

UA NEWS

Amnesty International.....UA Newsletter.....February/April 1994.....Amnesty International.....UA Newsletter

WANTED

THE TRUTH

~~***THIS MAN "DISAPPEARED" 29 YEARS AGO***~~

~~***THE MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES KNOW WHERE HE IS***~~

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The Urf Network puts pressure on the Moroccan authorities for the truth about Abdelhaq Rouissi, who "disappeared" in October 1964.

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4 Nigerian release

Chief Gani Fawehinmi, leading member of Nigeria Campaign for Democracy is released.

5 Power problems

Profile of the Philippines' Urf coordinator and news of the release of Filipino children.

UA NEWS welcomes letters about your experiences working in the Urgent Action Network.

to: **Angela Robson and Rob Freer, Urgent Action Team, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, LONDON WC1X 8DJ UK.**

6 Network Update

News concerning the Urf Network and a brief summary of statistics relating to Urf's in 1993. Brazilian street children thank the Network.

7 News in Brief

Snippets of news to follow up your actions on Argentina, USA, Guatemala, United Kingdom, and Kyrgyzstan.

7 Thank You!

South Korean human rights activist, Noh Tag-hun, thanks all following his release.

8 Turkish light

Abuses in Turkey continue to keep the Urf Network busy. Your appeals do not go unnoticed.

GET THE MESSAGE! - music for human rights

On Human Rights Day 1993, Waby Spider, Ivorian singer and all member, released "Maagizo" (Swahili for "message"). A cassette of 8 songs, "Maagizo" aims to spread the message of

other parts of the world. The songs are in Dioula, English, French, Spanish and Yoruba, and are set to a spectacular mixture of Afro beat, Mandingo dance music and reggae.

Order your copy now!

MAAGIZO may be ordered from: Amnesty International, Section Ivoirienne, 04 B.P. 895 ABIDJAN 04, COTE D'IVOIRE, West Africa.

Cassettes UK£6.00 or US\$8.85 each.

(Cost reduction if ordering multiple copies - consult Ivorian Section)

Pay by International cheque or bankers draft to: **Amnesty International, Section Ivoirienne**

where *is*

Abdelhaq?

UA pressure for the truth

"disappeared", a UA was issued on behalf of Abdelhaq Rouissi, following new reports which again confirmed the belief that he was still alive. It seemed that the reason for his continued detention was that he was too ill to be released. There was an urgent need for a massive expression of outrage demanding that he be given immediate medical care, as well as redoubling demands that he be released as a prisoner of conscience.

For "disappearances" to succeed, there must be an

unbroken conspiracy of silence as perpetrators rely on the passage of time to fade the world's memory of their victims. The UA Network is not known for its silence and was in full voice for Abdelhaq Rouissi. Thousands of appeals were launched urging the Moroccan Government to act.

Khadija Rouissi has a brother whom she hasn't seen in 29 years. Not since 4 October 1964. No one witnessed what happened to him that day; all that remained were traces of blood in his bedroom.

An employee of the Bank of Morocco, Abdelhaq Rouissi was an active trade unionist, and it was this activism which first led to suspicions of official complicity in his "disappearance". These were confirmed by others released from this fate in Morocco, who said they had seen Abdelhaq in secret detention centres.

On 14 September 1993, nearly three decades after he

The effects of the UA have been widespread: it gave new

impetus to human rights groups in Morocco, sparked international and local media interest in Abdelhaq's plight, and in October, families of the "disappeared" held a press conference in Casablanca. The European Parliament passed a resolution which *"having regard to the recent appeals by Amnesty International"* stated its concern at *"the serious condition of Mr Abdelhaq Rouissi, a prisoner of conscience who 'disappeared' on 4 October 1964 and is still under secret arrest"*.

In 1991, more than 300 "disappeared" were released after years in secret detention in Morocco. But the truth about the fate of 500 others, including Abdelhaq Rouissi, remains known only to the Moroccan authorities.

"Disappearances" are doubly cruel: for the victims who are kept ignorant of their fate, often in inhuman conditions, and for the family who wait and wait, not knowing if their relative is still alive, and if so, where, in what state of health, and under what conditions?

Khadija and the rest of the Rouissi family have, through the years, struggled to find out where Abdelhaq is, convinced that he is still alive. Let us hope this UN will mark a new beginning for them.

Appeals on behalf of Abdelhaq may be sent to: Sa Majesté Hassan II ("Your Majesty"), Bureau de Sa Majesté le Roi, Palais Royal, Rabat, Maroc.

In October, AI launched "The lies behind the lives" campaign, focusing on "disappearances" and political killings in a concerted effort to force these issues centre stage and confront governments with their crimes.

The UA Network will play an important role in this effort: by aiming to prevent such abuses before they occur, but also by expressing mass international outrage when they do and demanding that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

Ending political killings and "disappearances" is the greatest human rights challenge of the 1990s. Failure to meet it will mean governments literally getting away with murder.

your solidarity counts

Throughout 1993, Úŕŕs were issued for people caught up in the crisis that descended on Haiti during the year. When respect for human rights is apparently lost, it may seem there is little we can do to protect individuals or influence those who assume power and abuse it. But your appeals keep that essential message of international solidarity alive.

On 4 February, we reported that Colson Dormé of Radio Tropic FM, had gone missing. His abductors released him after a week, and he wrote to thank the Network: *"You have shown me, as a journalist, that I am not alone... I salute you in the name of the continuing struggle for human rights and freedom of the press."*

On 26 February, a Úŕŕ was issued for Monsignor Willy Romélus, Bishop of Jérémie. He later wrote that *"on each of these painful occasions, we benefit from international support. Certainly, this proof of solidarity brings comfort to many. These kinds of letters summon the "de facto" rulers and help keep the pressure on them. An example to explain how great a service your letters have provided to Jérémie: a priest has been arrested, insulted, unlawfully incarcerated; letters of solidarity were coming from everywhere in the world well after the priest was released with such an impact that another time his driver, taken illegally into custody, was liberated immediately from fear of international pressure."*

Úŕŕ participants are usually asked to copy their appeals on Haiti to the newspaper *Haiti en marche*. This is part of an article from the 29 September issue:

"Between 15 and 24 September, we were inundated with hundreds of letters... The writers are American, British, German, French, Swedish, Italian, Latin-American, Japanese or Australian citizens... but they share one thing in common: their membership to an organization which has with it, wherever it goes, its little symbolic candle, to denounce the crimes..."

Rarely have we received a parcel of letters so voluminous as those denouncing the assassination of Antoine Izmerly. Justin Ajufo of Denmark cites all the details of the "execution". Johannes Wier Stiechting of Holland asks the Prime Minister Robert Malval for total light to be shed... Robert Putkoski, Kathrine Thomas of England, Birger Hallden of Sweden, Stephen Lofs, Matt Schroeder, and Ann Freer of Cologne, in Germany, Philippe Dedonder of Liège, Belgium, Phylis Lancaster Hajts of Torrington, Mary Blackey of Brillot, Pennsylvania, Sabine Jordan of Ft Collins, Richard Spaul of Great Britain, Sabine Husehenbett of Spaichingen in Germany, etc, etc..."

Despite the efforts of those in power in Haiti who would have it otherwise, Úŕŕs have had an impact there. Thanks to all who have sent appeals through a difficult year. Keep the faith.

Released!

Chief Gani Fawehinmi, a prominent human rights activist and leading member of the Nigeria Campaign for Democracy, was arrested on 7 July 1993 and charged with conspiracy and sedition. This followed a week of protest called by the Campaign in response to the government's annulment of the results on Nigeria's presidential election held on 12 June.

ŕŕ immediately began campaigning on his behalf but, despite bail being granted at the end of July, Chief Fawehinmi was detained until 29 August when his unconditional release on humanitarian grounds was announced by the head of the newly founded Interim Federal Executive Council. He wrote the following to ŕŕ in September:

"I want to place on record my most profound gratitude and deepest appreciation for all your concern for my health whilst in detention in Kuje Prison in Nigeria and for all your innumerable efforts to get me released... Once again I thank you for all you have done for me and for your efforts in this respect."

country profile

Philippines

People Power

"Five more minutes, please!" This is the most popular phrase of the Philippines Section of Amnesty International and particularly the Urgent Action Network. But this is not a plea to delay an execution for five more minutes but rather an anxious wish that the electricity will not be cut off before all the UA cases have been printed out.

My name is Lyma Balderama and I am the UA Coordinator for the Philippines. I was 'volunteered' by our Section Director to this job in September 1992 and strangely, I am enjoying myself.

Working for the Philippines Network is very exciting. The network started out the basic way, receiving the UA cases from the IS by express mail. But a few months after the International Meeting of UA Coordinators in Toronto, we finally got hooked up to a local E-mail centre and are now receiving all cases the same day they are released.

Even with our perennial problems such as the power shortage and computer breakdowns, the Network is growing. Starting with four writers when I first started, there are now about 100 UA participants, most of them in provinces located far from the National Secretariat.

UA work is not my only involvement. To pay my bills I am working in a university based NGO where I am also finishing my MA.

The Urgent Action Network has a long way to go here in the Philippines. I just hope that the power supply situation improves so that we do not always have to pray for five more.....

Success Story

When Amnesty International heard that two young Filipino children and their aunt had been

abducted from their home an appeal was immediately launched through the Urgent Action Network.

Eyewitnesses reported that in the early hours of 12 September more than a dozen armed men, believed to be military agents, forced their way into the Magpatoc family home in Bitan-aguan, Butuan City. They seized 10-year-old Manilyn and Abeldardo, aged 6, and their aunt, Nenita.

Happily Manilyn, Abeldardo and Nenita were released unharmed and returned to their home. They had been held incommunicado in separate detention centres for three weeks. In a letter from Floracio Marcos Mordeno of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, he says that Nenita was "often asked by the abductors what she knew about the New People's Army and her older brother, an alleged member of the underground movement". He went on to say that the three "were warned not to tell anybody about the incident or something bad will happen to them and their family".

Thanking the UFA network for their concern and efforts on behalf of Manilyn, Abeldardo and Nenita, Floracio Marcos Mordeno gave some encouraging news for ending cases of involuntary "disappearance" in the Philippines saying, "it has helped a lot in preventing similar unconscionable acts by military agents".

..Urgent Action....Action
Urgente....Acción Urgente....Urgent
Action....Action Urgente...Acción
Urgente..

International UA Working Group

Proposals for the International Working Group of UA Coordinators are still progressing. The group would particularly aim to assist UA networks in new or small sections. It could develop mutual assistance between UA networks whereby sections could help each other by exchanging advice and support or by providing specified materials, equipment or services. The International Working Group would help ensure that there are regular inter-section meetings on the UA technique and follow up the recommendations from these meetings.

E-mailwatch

New sections receiving UAs by E-mail include Israel, Ecuador and the Philippines. "Getting UAs by e-mail has completely revolutionized the UA network in Ecuador" says UA coordinator, Dalton Martínez.

Some UA networks are now getting photos by e-mail. The UA team at the IS scans the photo, converts it into a word-perfect file and then sends it out by e-mail with the UA.

If you'd like more information about E-mail, then Graham Lane at the IS is your man.

Brazilian street children get in touch

A number of UA participants received Christmas cards drawn by Brazilian street children who visit the Pastoral do Menor night shelter near the Praça da Sé in São Paulo.

They write: "The street girls and boys of São Paulo thank you for the support and solidarity they have received in the violent situations they have passed through. They send you their wishes for a Happy Christmas and express their dream that 1994 will bring more peace, health, hope, housing, schools, food, justice and LIFE."

Your Numbers - Up

1993 was another busy year for the UA Network: 551 new actions on 86 countries (442 UAs and 109 EXTRAs). In addition, there were 429 follow-ups, of which 318 asked for more appeals. With the 54 WFRNs issued during the year, the UA Network was thus asked 925 times to take immediate action.

Concerns covered were: "disappearance" (14%), torture (52%), fear for safety (24%), political killing (18%), death penalty (17%), and legal concerns (19%), but action was also taken on health concerns, forcible exile and refoulement of asylum-seekers. A single UA often contained more than one concern.

A few UAs detailed abuses by non-governmental entities, and some described lack of official protection from, or collusion with civilian abuses. Cases included a Muslim novelist condemned to death by an Islamist group in Bangladesh, threats of violence against the Roma community in Romania, and police involvement in a near-lynching of street educators in Brazil.

Pressure pays

off

Kyrgyzstan

Grigory Abramov, aged 36, who was facing the death penalty in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, had his sentence commuted by the President to 20 years' imprisonment in October 1995. This was the fourth commutation of a death sentence in Kyrgyzstan known to UfA this year.

United Kingdom

On 16 December 1995, Damien Austin, a young Catholic man from Belfast, was awarded damages, reportedly of £10,000, against the Royal Ulster Constabulary in an out-of-court settlement. In August 1991 a UfA was issued on his behalf, following reports that he had been ill-treated while in custody at the Castlebaragh interrogation centre.

Guatemala

The National Council for the Displaced of Guatemala wrote to thank UfA participants who had appealed on behalf of one of their members (UfA 387/95): "we send you our warmest greetings and wish you much success in your daily work for human rights. Marco Choco Damas was released from the barracks in Salamá, Baja Verapaz, on 4 November. We thank you for the international pressure you brought to bear."

Argentina

Also thanks from the Argentine Federation of Press Workers: "We, together with 35 member organizations within our country, are totally grateful for the solidarity shown by international organizations and yourselves. Your solidarity encourages us to continue working hard for the achievement of our aims..." (UfA 319/95).

USA

Gary Graham, who featured in the last edition of UfA NEWS, is now out of danger of imminent execution. He

"I must express my sincere thanks to you and your organisation for your efforts in working for my release. I was freed on a suspended sentence of two years on September the 1995."

Thus wrote South Korean human rights activist Noh Tag-hun following his two-month imprisonment and subsequent trial before Seoul District Criminal Court. He was arrested for in July 1993 for possession of pro-North Korean books and pamphlets. It is believed that only the letters of protest sent from human rights groups and activists worldwide protected Noh Tag-hun from further ill-treatment by his interrogators during his period of imprisonment. The South Korean human rights group Minkahyup acknowledges this widespread support:

"We have received hundreds of letters from people in countries all over the world. These efforts were a great boost to the many people working for Mr Noh's release in Korea."

"I am preparing to repeal my suspended sentence" Mr Noh asserts "as the sentence holds confirmation of my guilt."

His predominant mood, however, is defiantly optimistic. He has pledged his continuing commitment to human rights activities believing that his release was "due to the victory of conscience of international solidarity, as well as the proud human rights movement in Korea."

decision is expected within the next four months on whether the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles will hold a hearing into Gary's claim of innocence.

Some light filters through...

"Land of contrasts, where East meets West". Well-known to travel agents, Turkey is just as familiar to UfI "agents", who must themselves often feel in need of a holiday to get away from the incessant reports of abuses which seem to imply that their appeals achieve few inroads into the psyche of the Turkish authorities. But snippets of positive news do emerge.

Two Kurdish women, the subjects of appeals in 1993, have shown how the human spirit can prevail over the inhumanity of the torturer, and Ilker Demir tells of how UfIs changed his life.

Journalist Nezahat Ozgen was detained in July after writing an article about the rape and torture of a 17-year-old girl. Despite being seven months pregnant, Nezahat herself was so severely tortured that she had to be hospitalized. She was then sent to prison and there were fears that she would lose her child. However, in September, just after her conditional release, Nezahat gave birth to her daughter Pireiwan. Despite the torturers, Nezahat has now returned to her journalism.

Nilufer Koc lives in Germany. On 25 September she went to Turkey as interpreter for a German human rights mission. But the Turkish security forces

intervened with a familiar brutality. She was detained for six days before being allowed to return to Germany where she told of her torture. She wrote to UfI: *"I would like to thank all of you who helped very much... by the help of various people and organizations, a massive media campaign and constant pressure on German and Turkish institutions, I was released after six days and could return to my family, my friends and my University studies."*

***Ilker Demir
a personal UA***

story

Many Amnesty

International members know the story, but for the benefit of others who don't, I shall briefly repeat the facts. I was working as the chief editor, in 1980, of a political journal when the military coup took place. Because of articles I had published, about equality, peace, democracy and human rights, I became a "wanted" person. I was

arrested on 2 April 1984 in Istanbul and sentenced to a total of 48 years and one month...

The efforts of AI and other human rights organizations had a direct, immediate and personal effect on the Turkish government and on the lives of detainees. Thanks to the Urgent Action issued by Amnesty, my solitary confinement which was imposed following my torture, ended after 10 days. Even more importantly, I felt secure in the knowledge that I would not die during torture. To be more precise, in 1984, as an Urgent Action had not yet come to my rescue, I remained in solitary confinement for 40 days, in the Selimiye Military Prison. However, an Urgent Action did come to my rescue while I was in the Nazilli Prison, and although I had not complied with the wishes of the prison authorities, my period of solitary confinement was not extended.

I was released on 14 April 1991. If I had not been released I would have remained in prison for many years, as my sentence had been confirmed as 48 years and one month. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Amnesty members who worked on my behalf. I will never forget what you have done for me.