



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

November 2005

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

USA: New AI Report Corroborates “Black Sites”

This article is taken from an November 7, 2005 AIUSA press release.

Amnesty International today released *Secret Detention in CIA “Black Sites,”* a new report detailing the detention of three Yemeni nationals who had “disappeared” into the labyrinth of U.S.-run secret detention facilities in 2003. The men, Muhammad al-Assad, Salah Ali and Muhammad Bashmilah, were kept in complete isolation in a series of secret detention centers operated by the United States, with no judicial review, notice to their family or contact with the outside world.

This document, released on the heels of media reports exposing the United States’ secret detention facilities known as black sites, provides detailed information about the three Yemeni nationals who were held in secret U.S.-run facilities before resurfacing in Yemeni custody, including allegations that they were tortured. That these men were returned to Yemeni authorities indicates they were not high-value detainees, demonstrating that almost any suspect can be subject to this unlawful practice. The cases further suggest that the network of clandestine interrogation centers are not reserved solely for high-value detainees, but may be larger, more comprehensive and better organized than previously suspected.

“Each man described facilities and procedures that could not have been created and maintained solely for three low-level suspects,” said Amnesty International USA Executive Director Dr. William F. Schulz. “We fear that what we have heard from these three men is just one small part of the much broader picture of U.S. secret detentions around the world.

“It is absolutely outrageous that the Bush Administration, the self-described defender of democratic values around the world, holds and tortures people in secret facilities or outsources torture, without charge, trial or access to the outside world. This is a blatant violation of U.S. obligations under international law. We cannot ignore the evidence. These detention centers, coupled with torture, indefinite detention and the ‘disappearing’ of people in custody—provide additional impetus for Congress to create an independent commission to investigate all aspects of U.S. detention and interrogation policies,” added Schulz.

In the report, Amnesty International calls on the U.S. government to clarify its position on the legal status of the three Yemeni nationals. If the United States does not maintain any control over them, it should state this clearly, emphasizing that there are no U.S. conditions attached to their transfer. The organization also urges the U.S. government to disclose the locations of the detention centers where the three men were held; disclose the identities of all others held at these places,

and invite the ICRC and other independent human rights organizations like Amnesty International to have full and regular access to those detained. All incommunicado and secret detention should be stopped immediately.

Amnesty International is also calling on the Yemeni government to promptly charge the three men with a recognizable criminal offense and bring them to trial in full accordance with international standards, or release them without condition.

Mexico: Environmental Activist/Prisoner of Conscience Felipe Arreaga Released

Amnesty International has received with pleasure the news of the acquittal of Felipe Arreaga Sánchez, environmental activist, founder of the Peasant Environmentalist Organization of the Sierra de Petatlán (OCESP) and prisoner of conscience. He was released on September 15. However, he, his family and other environmental activists in the region remain in grave danger. After considering his case, Amnesty International believed that the arrest and prosecution of Felipe Arreaga was in retaliation for his peaceful struggle to prevent excessive logging of the region’s forests.

The organization believes that his acquittal was due to the determination of Felipe Arreaga and his family, their defense lawyers from the Tlachinollan Mountain Human Rights Centre (Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan) and national and international pressure demanding justice. All these efforts led the judiciary to take a decision that is in line with the law and justice.

In a letter dated September 21, 2005, Felipe Arreaga wrote to those who worked on obtaining his freedom: “. . . I want to tell you that during the long time of my detention, I always felt accompanied because of the expressions of support that never ceased. . . . I always said that I can die for the cause I believe and that I will not cease in a clean, legal and unselfish struggle that encourages me. . . . Rest assured that my struggle will not cease and that you can count on me even if it is to do an errand. I will continue to walk in the mountains and advocating for human rights and a healthy environment. I will work very hard with my wife, caring for the forests and planting trees. . . .”

Amnesty International would, however, like to remind the authorities that there is still a long way to go before justice can be guaranteed in this case. In this regard the organization added that, “The State must now ensure his safety, that of his wife Celsa Valdovinos and his family, as well as other environmental and human rights activists in Guerrero state.”

October Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Artists Village Tabling

The Orange group will be tabling at the Santa Ana Artists Village Open House on Saturday, December 3. The Artists Village Open House is held on the first Saturday of each month, 7:00–10:00 PM, rain or shine. Anyone wanting to help table is welcome. We will be near the Gypsy Den on the Plaza of the Arts. It is an evening when the galleries stay open late and there are lots of people out walking. The following link shows a map of the area: <http://www.grandcentralartcenter.com/gcacPages/Maps.html>

Parking can be found in the Artists Village Parking Structure at Third Street and Broadway. Walk through the galleries and studios, see a live performance or just hang out and enjoy the music, all for free.

October Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Deidre Gaffney, J. Kevin Gaffney, Bobbi Kendig, Cathleen Kilgallen, Shean McMahon, Steve Wicke

November Special Events

Please join us at our November 16 meeting for two presentations. Steve Wicke will be giving us a timely presentation on torture, and Kevin and Deidre will go over the International Council Meeting decisions.

War on Terror

After Steve's update on the campaign and current events, the group brainstormed about what we can do. Some ideas we came up with: target military contractors in Iraq (and Amnesty already has a list of independent contractors working at Guantanamo), contact Veterans for Peace and other possible allies. Approaching the third parties was successful when Jim went to a local Long Beach company and persuaded them to stop exporting thumbscrews (of course, they weren't being sold as thumbscrews). And also, as always, educate the public about what's going on.

Letter-Writing

The group sent 57 letters to Uganda, Nepal, Washington, D.C., the U.N., China, Benin, California, and Kenya.

Other News

- Amnesty has new reports out on Myanmar and Guantanamo (and there will soon be a campaign focusing on the "Gitmo" (Guantanamo Bay) prisoners. In addition, the Business and Human Rights group has released a report on the Chad-Cameroon pipeline project.
- Best wishes to Naomi, who has been in Peru volunteering.
- The 1000th execution since reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976 could take place this November. Visit 1000executions.org for actions.
- The group was happy to welcome new Area Coordinator Cathleen Kilgallen to the meeting and to the job!

October Meeting Minutes

Group #178 Irvine

Group Business

The group agreed to donate \$100 for Ngawang Choephel. Jacques and Julie will be writing letters to various artists on his behalf.

Group Health and Organization

The Irvine group has been low on numbers and during the meeting discussed recruiting possibilities. One of the ideas was to meet at a local Irvine church that would be open to Amnesty meeting there and spreading the word to its members. Ting, Jacques and Kris were each assigned a church to pursue. In the meantime we will go ahead and reserve our current room for next year just in case we don't find something before the beginning of the year.

Since we are low on numbers and everyone's lives are busy we don't have a coordinator for next year. So, we are changing the structure of the meetings next year until we have one. We will each take turns facilitating the meeting and bringing an agenda. The meeting will focus on letter-writing and the topics that the facilitator brings to discuss. Once we have a coordinator and more members we will start planning events again. We discussed that once we find a new location and coordinator we could do some type of event to bring in new members.

Future Meetings

There will be a November meeting but no December one. We will be participating in the December 10th event with Huntington Beach. More details next month.

Torture Amendment Passes Senate

One week after a massive online lobbying effort by AIUSA activists and allies coast to coast, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the McCain amendment to the Department of Defense spending bill 90–9 re-affirming a ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and establishing the Army Field Manual as the uniform standard by which detainees are to be treated.

AIUSA's Denounce Torture Initiative Congressional District Office Lobby Week took place Sept 26–30. Amnesty delegations urged Senators and Members of Congress to support the establishment of a fully independent commission to investigate all allegations of torture and ill treatment by agents of the U.S. Government around the world, in addition to supporting other initiatives in Congress that work to stop torture and ill-treatment in the context of the U.S.-led "war on terror."

"This was AIUSA's first effort at mobilizing Congressional district lobby delegations through the Web and it proved to be highly successful," enthused Eric Sears, AIUSA's Denounce Torture Initiative Manager. More than 200 delegations registered in 46 states and 90 percent of those who responded to a follow-up survey said they were willing to follow with actions at the Congressional district level if needed.

"We are certain that the lobby delegations contributed to this legislative victory," said Sears. AIUSA activists are now contacting key legislators in the Senate and House Appropriations Committees to ensure that the McCain amendment is retained and stays "as is" in conference committee.

October Meeting Minutes Group #596 Huntington Beach

Letter-Writing

We had over 50 people in attendance and produced over 75 letters on the War on Terror, Death Penalty, and HIV/AIDS.

New Area Coordinator

The new Area Coordinator, Cathleen Kilgallen, attended the meeting. Cathleen would like for the Irvine, Huntington Beach and Orange chapters to have a closer working relationship. She would love to receive suggestions.

Announcement about Mahsa Abassi

Mahsa Abassi won second prize for her submission of her AIDS work in Kenya from the American Academy of Osteopathy. She was flown to Florida to give her presentation in person on October 23.

New Member Coordinator

We need a Member Coordinator. This individual will coordinate welcome packets for each new member and more. If interested, please contact Darcie Olson at c_olson@onebox.com.

Discussion Items

The group discussed campaign updates for the War on Terror, the movie *The Torture Question*, and Senator McCain's amendment on the Army Field Manual and cruel, inhumane, degrading treatment.

Website Update

The website will have a welcome page, news section, an events calendar, links, discussion topics, and more. The temporary website is at <http://home.socal.rr.com/openyourmind/aihb/>

Upcoming Events

Steve Wicke could use help to plan the event on December 10, scheduled for 3:00–9:00 PM at Jude Church. Please contact Steve Wicke directly at stevewicke@earthlink.com.

Topic of the Month: War on Terror

Ali Azizi gave an overview. He discussed his research mission and the larger scope of the "War on Terror," the detainee's right to a fair trial, and torture at the detention centers. The recommended action is to write to your local congressional representative about a detainee's right to a fair trial. Become a member of Amnesty to learn more.

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be Monday, November 28, at 7:00 PM. Our discussion will be about economic, social and cultural rights, and will feature a video and discussion. We will also provide socially conscious gift giving ideas for the holidays. Please send your ideas to us at amnesty596@gmail.com.

From the Executive Director The Facts Behind Lord Of War

Those of you who watched the new film *Lord of War* may have wondered how much fact lies behind the "based on true events" claim of the movie. The film, directed by Andrew Niccol, shows a gunrunner easily trafficking arms to brutal dictators and armed groups around the world.

This month I, along with other Amnesty International staff and activists, had an opportunity to respond to that question and others when we were interviewed for a documentary that will accompany the release of the *Lord of War* DVD. Here's some of what we said: While the film is fictional, the real life events and circumstances that inspired the film are hauntingly true. Every year, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children are killed because of the uncontrolled proliferation of arms; many more are maimed, tortured or forced to flee their homes.

Since the end of the Cold War, ruthless arms brokers have been at the center of many of the most troubling arms deals. According to UN investigations, arms brokers or private middlemen have been instrumental in arranging arms shipments to several countries under UN arms embargoes, such as Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

As the film accurately depicts, gunrunners like the notorious Victor Bout, helped supply the former dictator of Liberia, Charles Taylor, with arms, including assault rifles. Taylor's forces then used those arms to wreak havoc on their own citizens, killing, maiming and raping innocent civilians.

The fact that gunrunners are rarely prosecuted is also disturbingly true. Despite ample evidence of arms brokers' involvement in arms transfers to countries under UN arms embargoes, not one individual has been convicted for violating these embargoes in national courts. The lack of convictions is in part because so few countries have laws that specifically regulate arms brokering. Although the film might imply otherwise, governments, including the United States, have begun to address this scourge. At the moment, close to 35 governments have laws that regulate arms brokering, up from 25 last year. Many more governments, however, need to adopt similar laws and cooperate more effectively to prevent illicit arms brokering.

That is why Amnesty International is encouraging the U.S. Government to support a strong global agreement on arms brokering. It's also why it's essential for your congressional representatives to hear from you on this issue. To learn more about real arms brokers and to take action, go to <http://www.amnestyusa.org/lordofwar/>, and look for the release of the *Lord of War* on DVD!

William Schulz, Executive Director

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 shown with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues cover the costs of this newsletter and of stamps used for saving lives. Your address label contains your membership expiration date. Join us!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Return to:

Amnesty International
Group 596
P.O. Box 5368
Huntington Beach, CA 92615

For (check one):

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

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

Calendar

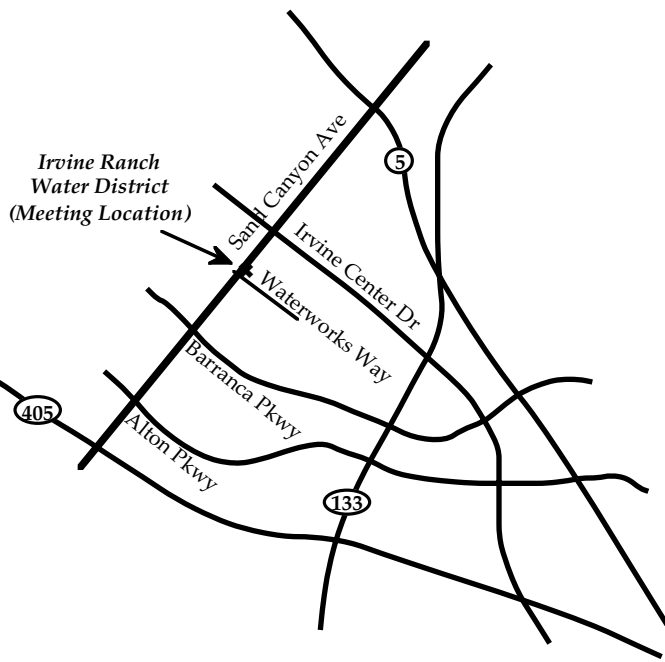
November

15 Tuesday 7:00 PM

Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting in Classroom 3 at the Sisters of St. Joseph, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. Look for the classroom/ auditorium building behind the main building. Drive around and to the back. Group #141 meets the third Tuesday of each month. For further information about the group, contact Deidre Jackson at (562) 430-7381.

16 Wednesday 7:00 PM

Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For further information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.



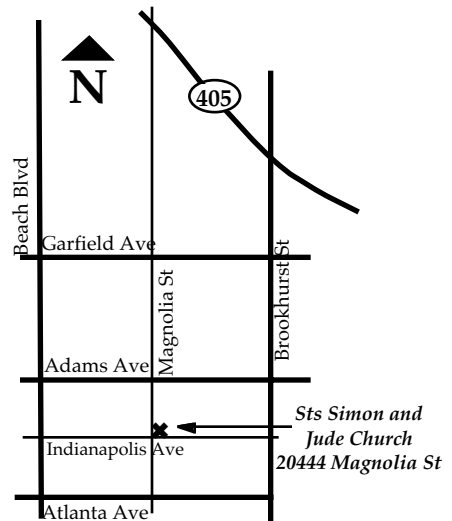
Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

28 Monday 7:00 PM

Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. Please note the special meeting day.

29 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. See details on the web page <http://www.aiusaoc.org>. For more information about the group, contact Kris Elali at (714) 724-5811.



Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting Location

Amnesty International
Group 596
P.O. Box 5368
Huntington Beach, CA 92615