

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XV Number 2, February 2008

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 28, 7:30 PM. Monthly Meeting. Caltech Y is located off 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 and more.

Tuesday, March 11, 7:30 PM. Letter writing meeting at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena.

Sunday, March 16, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group at Vromans Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd. in Pasadena. 626-449-5320. The featured book is "Unbowed: A Memoir", by Wangari Maathai.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,

In the newsletter this month, we are focusing on the death penalty, having neglected this issue lately! There are 2 actions in the newsletter re the death penalty.. These actions were submitted by Stevi, our Death Penalty person.

There is also information about sexual violence against Native American women. "Maze of Injustice", Amnesty's report on sexual violence against Native American women in the USA is available on the AIUSA website at: <http://amnestyusa.org/women/maze/report.pdf>.

Group 22 members participated in the Doo Dah parade, (now moved to January instead of the traditional Sunday before Thanksgiving), in grand style with the portable waterboarding express! A flatbed truck outfitted with an old bathtub, "Surfin' USA" blaring from the speakers, 2 ominous looking plain-clothes CIA types combing the crowd for "volunteers", and a lot of fun! Photos can be seen on Group 22's website at <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/>. This was our best entry so far in the years we have been in the parade and everyone had a lot of fun! (Not that we don't take torture seriously...don't get the wrong idea.) Thanks to

all who helped out and participated, especially to those wild and crazy guys Robert and Dan (Marie-Helene's husband and friend!!)

Group 22's friend, Stop Genocide Now activist Gabriel Stauring, was trapped in a hotel in Chad while visiting Darfurian refugee camps in Chad's capital in late January. Paula received an email from him regarding the situation. It was a tense few days before Stauring and co-workers were able to be evacuated to a nearby military base, then flown out of the country. To read Gabriel's blog, go to <http://www.stopgenocidenow.org>.

Con Cariño,

Kathy

RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Keep up with Rights Readers at <http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>

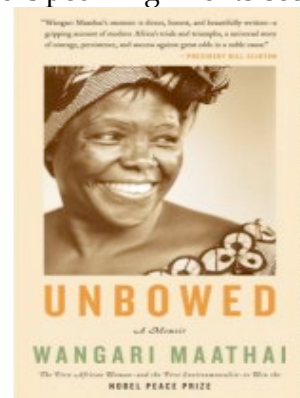
Next Rights Readers meeting:

Sunday, March 16, 6:30 PM

Vromans Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd.

In Pasadena

(See Upcoming Events section)



"Unbowed" by Wangari Maathai

In Unbowed, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai recounts her extraordinary journey from her childhood in rural Kenya to the world stage. When Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement

in 1977, she began a vital poor people's environmental movement, focused on the empowerment of women, that soon spread across Africa. Persevering through run-ins with the Kenyan government and personal losses, and jailed and beaten on numerous occasions, Maathai continued to fight tirelessly to save Kenya's forests and to restore democracy to her beloved country. Infused with her unique luminosity of spirit, Wangari Maathai's remarkable story of courage, faith, and the power of persistence is destined to inspire generations to come.

About the Author

Wangari Muta Maathai was born in Nyeri, Kenya, in 1940. She is the founder of the Green Belt Movement, which, through networks of rural women, has planted over 30 million trees across Kenya since 1977. In 2002, she was elected to Kenya's Parliament in the first free elections in a generation, and in 2003, she was appointed Deputy Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate of 2004, she has three grown children and lives and works in Nairobi.

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



"MAZE OF INJUSTICE: THE FAILURE TO PROTECT INDIGENOUS WOMEN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE USA"

A summary of Amnesty International's findings

Sexual violence against Indigenous women in the USA is widespread -- and especially brutal. According to US government statistics, Native American and Alaska Native women are more than 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than other women in the USA. Some Indigenous women interviewed by Amnesty International said they didn't know anyone in their community who had not experienced sexual violence. Though rape is always an act of violence, there is evidence that Indigenous women are more likely than other women to suffer additional violence at the hands of their attackers. According to the US Department of Justice, in at least 86 per cent of the reported cases of rape or sexual assault against American Indian and Alaska Native women, survivors report that the perpetrators are non-Native men.

Sexual violence against Indigenous women is the result of a number of factors including a history of widespread and egregious human rights violations against Indigenous peoples in the USA. Indigenous women were raped by settlers and soldiers in many infamous episodes including during the Trail of Tears and the Long Walk. Such attacks were not random or individual; they were tools of conquest and colonization. The underlying attitudes towards Indigenous peoples that supported these human rights violations committed against them continue to be present in society and culture in the USA. They contribute to the present high rates of sexual violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and help to shield their attackers from justice.

Treaties, the US Constitution and federal law affirm a unique political and legal relationship between federally recognized tribal nations and the federal government. There are more than 550 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the USA. Federally recognized Indian tribes are sovereign under US law, with jurisdiction over their citizens and land and maintaining government to government relationships with each other and with the US federal government. The federal government has a legal responsibility to ensure protection of the rights and wellbeing of Native American and Alaska Native peoples. The federal government has a unique legal relationship to the tribal nations that includes a trust responsibility to

assist tribal governments in safeguarding the lives of Indian women.

Tribal law enforcement agencies are chronically under-funded – federal and state governments provide significantly fewer resources for law enforcement on tribal land than are provided for comparable non-Native communities. The lack of appropriate training in all police forces -- federal, state and tribal -- also undermines survivors' right to justice. Many officers don't have the skills to ensure a full and accurate crime report. Survivors of sexual violence are not guaranteed access to adequate and timely sexual assault forensic examinations which is caused in part by the federal government's severe under-funding of the Indian Health Service.

The Federal Government has also undermined the authority of tribal governments to respond to crimes committed on tribal land. Women who come forward to report sexual violence are caught in a jurisdictional maze that federal, state and tribal police often cannot quickly sort out. Three justice systems -- tribal, state and federal - - are potentially involved in responding to sexual violence against Indigenous women. Three main factors determine which of these justice systems has authority to prosecute such crimes:

- whether the victim is a member of a federally recognized tribe or not;
- whether the accused is a member of a federally recognized tribe or not; and
- whether the offence took place on tribal land or not.

The answers to these questions are often not self-evident and there can be significant delays while police, lawyers and courts establish who has jurisdiction over a particular crime. The result can be such confusion and uncertainty that no one intervenes and survivors of sexual violence are denied access to justice.

Tribal prosecutors cannot prosecute crimes committed by non-Native perpetrators. Tribal courts are also prohibited from passing custodial sentences that are in keeping with the seriousness of the crimes of rape or other forms of sexual violence. The maximum prison sentence tribal courts can impose for crimes, including rape, is one year. At the same time, the majority of rape cases on tribal lands that are referred to the

federal courts are reportedly never brought to trial.

As a consequence Indigenous women are being denied justice. And the perpetrators are going unpunished.

In failing to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence, the USA is violating these women's human rights. Indigenous women's organizations and tribal authorities have brought forward concrete proposals to help stop sexual violence against Indigenous women – but the federal government has failed to act.

Amnesty International is calling on the US government to take the first steps to end sexual violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women:

- Work in collaboration with American Indian and Alaska Native women to obtain a clear and accurate understanding about the prevalence and nature of sexual violence against Indigenous women;
- Ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native women have access to adequate and timely sexual assault forensic examinations without charge to the survivor.
- Provide resources to Indian tribes for additional criminal justice and victim services to respond to crimes of sexual violence against Native American and Alaska Native women.

This report and action is part of the international SVAW campaign project on stopping violence against Indigenous women globally. This project will encompass not only this current work on sexual violence against Indigenous women in the USA, but also ongoing work on AI Canada's 2004 report "Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada", and work now under development by other sections and I.S. country teams.

QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR NATIVE AMERICAN AND ALASKA NATIVE WOMEN

It is essential that health service facilities have the staff, resources and expertise to ensure the

accurate, sensitive and confidential collection of evidence in cases of sexual violence and secure storage of this evidence until it is handed over to law enforcement officials. Health professionals also have a key role to play in providing survivors of sexual violence with any additional medical attention they may need, including treatment for any injuries and for sexually transmitted infections as well as emergency contraception.

A key step in ending the maze of injustice for Native American and Alaska Native women is making sure that they have free access to sexual assault forensic examinations conducted by Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. The Indian Health Service (IHS) must adopt and implement standardized policies and protocols for handling cases of sexual violence at all IHS emergency rooms. These policies and protocols should be developed in cooperation with Indigenous women's rights defenders and implemented by trained medical personnel in the form of Sexual Assault Violence Nurse Examiners.

TAKE ACTION FOR NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Sample Letter

Robert G. McSwain - Acting Director
Indian Health Service
The Reyes Building
801 Thompson Avenue, Ste. 400
Rockville, MD 20852-1627

Dear Mr. McSwain,

I have recently become aware of an Amnesty International report, conducted during 2005 and 2006 in consultation with Native American and Alaska Native organizations, which profiles the horrendous rates of sexual violence against Indigenous women in the USA. The report, "Maze of Injustice: The failure to protect Native American and Alaska Native women from sexual violence in the USA," found that Indigenous women suffer disproportionately high levels of rape and sexual violence. According to the Justice Department, Native

American and Alaska Native women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped than women in the United States in general, and this statistic is widely considered to be a low estimate. The Amnesty International report unraveled many of the reasons why Indigenous women are at such high risk for sexual violence and why they are continuously denied justice. One main factor was lack of accessible and comprehensive medical services and response to survivors.

Indian Health Service (IHS) is the principle and, in some areas, sole provider of health services for Native American and Alaska Native people. Reports to Amnesty International indicate that many IHS facilities lack clear protocols for treating victims of sexual violence and do not provide consistent access to sexual assault forensic examinations (also known as "rape kits") and other related health services, such as testing for sexually-transmitted infection, pregnancy testing, emergency contraception and culturally appropriate support services. The report found that the IHS has not prioritized the implementation of programs involving Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)-registered nurses with advance education and clinical preparation in forensic examinations of victims of sexual violence-throughout its facilities. IHS's lack of consistent protocols and services are inexcusable barriers to Indigenous survivors and advocates dealing with crisis.

A key step in ending the maze of injustice for Native American and Alaska Native women is making sure that they have free access to sexual assault forensic examinations conducted by Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. The IHS must adopt and implement standardized policies and protocols for handling cases of sexual violence at all IHS emergency rooms. These policies and protocols should be developed in cooperation with Indigenous women's rights defenders and implemented by trained medical personnel in the form of Sexual Assault Violence Nurse Examiners.

I know that IHS' main concern is to provide high quality health service to Native American and Alaska Native people, therefore I thank you in advance for your active support to help unravel this maze of injustice.

Sincerely, (your name and address)

DEATH PENALTY ACTION IRAN

12 February 2008

UA 38/08 Death sentence/Unfair trial/Torture

IRAN Ya'qub Mehrnehad (m), aged 28, member of Iran's Baluchi minority Baluchi cultural and civil rights activist Ya'qub Mehrnehad was sentenced to death in early February, for an unknown offense, after an unfair trial conducted behind closed doors. He has allegedly been tortured. His appeal before the Supreme Court has been scheduled for 17 February, denying him the minimum 20 days normally given in Iran for him to prepare his appeal.

His trial began on 25 December 2007 before a court in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchistan province. This may have been a special court set up in the city in May 2006, and it is unclear if it operates as a branch of the Revolutionary Court it would be governed by the General and Revolutionary Court procedures, but it may be operating outside that framework. Furthermore, in June 2006 it was announced that a "special judicial complex for security affairs" had begun work and that a recommendation had been made to the Judiciary to establish a branch of the Supreme Court in the complex in order to expedite the implementation of sentences and to reduce the time between the commission of crimes and the implementation of sentences.

Amnesty International is concerned that Ya'qub Mehrnehad may be in imminent danger of execution. Ya'qub Mehrnehad is the head of a government-registered NGO, "The Voice of Justice Young People's Society", which specializes in organizing events such as concerts and educational courses for young Baluchi people. He was arrested in early May 2007 along with six other members of the association after they attended a meeting in the Provincial Office of Culture and Islamic Guidance, which the Governor of Zahedan reportedly attended. The six other men were later released. The exact reasons for his arrest are not known although some newspaper reports in July 2007 mentioned that a man identified as Ya'qub M. was being detained on suspicion of "aiding Abdolmalek

Rigi", the head of a Baluchi armed group, Jondallah, also known as the Iranian Peoples' Resistance Movement. Five months after his arrest, Ya'qub Mehrnehad was allowed visits from his lawyer and his family, who said afterwards that he had been tortured, had lost about 15kg and was unable to keep his balance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iran's Baluchi minority live mainly in the south-east of the country, and are believed to make up between one and three percent of the total population of around 70 million. Mainly Sunni Muslims, they have for many years complained of discrimination by the authorities. Jondallah has carried out a number of armed attacks on Iranian officials and has sometimes taken hostages and killed them. It reportedly seeks to defend the rights of the Baluchi people, though government officials have claimed that it is involved in drug smuggling and terrorist activities and has ties to foreign governments. Attacks by Jondallah have been followed by widespread arrests of members of the Baluchi minority. According to a 15 March 2007 BBC report, Sistan-Baluchistan television said that at least two people had been hanged in connection with a 14 February 2007 attack on a bus carrying Revolutionary Guards. At least 17 other people are reported to have been either sentenced to death or executed in connection with a March 2006 attack in Tasuki, in which up to 22 people were reportedly killed. In an interview with the Iranian newspaper 'Ayyaran on 17 March 2007, parliamentarian Hossein Ali Shahryari said prisons in Sistan-Baluchistan province held more than 700 people under sentence of death. In 2007, at least 312 people were executed in Iran, and the true figure may be considerably higher. There was a marked rise in the number of Baluchis executed. For further information please see: Iran: Human Rights Abuses against the Baluchi Minority, September 2007:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MD.E13/104/2007>.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:
- calling on the authorities not to carry out the death sentence against Ya'qub Mehrnehad;
- asking for details of the charges against Ya'qub Mehrnehad and his trial;

- expressing concern at reports that Ya'qub Mehrnehad has been tortured, and has lost 15kg and cannot keep his balance as a result, and reminding the authorities of their responsibility to ensure that he has access to adequate medical treatment;

- stating that Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offenses, but opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic
His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader,
Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust
Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@leader.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh / Office of
the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e
Jomhuri,
Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the
subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence
Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan
Street,
Pasdaran Avenue,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President
His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan
Intersection,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: www.president.ir/email/

Speaker of Parliament
His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel

Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Baharestan Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: 011 98 21 3355 6408
Email: hadadadel@majlis.ir
(Ask for your message to be passed to the Article
90 Commission)

Iran does not presently have an embassy in the
United States. Instead, please send copies to:
Iranian Interests Section
Embassy of Pakistan
2209 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington DC 20007
Fax: 1 202 965 1073
Email: requests@daftar.org

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.
Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if
sending appeals after 25 March 2008.

**DEATH PENALTY ACTION
AFGHANISTAN**

12 February 2008
UA 39/08 Death Penalty

AFGHANISTAN Sayed Perwiz Kambakhsh (m),
student and journalist University student and
journalist. Perwiz Kambakhsh was sentenced to
death on a charge of blasphemy on 22 January in
the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkh
province. Before the trial began, local religious
leaders had called for him to be executed for
causing offense to Islam. His trial took place in a
closed session of the provincial lower court and
he had no legal representation. Perwiz
Kambakhsh was convicted under the blasphemy
laws for allegedly downloading material from the
internet that examined the role of women in
Islam and distributing it at Balkh University. His
brother Yaqub Ibrahimy has filed an appeal on his
behalf. If the appeal is rejected by both the
Appeal
Court and the Supreme Court, his sentence will
be passed for review to President Karzai, who
under the Constitution is authorized to approve
it, commute the sentence or pardon Perwiz
Kambakhsh altogether. Perwiz Kambakhsh
reportedly said that the court consisted of three
judges and an attorney. He was handed the

written death sentence before he had a chance to defend himself and then escorted from the room by armed guards and returned to prison. Perwiz Kambakhsh, who also works for a local newspaper in Mazar-e-Sharif, has denied all charges against him saying that his confession was coerced. The case against Perwiz Kambakhsh appears to be politically motivated, aimed at stopping his brother Yaqub Ibrahim - also a journalist who works for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) a charity providing training and capacity building for local media - from publishing articles critical of local power holders. Perwiz was arrested in November 2007 after Yaqub published a series of articles voicing concerns about local leaders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fifteen people were executed in October 2007, the first executions in Afghanistan for three years. The 15 were gunned down as they attempted to flee the execution and one person sentenced to death allegedly bribed his way out of the execution. The executions were immediately followed by a 10-day hunger strike by some prisoners in Pule-Charkhi prison. The prisoners said that the executions were not based on fair and transparent trials, that some were politically motivated and that at least one person escaped execution by paying bribes. Between 70 and 110 people are believed to remain on death row. The death sentence against Perwiz Kambakhsh comes despite the UN General Assembly's adoption of a resolution (18 December 2007) calling for a worldwide moratorium on the use of the death penalty and at a time when a total of 135 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases. The death penalty is a symptom of a culture of violence, and not a solution to it. It has not been shown to have any greater deterrent effect than other punishments, and is known to have been carried out on the innocent. The death penalty is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and a violation of the right to life, a right proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

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

- calling on President Karzai to use his powers to pardon Perwiz Kambakhsh;
- expressing concern that the court proceedings fell far below international fair trial standards;
- expressing concern that the charges against Perwiz Kambakhsh appear to have been brought for political reasons ;
- calling on President Karzai to re-introduce an immediate moratorium on all executions in Afghanistan, as called for in the recent UN General Assembly resolution that was passed, with a view to an eventual abolition of the death penalty in line with the worldwide trend.

APPEALS TO:

Please Note:

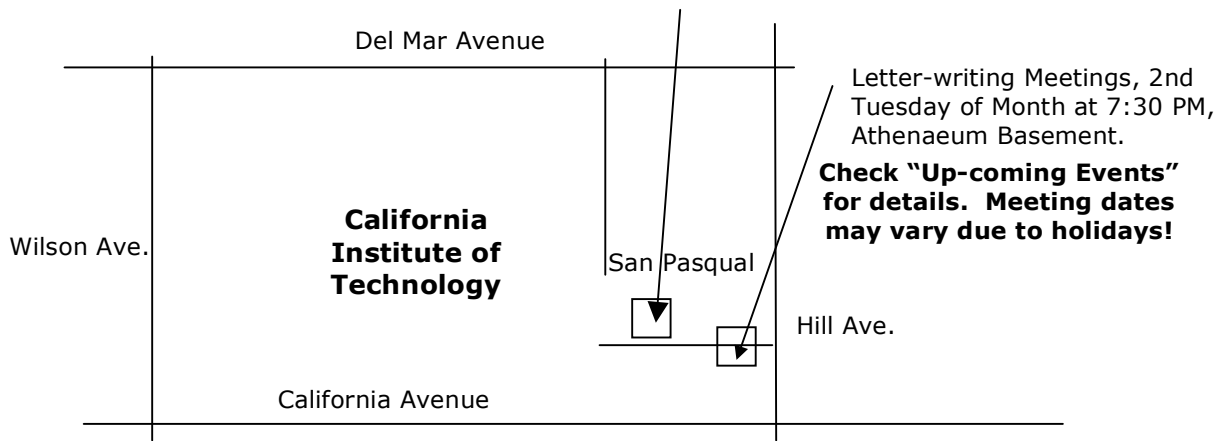
It is difficult to get letters and emails to Afghanistan. Please send appeals to the Ambassador of Afghanistan, and ask that they be forwarded to President Karzai, Attorney General Abdul Jabar Sabit and Minister of Justice

Sarwar Danish.
 Ambassador Said Tayeb Jawad
 Embassy of Afghanistan
 2341 Wyoming Avenue NW
 Washington DC 20008
 Fax: 1 202 483 6488
 Email: info@embassyofafghanistan.org

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.
 Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 25 March 2008.

LETTER COUNT	
US/Torture:	8
POC:	1
DP (Singapore):	2
Other UAs:	6
Total:	17
To add your letters to the total contact lwkamp@gmail.com	

Monthly Meetings, 4th Thursday of Month, 7:30 PM,
Caltech Y Lounge.



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.

Amnesty International Group 22
The Caltech Y
Mail Code 5-62
Pasadena, CA 91125
www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>



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.