



Amnesty International

Orange County

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

July 2006

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

Sudan: Responding to the Crisis In Darfur

This article is taken from the July–August 2006 AIUSA Connect.

Amnesty International has gone into full crisis mode in response to the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Darfur.

In June, AI Secretary General Irene Kahn declared a movement wide “Crisis Response” that will enable the organization to react more comprehensively to the catastrophe. A Crisis Response is the highest level in AI’s crisis mechanism and, once invoked, allows greater support and resources to flow from the International Secretariat to AI’s national sections. This will permit AIUSA to significantly increase its response to the crisis at all levels of the organization.

Between 200,000 and 300,000 people are believed to have died and 2.5 million more left homeless in the three-year-old conflict, which the United Nations has called the world’s worst humanitarian disaster. Despite the presence of an African Union peacekeeping force, the Sudanese Government’s proxy Janjawid militia continues to carry out routine attacks throughout the region and into neighboring Chad, burning and depopulating villages, often employing rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons of war. With estimates that over 3 million people are in need of daily humanitarian assistance, aid has been hindered, both by deliberate Sudanese Government obstruction and because of critical funding shortfalls at the international level.

There are also some encouraging signs, including the recent signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and growing support for a UN peacekeeping force. But that progress remains tenuous. Militia fighting has increased recently in Darfur and across the border in Chad. The transition to a better-equipped UN force is also still months away.

AIUSA’s Sudan Country Specialist Scott Edwards believes this is a critical moment for Amnesty to act. “Essentially we are now at a cross-roads, where things could potentially get much better or much worse,” explains Edwards. “In the past six months we’ve seen this turn from something between the Darfuri people, the Darfuri rebels and the Sudanese Government to something that spilled over into the border in Chad, and now involves the Chadian Government and lots of international actors. If there’s any situation to point to that necessitates a crisis response now and pulling together the resources available for AI’s membership and concerned people to act, it’s the present situation in Darfur.”

AIUSA’s Crisis Prevention and Response Unit is now organizing a special Darfur Crisis Response Team to develop and coordinate a comprehensive action plan for the crisis in close collaboration with Amnesty’s program staff and Regional Offices. In the days and weeks ahead activists can expect to see a

Darfur Organizing Guide as well as additional organizing materials, including actions, postcards, photo exhibits, petitions and other campaigning tools.

“During the Crisis Response, all of us must spare no effort to make a positive impact on the most pressing human rights concerns in Darfur and to take action wherever possible to diminish the severity of the situation,” stressed AIUSA Executive Director Larry Cox. “While the situation in Darfur is daunting, it is also clear that there are many meaningful opportunities for AI to make a critical impact on this situation. Momentum is gathering for a transition to a full UN peacekeeping force that would both be better equipped and have a stronger mandate to protect civilians. An arduous peace process has also resulted in a fragile peace agreement between the government and the largest rebel group. These are hopeful signs, but they require AI’s strong action to ensure that they lead to the protection of civilians and an end to the grave human rights abuses that have characterized the conflict in Darfur.”

Act Now

Thousands of girls and women have been raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence in Darfur. Inquiries by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court identified “high numbers of mass rapes and other forms of extremely serious gender violence,” and a UN Commission of Inquiry found that these abuses amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Since the launch of the ICC investigation in June 2005, however, Sudanese authorities have publicly refused to comply with ICC requests or otherwise allow the Court to conduct investigations in Darfur. The ICC is the world’s first permanent court able to hold individuals criminally responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It can play a unique role in combating impunity for the worst crimes of violence against women. Support the ICC’s call for justice for the women and girls of Darfur. Go to Amnesty International’s Online Action Center at <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org>.

The AC Corner

From Cathleen Kilgallen, Area Coordinator for the Orange County and Long Beach groups

Hi All! I hope everyone’s enjoying the summer. To keep the fun going, keep your calendars open for Saturday, September 23. If everything goes according to plan, we can all meet up and have a grand picnic. We’re tentatively looking at Mile Square Park just off the 405 freeway in Fountain Valley, but as always, send suggestions my way. Keep an eye out for more details as we get closer to the big day, and I hope to see you all there!

June Meeting Minutes

Group #141 Orange

Letter-Writing Actions

The group sent a total of 24 letters this month. These included letters to Sri Lankan officials concerning the "disappearance" of eight Tamil men from a Hindu temple, to Guatemalan officials asking for an investigation of shootings near houses of former coffee plantation workers who had been awarded land by a judge in compensation for their unfair dismissal, and to U.S. officials calling for the closure of the detention facilities at Guantanamo.

Upcoming Events

- The group discussed with Area Coordinator Cathleen Kilgallen holding a picnic for the Orange County and Long Beach groups sometime during the summer or early fall. After discussing this with the other groups, it was tentatively decided to hold this on Saturday, September 23 at Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley.
- The group also discussed holding an International Human Rights Day (December 10) event, possibly in conjunction with the United Nations Association. Cathleen was going to bring this up with the other groups as well.

Next Month's Meeting

The group will be working on AIUSA's Summer Postcard Action at our July 18 meeting. Please bring some picture postcards to the meeting.

June Meeting Minutes

Group #175 Long Beach

Attendees

Mary Kay Dunn, Norma Edwards, Mike Ferris, Bobbi Kendig, Cathleen Kilgallen, Elizabeth Petras, Jim Roberts, Robin Schneider, Steve Wicke, Carole Widding

Welcome Newcomers!

We were happy to be joined by Carole (who read about us in the *Grunion* calendar) and Robin (who came with Mary Kay).

War on Terror/Denounce Torture Campaigns

Our campaign(s) coordinator, Steve, reported that all reporters were recently kicked out of Guantanamo. Apparently this was in reaction to three successful suicides on June 10. (There have been dozens of attempts since the camp was set up four years ago.) Camp commander Rear Admiral Harry Harris said, "They are smart. They are creative, they are committed. ... They have no regard for life, either ours or their own. I believe this was not an act of desperation, but an act of asymmetrical warfare waged against us."

In addition, the Red Cross is still being denied entrance. It is becoming harder to get information about the camp. Meanwhile, *Road to Guantanamo* (a movie that Amnesty recommends) has hit theaters and brought some new attention to the stories of some released prisoners who returned to England.

The group had an interesting discussion about the Geneva Convention and "enemy combatants." The War on Terror really has brought a lot of issues to the fore (what are the rules of engagement when not fighting a country or recognized gov-

ernment?), but, unfortunately, these issues are not always very clearly explained by the media. Amnesty members have their work cut out for them to educate ourselves and the public. Perhaps people aren't more outraged because they don't get it?

Death Penalty News

Mary Kay brought to our attention two recent victories in the work to end the death penalty. In the first (Paul House), though Roberts, Scalia, and Thomas voted no, the court ruled that if an inmate comes forward with DNA evidence and it's compelling evidence of innocence, then the courthouse must hear his claim. In the other case (Clarence Edward Hill) a prisoner was allowed to challenge the drugs that Florida uses to carry out lethal injections in a civil rights claim. (He said that these drugs violated his civil rights because they cause or they resulted in unnecessary and gratuitous pain.) The court has yet to decide a case about lethal injection itself, but this ruling could result in more cases on this topic making their way to the Supreme Court. In other news, Wisconsin will consider reinstating the death penalty at their next election.

Burma

Aung Sun Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest again. She is not allowed any visitors, including her two sons and doctor (other than once a month). Burma released one political prisoner this year.

Group News

- We sent out 65 letters/actions total.
- The group expressed interest in a December 10 event with Orange County groups and the UNA (United Nations Association). Sounds like the UNA will plan and we will help out? Cathleen will help to coordinate us all. Thanks, Cathleen.

Recent Area Events

Sewing and Patching For Human Rights

AIUSA's Pepperdine University Student chapter hosted a unique clothing sale April 4 to raise funds. The clothing consisted of items with minor defects donated by the store, Zara. No problem! The group held "sewing parties" the week prior to the sale, fixing the clothing to make it sale-worthy. In the end, the event was an unqualified success, raising \$3,278.

Twenty percent of the proceeds were retained by the Group to help with other events and actions, and the rest was sent to Amnesty International USA. Along with the money raised, the group generated almost 200 letters and postcards on Darfur, women's rights in Russia, and on Guantanamo.

Riverside Torture Program

The UC Riverside and Riverside Community College Student Groups hosted Argentine torture survivor Nestor Fantini, along with a local band, Conspiracy of Thought, on May 26 for an evening of education, activism and entertainment. The evening was a roaring success!

Anil Raj, the Student Area Coordinator for Riverside, said, "The venue, a local, independent coffee shop, was perfect; the band was very good; the speaker was even better; and Irene Garza, AIUSA's Legislative Coordinator, came out and presented information on torture legislation, paving the way to AIUSA's Torture Awareness month in June." Anil says they are already brainstorming for their next project.

June Meeting Minutes

Group #596 Huntington Beach

Our June meeting was spent planning for July/August and September. We had 13 people in attendance.

July Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 31, at 7:00 PM. The July Meeting will be run by Beth McFarland, Cheri Hierbaum, Lisa Howard with additional support from Brett Nichols. The topic will be the School of the Americas. We will show the documentary *Hidden in Plain Sight* and Beth, Lisa, and Cheri will conduct a training after the documentary.

The Amnesty International website has background information on the School of the Americas at http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/site/c.goJTI00vElH/b.1111211/k.23D1/Demand_Accountability_for_School_of_the_Americas_Training_Manuals_Advocating_Torture_and_Execution.htm. However, the action on this site is out of date. There is also a more general web page on the Amnesty website on military training mentioning the SOA about halfway down the page at http://www.amnestyusa.org/arms_trade/ustraining/schools.html.

The following is the website for the documentary film: <http://www.hiddeninplainsight.org>.

August Meeting

For our August Meeting, scheduled for Monday, August 28, because Sts. Simon and Jude will be shut down for the month of August, we will be meeting at an alternate location and working on the annual postcard action. We will serve appetizers and drinks. For more information on the location, please contact us at amnesty596@gmail.com.

September Meeting

For September we will have a workshop on "Women's Roles in Alleviating Poverty." This workshop will be brought to us by Holly Hight from Bread for the World.

Group News

Vincent Mapili, our group leader, has moved to Seattle. We wish him well. If you wish to keep in contact with him, his phone numbers is (949) 633-5929 and his email is vincent.mapili@gmail.com and his mailing address is:

215 Southwest, 319th Lane
Apt. #L301
Federal Way
Seattle, WA 98023

We Are Irrepressible

The Internet is a new frontier in the struggle for human rights. Governments—with the help of some of the biggest IT companies in the world—are cracking down on freedom of expression. But you can undermine censorship by publishing irrepressible fragments of censored material on your own site. The more people take part, the more we can defeat unwarranted censorship and create an unstoppable network of protest.

The website <http://irrepressible.info/> is part of a new campaign organized by Amnesty's Corporate Action Network. On the website, you can

- **Sign a pledge on Internet freedom** to call on all governments and companies to ensure the Internet is a force for political freedom, not repression.
- **Take action to free Shi Tao.** Write to the Chinese authorities and Yahoo to urge the release of journalist Shi Tao, serving 10 years in prison for sending an email to a pro-democracy website.
- **Undermine censorship** by publishing irrepressible fragments of censored material on your own site, such as the following: "... A military machine of 500,000 soldiers denies a whole nation its most basic rights. ..." This is an excerpt from <http://burmacampaign.org.uk/>, the website for The Burma Campaign UK, which has been censored in Myanmar/Burma. The Burma Campaign UK campaigns for human rights and democracy in Burma.

Send Greetings to Turkish Activists

The Human Rights Association (IHD) is one of Turkey's foremost human rights organizations and a valuable source of information for AI's work. Sadly, their work has not been without risk. Twelve members of the group have been killed. Many more have faced death threats and harassment, while many continue to be prosecuted under various laws in what Amnesty International considers to be a pattern of judicial harassment.

This summer the IHD is marking its 20th anniversary. So why not send them a greeting card to show your solidarity. Send your cards to:

Yusuf Alatas
IHD Genel Merkezi
Tunalihilmi Cad.
104/4 Kavaklıdere Ankara
Turkey

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 178
P.O. Box 14485
Irvine, CA 92623-4484

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

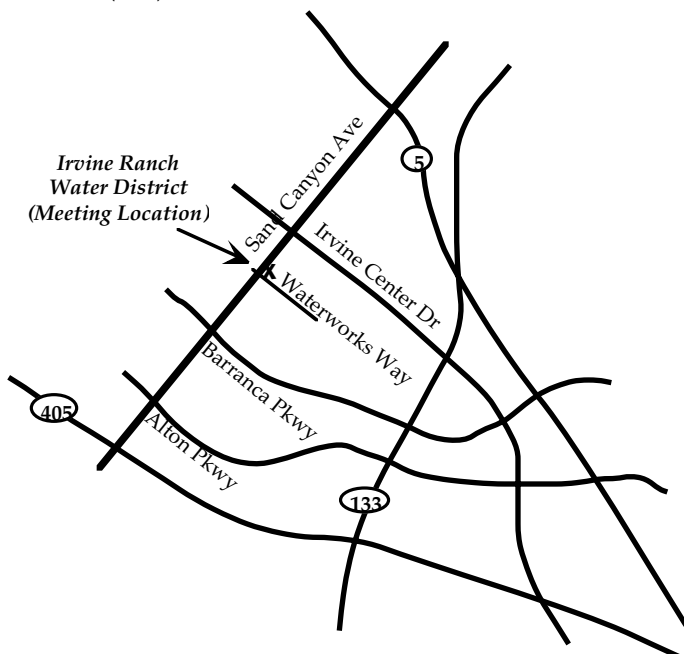
July

18 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 Kevin Gaffney at xhusker@aol.com.

19 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.



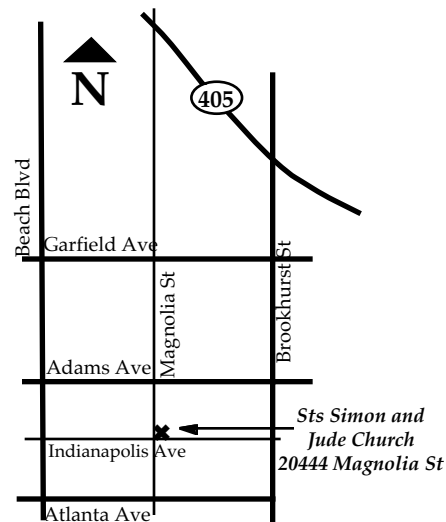
Group #178 Irvine Meeting Location

25 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 Glen Nielsen at nielsen-electric@cox.net.

31 Monday 7:00 PM

Group #596 Huntington Beach Meeting at Saints Simon and Jude Church, Adult Center, 20444 Magnolia Street in Huntington Beach. See details on the website <http://www.hbamnesty.com/main.htm>.



Group #596 Huntington Beach Location

Amnesty International
Group 178
P.O. Box 14485
Irvine, CA 92623-4484