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 II

JULY 2002

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.

CAUSE TO CELEBRATE

CHILD SOLIDIERS On June 18, the U.S. Senate ratified the Optional Protocol No. 1 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which sets the minimum age for combat soldiers at 18 and addresses horrific abuses against children in times of conflict. The Senate also ratified the Optional Protocol No. 2 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. This treaty deals with issues of trafficking and other forms of exploitation and human rights abuses. The United States still has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child itself. Somalia and the United States are the only two nations not to have ratified this international convention.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT On July 1, history was made with the establishment of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Beginning with the Nuremberg Trials, the international community has created ad hoc tribunals to deal with the worst atrocities committed by governments and militaries around the world. With the establishment of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the world will now have a forum to address these violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law (governing the conduct of nations during armed conflict). President George W. Bush withdrew U.S. support for this vital institution earlier this year.

EXECUTION OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED On June 20, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Atkins v. Virginia that the execution of mentally retarded offenders was a violation of the 8th Amendment, amounting to cruel and unusual punishment. Twenty U.S. states that currently execute mentally retarded offenders will now have to comply with the ruling. The Supreme Court's decision brings the U.S. in line with international human rights standards, and the increased opposition to this practice in the U.S. In May a Gallup poll found 82% of Americans opposed the execution of mentally retarded offenders. Amnesty International continues to work for the complete abolition of the death penalty in all cases.

ON THE FRONTLINES

ARTISTS and INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS that deserve a special thanks for their support of recent Amnesty International events and programs:

CHRIS ABANI
MAJORIE AGOSÍN
ISABEL ALLENDE
GABRIEL BYRNE
COSTA-GAVRAS
SEAN DANIEL
HOLLACE DAVIDS
ARIEL DORFMAN
WHITNEY DOW
MELANIE MAYRON
TAHMINEH MILANI
ALICIA PARTNOY
SAM PILLSBURY
TIM ROTH
JOHN SHEA
STACEY SNIDER
JOEL SOLER
MARCO WILLIAMS

UNIVERSAL PICTURES

How can you . . .

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION CENTER

help protect human rights defender B.N. Jagdish in India;

press the U.S. Congress to provide funds for torture survivor's relief;

prevent the torture of Nepalese lawyer Tikajung Shahi; and

call on President George W. Bush to support the United Nations Convention on the Elimination on of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

all from the comfort of your home in less time than it takes you to read the paper?

Thanks to Amnesty International USA's Human Right Action Center, you don't need to stop sleeping and quit your day job to free prisoners and save lives. Amnesty has brought its over 40 years of human rights activism to the 21st century, and turned the internet into a powerful tool to stop human rights abuses worldwide. With the click of a mouse, you can take action for human rights.

To check out the Human Rights Action Center, please visit:

http://www.amnestyusa.org/actnow*

*Personal information gathered by Amnesty at the Human Rights Action Center is not sold, rented, or exchanged with any other organization.

SPECIAL FOCUS CASE

LEYLA ZANA

Leyla Zana never should have been arrested. Her trial in Turkey fell deplorably short of international standards for fairness. Her conviction has been condemned by the European Parliament, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Amnesty International, and human rights activists worldwide. She is the first Kurdish woman to be elected to the Parliament. The Turkish government does not recognize Kurds as an ethnic minority and has long suppressed the Kurdish ethno-lingual culture as a threat to national unity. At her inauguration as a member of Parliament in 1991, Leyla Zana took the oath of loyalty in Turkish, as required by law, and then added in Kurdish, "I shall struggle so that the Kurdish and Turkish people may live peacefully together in a democratic framework." Members of Parliament responded with cries of "Separatist," "Traitor," and "Arrest her." As a member of Parliament, she had immunity from prosecution until March 1994, when the Turkish government closed down the newly formed political party she had joined. Authorities immediately detained her, and five months later they brought her and three other Kurdish members of Parliament to trial on charges of treason. The charges were later reduced to membership in an illegal armed opposition group. Leyla Zana's indictment also included a charge of wearing "accessories in yellow, green, red" which refers to the headband of traditional Kurdish colors that she wore at her parliamentary inauguration.

LEYLA ZANA

Now serving a 15-year prison sentence, Leyla Zana wrote from her cell in 1996, "The jailers who lock my body behind the thick walls of an Ankara prison do not have the power to prevent my spirit from traveling freely. Therefore, in my thoughts, I will spend the day of 17 January with you." She addressed these words to members of the European Parliament who honored her that day with the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

TAKE ACTION:

Please send letters calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Leyla Zana.

Write to:
Prime Minister Ecevit
Office of the Prime Minister
Basbakanlik
06573 Ankara
TURKEY

ENDING TORTURE, DEFENDING DIGNITY

Tomás Ricardo Anderson Kohatsu (left) is among several officers from Peru's Army Intelligence Services who was accused of torturing Leonor La Rosa and Mariela Lucy Barreto. La Rosa was left a paraplegic and Barreto was killed, her body dismembered. When Anderson Kohatsu traveled to the United States in March of 2000, human rights groups urged the Justice Department to detain him for criminal prosecution. Federal agents boarded Anderson Kohatsu's plane in Houston, and he agreed to submit to questioning. However, the State Department intervened claiming that Anderson Kohatsu was entitled to diplomatic immunity. He departed for Peru on the next flight out.

It would undoubtedly surprise most Americans to learn that perpetrators of human rights abuses from around the world live in the United States. In the past year alone, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has identified numerous individuals in the United States who allegedly committed human rights abuses abroad. Other individuals identified by the INS remain at large. Non-governmental organizations have made similar findings. ***United States: A Safe Haven for Torturers,*** is a special report that makes an in-depth analysis of this problem. To obtain copies of the report please contact Bonnie Abaunza (contact information below).

On June 26, Amnesty and Program for Torture Victims co-hosted an event to commemorate the United Nations Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Amnesty would like to acknowledge those individuals who participated in the evening's program to highlight the need for all of us to work collectively to end torture worldwide.

Alicia Partnoy is one of the few survivors of secret detention camps in which 30,000 Argentines were disappeared. She now lives in Los Angeles and is a professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Loyola Marymount University and an accomplished poet.

Natalia Vaisman, a torture survivor, studied violin at the Moscow Conservatory. She arrived in the United States in 1991.

William Aceves, author of AIUSA's report *USA: A Safe Haven for Torturers,* is an Associate Professor of Law and Director of the International Legal Studies Program at California Western School of Law.

Chris Abani is an award-winning poet and torture survivor from Nigeria. His experiences as a political prisoner in Nigeria's notorious Kiri Kiri prison are captured in his book of poems, *Kalakuta Republic.*

No one shall be subject to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

United Nations Convention Against Torture, 1984

JOIN ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY

CONTACT: Bonnie Abaunza
Director, Artists for Amnesty
2999 Overland Avenue, Suite 111
Los Angeles, CA 90064
310.815.0450 babaunza@aiusa.org
visit amnesty on-line: www.amnestyusa.org

AFA MONTHLY BULLETIN Edited by Bonnie Abaunza and Mario Tafur