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

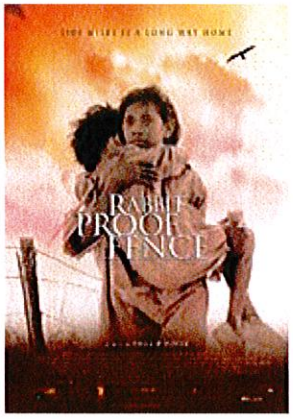
VOLUME VI

NOVEMBER 2002

*Welcome to the **Artists for Amnesty Monthly Bulletin**, which will keep you informed about 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.*

RABBIT PROOF FENCE: SPECIAL SCREENING

RABBIT PROOF FENCE, a powerful new film by **PHILLIP NOYCE**, is the true story of Molly Craig, a young Aboriginal girl who, with her younger sister and cousin, escaped from a state run orphanage. Molly guides the girls on an epic journey over 1,500 miles of Australia's outback to return home. The treacherous journey, during which Australian police and indigenous trackers pursued the girls, tested the resolve of the children, their families, and the will of the government to enforce its policy of relocating and training Aboriginal children as domestic workers and integrating them into white society. The film is based upon the book *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* by **DORIS PILKINGTON GARIMARA**, daughter of Molly Craig.



In 1995, under pressure from the media and from groups representing Aboriginal peoples, the Australian government convened an investigative commission to examine claims that as many as 100,000 (known as the *Stolen Generation)* Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their homes and transferred to the custody of white families between 1870 and 1970. Removal of the children from their families prevented their learning of Aboriginal language, culture and traditional responsibilities. According to a 1997 report on the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families: 90 percent of those surveyed said they suffered from chronic depression and one out of every six said they had been sexually abused.

In 1937, the following proposal was put forward at an Aboriginal Welfare Conference in Canberra, "... as the destiny of the Aboriginal people lay in their ultimate absorption by the white race all efforts be directed to that end. This theory was disputed by most States ... but the proposal was accepted when limited to persons of Aboriginal extraction with fifty-percent, or more white or other Non-Aboriginal blood." These 'cross breeds' were to be educated and trained to fit them for assimilation in the white community. After reviewing claims for two years, the National Inquiry concluded that Australia's federal government, over the course of a century, had knowingly pursued a policy of genocide policy constituted genocide with respect to the Aboriginal peoples.

"There are many Australian people who feel that the way we have treated the Aboriginal people has been shameful," John Bond, Secretary of the National Sorry Day Committee as reported by the Los Angeles Times. The National Sorry Day Committee was created to coordinate a national "Sorry Day" in Australia recommended by a report submitted to the Australian Parliament regarding the *Stolen Generation*. "There has always been this conflict between facing the truth of the past and trying to pretend it didn't happen ... people recognizing this is something that needs to be healed."

Rumbalara Films, Amnesty International, and the Museum of Tolerance will present a special screening of this critically acclaimed film on November 19th. Academy Award-winner **GEOFFREY RUSH** will host the evening. Amnesty International would like to extend a very special thanks to **NICOLE KIDMAN, GEOFFREY RUSH, MIRAMAX FILMS, MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE, RUMBALARA FILMS** and **PHILLIP NOYCE** for making this event possible.

ON THE FRONTLINES

Actor **MIA KIRSHNER** recently returned from her trip to Ingushetia to document the plight of Chechen refugees living in camps in the city of Nazran. The trip is one of several Mia plans to take to collect material for a book titled, *I Live Here,* focusing on the lives of women in children refugees. Proceeds from the book will benefit Amnesty International USA. Mike Simons and Paul Shoebridge, art directors from *Adbusters* magazine, will provide art direction for the book. Mia provided us with an excerpt from the journal she kept during her trip to Ingushetia: *10.05.02 He is an orphan. Twelve. His father killed by a rocket in the first war. His mother just died – she was hit by a car in Ingushetia. Her body is still in the morgue. There is no money for a funeral. He breaks glass bottles and digs the shards into his skin.*

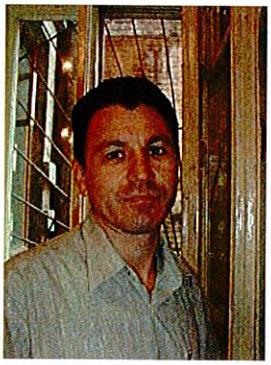
Chechen family members demanding information about their missing and "disappeared" loved ones. Leo Erken/Panos Pictures©

GUATEMALA: SITUATION WORSENS

Last month a Court of Appeals annulled all the convictions in the murder of Bishop Juan José Gerardi Conadera. This decision clearly demonstrated that the Guatemalan authorities are not committed to ending impunity for human rights violations. During the course of the trial, nine witnesses connected to the case were killed. Late last month Amnesty hosted several book signings by **SISTER DIANNA ORTIZ**, who has recently published her memoirs chronicling her own experience of brutal torture at the hands of the Guatemalan government. For more information about human rights in Guatemala please visit:
www.amnestyusa.org/countries/guatemala

GET UP, STAND UP

ENVIRONMENTALIST UNDER FIRE



GRIGORY PASKO, an environmentalist and journalist, was convicted of espionage by the Russian government in December 2001. The prosecution alleged that he gathered sensitive information about Russia's Pacific Fleet with the intention of passing it on to the Japanese media.

Pasko, also a former Captain of the Far Eastern Fleet of the Russian Navy, was arrested because he filmed and reported on the human and environmental threats stemming from illegal dumping of nuclear waste by the Russian Navy into the Sea of Japan. Amnesty believes his conviction is a violation of his human right to freedom of expression, and has declared him a Prisoner of Conscience. To that end, Amnesty is demanding his immediate and unconditional release. The Russian Criminal Code states it is a crime to withhold information about the condition of the environment or regarding incidents or catastrophes, that endanger human life — precisely the kind of information Pasko was investigating and making public.

Pasko was convicted by a secret military decree and was sentenced to four years in a labor camp. This conviction was upheld even though the Russian constitution forbids the use of secret decrees in criminal cases. Only a few months after Pasko's appeal was denied the Russian Ministry of Defense abolished the secret decree that served as the basis for Pasko's conviction.

Although Amnesty International has fought for his release, Grigory Pasko remains imprisoned at the labor camp. In June of this year, his appeal was denied. Please help us protect freedom of expression and peaceful environmental activism by taking action to free Grigory Pasko. Write Russian government officials and demand his immediate and unconditional release.

To learn more about Grigory Pasko's case or AIUSA's Just Earth! Program, which focuses on protecting the human rights of those struggling to defend the environment, please visit: www.amnestyusa.org/justearth

TAKE ACTION

Vladimir Putin
President of the Russian Federation
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
g. Moskva
Kreml, Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii
Putin V.V.
Russian Federation
FAX: 011 7 095 206 8510 EMAIL: president@gov.ru

IRAQ

Amnesty International has been very concerned about the human rights situation in Iraq for many years due both to the conduct of the Iraqi government and economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations. As some members of the international community consider military action in Iraq, heeding this concern becomes more pressing in anticipation of a deepening of that country's human rights crisis. Military intervention will inevitably exacerbate the already precarious situation of the Iraqi civilian population and may result in grave violations of human rights.

In the past several months, the human rights crisis in Iraq has been alluded to as an impetus for the use of force. Human rights must not be used as an instrument in the rhetoric of war. Claims that military action in Iraq is justified in the name of human rights raise questions of selectivity and double standards; the states that claim force is now justified to protect human rights are the very states who supported Saddam Hussein's government during the Iran-Iraq war.

In light of the risk that military action may result in large-scale human rights violations, Amnesty International USA reiterates its call to the U.S. government that use of force must be preceded by exhaustive pursuit of a solution through peaceful means.

RABBIT PROOF FENCE SPECIAL SCREENING Los Angeles

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 19 · 7pm Museum of Tolerance 9786 W. Pico Blvd.
For information: 310.815.0450

IMAGINE DAY LAUNCH OF THE AIUSA IMAGINE CAMPAIGN
December 10 Los Angeles For information: 310.815.0450

LORD OF THE RINGS: TWO TOWERS PREMIERE San Francisco
December 17 For tickets and information: 310.815.0450

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: DENIAL OF JUSTICE

On October 30, 2002, Amnesty International launched its international campaign on human rights in the Russian Federation with a new report that focuses on specific and serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Russian law enforcement and security forces. Throughout, it seeks to highlight the lack of accountability for perpetrators, and touches specifically on challenges faced by women, children and ethnic minorities.

For copies of this report please visit: www.amnestyusa.org

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