



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

November 2004

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

AI Mission Returns From Sudan

This article is taken from the October 2004 Connect.

An Amnesty International delegation returned from Sudan in September painting a bleak picture of displacement and despair in the Darfur region. Amnesty International was the first international non-governmental human rights organization to gain access to the region and meet with senior members of the Sudanese Government since the Darfur crisis began. The mission included AIUSA Executive Director William F. Schulz as well as AI Secretary General Irene Khan and Samkelo Mokhine, Chair of AI South Africa.

"When the Minister of the Interior angrily declared that 'you [Amnesty International] make a judgment before you come to the country,' it was good to be able to say, 'We would gladly have come earlier, sir, if your government had permitted us,' "" remarked Schulz.

In a marked departure from past practice, the mission delegates were given free and full access to Darfur. Delegates visited Al Jeneina, Nyala and Al Fasher and met with senior government ministers and officials in Khartoum and Darfur, as well as international organizations and civil society representatives. The visit confirmed Amnesty International's earlier analysis of attacks on villages by the government-supported Janjaweed militia, in some cases backed by the Sudanese armed forces, killing civilians, looting and burning homes.

The delegation saw several sites where villages had been burned to the ground, or abandoned and were now almost overgrown with vegetation. They saw nomads grazing camels, goats and cattle on land where farming villages once stood.

They talked to displaced persons in camps and villages in Western Darfur and in Nyala in Southern Darfur. Two women described how, in February, armed militia attacked their village near Nuri in Western Darfur, leaving some 130 people dead. One of the women said that so many men had been killed that it was left to them to bury the dead and she and another woman had buried seven men. The women placed the bodies they could not bury that evening in a shelter, but they said that the Janjaweed returned later that night and burned the shelter and the bodies.

"The displacement of people continues—people are still being uprooted from their homes by fighting as well as by deliberate attacks on civilians," stated Schulz describing the recent arrival of 3,000 people to the Kalma camp. "While we found engagement and admission of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by some members of the government, there was total denial by others. Such denial is insulting to the victims," Khan stated.

The delegates visited displaced people from tribes now

in Musai camp near Nyala, where they heard "mirror image" accounts of killings and rapes said to have been committed by the insurgents.

Amnesty International acknowledged the government's efforts to increase the number of police in Darfur by redeployment from other parts of Sudan. However, often they are not properly equipped. The delegation also heard from displaced persons that police did not investigate their complaints and that some of the Janjaweed had even been apparently absorbed into the police and government militia.

"Because of rampant insecurity and the failure to address past abuses, those who have suffered say they do not trust the government. They say they don't feel safe in the camps, they say they are terrified outside. Every person we spoke to in the camps was adamant that they do not feel safe enough to return to their villages," said Mokhine. "In this situation the only solution is a massive increase in monitors. An international presence in every district is what is needed now to build the confidence of the people and improve security."

While Amnesty International welcomed the proposed increase of African Union monitors, Khan said "It is not just an issue of numbers but also of ensuring that the mandate and capacity of the AU monitors are strengthened to enable them to meet expectations. The UN human rights observers must also be dramatically increased and properly resourced to carry out their responsibilities. It is not a question of simply having more policemen, but of them having the ability and willingness to protect people."

"Restoring security is essential to enable people to return home voluntarily and in safety and dignity. The significance of establishing these conditions cannot be too heavily underscored. Otherwise there is a risk that ethnic cleansing might lead to ethnic re-engineering," cautioned Khan, pointing out that prolonged displacement could upset the demographic balance in the region.

The Amnesty International delegation found that "safe areas" designated by the Sudanese Government do not provide real safety to those living there, imply that those living elsewhere can be attacked with impunity, and is a disincentive for restoring security elsewhere.

"The UN must persuade the Government of Sudan to abandon this concept and instead put its weight behind the already agreed Plan of Action to enhance safety throughout Darfur by stopping violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, respecting the ceasefire, disarming and disbanding the militia, and ending impunity," said Khan.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

In October we sent letters to officials in Rwanda, the Sudan, and for our POC in Vietnam. Deidre gave a short talk on the history and nature of the conflict in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Last month she spoke to both the Orange and Long Beach groups about the continued incarceration of POWs in Guantanamo and the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib.

Both Deidre and Kevin will be attending the Western Regional Conference in Salt Lake City and will be covering all of the comings and goings of the conference for the November meeting.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Mike Farris, Kevin Gaffney, Deidre Jackson, Bobbi Kendig.

Amnesty International's Mission

The group talked about a resolution making the rounds of regional conferences regarding Amnesty International's mission, in the face of changes following Amnesty's "Integrated Strategic Plan." The proposed resolution (in summary) would continue AI's mission to prevent and end grave abuses, define such abuses, ensure that prisoners of conscience are specifically included in Amnesty's plan, and amend the plan to maintain research capacity for countries that don't have a country action plan. The group was in agreement that the resolution covers and institutionalizes issues important to us and agreed that if anyone from the group is able to attend the regional conference in Salt Lake City, that person should vote for this resolution on behalf of our group.

Death Penalty Event

Kevin said the Orange County chapter of California People of Faith Against the Death Penalty are planning a December 3 event featuring the play *A Prison of the Mind*. One of the sponsors may be the Green Party, in which case we won't be able to participate. (A side discussion took place about more emphasis from Amnesty that groups take pains not to appear to align with any political group, so as to remain purely nonpartisan.) If the People of Faith are OK with just having Amnesty cosponsor, we will approach the Orange, Huntington Beach, and Amnesty groups. This could be a great opportunity to have an event to celebrate Human Rights Day (December 10) in the Orange County area.

Myanmar Update

Jim was sick and unable to attend, so no in-depth insight from our resident country expert, but the group mulled over the breaking news that Myanmar's Prime Minister was ousted by the military junta.

Tabling

Norma reported back on the sad news that local bookstores Borders and Barnes and Noble seem unwilling to stick their necks out (as they see it) and have our group table. However, Wild Oats has graciously agreed to host us. We hope to table the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

Letter-Writing

The group sent 19 letters to members of parliament in Zimbabwe, six letters to Kosovo, 22 letters to Sudan, seven letters to the Sudanese ambassador in Washington, D.C., and seven letters to Nepal.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #596 Huntington Beach

For our October meeting we watched *The Lost Boys of Sudan* a documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees on their journey from Sudan to America. We were also joined by Alepho, one of the "Lost Boys" who is now residing in San Diego. He shared with us his inspirational story of struggle and survival in one of Africa's cruelest civil wars as well as his experiences on adapting to American culture. Judy Bernstein, a full time volunteer and manager of the "Lost Boys" throughout California was also in attendance and made it possible for Alepho to have been there. We had approximately 50 people in attendance many of whom stayed after the meeting had ended to continue conversing with Alepho. To learn more about the documentary you can visit www.lostboysfilm.com.

Upcoming Meetings

For November, we will be meeting at 7:00 PM, Monday, November 29, to discuss events that we will be trying to put together in the upcoming year.

Topics to be discussed will include a mini-letter-writing marathon that will be held in the month of December, an event that will focus on a peaceful solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, a possible event directed at addressing global poverty, a mini-conference focusing on the topic of HIV / AIDS, fundraising ideas, as well as any other suggestions that anybody might have.

Food will be provided, so please come on an empty stomach and be ready to share your thoughts and ideas.

Voices from the Inside

California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty (CPF), Orange County Chapter, and Amnesty International Orange County present the 3rd annual Voices from the Inside death penalty program on Friday, December 3, at 7:00 PM.

The program will feature a performance of *A Prison of the Mind*, a thought provoking one-act play about the death penalty that brings to life the emotions of the victim's family, the death row inmate's family, the judge, the prosecutor, the public defender, and others. Actress/director/author Marion Scherer's powerful one-woman show probes the conscience of her audience as she asks not do you believe in the death penalty but rather will this heal your heart? As the play's Devil's Advocate, Marion explores the issues with a Victims Rights Activist who wants her sister's murderer put to death.

The program will take place in the Auditorium, Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph, 480 S. Batavia, Orange, and will include refreshments. A free will offering is requested. For more information, visit the website <http://detention.la-archdiocese.org/penalty.html> or email cpfocc@yahoo.com.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

Treasurer's Report

We had a very successful fundraiser at the Sting/Annie Lennox concert: approximately \$750 for our group alone! Thank you Annie (who mentioned AI on stage) and Sting. Recent expenses: the group made donations to two "Lost Boys of Sudan" currently living in San Diego, paid dues to the National Organisation, and sponsored a group member to go to the Western Regional Conference in Salt Lake City.

Tabling

The group had a table at the Peace Wants You festival at the University of California, Irvine, along with the Huntington Beach group and the UCI student group. Many non-profit organizations had tables at the festival and there was a good roster of speakers. We hope to table there again next year.

End-of-Year Events

We will invite the other Orange County groups to participate in the Amnesty International Write-a-Thon (<http://www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon>) at a location yet to be determined. Possible locations are: Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church in Costa Mesa, Renaissance Café in Tustin, The Lab (shopping center) in Costa Mesa. Any suggestions are welcome.

Julie Ralls will be contacting other group coordinators to plan the possibility of a common holiday party reuniting all Amnesty groups in Orange County and Long Beach.

Letter-Writing

We sent 48 letters and 2 petitions at the October meeting.

Next Month's Meeting

At our next meeting, we will be having in-depth coverage on our current Action Files (Dr. Sa'adey and Rebiya Kadeer) and a report on the latest news with the Western Africa Regional Action Network (WARAN).

At the November meeting, bring some holiday cards for Amnesty International's annual Holiday Card Action (See www.amnestyusa.org/action/holiday/index.html).

From the Executive Director Of Hamsters And Human Rights

This article is taken from the October 2004 Connect.

Swift boats, hamsters, "Sex and the City," jobs, health care, taxes, the war in Iraq—all these have played prominent roles in the presidential campaign to this point, but isn't it striking what has received very little attention from any of the candidates?

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.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Please make your check payable to Amnesty International. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!

Despite one official report after another disclosing the widespread use of torture by U.S. military and intelligence, torture has been spoken of only in the most general terms. With slaughter continuing in Sudan, what the U.S. should do about it—equip and transport African Union troops, for example—is a topic absent from the debate. With renewal of the Patriot Act soon to be decided in Congress, the implications of a post-9/11 world for our rights and liberties is far from the forefront of candidates' concerns.

The International Criminal Court is in its nascency but would you know that from those who are running for President? And of course the use of the death penalty, even the juvenile death penalty, is a subject those who oppose the punishment will do almost anything to avoid discussing.

In part this is due to Mr. Bush's stubbornness and Mr. Kerry's cautiousness and Mr. Nader's God-knows-what, but it is also due to the failure of the citizenry to demand answers. It is a reflection of the relatively modest organized constituency pushing for human rights accountability in this country. And it is a call to arms to those of us in Amnesty to see to it that in the time remaining in the campaign, human rights not be relegated to the back burner—at the Presidential or Congressional levels.

Amnesty International takes no position on particular candidates but, through the news media and through direct communications with the candidates and their advisors, we can find out whether, for instance, as the Schlesinger report allowed, torture in Iraq had merely been imported from Guantanamo and Afghanistan. Does that mean that it was acceptable in the latter two contexts, but not the former? Or is it truly unacceptable in all contexts? Schlesinger was strangely silent on the question.

And we can find out whether Mr. Bush and Mr. Kerry, both supporters of intervention in Iraq, would do anything more than we are already doing to stop impending genocide in Sudan. Elections choose leaders who choose agendas for the future. There is no better time than this to do what we can to hold those leaders to account and shape those agendas to our liking.

William Schulz
Executive Director

Summer Postcard Action Update

Saleh Mahmud Osman, a subject of AIUSA's recent Summer Postcard Action, was released from Kober Prison in Sudan on September 4. Amnesty activists had sent thousands of cards and letters to Osman during the summer. After his release he expressed thanks and gratitude to Amnesty International members for their support.

Return to:

Amnesty International
P.O. Box 14485
Irvine, CA 92623-4485

For (check one):

- ☐ Orange Group
- ☐ Irvine Group
- ☐ Huntington Beach
- ☐ Long Beach

Calendar

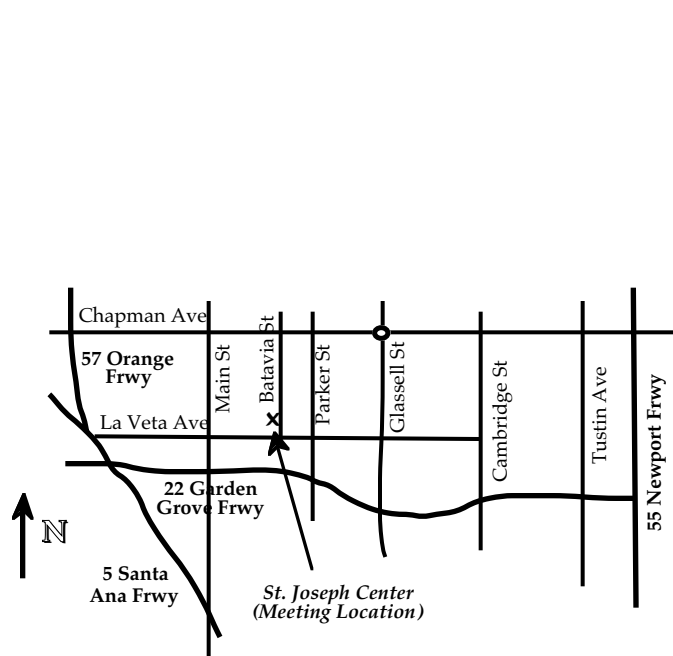
November

16 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting in Classroom 3 at the Sisters of St. Joseph Special Events Center, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. **Note the new location!** Look for the signs. Group #141 meets the third Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Deidre Jackson at (562) 430-7381.

24 Wednesday 7:00 PM

Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Ather-ton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Bobbi Kendig at (562) 420-1155.



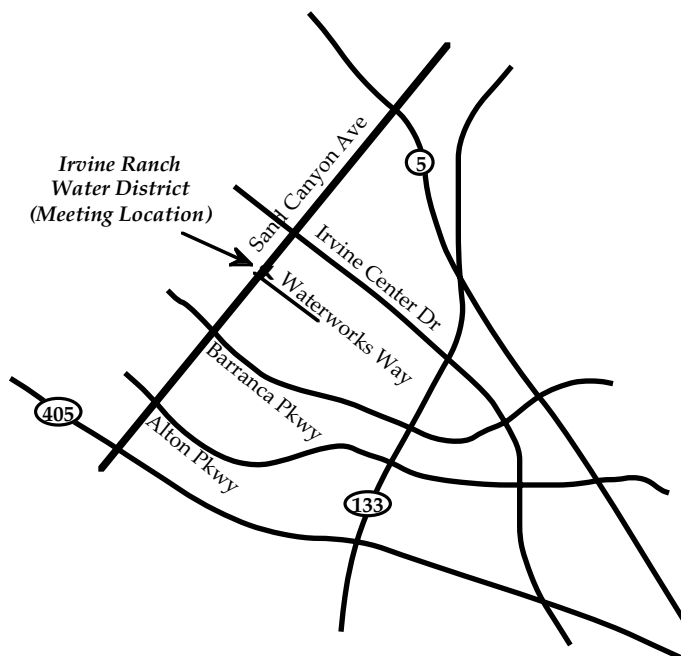
Group #141 Orange Meeting Location

29 Monday 7:00 PM

Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Room 7A, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. Group #596 meets the last Monday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Darcie Olson at (949) 650-5375.

30 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, between the 5 and 405 freeways. **Note the new location!** See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at (714) 557-8427.



Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

Amnesty International Local Group 178
Post Office Box 14485
Irvine, California 92623-4485