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

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2004

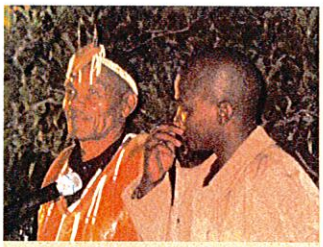
Welcome to the *Artists for Amnesty Monthly Bulletin*, which will keep you informed on critical human rights issues, cases of individuals at risk, and the life-saving work of Amnesty International. Our Monthly Bulletin will also highlight the efforts of artists on behalf of human rights.

BUSHMEN

On August 27, Artists for Amnesty and the Indigenous Land Rights Fund organized an event in Beverly Hills to draw attention to the plight of the Bushmen of Botswana. The Bushmen, considered to be the world's oldest culture, have been forcibly evicted from their ancestral land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana, and are touring the U.S. to raise awareness and funds to wage the legal battle to reclaim their homes.

Top row, (left to right): Isak Kruiper, Vetkat Kruiper, Belinda Kruiper, Dave Matthews, Bonnie Abaunza, Julie Warner and Jackson Browne. Bottom row (left to right) Roy Sesana, Rupert Isaacson, and Jackson Warner.
© AIUSA

We would like to offer a very special thanks to all of those people who helped make the evening possible: our hosts **JULIE WARNER** and **STEPHEN NEMETH, JACKSON BROWNE, DAVE MATTHEWS, LILI HAYDN, ALLISON MEZEY, KIM LANGBECKER, RUPERT ISAACSON, JONATHAN GREENBLATT, INDIGO TRIANGLE, RUBISOW SARGENT WINES, QUPE WINES, ETHOS WATER,** and everyone who lent their support to make the evening a success.



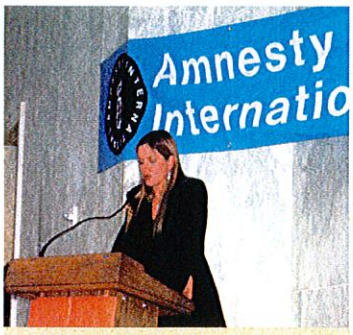
Roy Sesana speaking with his translator Jumanda Gakelobone.

The Bushmen are represented by **ROY SESANA** (Director, First People of the Kalahari, Ganakwe Bushman), **JUMANDA GAKELOBONE** (Ganakwe Bushman), **BELINDA KRUIPER** (Xhomani Clan, South Africa), **REGOPSTAAN "VETKAT" KRUIPER** (Xhomani Clan, South Africa), and **ISAK KRUIPER** (Xhomani Clan, South Africa). Also accompanying the Bushmen are **BEATA KASALA** (Editor, *The Voice,* Botswanan Newspaper), and **ARCHIE MOKAKA** (*The Voice* Photographer). The Bushmen will continue their tour, meeting with indigenous leaders, members of Congress, and other supporters.

ON THE FRONTLINES

Renowned author of the Harry Potter series, **JK ROWLING,** joined Amnesty International in its fight to end the use of "cage beds" in the Czech Republic. "Cage beds"—which are beds fitted with a metal-barred construction above the mattress, or a metal frame covered with netting ("net beds"), designed to enclose a person within their confines—are endemic within Czech (and Hungarian and Slovak) psychiatric and social care systems. On July 13, 2004, the Czech Minister of Health Jozef Kubinyi issued a statement instructing directors of all health institutions to immediately cease use of "cage beds," calling for the elimination of "net beds" by the end of this year. This decision was made days after the Czech authorities received a letter of concern from Ms. Rowling. Much work remains to be done, as the decision has been criticized by Czech President Vaclav Klaus as an "unduly hasty step," but Ms. Rowling's contribution has brought the issue much needed international attention.

Academy Award winning actor **MIRA SORVINO** went to Capitol Hill to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of the victims of the on-going crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Amnesty International has said that the actions of the Janjawid militias (armed by the Sudanese government) constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ms. Sorvino encouraged lawmakers to enhance the role the U.S. is playing in ending this crisis. Ms. Sorvino met with **REPRESENTATIVES PAYNE** (D-NJ) and **LANTOS** (D-CA), **SENATORS DEWINE** (R-Ohio) and **LANDRIEU** (D-LA).



Mira Sorvino addresses the audience gathered for the *Stop the Fires, Darfur* photo exhibition on Capitol Hill.
© AIUSA

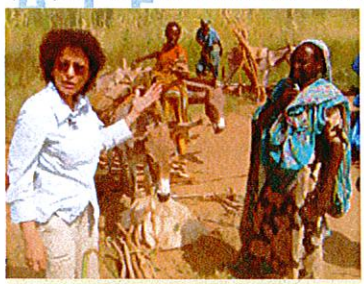
The visit also included a photo exhibition, *Stop the Fires, Darfur,* where Ms. Sorvino delivered a statement calling for an end to the killing. Other speakers included **REPRESENTATIVES CONYERS** (D-MI), **LANTOS** (D-CA), **JACKSON LEE** (D-TX), **PAYNE** (D-NJ) and **ROYCE** (R-CA), **OMAR ISMAIL** of Darfur Peace and Development, and **ANNE SNOUCK-HURGRUNJE**, member of the Adams Morgan AIUSA Group.

Mira Sorvino with Representative Tom Lantos (D-CA) © AIUSA

Ms. Sorvino made the trip to Washington, D.C. as an Ambassador to Amnesty's Stop Violence Against Women Campaign. Earlier this year, Amnesty issued a report detailing the use of rape as a tool of war by the Janjawid militias against women and girls as young as eight years old in Darfur. Ms. Sorvino stressed the need to recognize this dimension of the problem.

DARFUR

In September, Amnesty International sent a high-level mission to Darfur, Sudan to assess the ongoing human rights crisis there that has claimed as many as 50,000 lives and displaced over 1.5 million people. The mission includes Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan and Amnesty International USA's Executive Director William F. Schulz. They have interviewed internally-displaced people, potential prisoners of conscience, others facing human rights violations, and met with government officials. To learn more visit: **http://www.amnestyusa.org.**



Secretary General Irene Khan with internally-displaced refugees in Sudan.

GET UP, STAND UP

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DARFUR

Displaced women from the Darfur region. © AFP

Much of the violence perpetuated in the Darfur conflict includes grave human rights abuses against women. The abuses have specifically targeted women and girls and include abductions, sexual slavery, torture and forced displacement. Girls as young as eight years old have been raped and used as sex slaves.

The Janjawid have also tortured women to coerce them to report the whereabouts of their husbands. Forms of torture have reportedly included forcing the faces of women between wooden sticks and pulling out women's nails. Some women have also reported that the Janjawid has broken the arms and/or legs of rape victims in order to prevent them from escaping. Some 15 women and girls who had not fled quickly enough were raped in different huts in the village. The Janjawid remained in the village for six or seven days. After the rapes, the Janjawid looted the houses. In many cases, the Janjawid have also raped women in public in front of their husbands, relatives and the wider community.

Rape in itself is a heinous human rights violation, but the survivors are likely to suffer even after the event because of the associated shame and stigma. Married women who have survived sexual violence can be "disowned" by their husbands, while unmarried survivors may never be able to marry because their communities consider them "spoiled." Women who are raped often become socially and economically vulnerable, and unable to enjoy the economic support that men traditionally provide.

The mass rapes and other forms of sexual violence taking place in Darfur are war crimes and crimes against humanity, but the international community is not doing enough to stop them. Despite the regional and international focus on Darfur and promises by the Sudanese government to disarm the Janjawid militia, there is still no protection for women and girls. Not a single member of the Janjawid or the armed forces has been charged with committing rape or abductions.

Urge the Government of Sudan to protect the women of Darfur from violence by the Janjawid militia. Ask that the Government halt attacks on women, bring perpetrators of sexual violence--in particular members of the Janjawid militia--to justice, ratify international laws that protect women from sexual violence in conflict, and publicly condemn all forms of gender based violence in Darfur.

TAKE ACTION

Send your letters to:

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir
c/o Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations
655 Third Avenue, Suite 500-510,
New York, NY 10017

STUDENT ACTIVISM

By ANDREA FUNSTEN
Marlborough High Amnesty International Chapter

Being a student at Marlborough School has given me the opportunity to turn my desire to help others into action. Our club mission is to inform, create awareness, and provide avenues for change and enlightenment in regards to human rights abuses worldwide.

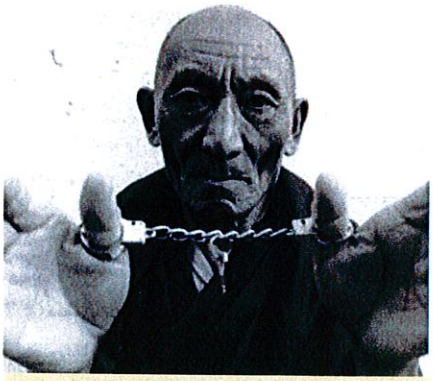
As an all-girls school, our student group became heavily involved in the Stop Violence Against Women campaign that Amnesty International launched earlier this year, focusing specifically on the murder and disappearance of more than 370 women in Cuidad Juarez, Mexico. Through petition writing, education information sessions, demonstrations, and all-school teach-ins, we were able to create awareness in our school community and give students the opportunity to find hands-on outlets for activism. Choosing to direct our efforts for one specific cause really gave our club the ability to apply all of our energy and attention to what we were fighting for. One of our biggest accomplishments of the year was having the opportunity to march alongside thousands of Amnesty supporters through Cuidad Juarez to protest the intolerable murders and disappearances of all the women, and to demand justice from the government which had ignored these protests for so long.

All over the world women have led brave and inspiring campaigns against this violence, achieving dramatic changes in laws, policies, and practices. It is our goal as Marlborough School's Amnesty International student group to accomplish these same things, and to make a difference in a world where violence against women won't be tolerated.

COMPASSION

PALDEN GYATSO is a Tibetan Buddhist monk that spent 33-years imprisoned in Tibet for his peaceful protest of the Chinese invasion of Tibet. During his incarceration, he faced brutal torture at the hands of his captors. As a result of the mistreatment he suffered, Palden lost all of his teeth. Amnesty International paid for Palden to receive a set of dentures to replace the teeth that were stolen from him. At a meeting this summer, Palden said:

"I really like these teeth. There is a human being who took my teeth and then there is another human being who gave me my teeth. One human being takes things and the other human being, through sympathy and affection, makes teeth for you."



Palden Gyatso © Timothy Nunn.

AFA Bulletin edited by Bonnie Abaunza, Jamie Skaluba, and Mario Tafur.

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