

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 28, 7:30 PM. *Monthly Meeting* Caltech Y has moved. Just around the corner from our old meeting place, we moved to 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, environmental justice and more.

Tuesday, May 10, 7:30 PM. *Letter-writing Meeting* at the Athenaeum. Corner of California & Hill. This informal gathering is a great for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty!

Sunday, May 15, 6:30 PM. *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* Vroman's Book Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. This month we discuss journalist Alma Guillermoprieto's memoir, *Dancing with Cuba*. (More info below.)

Save the Dates!!! The Amnesty International Film Festival is coming to West Hollywood, May 24-29. Visit www.amnestyusa.org/filmfest for details, or call the Western Regional office at 310-815-0450 to request a brochure or volunteer to help staff the event!

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Greetings! We are giving Kathy a little break from the column this month as she and Robert are on their honeymoon! Kathy and Robert met as members of our book group, Rights Readers, and we in Group 22 count this as a big human rights success story! If you haven't had a chance to congratulate the happy couple, we suggest a visit to our next monthly meeting.

After many years of casework on Tibetan prisoners, Group 22 has decided to adopt a Vietnamese Prisoner of Conscience. We hope to have details on this case by the time of our meeting on April 28 and begin strategizing for our work on behalf of this new prisoner. In the meantime, I thought I would include an action from Vietnam in this newsletter as a kind of warm-up for our future work.

This month Group 22 members have been busy tabling at events ranging from Domestic Violence

Awareness Day at PCC to Caltech Earth Day. A special shout-out to our coordinator Lucas Kamp for fielding (and staffing) all these outreach opportunities.

Coming up in May, we look forward to the Amnesty International Film Festival in West Hollywood. See Up-coming Events for more information. Past festivals have offered terrifically moving and informative films. Make reservations early!

Summer will be upon us soon and if you're not planning an exotic vacation, may we suggest some vicarious travel with the book group? In the coming months, Rights Readers books will take us to Cuba, Nigeria and Mongolia. That's quite a journey! In August we'll carry on our tradition of reading a mystery novel (and while the title is still "to be determined" I think I will just drop a hint here that it may be a novel set very close to home!)

Hope to see you all soon at an up-coming meeting!

Take care,

Martha Ter Maat aigp22@caltech.edu

RIGHTS READERS

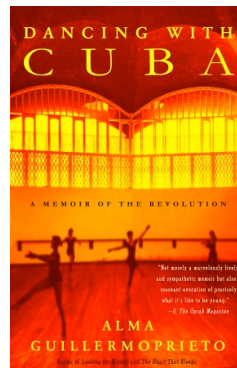
Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Vroman's Bookstore
695 E. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena

Sunday, May 15, 6:30 PM

Dancing with Cuba

by Alma Guillermoprieto



In 1970 a young dancer named Alma Guillermoprieto left New York to take a job teaching at Cuba's National School of Dance. For six months, she worked in mirrorless studios (it was considered more revolutionary); her poorly trained but ardent students worked without them but dreamt of greatness. Yet in the midst of chronic shortages and revolutionary upheaval, Guillermoprieto found in Cuba a people whose sense of purpose touched her forever.

In this electrifying memoir, Guillermoprieto-- now an award-winning journalist and arguably one of our finest writers on Latin America-- resurrects a time when dancers and revolutionaries seemed to occupy the same historical stage and even a floor exercise could be a profoundly political act. Exuberant and elegiac, tender and unsparing, *Dancing* is a triumph of memory and feeling.

VIETNAM POC

Medical Concerns for 21 Year Old Teacher

Prisoner of conscience Le Thi Hong Lien, who is reportedly suffering from severe mental illness, has been moved to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, where she is reportedly receiving treatment for the first time. Her family has been able to visit her but have reported that her physical and mental health is still very poor. Amnesty International is concerned that she may not be receiving appropriate medical treatment.

She had been held at Chi Hoa Prison, in Ho Chi Minh City, since her arrest in June 2004, when she was arrested. Her mental health is reported to have deteriorated seriously since her arrest. Guards at Chi Hoa Prison reportedly told her relatives that they did not have the means to care for inmates with such a severe illness. On 25 January the prison authorities finally acknowledged that Le Thi Hong Lien was suffering from mental illness. On 17 February she was moved to another prison distant from her family home. Ten days later she was moved from there to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, 50km northeast of Ho Chi Minh City, where she is reportedly held in the prison section under the charge of prison guards rather than medical staff.

Guards beat Le Thi Hong Lien while she was held at Chi Hoa Prison, according to fellow inmates, and received a particularly savage beating from a guard escorting her to and from her trial.

Le Thi Hong Lien, a teacher for the Vietnamese Mennonite Christian Church, was arrested in June 2004 along with a number of other members of the Mennonite community. On 12 November she was sentenced to 12 months in prison on charges of "resisting a person performing official duty".

Amnesty International considers Le Thi Hong Lien to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association. Members of the Mennonite Church, and other religious organizations that are not sanctioned by the state, have suffered official harassment and imprisonment for many years. Le Thi Hong Lien had taken part in a number of demonstrations against the government's policies on religion, and had been arrested many times.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- welcoming the news that Le Thi Hong Lien has been moved to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, but expressing concern that she may not be receiving appropriate treatment;
- expressing concern that she is currently in the prison wing of the hospital and that her care-

givers reportedly are prison staff, not medical staff;

- urging the authorities to ensure that she receives the medical attention she needs;
- calling on the authorities to order an investigation into reports that she was beaten by guards at Chi Hoa Prison, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for Le Thi Hong Lien to be released immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister:

His Excellency Phan Van Khai

Office of the Prime Minister

Hoang Hoa Tham

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Minster of Public Security:

His Excellency Le Hong Anh

Ministry of Public Security

15 Tran Binh Trong Street

Hoan Kiem District

Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

COPIES TO:

Ambassador Chien Tam Nguyen

Embassy of Vietnam

1233 20th St NW #400

Washington DC 20036

Email: vietnamembassy@msn.com

ECUADOR

Radio La Luna Staff in Danger

Radio station director Francisco Velasco has received telephone death threats at his home, after he allowed critics of the government to air their views on his station. The authorities have reportedly done nothing to protect him or investigate the threats, and Amnesty International believes that he, his family and staff at the radio station may be in grave danger.

Francisco Velasco is the director of the independent FM radio station La Luna, based in the capital, Quito. The station has repeatedly allowed critics of the government of President Lucio Gutiérrez to broadcast their views.

On 3 April, Francisco Velasco's 13-year-old son answered a call from a man who told him, "te vamos a matar" (we are going to kill you). Four days later, his 11-year-old daughter answered the phone, and heard the same message. On 14 April, Francisco Velasco's wife answered a call from a man who told her that "vamos a matar a tu hijo" (We are going to kill your son).

In February 2004, the government had threatened to close down Radio La Luna and file charges against Francisco after he criticised the government over the detention of an indigenous leader. Velasco.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION. Lucio Gutiérrez took office as President in January 2003 with the support of the Pachakutic Movement, the political party backed by the indigenous communities. However, by August 2003 the Pachakutic Movement broke ranks split from the government amid accusations that the government was continuing to implement economic policies that did not serve the interests of the majority of the population. Trade unions and grassroots organizations, including those based in the indigenous communities, staged demonstrations against growing poverty and government economic policies.

The latest demonstrations against President Gutiérrez began in Quito on 13 April, and led him to declare a state of emergency in the city two days later: this suspended the rights to freedom of expression, association and movement. Following national and international pressure the state of emergency was suspended on 16 April. The demonstrations in front of the presidential palace continued, and were broken up by police using tear gas.

Amnesty International has recently expressed its deep concern about the continued threatening and harassment of those who are critical of the authorities, including human rights defenders, journalists and indigenous community leaders. The organization has urged the Ecuadorian authorities on several occasions to send a clear message that such threats will not be tolerated, to ensure that human rights defenders, community leaders and journalists are able to work without fear of intimidation. It has also called upon the authorities to investigate these threats and bring those responsible to justice, but nobody has been charged.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern for the safety of Francisco Velasco, his family and staff of Radio La Luna, in Quito, after telephone death threats were made to his family home;
- expressing serious concern that this is the latest of several threats against Francisco Velasco, which have not been investigated by the authorities;
- calling for a prompt and impartial investigation into the threats against Francisco Velasco and

his family, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- urging the authorities to do everything in their power to guarantee the safety of Francisco Velasco, his family and staff of Radio La Luna, in accordance with their wishes.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior:

Dr. Oscar Ayerve

Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,

Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades

Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía

Benalcázar y Espejo

Quito, Ecuador

Acting Attorney General:

Dra. Cecilia Armas

Ministra Fiscal Subrogante

Fiscalía General del Estado

Av. Eloy Alfaro N°32-240 y República

Quito, Ecuador

COPIES TO:

Ambassador Raul Gangotena Rivadeneira

Embassy of Ecuador

2535 -15th St. NW

Washington DC 20009

Fax: 1 202 667 3482

Email: mecuawaa@pop.erols.com

LETTER COUNT

Stop Violence Against Women Campaign	5
Urgent Actions	23
Death Penalty	8
Mexican Environmentalists	8
Campaign for Bhopal	8
Total:	49

Want to add your letters to the total? Get in touch with lwkamp@sbcglobal.net

DEATH PENALTY

Afghan Refugee, Age 19, to be Executed in Iran

Afghan refugee Abbas Hosseini is reportedly scheduled for execution on 1 May for a murder committed when he was 17. Iran is a state party to international treaties that expressly prohibit the use of the death penalty for crimes committed below the age of 18.

In July 2003 Abbas Hosseini was reportedly helping a man, a member of the Revolutionary Guard, to move furniture in his house. He says the man made sexual advances to him. Abbas Hosseini then managed to leave the house by promising that he would return with his girlfriend. In a fit of rage he returned to the house in order to "teach the man a lesson". He lured the man outside, supposedly to meet the girlfriend,

and stabbed him once with a knife. The man died shortly afterwards as a result of his injuries.

Abbas Hosseini was arrested by the police and held in a juvenile detention center in the city of Mashhad. He reportedly confessed to the murder, claiming that he had done it in a moment of insanity. A medical examination, conducted ten months after his arrest, rejected his claim of insanity at the time of the crime. Six months after his arrest he was transferred to the central prison in Mashhad, and charged with murder.

On 3 June 2004 he was sentenced to death by Branch 43 of Mashhad Special Court. The sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on 28 October. The family of the victim has refused to accept payment of compensation (diyeh) and has insisted the death sentence be carried out. Under Iran's penal code, death sentences imposed for murder can be commuted if the victim's heirs forgo their right to retribution (qesas) and ask instead for the payment of 'blood money' (diyeh).

Abbas Hosseini was born in September 1985 to Afghan refugee parents in Mashhad, Iran. His family had fled to Iran to escape the civil war in Afghanistan, and he is considered a refugee by the UNHCR. He was 17 years old and attending high school when the crime took place.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION. As a state party to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Iran has undertaken not to execute anyone for an offence committed when they were under the age of 18.

Nevertheless, 11 child offenders have been executed in Iran since 1990. On 20 January 2005 Iman Farokhi was executed for a crime committed when he was 17 years old. On the same day an Iranian governmental delegation claimed that Iran does not execute people under the age of 18, in a declaration to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Committee, which monitors states' implementation of the CRC, urged Iran to immediately stay all executions of people convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18, and abolish the use of the death penalty in such cases. The Committee said that it "deplored" the fact that Iran had continued to carry out such executions even after it ratified the CRC, including the execution that had taken place that day.

There are least 37 children under sentence of death in Iran, including Rasoul Mohammadi, a 17-year-old boy who is due to be executed on 16 April at Esfahan prison.

For the last three years, the Iranian authorities have been considering legislation that would prohibit

the use of the death penalty for offences committed under the age of 18.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- stating that Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- urging the authorities to commute the death sentence imposed on Abbas Hosseini immediately;
- asking for details of his trial, including his legal representation and the appeals against his conviction;
- reminding the authorities of their commitment to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that "sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age";
- calling on the Iranian authorities to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which called on Iran in January 2005 to "immediately suspend the execution of all death penalties imposed on persons for having committed a crime before the age of 18, and to abolish the death penalty as a sentence imposed on persons for having committed crimes before the age of 18, as required by article 37 of the Convention."

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic:

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Presidency

Palestine Avenue

Azerbaijan Intersection

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Head of the Judiciary:

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice

Park-e Shahr

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

COPIES TO:

Iranian Interests Section

2209 Wisconsin Ave NW

Washington DC 20007

USA

Conscientious Objector Imprisoned

Abdullah Webster, imprisoned in the USA on account of his conscientious objection to the war in Iraq, is now receiving appropriate medical care. He had not been getting the regular blood tests required to check for the side effects of a drug he needs to take for high blood cholesterol.

Shortly after the last update to this UA, a medical enquiry was set up into Abdullah Webster's medical condition and an Army major took over the supervision of his medical care. Abdullah Webster has now had a further blood test which showed no abnormalities and no apparent permanent damage to his liver. He has also been taken off the medication and the prison authorities are looking into alternative medication, with less severe side effects, to regulate his high cholesterol.

Abdullah Webster is the second serving soldier imprisoned by the US authorities solely on the basis of his conscientious objection to the war in Iraq. Amnesty International adopted both men as prisoners of conscience. Camilo Mejia was released on 15 February, after serving nine months of a one-year sentence for desertion, handed down in May 2004 after he refused to return to his unit in Iraq. His sentence was reduced on grounds of good conduct, and he is now back at home with his family. (See UA 190/04 issued 3 June 2004, and re-issued once)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- welcoming the improvement in Abdullah Webster's medical care;
- calling for Abdullah Webster to be released immediately and unconditionally, with restoration of his pension and other benefits, and pointing out that Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

APPEALS TO:

Raymond F. Dubois
Acting Secretary of the Army
102 Army Pentagon, Room 3E588
Washington DC 20310-0102

Lieutenant Commander Anthony Cruz
Commanding Officer
Fort Lewis Corrections Facility, Bldg. # 1450
Washington 98433
Email: RCF@Lewis.Army.MIL

COPIES TO:

Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington DC 20301
Email via: www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment

STOP VIOLENCE against WOMEN
Zimbabwean Women Receive Harassed

You may recall that we sent holiday greetings to WOZA last December. They still need our support! Here's a sample letter:

Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri
Police Headquarters
PO Box 8807, Causeway

Harare
ZIMBABWE

Dear Commissioner Chihuri:

Since February 2003, police repeatedly have arrested women belonging to the women's rights organization Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA!) for taking part in peaceful demonstrations to protest the worsening social, economic and human rights situation in Zimbabwe. The women have been subjected to intimidation, harassment, and ill-treatment by police officers.

On 7 March 2004 Bulawayo police arbitrarily arrested three women, all WOZA leaders, as they left a meeting, according to Amnesty International. On 16 June 2004, 43 women, along with some of their children, were arrested while attending a private meeting in Bulawayo. Several of the women reported that they were verbally abused and assaulted by the police. On 28 September 2004, 48 women participating in a fundraising and protest walk, together with four men who were assisting them, were arrested and held in custody for several days until a magistrate ordered them released. On 12 February 2005, 50 women were arrested after participating in a WOZA demonstration in Bulawayo, where they carried banners proclaiming, "The Power of Love can conquer the Love of Power."

I am aware that many of those arrested have subsequently been released without charge, but some have been charged under the repressive Public Order and Security Act or under the Miscellaneous Offences Act. In numerous cases where WOZA women have been arrested, police have attempted to deny the detained activists access to legal advice. Lawyers acting for WOZA have been harassed and ejected from police stations, and many detainees have been freed only after their families paid a so-called "admission of guilt" fine.

I join Amnesty International in urging you to put an end to the intimidation and arbitrary detention of WOZA activists and other human rights defenders. I also ask you to ensure that investigations are conducted into all reports of harassment, ill-treatment and unjust imprisonment of human rights defenders, as required by the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

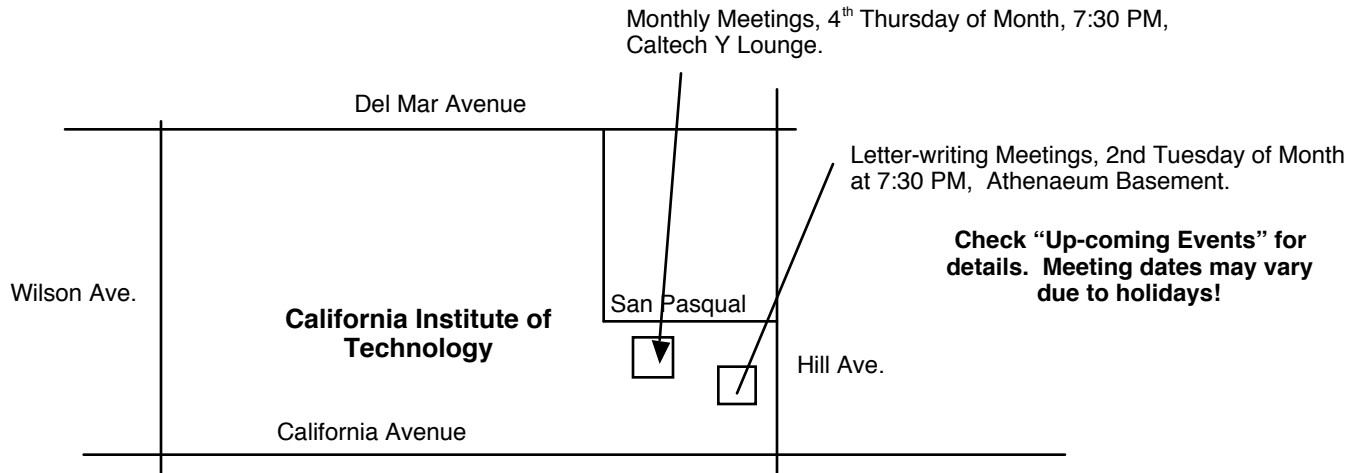
Sincerely, YOUR NAME and ADDRESS

copy to:

Ambassador Simbi Veke Mubako
Embassy of the Republic of Zimbabwe
1608 New Hampshire Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
email: zimemb@erols.com

Editor's Last Word:

Read us on line: <http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~aigp22>
Martha Ter Maat, 626-281-4039 / rightsreaders@yahoo.com



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.

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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.