SOMALIA’S FUTURE ON THE LINE

NEW HOPE FOR ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN EUROPE
YOUNG AZERBAIJANIS CALL FOR DEMOCRACY
RAISE A TOAST TO FREEDOM
Welcome to WIRE,

Amnesty International is 50 this year and millions of members and supporters will raise a toast to freedom on 28 May to celebrate. We hope you will too.

Straight after that, we’ll begin putting together a special anniversary edition of WIRE. It will look back on 50 years of working for human rights and look ahead to an intense year of activism and campaigning.

Working on WIRE, we get the opportunity to closely follow the stories and people whose lives are affected by human rights violations. We also see that every letter and every action can and does make a difference. Ask Femi Peters, the Gambian politician who is now free and back at home after thousands of letters called for his release from prison (see page 17). Ask M.S.S., an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan, who won a court case against two European countries that failed to respect his rights (Page 14). Change is possible. Change is happening.

But we all need to do more. As this issue of WIRE shows, governments out there still think that they can trample human freedom and dignity. And if we don’t stand up to them, who will?

Yours,

WIRE team
‘DEATH AND INJURY THE ORDER OF THE DAY’
Somalia’s armed conflict continues to destroy the lives and security of thousands of people. The international community can do more to change things in the country. Find out what you can do on PAGE 2.

THEY WILL NOT BE SILENCED
Young activists in Azerbaijan want democracy. The authorities want them to keep quiet. PAGE 7

IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT SINCE 1972
Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox are locked in their prison cells in the USA for 23 hours a day. Is the degrading treatment they suffer in prison related to their political activism? Their fight for justice continues. PAGE 9

THE RAILWAY DWELLERS
Thousands who live beside Ghana’s railway lines in Accra face losing their homes and livelihoods because of new redevelopment plans. Read their story on PAGE 12 and send a POSTCARD to the authorities.

SEEKING JUSTICE
EU countries are violating the rights of asylum-seekers, according to a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights. Read more on PAGE 14 and send a postcard to the Greek government.

Q&A
Veteran Russian human rights defender Ludmila Alekseeva talks to WIRE about her introduction to human rights in the Soviet era, a life of campaigning, and why grandmothers are important. PAGE 18

JOIN US FOR A TOAST TO FREEDOM
WHAT ELSE?
Get together and raise a toast to freedom to celebrate Amnesty International’s 50th birthday – we’ve already prepared the invite to your friends (insert and poster); call for an effective Arms Trade Treaty (PAGE 6); take action on women and girls’ right to health in Indonesia, and attacks on civil society in Belarus on PAGE 13.
As the UN Human Rights Council meets to review Somalia’s human rights record, Amnesty International calls for an independent commission of inquiry into war crimes and for effective measures to protect civilians.

When Amina was asked why she had left her home in Somalia, she said: “Death and injury had become the order of the day… Dead people were scattered everywhere.”

Somalia’s armed conflict shows no signs of abating. Men, women and children are caught in a human rights crisis that has been largely ignored by the international community. Millions have been displaced and many denied access to aid. Heavily populated areas come under indiscriminate attack and armed Islamic groups kill and punish people they see as opponents or accuse of having broken their rules.

Somalia is known as the ultimate “failed state” and an entire generation of children has grown up without ever knowing peace.

On 3 May 2011, representatives of many governments will gather in Geneva, Switzerland, to review Somalia’s human rights record in the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. Amnesty International is using this event to ask the international community to remember the civilians of Somalia. The situation will not and cannot improve without taking measures to bring accountability for the appalling human rights abuses and war crimes which take place on an almost daily basis.
TIME FOR ACTION ON SOMALIA
TWO DECADES OF CONFLICT

In 1991, President Siad Barre’s government was overthrown by armed groups. Since then, South and Central Somalia have been mired in conflict based on clan rivalries, competition over scarce resources, ideology and criminal activity.

After years of warlords fighting for power, in June 2006 a group called the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took effective control of the capital Mogadishu, and a number of other cities. Opposed to the ICU and backed by the USA, Ethiopia intervened militarily in late 2006, aiming to restore to power the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Formed in 2004 at a national reconciliation conference, the TFG was a government in exile until 2006.

The Ethiopian intervention initially succeeded in installing the TFG and driving out the ICU, which splintered into numerous groups including al-Shabab, which today controls much of the country. Many of these groups launched attacks against Ethiopian and TFG troops. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and injured, and thousands more displaced from their homes during the fighting.

In January 2009, a new Transitional Federal Government was formed after a peace agreement was reached in neighbouring Djibouti with an armed group opposed to the old TFG. Al-Shabab was not part of this process. A former leader of the ICU, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, was appointed President and the hated Ethiopian troops withdrew. Many hoped that this signalled a return of peace and the possibility of rebuilding lives.

These hopes were short-lived. In May 2009, al-Shabab and other armed groups in Mogadishu launched a massive offensive against the TFG and an African Union peace support mission of troops from Uganda and Burundi, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Since then, fighting between pro-TFG forces and armed opposition groups has continued to rage.

RAINING MORTAR SHELLS

All parties to the conflict use heavy artillery weapons, including mortars, in urban areas. Attacks in densely populated civilian areas using these weapons are indiscriminate.

Ali, who owns a small business, said: “people were exchanging mortar shells, it was like rain.”

Al-Shabab uses residential areas as bases for attacks against government and AMISOM forces, placing civilians living there at risk of retaliation, although AMISOM denies firing heavy artillery at civilian populated areas.

Fighting can break out unexpectedly. “I have a bullet in the right rib: I was hit by a stray bullet”, said a 15-year-old boy, “I was in the market and I was shot in the back. I don’t know who did it.”

Another told Amnesty International: “We had to run away from the big bombs.”

Children’s lives are in constant danger. The World Health Organization said that in 2010, one fifth of all weapons-related casualties in Mogadishu were children.

Children are also increasingly used by armed groups to collect “intelligence”, to place bombs in streets and to fight. Refugees report that recruitment of children is widespread, mainly by groups opposed to the TFG. “My 15-year-old brother was recruited by al-Shabab. They came to our home and they took him forcibly. We haven’t heard from him since,” said a 13-year-old girl.

The TFG and its affiliated militias have also been accused of recruiting and using children. In June 2010, after media coverage of child soldiers at a TFG checkpoint, President Sheikh Sharif ordered an investigation into the use of child soldiers in TFG armed forces. The investigation’s findings are still not available.

Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 into armed forces, or using them to participate in hostilities, is a war crime.

“WHEN AL-SHABAB CAME, THEY STOPPED THE FOOD AID”

“We went to school early one day only to come back home and our parents were not at home... the house had been bombed. We do not know whether anyone died in the bombing or whether there were any survivors”, one child told us. In the confusion and chaos, many children have become separated from their families.

Fighting in Mogadishu and in other areas has caused mass displacement. The 30km road between Mogadishu and Afgoye is home to the most densely concentrated population of internally displaced people in the world; over 400,000 people as of October 2010.

2.4 million people need emergency humanitarian aid, with a worsening drought since late 2010. However, aid operations are impeded by insecurity, attacks on aid workers and increasingly, restrictions on aid agencies’ access to populations in need of help. At least two aid workers were killed in 2010 and others abducted. Al-Shabab has banned the UN World Food Programme from areas under its control, claiming that the distribution of food undermined local farmers and had a political agenda.

“Before [the militants] came, life was ok. There were NGOs who were working in the area providing food, plastic materials for building our...
homes and cooking items. There are now no more aid agencies as these have all been forced to flee,” Amnesty International’s team were told. These restrictions have led to further deterioration in conditions for most people living in South and Central Somalia. Restrictions on aid – food, shelter and medical services – have contributed to widespread malnutrition and disease. At the end of 2010, at least 1 million people were not able to access the assistance they needed to survive.

SILENCED VOICES

Somalia is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist or human rights defender. Conflict and direct attacks on Somali and foreign observers have made the country too dangerous for consistent monitoring. As a result, information about what is happening in Somalia is patchy – both for people living in Somalia and for the international community – despite the crucial importance of independent and accurate information in such an insecure environment.

Journalists and human rights defenders have been deliberately targeted and murdered, or have been killed in cross-fire. In 2010, at least three journalists were killed. Nine were killed in 2009.

Nur Mohamed Abkey was abducted on 4 May 2010 near his home in southern Mogadishu after leaving Radio Mogadishu, a TFG-owned radio station, where he was training journalists. His body, which bore signs of torture, was found dumped in an alleyway. He had been shot repeatedly in the head.

Journalists Yasir Mairo, Hassan Zubeyr and Mohamed Amin were among 22 people killed in an explosion at a graduation ceremony for new doctors in the Shamo hotel, Mogadishu, on 3 December 2009. Those killed in the explosion, reportedly detonated by a suicide bomber, also included three TFG Ministers and other civilians.

Many other journalists and human rights defenders have been forced to flee the country because of threats to their lives.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CAN DO MORE

The situation in Somalia is desperate for many people. But it isn’t hopeless. The international community could and should do more to help the civilians of South and Central Somalia.

The international community must ensure that its assistance to the TFG and AMISOM is not used in human rights violations. Arms, training and funding are still being delivered to security forces whose members are not properly vetted, who are not held accountable for human rights violations, and whose allegiances have frequently shifted. Without adequate safeguards, transfers meant to improve the security situation may actually undermine human rights.

Amnesty International urges the international community and the TFG to support an independent and impartial commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations and war crimes in Somalia and recommend ways forward for accountability. Peace and stability can only be guaranteed by ensuring that those who commit war crimes and other grave abuses of human rights are held to account.

ACT NOW

Tell your Minister of Foreign Affairs that you haven’t forgotten about Somalia.

Ask your Minister to call on the UN to establish an independent commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes under international law committed in Somalia, and to make recommendations to address impunity.

Ask him or her to assist in setting up independent accountability and oversight mechanisms for all TFG security forces and affiliated militia. These should monitor, document and report alleged human rights abuses by TFG security forces and pro-TFG forces.

To find out more on journalists in Somalia, go to http://snipr.com/27qs4h. A new report, Somalia’s children under attack will be available soon on www.amnesty.org.
Mateo López was shot in his stomach by a man riding on the back of a motorbike. At the time, Mateo and his sister-in-law were walking along the main street in Catarina on their way to a trade union meeting in Guatemala City on 28 October 2010. Mateo survived the shooting, but is at risk of further attacks. The investigation into his attack has not progressed and the assailants remain at large.

Mateo's case is not an isolated one. Guatemala has the fifth highest rate of gun violence in the world, with firearms imported from Argentina, the Czech Republic, Israel, South Korea and the USA.

Homicides in non-conflict settings have been identified as the most commonplace form of armed violence globally. Approximately 60 per cent of such homicides are committed with firearms.

Preventing gun violence requires multiple solutions. The Arms Trade Treaty is one instrument that could help prevent firearms proliferation by requiring governments to identify risks associated with small arms and ammunition availability, so that where the risk is substantial, international supplies could be stopped.

The next UN meeting on the Arms Trade Treaty in July will focus on implementation mechanisms. Amnesty International’s Global Week of Action (13-19 June 2011) and other activities in the run-up to the UN meeting will highlight how an Arms Trade Treaty will help prevent armed violence.

**TIME TO DEMAND A BULLET-PROOF ARMS TRADE TREATY**

*Incredibly, despite decades of discrimination and inequality, women are being denied a role in the creation of a new Egypt. They are being excluded by both the caretaker government and the international community. Most recently, a new national committee formed to write the new Egyptian Constitution was composed only of men. This is not acceptable.***

*Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International crisis researcher is in Benghazi, Libya. [http://snipr.com/27rs4g](http://snipr.com/27rs4g)*

*The devastation caused by the 2008-2009 conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel was unprecedented: more than 1,400 Palestinians, mostly civilians, were killed by Israeli forces in Gaza, and thousands more were injured. Three Israeli civilians were killed by indiscriminate rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups.*

*Read more from campaigner Rachel Campbell on [http://snipr.com/27rs5a](http://snipr.com/27rs5a)*

**ACT NOW.**

*Join the demand for a bullet-proof Arms Trade Treaty. For more info, go to [http://sn.im/27q58lr](http://sn.im/27q58lr) or email [ms@amnesty.org](mailto:ms@amnesty.org)*


*Above: A mother and her children walk through a scene of a deadly shootout near Zacapa, Guatemala, September 2010. Guatemala has the fifth highest rate of gun violence in the world. The Arms Trade Treaty can help prevent firearms proliferation.*
The beginning of March. Bakhtyar Hajiyev, a 29-year-old former parliamentary candidate, organized an online protest on Facebook for 11 March 2011, calling for democracy in Azerbaijan. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested for allegedly violating a court order. At his court hearing, he passed a note to his lawyer saying that he had been questioned about his activities on Facebook, beaten while in custody and threatened with rape by a senior police official. Despite Bakhtyar’s arrest, 4,200 online activists took part in the 11 March virtual protest. Several of them were questioned or arrested leading up to 11 March, and a further 43 were arrested as they attempted to start a physical protest in the centre of the capital city, Baku. At least nine were convicted of “disobeying police”. They were sentenced in closed trials lasting no more than a few minutes to between five and eight days in prison.

At least 150 protesters were arrested that day. Hundreds of demonstrators arriving at the 2 April protest were confronted by riot police armed with shields, truncheons, and rifles with rubber bullets. The police dispersed the protest and arrested at least 150 people, in addition to the 17 protest organizers who had been arrested before the rally. Ten of the organizers, including Elnur, are now facing criminal charges.
STUDENTS ACT FOR RIGHTS

Students can be empowered to make their schools fairer and safer places, where everyone is treated equally and with respect. This is the message Amnesty International is taking to students and teachers with its global Human Rights Friendly Schools project.

In 15 schools around the world, students engage with human rights in ways that matter to them: they are putting an end to violence and bullying, promoting diversity and tolerance in the classroom and encouraging their schools to engage with human rights. Everyone is getting involved. How about you?

Above and left: Students and teachers from the Lycée Ibn Youssef school in Marrakesh, Morocco, march on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2010. The school has addressed bullying issues and created a safe space for girls where they can spend their breaks together. As a result, girls at school feel safer and there are almost no violent incidents. “The school is different now”, one student said, “something new can be felt.”

Above and right: Collège d’Enseignement Général de Pahou in Ouidah, Benin, launched the Human Rights Friendly Schools project in 2009. Students then assessed the punishments they get for bad behaviour; they thought some of these were unfair and asked to change them.

Right: Students at the Mongolia-India Joint Secondary School in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, draft their school charter, September 2009. The Human Rights Friendly Schools project integrates human rights values and principles into four key areas of school life: school participation and governance; relations between members of the school community; the school curriculum and the extra-curricular activities and the school environment.

Hands up for human rights! To find out more about Amnesty International’s Human Rights Friendly Schools Project, email hrteam@amnesty.org.

All images © Amnesty International
This was how Teenie Verret described the fate of Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox in 2008. The crime she believes they did not commit was the 1972 murder of her husband, Brent Miller, a Louisiana state prison guard. For nearly four decades, 69-year-old Herman and 64-year-old Albert have been held in solitary confinement for a crime that they have consistently said they did not commit.

April 2011 marks the 39th year since the men were convicted of the crime. Kept in small and sparsely furnished cells for 23 hours a day, Herman and Albert have never been allowed to work or have access to education. Their access to books, newspapers and TV is restricted. If the weather is good, they are allowed out of their cells three times a week for an hour’s solitary recreation in an outdoor cage measuring 2m x 5m. For four hours a week they can leave their cells to shower or walk alone along the cell unit corridor. Visits and telephone calls with friends and family are the only social interactions permitted.

No physical evidence was ever found linking them to the murder of Officer Miller and their convictions were based on testimony from prison inmates. Evidence has since emerged that one of the witnesses was bribed and another committed perjury, while a third witness later recanted. The men’s convictions have been reversed by the courts, but the Louisiana state authorities have refused to accept these decisions. Both men now have appeals pending before the federal courts.

During the 1970s, in an attempt to combat brutal prison conditions, Albert and Herman founded the prison chapter of the Black Panther Party. At the time, inmate murder and rape were commonplace and sexual slavery and racism were entrenched in inmate culture in the State Penitentiary in Angola, Louisiana.

The men believe that the real reason for their convictions and continued imprisonment is that they were political activists. And there is evidence to support their claim. In 2008, the warden of their prison stated that even if Albert were innocent: “I would still keep him in CCR (Closed Cell Restricted); I know he has a propensity for violence, I still know that he is still trying to practice Black Pantherism, and I would still not want him walking around my prison”.

In the past 39 years the prison review board has reviewed the original decision to keep Albert and Herman in solitary confinement over 150 times. Each time, it has determined that they should remain in CCR. The reason given has always been the “original reason for lockdown”. By merely rubber-stamping the warden’s original decision in 1972 to place the men in CCR, the board has failed to provide a meaningful review and has subjected both men to cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions.

**ACT NOW**

Urge the Louisiana state authorities to immediately remove Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace from solitary confinement and bring an end to the years of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment that they have suffered. Reiterate your concerns to the US Attorney General, calling on him to ensure that the men are treated in compliance with international standards and the US Constitution.

Governor Bobby Jindal  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 94994, Baton Rouge, LA 70804, USA

Attorney General Eric Holder,  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue  
NW Washington  
DC 20530-0001, USA
JOIN US FOR
A TOAST TO FREEDOM
TO CELEBRATE
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S
50TH BIRTHDAY
Thousandsof railway dwellers in the capital, Accra, are to be evicted to make way for the redevelopment of the country’s railway system.

Many of those facing eviction have nowhere else to go and will be left homeless if the evictions go ahead. Some have lived alongside the railway lines for more than 25 years.

In November 2010, the government of Ghana signed a US$6 billion deal with a Chinese company to redevelop the railways. Part of the country’s “Better Ghana Agenda”, the declared aim is to improve living standards for all Ghanaians. However, the policy has been developed without consultation with the railway dwellers and there are no plans to resettle them.

The Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and the Ghana Railway Development Authority have failed to give the residents reasonable and adequate notice to vacate the area. Many told Amnesty International that they had only heard rumours before their buildings were marked for demolition, leaving them anxious and insecure.

On 1 December 2010, vans with megaphones visited informal settlements next to railway lines in Agbogbloshie, Accra. Officials ordered people to dismantle their homes and businesses and vacate the area within two weeks. They warned that any structure not removed within two weeks would be demolished.

This was not the first time the railway dwellers had been threatened with eviction. The previous month, structures in the area had been marked for demolition with crosses and instructions to vacate by 11 November 2010.

On 21 January 2011, officials visited communities along Accra’s railway lines. They measured distances and issued fresh eviction notices to people living within 160 metres of the tracks. The eviction notices did not give people a date. However, the Chief Executive of the AMA stated that construction work would begin in February. On 25 January, buildings were painted with the words “Remove by January 25 2011 by AMA”.

In early February 2011, the authorities renewed their threats, telling railway dwellers in Agbogbloshie that they had to leave the area within two weeks or face eviction.

These notice periods – whether three months, three weeks or two weeks – are too short to qualify as reasonable or adequate.

 Coffie Nissar, an Agbogbloshie railway dweller, told Amnesty International: “One day they will just stand up and come and demolish. Perhaps tomorrow they will come. When we sleep, we don’t sleep.”

Ghana’s laws do not provide adequate protection against forced evictions. Officials often deny that they have any responsibility for residents of informal settlements, claiming that they are there “illegally”. However, forced evictions are a violation of human rights. Ghana is obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate housing, and must prevent and refrain from carrying out forced evictions.

Amnesty International, in partnership with Ghanaian civil society organizations, has been taking action to stop the forced evictions and to insist that the government implement measures to progressively realize the right to adequate housing. So far, the forced evictions that have been announced have not taken place. However, the authorities have not yet called them off.

Mushalatu Ayeshia lives with her brothers and sister next to the railway line near Agbogbloshie market in Accra. She has lived there for six years in one room, cooking and selling rice to passers-by. She has nowhere to go if her home and business are demolished. She told Amnesty International, “if they demolish, we will have nothing.”

**THE RAILWAY DWELLERS**

They call them the railway dwellers. Thousands of men, women and children who live in shacks and small houses alongside Ghana’s railway lines and earn money by trading from kiosks. Now their homes and livelihoods are at risk.
BELARUS AUTHORITIES MUST RELEASE PEACEFUL ELECTION PROTESTERS

Tens of thousands of Belarusians took to the streets of Minsk following the 19 December 2010 presidential elections, to protest against an election process they believed was unfair.

When an isolated violent incident occurred outside Government House building, riot police used excessive force to disperse the demonstrators. More than 700 mostly peaceful participants and bystanders were detained. Most of them were charged with violating public gathering regulations and sentenced to 10-15 days’ imprisonment.

The Belarusian authorities have orchestrated an unprecedented crackdown on civil society since the demonstration. Opposition presidential candidates, leading journalists and opposition activists have been detained and charged with “organizing mass disorder” and could face up to 15 years in prison.

Former presidential candidate, Alyaksей Mihalevich, who was released on 19 February, spoke out about the torture and other ill-treatment that he and other detainees suffered, including being made to stand naked for up to 40 minutes at a time in temperatures at or below 10°C.

ACT NOW
Call on the Belarusian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all prisoners of conscience. Urge them to immediately investigate all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees and to end the obstruction and harassment of human rights defenders, independent journalists and lawyers.

Please write to:
President Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
ul.Kaіa Marksa, 38
220016 Minsk
Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10+375 17 222 38 72
Email: contact@president.gov.by
Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AT RISK IN INDONESIA

When Enni’s pregnancy became noticeable to others, she stopped going to the doctor. Like many unmarried women and girls who become pregnant in Indonesia, Enni was ashamed and afraid of what other people would say. Discriminatory attitudes are one of the multiple barriers unmarried women and girls face in accessing their sexual and reproductive rights. Other barriers result directly from laws, policies and practices implemented by the state that discriminate against them.

Two laws in particular – the Population and Family Development Law and the Health Law – discriminate against unmarried women. Under these laws, only legally married couples can use reproductive health services. These provisions discriminate both on grounds of marital status and gender. Refusing unmarried people access to reproductive health services, including contraceptives, disproportionately affects women and girls.

Denying such services to unmarried women and girls leaves them vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and human rights abuses. Rather than risk rejection from the wider community, some women and girls may decide – or be forced – to marry when they become pregnant. Many are forced to drop out of school. Others may seek an unsafe abortion which puts them at risk of serious health problems, even death.

ACT NOW
The Indonesian government has an obligation to protect women and girls from discrimination and to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the right to health. Call on it to amend the Population and Family Development Law and the Health Law to conform with international human rights standards, in particular those provisions which discriminate on grounds of marital status.

Please write to:
Endang Rahayu Sedyaningsih
Minister of Health
Jl. H.R. Rasuna Said Blok X.5 Kav. 4-9
Jakarta 12950, Indonesia
Fax: +62 21 5201 591
Salutation: Dear Minister
For more information, go to
http://snipr.com/27pb9q
When M.S.S. received warnings that his life was under threat from the Taliban, his mother begged him to leave Afghanistan – “We don’t want you to be next”, she said. The Taliban had already killed many members of his family. “My father was an engineer,” M.S.S. says. “These people (the Taliban) thought he was a communist because he studied in the Soviet Union. For them, he was not a real Muslim. So he was killed. My grandfather (was killed) for another reason, my uncle for another reason, my [other] uncle the same. Now it was my turn.”

M.S.S., who had worked with international forces in Kabul, fled the country to seek asylum in Europe. He reached Turkey, and then crossed the river Evros into Greece. The authorities detained him instantly. He was released after seven days and given two options: apply for asylum in Greece or leave the country within a month. A human rights worker told M.S.S. that his chances of receiving refugee status in Greece were very slim, to say the least. According to official figures, the recognition rate of asylum applications in Greece was 0.04 per cent in 2009 – that is four out of 10,000 people.

M.S.S. decided to leave the country and try his luck elsewhere. He travelled to Belgium and applied for asylum there. But the Belgian authorities did not process his application. Instead, they sent him back to Greece.

The authorities in Belgium were following a European Union (EU) regulation called the Dublin II, which determines the member state responsible for examining an asylum application lodged within the EU. Under the Dublin II system, asylum-seekers are usually returned to the first country they entered on arriving in EU territory. However, states can decide to examine an asylum application for humanitarian and other reasons, even when they are not the first point of entry.

The Belgian authorities chose to return M.S.S. to Greece despite the fact that the Greek asylum system fails to provide people with the protection and support they are entitled to under international law. Greece is the first point of entry for thousands of asylum-seekers from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Once in Greece, they are routinely detained in appalling conditions, often for long periods. International law requires that the detention of asylum-seekers and migrants is only used as a last resort, when justified in each individual case as a necessary and proportionate measure.

In September 2010, UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, described the situation in Greece as a “humanitarian crisis”. EU member states and other countries participating in the Dublin II system have exacerbated the situation by insisting on returning asylum-seekers to Greece. The Greek authorities have claimed that the numbers are simply too high for them to cope with and have called for such transfers to be stopped.

When M.S.S. was returned to Greece in June 2009, he was detained again. “I arrived at the airport and two policemen took me to what they call a detention centre, but it was really a jail. I couldn’t believe the conditions there. I was held in a small room with around 20 other people. It was difficult to move. The room was locked and we had to knock on the door every time we needed to use the toilets.”

M.S.S. was detained for seven days. When he was released, he had
no money and nowhere to go. Like many other asylum-seekers in Greece, including women and children, he was left destitute with no one to turn to for help. “When I was released] I had no money. They (the authorities) said ‘that’s your problem, not ours. There is the bus station, you can go to Athens.’ If you don’t have money, you live in the park, or wherever you can find a place to sleep. There were many Afghan families living outside a church there.” M.S.S. came to Europe for protection. Yet he was still in danger. “Life was not safe”, he says. “There was often violence at night. I was beaten up several times, people tried to rob me.” He also lived in fear of being recognized by other Afghans. “I was still afraid of the Taliban. Because you never know who is a Taliban. I saw many people from all parts of Afghanistan on the streets.”
M.S.S. faced another danger, too: being removed from Greece. In the past, asylum-seekers have been forcibly removed from Greece despite the real risk of being subjected to grave human rights violations as a consequence of their deportation. All this time, M.S.S. was not interviewed to give an account of the reasons for his asylum application.

M.S.S. did not give up. He demanded recognition for his rights. In June 2009, he filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights (M.S.S. vs. Belgium and Greece). Amnesty International, jointly with the NGO Advice on Individual Rights in Europe Centre, intervened at the European Court to support the case. In January 2011, the court issued a landmark ruling in favour of M.S.S., which will also contribute to protection for other asylum-seekers in Europe.

In their ruling on the complaint by M.S.S., the Court found that both Greece and Belgium had violated the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Court held that, by detaining M.S.S. in degrading conditions and afterwards leaving him destitute, Greece had violated Article 3 of the Convention, which prohibits torture or inhuman or degrading treatment. Belgium was also found in violation of this Article by transferring M.S.S. back to Greece and thereby exposing him to possible removal to Afghanistan, where he faced risk of torture or other ill-treatment and even death. “The Belgian authorities knew or ought to have known that he had no guarantee that his asylum application would be seriously examined (in Greece)”, the Court said.

The Court ruling reiterates the call of Amnesty International and other human rights organizations that returns of asylum-seekers to Greece must be suspended until the country establishes an effective asylum system that is compliant with international human rights law. Greece has recently reformed its asylum system, but besides existing concerns it is too early to tell when and how these reforms will address the shortcomings in the Greek asylum system.

“The decision of the court was not only for me”, says M.S.S. “[Another asylum-seeker] just told me, ‘Thank you, because of you we get free from this tension that we will be sent back to Greece’. It’s a very good thing”. M.S.S. is now waiting to re-start his life. “I am already 30 years old and all my life has been in this problem so I never had the opportunity”, he says. “If they give me a chance to stay, I will work hard, try hard to make a good life after this.”

ACT NOW

Amnesty International continues to campaign for the human rights of asylum-seekers in Greece and the rest of Europe, and for changing the Dublin II system towards a more equitable system which ensures that responsibility for asylum-seekers is shared among EU member states and which upholds the rights of asylum-seekers. To find out more, go to www.amnesty.org/en/refugees and migrants.

Please sign and send a postcard to the Greek authorities, expressing your concern over the way asylum-seekers are treated in Greece.

World Refugee Day is on 20 June 2011.
Thousands of Amnesty International supporters and activists from over 50 countries wrote and signed more than 636,000 appeals and messages of support during the annual letter writing marathon in December 2010. This is what happened next.

How we wrote for rights and made a difference

Mao Hengfeng has finally seen her family
Shortly after thousands of appeals were sent to the Chinese authorities, human rights defender Mao Hengfeng was allowed to meet with her family for the first time in over a year. She is serving an 18-month sentence at a Re-education Through Labour facility in Beijing. Her husband believes the international pressure led to the visit.

Father Alejandro Solalinde Guerra now has police protection
Father Solalinde has been provided with two bodyguards to protect him against the harassment and threats he has received for his work defending migrants in Mexico. Staff at the shelter he runs have created a huge banner from all the cards and letters sent to them, and say they appreciate the solidarity.

Femi Peters is free and back home
Gambian opposition politician Femi Peters was released early from prison in December 2010. His son told Amnesty International: “I wanted a laptop for Christmas, but I got my father back – the biggest Christmas present ever.”

Zelimkhan Murdalov’s family is closer to knowing his whereabouts
Zelimkhan Murdalov has not been seen since 2001, when he was detained in Chechnya. His sister said: “We are very happy that Amnesty International has done this campaigning for my brother Zelimkhan. We have appealed to so many officials without any result but the authorities cannot stay silent every time. They will have to respond.”

Walid Yunis Ahmed is no longer detained without charge
Walid Yunis Ahmad has finally been charged after a decade in detention in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. He said he appreciates the work of Amnesty International members, which helps to keep alive his hopes of one day being released and seeing his children again.

Khady Bassène is “deeply touched” by the support
Khady Bassène is trying to find out what happened to her husband Jean Diandy after he was arrested in 1999. She sent the following message to those who wrote to her: “Thank you for your help... I’m deeply touched by the fact that people living far away from Senegal are concerned about my situation.” She also found it comforting to know that people sent letters to the authorities.

Media focuses on threats to Norma Cruz
The Guatemalan media highlighted the threats against women’s rights activist Norma Cruz. Norma said she would like to find a way to thank every single person who sent letters and postcards, which are now displayed on the office walls of the Survivors’ Foundation (Fundación Sobrevivientes) in Guatemala City.

Roma community is flooded by letters of solidarity
The Roma families who were forcibly evicted from their homes in Romania were very pleased to receive letters of solidarity from activists and to hear about the appeals that have been sent to the Mayor on their behalf: “Thank you! We have received hundreds of letters already and there are even more waiting for us at the post office.”

The annual Write for Rights marathon will be back later this year.
What sparked your interest in human rights?
In 1965, following the arrest of two Moscow writers, Andrei Sinyavskii and Yulii Daniel, the first public protests started in the Soviet Union. (The two writers published satires abroad that were critical of the Soviet regime. Following their arrest, they were subjected to a show trial that has been cited as an important catalyst for the modern Soviet dissident movement.) I was simply lucky that I happened to be in the middle of it as I was friends with Yulii Daniel. This public movement incited me, it was my thing, what I wanted to do – and I have not stopped for 45 years. I do not want to do anything else for the rest of my life. I might have started earlier but there was nothing like that before in the Soviet Union.

In the ‘60s, for the first time there were protests against the state’s lack of consideration for its citizens’ views, about the lack of respect for human dignity. We were not influenced by the West – I, for example, did not even know that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been adopted in 1948; we did not have the term human rights and we did not know about human rights movements in the West.

What do you think are the main challenges in the struggle against human rights abuses in Russia?
For me, the right to freedom of assembly has been crucial for the last two years: the denial of the right to go to the street and speak out. Today, fair elections are important. Fair elections will ensure the government listens to our opinions and concerns. Otherwise, the government will continue to do as it pleases. It is the same with all governments throughout the world. They believe it is much easier to rule if you do not have to listen to different opinions, negotiate, find compromises. We, the people, have to demand to be listened to.

If you could change one thing about the situation in Russia what would it be?
I would make the courts independent. To have courts which are really independent from federal or regional or any other authority besides the law would really change something in our imperfect state.

What impact does your work have on your life and/or your family?
It gave my life a meaning and a purpose. My work is my life and that is not only because I am old and lonely. After we founded the Moscow Helsinki Group in 1976, my husband declared that our flat had become the office of the group and we just happened to live in this office, too. My family was very supportive. They thought “our mother is weird but she is doing the right thing”. We never had a conflict about this. My younger son was not allowed to write his PhD, my husband was forced to resign from his work, my elder son was questioned by the KGB but
they always stood by me, they were convinced that what I was doing was right and good.

**What keeps you motivated when times are hard?**

Today, from 10 cases we take up, maybe in two or three we have some success. When we do not achieve anything we have to think about our successes to keep going. Being successful in two or three cases is already progress compared with Soviet times.

**What does Amnesty International mean to you?**

I very much love Amnesty International. Really, when the organization came to see us during Soviet times, when we heard about its work, I was excited that there are people who care about the situation in a different country. For me that was a high form of altruism, for which I was not prepared.

I was concerned about the situation in my country. To care about human rights in other countries, for people who have different opinions from your own, that I admire. I am very proud that my youngest son founded an Amnesty Group in his school when we had to emigrate to the USA.

**Do you have a message for our readers?**

I want Amnesty International members all around the world to continue to defend the human rights of people in other countries, in other cultures. I would like to see people all around the world living in such conditions that they are able to find the strength and the time to consider the fate, the human rights of others.

“*My work is my life*”. Ludmila Alekseeva.

**What is the single most important lesson that your activism has taught you?**

Not my work but my grandmother, who brought me up, taught me to treat other people the way I want to be treated, not to cause harm which I would not suffer myself.
USA: ILLINOIS ABOLISHES THE DEATH PENALTY

Illinois has become the 16th US state to ban capital punishment following the state legislature’s approval of the bill to abolish the death penalty in January this year. The law, signed by Governor Pat Quinn on 9 March, comes into effect on 1 July.

It is the third state to enact abolitionist legislation in the past four years after New Jersey and New Mexico.

Amnesty International has welcomed the Governor’s signing of the law and his decision to commute the death sentences of 15 deathrow inmates to life in prison. Rob Freer, Amnesty International researcher on the death penalty in the USA, said: “In making this bill law Governor Quinn has set an example to other states that still retain the death penalty. This is a cruel punishment – incompatible with human dignity – that should have no place in a modern criminal justice system.”

Twelve executions have been carried out in Illinois since judicial killing resumed in the USA in 1977, the last one being in 1999. Twenty people have been released from the state’s death row in the same period on grounds of innocence.

Two thirds of countries no longer use the death penalty, and death sentences in the USA have plunged in the last decade to their lowest levels since 1977. This is thought to be at least partially due to public and political awareness of the number of wrongful convictions that have been discovered in capital cases.

For more info, go to www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty

CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST
AN APPEAL FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
SECRETARY GENERAL, SALIL SHETTY

Dear WIRE reader,

The long-suffering people in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen and elsewhere in the region have defied decades of repression to demand their human rights.

Amnesty International has triggered its crisis response mode to maximize our efforts at this moment of unprecedented challenge and opportunity to change the human rights landscape across the Middle East and North Africa. We sent experienced research staff to Tunisia and Egypt to witness and document any human rights abuses during and after the demonstrations. We also mobilized our global movement to demand the release of people swept up in the repression, including at one point two of our staff arrested in Egypt.

There is still an opportunity to help at this very important time if you haven’t had a chance to yet.

The way people in the Middle East and North Africa have taken to the streets in unprecedented numbers to demand dignity and social justice has been an inspiration to oppressed peoples everywhere. But there is still much more to be done to achieve real, permanent change. It is vital that we have enough resources to work on the region to help them realize their human rights demands.

We need your support to:

□ increase our capacity to get researchers on the ground quickly and securely to monitor human rights violations wherever people are fighting for their rights;
□ mobilize local legal defence networks to get legal support to individuals in detention and track missing persons;
□ translate publications, campaign materials, social networking content and press releases so local human rights defenders have the resources they need to campaign for change.

We hope you will be able to help us in this vital work by making a donation today. Please give as generously as you can. To make a donation please visit www.amnesty.org and click donate.

In solidarity,

Salil Shetty

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□ mobilize local legal defence networks to get legal support to individuals in detention and track missing persons;
□ translate publications, campaign materials, social networking content and press releases so local human rights defenders have the resources they need to campaign for change.

We hope you will be able to help us in this vital work by making a donation today. Please give as generously as you can. To make a donation please visit www.amnesty.org and click donate.

In solidarity,

Salil Shetty

Top: Protestors celebrate the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, February 2011. Below: A protester sits under an army tank during an anti-Gaddafi protest in Benghazi, Libya, February 2011. It is vital that Amnesty international has enough resources to support people in Middle East and North Africa as they struggle to realize their rights.
‘WE HAVE TO DEMAND TO BE LISTENED TO’

LUDMILA ALEKSEEVA (PAGE 18)
**INDIA**

**KARTAM JOGA**

Since 2005, Kartam Joga has worked on documenting human rights violations against the Adivasi Indigenous people of Chhattisgarh state, central India. In his meetings with villagers, he has helped document more than 500 unlawful killings and instances of sexual assault and rape, the burning down of Adivasi hamlets and houses and the resultant displacement of Adivasis from 644 hamlets.

Kartam Joga is a member of the Communist Party of India and an elected member of a local self-government body in Dantewada district, Bastar region, Chhattisgarh. He began his work documenting human rights violations following an attack on an Adivasi hamlet by members of a local private militia group, Salwa Judum, which is widely believed to be a state-supported militia.

In 2007, Kartam Joga and two other Adivasi leaders petitioned India’s Supreme Court regarding human rights violations in Chhattisgarh and the impunity for security forces and Salwa Judum. On 31 August 2010, the Supreme Court criticized the Chhattisgarh government for being “wholly vague and indefinite” while replying to the petitions. The Supreme Court also asked the Chhattisgarh government to file a comprehensive affidavit in response to the allegations made in the petitions.

On 14 September 2010, Kartam Joga was imprisoned on several charges, including collaborating with the Maoists in bombings and other attacks, and murdering a state official. Amnesty International believes that the charges are politically motivated and considers Kartam Joga to be a prisoner of conscience. If found guilty, he could face the death penalty.

Please write, calling for Kartam Joga to be released immediately and unconditionally.

Send appeals to:

- Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh
- Dr Ramon Singh
- Chief Minister Niwas
- Raipur 492001
- Chhattisgarh
- India

Fax: +91 771 2221306
Email: cm@cg.nic.in

**IRAQ**

**SAMAR SA’AD ABDULLAH**

Samar Sa’ad ‘Abdullah was sentenced to death in Baghdad on 15 August 2005 after being convicted of the murder of her uncle, his wife and one of their children. She denied involvement and blamed the killings on her fiancé, who she said had carried out the killings during a robbery.

When she appeared in court, Samar Sa’ad ‘Abdullah told the judge that she was innocent and had “confessed” as a result of police torture. Her fiancé is reportedly still being sought for arrest by the authorities. Samar Sa’ad ‘Abdullah’s death sentence was upheld by the Court of Cassation on 26 February 2007.

The Iraqi government reinstated the death penalty in August 2004 for several offences, including attacks to Iraq’s internal security, premeditated murder, drug trafficking and kidnapping. Prior to that, the death penalty had been suspended since June 2003. The Iraqi authorities justified its reinstatement by pointing to the country’s precarious security situation and high level of political violence. At least 255 people were executed in Iraq between 2004 and the end of 2009. At least 1,300 people are believed to remain under sentence of death. Most were sentenced in previous years and are at constant risk of execution.

Please write, urging the authorities not to carry out the death penalty on Samar Sa’ad ‘Abdullah. Ask for details of the charges against her and urge that her allegations of torture are independently investigated without delay, and for anyone responsible to be brought to justice. Call on the authorities to commute all death sentences and immediately impose a moratorium on executions as a step towards the abolition of the death penalty.

Send appeals to the Iraq embassy in your country, addressed to His Excellency Neuri al- Maliki, Prime Minister of Iraq, with copies to the Minister of Justice and Minister of Human Rights.

**MEXICO**

**BETY CARIÑO TRUJILLO AND JYRI ANTERO JAAKKOLA**

Mexican human rights defender Bety Carilo Trujillo and Finnish human rights observer Jyri Antero Jaakkola were shot dead in the southern Indigenous community of San Juan Copala to which was trying to reach the remote Triqui district in Oaxaca on 27 April 2010. Both activists were part of a humanitarian convoy distributing food and medicines and documenting human rights violations.

Bety Carilo was head of the NGO “Working Together” Community Support Centre (CACTUS) in the city of Huajuapan de León. Jyri Antero Jaakkola was a member of the Finnish organization Uusi Tuuli (New Wind). He was carrying out research on sustainable agriculture and Indigenous customs in Oaxaca. Despite a federal investigation into the killings, no one has been charged or arrested to date and those responsible remain at large.

Since 2005, Kartam Joga and two other Adivasi leaders petitioned India’s Supreme Court regarding human rights violations in Chhattisgarh and the impunity for security forces and Salwa Judum. On 31 August 2010, the Supreme Court criticized the Chhattisgarh government for being “wholly vague and indefinite” while replying to the petitions. The Supreme Court also asked the Chhattisgarh government to file a comprehensive affidavit in response to the allegations made in the petitions.

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Please write, calling for Kartam Joga to be released immediately and unconditionally.

Send appeals to:

- Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh
- Dr Ramon Singh
- Chief Minister Niwas
- Raipur 492001
- Chhattisgarh
- India

Fax: +91 771 2221306
Email: cm@cg.nic.in

**HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS KILLED**

© CACTUS

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Please write, urging the Federal Attorney General to carry out a full and prompt investigation into the killing of Bety Carilo Trujillo and Jyri Jaakkola, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice according to international fair trial standards.

Send appeals to:

Arturo Chávez Chávez
Procuraduría General de la República
Av. Paseo de la Reforma 211-213
Delegación Cuauhtémoc
México D.F.
C.P. 06500, Mexico
Fax: +52 55 53460908
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Señor Procurador

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© Margaret Sekkagya

Image: Bety Carilo Trujillo, head of the NGO CACTUS, with Margaret Sekkagya, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, February 2010.

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Image: Bety Carilo Trujillo, head of the NGO CACTUS, with Margaret Sekkagya, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, February 2010.
TAJIKISTAN

ILLHOM ISMONOV

Ilhom Ismonov (pictured with his children) was detained by police in Khujand city, Tajikistan, on 3 November 2010. When his wife saw him briefly on 6 November, she reported he had cuts on his neck and what appeared to be electric shock marks on his hands. He was not brought before a judge until nine days after being detained, in violation of Tajikistan’s Criminal Procedure Code. His lawyer reportedly first saw him at that court hearing.

In December 2010, the Soghd Region Prosecutor’s Office informed Ilhom Ismonov’s wife that their investigation did not confirm the allegations of torture, illegal detention or lack of access to his lawyer. Amnesty International is concerned that the investigation may have been inadequate and ineffective, as the Prosecutor’s Office gave no indication of how it had arrived at its conclusions. Ilhom Ismonov’s wife is not aware of any interviews with Ilhom Ismonov, his lawyer or other witnesses having been conducted.

Furthermore, Amnesty International is concerned that Ilhom Ismonov has had restricted access to medical examination and treatment while in detention.

Please write, expressing concern over the allegations that Ilhom Ismonov was tortured, had limited access to his lawyer and was only brought before a judge nine days after police took him into custody, in violation of Tajikistan’s Criminal Procedure Code. Express concern over the response of the Soghd Region Prosecutor’s Office to these allegations. Urge the Prosecutor General to demonstrate that the investigation was effective and thorough, or carry out such an investigation without delay, following the standards of medical examination and documentation of torture set out in the UN Istanbul Protocol. Urge that an investigation is launched into the allegations that Ilhom Ismonov did not have adequate access to medical examination and treatment in the first months of his detention. Send appeals to:

Sherkhon Salimzoda
Prosecutor General Pr. A. Sino 126
734043 g. Dushanbe
Tajikistan

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

SUDAN

ABUZAR AL AMIN

Abuzar Al Amin, a journalist working for the Sudanese Rai Al Shaab newspaper, is serving a two-year prison sentence, reduced from five years, for “undermining the Constitution” and “publishing false news”. He was reportedly tortured following his arrest in Khartoum in May 2010. Between 15 and 27 May 2010, several other members of staff at the newspaper, including Ashraf Abdelziz and Al Tahir Abu Jawhara, were also detained. They have since been released.

Abuzar and his colleagues were arrested in relation to articles that were published in Rai Al Shaab, including an analysis of the results of the April 2010 presidential and parliamentary elections, and an article suggesting that an Iranian weapons factory had been built in Sudan.

Abuzar was held incommunicado detention for three days following his arrest and was reportedly tortured and interrogated about his work at the newspaper. On 14 July 2010, he was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for undermining the Constitution and publishing false news. His colleagues Ashraf and Al Tahir were each sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for publishing false news. Their sentences were reduced from two years to nine months and they were released in February 2011.

Please write, stating that Amnesty International considers Abuzar Al Amin to be a prisoner of conscience. Call for his immediate release and for an effective and impartial investigation into his alleged torture and other ill-treatment. Call for Rai Al Shaab newspaper to be reinstated. Send appeals to:

Minister of Justice
Mohamed Bushara Dousa
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 302
Khartoum
Sudan
Fax: +249183770863 or +249183764168
Email: moj@moj.gov.sd

Salutation: Your Excellency

SRI LANKA

PRAGEETH EKNALIGODA

Sri Lankan journalist and cartoonist Prageeth Eknaligoda went missing on 24 January 2010 while travelling to his home in Homagama, near the capital, Colombo. An outspoken government critic, Prageeth Eknaligoda had been reporting on the forthcoming Sri Lankan presidential election, which took place on 26 January 2010. He had recently published a comparative analysis of the two main presidential candidates, coming out in favour of opposition candidate Sarath Fonseka, who ultimately lost the election.

In the days before his enforced disappearance, Prageeth Eknaligoda told a friend he believed he was being followed. On the night he failed to return home, his wife Sandya Eknaligoda went to her local police station to report his disappearance. For two weeks the police failed to open a case or accept her complaint, saying they believed his disappearance was a publicity stunt. Later, she was told the log book containing the details of his case had been lost.

Sandya Eknaligoda filed a Fundamental Rights case questioning the independence of the investigation into her husband’s disappearance. She is actively campaigning for truth and justice for her husband and other victims of enforced disappearances.

This is the second time Prageeth Eknaligoda has been abducted. On 27 August 2009, a group forced him into a white van, blindfolded and handcuffed him and drove him to an undisclosed destination. He was released the following day.

Please write, calling on the Sri Lankan authorities to conduct an impartial, thorough and prompt investigation into the enforced disappearance of Prageeth Eknaligoda. Urge them to ensure that attacks and abductions of journalists in Sri Lanka are properly investigated, and the perpetrators brought to justice. Send appeals to:

Mr Mahinda Balasuriya
Inspector General of Police
New Secretariat
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 112440440
Email: igp@police.lk

His Excellency the President
Mahinda Rajapaksa
President Secretariat
Colombo 1, Sri Lanka
Fax: +94 112440657

Salutation: Dear Mr President

NEW SECRETARIAT
YOU ARE INVITED TO
RAISE A TOAST TO FREEDOM AND
CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF
DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

DATE: 28 MAY 2011
TIME AND PLACE: ____________

STOP FORCED
EVICATIONS IN GHANA

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

MINISTER,
REMEMBER
THAT 'ASYLUM'
IS A GREEK
WORD

PROTECT THE
RIGHTS OF
ASYLUM-SEEKERS

NO DIGNITY
DEMAND DIGNITY
DEMAND DIGNITY
DEMAND DIGNITY

50 YEARS
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
Dear Chairman,

Thousands of people who live and trade beside the railway lines in Accra are at risk of forced eviction to make way for the redevelopment of the country’s railway infrastructure.

Forced evictions are a violation of human rights. Under international law, evictions must only be carried out as a last resort, after all feasible alternatives have been explored, and only once safeguards are in place. These include genuine consultation with those affected, reasonable notice, adequate alternative housing and compensation and access to legal remedies. Everyone is entitled to this protection, whether or not they own their home and land.

I respectfully urge you to halt the planned demolition of structures along the railway lines in Accra until all necessary safeguards are in place, including genuine consultation and a resettlement plan to provide adequate alternative housing.

Yours sincerely,

Name: __________________________
Country: _________________________

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Chairman of the Railway Development Authority, Daniel Markin
Ministry of Transport
Accra, Ghana

Dear Minister

Asylum-seekers in Greece, including unaccompanied children, are routinely detained in appalling conditions.

I call on the government to end the routine detention of asylum-seekers and limit detention to exceptional circumstances, used only as a last resort and based on a case-by-case decision that compiles with the principles of necessity and proportionality. Minors should not be detained at all. The conditions in the detention facilities need to be brought in line with international standards.

Refugee recognition rates in Greece are among the lowest in the EU. Several asylum-seekers have been expelled without a full and fair assessment of their claims, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.

I strongly support Amnesty International’s call for reforms of the asylum system in Greece, including safeguards against forced removal of asylum-seekers pending their appeal, and access to free, independent and competent legal assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Name: __________________________
Country: _________________________

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Christos Papoutsis
Minister of Citizens’ Protection
Ministry of Citizens’ Protection
4, P. Kanellopoulou street
10177 Athens
Greece