain at the chair until Davis is pardoned, his sentence is commuted, or until Tuesday, when Davis is due to be killed. "I'm not just protesting the death penalty, I'm protesting because he's an innocent man," Woodall said, wearing a blue and white T-shirt that reads "I am Troy Davis."

On Thursday night, demonstrators carried signs proclaiming "Innocence Matters" as they walked 12 blocks from Woodruff Park in the heart of downtown Atlanta to new Ebenezer Baptist Church.

The church is across Auburn Avenue from the historic sanctuary where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. preached. Ebenezer's pastor, the Rev. Raphael Warnock, said it was appropriate the march should end there because King opposed the death penalty.

"This is the house of God, but it is also the house of a great servant of God whose voice echoes from the crypt," Warnock said to the crowd, swollen to about 350 by the time they assembled in the church.

Supporters of Davis, who is scheduled for lethal injection Tuesday, say he should get a new trial because several witnesses who testified against him recanted or contradicted their statements. The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles denied Davis clemency last Friday but did not give a reason.

"We're quite shocked that the board turned him down," said Peggy Hendrix, an anti-death penalty activist from Atlanta who took part in the march organized by Amnesty International and the NAACP. "We're trying to get them to reconsider."

The case has taken on racial overtones because Davis is black. The slain officer, Mark McPhail, was white. Edward Lee, an Asian-American marcher, said it was a matter of social justice. "Any of us could be in the same situation, with the wrong skin color or whatever," Lee said.

Eleanor Hunter of Atlanta noted that the United States is one of the few nations with capital punishment. "We should be following the universal human rights proscribed by the United Nations," Hunter said. "That doesn't mean you shouldn't be punished, but each of us has the right to live."

The Rev. Timothy McDonald, who spoke at the park to begin the march, noted that all types of people were present, "old, young, Asian, black and white." "This is what justice looks like," McDonald proclaimed as he exhorted the throng to chant "justice matters" and "innocence matters" along the way.

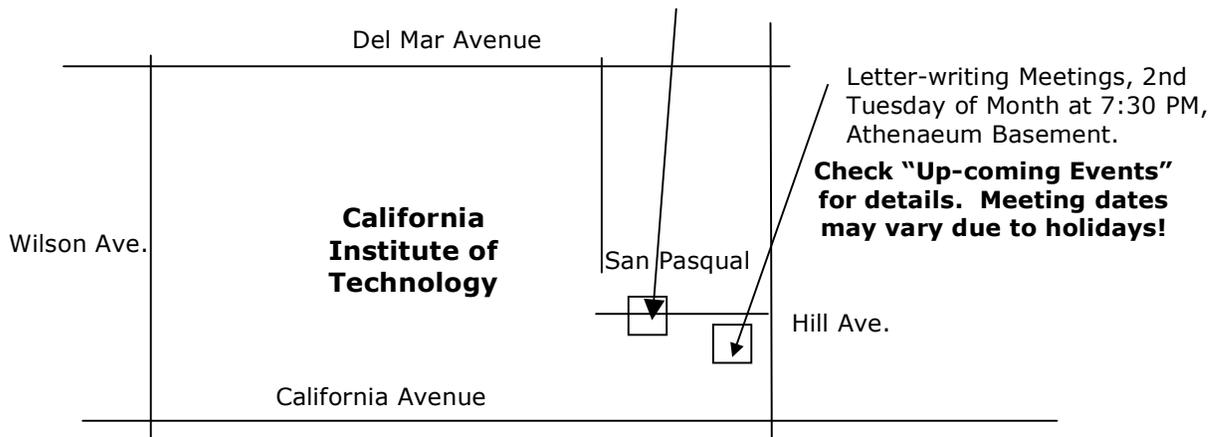
At the church, Davis' older sister, Martina Davis Correia, said she was gratified by the turnout. "Everyone is here," Correia told a reporter. "No matter what happens on the 23rd we win. People are getting involved. They're not standing for executing people for no reason."

She said she would not give up even if her brother is put to death on Tuesday. Rejection of his appeals so far has been on procedural grounds, she said. "I'm taking this fight to the White House," Correia said. "This is about a system of injustice that we have to expose."

MONTHLY LETTER COUNT

UAs	7
DP actions	7
Total:	14
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.