



# Amnesty International

**Orange County**

GROUP 141 **ORANGE** • GROUP 175 **LONG BEACH**  
GROUP 178 **IRVINE** • GROUP 596 **HUNTINGTON BEACH**

May 2003

## 1,526 executed in 2002

During 2002 over 1,526 people were executed in 31 countries, Amnesty International said in an April 11 press release.

Releasing its statistics for the number of worldwide executions carried out during 2002, Amnesty International called on the UN Commission on Human Rights to take strong action against the death penalty at its annual session, currently sitting in Geneva, and to establish a universal moratorium on executions.

"The Commission on Human Rights will hopefully soon pass another strong resolution reiterating its call for an immediate worldwide moratorium on executions and urging states to respect international standards, including the ban on executing child offenders."

"The UN should take the lead and take firm and positive measures to protect those facing the death penalty."

Amnesty International stressed that the figures released today only include cases known to the organization. "It is impossible to give a complete total because many countries deliberately keep the true numbers of those executed secret, belying the supposed deterrent value of the death penalty," the human rights organization said.

Amnesty International also recorded over 3,248 people who were sentenced to death in 67 countries during 2002.

"Many cases were in blatant violation of international standards on the application of the death penalty," Amnesty International said.

"Prisoners were sentenced to death following unfair trials. There were executions of child offenders—people convicted of crimes committed when they were under the age of 18." Three such executions were recorded in 2002—all in the USA.

Amnesty International recorded 1,060 executions in China and 113 executions in Iran, but the true number was believed to be much higher in both countries. Seventy-one people were executed in the USA, up from 66 in 2001.

"The figures for China, Iran and the USA accounted for 81 per cent of all known executions in 2002," Amnesty International said.

"Yet there has also been progress towards abolition. By the end of the year, 111 countries had abolished the death penalty in law or practice."

During 2002, Cyprus and Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro) abolished the death penalty for all offences, while Turkey abolished the death penalty in practice.

Amnesty International welcomed the decision by the President of Tanzania in April 2002 to commute the death sentences

of 100 people convicted of murder, and the commutation of 17 death sentences in Saudi Arabia in December.

More recently, Governor George Ryan of the state of Illinois decided, when leaving office in January 2003, to commute the sentences of all 167 prisoners on the state's death row. Suspension of executions were announced in Guatemala, the Philippines and the US state of Maryland. In Kyrgyzstan, the President announced in January 2003 that the country's moratorium in executions would be extended for another year.

Additionally, during 2002 Djibouti, Lithuania and South Africa ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)—a treaty providing for the total abolition of the death penalty – bringing the number of state parties to the Second Optional Protocol to 49.

In Europe, a new treaty providing for the total abolition of the death penalty with no exceptions was adopted and opened for signature. By the end of the year five countries had ratified Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights, and 34 other countries had signed it.

Another positive development in 2002 was the formation of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty, comprising trade unions, bar associations, local and regional governments and human rights organizations. This new coalition is working for the universal abolition of capital punishment. Amnesty International has been joined by the other members of the Coalition in appealing for action by the UN Commission on Human Rights.

"The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and a violation of the right to life," Amnesty International said.

"It is time to get rid of this barbaric punishment forever."

## Volunteers Recognized

The Western Region Standing Committee on Membership Development recently selected Dr. Barb Bocek for the 2003 Western Region Outstanding Volunteer Award for her many contributions to the region, including service as a Guatemala Country Specialist. The award included a subsidy to attend the 2003 Annual General Meeting in Pittsburgh.

Certificates of Appreciation were awarded in recognition of the leadership and contributions of 11 other regional volunteers: Nadezhda Banchik, Geoffrey Barrett, Joshua L. Cooper, James Cowdrey, Larry Ebersole, Lois Pribble, Anne Rosenzweig, Maria Telesco, Martha Ter Maat, Tomasz Trzpil, and Jeffrey Zankel.

## April Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### **Attendees**

Ravi Alexander, Rukshana Alexander, Jeannine Christensen, J. Kevin Gaffney, Deidre Jackson, Tami Jacoby, Gordon Johnson, Vangee Oberschlake, Priscilla Rocco, and DeDe.

#### **Letter-Writing**

we wrote letters for our adopted prisoner of conscience, the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang of Viet Nam. We also wrote letters for an Egypt action, and to our senators concerning the Iraq crisis.

#### **Speaker**

Vangee suggested a speaker for all of the local AI groups to come speak in few months. She has been working with women in Afghanistan.

#### **Regional Conferecne**

Deputy Western Regional Director Michele Williams is looking for folks to volunteer to help with the planning of the regional conference which will be held the last weekend in October in Redondo beach.

## April Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### **Attendees**

Mary Kaye Dunn, Kevin Gaffney, Shean McMahon, Jim Roberts, and Jamie Skaluba.

#### **Letter-Writing**

We wrote five letters on behalf of our prisoner of conscience, Nguyen Dinh Huy of Viet Nam. In addition we signed two petitions on behalf of two other AI prisoners of conscience and sent a postcard to Myanmar on behalf of Dr. Saial Than Tun.

#### **Discussion and Business**

Keven led a short discussion involving a couple of aspects of the new AI mission and, as treasurer, another discussion of ideas for needed fundraising for the group. Also, the group noted the news that the United States has detained juveniles at Camp X-Ray in Cuba as "unlawful combatants."

All the members in attendance discovered they all were by blood full or part Irish and as a result agreed to meet soon at Limerick's Pub and Grill.

Bobbi Kendig was confirmed (in absentia) to be the group's choice for the post of AI Long Beach group coordinator.

## April Meeting Minutes

### Group #596 Huntington Beach

#### **Special Speakers**

Thanks to Shyamal Leonard, we had a guest speaker, Richard Gillock from the ACLU. He spoke on "Civil Liberties After 9/11: A discussion of the USA Patriot Act from the ACLU perspective."

We had over 50 participants! (Another big "thank you" to Rhonda for making up nearly 50 new member packets for the meeting!)

He gave a general overview of the Patriot Act, its history, and certain areas of concern.

Michele Williams, Deputy Director of Amnesty International USA, also gave a summary of the work that Amnesty will be doing as part of the War on Terrorism and the coalitions and alliances that we are forming to become more effective in our campaigns. For more information, you can go to the ACLU website ([www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)) and search for the Patriot Act. For a more human rights focus on the Patriot Act, go to AI USA's website under "The War on Terror": <http://www.amnestyusa.org/waronterror/>.

#### **Next Month's Meeting**

**We have a date change and room change for our May meeting due to the holiday! We will meet on Wednesday, May 28, at 7:00 PM in classroom 7A.**

We will be getting an update on Afghanistan and coordinating our next event, an interfaith musical performance focusing on the "Imagine" Campaign. Please join us!

## Demand ExxonMobil Take Responsibility For Human Rights

ExxonMobil, the world's largest oil and gas company, operates in several countries cited for egregious human rights violations, including: Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, and Nigeria. In Indonesia, the company forged close relationships with the past government of General Suharto and the Indonesian military force, known for its history of grave human rights violations. The company is currently being sued on behalf of 11 villagers from Aceh, Indonesia who were allegedly victims of human rights abuses including murder, torture, sexual violence, and kidnapping, perpetrated by members of the military contracted as security forces by ExxonMobil.

ExxonMobil denies these allegations and says that it condemns human rights violations in any form. The company contends that its current ethics policies are substantially equivalent to a human rights policy, yet its existing Standards of Business Conduct do not explicitly support and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Amnesty International calls on the company to develop and implement a comprehensive, transparent and verifiable human rights policy.

Amnesty International USA asked for this in its first shareholder resolution with ExxonMobil last year, receiving the support of many individual and institutional investors, including the public employee retirement systems of New York (City and State) and California. The resolution attracted enough votes to allow it to be re-filed for 2003.

This second resolution will come up for consideration at ExxonMobil's Annual Meeting in late May 2003. Many shareholders, especially the larger institutional shareholders, make their voting decisions in the weeks just before the meeting.

To learn more about the shareholder resolution and Amnesty concerns for human rights violations connected to ExxonMobil's operations in Indonesia, Chad and Cameroon, and find out how you can take action, go to [www.amnestyusa.org/business/exxonmobil.html](http://www.amnestyusa.org/business/exxonmobil.html).

## Amnesty international Film Festival

The Amnesty International Film Festival, co-presented by The City of West Hollywood, will be held at the Directors Guild of America, 7920 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, May 28 through June 1. The festival will feature 27 human rights documentary, short, and feature films from 10 countries.

Among the notable films included in Amnestys flagship DGA festival is a special archive presentation of Warner Brothers Academy Award winning *The Killing Fields*. The special opening night event will feature a brief introductory program during which director Roland Joffé will receive the 2003 Artists for Amnesty Award. Other special guests will also participate in the program. "Nearly 20 years after its original release, *The Killing Fields* remains not only relevant to todays audiences, but becomes even more critical to showcase the lessons of history given current world events," said Bonnie Abaunza, Director, Artists for Amnesty, Amnesty International.

Also of note in the 2003 line-up is the special preview screening of the new documentary *Discovering Dominga*, in which a young mother from Iowa learns that she is a survivor of one of the most horrific episodes in Guatemala's bloody civil war. Denise Becker's journey of discovery leads her back to Guatemala where she learns that she was born Dominga sic Ruiz, and fled the Rio Negro Massacres at the age of nine while soldiers slaughtered her family and community. "This unique personal perspective on Guatemala's troubled past is a real jewel," said Festival Producer Dennis Palmieri. *Discovering Dominga* will air nationally on P.O.V. this summer.

This year's program also includes a number of groundbreaking films that openly challenge conventional wisdom, and in some cases, government policy and veracity. The hard-hitting *Afghan Massacre* boldly questions the role of U.S. forces in the massacre of up to 3,000 prisoners who surrendered to Afghan allies of the U.S. during the recent conflict. *State of Denial* slams South Africa's national AIDS policies as thousands live and die with the disease in the face government neglect, and *Bus 174* uses stock footage from Brazilian news broadcasts in a riveting chronicle of the hijacking of a city bus in Rio that had the entire country glued to their TVs as police bungled the tense situation.

In addition to 27 remarkable pieces of film and video, Amnesty International will also bring filmmakers to present their work for several of the screenings. "What many people don't realize about human rights documentary filmmakers is that they often have to risk more than their time and money

to make these films," said Palmieri.

Patricia Flynn will be on hand for her film *Discovering Dominga*; Jamie Doran will take questions after the screening of *Afghan Massacre*, John Smihula will discuss *Hidden in Plain Sight's* challenge to the U.S. Army's School of the Americas, and AFI film student Tanja Mairitsch will introduce her short film *Fueling the Fire*.

General admission for the films is \$8, Amnesty International members \$6, students \$4. For advance ticket sales (recommended) and group sales, please call (310) 815-0450.

For the complete schedule and film synopses, along with other information, please see the Website [www.amnestyusa.org/filmfest](http://www.amnestyusa.org/filmfest).

### Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to help with the film festival with a variety of tasks, including tabling, getting petitions signed, answering questions about AI, staffing the box office, checking RSVPs, and selling and taking tickets. Volunteers are welcome to watch the films as long as there is at least one person at the door during the screening. In the event you cannot see the film on your shift a ticket for any other screening will be made available to you. There will be a donation box at the AI table. Any money collected will be split up among the groups that volunteer.

If you would like to volunteer, contact Tracy Gore at [tgore@earthlink.net](mailto:tgore@earthlink.net) or (323) 876-2662.

## Western Regional Conference

This year's Amnesty International 2003 Western Regional Conference will take place in Redondo Beach on the weekend of October 31–November 2. The conference is in the planning process now and Michele Williams, the Deputy Regional Director, is asking for any suggestions for workshops and/or speakers. The conference normally has about 15 workshops in 3 concurrent sessions.

This year's theme will center around AIUSA's Campaign Against Discrimination, which focuses on the following areas: ill-treatment of children in INS custody, racial profiling pre- and post-September 11, police brutality against LGBT people, and violence against women, including domestic violence and women in conflict/post-conflict. Any and all workshop suggestions/topics, though, are welcome.

Please email or mail your requests or suggestions for workshops by Thursday, May 29, to Michele Williams at [mwilliams@aiusa.org](mailto:mwilliams@aiusa.org) or at the Los Angeles Office at 2999 Overland Avenue, Suite 111, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups, please return this coupon to the address below with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues are used to cover the costs of this newsletter and of letters on behalf of prisoners. Your address label contains your membership expiration date.

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