



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

BIOGRAPHIES of FORMER SECRETARIES GENERAL

Since Amnesty International was founded by Peter Benenson in 1961, the worldwide movement has been led by eight secretaries general who have each contributed to the growth, development and shaping of Amnesty International as the world's leading human rights organization.

Eric Baker, 1967 - 1968

A lifelong pacifist, Eric Baker was Amnesty International's first director and was acting director general from 1967 to 1968.

Under Eric Baker's steady hand Amnesty International decided to give 'prisoner of conscience' status to those who refuse to participate in particular wars, as well as those who refuse to fight in all wars. He also guided Amnesty International's efforts to urge UN member states to adopt three international conventions and protocols, namely; The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and The Protocol to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Eric Baker died in July 1976, aged 55.

Martin Ennals, 1968 - 1980

Martin Ennals was the movement's first Secretary General, serving for 12 years from 1968 until 1980. During this time he made one of the foremost contributions in the history of the movement.

He was appointed Secretary General at a time when the organization was just beginning to emerge from its first major public controversy over torture by British forces in Aden, Yemen.

Under his leadership Amnesty International first adopted an international statute to regulate its democratic governance and made significant advances in its public impact and rapidly expanded as an organisation.

When Martin Ennals joined the organisation its national budget was less than £20,000, the International Secretariat in London employed 19 people, and there were 27 national Sections and 850 groups. By the time he handed over the position of Secretary General to Thomas Hammarberg in 1980, the international budget had grown to £1,666,280, there were 150 staff working at the International Secretariat, and the movement counted 39 national Sections and 2,200 groups.

Martin Ennals followed a gruelling schedule of work, travel and public engagements that brought him face to face with heads of government and heads of state, including the Shah of Iran, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and numerous other officials to whom he appealed for the freedom of prisoners of conscience and fair treatment for political prisoners.

During his tenure Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1977), characteristically Martin ensured that it was a political prisoner who accepted the award on behalf of Amnesty International rather than himself as Secretary General. In 1978, Amnesty International was also awarded the United Nations Human Rights Award.

Two Amnesty International campaigns during this time are particularly emblematic of the potential of the movement to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people worldwide, were the campaign for the Abolition of Torture and the campaign for the Abolition of the Death Penalty - campaigns that remain to this day synonymous with the work and aspirations of the Amnesty International movement.

Martin Ennals personally championed the cause of the campaign for the Abolition of the Death Penalty as Amnesty International debated becoming an abolitionist movement.

“When Amnesty International meets the nineties,” wrote Martin Ennals in 1980, “it should be universally active both in working for prisoners and indentifying prisoners to be assisted. The sophistication of impartiality must be accepted and appreciated by governments and opposition movements. Amnesty International is not and should not be a movement of dissidents or opposition elements in nation internal affairs. Instead it should be working for the recognition that dissidents have rights and governments have the duty to protect their societies against abuses that result or may result in imprisonment, torture or death. To convince governments of this fact, which in principle they accept and to which they have in public committed themselves, is an amazing ambition.”

The extent to which this ambition today seems not only plausible, but increasingly within reach, is in itself a tribute to the role that Martin Ennals played in putting human rights firmly on the international agenda.

Martin Ennals was instrumental to the modern human rights movement and in recognition of his contribution the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders was created in 1993. It is granted annually to someone who has demonstrated an exceptional record of combating human rights violations by courageous and innovative means. The Martin Ennals Foundation is a collaboration among 10 of the world’s leading human rights NGOs including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation of Human Rights, World Organisation Against Torture, Front Line, International Commission of Jurists, Human Rights First, International Service for Human Rights, Diakonie Germany, and HURIDOCs.

He died in October 1991 in Canada.

Thomas Hammarberg, 1980 - 1986

Thomas Hammarberg became Amnesty International Secretary General in 1980 and served to 1986, following a career in international journalism.

In the course of his work for the organization he visited: Northern Ireland to lead an inquiry into allegations of torture (1971), the Soviet Union to meet Amnesty International members (1974), Turkey to discuss human rights issues with the government (1974 and 1978), Cuba to visit prisons and meet government officials (1977), and Vietnam on a similar mission (1979).

Under Thomas Hammarberg’s leadership Amnesty International; began the first campaign against the Death Penalty, launched an appeal for a universal amnesty for all prisoners of conscience (more than one million people signed petitions which were presented to the United

Nations a year later), launched a special report on political killings by governments, condemned and opposed apartheid laws and practices and reaffirmed its opposition to inhumane treatment of people who are open about their sexuality.

Thomas Hammarberg also led the organization through the launch of the second Campaign Against Torture, including a 12-point plan for the abolition of torture which eventually influenced the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984). During this time, Amnesty International published its first educational pack: Teaching and Learning about Human Rights, and made a decision to broaden the Amnesty International statute to include work for refugees.

Ian Martin, 1986 - 1992

Ian Martin became Secretary General of Amnesty International on 1 October 1986, a post he held for six years.

During his tenure as Secretary General, Amnesty International underwent a period of unprecedented growth from just over half a million members, supporters and subscribers in 1986, to over a million in 1992. This period also saw an increase in local groups from 3,433 in 50 countries, to over 6,000 in more than 70 countries.

Ian Martin presided over the organization during what was a transformational period with the end of the Cold War, huge changes in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, the emergence of conflicts in former Yugoslavia that led to the breakup of the country into separate states and the Gulf War (1990-1991).

Ian Martin's leadership of Amnesty International saw a number of innovative strategies initiated to further the organization's human rights objectives including: the Human Rights Now! concert tour (featuring Sting and Bruce Springsteen, among others, travelled to 19 cities in 15 countries and was viewed by millions when broadcast on Human Rights Day), the launch of the Conspiracy of Hope rock concert tour (with U2, Sting, Peter Gabriel, Bryan Adams, Lou Reed, the Neville Brothers and others), and the publication of a major new study on the death penalty: When the State Kills.

For Amnesty International's 30th anniversary Ian Martin oversaw the organization as it broadened its scope, adopting a new mandate and pledging to promote all the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including; to cover work on abuses by armed opposition groups, hostage taking and people imprisoned due to their sexual orientation.

Pierre Sané, 1992 - 2001

Pierre Sané was appointed Secretary General of Amnesty International in October 1992, serving to April 2001.

Pierre Sané said he accepted the post of Secretary General because "working for the effective universalisation of human rights enjoyment is the greatest service one could render to the weak or dispossessed in our societies."

On behalf of Amnesty International, he travelled extensively to raise human rights concerns with heads of government and other officials worldwide and to participate in the organization's campaigning activities.

As Secretary General, Pierre Sané visited many countries to raise the organization's concerns directly with those in positions of authority. The high-level missions took him to dozens of countries, including: Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories (1996); South Africa (1995, 1996, 1997), Peru and Colombia (1996), USA (1997), Mexico (1997), Kenya (1997), Morocco (1998), South Korea (1998) and Spain (1998), Ivory Coast (1999), Mali (1999).

In 1998, Pierre Sané led the worldwide campaign to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, focussing the world's attention on the threats against human rights defenders in many countries. He presided over the Human Rights Defenders Summit in Paris in December 1998 and called on the international community to rededicate itself to the values and principles of the UDHR.

Irene Khan, 2001 - 2009

Irene Zubaida Khan served as Amnesty International's seventh Secretary General from August 2001 until December 2009.

Irene took up the leadership of Amnesty International in its 40th anniversary year as the organization began a process of change and renewal to address the complex nature of contemporary human rights violations, and confronted the challenging developments in the wake of the attacks of 11 September.

In her first year in office, Irene reformed Amnesty International's response to crisis situations, and lead a high level mission to Pakistan during the bombing of Afghanistan. She also led AI missions to Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories just after the Israeli occupation of Jenin and to Colombia before the Presidential elections in May 2003.

Irene Khan's leadership of Amnesty International saw the beginning of work to combat torture in the context of the 'war on terror', the launch of the global Control Arms campaign and the Stop Violence Against Women campaign, a global call to respect the human rights of those living with HIV/AIDS and a focusing of the world's attention on the plight of the mothers of young women murdered in Mexico. She also led the organization in the launch of the Demand Dignity campaign to end the economic, social and cultural rights violations which, with civil and political rights abuses, combine to drive and deepen poverty.

During her time as Secretary General, the UN adopted the International Convention for the Protection Of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.