

UA News

September 1998

External, AI Index ACT 60/01/98

### *Global Urgent Action*

*Tell us about your experiences in the UA Network! Whether it's a reaction you've had to a letter, a story about your local UA group, general feedback or a suggestion regarding what to feature in the next issue of UA News, we'd like to hear from you!*

*Write to: The UA team, AI, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, UK.*

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### *Editorial*

*By 1998, its 25th anniversary year, the Urgent Action technique has become a universally recognised means for change. It changes the lives of victims of human rights abuses, whose cries for help would otherwise go unheard. It changes ordinary people's capacity to make an impact on world events as their letters of appeal can be shown to make a real difference. And - ultimately - the sheer volume of Urgent Action appeals helps to change governments' and other authorities' attitudes towards respect for human rights.*

*Today, with up to 100,000 appeal writers spread across the globe, the only generalisation one can make about the UA network is that it is truly international. In countries like Bahrain, Bosnia, Bhutan, Belize and Botswana, people from all walks of life, different backgrounds and ages, devote their time and energy to appeal on behalf of someone they have never met, in countries they may never visit. They base their letters on UAs written by members of the research teams at Amnesty's International Secretariat in London, UK, who come from all corners of*

the world to work for the organisation. And in order to reach appeal writers, UAs are distributed through an equally diverse network of volunteers and professionals across all continents.

Twenty-five years on, it is time to take a closer look at today's UA network. This issue of UA News therefore attempts to shed some light on the various ways in which people across the world now engage with UAs and on the different effects this global action form can have. Enjoy!!

Happy 25th birthday Urgent Actions!

It was cake all round on March 19th 1998 at AIUK's Urgent Action (UA) Team office as the UA Team and friends gathered to toast the 25th anniversary of the UA Scheme. Amnesty researcher Tracy Ulltveit-Moe, who wrote the first UA - and still works at the International Secretariat! - joined in the celebrations to mark the longevity of this campaigning technique. She recalled the early days when UA cases were several pages long.

The first UA featured Professor Luis Basilio Rossi, a Professor of Economics at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil. Tracy explained how, as a young researcher responsible for the whole of Latin America and Portuguese-speaking Africa, she had typed out the first UA, making four carbon copies, and selected recipients from a shoe box full of handwritten address cards.

Tracy later received two letters from Professor Rossi's wife and brother. Both letters bore the stamp of the Brazilian Department for Political and Social Order on the envelopes, and assured Amnesty that Rossi was in no danger. However, church authorities in Brazil alerted Amnesty to Rossi's ill-treatment in detention. Also, his wife was under house arrest, and was only able to raise alarm about their situation by throwing a scribbled note from a window into her neighbour's garden.

After nine months' detention, Professor Rossi was released. He maintains to this day that the UA technique saved his life. In the first year of the

UA Scheme only a handful of cases, confined to the South America region, were generated. Twenty-five years later there are UA participants in over 80 countries, from New Zealand to Costa Rica, and an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 people worldwide now respond to UAs on a regular basis. Numerous UA networks are able to generate responses by fax, e-mail, telex and/or telegram within 48 hours of a case being distributed.

Over 1,000 UAs and updates are now issued each year and translated into numerous languages, including French, Spanish, German and Polish. UA cases cover all areas of AI's mandate and in 1997 involved victims of human rights violations in over 100 countries. Amnesty has used the UA technique to work on some of its most well-known cases. In 1989, for instance, former prisoner of conscience Vaclav Havel (UA 23/89) attributed his release to the support he had received from the UA network: "My case proves that this activity has a meaning and an effect," he said. It is not possible to be precise about the number of people whose lives have been saved by the UA technique, but Amnesty does learn of an improvement in the situation of the people concerned in over a third of all UA cases.

Happy Anniversary to all UA participants! As we say in the UK, more power to your elbows!

by Becky Hess

*Urgent Action Review Pending!*

The fact that Amnesty registers an improvement in a third of all UA cases is a statistic of which we are justifiably proud. However, the UA scheme faces a number of challenges which must be resolved in order for this success rate to increase. Therefore, the 1997 International Council Meeting (ICM) prioritised a review of the effectiveness of the UA technique and delegated this to the International Standing Committee on Research

and Action (SCRA). The lucky member of SCRA to have been delegated the responsibility of leading the implementation of the UA review is Martine Herz of AI France. Bon courage to Martine! The review will examine as many of the issues which affect the outcome of UA cases as possible, such as:

- the changing context of human rights violations which has resulted in more UA cases involving large numbers of people in more than one country;
- the imbalance in the size and speed of the response generated to UA cases in different regions;
- the opportunities offered by rapid communication methods such as fax and e-mail.

The review will continue during 1998 and report to the 1999 ICM, hopefully enabling the UA Scheme to continue to save lives into the next century. All UA Coordinators will be consulted in the course of the review and a report will be considered at the next ICM. If you have any comments or queries concerning the current review please contact Becky Hess, Facilitator of the International Urgent Action Working Group, at AIUK, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RE , tel: 0171 814 6267, fax: 0171 814 6268, e-mail: bhess@amnesty.org.uk

#### Word Power

Christine Anyanwu, publisher of The Sunday Magazine in Nigeria, was first featured in a UA on 28 June 1995 (UA 151/95). After her release in June 1998 she wrote to thank all those who supported her during her imprisonment:

"I cannot tell you how wonderful it feels to be free again and to be able to write you this note. It is something I have wanted to do since 1997

when I received my first batch of cards from the peoples of the world, generated through Amnesty's efforts.

It is impossible to paint an accurate picture of the actions and reactions as I sat in that tiny cell, the floor carpeted with cards and envelopes. It was deeply touching, greatly encouraging, and strengthening. Thereafter, I knew that I was not alone, and held on to the thought till the end. I pasted the walls with the photographs and the words of exhortation. I was emboldened by them, inspired even to stretch my imagination beyond the ubiquitous, constricting walls, and produce ideas and images which I hope should be of some use in the future.

I thank the staff and members of Amnesty International worldwide. My special thanks to USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Northern Ireland, France, Germany, Spain, Bermuda, Holland and Italy branches for their overwhelming responses.

Thank you Amnesty for going that extra mile to obtain a true picture of what brought about our ordeal, and for your strenuous efforts in sensitizing the world community to our case. I use your medium to thank all those organisations who took on the battle from you.

I am especially indebted to the world press for the stupendous publicity it gave our case on a sustained basis. To the institutions, organisations, groups and individuals who gave me awards, who raised funds for my assistance, I owe a debt of deep gratitude. I thank all those thousands of people of the world who gave me strength and encouragement through cards, and notes. I shall never forget your kindness. Thank you all with all my heart. Chris Anyanwu"

On 30 October 1997, AI issued a UA on behalf of Miriam Prochnow and Wigold Schäffer, two environmental activists campaigning to save the Mata Atlantica Rainforests in the state of Santa Catarina in the south of Brazil, after they were threatened with death because of their work.

One anonymous caller left a message on their answering machine saying: "Tell Miriam and Wigold to keep out of the logging in Santa Terezinha [a small town nearby], because we are not like Pamplona [a local meat company], we're not going to just make threats and then do nothing". Another caller simply repeated over and over "You're going to die, you're going to die".

Miriam Prochnow and Wigold Schaeffer later wrote to Amnesty to thank all those who made appeals after UA 340/97 was issued. "From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for all the support and solidarity received. The letter that you sent to the Brazilian authorities, together with hundreds of others, provoked investigations from federal and state policies. Those investigations caused a wide repercussion on the press and local public opinion and made the threats against us stop. Unfortunately, the police have not yet found the authors of the threats, which were caused by our involvement in defending the Atlantic Forest and fighting against pollution and environmental degradation through APREMAVI, Associação de Environmental Preservation of Alto Vae do Itajaí, Associação de Preservação do Meio Ambiente do Alto Vale de Itajaí."

Njuguna Mutahi and Wahome Karengo were arrested on or about 15 May 1998 and illegally held for four days in incommunicado detention before being charged with theft. Njuguna Mutahi was a prisoner of conscience and Amnesty International feared that Wahome Karengo might also be a prisoner of conscience. After their release on bail on 22 May, Njuguna Mutahi sent the following message to Amnesty International:

"I do not know how to say this but let me just say it. I was so overwhelmed by the support from Amnesty members and I think that I now have a good idea of what a membership organisation can do. To all

*of the people who sent out appeals, I say a big thank you. I owe my release to their efforts. Once again, thank you.”*

#### *In memoriam*

*Juan Gerardi Conadera, Auxiliary Bishop of Guatemala and the Coordinator of the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG), was brutally murdered in Guatemala City on 26 April 1998. His death came only two days after he presided over the presentation of the report of an inter-diocesan project on the Recuperation of the Historical Memory (REMHI).*

*The report resulted from a three-year study of more than 55,000 testimonies by the victims and witnesses to the tens of thousands of human rights violations suffered by non-combatant civilians during the civil conflict which ravaged Guatemala for more than three decades. The REMHI report identifies the army as being responsible for around 70 per cent of these abuses. It also places responsibility for a number of past abuses against civilians with the United National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the armed opposition movement with whom the government finally signed a peace agreement in December 1996. The peace agreement facilitated the establishment of a Historical Clarification Commission, to which REMHI's findings are to be submitted.*

*After issuing UA 139/98 on 1 May 1998 on behalf of Monsignor Gerardi, Amnesty International received the following letter of thanks from the Archdiocese of Guatemala:*

*“We wish to thank you for your support, which is fundamental for us in these moments, and wish to reiterate how important it is for the Archdiocese of Guatemala, the Catholic Church, other Human Rights Organizations and the Guatemalan people in general, to know that there are individuals, groups, parishes, organizations and communities around the world who show their support for us all.”*

### *Urgent Action around the world*

*In the 25 years since a handful of human rights activists issued the first Urgent Action from a small London office, the UA network has become global in size and scope. Yet the working realities of those involved in the network are as varied as the people themselves and the cases and countries they work on...*

*“A few nights ago we received a call from an English Methodist Minister now stationed in Jamaica. He had been a member of the British section and wanted to continue to write Urgent Actions. I asked how many they would like to receive each month and was almost blown away when he said 10 – our entire monthly mailing only goes to slightly more than 10 people!*

*Sometimes it seems that when you are most threatened by ‘what difference does this make?’, strength comes from the wider Amnesty family. Our local UA network, like our groups, is small, but over the years the commitment has become more distilled, responsibilities are shared – no one person is left to do everything, and we do not hesitate to ask each other for support. The core group has become almost a nuclear family within the wider extended Amnesty family.*

*We receive Urgent Actions regularly (unfortunately still by fax, but this may soon change). We distribute them at monthly meetings and by mail to members and other interested persons, ie. those who do not come to meetings but say they will write, like journalists and others with particular interests in specific countries or issues (e.g. environment, women, children youth, trade unions, Human Rights Defenders).*

*We work from different locations – at last count I think the International Secretariat sends communication to four local addresses. All of us have*



*piles of paper and boxes of Amnesty 'stuff' which our families claim threatens their living space.*

*One of the advantages of living in a small community is that we often have access (through knowing the individuals) to those who receive appeals - in our case mainly those associated with the death penalty. This brings new insight. I was told by one person who - though unsympathetic - was obviously impressed by the number of appeals received and the many countries from which they came.*

*The interest and support of Marilyn McKim at AI Canada in particular and those she is in contact with has been very reinforcing. It is always good to receive campaign material and handouts which we can use with both young people and the wider public. Our thanks, wishes for Peace and Love go to all those who are part of this community."*

*by Hilary Sherlock, UA coordinator in Jamaica*

*UAs US style*

*“Urgent Actions are a primary resource for our Amnesty group at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We use them for letter writing, event programming, and as tools for spreading Amnesty’s goals. They are also one of the more concrete ways we can measure our success.*

*Our group is an interesting cross-section of the campus. We have equal numbers of women and men, we have writers, engineers, artists, designers, athletes, and even a fraternity brother. This cross-section is one of our strong points – it allows for better turnouts when members invite friends from their various ‘crowds’, and has allowed us to survive for the past four years while other small activist groups have come and gone at CMU.*

*During the school year, our group receives between 8 and 12 UAs per month, usually by mail. We also get some via e-mail, which we post on our electronic bulletin board, encouraging members to print them out and take personal action. E-mail and electronic bulletin boards are used at least once daily by every student at Carnegie Mellon so we decided to take advantage of this.*

*We take action on all of the UAs processed by our UA Coordinator. Individuals who receive their own UAs over e-mail usually act on about 9 out of 10. Our group defines “taking action on a UA” as writing letters, creating postcards, or making petitions. Since a UA is most effective when it generates thousands of letters, we only turn them into petitions or postcards for large events, and after we have already written as many letters as possible for that UA.*

The Urgent Action Coordinator is responsible for keeping the UAs coming to a standard address, picking them up regularly when they arrive from the Washington DC office, photocopying them and distributing them to the group. Our UA Coordinator also makes sure that we have a steady supply of airmails, and/or paper, stamps, and envelopes. We write letters at meetings and in our spare time, and the Coordinator keeps track of how many letters we write per month.

Our group is a 'recognized' and 'funded' group at Carnegie Mellon University, which means that we receive funds and can apply for space within the University Center Building. Currently our group has an approximate US\$900 budget and a desk in a large common area, where we store supplies. Due to an extremely active year, our budget for 1998-1999 is now around US\$1800, which means we will now have an office with a phone line, Internet connection, shelves, as well as a desk!

Membership is one of our most difficult challenges. We have about 12 members. There is an executive committee of four to six members, and an equal-sized member pool. The executive positions are Group Coordinator, UA Coordinator, Advertising and Public Relations Coordinator, and Business Manager. Every few weeks, or when it's necessary, our executive committee meets to discuss how things are running. UAs frequently come up because they are a very good way for us to measure our activity and dedication to Amnesty's goals.

There's some debate over whether to increase or limit the amount of UAs we receive next semester. There are two camps: One argues that we should do as much we can, and sign up for as many UA mailing lists as possible, the theory being that with too many UAs we'll never be in a jam for actions. The other camp takes a more conservative approach and believes we should really cut down to UAs just from a few select areas, and cut other mailings out almost altogether. Their logic is that we're spreading ourselves too thin, and wasting time and money.

*Right now, this is our biggest debate regarding UAs. Issues such as 'letters or airmails?', 'personal or copied?', 'at home or in meetings?' change with the week for us. It depends on schoolwork, conflict with other large events, and personal matters. The UAs themselves are timely, informative, and designed well. From our standpoint, UAs don't need to go in new directions, our group does."*

*by Marshall Warfield, a student at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA*

*On the receiving end*

*“In March 1996, a few days after AI Nepal launched the China Campaign, three of our members were suddenly arrested while collecting signatures. After we attempted to stage a demonstration most of the office staff of AI Nepal and many Tibetans were also rounded up and we found ourselves behind bars. The country’s newspapers flooded with the news. The major political parties stated that we, the ‘anti-China’ protesters, had committed a grave crime and that we should be charged with treason. Many members of the press agreed.*

*We were about 20 people in prison, including AI Nepal’s chair, general secretary, director, deputy director, as well as other staff and members. Eight of us were kept in a room of seven by eight feet. The worst thing was that our shoes had to be kept inside this tiny room, taking up much of the space.*

*We were not allowed to receive any letters from outside, nor to send any. But hundreds of people came to see us. And from them we learned that AI had issued an Urgent Action on our behalf. This came at a time when we felt that nobody in Nepal was voicing support for us because it was a matter to do with China.*

*Our ordeal lasted three days, after which we were released unconditionally. Later, we found out that the prime minister’s office had been flooded with letters, faxes, telegrams and e-mails from people around the world demanding our release.*

*Before this happened, when I prepared and wrote Urgent Action appeals, I used to try to imagine the value of letters to the victims of human rights abuses. But when we ended up behind bars ourselves we directly experienced what a letter is worth.”*

*by Anil Pant , Director and UA Coordinator for AI Nepal.*

*Indonesia: The end of an era*

*Has President Suharto's fall earlier this year affected the human rights situation in Indonesia? And if so, how? The Indonesia team at Amnesty's International Secretariat assesses the situation...*

*President Suharto's resignation on 21 May 1998 was greeted with a sense of relief both inside and outside Indonesia and East Timor, where he had ruled with a rod of iron for 32 years. With the support of the military, his family and a small group of crony businessmen he had systematically dismantled the institutions which would normally guarantee political participation, legal protection and government accountability. He had also steadfastly resisted domestic and international pressure to improve the human rights situation. During the last 18 months of Suharto's rule the Indonesian currency collapsed along with the once buoyant economy, social unrest grew as the ranks of the poor and unemployed swelled and political dissent increased with the realisation that the government was beyond reform. As the calls for change became stronger, the government relied increasingly on crude force to maintain its position, causing the already poor human rights situation to deteriorate sharply.*

*This downward slide began in mid-1996 with a government-backed raid on the headquarters of a political party - the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). This was the government's pretext to begin a round-up of its political opponents. In the following weeks over 100 people were detained, most of them prisoners of conscience. The use of repressive legislation, in particular the draconian Anti-subversion Law, increased, and peaceful political activists, trade unionists, human rights defenders and others were given some of the stiffest prison sentences for prisoners of conscience in many years.*

*By the beginning of 1998 the repression had intensified. In the three months before the March presidential elections over 350 people were arrested for their peaceful political activities. Many were tried and*

sentenced to short terms of imprisonment. There was also a sinister development as young political activists began to “disappear” from the streets of Jakarta and other major cities. “Disappearances” are not a new phenomena in Indonesia – the practice is already well established in the context of counter-insurgency operations in Aceh (North Sumatra), Irian Jaya (Indonesia’s easternmost province) and East Timor. However, the regularity of kidnap style arrests and “disappearances” of activists from urban centres was chilling.

At least 20 people have “disappeared” since the beginning of 1998. In each case where AI had sufficient information an Urgent Action was issued. In a few cases the victims’ families feared for their own and their missing relative’s safety and asked AI not to go public. The level of national and international support for “disappearance” victims gave others the courage to come forward with details of missing family members. It emerged that at least seven activists who “disappeared” during the parliamentary elections in May 1998 were still unaccounted for.

A number of people have reappeared as a result of domestic outrage, AI appeals and intervention by second governments. They include subjects of Urgent Actions such as Pius Lustrilanang, Desmond J Mahesa and Haryanto Taslam. Andi Arief reappeared in police custody and has subsequently been released, while N.A Chairal Syarif and Hamdani, who had been held in incommunicado police detention, were permitted access to lawyers. Some of those who have reappeared are too afraid or too traumatised to speak of their experiences. However, many have spoken out. In a press conference on 27 April in Jakarta, Pius Lustrilanang – an activist with Alliance for People’s Democracy (Aldera) and Indonesian Solidarity for Amien Rais and Megawati (SIAGA) – told of electric shocks to his legs and stomach, being hit and punched, submerged in a tank of water and threatened with death while being interrogated about his political activities. Although his captors always wore masks, Pius – like

others who have testified – is convinced that he was arrested and detained by members of the security forces.

Others who have dared to speak out, including Desmond Mahesa, Andi Arief and Rahardjo Waluyo Djati, have told similar tales of torture and ill-treatment and have also provided evidence of the involvement of the security forces in their arrests.

Suharto's resignation has brought a unique opportunity for change. However, the immediate sense of relief at the relatively peaceful transition of power has given way to the realisation that the climb out of the political, economic and human rights void has only just begun. The early signs are encouraging and indicate that President Habibie's new government is aware of the pressing need to improve the human rights situation. So far it has published a long awaited National Action Plan for Human Rights and released at least 75 prisoners of conscience or political prisoners, including the independent trade union leader, Muchtar Pakpahan, and the former parliamentarian, Sri Bintang Pamungkus. Further releases are expected to take place in coming months.

Laws restricting political activity are being redrafted, commitments have been made to review the Anti-subversion Law and press restrictions loosened. In the important area of labour relations the government has announced that the largest independent trade union, the SBSI, will be permitted to operate legally and has signed an International Labour Organization (ILO) convention relating to freedom of association and the right to organize.

An outflow of allegations of human rights violations during Suharto's rule has dominated domestic media coverage, prompting the government to undertake some inquiries, into for example the "disappearances". Despite mounting evidence to the contrary, the military persistently denied its involvement in the "disappearances". Finally, in July 1998, the Commander of ABRI, General Wiranto, could no longer resist the



pressure and the weight of evidence and admitted that several military personnel from Kopassus – the special forces formally under the command of former President Suharto's son in law, Lt-General Prabowo – were involved in the kidnapping of activists. Ten members of Kopassus have since been charged in connection with the “disappearances” and will face court-martial.

The military formed a Military Honour Council to investigate the “disappearances” and announced the suspension of Lt-General Prabowo from his current post. He was called before the Honour Council and admitted that he had “misinterpreted an order”. Human rights activists are concerned that Honour Council hearings, which are not held in public, will not lead to all of those involved from different military units being brought to justice. And while Amnesty International welcomes efforts to bring those responsible for the “disappearances” to justice it remains concerned that at least 12 people are still missing, including Yani Afri, known as Rian, and Sonny, who “disappeared” on 26 April 1997. Pius Lustrilanang has testified to having communicated with the two men while in custody. Both domestic and international human rights organizations are calling on Indonesia's authorities to establish the whereabouts of these 12 people as a matter of priority. AI is also concerned that the trials of those believed to be responsible take place in civilian courts and that the procedures meet with international standards for fair trial.

Beyond these first important steps however, fundamental institutional and legal reform as well as significant changes in the human rights culture is necessary to ensure full protection of the rights of Indonesian citizens in the future.

AI is now campaigning to ensure that the new government undertakes a range of measures, including the release of all remaining prisoners of conscience, reviewing the convictions of political prisoners, establishing an

independent judiciary and mechanisms for investigating all reports of human rights violations, repealing repressive legislation and ratifying international human rights instruments, including the UN Convention against Torture (CAT). Without such changes the people of Indonesia and East Timor will remain at risk of extrajudicial execution, "disappearance", torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrest, unfair trial and imprisonment as prisoners of conscience.

People still missing:

Yani Afri (Rian), PDI supporter, "disappeared" 26 April 1997

Sonny, PDI supporter, "disappeared" 26 April 1997

Dedy Hamdun, supporter of the United Development Party (PPP), "disappeared" 29 May 1997

Noval Alkatiri, "disappeared" 29 May 1997

Ismail, "disappeared" 29 May 1997

Mohamad Yusuf, supporter of the PPP, "disappeared" 7 May 1997

Ucok Munandar Siahaan, student activist, "disappeared" May 1997

Hendra Hambali, missing since 14 May 1998.

Yidin Muhyidin, missing since 14 May 1998.

Herman Hendrawan, a student activist, "disappeared" 12 March 1998

Petrus Bima Anugerah (Bimo), member of the PRD, "disappeared" 31 March 1998

Suyat, member of SMID, "disappeared" 12 February 1998

The kids are all write!

“Your Excellency,” wrote Yepoka Yeebo, a 13-year-old from Finchley in North London. “As far as I know, Farzana and her children have not committed any crime and to imprison someone for no reason is clearly wrong.”

Along with 15 other pupils at Christ Church School, Yepoka had decided to spend her lunch break inside a classroom, writing letters to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in London. The pupils were writing on behalf of Farzana Kauzar, a 33 year-old Pakistani woman, and her sons Mohamed Assad Ijaz, aged 3, Mohamed Saad, aged 9, and her six-year-old daughter Fakeyha Ijaz. By June 1998 these four people had been held for eight months in secret detention in Saudi Arabia. There were concerns that they were at risk of ill-treatment, and that Mohamed Saad was ill. The only likely reason for their imprisonment was to force their father, Ahmed Mohamed Ijaz, to return from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, where he was wanted by the authorities in connection with a business dispute.

A few desks away from Yepoka sat Jonathan, aged 14. He joined the school’s Junior Urgent Action letter writing group about a year ago, and has written letters regularly since. He had no doubts that missing a lunch break for the sake of Farzana and her children was worth it: “They just got arrested for no reason and it’s not fair so I want to help them.”

Samantha Rowe, a teacher of Modern Languages and Head of Year Eight at Christ Church, joined Amnesty UK’s Junior Urgent Action (JUA) scheme a year ago and organises letter writing sessions about once a month. They are advertised via a notice board in the school corridor and by the Head in assembly. She thinks the letter writing workshops are useful because they get the pupils “thinking about people other than themselves”.

The concept of producing children’s versions of UAs has come a long way since AIUSA set up its Children’s Edition network in the 1980s. Since

then, Amnesty sections in the UK, Canada (Anglophone) and Belgium (Francophone) have followed suit with their respective Junior Urgent Action, Lifesaver and Actions Urgentes Jeunes networks. Once a month, one UA is selected, rewritten to suit children, and distributed to their national children's network. It is also sent to Amnesty sections and groups in countries which don't produce their own children's UAs.

AIUK alone currently distributes their JUAs to UA coordinators in 23 countries - including Australia, Sweden, Mauritius, Japan and Nigeria - who then distribute them to their own networks of parents, teachers and others involved with children and young people. JUAs are translated into several languages - Al Israel now produces a version in Hebrew, and an Arabic version could also be in the pipeline.

Within the UK, around 300 adults are currently part of AIUKs JUA scheme. Each new participant gets an introductory package which explains the ins and outs of the network and gives ideas about how to make use of the JUAs, for example in geography or art lessons.

At the beginning of letter writing sessions at Christ Church School, Samantha writes the school's address on the blackboard for pupils to use in their letters. She also keeps a big sheet of stamps - paid for by money the pupils make from selling homemade cakes - which she hands out along with envelopes while the pupils quietly crouch over their pieces of lined paper, pens in hand, writing away as confidently as if they always spend their lunch breaks writing to government representatives.

When new people join the class, one of the "old-timers" usually explains how and why they write letters. Today, Michelle, 11, and Keely, 12, are here for the first time, but they seem unfazed and quickly start writing away without problems. They decided to come along after the Headmaster announced the session in assembly - they thought it made sense. "I wouldn't like it if someone put me in prison and I hadn't done anything," said Michelle. Keely nods.

Today's session has 14 girls and two boys, a usual balance according to Samantha. As many as 30 pupils sometimes come along to the sessions, but always a majority of girls. It is difficult to say why - "maybe boys tend to prefer football - they are more physical", she says.

Taiwo and Irene, both 15, are regular letter writers. Irene got a reply from an ambassador a few months ago, which according to Samantha is a rare occurrence. This makes any acknowledgement of their action extra special, and Irene says the ambassador's reply really made her feel good - like she'd done something. She joined the JUA sessions because she wanted to "help people who are in trouble and prisoners - to set them free. I like helping people. It doesn't matter that they live abroad or that I don't know them".

Meanwhile Micah, aged 12, is concentrating hard on getting his letter ready by the end of the lunch break. Halfway through he realises that he has left the word "about" out after "I am very concerned .." and decides to start all over again. When the bell rings, he agrees with Samantha that he better finish the letter at home and post it himself. The other pupils hand in their letters for Samantha to post as they leave this last letter writing session before their summer break.

About four weeks later, on 27 July 1998, Farzana Kauzar and her children were released and allowed to return to Pakistan. Although the Saudi Arabian authorities say she may have to return in the near future to face alleged criminal charges, she and her children are safe for now. Not least thanks to 16 people from Christ Church School in North London, UK.

by Kristin Sunde

If you are interested in knowing more about AIUK's Junior Urgent Action Scheme, or any of the other above mentioned UA schemes for children

and young people, please contact Becky Hess at AIUK, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R, UK, e-mail [bhess@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:bhess@amnesty.org.uk)

### *Urgent Actions – the new campaigner's view*

Victoria Webb quickly became familiar with the Urgent Action technique when she began working as a campaigner for Amnesty in March 1998. But how important are UAs in her work on Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, and what effect do UA appeals to these countries really have?

There simply isn't another tool like UAs that campaigners can lay their hands on in order to evoke such an international, direct, and speedy response. Other forms of campaigning action can take weeks from their creation to the time the first letter is written or event organized. And with the use of new communications technology, the impact of the network is increasing.

However, with the countries I work on – Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova – the problem is not just getting the message across but making sure it is taken notice of. It is unclear whether e-mails, as speedy and cost-effective as they may be, are actually read by the bureaucrats who receive them. Judging by the glimpses we got of various officials' offices during the High Level Mission to Russia earlier this year, it is safe to say that old-fashioned paper still reigns supreme.

Not even faxes are failsafe. Many who have tried to fax Russia, Ukraine, Belarus or Moldova have probably wondered why there often is no fax tone at the other end. This is because, annoyingly, fax machines in Russian offices often aren't left on "fax option" when everyone leaves in the evening (either on purpose or simply because no one thinks of it). And if you're trying to send a fax via a computer modem, many people

won't realise that the beeping sound means you're trying to send them a fax – they'll presume there's a problem with the line, a common occurrence in that part of the world.

And, even if the fax is transmitted, there still could be problems. This year, one Russian civil servant replied thus when we asked whether he had received our fax: "It is a well-known international standard that governments only ever accept letters with an original signature, not faxes". This was certainly news to us, and obviously also to the various Russian government departments who have sent faxes to both the International Secretariat and Amnesty members in recent years.

So if it's letters they want, the use of pooling systems to pay for letters to be couriered to officials may be very useful. The cost could well shout volumes, since it would be clear that we believe the individual important enough to warrant the expense of couriering.

Nevertheless, new initiatives like this can only compliment, and not replace, traditional methods of Urgent Action campaigning. This is evident given the number of success stories from past UAs. Prisoners of conscience, especially in Russia and Belarus, have been released from detention mainly because of the pressure exercised by the UA network. This shows that we must be doing something right, and that despite what some civil servants say, faxes, as well as the other methods of communication used for UAs, all have an impact.

### *Caught in the middle*

The victims of Colombia's long running civil conflict are the civilian population. Caught between the Armed Forces and their paramilitary allies on one side and the armed opposition on the other, the plight of ordinary people, often from remote rural areas, often goes unseen and unheard. Urgent Action appeals are a vital means of breaking through

*this silence and giving individuals and communities facing imminent danger a voice that is heard around the world.*

*Perpetrators of human rights violations enjoy almost total impunity in Colombia, but the international pressure produced by Urgent Actions helps undermine the confidence of those responsible for such crimes. Impunity can only be defeated by making human rights violations visible; by making sure that there is a high political price to pay for committing them. UA network appeals ensure that the Colombian government knows it cannot escape the scrutiny of the international community and serves as constant reminders of its obligation to protect its own citizens. This political pressure is essential for effective and thorough investigations into human rights violations to take place and for those responsible to be brought to justice.*

*On a day to day level, the spotlight that the UA network throws on a community at risk or on a non-governmental organization (NGO) working in the field, in an extremely tense situation, helps provide a breathing space for those under threat and allows them to continue their essential work. The appeals that come flooding in may not only save a potential victim of human rights violations, but are also a testament to those in danger that the rest of the world is listening and responding. Appeal writers cannot guarantee the safety of those under threat - that is the responsibility of the government - but without the flood of UA appeals the threat they face would be even greater.*

*AI recently received this letter from the Grupo de Apoyo de Desplazados, Displaced Peoples' Support Group, an umbrella organization of NGOs working with the many thousands of communities who have been forced to flee their homes by the violence:*

*“ Dear Friends: I wish to express to all the members of Amnesty International our sincere gratitude for their interest in the situation of the displaced Colombians. We have received hundreds of copies of letters*



directed to the Colombian authorities signed by members of AI from different countries all over the world referring to cases such as Puerto Alvira, Villavicencio, Medellin, Murindo, Carmen de Atrato, San José de Apartado, etc. expressing their concern for the situation in Colombia, urging the government to adopt preventive measures to protect the displaced population and guarantee the safety of those who carry out humanitarian work.

I would appreciate it if you would give this message to the different AI sections in different countries and their members. We were not able to express our gratitude before, because as you know, the situation occupies all our time. Nevertheless, we remember. Without you we wouldn't be able to carry on our work."

by AI's Colombia research team

Urgent Action around the world (continued)

A day in the life of a UA coordinator at the International Secretariat  
 "First things first - COFFEE! Next, I log into my computer and wait while it slowly clunks and churns itself into action. The Urgent Actions from the day before are waiting in a nice pile (in theory) to be taken to the print room. However, first I check the E-mail to see if any comments have arrived since last night regarding any of yesterday's UAs, particularly, if there are any mistakes I need to correct before I make the journey over to the print room. Satisfied, I walk the three flights of stairs up to the bridge that links the two IS buildings and down again to the print room to drop the UAs off and to collect those printed from the day before. Then it's back again to the library where I distribute the printed UAs to the regional team pigeon holes. There's nothing like a little bit of exercise to start the day!

Then it's back to check the e-mail to respond to messages from UA coordinators worldwide. The phone rings - a UA is on its way! - and soon after the research team sends it down by e-mail. I print a copy of it out and start editing it. This can take anything from five minutes to two hours, depending on the UA's length and how it has been written. I often have to ring the research team to clarify details which appear confusing in an attempt to pre-empt queries from network members. After editing the draft UA and checking a number of other things - spelling, fax numbers, names and addresses - I send it back to the team for approval.

We then discuss any additional changes which they may like to make, before the UA is allocated UA and index numbers, converted into various electronic formats and sent out to the network by e-mail.

In the meantime things are hotting up, a couple more UAs have arrived and it looks like it's going to be a busy day. I have a quick look at them all to decide which one is the most urgent and get cracking as fast as I can - supplemented by lots of cups of tea throughout the day.

If I am lucky enough to get some spare time I start the filing. We file each UA in three separate ways - by country, by UA number and by date. This way it is all well cross-referenced and we can find things very easily. I notice a large pile of UAs steadily mounting up on top of our filing cabinets and realize that it is time for another weekly mailing.

Next, I have a look through our UA "updates" filing tray to see if any have gone past their appeal end date. If so, I send a message to the teams concerned to remind them of this and to request a follow-up if any more significant information concerning the case has surfaced.

Then a huge envelope of government responses arrives. We pass these on to research teams with a note from us asking them to issue an update if a government has contradicted information given in the original UA. In between these tasks I constantly check the e-mail for any more UAs - they always take top priority.

*At the end of the day there's just one more thing to get out of the way - sending a checklist to the whole UA network listing all the UAs produced during the day. Then I log off from my computer and leave the world of Urgent Actions behind for a little while as I head off into the busy London evening."*

*by Claire Hallam*

*"The AI Benin UA coordinating body was set up in 1992. It receives the actions to be worked on through the group's UA coordinators. Pre-groups receive UAs through the National Secretariat of the section. Most of the groups meet twice a month to work on actions, notably Urgent Actions. Groups and pre-groups use AI Benin's letterhead to write UAs. Priority is given to UAs relating to the death penalty. Individuals and professional groups (teachers, journalists, etc.) are also involved in UAs, and in 1997 AI Benin held a training session for journalists on UA techniques.*

*UAs are sent as ordinary letters as they don't cost a lot of money. They are cheaper than all other forms of mail. An evaluation of UAs is carried out on a regular basis by the UA coordinators. The total number of UAs dealt with per year by the 15 groups and 8 pre-groups in Benin is about 500."*

*by Gregoire Kpekpede, Chairperson of AI Benin.*

*"Poland's UA team was set up in Warsaw in early 1996. It originally had three members who were all full-time students in their early twenties: Sandra, an American who hardly spoke Polish, a German girl, Kristin, who did not speak Polish at all and Marcin Wojtalik, the only one who is still involved with UAs. They met irregularly in the group office or in their flats, sending appeals and trying to set up and expand the network.*

They also had to raise their own funds, which is not easy and requires much time, making the work even more difficult.

However, 1997 was a very good year for our team. We got a large grant - £6,664 - from the International Urgent Action Working Group (IUAWG), Marcin was trained by the German UA coordinators and we also got our own office room! Thanks to the IUAWG we've now got a good computer, a fax machine, a Xerox machine and we're insured. Also, Kasia went to London for a training visit in March this year.

At present UAs are run by Marcin, Kasia, and me, all on a voluntary basis. We carefully translate every UA we work on into Polish. The translation is then checked by another member of the team. Although we try to do as many UAs as we can, we are limited by three things. These are: time (we all go to school or work full-time), money (we can have more money only when we sent all our receipts to AI Poland's national office in Gdansk) and difficulties with distribution of UAs among the network members (luckily we've found two people who agreed to do this regularly).

Because of this we can only issue between eight and ten Urgent Actions a month although we plan to do much more. However, we have just finished preparing a UA manual which we're planning to send to all our present and future members. Our network is not very big - 130 people - but we are doing our best to expand it. Amnesty is still a novelty in Poland and many people don't know what it does. If you try to persuade people to get involved, not only in AI but also in something like Urgent Actions (which sounds weird and suspicious to some), you are often rejected because the whole thing is not very well known. For example some people may feel unsafe signing an appeal. We try to expand the network in many different ways - advertising in the local press, giving out leaflets, using our personal contacts - but the work is still difficult and demands a lot of patience."

by Andrzej Podgorski, one of AI Poland's UA Team members

## URGENT ACTION SAVES LIVES

What are Urgent Actions? How does the Urgent Action Network function? How effective is the Urgent Action technique?

All these questions are answered in the new 25-minute video *Urgent Action Saves Lives*, produced by the AIUK Urgent Action Team.

Narrated by well-known British journalist John Tusa, the video describes the process of issuing an Urgent Action and demonstrates how this is done in the AIUK Urgent Action office. It includes footage of Professor Luis Rossi, the subject of the first Urgent Action case, and recent testimonies from well-known subjects of Urgent Action cases, such as Turkish human rights defender Eren Keskin, Sri Lankan lawyer Prins Gunasekara and Liberian student activist Ezekiel Pajibo.

Interviews with AI's researchers Morris Tidball and Jonathon Sugden - experts on Mexico and Turkey, countries which generate a high percentage of Urgent Action cases - are also featured. Members of the AIUK Urgent Action Network and children from a Junior Urgent Action group in Hounslow Manor School illustrate the activities and motivation of Urgent Action participants. The video ends with a 5-minute section affirming the effectiveness of the Urgent Action campaigning technique. Archive news footage and still photographs are combined to vary the pace of the film. The soundtrack features music by Peter Gabriel and the Pet Shop Boys.

### Recommended Use

This new audio-visual resource is ideal for use in AI Group and Regional meetings, presentations to schools and youth groups, or for anyone who wants to know more about this vital area of AI's work. It can be used by all Sections and copies have been freely distributed to all section

offices, Urgent Action Networks and many pre-section groups by AIUK Urgent Action Team in 1997/1998.

#### *Other language versions available*

The video is currently available in English, French and Spanish. The AIUK Urgent Action Team is keen to make this video available in further languages such as Turkish and Arabic – they hold master copies with a blank soundtrack which can be dubbed/subtitled in any other language, and some resources are available to assist other AI sections/structures requesting other language versions (please contact the AIUK Urgent Action Team on 0171 814 6266 or via [ua@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:ua@amnesty.org.uk)).

#### *Additional Materials provided*

AIUK Urgent Action Team will provide free copies of the transcript and subtitles of the video and examples of all their Urgent Action materials and literature in English to accompany orders of this video.

#### *Restrictions on use/copyright details*

This video is free to all UA coordinators and can otherwise be purchased for non-commercial use for £6 from the AIUK Urgent Action Team. It can be screened at internal and external meetings. It is NOT available for broadcast use. All inquiries or orders should be directed to the AIUK Urgent Action Team, Amnesty International UK, 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RE, UK. The video copyright belongs to AIUK (and contributors).

#### *Letter from Oussaima*

Radhia Nasraoui and her daughter Oussaima, aged nine, have been under constant surveillance since February 1998, when a UA was issued on Radhia's behalf. Her daughter's name was added to the second UA follow-up. However, it named her as Oussaima Nasraoui, which she was not happy about. She explains why in this letter to Amnesty:

"Dear friends,

I thank you for the Urgent Action that you have done. I would like to tell you that my name is Hammami Oussaima because here the children are given their father's name and I want Amnesty International to help us so that daddy doesn't go to prison and that he returns home as soon as possible."

Oussaima's father, Hama Hammami, has been in hiding since February 1998 (see FU UA 59/98, 13 March 1998).

... and one from her mother, Radhia Nasraoui

"When I first got in contact with Amnesty I was a young lawyer at the beginning of my career. It was 1978, the time of the riots and the suppression of the trade-unionists of the Union Générale des Travailleurs de Tunisie, the Tunisian Workers' General Union. I discovered the seriousness with which Amnesty representatives treated the cases they were working on, their quest for truth, their discretion ... I was struck by their independence towards everyone.

While working on the cases of my clients, who were of various political convictions and backgrounds, I understood just how efficient AI's work was. For instance, a client who had "disappeared" was brought before the examining magistrate after a UA was issued on his behalf, and a client who was beaten and ill-treated in prison was given less harsh detention conditions. And when a client finds out that people who he doesn't know, in a country far away, are demanding his release or ask about his health

.. all these actions play a large part in easing the detainee's isolation. It gives him hope and helps him to bear his possibly inhuman detention conditions.

When my husband, Hamma Hammami, was arrested, tortured and sentenced to jail in 1994, I myself experienced the effectiveness of AI's actions. AI and other NGOs played a very important role in the improvement of his harsh detention conditions (months of isolation, physical and psychological aggression) and in his release. I will always remember the moral support AI gave me, particularly some calls from AI friends in difficult moments. I was always sure that any information that I gave about my husband would be broadcast to all corners of the world, breaking the feeling of isolation and contributing to exposing the torturers.

In the end I too became the victim of constant harassment. My conviction of AI's role has been confirmed: It is an absolutely necessary action for the defence of human rights at the international level. Through my own experience, I have come to understand that AI's intervention on behalf of a victim reminds the authorities that this person is not "forgotten", that hundreds or even thousands of people worldwide are concerned about the fate of this person.

It is very important that AI does not take into account the social background, ideology or political stand of the victim. AI's actions prove that "human rights for all" is not an empty slogan. The hundreds of postcards that my husband and I received are the living proof of this effective solidarity from AI members who are aware of our difficult situation. Through this story, I want to warmly thank all AI members. The pursuit of AI action is vital so that one day, all human rights abuses will end."

by Radhia Nasraoui



*On the night of 11-12 February 1998 the office of Radhia Nasraoui, a human rights lawyer and mother of two, was ransacked by the Tunisian security forces. All the files relating to her clients, legal codes, books and a computer were stolen. Nothing was taken from colleagues sharing the same office.*

*Radhia Nasraoui has a long history of harassment and intimidation by security forces in connection with her human rights work. Her clients have often been questioned and intimidated by the security forces and she has sometimes been prevented from leaving the country. In April 1997 her office was also broken into and client files and other documents left scattered about; the computer and telephone were stolen. Similar incidents occurred in 1994 and 1995, when the door to her apartment was set alight. In none of these cases were the perpetrators brought to justice.*

*Harassment of human rights defenders and activists in Tunisia - including arrest, arbitrary detention and imprisonment, and surveillance - has become increasingly widespread in recent years in an attempt to silence and intimidate them and inhibit their work. In addition, new regulations, both codified and unwritten, have been put into place to further curtail freedom of expression, association and human rights activities.*

*Get Up! Sign Up! A UDHR campaign update ...*

*In June 1998 a new Nigerian military government released dozens of prisoners of conscience (POCs) after head of state General Sani Abacha died on 8 June. Among those released was Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti, a defender of human rights in Nigeria and Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy, a coalition of pro-democracy and human rights groups. He was featured in an Urgent Action on 31 July 1995, after he was arrested and later sentenced to 15 years in prison for his work on behalf*

of prisoners convicted in secret treason trials. He too was convicted after a grossly unfair trial held in secret before a military tribunal. Such trials contravene Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which entitles everyone to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

Dr Ransome-Kuti was held in solitary confinement in Katsina, more than 1200 kilometres away from his home in Lagos. He was allowed only brief and closely supervised monthly visits by relatives and his health was deteriorating. After his release, Dr Ransome-Kuti addressed a staff meeting at Amnesty's International Secretariat on 6 August 1998: "The letters I was sent by your members in various places was one of the greatest moral boosts I received. At first they were kept away ... they intimidated prison officials". Dr Ransome-Kuti finally received some of his letters: "I am particularly grateful for that because it made my life a lot easier."

Despite his release, Dr Ransome-Kuti expressed concerns for human rights and pro-democracy activists during the new "transition to civil rule" announced by the new military government. After the failure of so many attempts to restore civilian government in Nigeria's almost 40 years of independence, some are sceptical of the current government's declared intention to hand over power by May 1999.

Dr Ransome-Kuti is currently one of 28 human rights defenders featured in the organisation's year-long UDHR campaign. These 28 people have all been the targets of human rights violations because of their efforts to defend the rights enshrined in the UDHR. Their stories illustrate the 30 rights and freedoms enshrined in the UDHR, which was proclaimed by the United Nations on 10 December 1948 in response to the atrocities of the Second World War. All member states pledged "to achieve ... the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

by Ulrike Zimmermann

Fifty years on, Amnesty International invites people around the world to make a personal pledge to the principles contained in the Declaration. This initiative is called *Get Up, Sign Up!* and began in December 1997. Amnesty is asking individuals to sign up to a personal commitment to doing all that they can to ensure that the principles enshrined in the Declaration are upheld. Amnesty members in more than 100 countries are currently taking this initiative to their political leaders, business leaders, celebrities and members of the public.

You can sign up too! Add your voice to over 6 million people who have signed worldwide by visiting Amnesty's *Get Up! Sign Up!* website on [www.amnesty.excite.com](http://www.amnesty.excite.com)

*A question of freedom*

In June 1997 Fathi Subuh, a 43 year-old university professor, set the questions for an examination for his "critical thinking course" at al-Azhar University in Gaza City. Two of the questions asked students to write about corruption in the Palestinian Authority (PA) and to discuss corruption at the university. Shortly afterwards, on 2 July, the Palestinian Authority's Preventive Security Service (PSS) arrived at his home and took him away. AI concluded that Fathi Subuh had been arrested for setting examination questions seen as critical of al-Azhar University and the PA and adopted him as a prisoner of conscience (POC).

The Urgent Action Network began working on Fathi Subuh's case after he had spent nine days in incommunicado detention. Initially appeal writers asked for his immediate and unconditional release if he was not

to be charged or brought to trial. They also urged the PA to allow visits by his family and lawyer.

Over the next few months different PA officials provided different justifications as to why Fathi Subuh was in jail, including “security reasons” and “moral reasons”. But no charges were pressed against him. And if these were the reasons for his arrest, why did members of the PA’s security forces turn up at his home later in July 1997 to confiscate the students’ examination answers?

A steady flow of information from Gaza City allowed the research team at the International Secretariat to update the UA Network regularly about developments on his case, such as his first family visit and the challenge brought against his detention in the Palestinian High Court.

It was not until later, however, that the world learned that Fathi Subuh was not only arbitrarily detained but had also been tortured when he was initially held in PSS’ Tel al-Hawa Detention Centre. His lawyer described in court in September 1997 how his client had been hung from behind by his hands with his feet off the ground, how he had been forced to balance on his toes for long periods and how he had been subjected to beatings, sleep deprivation and hooding.

On 30 October Fathi Subuh was transferred to Shifa’ Hospital after he fainted. He was found to have a brain condition caused by the deterioration of sinus-related problems. On 26 November he was taken to the State Security court and released on bail of 5,000 Jordanian dinars (\$US7,100).

AI delegates visited Fathi Subuh and his family in their home in February 1998. He said that sometimes, during his interrogation, he was asked how he knew so-and-so from Sweden or Germany – the writers of UA appeal letters. He expressed his deep gratitude to AI members for all their work on his behalf. On 11 March 1998, Freih Abu Middein, the PA’s Minister of Justice, wrote to Riad al-Khudari, the President of al-Azhar

University in Gaza City, stating, "We would like to inform you that Doctor Fathi Subuh has been released without charge or conviction".

We don't know exactly how many letters the UA network wrote to PA officials on behalf of Fathi Subuh. But we know that they were many, and that they made a difference.

In September last year, when an AI delegate met with Colonel Muhammad Dahlan, the head of the PSS in the Gaza Strip, the Colonel said they had already received 3,500 letters asking for Fathi Subuh's release!

by Amnesty's East Mediterranean team

### *Strength in numbers*

No further action from the UA network is required ...These are familiar words. They appear at the end of a follow-up UA or Extra, usually bearing positive news - of a release, the commutation of a death sentence or of a situation which has improved significantly since the original UA was distributed to the network. It is not always possible to determine what effect - if any - the UA network's appeals have had in a particular case. But the list of people featured in follow-ups to Urgent Actions by the end of July 1998, who were released after Amnesty International took action on their behalf, is a long one, and should be a source of encouragement to appeal writers all over the world:

Algeria: Karim Khelili, FU UA 36/98, 9 February; Mohamed Naceur el-Hani, FU UA 125/98, 1 May  
Bahrain: Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad al'Ikri, FU UA 65/98, 31 March

Burundi:

Astère Baranyigera, FU UA 05/98, 20 January

*Cambodia:*

*Ho Chenda and Chen, FU UA 19/98, 27 January*

*Cameroon:*

*Members and supporters of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) including:*

*Justin Pokam, Thomas Seme, Konga Philip Kuate, Victoria Musong, Grégoire Diboule, Oliver Finya, Wavie Asago, Richard Nyieka, Stephen Aka, Julius Mbenya and Chief Mondji, FU UA 353/97, 9 January*

*Cameroon/Chad:*

*Michel Nguimbaye Barde, Alamine Guirgue and Allah-Afra Boyalkaya, FU UA 378/97, 9 July*

*Democratic Republic of Congo:*

*Immaculée Birhaheka, FU UA 149/98, 20 May*

*Egypt: Abd al-Rahman Lutfi, FU UA 69/98, 18 May; Ibrahim Khalil al-Za'farani and Mohammad Taha Wahdan, FU UA 29/98, 1 April; Magdi Ahmad Hussain and Mohammad Hilal, FU UA 80/98, 8 July*

*Ethiopia: Alemayehu Kifle, Mukenil Shebo and Tamrat Gameda, FU UA 56/98, 8 May; Abebe Abashu, Yadesa Bedassa, Alemayehu Dirro, Ademe Gebre-Senbet, Sori Kitila, Dawit Mekonnen, Isayas Negatu, Mohamed Sheka, Alemayehu Umatta, Muktar Usman and Hundesa Wakwaya, FU UA 56/98, 8 May; Amour Ben Bechir Jemi'i, FU UA 11/98, 9 February*

*India: Hidiyat-ul-Rashid, FU EXTRA 27/98, 7 April*

*Indonesia/East Timor:*

*Lucas da Costa, FU UA 411/97, 19 January; Pius Lustrilanang and Desmond J Mahesa, FU UA 46/98, 9 April; Jose da Costa Soares, FU UA 94/98, 7 April; Cut Sari and H Hasyim, FU UA 134/98, 18 June; Haji Jafar bin Adam, FU UA 47/98, 15 June*

*Iran:*

Faraj Sarkouhi, FU UA 292/97, 29 May; Zoleykhah Kadkhoda, FU UA 282/97, 15 May

Israel/South Lebanon:

Nassar Husayn Nassar and Huda Marquis, FU UA 03/98, 11 February;  
Khuza'i Barakat, FU UA 45/98, 21 July

Morocco/Western Sahara:

Abdrerrahman Brahim Atman and Mohamed El Yaddassia, FU UA 403/97, 29 January

Nigeria:

Ogaga Ifowodo, FU UA 368/97, 11 June

Palestinian Authority:

'Abbas al-Mu'mani , FU UA 147/98, 15 May

Russian Federation:

Larisa Kharchenko, FU UA 223/97, 27 February; Vitaliy Vladimirovich Gushchin, FU UA 102/98, 17 July

Rwanda:

Philomène Mukabarali, FU UA 405/97, 20 May

Sierra Leone:

Sylvanus Kanyako, David Kamara and Anthony Swaray, FU UA 20/98, 2 March; Michael Lawson, FU UA 35/98, 23 February

Syria:

Zubayda Muqabel, FU UA 233/97, 13 May; Aktham Nu'aysa, FU UA 296/98, 15 June; Mustafa Tawfiq Fallah, FU UA 178/96, 11 June;  
Munir Sha'bu, FU UA 145/98, 10 June

Syria/Lebanon:

Tony Michael Zakkour, FU UA 77/98, 12 May

Turkey:

Hamdi Turanli, FU UA 15/98, 26 February

United Arab Emirates:

Jassim 'Issa al-Yassi, Ahmad 'Abdullah Makki and Yassir 'Abdullah Makki,  
FU UA 244/96, 4 February

*At least two other people, one in Mexico, the other in Indonesia, have reappeared this year following the issuing of a UA expressing fears about their possible "disappearance". Two others, also in Indonesia, were permitted legal counsel. UA appeal letters are also believed to have helped secure medical attention for a prisoner in Japan, Saeid Pilhvar.*

*The lawyer for two prisoners in Israel/ Occupied Territories said she believed that the appeals sent on behalf of her clients influenced the decision to transfer them from the interrogation unit where AI was concerned that they were being subjected to ill-treatment. Three men in Indonesia were released from incommunicado detention into police custody, which is thought to have reduced the risk of torture or ill-treatment significantly. A full investigation was opened by the judicial authorities in Caracas, Venezuela into the arbitrary detention of Yuraima Lara on 16 October 1997.*

*In addition come a number of people who had their death sentences commuted or repealed, and yet others who received stays of execution.*

*... many thanks to all who sent appeals.*