ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY

ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY IS A GROUP OF ARTISTS COMMITTED TO PREVENTING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, SAVING LIVES AND PROMOTING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS.

MONTHLY BULLETIN

VOLUME I

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Welcome to the *Artists for Amnesty Monthly Bulletin*, which will keep you informed on critical human rights issues, cases of individuals at risk, and the life-saving work of Amnesty International. Our Monthly Bulletin will also highlight the efforts of artists on behalf of human rights.

IRAQ

The international situation in Iraq presents us with some unprecedented challenges. We are confronted with the threat of military action that could have severe consequences for the civilian population. Moreover, for the first time in recent history, a major power is articulating a doctrine of preventive, possibly unilateral, recourse to military means to deal with alleged weapons threats and to overthrow an existing government. While security and geopolitical arguments have featured prominently in support of the use of force, human rights considerations—including explicit references to Amnesty International's work—have also been advanced by some governments to justify military action against Iraq. However, the mention of human rights in the debate has been selective and manipulative, and little or no attention appears to have been given to the human rights and humanitarian repercussions of military action.

In a shelter in Baghdad, an Iraqi woman holds a candle in remembrance of the 407 people who were killed when the shelter was hit by a US air strike during the Gulf war. (© Karim Sahib/AFP)

In this context, Amnesty International has spoken out. Broadly, we have stressed that those seeking a military solution ought to bear in mind that such a course of action would have a severe cost in terms of civilian casualties, and would add to the hardship of Iraqis already suffering at the hands of their government and from the impact of economic sanctions. We are not saying that these concerns would definitely outweigh other legitimate concerns such as Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction and alleged intention of using them further.

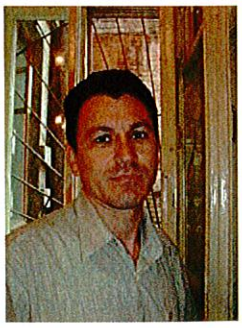
Given the inevitable human rights and humanitarian impact of military action on any civilian population, Amnesty International's credibility would be at stake around the world if we failed to encourage governments to take a preventive approach and examine other measures before using force. This is why we have stressed the well-established principle in the context of international conflict and reflected in the United Nations Charter, that force should be used only as a last resort.

The U.N. Charter provides sufficient guidance to states as to the measures that they should pursue before resorting to the use of force, and it is up to the U.N. Security Council to judge whether that has been done. By encouraging states to adhere to international standards with respect to the use of force, we hope that the international community will further enhance its capacity and desire to thoroughly weigh the immeasurable price paid in human lives and suffering caused by war against the threats posed to the peace and security of the world.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAQ

Scores of people, including possible prisoners of conscience and armed forces officers suspected of planning to overthrow the government, have been executed during the past few years. The death penalty has also been extended to the offenses of prostitution, homosexuality, incest and rape, with those convicted of prostitution to be executed by the sword. Torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners and detainees remain systematic. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has adopted a resolution condemning the "widespread and extremely grave violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law by the Government of Iraq, resulting in an all-pervasive repression and oppression sustained by broad-based discrimination and widespread terror."

GRIGORY PASKO RELEASED



Once again, we feel elated at the release of another Amnesty Prisoner of Conscience. **GRIGORY PASKO** (featured in our November Bulletin), who was sentenced to four years at a Russian Labor camp for exposing the illegal dumping of nuclear waste by the Russian military, was set free at his parole hearing on January 23, 2003. He had been fighting his conviction to clear his name for five years. Grigory said that he had received over 500 letters from supporters while in prison. "I want to tell them how important it was to have that support and know people were thinking about me. This is a common victory for us all," he said.

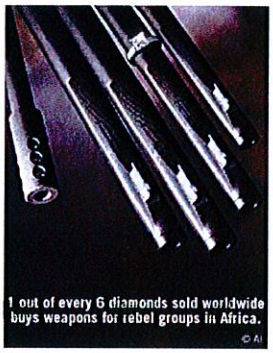
As a reporter for a Russian Pacific Fleet newspaper, Pasko was first arrested in 1997 for passing allegedly sensitive information to Japanese media, but two years later he was acquitted of all spying charges. After an appeal, in December 2001 a Military Court in the city of Vladivostok gave Pasko a four-year sentence for treason and espionage, before being freed last month.

GET UP, STAND UP

Did Someone Die For That Diamond?

Valentine's Day Week of Action

In Angola, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and several other African countries, some diamonds have been, and are still linked to terrible human rights abuses either by insurgent groups or by unscrupulous governments who are equally brutal. The violence and conflicts are financed in part by the mining and trade of diamonds. The diamonds utilized in this way are "conflict" or "blood diamonds."



1 out of every 6 diamonds sold worldwide buys weapons for rebel groups in Africa. © AI

Since September 11, 2001, concerns have also mounted over links between the trade in conflict diamonds and money laundering by groups like Al-Qaeda. A recent report in the Financial Times of London estimated that Al-Qaeda might have laundered up to 20 million US dollars in conflict diamonds. In December the Washington Post reported that Al-Qaeda had hidden millions of dollars of assets by buying gems that were not being tracked, underscoring that the problem of conflict diamonds is no longer limited to conflicts in Africa.

The Kimberley Process sets out guidelines and principles to govern the international diamond trade. The international community and diamond industry developed it in response to the problem of conflict diamonds. The Kimberly Process was to have come into effect on January 1, 2003; however, the United States has not passed the necessary regulations and legislation to enforce the Kimberly Process. In addition, there are significant weaknesses to the Kimberly Process, such as the narrow definition of conflict diamonds, which excludes diamonds controlled by groups like Al-Qeada, the exclusion of polished stones and diamond jewelry from the gems monitored, and the lack of independent monitoring over the Kimberly Process itself. Furthermore, the diamond industry's chain of warranties, a critical complement to the Kimberly Process, has yet to be effectively implemented and independently monitored. Please write letters expressing your concern about Conflict Diamonds and ask Matthew Runci, President and CEO of Jewelers of America, Inc. to vigorously and quickly lobby Congress to pass legislation banning Conflict Diamonds from the U.S. market. Ask Mr. Runci to show his vocal and total support.

Diamonds mean true love. So we believe, as we give and receive them. But in some places where they're mined, diamonds mean suffering, violence and the torture of innocents. Help Amnesty International and your jeweler end the trade in Conflict Diamonds. It won't be easy, but neither is true love. Ask where your diamond is coming from -- and don't buy until it means what you intend.

Mimi Kennedy
Actor, Activist, Artists for Amnesty
Advisory Board Member

TAKE ACTION:

Send letters to:

Mr. Matthew Runci
1185 Avenue of the America's, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10036

ON THE FRONTLINES

EVE ENSLER will be celebrating **V-DAY** on Monday, February 24 in Los Angeles at the Director's Guild of America, featuring a private benefit screening of *Until the Violence Stops,* the first-ever documentary of the V-Day world movement to end violence against women and girls. There will also be readings of three new monologues by **ROSARIO DAWSON, SHIVA ROSE,** and surprise guests. This year the event is co-presented by the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW), which provides crisis counseling, support and prevention education to over 50,000 people in Los Angeles each year.

For more information about this event call Blue Room Events: 310.491.1401

ARE YOU ON A BLOG? The word BLOG (an abbreviation of the word weblog), refers to a new phenomenon on the World Wide Web where independent journalists, unrestricted by editors or bosses, publish newsletters on everything from politics to music, and medicine to the law. Indigenous rights filmmaker and activist **GARY RHINE**, under his alias, *Rhino,* each weekday offers several one paragraph summaries and web links to recent news articles on human rights and environmental issues, with a special blog each weekend featuring political humor & entertainment notes. To receive the *Rhinos Blog* once a day, email a note to rhino@kifaru.com or check out his web site at http://www.rhinosblog.info.

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

On February 15, 2003, thousands of people will converge in Hollywood, CA for a demonstration (in coordination with worldwide events) to voice their concerns about the possibility of war on Iraq. Amnesty International will demand that the United States government act in accordance with human rights law and humanitarian law. ***We will begin gathering at 12:15pm at Grauman's Chinese Theater (Mann Chinese 6)*** 6801 Hollywood Blvd.. Look for the Amnesty banner.

JOIN ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY

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