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

OCTOBER 2005

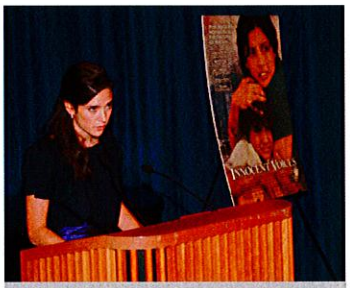
Welcome to the *Artists for Amnesty Monthly Bulletin*, which will keep you informed on critical human rights issues, cases of individuals at risk, and the life-saving work of Amnesty International. Our Monthly Bulletin will also highlight the efforts of artists on behalf of human rights.

innocent voices

Leonor Varella and Carlos Padilla

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers estimates that as many as 300,000 children under the age of eighteen are currently participating in armed conflicts in more than thirty different countries on nearly every continent.

On October 6, Artists for Amnesty and UNICEF co-hosted the New York premiere of *Innocent Voices* at the United Nations. The evening was hosted by Jennifer Connelly and His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan. Artists for Amnesty presented the Excellence in Filmmaking Award to Director Luis Mandoki.



Jennifer Connelly © Michael Loccisano/FilmMagic.com

Lawrence Bender, Producer, Leonor Varela, Luis Mandoki, Director and Luis Mandoki, Director, and Oscar Torres, Screenwriter © Michael Loccisano/FilmMagic.com

Amnesty International is proud to be working with the filmmakers of *Innocent Voices* to raise awareness on the issue of child soldiers. Luis Mandoki has directed a film that powerfully, poignantly and realistically tells the true story of 11-year-old Chava who is caught in the middle of the civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s.

Amnesty International is part of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which works to pressure governments and armed groups around the world to sign on to and adhere to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts - which sets 18 as the minimum age for all direct participation in armed conflict, all forced conscription, and all recruitment by non-state armed groups.

Larissa Peltola and Luis Mandoki, Director © Michael Loccisano/FilmMagic.com

Innocent Voices opens in select cities on October 14th. For more information, please log onto: www.innocentvoicesmovie.com

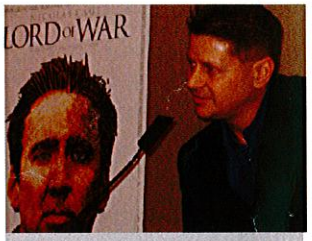
lord of war

Nicolas Cage in *Lord of War* courtesy of Lion's Gate Films.

On September 14th, Artists for Amnesty and National Geographic co-hosted the Washington D.C. premiere of *Lord of War* at the Library of Congress. Writer/Director **Andrew Niccol, Ethan Hawke** and **Eamonn Walker** were in attendance and participated in a Q&A after the screening.

Lord of War was released nationally on September 16th. The film follows the story of an arms broker (Nicolas Cage) who traffics weapons to dictators and human rights abusers, and the efforts of the Interpol agent (Ethan Hawke) who tries to stop him. The movie co-stars Jared Leto, Bridget Moynahan, and Ian Holm.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children die because of the uncontrolled trade in conventional arms, especially small arms and light weapons. Ruthless arms brokers play a major role in weapons proliferation, selling to abusive armed groups and countries under UN arms embargoes.



Writer/Director Andrew Niccol

Ethan Hawke and Congressman Tom Lantos

Artists for Amnesty would like to thank actor **Nicolas Cage** for supporting the Control Arms Campaign and for participating in a public service announcement to educate the public on the deadly impact of the arms trade.

Ethan Hawke, Andrew Niccol and Eamonn Walker

Amnesty International USA is actively engaged in the Control Arms Campaign, an international campaign organized by AI, Oxfam, and the International Action Network on Small Arms. Through this campaign, AIUSA is working to mobilize the public to pressure the U.S. government to be a leader in efforts to curb the arms trade. Over the next year, we will advocate for a global agreement on arms brokering and arms transfers as well as increased U.S. assistance to foreign governments to better secure their arms stockpiles and exports.

AIUSA has developed a *Lord of War*/Control Arms Campaign online action kit, Educators' Guide, and other activist tools to help your organizing around this film

Log on to view a message from Nicolas Cage: http://www.amnestyusa.org/lordofwar

get up, stand up

FILMMAKER THREATENED WITH PROSECUTION

Singaporean filmmaker Martyn See is under police investigation for making a short documentary film about an opposition politician in the state. He has been threatened with prosecution under the Films Act, after making a 26-minute documentary on Dr Chee Soon Juan, the leader of the opposition Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), and could face up to two years in jail or a fine of about $59,000.

In March 2005, government movie censors ordered the withdrawal of his documentary, entitled ***Singapore Rebel***, from the country's annual international film festival on the grounds that that it breached the Films Act. Subsequently, as police conducted a criminal investigation, Martyn See was called for questioning and compelled to surrender his video camera, existing tapes of the documentary and other related material.
The Films Act, just one of a wide range of restrictive laws that curtail freedom of expression in Singapore, prohibits "party political films". The Act broadly defines such films as those containing "...either partisan or biased references to or comments on any political matter".

Dr Chee Soon Juan is prominent among the limited number of Singaporeans who remain vocal and active in opposition politics despite the serious obstacles and personal pressures that such a role can entail.

He has been imprisoned for holding peaceful public meetings, and, following civil defamation suits lodged by leaders of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP), faces possible bankruptcy which would bar him from participating in parliamentary elections.

Martyn See denies making the film in support of any particular political belief or party, commenting that he sought to "find out Chee Soon Juan's motivation, as to why he does what he does." Although banned in Singapore, the film has been screened at human rights film festivals in the United States (including Amnesty International's Film Festivals) and New Zealand and may soon be shown in Canada.

Write a letter to express concern about the harassment of Martyn See, the threat of his prosecution under the Films Act, and restrictions on freedom of expression, including artistic freedom.

Call for an end to the misuse of restrictive laws, including the Films Act, which can serve to punish perceived government opponents and to deter Singaporeans from expressing dissenting political opinions and participating in public life.

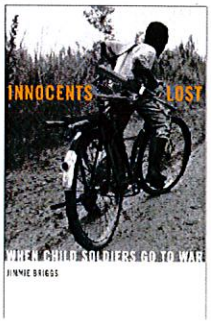
State that freedom of expression is a fundamental right protected by international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

TAKE ACTION

Send appeals to:

Dr LEE Boon Yang
Salutation: Dear Minister
Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts
140 Hill Street, #02-02 MICA Building
Singapore 179369
Fax: +65 6837 9837
E-mail: lee_boon_yang@mica.gov.sg

innocents lost



On October 18th, Artists for Amnesty will host a book signing of *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go To War* by author Jimmie Briggs.

Innocents Lost is the culmination of six years of research in Uganda, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Afghanistan. Briggs chronicles the stories of both active and former child soldiers. *Innocents Lost* also provides a glimpse into rehabilitation centers where former child soldiers are attempting to regain normal lives.

'The personal and tragic stories of these children, in their own voices, and in Briggs' moving accounts, not only reveal the horror of children fighting, but focus on what is happening today, fifteen years since the first reports of the global phenomena of children in combat began to make headlines. **Innocents Lost**

Jimmie Briggs is the first African-American to be appointed as Goodwill Ambassador and Special Envoy for Children and Armed Conflict at the United Nations. In addition, Briggs served as Special Consultant for the United Nations Special Session on Children. Briggs has taught writing and reporting to young people at the International Center for Photography and served as an adjunct professor of investigative journalism at the New School for Social Research in New York.

Gikonodo Central Prison in Rwanda, Juvenile Wing © Jimmie Briggs

upcoming events

OCTOBER

Book signing

October 18
Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War
by Jimmie Briggs

NOVEMBER

Western Regional Conference

November 11-13
Holiday Inn Golden Gateway, San Francisco

Screening

November 15
En Route to Baghdad

AFA Bulletin edited by Bonnie Abaunza and Jamie Skaluba

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