



## Impunity entrenched in Oaxaca City

More than a year after José Jiménez Colmenares was shot dead during a peaceful demonstration in Oaxaca City, Mexico, his killers remain at liberty. No one has been charged with his murder, despite the fact that demonstrators handed over gun shell casings and several suspects – including two state police officers – to the authorities on the day he died.

The prosecuting authorities failed to preserve the crime scene and released the suspects. José Jiménez Colmenares's wife said she was told to come back when she had collected sufficient evidence to prosecute.

In mid-2006, what began as a strike by teachers over pay and conditions escalated into widespread demonstrations. A popular support movement – the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO) – was formed to support the teachers. The response of the authorities triggered a political and public security crisis which has continued into 2007.

At least 18 people were killed in the unrest. Scores more were injured and hundreds were detained and ill-treated. Many of those detained were charged on the basis of fabricated evidence and convicted following unfair trials.

Across Oaxaca, human rights violations committed during the upheavals in 2006 are being compounded by a failure to bring those responsible to justice and a systemic disregard for the rights of victims and their families.

"One grabbed me and threw me to the ground, shouting: 'You thought you were a real revolutionary, no? A real rebel. Now you are going to know what that means...'" said Rosalba Aguilar Sánchez, describing how she was detained on 25 November 2006 by Federal Preventive Police in central Oaxaca City.

Reports say 140 people were detained on that day, after a peaceful APPO demonstration ended in violent clashes.

The National Human Rights Commission found that at least 13 of those detained were tortured by State Judicial Police and Federal Preventive Police.

The response of the authorities to the demands for justice by the victims of human rights violations has been characterized by inertia, incompetence and obstruction. Journalists, relatives and human rights defenders who have tried to pursue cases and expose the truth have been threatened.

At every stage of the investigative and judicial process the quest for truth has been thwarted. In most cases crime scenes were not preserved and evidence was not gathered promptly.

Not all protests were peaceful, and the authorities have a duty to maintain public order and protect the public. However, such challenges do not diminish their obligation to uphold national and international human rights law. Nor can they excuse impunity for human rights abuses.

For more cases of violations and impunity, and a full list of AI's recommendations to the Mexican authorities on tackling such impunity, bringing policing into line with international standards, and ensuring fair trials, see *Mexico: Oaxaca – clamour for justice* (AMR 41/031/2007).



Florina Jimenez Lucas (right), whose husband José Jiménez Colmenares (in photo on the table) was killed in Oaxaca City, Mexico, in August 2006, talks with AI Secretary General Irene Khan.



Palestinians cram on to buses to leave Gaza for Egypt during a rare opening of the Rafah border crossing, February 2007.

## Peace talks ignore rights

The international community's renewed interest in the Middle East peace process has sparked a flurry of initiatives to try to resuscitate it, but human rights developments on the ground are not moving so fast.

The international community was spurred into action after Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) wrested control of security installations and other institutions from the Fatah party, led by the Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, following months of inter-factional clashes in the Gaza Strip.

Major international donors, notably the USA and the EU, who had suspended aid to the Hamas-led PA government in early 2006, have now resumed financial aid to the emergency government set up by President Abbas in the West Bank. They have also tightened sanctions on Hamas, which has become the de facto administration in the Gaza Strip.

President Bush announced that the USA will convene an international conference later this year to revive the long-stalled Middle East peace process. Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was appointed as the envoy of the Quartet (UN, USA, EU and Russia), is tasked with helping revive the Palestinian economy, which has been virtually paralysed by stringent Israeli blockades and restrictions on the movement of people and goods in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Meanwhile, following meetings with his Palestinian counterpart, Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has announced his intention to allow the PA to establish a Palestinian state in the OPT.

The optimism of these initiatives, however, is in stark contrast to the deteriorating human rights situation.

In the West Bank, Israeli settlements and related infrastructure continue to be built and extended, in violation of international law. Some two million Palestinians remain subject to rigorous restrictions on their freedom of movement between towns and

villages, making even the most basic activities of daily life difficult or impossible.

In the Gaza Strip, 1.5 million Palestinians have been trapped by a stringent blockade since early June, when the Israeli authorities sealed the crossing points between Gaza and the outside world. No one is allowed to leave Gaza, except the most urgent medical cases, and even the flow of basic food and medical and humanitarian aid into Gaza has been reduced.

The blockade on exports from Gaza has reduced production in many factories by around 80 per cent and closed others entirely. This is disastrous for a community where two thirds of the population is already dependent on aid and lives below the poverty line.

The internal security and law-enforcement situation in the Gaza Strip is also a major cause for concern. The end of the frequent and bloody Fatah-Hamas armed clashes and abductions of both Palestinian and foreign nationals by armed gangs has brought much-needed respite. However, President Abbas' decision to suspend the operation of PA security forces and judicial institutions in the Gaza Strip has left the population with no formal law enforcement. Hamas is filling this gap. It has established its own security and law enforcement apparatus, with no appropriately trained personnel and without adequate accountability mechanism or safeguards.

The USA-convened international conference must ensure from the outset that all concerned parties understand respect for human rights and international law as a fundamental obligation.

Human rights are not a bargaining chip to be used by one side or the other to extract concessions.

The subordination of fundamental rights to political considerations and the application of double standards of accountability have been a major cause of the failure of past peace processes. The same mistakes should not be allowed to undermine the prospect of sustainable peace and security again.

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## Arms trade treaty must have human rights at its heart

India has reportedly been in negotiations since late 2006 to supply military helicopters to Myanmar. This transfer, if it goes ahead, would undermine an EU Arms Embargo on Myanmar.

At the same time, the irresponsible transfer of arms to Sudan and its neighbours has been a significant and continuing factor in the human rights catastrophe in Darfur and eastern Chad.

A high proportion of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law around the world are committed by military and law enforcement personnel and armed groups, using a wide range of easily available weaponry. While many governments have recognised this problem, there are powerful opponents of the proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) who can still block progress.

### Helicopter transfers

India is one such potential blocker. A recent report produced by AI and Saferworld, *Indian helicopters for Myanmar: making a mockery of the EU arms embargo?*, outlined concerns about the potential transfer from India to Myanmar of the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), which is highly likely to contain components, technology and munitions originating from EU member states and the USA.

The Indian government's reaction to the report was confused. The first response, which came from an anonymous official, stated that the Indian government "does not attach much credence to reports by Amnesty International". The second more "senior" unnamed source, from the defence ministry's armaments production wing, admitted to the press agency AFP that: "The matter is delicate: 90 per cent of the ALH is European, and its transfer would be in breach of the embargo. It's a Catch-22 situation for us." Some three hours later an official reaction from Indian Foreign

Ministry Spokesman Navtej Sarna rejected the report as "completely baseless".

Some transfers to Sudan have already flown in the face of a UN embargo requiring all member states to take measures to prevent arms reaching those fighting in Darfur – transfers of military equipment to the Sudanese armed forces have mainly been from China and Russia.

### Eyewitness accounts

Detailed eyewitness accounts given to AI confirmed the continued presence of the Russian Mi-24 attack helicopters at Geneina, El Fasher and Nyala, and Chinese A-5 "Fantan" jet fighters were seen parked at Nyala airport, Darfur, between January and March 2007. These aircraft are specifically designed to be used for ground attack operations. Both China and Russia are aware of the UN reports accusing the Sudanese government of repeatedly violating the UN arms embargo by moving such military equipment into Darfur for offensive operations and without UN authorization.

This is why an ATT is so crucial. Campaigners around the world are celebrating a significant victory after more than 90 governments participated in the UN consultation process on the ATT.

Complementing these countries' submissions to UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, the Control Arms campaign has coordinated more than 100 People's Consultations around the world, where people shared their views on what the ATT should include.

The work of global civil society has been a major contributing factor in the success of the treaty process so far.

This October, states will resume the debate on an ATT at the UN before a group of government experts starts, in early 2008, to deliberate on the feasibility, scope and parameters of such

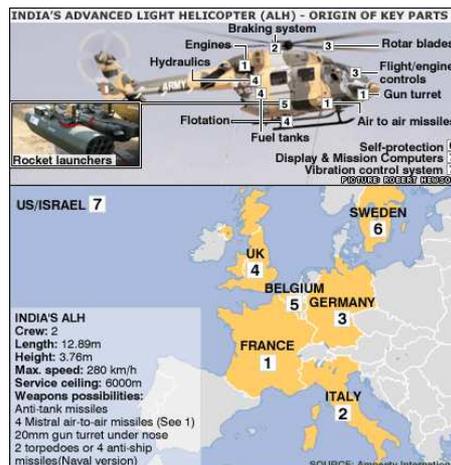


Diagram showing the countries of origin of the various parts needed to make up the Advanced Light Helicopter.

An instrument. The golden rule essential to an effective treaty is: no arms transfers should be authorized that will contribute to serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

For further information see AI documents *Indian helicopters for Myanmar: Making a mockery of the EU arms embargo?* (ASA 20/014/2007) and *Sudan: Arms continuing to fuel serious human rights violations in Darfur* (AFR 54/019/2007). To take action, visit the Control Arms website: [www.controlarms.org/](http://www.controlarms.org/)

## Greek police circulate video of violations

"I did it for a laugh," a senior police officer told journalists. "I wasn't beating them for any particular reason but because I wanted us to have a bit of fun." He was describing the ill-treatment of two migrants in detention in Athens, June 2006.

The two migrants were detained in Omonia police station in central Athens, beaten by police officers and forced to slap each other repeatedly. The incident was recorded on a video which was circulated a year later, in June 2007. In this case, the officers involved have been suspended, an investigation launched, and some charges pressed. But other similar videos exist and there are reports that the number of cases of ill-treatment in Greece is on the rise.

A young Moldovan woman, for example, held at a police station in Athens in June 2007 for three hours, has detailed how she was ill-treated.

She and her family had been residing legally in Greece for the past four years. She told AI that on 8 June she was arrested at home by police officers who searched the house and demanded to

see her and her father's residence permits. She was then taken to the general police headquarters of Attica in the centre of Athens and questioned about the whereabouts of her former partner.

She said she was then taken to another office by three female police officers, one of whom beat her around the head. The officers forced her to strip to her underwear and face the wall. She was then struck again and one officer pulled out clumps of her hair.

Following this, she was taken back to the first office where she was interrogated again about her former partner. One of the officers grabbed her arm while another kicked her. She said that they threatened to destroy her residence permit and one of them told her: "We'll bring your parents here too and they will go through what you have. You will appear before a court as a defendant and we will send you back to your country along with your parents."

Around three hours after the beginning of her ordeal she was released. She was admitted to hospital with head pains, nausea and dizziness. She was X-rayed and given a neck brace as a result

of her injuries. She lodged a complaint against the officers for bodily harm, threats and blackmail, but no steps have been taken to investigate the incident and bring the officers to justice.

While the investigations that do occur in Greece are welcome, many other reports of ill-treatment remain ignored.

AI urges the Greek authorities to initiate independent investigations into all allegations of ill-treatment immediately. The perpetrators must be brought to justice and victims receive reparations. Police officers also need to be fully trained in the proper treatment of detainees.

### ACT NOW

Write to the Ministry of Public Order, urging the authorities to uphold their international legal obligations and to investigate the allegations of ill-treatment immediately – bringing the perpetrators to justice and giving victims reparations.

Send letters to: Byron Polydoros, Minister of Public Order, P. Kanellopoulou 4, 10177 Athens, Greece.  
Fax: +302106988176.  
Email: [grammateia@polydoras.gr](mailto:grammateia@polydoras.gr) or [vpolydoras@yahoo.gr](mailto:vpolydoras@yahoo.gr)

### TURKEY

## Jailed for non-violent political beliefs

Mehmet Desde was imprisoned on 8 June solely on the basis of his non-violent political beliefs. He was convicted following an unfair trial, largely on the basis of statements allegedly extracted under torture. He faces a 30-month prison sentence of which he will serve around 17 months, having to date served six months. AI considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

On 25 December 2006, the 9th Chamber of the Court of Cassation, Turkey's highest court, upheld the March 2006 convictions of Mehmet Desde and four others for "membership of an illegal organization", and of three more people for "supporting an illegal organization". The convictions relate to the men's alleged connection with the Bolshevik Party (North Kurdistan/Turkey), a small, non-violent political party. During their trial

the men denied being members of the group.

The evidence used to convict the eight men consisted mainly of statements allegedly extracted from some of them under torture, as well as the discovery of legal journals in their possession, and leaflets and stickers in the name of the Bolshevik Party (North Kurdistan/Turkey). The eight were detained between 9 and 10 July 2002.

The decision by the Court of Cassation is all the more disturbing in view of the fact that a separate case against four police officers accused of torturing Mehmet Desde when he was first detained in 2002 is still unresolved.

AI regards the final verdict against the eight as evidence of a continuing pattern of unfair trial proceedings which blights Turkey's criminal justice system.



### EGYPT

## Blogger imprisoned

Karim Amer, a 23-year-old Egyptian blogger and former al-Azhar University student, was sentenced to four years' imprisonment on 22 February for criticizing Egypt's al-Azhar religious authorities, the Egyptian President and Islam.

AI considers Karim Amer to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned on account of the peaceful expression of his views.

A Misdemeanor Court in Alexandria, North Egypt, jailed Karim Amer for writing internet blogs about Islam, the Egyptian regime and the sectarian riots which took place between Muslims and Christians in Alexandria in October 2005. The court found that his writings were "inciting strife and defaming Muslims on the internet by describing the prophet of Islam and his comrades as murderers, which disturbs national peace"; and "insulting the President of the Republic by writing on the internet".

He received three years' imprisonment on the first charge and one year's imprisonment on the second. On 12 March the Court of Appeal confirmed the sentence. He lodged a further appeal

to the Court of Cassation on 21 April but no hearing has yet been scheduled.

Karim Amer is now in solitary confinement for 65 days, reportedly in order to force him to give up his views about Islam. He is allowed regular visits by his family and lawyers. Since July he has also reportedly been allowed daily outdoor exercise and exchanges of letters with his mother. He plans to study literature at Alexandria University from October, if allowed by the prison director.

➔ Please write to the President of Egypt, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Karim Amer.

Send appeals to: Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 'Abidine Palace, Cairo, Egypt. Fax: +20 223 901 998.

E-mail: [webmaster@presidency.gov.eg](mailto:webmaster@presidency.gov.eg)  
Salutation: Your Excellency  
Please also send expressions of solidarity to: Abdel Karim Nabil Soliman Amer, Borg Al-Arab Prison, Alexandria, Egypt.



Poster calling for the release of Karim Amer

➔ Please write, calling on the authorities to release Mehmet Desde immediately, to conduct a full and prompt investigation into all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, and to end the use of evidence extracted under these circumstances.

Send appeals to: Minister of Justice Mr Fahri Kasirga, Adalet Bakanligi, 06659 Kizilay, Ankara, Turkey. Fax: +90 312 419 3370.  
Salutation: Dear Minister

## Sexual violence in Sierra Leone – time to repair the damage

Six years after the end of the conflict in Sierra Leone, little has been done to ensure that the survivors of sexual violence receive justice, acknowledgement of their suffering or reparations which would enable them to rebuild their lives.

All parties to the 11-year-long war committed abuses, including rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and other crimes of sexual violence against an estimated quarter of a million women and girls.

For the victims of these crimes, sexual violence was not a single event but a violation which has continued. Having been systematically targeted during the war, their physical and psychological wounds have been compounded by stigmatization and discrimination in the years since hostilities ended.

They have employed many strategies to survive, both during the conflict and in the years that have followed. Many survivors felt too ashamed of their experiences of sexual violence to return to their own towns and villages; others live in silence, unable to share their painful memories out of fear that they will be rejected by family members and lose their economic security. In addition, because many of the women and girls are identified as former “rebel wives”, they are discriminated against, isolated and excluded from their communities. As a result they have difficulty obtaining food, shelter, work and healthcare; they are effectively prevented from reintegrating into society.

The desire of these women and girls for justice and reparations is simply to enable them to become economically independent – to provide for themselves and their children and begin to re-establish their lives free from fear, stigma and discrimination.

The Sierra Leone government has not addressed the physical and psychological effects of the crimes that have been committed against so many women and girls. Neither has it provided justice, recognition of the crimes, or effective rehabilitation programmes, without which they

cannot even begin to rebuild their lives and those of their children.

If reparations for women and girls in Sierra Leone are to tackle the complex social and individual effects of sexual abuse, they must be part of a wider strategy to prevent future violence, address the deep-seated discrimination against women, promote equality and improve women's status.

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has recommended specific measures for ensuring that victims of sexual abuse receive reparations which would enable them to begin to address the damage that has been done to them. The survivors themselves need to be active participants in establishing a reparations programme which genuinely meets their needs.

AI's forthcoming report, *Sierra Leone: Getting reparations right for survivors of sexual violence* (AFR 51/005/2007), examines the social and individual impact of sexual violence, and calls on the government, with the support of non-governmental and international bodies, to implement a comprehensive and effective reparations programme.

There is a long road ahead for Sierra Leone's victims of sexual violence. A meaningful reparations programme, which genuinely involves the survivors of these crimes, can provide a stepping stone to help restore their dignity so they can use their proven survival skills to take an active role in moving on from these terrible experiences.



Demonstration in Freetown, Sierra Leone, calls for access to justice for rural women. 2006

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Ethiopia – human rights crisis continues

Prisoners of conscience Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demissie remain in prison nearly two years after their arrest in November 2005. They were among tens of thousands of protesters detained in the aftermath of elections in May 2005. During the violent protests against the results, nearly 200 people were shot dead by security forces and more than 700 others were wounded.

Daniel Bekele, policy manager of ActionAid in Ethiopia, and Netsanet Demissie, founder and director of the Organization for Social Justice, were defendants in a recently concluded trial of some 76 people, who included leaders of the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy as well as journalists and human rights defenders. Thirty-eight defendants were convicted of “outrages against the Constitution” in July and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, four days later, on 20 July, they were pardoned and released at the instigation of the Prime Minister after they signed a letter apologizing for “mistakes” in the protests and promising to respect the government. At least one of them later claimed that the statement was signed under duress.

The verdict on Daniel Bekele and Netsanet Demissie is due to be announced on 8 October.

### UK ruling in Baha Mousa case

On 13 June the UK's Law Lords ruled that the family of Baha Mousa – a 26-year-old Iraqi hotel receptionist who died on 15 September 2003 after being tortured over a period of 36 hours while detained by British troops in Basra, southern Iraq – was entitled to an independent, impartial and thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death. Since then, the case has been remitted to a lower court to decide whether the investigations carried out to date have met these standards. See *Worldwide Appeal* June 2007.

### China – prisoner of conscience severely beaten

Prisoner of conscience Chen Guangcheng was severely beaten on 16 June by six other prisoners who were encouraged by prison guards, because he refused to have his head shaved. He told his wife on 19 June that he was being punished for “being disobedient” because he insisted on appealing against his sentence to a higher court. He thinks he may have a broken rib following his beating but he has been denied medical treatment.

Blind since birth, Chen Guangcheng needs the help of his wife and lawyer to file his appeal, but visits from them are restricted to 30 minutes a month.

A self-taught lawyer, he was helping villagers take legal action against the authorities who had allegedly forced

women to have abortions in order to meet government birth quotas. In August 2006 he was sentenced to four years and three months in prison for “damaging public property and gathering people to block traffic”.

AI is concerned that Chen Guangcheng may be at risk of further torture and other ill-treatment. See *Worldwide Appeal* October 2006 and *the Wire* February 2007.

### Syria – advocate of peaceful reform imprisoned

Advocate of peaceful reform Kamal al-Labwani was sentenced on 10 May to a 12-year prison term for “scheming with a foreign country... with the aim of causing it to attack Syria”. The charge relates to his visit to Europe and the USA in 2005 where he met human rights organizations and government officials and called for a process of peaceful democratic reform in Syria. Kamal al-Labwani was previously imprisoned for three years for his involvement in the “Damascus Spring” peaceful reform movement. AI deplores the sentence, which followed an unfair trial during which evidence showing that Kamal al-Labwani has repeatedly opposed any advocacy of US aggression against Syria was ignored. See *the Wire* March 2005.



### Iran – juvenile offender's execution delayed

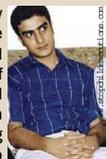
On 18 July, just before 4am and only minutes before he was scheduled to be executed, Sina Paymard, an 18-year-old musician – was granted a 10-day stay of execution to allow time for his family and the family of the murder victim to reach a financial settlement aimed at providing compensation (*diyeh* – blood money) to the family of the victim.

Following the stay of execution, the family of Sina Paymard managed to collect the US\$160,000 demanded by the family of the victim. However, at the time of writing, over three weeks later, the family of the victim have yet to accept the blood money. Sina Paymard's lawyer has reported that the family of the victim may now want the execution to go ahead, and that a court will make a final ruling.

For more information see *Iran: End child executions* (MDE 13/078/2007) and *the Wire* July 2007.

### Justice at last in Peru

In June Lima's Penal Court sentenced two policemen to eight years' and four years' imprisonment for “torture leading to death” of Ricardo Huaranga Felix. The court also ordered the two men to pay compensation to Ricardo Huaranga Felix's family. See *Worldwide Appeal* November 2006.



## MOROCCO

### Jailed for ‘undermining the monarchy’

Eight men, all members of the Moroccan Human Rights Association (AMDH), are currently serving prison sentences in Morocco on charges of “undermining the monarchy”. They were arrested after participating in peaceful demonstrations, during which slogans referring to the monarchy, including “no more taboos, more freedom”, were chanted.

AI considers them to be prisoners of conscience, held solely for their participation in non-violent demonstrations during which opinions were expressed peacefully.

Thami Khyati, Youssef Reggab, Oussama Ben Messaoud, Ahmed Al Kaateb and Rabii Radssouini were arrested in the city of Ksar El Kebir after participating in demonstrations on 1 May marking International Workers Day. They were sentenced to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 dirhams (about US\$1,000). On 24 July, a court of appeal extended their prison sentence from three to four years.

Mehdi Berbouchi and Abderrahim Karrad were arrested in the city of Agadir after demonstrating on 1 May and sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 dirhams. Their claim that they were threatened and ill-treated during arrest and

interrogation was not investigated adequately by the court. Their sentence was confirmed on appeal.

Following a sit-in in solidarity with the seven men above, 10 further AMDH members were arrested in June in Beni Mellal and charged with the same offence. Political activist Mohamed Bougrine was sentenced to one year in prison, three men received suspended prison sentences and six were acquitted. On 9 August, after an appeal by the prosecution, the 10 men received harsher sentences – Mohamed Bougrine's prison sentence was increased to three years. The other nine were sentenced to one year's imprisonment but remained free pending appeal before the Court of Cassation.

Several people, including journalists and political activists, have been prosecuted and in some cases sentenced to prison terms in recent years, after peacefully expressing views on the monarchy, still a taboo subject in many discussions.

➤ Please write to the Moroccan authorities, urging them to release immediately and unconditionally the eight men.

Send appeals to: His Excellency Mohamed Bouzouba, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Place Mamounia, Rabat, Morocco.  
Fax: +212 37 72 37 10.  
Salutation: Your Excellency

## SOUTH KOREA

### Journalist denied freedom of expression

Lee Si-woo, a photojournalist and peace campaigner, was arrested on 23 April on charges under the vaguely worded South Korean National Security Law (NSL). The charges relate to information he reported as a freelance journalist. AI believes he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Lee Si-woo published information on the US military presence in South Korea. His news reportage was based on information obtained legally through the government and the military, through Freedom of Information laws.

Lee Si-woo's trial before the Seoul Central District Court began on 4 July.

Lee Si-woo is accused of “disclosing national/military secrets” and propagating the ideology of “an enemy state” – in other words, of supporting North Korea.

The authorities have specified that the military secrets they accuse Lee Si-woo of

disclosing include reports on anti-personnel mines clearance and landmine casualties in South Korea, which Lee had examined in 2002 for the Korean Campaign to Ban Landmines. His investigation was reportedly given the go-ahead by the South Korean government and was funded by an organization supported by the government. No questions were raised about the legality of the reports at the time, and many of the sources he used to gather information are freely available on the internet.

He has published books and collections of his photographs, focusing on the anti-personnel mines which remain in the de-militarized zone separating South and North Korea (known as the Civilian Passage Restriction Line), and on the presence of the US-led UN Command in South Korea.

Following his detention, Lee Si-woo went on hunger-strike for more than 40 days, and is still said to be weak. He reportedly has difficulty standing and has to use a wheelchair. He appears to have received adequate access to medical care, and reportedly receives regular visits from his family, lawyer and local activists.

➤ Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Lee Si-woo, and urging the government to abolish the National Security Law or fundamentally review it so as to bring the law into line with international standards.

Send appeals to: Minister of Justice Jeong Song-jin, Ministry of Justice, Gwacheon Government Complex, 1 Jungang-dong, Gwacheon 427-725, Gyeonggi Province, Republic of Korea.  
Fax: +82 2 2110 3079. Email: webmaster@moj.go.kr  
Salutation: Dear Minister Jeong

## Activists mobilize through theatre

Cousin Zilala, the dynamic new Executive Director of AI Zimbabwe, knows exactly how he wants to mobilize people to defend human rights in his troubled country – through the theatre. While visiting the International Secretariat in London in June, he spoke to *the Wire* about his plans.

“Theatre is one of the best community mobilization tools,” he said. “It looks at how people live, then mirrors their actions, attitudes, emotions and behaviours on stage to stimulate discussion and action. The community is then given the opportunity to tell their problems, which feeds back into the play.”

Cousin Zilala described one example of many from his 17 years of using theatre to promote human rights.

“In 1998 I created a play based on a real story where a man had raped his deceased brother’s two daughters aged eight and 12. The case was not reported to the police because the family wanted to preserve its name.

“The uncle was walking scot-free for two years until I contacted a theatre group to act out the story in Mutare, in the community where the rapes had taken place. Members of the audience confessed that they knew about the rape, that it was real. They then helped the police with the investigation and the man was brought to justice.”

Cousin’s voyage to such theatre began in the early 1990s when he gained a diploma in theatre for development. He then used this knowledge while co-ordinating a cultural exchange programme for young people between the Netherlands and Zimbabwe.

In 1995 he joined the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association. “At this point”, he said, “I realized that I had always been in

theatre to work for human rights. My art is a tool – human rights is the content.”

So successful was his work that he organized a competition of human rights plays across the country to feed into the development of a human rights education curriculum. “Unfortunately, just as the curriculum was launched in 1999, the political situation deteriorated rapidly and the project was dumped.”

Several times he narrowly escaped attacks. “One evening in 2000 I was speaking in a hall in Kariba. Members of the ruling party shouted out ‘let’s beat him up’, and turned off the lights. People were crying... I managed to escape.”

### Partnership with communities

The following year he joined the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre as the Deputy Director and initiated a programme called Theatre for Human Rights and Political Tolerance, where they developed *chirwirangue* (partnership) between the theatre and local communities. Cousin Zilala hopes that such partnerships can be used to build AI’s impact in Zimbabwe.

However, he acknowledges the enormity of the challenges facing him and his fellow human rights activists. “In Zimbabwe today, freedom of movement, association, choice, expression and many other political freedoms are under siege... Inflation is skyrocketing... People are starving... There are organized human rights violations against human rights defenders and the opposition. Given this situation, the strengthening of AI cannot be delayed.”

Cousin Zilala’s final words revealed his defiance and determination. “We have only one Zimbabwe,” he said. “We won’t surrender it.”



## Guantánamo detainees sent back to Saudi Arabia

Jumah al-Dossari, who is believed to have attempted suicide at least 13 times while in US custody, was among a group of 16 Saudi Arabian nationals transferred from Guantánamo to Saudi Arabia in July 2007.



Just three months before his release, he had described his despair at his continued detention in a letter to his lawyer: “I can say that life and death, here in Cuba, are equal, but death has become my greatest hope to end my misery, suffering and sad life.”

His brother-in-law, who spoke to Jumah al-Dossari on the phone after his return, told the media that: “His mother, brother and sister have seen him in Riyadh and they say he is well and he was very pleased to see them... For five years, he was there, but now he has come back and that is great... We are very happy... He called me and I talked with him – his health seems better than before because he is back.”

More than 50 Saudi Arabian nationals remain in Guantánamo. Up to 77 others have been released from Guantánamo and returned to Saudi Arabia. All were detained upon arrival in Saudi Arabia but most are believed to have now been released.

### Day of action for Darfur – 16 September

Despite the UN Security Council Resolution 1769, authorizing the deployment of a peacekeeping force, attacks on civilians in Darfur continue. Until the attacks cease and a full peacekeeping force is deployed, the international community must not look away. On 16 September, AI will join a large coalition of organizations calling again for the urgent and full deployment of peacekeepers.

For details go to: [www.globefordarfur.org](http://www.globefordarfur.org)

## International Youth Day – keep freedom flying

AI youth activists from South Africa to South Korea came together in a creative celebration of International Youth Day at AI’s International Council Meeting in Mexico.

The activists created a giant origami bird of peace representing freedom in support of prisoner of conscience Zmitser Dashkevich. The Belarusian youth opposition leader, imprisoned for expressing his views, symbolizes the harassment and intimidation faced by young activists around the world.

Young people at the forefront of social activism are often the first to be silenced. In Belarus, AI has observed an increasing number of arrests of youth activists. In the run up to the last presidential elections – and indeed since – many students have been

expelled from universities as a result of their political activities.

The origami bird was nearly two metres high and will soon be flying to the capital, Minsk, calling for Zmitser Dashkevich’s release. The action is just one part of a campaign that has seen 6,500 paper birds sent to Belarus.

Young people are a powerful voice with a key role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights – bringing a fresh perspective, creativity and energy to campaigning, both locally and globally. This action, based around the simple act of turning folded paper into a powerful symbol, has created a global consciousness among young activists of their unique potential to create change.

**ACT NOW to support Zmitser Dashkevich**  
Write to the Belarusian authorities demanding the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Zmitser Dashkevich and all other young activists. Urge them to stop the obstruction, harassment and intimidation of civil society activists promoting human rights in the country.  
Send appeals to: President Alyaksandr G Lukashenka ul Karla Marxa 38, 220016 Minsk, Belarus. Fax: +375175260610. Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka



At AI’s 2007 International Council Meeting held in Morelos, Mexico, in August, delegates were invited to build a shared picture of what AI could be, by adding their own piece of the puzzle to a giant jigsaw.



## UN moratorium on the death penalty

The dream of a world free of executions could be in reach with a big push from the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

A clear endorsement of a global moratorium on executions by the UNGA would be a significant boost to the campaign. It would carry considerable moral weight and be an invaluable lobbying tool when calling on retentionist states to change.

AI is supporting an EU initiative – with an alliance of states from other regions – to table a resolution on a moratorium on executions at the UNGA 62nd session in New York in October 2007.

There is an unmistakable trend towards worldwide abolition – we are at the tipping point – with 130 countries having abolished the death penalty in law or practice. We must take advantage of the momentum.

In 2006, only 25 countries carried out executions, of which 91 per cent took place in China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the USA. In the Americas, only the USA has carried out executions since 2003. Europe is almost a death penalty-free zone – with Belarus as the ugly exception. In Africa, only six states carried out executions in 2006. In Rwanda, the parliament passed legislation in July 2007 to abolish the death penalty.

Globally, AI statistics show a decline in the number of reported executions, dropping to 1,591 in 2006, compared with 2,148 the year before. It is important to note, however, that the real figures for both years are certainly higher than the numbers AI has been able to verify, as many governments carry out the death penalty in a secretive manner and issue no official information.

Many governments and international organizations have led and supported international initiatives to achieve worldwide abolition. In 2005, the then UN Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution which called upon all states that still maintain the death penalty to abolish it “completely and, in the meantime, to establish a moratorium on executions”. More recently, more than 90 countries have signed a statement at the UNGA 61st session (2006) also “calling upon states that still maintain the death penalty to abolish it completely and, in the meantime, to establish a moratorium on executions”.

The UNGA is composed of all UN member states. Therefore, a call by this key body for a moratorium, as a first step towards abolition, would be an important international milestone. The resolution itself would not prevent a state carrying out an execution, but it would carry a heavy moral and political weight of united international pressure.

The resolution is within reach – but it is important the draft has as many co-sponsors as possible across all regions, both to ensure its adoption and to carry political weight.

You can join AI’s campaign for a resolution on a global moratorium at the UNGA; sign the World Coalition against the Death Penalty petition and write to your government to support the resolution.

See also [www.worldcoalition.org](http://www.worldcoalition.org) and [www.amnesty.org/campaign/](http://www.amnesty.org/campaign/). October’s issue of *the Wire* will look at the death penalty in more detail.

Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
Peter Benenson House  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
United Kingdom

[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)  
email: [newslett@amnesty.org](mailto:newslett@amnesty.org)  
subscriptions:  
[ppmsteam@amnesty.org](mailto:ppmsteam@amnesty.org)

