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

JULY 2004

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.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF TREATY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

For the 10th anniversary of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women known as "Convention of Belém do Pará" -- the only international treaty in the world specifically on violence against women -- Amnesty International, and nearly 100 other organizations, have made an urgent appeal to all member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) with regard to the situation of women in the Americas. If the signatories to the Convention of Belém do Pará are seriously committed to promoting and protecting women's rights, it is time to act. They should delay no more in implementing specific measures to help stamp out violence against women in the Americas in their daily lives once and for all.

DURBIN AMENDMENT

On June 16, 2004, the US Senate voted to adopt an amendment to the Defense Department Authorization bill presented by **SENATOR RICHARD DURBIN** of Illinois affirming the important and longstanding position of the US government to refuse to engage in torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The amendment would require the Defense Secretary to issue guidelines to ensure compliance with this standard and to provide these guidelines to Congress. Sen. Durbin's office thanked Amnesty International for its crucial support, as Senate offices were inundated with calls urging passage of this amendment.

FREEDOM

Amnesty International welcomed the decision by Turkey's Appeals Court to release from jail prisoners of conscience **LEYLA ZANA, HATIP DICLE, SELIM SEDAK** and **ORHAN DOGAN** on June 9, 2004. The ruling follows a request by the country's chief prosecutor to overturn their 15-year sentences. The organization believes that their release should be unconditional and that they should face no further legal action.

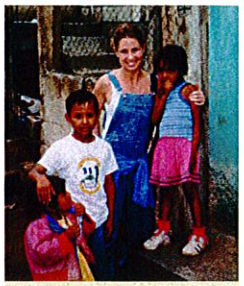
Amnesty International members around the world have been campaigning for the release of the four former deputies of the Turkish parliament since they were sentenced in December 1994 to 15 years' imprisonment for alleged membership in an illegal armed organization, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). The organization considers the prosecution to have been motivated by a desire to punish the four former deputies who had engaged in non-violent political activities in support of the Kurdish people.

Former pro-Kurdish lawmakers Leyla Zana, center right, and Selim Sadak, center left, are greeted by supporters after they were freed from a prison in Ankara, Turkey, Wednesday, June 9, 2004. © AP Photo/Anatolia

ON THE FRONTLINES

Last year, actor **JULIA STILES** joined Amnesty International in raising awareness about the plight of children in immigration detention in the United States. Ms. Stiles continued to shine a spotlight on this issue by organizing the Stony Brook University First Annual Seawolves Summer 7s Soccer Tournament. The trophies were presented on behalf of Amnesty International and Ms. Stiles. Through her personal experience as a player and a fan, she has grown to believe that soccer is truly a global sport where people from very different cultural and political backgrounds have the opportunity to play together united through their love of soccer.

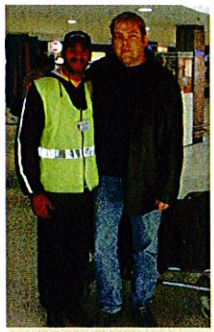
Actor **JULIE WARNER** recently traveled to Guatemala with Artists for Amnesty Advisory Board member and producer **STEPHEN NEMETH**, where they supported work her brother has been doing through the Peace Corps to bring sustainable eco-tourism to the town of San Vicente Pacaya. The town lies near the base of a volcano of the same name that attracts over 40,000 international visitors a year. Ms. Warner also brought a suitcase full of gifts for under-privileged children in the town.



Julie Warner with children in San Vicente Pacaya, Guatemala.

"Seven Dollars. A Five dollar bill and two ones. Twenty-eight quarters. What does that buy these days? A magazine and a cup of coffee? Does it still get you into a matinee at the theater?"

- Stephen Bures



Norman (left) and Stephen Bures at the Capetown Airport.

Seven dollars is how much **STEPHEN BURES** tipped his porter in Capetown, South Africa as he prepared to return to the US On assignment in South Africa for Saturn Films, Stephen soon found out that his porter, **NORMAN**, had not worked in two days, and now had enough money to provide his family with a Sunday chicken dinner. Norman is the father of three daughters and lives in Capetown Flats, a very dangerous and impoverished area outside of Capetown, where unemployment is often as high as 45%. As Stephen was preparing to get on his flight, Norman told him, "Thank you Stephen. Remember me, your new friend in Capetown. And tonight when we eat, my family and I will pray for you and your flight. You need to land safely. You have loved ones somewhere too." Stephen Bures sent an email to friends describing his experience, and was flooded with responses and questions about how they could help Norman. Stephen is now establishing a trust fund for Norman and his family. To learn more about how you can get involved, email Stephen at: sbures@aol.com.

GET UP, STAND UP

STOP UNJUST JUDICIAL PRACTICES IN DARFUR, SUDAN

Violence in Darfur has quickly escalated since February 2003, when armed opposition groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and later the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), took up arms against the government. As justification for their opposition to the government, these armed opposition groups cited lack of government protection for agricultural ethnic groups from attacks by nomad militias and the marginalization and underdevelopment of the region. The Sudanese government reacted by giving free rein to the nomadic militias, known as the Janjawid, to attack the villages of the mainly agricultural ethnic groups, such as the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa. The Janjawid are supported and funded by the Sudanese government; they wear uniforms and ruthlessly attack, kill, rape and abduct civilians, burning villages as they go. Over a million people have now fled from their burnt villages; more than 150,000 have crossed the border into Chad. Human rights abuses, including unjust judicial practices, underpin the Darfur crisis. It is therefore essential that human rights issues as well as the humanitarian crisis be addressed to effectively resolve the crisis. This will include the immediate reform of the justice system in Darfur and Sudan in its entirety.

In 2001, the Sudanese government, after declaring a state of emergency in the region, set up Special Courts in North, South and West Darfur states. Trials in these Special Courts are deeply flawed. The presence of members of the military as judges calls into question the independence of the judiciary. Trials in the courts are summary and death sentences have been handed down after trials lasting only an hour. The vast majority of detainees in Darfur as well as those arrested outside Darfur in connection with the conflict have not been told the reasons for their arrest and have not been permitted access to lawyers, families, and medical assistance. Lawyers are only allowed to be present as "friends" and to meet the defendant for short periods of time, sometimes only just before the trial and without sufficient time to examine the case file. The lawyer as "friend" is normally not allowed to cross-examine prosecution or defense witnesses. In addition, torture is widespread and confessions made under torture are accepted as evidence. Frequently, the presumption is one of guilt rather than of innocence, which is one of the preconditions of a fair trial.

Urge the Sudanese government to amend the presidential decrees that led to the creation of the Special Courts and Specialized Criminal Courts in Darfur. Ask that the Sudanese government ensure that all trials and judicial procedures operate according to internationally recognized standards of justice and fair trial as outlined in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

TAKE ACTION

Send your letters to:

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir
c/o Ambassador H.E. Khidir Haroun Ahmed
Embassy of the Republic of Sudan
2210 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008

URGENT ACTIONS

In May 2000, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on behalf of **VALDENIA APARECIDA PAULINO**, a Brazilian lawyer who was facing threats and intimidation in her attempts to uncover the truth behind the suspected extrajudicial execution of two men by military police. Earlier this year, Valdênia Aparecida Paulino spoke to AI about its impact: "[w]e were working on a case in which military police had killed two people, one of whom was mentally handicapped. We couldn't make ourselves heard, not even in the state or in the country. From the moment that Amnesty became involved through an Urgent Action campaign, the authorities realized the problem actually existed, and a case, which was on the verge of being closed, went to trial. When the Urgent Action letters began to arrive, it was the first time the postal services had entered our *favela* (shanty-town). Generally speaking, they don't come in - but because these were letters from other countries, and because there were so many, the postal service went into the *favela* where the families lived. The public authorities, which had always ignored them, now recognize their existence."

The mother of José Nunes da Silva, holding the letters sent to her family by Urgent Action Network members. © AI

GUANTANAMO BAY

The United States has taken a step towards restoring the rule of law for the hundreds of non-US nationals in military custody in Guantanamo Bay by affirming their right to a judicial review of the legality of their detention. Although the Supreme Court's decision could be a potential turning point for the defense of human rights post 9/11, it will only make a difference if prisoners held without charge or trial are freed. Amnesty International urges the Administration to afford all detainees held by the US the fundamental right to contest the legality of their detention. This ruling which grants US courts jurisdiction to consider challenges to the lawfulness of such detentions moves us one step closer to justice and accountability in the context of the USA's "war on terror" detention policies. The US administration chose the Guantanamo naval base because it believed that it could keep detainees out of reach of the federal courts. The US government should use this ruling to adopt an approach that places human rights and the rule of law at the center of the pursuit of security.

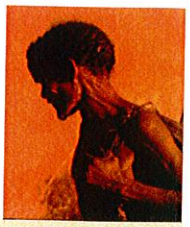
AIUSA activists protest indefinite detention of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, outside the US Supreme Court on April 20, 2003 in Washington, DC. (© AI)

SAVE THE DATE

SPECIAL VISIT BY THE BUSHMEN OF BOTSWANA discussing their struggle for survival in the face of forced eviction from their ancestral land.

PRIVATE RECEPTION, FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2004.

LOOK FOR DETAILS IN THE AUGUST BULLETIN.



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JOIN ARTISTS FOR AMNESTY

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