

WIRE

FOR PEOPLE PASSIONATE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS
MAY/JUNE 2013 VOLUME 43 ISSUE 003

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



THANK YOU

WE HAVE
AN ARMS
TRADE TREATY!

INSIDE THIS WIRE



COVER IMAGE

A box of ammunition captured from the Sudanese Armed Forces in southern Kordofan, Sudan, July 2011. On 2 April 2013, activists worldwide celebrated a new UN treaty that will regulate the global arms trade, secured after 20 years of campaigning.



'THERE ARE NO HUMAN RIGHTS IN SRI LANKA'

The Sri Lankan authorities claim that their human rights record has improved, but has it? Sign our petition and send an appeal for a disappeared journalist.

PAGE 4



TORTURE – THE PAINFUL TRUTH

States often use 'security' and 'counter-terror' as excuses for torture. Find out what is happening in the USA, Nigeria, Iraq and Russia.

PAGE 6



FIVE WAYS TO SUPPRESS A JOURNALIST

For World Press Freedom Day, we look at some of the methods used to silence journalists around the world.

PAGE 8



SPOTLIGHT ON A SCANDAL

The story of how people are getting organised, in Kenya's slums and worldwide, to stop illegal evictions.

PAGE 10



PAPUA NEW GUINEA – TOXIC BREW

Vlad Sokhin's photographs capture how a toxic mix of casual brutality and a government that is unable or unwilling to stop it, is affecting women's lives.

PAGE 12



RISKY BUSINESS – DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

Chinese lawyer Teng Biao has been detained and tortured for his work. Read his story.

PAGE 14



'THIS IS A COLD WAR'

Katia Samutsevich from PUSSY RIOT talks to WIRE.

PAGE 20

WORLDWIDE APPEALS

Write a letter, change a life – here's all the information you need to take action. **PAGE 22**

ALSO IN WIRE

News in the **AGENDA**, an **UP FRONT** column from Côte d'Ivoire (**PAGES 2-3**), play our game, **A NEW ROUTE TO JUSTICE** (**PAGE 16**), writer **ABDELAZIZ BARAKA SAKIN** talks about his books and freedom of expression in Sudan (**PAGE 18**).

Getting WIRE

WIRE is available online at livewire.amnesty.org

You can subscribe to receive six printed copies of WIRE for £15/US\$24/€17 a year (or £35/US\$54/€41 for institutions). Amnesty International sections and structures can buy discounted copies. Email wire.subscribe@amnesty.org or call +44 (0)20 7413 5814/5507.

To join Amnesty International visit amnesty.org/en/join

First published in 2013 by Amnesty International Publications www.amnesty.org
© Amnesty International Ltd
Index: NWS 21/003/2013,
ISSN: 1472-443X
Printed by Banbury Litho, Banbury, United Kingdom, on 100gsm Cocoon Preprint 100% Recycled paper.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publishers.

WIRE, Editorial and Publishing Programme, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

Cover image:
© Private





Activists in Madrid, Spain, point the finger at world leaders to agree an Arms Trade Treaty that saves lives, March 2013. Days later, the UN voted on to put human rights at the heart of its historic new treaty.

THANK YOU — WE HAVE A TREATY!

As we put the finishing touches on WIRE May/June, news broke that world leaders had finally agreed **a new Arms Trade Treaty** at the UN on 2 April, after 20 years of **hard lobbying and campaigning**. We will **celebrate this huge win** for human rights in WIRE July/August, telling the story of how it came about and what needs to happen next.

Meanwhile, read our **exclusive interviews** with people who have felt the full force of state repression for speaking their minds, including Katia Samutsevich from the Russian band **Pussy Riot** (p. 20). Find out about **torture in Sri Lanka** (p. 6), sign our petition and **send an appeal** for somebody at risk (p. 22). As the huge achievement of a global Arms Trade Treaty shows, when people take injustice personally it can grow into a powerful force for change.

Read WIRE online and our LIVEWIRE blogs at livewire.amnesty.org

The Agenda

News about Amnesty International's work and campaigns

Activists from across Europe marked International Roma Day on 8 April 2013 by staging a flash mob outside the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. We set up a life-size Roma settlement, complete with furniture and fittings, a shower and toilet, and staged a dramatic portrayal of a forced eviction.

Find out more and get involved in our campaign at amnesty.org/roma

Read our blog about the event at bit.ly/roma-flashmob



© Sven Dauphin

Migrants in Mexico

Amnesty Mexico has distributed more than 13,000 pairs of socks to migrant shelters as part of its 'Send Socks' campaign, which focuses on migrants' practical needs while in transit and encouraged supporters to send in socks. Watch our film at sendsocks.org

Director Marc Silver's new film, 'Who is Dayani Cristal?', which showcased at the Sundance Film Festival this year, tells the story of an unidentified migrant who died in the Arizona desert, and the efforts to identify and locate his family back at home.

Visit www.whoisdayanicristal.com

Read **WIRE** online

The online version of **WIRE** allows you to flick through the pages and zoom in on text and images. You can click on live web links to go straight to other content, including videos, visit related websites and to take action. On the same site you'll also find **LIVEWIRE** – Amnesty's global human rights blog.

Updated regularly, it provides fresh insight into Amnesty's work worldwide. If you 'like' our global Facebook page you'll automatically get links to new blogs in your newsfeed.

Visit livewire.amnesty.org

China: Liu Xiaobo

In February, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's petition calling on China's new leader, Xi Jinping, to free imprisoned Nobel Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo and his wife Liu Xia was delivered to the Chinese authorities in Berlin, Hong Kong, London, Paris, New York, Taipei, and Washington DC. More than 450,000 people from 130 countries took part in the action.

Liu Xiaobo is a leading author of Charter '08, calling for the recognition of fundamental human rights in China.

Read our interview with Chinese lawyer and human rights advocate Teng Biao on pages 14-15

New toolkit against internet censorship

NGO Reporters Without Borders has developed an online toolkit as part of its ongoing campaign against internet censorship. Offering practical tools, advice and techniques on how activists can circumvent censorship and secure their own communications and digital data, the kit is available in French, English and Russian.

Visit bit.ly/fight-censorship

World congress against the death penalty

Participants from all over the world will gather in Madrid, Spain from 12-15 June for the 5th World Congress against the Death Penalty. Organized by the Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort in partnership with the World Coalition against the Death Penalty, the Congress will have workshops and roundtables and two plenary sessions focusing on Asia and the Middle East and North Africa.

For more information visit congres.abolition.fr

On tour with the Cure

Art for Amnesty has teamed up with iconic British band The Cure for their Latin America tour. Volunteers from Amnesty in Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Mexico will be promoting our 'My body, my rights' campaign at each show. The Cure will also be promoting the campaign on Facebook, where they have over 4.7 million followers. As long-standing Amnesty supporters, The Cure also contributed to the Instant Karma CD in 2007 for the Save Darfur campaign.

Visit facebook.com/ArtforAmnesty



"If even a handful of people come away from our concerts feeling they've got more power over their bodies – their lives – that's got to be a good thing."

Robert Smith from The Cure (pictured above)

Sexual and reproductive rights in numbers

There are currently 1.8 billion people aged between 10 and 24 in the world. Most of them live in developing countries

Nearly 3,000 young people are infected with HIV every day

Complications from pregnancy are the leading cause of death among adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 in developing countries

Maternal deaths are 28% higher among adolescent girls than among women aged 20-24

In the next decade around 100 million girls will be married as children, if present patterns continue



West Africa researcher Gaëtan Mootoo delivers Amnesty's new report in Côte d'Ivoire, March 2013

The impact of Amnesty's research was tangible when we arrived in Duékoué in western Côte d'Ivoire in February. This was the area most affected by the post-election violence in 2010. We had just launched our new report, *The Victor's Law*, which details serious human rights violations committed by government forces and local militia. Almost everyone we met was excited to tell us what a huge stir it had created.

Every single national press outlet had attended our press conference to launch it in the capital, Abidjan, a few days earlier. Some support Alassane Ouattara – the current President. Others remain pro-Laurent Gbagbo, the former president whose refusal to accept defeat in the 2010 elections sparked violence leading to the deaths of at least 3,000 people.

Once the launch was over, we were able to visit many of the people who had contributed to the report. Researcher Gaëtan Mootoo, and Philippe Hensmans and Alex Neve (Directors of Amnesty Belgium and Canada) hand delivered copies so people we work with could read their own words in print.

It was extremely moving to watch. People were satisfied that their words had been recorded, and pleased to have contributed to exposing the human rights abuses that had affected them so acutely. They hadn't given their testimonies lightly.

Two years after the post-election violence, many still live in fear and feel intimidated because they belong to the 'wrong' ethnic group. Many nevertheless continue to go out of their way to record human rights violations.

One man we met, who prefers to remain anonymous, had lowered himself by rope into a well where bodies had been dumped after a massacre. While helping to exhume the bodies, he also videoed them so no one could deny their existence. Our report would never have had the impact it did without the courage of people like him.

Read our new report at bit.ly/victors-law

LETTERS

Want your views and comments to appear in The Agenda? Write to us at thewire@amnesty.org

AS SRI LANKA GEARS UP TO HOST A MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH LEADERS IN NOVEMBER, TESTIMONY FROM TORTURE SURVIVORS, AND THE ABSENCE OF JUSTICE IN THEIR CASES, CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS TO MAKING HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS.

'THERE ARE NO HUMAN RIGHTS IN SRI LANKA'

“I was burnt all over my body with cigarettes,” said Kumar. “I was also kicked all over the body. They kept me in a dark cell with no windows, where I had to sleep on the floor.”

Kumar was 16 when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – an armed opposition group fighting

LEGALIZED ABUSE

Journalists, lawyers, grassroots activists – anyone who dares to criticize the authorities – can be picked up under arcane security laws and detained for years without access to the outside world.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act – a hangover from the 1980s – is one of the main legal tools deployed by the government to silence its critics. Under it, people can be arrested without charge or trial and held for up to 18 months under a detention order, or indefinitely pending trial. Locked in a sinister limbo and denied the right to a lawyer, they are left vulnerable to torture – despite a constitutional ban on the practice.

In 2009, journalist J.S. Tissainayagam was convicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and sentenced to 20 years' hard labour for criticizing the military's treatment of civilians during the war. He had been in pre-trial detention since his arrest in March 2008. His conviction was based on a confession that he said was made under duress. In June 2010, he was pardoned and went into exile.

BUNDLED INTO WHITE VANS

Sometimes the authorities eschew legal avenues altogether, harassing and assaulting their critics through anonymous means. Stories of people being bundled into white vans and later dumped, or never seen again, are alarmingly frequent.

Poddala Jayantha, an outspoken critic of the government's treatment of journalists and head of the Sri Lankan Working Journalists Association, was kidnapped in a suburban street in the capital, Colombo, by unidentified men in a white van and tortured in June 2009.

"They cut my hair and put it into my mouth, then gagged me," recalled Poddala, speaking to us in March. "They struck both my legs, breaking one at the ankle. They used a piece of wood to smash the fingers on my right hand until they bled. They said, 'This will stop you from writing'."

His captors eventually let him go, saying: "We won't kill you now," said Poddala, "but if you organize any more demonstrations against the government, if you speak to the media, we will kill you."

They then dumped him in the road in what Poddala described as a "high security zone". "There were checkpoints everywhere," he added. "Who gave permission for this vehicle to go without being stopped?"

Some weeks before his ordeal, Poddala and a fellow journalist were summoned to a meeting with Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Defence Secretary and brother of President Mahinda Rajapaksa. "He was sitting in front of us," recalled Poddala, "He said, 'If you don't stop this, something will happen to you.'"

"This" referred to Poddala and his colleagues' reporting. "We wrote about corruption within the army. We wrote about the rights of Tamil people, so they labelled us as supporters of the LTTE," he said. "They didn't like us talking about the rights of the Tamils."

Poddala fled the country with his family in December 2009. He was lucky to escape with his life.



Left: Family members protest against their relatives' disappearance, Colombo, Sri Lanka, January 2012.

Above: Sri Lankan journalists hold placards with a photograph of fellow journalist Poddala Jayantha, a campaigner for press freedom and an outspoken government critic. He was abducted and tortured by unidentified men in a white van in June 2009.

Fellow journalist Prageeth Eknaligoda disappeared in January 2010, and has not been seen since (see our Worldwide Appeals, p.22-23).

INTOLERANCE AND FEAR

A climate of intolerance and fear continues to sweep the island as the government's stranglehold on the population grows ever tighter. In March, Chief Justice Shirani Bandaranayake was impeached after declaring a government bill unconstitutional.

Lawyers working on torture and other human rights cases have been targeted and harassed. Meanwhile, the cases of Kumar, Poddala and the many activists who have disappeared have not been independently or credibly investigated.

Yet the authorities claim that their human rights record has improved – a claim reinforced by their selection as hosts of the November meeting of Commonwealth leaders. It is a whitewash of immense proportions, says Poddala.

"I can't understand why the Commonwealth has decided to do this," he told us, "because no civil society organization is allowed to function there. There are no human rights in Sri Lanka."

ACT NOW

Sign our petition at amnesty.org/srilanka. To write a Worldwide Appeal on behalf of Prageeth Eknaligoda see p. 22-23.



since 1983 for an independent Tamil state – forcibly recruited him in January 2008. He was eventually captured by the Sri Lankan army in April 2009, in the last weeks of Sri Lanka's bloody civil war. A child soldier, he was given no psychological treatment. Instead, he was held without charge or trial for 18 months and repeatedly tortured.

I was not allowed to contact anyone outside and never had any visitors," he told his lawyer in May 2011. "I would hear people scream and cry every day."

Kumar's experience is not unique. The government won its 26-year war against the LTTE in May 2009, but the abuses that became entrenched over that period persist. The war was once used as an excuse to detain people without evidence or warrants and hold them for years. Today, criticism of government policies could earn you the same treatment.

TORTURE IS ALWAYS A CRIME UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, NO MATTER WHERE AND HOW IT IS COMMITTED. THAT DOESN'T STOP MANY GOVERNMENTS FROM USING IT, NOT LEAST IN THE NAME OF 'SECURITY' AND 'COUNTER-TERRORISM'.

26 JUNE IS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE.

TO MARK IT, HERE IS A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT HAS GONE ON IN JUST A FEW OF THE COUNTRIES AMNESTY WORKS ON.

USA: IMPUNITY FOR TORTURE

Early in the Bush Administration's "war on terror", in March 2002, stateless Palestinian Zayn al Abidin Muhammad Husayn (also known as Abu Zubaydah) was arrested in Pakistan and handed over to US custody. He was later subjected to "enhanced interrogation techniques" including "water-boarding" – a torture method amounting to mock execution by interrupted drowning.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) interviewed him and 13 other detainees in the US Guantánamo Bay naval base in Cuba, in late 2006. All had just been transferred from the custody of the CIA. Abu Zubaydah had been held in secret for the longest – four and a half years of enforced disappearance.

The men told the ICRC that they had been forced into prolonged "stress standing" positions with their arms extended and chained above the head during interrogation. Other methods listed in the leaked 2007 ICRC report included physical assaults, confinement in a box, prolonged nudity, sleep deprivation, exposure to cold temperatures, threats of ill-treatment, deprivation or restriction of solid food, and water-boarding. Abu Zubaydah was the only man interviewed who alleged that every single one of these methods had been used on him.

The ICRC concluded that US agents were responsible for enforced disappearance – also a crime under international law – as well as for torture and other ill-treatment. It called on the US authorities to bring those responsible to justice. So far, that hasn't happened. Abu Zubaydah is still held in Guantánamo, without charge or trial, more than 11 years after he was first taken into custody.



THE P

RUSSIA: INCRIMINATING 'EVIDENCE'

"About 80 per cent of suspects charged with extremism or terrorism are tortured. Very few can go through this without giving false confessions and incriminating others. The rest give 'confessions' that then become key evidence for the prosecution."

This is a quote from Batyr Akhilgov, a criminal justice lawyer from Ingushetia in Russia. It highlights how people charged with extremism or terrorism are denied fair trials because "confessions" extracted under torture are allowed as "evidence".

He has worked on several high profile cases, including that of Rasul Kudaev, a former Guantánamo detainee. Soon after Rasul returned to Russia, he was arrested on suspicion of participating in a terrorist attack against government installations in Nalchik in 2005.

Rasul maintains his innocence and alleges that the police tortured him into "confessing", including by beating him for hours with truncheons and rifle butts, electric shocks, cutting his ears with small scissors, setting dogs on him and sticking a sharp tool under his right eye. Amnesty has obtained documentation, including photographs, that supports his claims.

But all attempts to bring his torturers to justice have failed. The Prosecutor's Office has refused to investigate his allegations. Meanwhile, he and 57 others are still being tried on the basis of their "confessions", while being held in inhuman and degrading conditions. They are often beaten by prison guards and denied medical assistance. Rasul Kudaev has now sought justice at the European Court of Human Rights.

IRAQ'S LETHAL CONFESSION CULTURE

Ahmad 'Amr 'Abd al-Qadir Muhammad was arrested in Baghdad in 2006 and held incommunicado for over a year. The first time his mother was allowed to see him, in August 2007, she was shocked. He had visible injuries, including scars from burns. He claimed being tortured into "confessing" that he belonged to an armed group that intended to plant explosives.

During Ahmad's trial, the court noted that he had withdrawn his self-incriminating testimony, stating that he had been coerced and tortured, and that the Forensic Medical Institute had found scars on his body. But the court still sentenced Ahmad to death in May 2011, relying on his withdrawn testimony as evidence.

Ahmad is now at imminent risk of execution. "I feel a pain in my heart," his mother said about their desperate situation. "It is crushing me".

His case is not unusual. Ten years after Saddam Hussein's brutal rule ended, the new government's security forces use torture widely, particularly when interrogating detainees arrested under anti-terrorism laws.

Fresh "confessions" are often filmed and broadcast on national television and the Interior Ministry's own YouTube channel. Suspects are often referred to as criminals, even though they haven't been tried or convicted. Many are then eventually sentenced to long prison terms, or to death, with courts relying on their "confessions" as evidence. And their torturers expect that they will never be held responsible.

Watch "Iraq's lethal confession culture" at bit.ly/IraqConfessions

NIGERIA: A VISIT TO THE ABATTOIR

Ibrahim Umar was arrested in January 2012 as a suspected member of the Islamist group, Boko Haram. It has claimed responsibility for bombings and killings in northern and central Nigeria. The charges against him were dropped after two weeks.

But after he was released the police immediately rearrested and detained him without charge at a police station in the capital, Abuja, known as the 'abattoir'. Located on a hilltop outside the city, this huge warehouse was once used for slaughtering cattle, with chains still hanging from the ceiling.

During his time there, Ibrahim says he saw police officers take a total of 15 inmates outside, then shooting and killing them. Abattoir detainees are often ill-treated, including by being given little food or water and being denied medical care. When Ibrahim went into a coma after developing appendicitis, he was taken to hospital in handcuffs and had his foot chained to the hospital bed. The police moved him back to the abattoir before he could have the operation advised by a doctor.

On 7 August, a court ordered the police to immediately release Ibrahim, but wasn't released until 3 January 2013. He now lives in the UK. The Nigerian Police Force has yet to respond to the court order to pay him compensation for his unlawful detention. "What happened to me made me realize that there is no rule of law in Nigeria," Ibrahim said. "A lot of innocent people are suffering for nothing".

ACT NOW

Read about torture in Sri Lanka on the previous page and sign our petition at www.amnesty.org/srilanka

AINFUL TRUTH



© AP Photo

FIVE WAYS TO REPRESS A JOURNALIST

From trumped-up charges to harassment – even murder: WIRE looks at just some of the methods used worldwide to stop journalists exposing uncomfortable truths.

PHYSICAL ATTACKS

In many countries journalists are beaten – even killed – for reporting on conflicts or being critical.

Palestinian cameraman Hussam Salameh and journalist Mahmoud 'Ali Ahmad al-Koumi were killed by an Israeli missile strike on their car on 20 November 2012. They were reporting for Al-Aqsa TV on Israeli attacks on Gaza during Operation "Pillar of Defense". **Israel's** military authorities claimed the men were " Hamas operatives"; however Amnesty International has confirmed that the journalists had no affiliation to any armed group. The Israeli military also targeted media offices during the eight-day conflict, and regularly uses excessive force against journalists covering protests in the West Bank.

Mexico's National Human Rights Commission reported that at least nine journalists were killed and many others attacked and intimidated during 2012. Most cases are not investigated. In June, crime and political corruption journalist Miguel Ángel López Velasco, his wife and son were shot and killed at home in Veracruz by unidentified gunmen. The investigation is ongoing.

At least 23 journalists have been killed in **Somalia** since December 2011. Many killings are thought to be linked to the armed opposition group, al-Shabab.

TRUMPED-UP CHARGES

Charging journalists with trumped-up, politically motivated criminal charges (possessing drugs, or fraud, for example) to stop them reporting is common in many countries.

On 12 March, a Baku court found **Azerbaijani** journalist Avaz Zeynali – editor of the *Khural* newspaper – guilty of bribery, extortion by threats, failure to implement a court decision and tax evasion. He was sentenced to nine years in prison. Avaz Zeynali has regularly criticized the country's high corruption levels and President Ilham Aliyev's clampdown on independent journalists and opposition activists. His trial was seen as deeply unfair.

HARASSMENT

Threatening journalists or their relatives is a common tactic used to silence them.

In **Yemen**, prominent journalist Abdul Karim al-Khaiwani has been threatened since he wrote articles about secret detention centres and torture in early 2013. His home was fired at twice and he received anonymous phone calls asking him if he could hear the shooting.

Nigerian journalist Musa Mohammad Auwal was arrested by the State Security Services in Kaduna in December 2012 and February 2013. He was never told why. His phone and laptop were seized. He was detained for eight days and interrogated about his news organization, and also the whereabouts of his editor-in-chief, currently in hiding and fearing for his life. He was then released on bail.

In **China**, the publisher of the *Beijing News* reportedly submitted his resignation after propaganda authorities ordered a number of daily newspapers throughout the country to run an editorial blaming “hostile foreign forces” for a strike in the *Southern Weekly* newspaper.

BANNING ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

In February 2013, a court in **Egypt** imposed a month-long ban on YouTube, following a complaint over a video deemed offensive to Islam. The ban was never implemented, partly for technical reasons. The Egyptian constitution protects freedom of expression, but with limits, including for insulting and defaming religion or individuals.

SHUTTING DOWN MEDIA OUTLETS

Some governments simply shut down newspapers and radio stations if they see them as being critical.

On 21 November 2012, the Almaty city Prosecutor in **Kazakhstan** filed a complaint seeking to close down almost all remaining independent and opposition media. In the verdict, the court labelled several opposition media outlets as “political extremists” that incited “social hatred”. The complaint covered approximately 40 print, online and broadcast media outlets, which had covered oil worker strikes and investigations into violent clashes between security forces and protesters in Zhanaozen during 2011.

In the first two months of 2012 alone, the authorities in **Sudan** suspended three newspapers using laws under the 2010 National Security Act. It allows the National Intelligence and Security Service to ban any publication with information considered a threat to national security. In April 2012, the authorities confiscated two issues of the *al-Midan* newspaper after it had been printed, putting it under serious financial strain.

Shooting the messenger, our new report on the repression of journalists in Syria, is published on World Press Freedom Day, 3 May. Visit amnesty.org

Above: A Ugandan policeman points his weapon at photojournalist Marc Hofer during protests in Kampala, Uganda, May 2011. Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni called journalists “enemies” for reporting on walk-to-work protests, organized by the opposition against rising prices.

Left: A riot policeman hits news photographer Panagiotis Tzamaros during a demonstration in Syntagma (Constitution) square, Athens, Greece, 5 October 2011.



ACT NOW

Citizen journalist Ali Mahmoud Othman was arrested in March 2012 in Aleppo province, Syria, and has not been heard from for over a year. Please write to the Syrian authorities on his behalf, using our Worldwide Appeal on page 22-23.



SPOTLIGHT ON A SCANDAL

ACTIVIST NETWORKS ARE WORKING FAST TO EXPOSE ILLEGAL EVICTIONS, LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

In the heart of Nairobi, Kenya, a grassroots movement is growing and gaining strength. It's purpose? To stop people being illegally evicted from their homes, and to support them when it happens.

"I have witnessed a million and one forced evictions," says Naomi Barasa, who grew up in Kenya's second largest slum, Korogocho. As Campaign Organizer for Amnesty International Kenya, she has worked closely with the capital's Rapid Response Team (RTT) since 2009. Most of its around 1,000 members are activists who live in slums.

"Evictions in Kenya are always abrupt," she explains. "People are ambushed at night or very early in the morning. Red marks or Xs sometimes appear on buildings first. Then you see heavy deployment of police. Three thousand people might get three hours' notice to vacate before the bulldozers come and crush everything."

BREAKING THE DREAM

Evictions are brutal and devastating. "Last October, an eviction started at 4am even though it was a school day and national exam time," Naomi says. "They even crushed chickens."

Women are often the first to face the impact, and bear much of the burden afterwards. "We found

women scavenging for sweaters for their children in the rubble afterwards, because it was raining," says Naomi. "Someone else was digging for a certificate."

"I've seen the incredible impact evictions have," says Paul Helsloot, Campaign Co-ordinator with Amnesty Netherlands. "Many people in slums earn their living cooking food, or selling cigarettes. It's a vibrant economic society and if you destroy it people lose their income, and their support networks too – people who help them in times of need and look after their children."

"From one day to another children are taken out of education, sometimes never to return again, breaking the dream of families who wanted a better life for their children," he adds.

A CLASSIC AMNESTY TECHNIQUE

Amnesty Netherlands is a founding member of the international Rapid Response Network (RRN) on forced evictions. "We needed something that combined co-ordinated, speedy action with traditional Amnesty tools," Paul explains.

Forty years ago, Amnesty issued its first Urgent Action appeal to a network of letter-writers on behalf of an individual at risk of human rights abuses. Today, the RRN uses the same idea to alert networks

of activists in over 20 countries when a community is threatened with forced eviction.

Forced evictions are part of Amnesty's work on economic, social and cultural rights, and currently focuses on Romania, Italy, Serbia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Cambodia and Brazil.

As soon as there is a sign of a potential eviction, the research team at Amnesty's International Secretariat assesses the threat before sending out an email alert to all Amnesty offices – or sections – involved with the RRN, saying what needs to be done, how and when.

Sections then alert their national activist networks, asking them to send emails, sign petitions or similar. The potential reach is huge: Amnesty Netherlands alone has an email network of up to 80,000 activists.

"One action targeted the Governor of Rivers State in Nigeria," says Paul, when a waterside community in Port Harcourt was threatened with eviction. "We posted messages on his Facebook page, informed our embassies – the Dutch Ambassador wrote a letter and visited the community, and the eviction was stopped".

BUYING TIME

The rapid response technique doesn't solve the problem for good. "That community was safe, but then the Governor suddenly started to evict another.



© Nikola Ivanovski



© Nikola Ivanovski

© Nikola Ivanovski

So it's an emergency instrument that can buy time to do longer term work to empower, train and mobilize communities to find a sustainable solution."

This links in with Naomi's work in Nairobi, where Amnesty is campaigning alongside the RRT for a law on evictions and resettlement, to be compliant with international human rights legislation. Having stalled in parliament since 2010, there are hopes that the draft bill will soon come before Kenya's new Government.

Evictions in Kenya are particularly difficult to stop because they usually happen at such short notice – possibly even through fires being started. "It's a tactic to disorganize and disperse people," says Naomi, "because when you are dispersed you can't respond."

LOUD AND CLEAR

But Kenya's RRT activists do respond, loud and clear. "They do a lot of documentation and tracking of evictions. We also do aggressive awareness on housing rights and how to resist. So by the time rumours of an eviction turn out to be reality, people know that this is a human rights violation."

"If the eviction has already happened, it is still very important to just go and cry with people and give them hope," Naomi adds. She says the RRT has secured blankets from well-wishers at flea markets

and helped people replace their medication when an eviction has left them destitute on the street. "This really says a lot to the victims," she says.

With support from Amnesty Kenya, the RRT now plans to develop its network across Kenya, and find ways to connect with the international RRN Paul is involved with. "Our members are very interested in international activism," Naomi says. "Most don't have access to internet and technology, but we have the numbers at the local level who can write letters. People here have already written letters about evictions in Nigeria and Zimbabwe, had solidarity visits from other countries and developed relationships."

The international network needs to become even stronger, says Paul: "We need more sections to participate across the globe, and to be more aware of evictions happening at very inconvenient times – Christmas, summer holidays, weekends – when it can be almost impossible to get people involved. We need to think out of the box and outside office hours."

The aim for activists remains crystal clear. As Paul put it: "We put the spotlight on the eviction and make it into a scandal."

ACT NOW

Join our Facebook group for global rapid response to forced evictions at bit.ly/RRFENetwork

Top: Janefiver Nafuna from Nairobi's Deep Sea slum is one of around 1,000 activists in the capital's Rapid Response Team. They work with Amnesty Kenya to respond quickly when people are being illegally evicted.

Above: Daily life in Deep Sea: a mother has her hair braided at an improvised hair salon. When people are illegally evicted they don't just lose their homes, but also their jobs and income, and important support networks such as neighbours, childminders and friends.

Main picture: Around 10,000 people live in Deep Sea, one of the smallest slums in Nairobi, Kenya. They live in constant fear of suddenly being illegally evicted from their homes. Although the entire settlement has already been flattened three times, people keep coming back, resisting all attempts to destroy their vibrant community.

TOXIC BREW

“IF A WOMAN IS ACCUSED OF SORCERY, THEY CAN DO ANYTHING TO HER AND NO ONE WILL STOP THEM”

A WOMAN SPEAKING TO AMNESTY IN MARCH 2013, GOROKA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

It was the death of a boy that prompted the attack on 20-year-old Kepari Leniata. Accused of being a witch and causing his death, Kepari was stripped, tied up, doused in petrol and burned alive in February by relatives of the boy in the city of Mount Hagen, central Papua New Guinea.

Her brutal killing shocked people across the world, yet this type of violence is par for the course in Papua New Guinea, where sorcery is outlawed and vigilante attacks on so-called witches occur with alarming frequency.

In fact, accusations of witchcraft are often used as a pretext for assaulting women. Behind the salacious headlines lurks another story. As Amnesty Media Awards 2013 nominee **Vlad Sokhin** captures so poignantly in these images, it's a toxic mix of casual brutality against women and girls, and a government that is unable or unwilling to stop it.



Above: Weapons confiscated from Raskol gang members during attacks on women, Top Town Police Station, Sexual Offences Squad, Lae town, Morobe province. Raskol gangs rule over slum settlements in the capital, Port Moresby, and are responsible for numerous killings, rapes and other assaults on women and girls.

Below: Rasta was accused of sorcery by people from her village, after the death of a young man in 2003. Villagers attacked her with axes and bush knives during the funeral, cutting off her hand. A study by the Melanesian Institute found that **WOMEN ARE SIX TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE ACCUSED OF SORCERY THAN MEN.**



All images © Vlad Sokhin



Left: A staff member at a clinic helps 19-year-old Kimberly, January 2012. Kimberly had been raped by three men in 8 Mile Settlement, Port Moresby, after the driver of the taxi she was taking allowed two other men to enter the car en route. They took her to an isolated area where she was sexually abused for 24 hours.

A 1993 STUDY FOUND THAT 55% OF WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA HAVE BEEN RAPED

Below: When her husband beats her, Mariana, who is not Muslim, seeks refuge with her local imam. With only a handful of women's shelters in Papua New Guinea, it is often left to community members to offer support to women and children fleeing such violence.



Left: Hellen, aged 38, lost her leg when her husband hacked it off in a drunken rage in 2005 – in front of their young children. In a rare instance of justice, her husband was later arrested and jailed for the attack. In many such cases, a man can offer compensation to the woman's family for the "damage" caused, making it difficult to pursue a court case.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECTS MORE THAN TWO THIRDS OF WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Right: The beautiful landscape of Papua New Guinea's highlands belies the desperate reality of life for women and girls in the region.



See more of
Vlad Sokhin's work at
[www.vladsokhin.com/
projects/crying-meri](http://www.vladsokhin.com/projects/crying-meri)
Read Vlad's 1 May blog post
on livewire.amnesty.org

RISKY BUSINESS

FIGHTING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

TENG BIAO IS A PROMINENT CHINESE LAWYER WHO HAS BEEN DETAINED AND TORTURED FOR HIS WORK. HE TOLD WIRE ABOUT HIS DECADE-LONG FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND WHY INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE FOR PROGRESS IN CHINA MATTERS.

“Beaten to death. This young man leaves his home one day and the police detain him for not carrying his ID card. He’s then beaten to death in the detention centre.”

Teng Biao, a prominent Chinese lawyer, recalls the incident in March 2003 that spurred him to campaign for human rights.

Sun Zhigang, a 27 year-old fashion designer, had moved to Guangzhou city in southern China for work. Police stopped and detained him under China’s custody and repatriation system, a form of arbitrary detention which led to millions of migrant workers being abused.

His subsequent brutal murder in custody provoked public outrage.

‘RISKY AND DANGEROUS’

At the time Teng Biao had just completed his law doctorate and was teaching at the China University for Political Science and Law in Beijing.

He and his former classmates decided to write an open letter to the National People’s Congress, China’s legislature, calling for the abolition of the custody and repatriation system.

Such a challenge was, as Teng Biao says, “risky and dangerous”. He didn’t know what would happen to him or the others involved.

The public outcry led to the custody and repatriation system being abolished within months. Teng Biao became well known within China. Many people started to write to him asking for help.

He and fellow academics and lawyers then set up a group – the Open Constitution Initiative or “*Gongmeng*” – to campaign for freedom of expression, religious freedom and against forced abortions.

GREAT PERSONAL COST

But this marked him as a troublemaker. A decade later, Teng Biao’s dedication to human rights has come at great personal cost.

Now aged 39 and married with two young children, he has been detained and tortured, stripped of his licence to practise law and prevented from teaching during some periods. But he remains determined to carry on.

“I cannot give up. I have a responsibility. What I am doing is right. I can contribute to better politics and a better China.”

Softly spoken, clear in his arguments and conviction, he is a visiting scholar at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

“It is very hard to balance my responsibility to society and to my family. I really don’t want to hurt my family. I try my best not to. I don’t want to be put in prison, but I don’t fear prison.”

When the Chinese government cracked down on activists during the 2011 ‘jasmine revolution’, Teng Biao was kidnapped by police and held for 70 days.

“I was forced into a car near my home. They used my scarf to cover my eyes and my shirt to cover my head. On the first day I was beaten by three

policemen. For 20 days I was shackled, 24 hours a day, in a hotel room.

“I was monitored by at least two policemen every second. The curtain never opened and the lights were never turned off. I was forced to sit facing the wall from early morning to evening.

“They printed all my articles and interviews and said I could face charges for ‘inciting subversion of state power’. They never gave me a written document as to why I was detained or when I would be released.”

Teng Biao had no contact with the outside world from 19 February, when he was taken by police, until two days before his release on 13 April.

“I couldn’t get any information out. I was scared and fearful. I didn’t know what would happen. In the ordinary process I can meet my lawyer, my family can visit. With illegal detention there is none of that.

“Only two days before I was released I was granted a quick phone call with my wife. Even then I didn’t know how long I would be detained for.

“I was forced to write a promise that I would not tell anyone what happened, and that I would not write any sensitive articles or take on any more sensitive cases.”

SUPPORTING LIU XIAOBO

Teng Biao has been involved in several significant human rights moments in China over the past decade. He was one of the founding signatories of Charter 08, a manifesto published in December 2008 calling for political and legal reforms.



Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo is currently serving an 11 year prison sentence for his role in co-authoring Charter 08.

“Liu Xiaobo played an important role in Charter 08. One day he showed me a draft and I told him of course I will sign up.

“We needed to let the top leaders know that reform is a common ideal for Chinese people. It was not only influential scholars that signed up but farmers, workers and activists representing many different walks of life.”

Earlier this year 450,000 people joined Desmond Tutu and other Nobel laureates in calling for Liu Xiaobo's release. Teng Biao feels it will ultimately make a difference.

“When Liu Xiaobo won the Nobel Peace Prize it was a big thing for China, not only for ordinary people but for the government.

“The central government must feel ashamed. They are very angry at the Nobel Peace Committee, so they may not release Liu Xiaobo soon. But if there is enough international and domestic pressure the government will do something. So many people are supporting him and are encouraged by his action and his spirit.”

FIGHTING AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

Today, Teng Biao dedicates much of his time towards campaigning to end the death penalty. A significant undertaking in a country that executed more people than the rest of the world put together in 2012.

Human rights lawyer Teng Biao (right) and artist Ai Weiwei wear 'Free Chen Guangcheng' T-shirts, China, October 2011. Chen Guangcheng, a self-taught legal adviser and a prisoner of conscience, has been kept under illegal house arrest since he was released from prison in September 2010.

A few years ago he co-founded China Against the Death Penalty, a network of lawyers working on death penalty cases, particularly those involving torture, mental illness or wrongful convictions, and campaigning for abolition.

“The most urgent matter is to reduce the number of miscarriages of justice. We don't have judicial independence. Judges are influenced or even controlled by the local police or the Communist Party. Courts are told to make the decision in important cases, including the death penalty.”

The network recently urged the Chinese authorities not to execute Li Yan, a woman sentenced to death for killing her husband despite evidence that she had suffered sustained domestic violence.

Tens of thousands of people worldwide also called for Li Yan not to be executed. Teng Biao is clear that those outside China can play a part to progress human rights.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

“International attention plays an important role in China's political transition. Without international pressure it will become more dangerous for human rights activists within China.

“It is vital that people outside China who want to see progress continue to tell their governments not to keep silent on the Chinese government's violations. Sometimes human rights are the elephant in the room. Governments should not place business above human rights.”

With China having just completed its once-in-a-decade leadership change, Teng Biao is optimistic about human rights progress in the years ahead.

“There has been progress over the past decade. The government is reluctant to give it to us. But we can see more and more activists rising up. We have to build a new system based on the rule of law and human dignity. More and more Chinese people are standing up for their own rights and their own freedom.”

Read our new report on the death penalty worldwide at bit.ly/deathpenaltyreport

A NEW ROUTE TO JUSTICE

A NEW ROUTE TO INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE OPENS ON 5 MAY 2013. THANKS TO ACTIVISTS, NGOS, LOBBY GROUPS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, THE IMPRESSIVELY TITLED *OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS* (OP) IS NOW A REALITY. IT COULD HELP BRING ABOUT REAL, LASTING CHANGES IN PEOPLE'S LIVES, ESPECIALLY THOSE LIVING IN POVERTY.

RULES:

- CUT OUT THE DICE AND CHARACTERS OR USE YOUR OWN.
- ROLL THE DICE TO SEE WHO STARTS.
- TAKE TURNS MOVING YOUR CHARACTERS ALONG THE SQUARES AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS WHEN YOU LAND ON A SQUARE.
- THE FIRST PLAYER TO REACH THE UN WINS!

BUT WHAT DOES IT COVER, HOW WILL IT WORK, AND WHO WILL IT HELP? PLAY OUR GAME TO FIND OUT.

START



CUT OUT AND CREATE YOUR OWN DICE

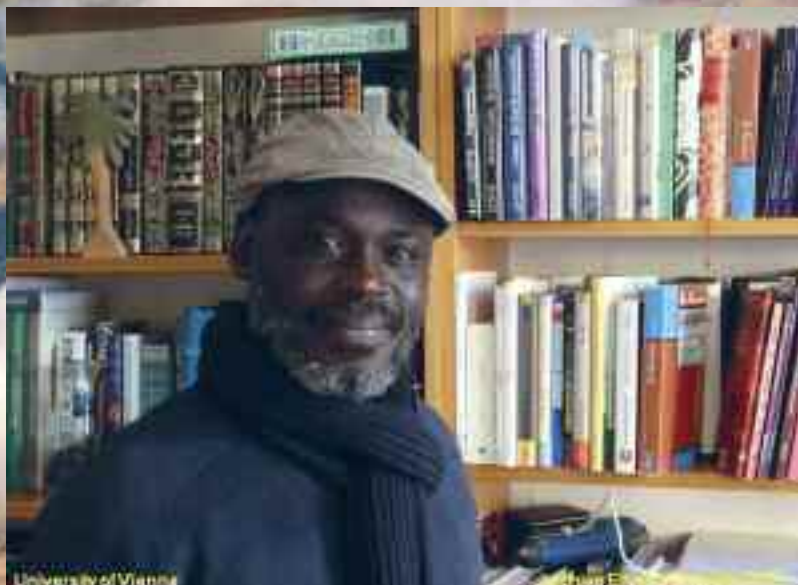


CUT OUT THESE CHARACTERS TO PLAY



'EVEN THE BIG TREES ONCE TINY GRAINS'

© Tarique Altype



© Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin

Speaking your mind can be dangerous in Sudan. The Security services often arrest and torture people who dare contradict the government. One of the most unusual and creative forms of dissent is writing realist fiction — simply telling stories about marginalized people. **WIRE** spoke to one of Sudan's most prominent writers, Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, about the banning of his books, being forced to leave Sudan, and his belief in a peaceful future.

WERE

AN EXTRACT FROM ABDELAZIZ BARAKA SAKIN'S 2009 NOVEL *THE JUNGO: STAKES OF THE EARTH*, WHICH WAS AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS AL-TAYEB SALEH AWARD IN 2011.

We passed by Al Safyah, a woman who was to be the focus of many stories in Al Hillah in the days to come. Skinny, and black as was everyone here, where the night covers everything with its dark veil, she was carrying something in her hand, and was followed by two men. The two women exchanged greetings, while I and the two men abstained. Our nostrils caught the smell of locally distilled liquor, mixed with bad armpit odour and the sweat of hard workers.

When they moved away, Addai said: "Today the Jungo descended on Al Hillah. Look at them, carrying the Googo."

The Googo was a small bag the Jungo carried on their shoulders, mainly to keep their belongings, although they credited it with supernatural powers too. I asked her if the woman was also a Jungojoya, and the reply came that she was the most famous Jungojoya in the entire East, from Al Homra to the Southern most parts of Qadarif, from Hawwatta to Fashaga – everyone knew her. She even went on to claim that it was this woman's grandfathers and the djinns who had first inhabited these lands.

Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin threatened to go on hunger strike last year unless his books were allowed at the Khartoum International Book Fair. Hours later, security officials confiscated all the copies and detained him. He then realized the wheels of his car had been tampered with. Fearing for his life, he fled the country in November 2012 and is now seeking asylum in Austria.

intention, but I feel duty-bound to write about my class: their dreams and sufferings, their slaughtered ambitions and internal peace. I am a sincere and ethical writer, an advocate of peace and freedom – but the censors can only see the opposite."

POLITICALLY DRIVEN CRACKDOWN

"My two major works, the short stories *At the Peripheries of Sidewalks*, and my novel *The Jungo: Stakes of the Earth* – describing the plight of seasonal laborers in eastern Sudan – were blacklisted in 2005 and 2010 respectively, for allegedly violating the Creative Works Law. But it was clear the crackdown was politically driven.

"In October 2012, after security agents removed my work from the Khartoum International Book Fair, I was denied permission to distribute and sell *Messiah of Darfur*, which deals with Darfur's long-running conflict; *Khandries*, about the poisoning of street children; and *A Woman from Kampo Kadees*, about a destitute war widow and mother who is sentenced to flogging by a corrupt judge for making alcohol to make ends meet.

"The situation badly affected my family. Fear of what might come next made me anxious, and I had to move away because I couldn't work in my hometown. I feared being arrested, as had happened many times before. My only chance was working with international organizations, including Plan International, UNICEF, and the World Bank. This always took me to conflict areas like Darfur and Kurmok in the Blue Nile, where I couldn't risk taking my children with me.

"My publishers fear my books might get lost if they send them to Sudan, so illegal prints and bad photocopies of my books are being secretly sold without financial reward. Most cultural centres and institutes in Khartoum are afraid of reviewing my books

or of supporting my case against the government. So I sometimes feel vulnerable and isolated."

'I FEEL AS IF I'M IN A PRISON'

"The best thing about life here in Austria is safety. But I feel as if I am in a prison, because of the limits on the movements of asylum seekers and the language barrier. And I don't know what is going to happen to my children, whom I have had to leave behind.

"I believe that books are going to make big changes in Sudan in the future – not yet, but it will happen. New generations prefer reading books that contain ideas and visions of a better life, freedom and democracy.

"Creating change in Sudan is the responsibility of all Sudanese, from all walks of life: writers, journalists, human rights activists, trade unions, civil society organizations, cultural centers and institutes, students, women's associations, and so on. They must believe in the future. Any small effort made will flourish one day. Even the big trees were once tiny grains."

Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin writes in Arabic for adults and children. Selected works have been translated into English, German and French.

ACT NOW

Leave a message of support on Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin's Facebook page at bit.ly/ABSakin

Main: Aerial view of South Darfur, Sudan.

Left: Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin is one of Sudan's most prominent authors.

"My family descends from Darfur and I belong to the Masalit tribe. I decided to be a writer in primary school after reading Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Terror* in Arabic. I found it in my older brother's hut and tried to write something as attractive and amusing myself.

"I found myself in novels – it gave me space to discuss issues that concern my community. I write about marginalized people, the war and, more particularly, the question of identity: our most complicated dilemma as Sudanese and the source of all wars set in Sudan."

WIDELY READ

"My books remain by far the most widely read in Sudan. The banned books are secretly traded in hard copy and circulated online as PDFs among readers of all generations, particularly younger people and university students. Readings of my stories are organized across Sudan and are frequented by people from all walks of life, including the illiterate and sight impaired.

"This popularity has won me the enmity of the rulers, who are doing their best to keep my writing – which advocates democracy, human rights, tolerance and the causes of the marginalized – beyond the reach of my readers.

"They believe my work is aimed at offending and ridiculing their ideology. That is not my

'THIS IS A COLD WAR'

Pussy Riot member Ekaterina (Katia) Samutsevich talks to WIRE about her activism, life after prison, and her band mates who are still in prison.

Katia Samutsevich was released last October after spending 178 days in prison for performing a “punk prayer” in a church, as part of feminist punk band Pussy Riot. They criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Orthodox Church officials who supported him.

Why did you choose to protest against Putin in this way?

“Pussy Riot is political art. If you are an artist you can’t help but react to political tendencies in your country, especially the state’s attitude towards civil society and the wide gap between society and the state elite.”

What did all the activism surrounding your trial and sentence mean to you?

“We wanted to protest against the Russian Orthodox Church, [and its] Patriarch Kirill; against Putin and sexist tendencies. The support we received took this already ongoing discussion in Russian society to a new level. We didn’t expect it to become so widely discussed around the world – and so acutely in Russia.

“Besides, the state authorities don’t just use handcuffs and arrests, but also use media attacks. There’s a constant flow of misinformation, of utter defamation. It’s difficult to convince people that it isn’t all true.





Photo stunt to free Pussy Riot in Venezuela, September 2012.

Main: Feminist punk group Pussy Riot members (from left) Maria Alekhina, Ekaterina Samutsevich and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova sit in a glass cage during a court appeal hearing in Moscow, Russia, 1 October 2012.

The campaigns supporting us stood against all that. Many people saw Pussy Riot's supporters and thought: 'Strangely, despite them being so bad and blasphemous, many people support them. Maybe things aren't exactly as they say on Channel One [one of the main Russian TV channels]?' That struggle was very important and truly necessary.

"It also influenced many people that international organizations, including Amnesty International, declared us prisoners of conscience, and that celebrities, including Madonna, Sting and others, showed their support."

Do the conditions of your suspended sentence restrict you a lot?

"In general, no. But I notice that I'm sometimes under surveillance, quite explicitly. Several times on the subway I've seen someone clearly doing a video recording. Other Pussy Riot members are also followed. Apparently the authorities fear that we're planning another protest, and that's why they're keeping an eye on us. But this isn't professional surveillance. They either lack experience or are simply sending us a message: 'You are being watched'. My phone is tapped, I'm sure of that. So of course I watch what I say."

Are you afraid to continue to participate in protest activities in Russia?

"No. Nobody's threatened me, nothing has happened. I see signs of a different war, a media war. Someone is seemingly trying to supervise us indirectly, without violence, without killing, without threatening. This is a cold war. Direct approaches won't work; the whole world would be outraged. They've chosen a different strategy, at least for now."

Do you think the threats made against Masha Alekhina by her cellmates are part of the media war, or are they real?

"I believe it's a real threat. I read the interviews with inmates in Masha's unit. It was because of their threats that Masha filed a complaint and was put into a punishment isolation cell."

"It is unclear how the penal colony administration will keep Masha safe. It also shows the chaos in the colony, because her cellmates are repeat offenders serving their second or third term. It's prohibited to keep such prisoners in the same cells and units as those serving their first term. Their psychology has been completely changed, they have a different understanding of where humanity ends."

What key tendencies can you see now in Russia?

"Authoritative power and repressive measures are being strengthened. And laws contradicting the Constitution are being easily and quietly adopted, without much resistance. There are also obvious right-wing tendencies. A particular path has been chosen, close to neo-fascism. The tip of the iceberg is the laws prohibiting 'propaganda of homosexuality among minors'. It's a little step along the way of limiting rights. Just like the non-profit organizations law, the high treason law, all of these weird laws. Mass media has shut up, so often you can't see what is actually happening."

What can the Pussy Riot case teach Russian society?



"It would be good if it taught people some critical thinking. People aren't used to seeing protest political art – they don't understand that it's a critical gesture. They are shocked by it and, under the influence of official propaganda, think that it is anti-Russian and commissioned by the West. Our state authorities will do anything to make people think that [protest] art is some kind of hooliganism."

"But many people have realized that something is wrong here. They've seen what's happened, read our

interviews, see our work. Many have started taking interest in political feminist art. Next time they see someone doing something publicly or posting media work online, they will recognize it as art and not hooliganism."

Is it scary to be a protest activist in Russia these days?

"It depends on what kind of activist you are. We aren't so hardcore. In my view, being hardcore is having sensitive information. Then your life will be short. Artistic political activity is not that dangerous. What happened to us probably happened because the Presidential elections were coming up in March last year."



Left: Katia Samutsevich being interviewed at Amnesty Russia's office in Moscow, February 2013.

Above: Police stand guard as a woman protests outside a Moscow court in July 2012. The writing on her chest reads: 'Freedom for Pussy Riot'.

"But the fact that Nadya and Masha are in jail, that they aren't being released despite the fact that they have children, is a new means of intimidation. After this, will anyone with kids want to participate in such activities? That is a peculiar kind of cruelty – a propagandist cruelty. It's important to fight this somehow."

ACT NOW

Katia's band mates Nadezhda (Nadya) Tolokonnikova and Maria (Masha) Alekhina have applied for parole, but are still serving their sentences in remote penal colonies until March 2014. The longer they stay in prison, the more important our support becomes. Help us push for their convictions to be overturned by sending an appeal – see page 22.

WORLDWIDE APPEALS

TAKE ACTION FOR INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

Amnesty issues Worldwide Appeals on behalf of people who are at risk or have suffered human rights abuses. Each appeal includes everything you need to demand change or express your support.

GOOD NEWS & UPDATES

CHINA: WOMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ALLOWED HOME

Chinese human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Mao Hengfeng was released early from police detention on 8 February. She was serving 18-months 'Re-education through labour' for "disturbing public order" but has been allowed to complete her sentence at home. An active reproductive rights advocate and campaigner against forced abortions and forced evictions, she has been detained repeatedly over the years.

While in detention, Mao Hengfeng was held in solitary confinement in a windowless cell without access to clean hot water until her health deteriorated. Amnesty's Urgent Action Network campaigned vigorously for her release.

NIGERIA: POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY SUCCESS

In February 2013, the Rivers State Commissioner of Police was "transferred" to another state immediately after the launch of Amnesty International's report, *Nigeria: No justice for the dead*. Launched in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, the report examined the lack of accountability by the Nigerian police and its failure of apparent unwillingness to investigate deaths in police custody. It also received wide media coverage and prompted a phone-in discussion programme on one of Port Harcourt's radio stations.

MEXICO MIRIAM LÓPEZ

ARBITRARILY DETAINED AND TORTURED

Miriam López, a housewife and mother of four, was raped and otherwise tortured by soldiers in 2011. Two soldiers arbitrarily arrested her in her hometown of Ensenada, Baja California State, on 2 February 2011. They initially held Miriam for a week in a military barracks and interrogated her in relation to alleged drug offences. During that week, Miriam was raped three times and subjected to electric shocks, stress positions and near-asphyxiation. Her torturers also showed her pictures of her husband and children, and told her that they would "go for them" if she didn't co-operate. Miriam was eventually released without charge in September 2011. So far, nobody has been brought to justice for her treatment.

Her story is just one of thousands of similar cases of torture and other ill-treatment in Mexican custody in recent years, since Mexico militarized the crackdown on organized crime. In 2012, the UN Committee against Torture issued recommendations to the Mexican government which, if implemented fully, would curb the use of torture and other ill-treatment.

Please write, urging the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the arbitrary detention, rape and torture



© Agencia Reforma

suffered by Miriam López, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice. Call for the authorities to adopt a comprehensive plan to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee against Torture. Send appeals to:

President Enrique Peña Nieto
Residencia Oficial de los Pinos
Casa Miguel Alemán
Col. San Miguel Chapultepec, C.P. 11850
Mexico City, Mexico
Fax: +52 5550935321
Email: enrique.penanieto@presidencia.gob.mx
Salutation: Estimado Señor Presidente

KYRGYZSTAN DILMURAT KHAIDAROV

LAWYER TORTURED IN DETENTION

On 27 June 2010, during the violent outbreak of ethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan, ethnic Uzbek lawyer Dilmurat Khaidarov was detained by members of the Kyrgyzstani police force and allegedly tortured for three days to extract a confession. He was charged with organizing and participating in mass disorder and taking part in the murder of an ethnic Kyrgyz tax inspector and two ethnic Kyrgyz military officers in the predominantly ethnic-Uzbek village of Nariman, Osh Region, southern Kyrgyzstan.

Police officers reportedly beat Dilmurat Khaidarov with rubber truncheons, including on his head and fingers, smothered him with a plastic bag and inserted paper clips under his finger nails. Yet, he refused to sign a confession.

Medical personnel examining Dilmurat Khaidarov have twice documented bruises and other signs of torture on his body. To date, no known investigations into these allegations have taken place. He remains in pre-trial detention and, if found guilty, could face life imprisonment.

The investigation into Dilmurat Khaidarov's alleged crimes was neither full nor impartial and there is no direct evidence linking him to them. Some witnesses have confirmed that he was in another place at the time of the tax inspector's murder and the eye witnesses to the murder of



© Archive of the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

one of the military officers could not identify him during the investigation.

Please write, urging the authorities to conduct a thorough, impartial and effective investigation into the allegations of Dilmurat Khaidarov's torture while in custody. Call for those responsible to be brought to justice. Call on the authorities to ensure that Dilmurat Khaidarov receives protection from further torture and other ill-treatment, adequate reparation and for his case to be tried before a court meeting international fair trial standards. Send your appeals to:

General Prosecutor Aida Salianova
Generalnaya Prokuratura Kyrgyzskoi
Respubliki
Ul. Toktonaliev 139, Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan
Fax: +996 312 66 30 67
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

RUSSIA MASHA ALEKHINA AND NADIA TOLOKONNIKOVA

On 17 August 2012, three members of the feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot were found guilty of "hooliganism on the grounds of religious hatred" and given prison sentences of two years each. Maria 'Masha' Alekhina, Ekaterina 'Katia' Samutsevich and Nadezhda 'Nadia' Tolokonnikova were arrested after performing a protest song in a Moscow cathedral. The song was in opposition to Vladimir Putin, who was then standing for election as Russian President. It also criticized some Russian Orthodox Church representatives for supporting Putin.

Katia was given a suspended sentence on appeal and released on probation in October 2012. Nadia and Masha were transported to separate penal colonies in late October and early November respectively. Nadia was put to work as a seamstress. Masha was soon placed in a punishment block, ostensibly for her own safety. Both Nadia and Masha have young children, who are currently deprived of day-to-day contact with their mothers.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, whom Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of



© AP Photo/Sergey Ponomarev

expression. Call for the convictions of Ekaterina Samutsevich, Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova to be overturned. Send appeals to:

**Prosecutor General
Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika
ul. B. Dimitrovka, d. 15a
Moscow, GSP-3, 107048
Russian Federation**

**Fax: +7 495 692 1725 and
+7 495 987 58 41
(If the fax number is answered by a
person, please say clearly "FAX")
Email: prgenproc@gov.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

RWANDA AGNÈS UWIMANA NKUSI AND SAIDATI MUKAKIBIBI

JOURNALISTS WHO ARE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Agnès Uwimana Nkusi and Saidati Mukakibibi, Editor and Deputy Editor of the independent Kinyarwanda tabloid newspaper *Umurabyo*, are serving four- and three-year prison sentences respectively for publishing articles critical of the government in 2009 and 2010. The articles addressed various issues including feelings of public insecurity ahead of elections and allegations of corruption among certain high-ranking officials, including President Paul Kagame. Amnesty International considers both women to be prisoners of conscience.

The High Court handed down sentences of 17 and seven years to the two journalists, but these were reduced on appeal by the Supreme Court in April 2012. The women were both convicted of threatening national security and Agnès Uwimana Nkusi was also convicted of defamation.

Agnès Uwimana Nkusi also served a one-year sentence for divisionism and defamation in 2007, for publishing an article comparing President Kagame's administration with that of former President Juvénal Habyarimana.

Both women are widowed with children, who must live with relatives while their mothers' are in detention. The women also have serious health problems which are compounded by their detention conditions.

The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) tightly controls political space, civil society and the media. Agnès Uwimana Nkusi's and Saidati Mukakibibi's arrest and prosecution was part of a wider clampdown on government critics in the run-up to the August 2010 presidential elections.

Please write, calling on the authorities to release Agnès Uwimana Nkusi and Saidati Mukakibibi immediately and unconditionally. Urge them also to ensure that no more journalists are arrested and prosecuted for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression. Send your appeal to:

**Paul Kagame
President of Rwanda
Office of the President
PO Box 15, Urugwiro Village
Kigali, Rwanda
Email: presidency@gov.rw
Salutation: Your Excellency**

Please also send messages of solidarity via: AgnesandSaidati@gmail.com
Examples could include:

"We are thinking of you and sending our support during your unfair detention."
"We hope that all journalists in Rwanda will be able to express themselves freely."

SYRIA ALI MAHMOUD OTHMAN

JOURNALIST SUBJECT TO ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Citizen journalist Ali Mahmoud Othman was arrested in March 2012 in Aleppo province and remains held at an unconfirmed location. He was part of an activist network running the make-shift Homs media centre providing footage to other news outlets and aided foreign journalists moving in and out of Homs during the army's assault on Baba Amr neighbourhood in February 2012.

A fellow Syrian activist told Amnesty International that government forces had sent Ali Mahmoud Othman a text message to lure him to the meeting where he was detained.

In April 2012, Syrian state TV aired interview footage of Ali Mahmoud Othman being questioned about his involvement in the protest movement in Homs and his media activities. He was also asked why he believed the protests continued despite reforms supposedly introduced by President al-Assad. Fellow activists dismiss the interview and believe that he was forced to take part.

No one has heard from Ali Mahmoud Othman since the televised interview. A relative living outside Syria told Amnesty International that, in November 2012, the family had received word from an unofficial source that Ali Mahmoud Othman had been transferred to the infamous Saydnaya Military Prison near Damascus.



© Baba Amro News

Please write to the Syrian authorities, urging them to immediately inform Ali Mahmoud Othman's family of his fate, whereabouts, and the reasons for his detention. Call on them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and granted immediate access to his family, a lawyer of his choice and all necessary medical care. Urge them also to clarify his legal status and to release him unconditionally or charge him with a recognizably criminal offence and try him in proceedings that meet international fair trial standards.

Send appeals to:

**His Excellency Bashar Ja'afari
Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative of the Syrian
Arab Republic to the United Nations
820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor
(Between 43rd Street and 44th Street)
New York, NY 10017, USA**

SRI LANKA PRAGEETH EKNALIGODA

JOURNALIST'S WHEREABOUTS STILL UNKNOWN

It is now more than three years since Sri Lankan reporter Prageeth Eknaligoda disappeared (see *Worldwide Appeals* April-May 2011). Prageeth, from Homagama, went missing in the run-up to the January 2010 presidential elections. A journalist and cartoonist at Lanka-e-News in Colombo, he was an outspoken critic of the government and was actively reporting on the election. He had recently published a positive analysis of political opposition candidate, Sarath Fonseka.

Amnesty International remains concerned that Prageeth may have been subjected to enforced disappearance because of his work.

Prageeth's wife, Sandya Eknaligoda, has campaigned tirelessly for information about her husband and encountered many obstacles. The local police failed to open a case or accept her complaint for two weeks after she first reported Prageeth's disappearance. When the case was passed to the Colombo Criminal Division, it made so little progress that Sandya was prompted to lodge a formal complaint concerning its conduct.

Sandya also filed a habeas corpus petition with the Colombo Supreme Court, requesting a prompt and thorough investigation but the police have repeatedly called for postponements in the case. At a hearing on Prageeth's case in



© Private

Homagama in December 2012, the judge highlighted the investigation's failure to be sufficiently robust.

Please write, calling on the Inspector General of Police to ensure that a full and impartial investigation into Prageeth Eknaligoda's disappearance is conducted immediately. Urge him to make public the findings of the investigation and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in proceedings meeting international fair trial standards. Send your appeals to:

**Inspector General of Police
N.K. Illangakoon
Inspector General of Police (IGP)
New Secretariat, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 11 2 440440
Email: igp@police.lk
Salutation: Dear Inspector General**

HUMAN RIGHTS KNOW NO BORDERS

THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2013 BEARS WITNESS TO THE COURAGE AND DETERMINATION OF PEOPLE WORLDWIDE WHO ARE STANDING UP TO DEMAND RESPECT FOR THEIR OWN AND OTHER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS, ACROSS NATIONAL BORDERS.

Published on 23 May 2013, the *Amnesty International Report 2013* documents the state of human rights in 159 countries and territories during 2012.

It outlines how governments have continued to use national interests, national security and concerns about public security to justify violating human rights. It also highlights how people all over the world responded by taking to the streets and exploring the explosive potential of social media to expose repression, violence and injustice.

"We live in an information-rich world," says Secretary-General Salil Shetty in his introduction to the report. "Activists have the tools to make sure violations are not hidden. Information creates an imperative to act.

"We face a crucial time: will we continue to have access to this information or will states in collusion with other powerful actors block that access?" he asks.

The report shows how, despite all the obstacles in its path, the human rights movement is growing ever stronger and more deep-rooted, and that the hope it inspires in millions remains a powerful force for change.

To read more and order your copy, visit amnesty.org from 23 May 2013.



Indigenous people at judicial proceedings for Efraín Ríos Montt in Guatemala City, January 2012. The former army General was charged with genocide and crimes against humanity, including massacres, torture and rape committed against Guatemala's Indigenous Peoples, during 1982 and 1983. Read more in the *Amnesty International Report 2013*, available at amnesty.org from 23 May 2013.



**‘ANY SMALL EFFORT
MADE WILL FLOURISH
ONE DAY. EVEN THE
BIG TREES WERE
ONCE TINY GRAINS.’**

NOVELIST ABDELAZIZ
BARAKA SAKIN ON THE
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION IN SUDAN.
SEE PAGE 18.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

