WHAT HOPE FOR HAITI?
THE RIGHTS JOURNEY

August saw the first step on the Rights Journey. Amnesty International Secretary General Salil Shetty took the Rights Journey suitcase of evidence to the Civicus World Assembly in Montreal, Canada. He gathered voices and support for the campaign to put human rights at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This will be added to the evidence Amnesty International has collected over the years to show how the cycle of human rights abuses compounds poverty.

If we are to see real progress, we must make sure that human rights are at the core of all international and national initiatives to end poverty. This is the message we took to the UN Summit on the MDGs in New York in September. The Rights Journey is a way for activists around the world to learn about the human rights violations that keep people poor – and to work to end them. Drop in online and take a trip. Hear what people feel about where and how they live, and take action.

www.amnesty.org/en/rightsjourney

Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s Secretary General, holds up a symbolic “Rights Journey” suitcase.

GETTING WIRE

Would you like to know more about Amnesty International’s campaigns or use the WIRE actionzine for your own activism?

WIRE is available to download online at www.amnesty.org. To receive your free print copy, all you need to do is join our international membership—go to the final page of this issue for more details.

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A DAILY BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL IN HAITI

Months after the earthquake, more than a million people are still living in overcrowded makeshift camps, with no security and little privacy, where women and girls are attacked daily. Read more and take action on PAGE 2.

YEMEN: SECURITY AT WHAT PRICE?

Find out how the Yemeni authorities are violating human rights in the name of security on PAGE 12.

SRI LANKA: HARD LESSONS TO LEARN

The demand for accountability for war crimes in Sri Lanka is still unanswered. Join the call for an independent international investigation on PAGE 13.

SLOVAKIA’S SECOND-CLASS STUDENTS

The segregation of Romani children in Slovak schools is humiliating, unjust, and denies them their rights. Read more on PAGE 14, then sign and send the postcard (see insert).

WHAT ELSE?

Mark World Habitat Day on 4 October (see centrefold). Find out how lack of sanitation in Nairobi’s slums is putting women at risk (PAGE 7). Read about the UK’s inquiry into human rights violations of overseas detainees and sign and send a postcard calling for an end to unlawful detention in Iraq (PAGE 8). Learn about restrictions on freedom of expression in Rwanda and take action against forced evictions in Nigeria (PAGE 9). Finally, celebrate a landmark victory for Indigenous rights in eastern India (PAGE 20).

Q&A

Lawyer Joseph Dunia Ruyenz, talks to WIRE about life as a human rights defender in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on PAGE 18.

ACT NOW
WORLDWIDE APPEALS
READ, DISTRIBUTE, ACT
SEE OUR INSERT
A stillness hangs over the makeshift camps. Displaced Haitians are waiting for some sign of reconstruction and recovery. More than eight months after the earthquake, the lives of 1.3 million people remain on hold. Every day is another struggle for survival in tent cities that offer little protection. People described to Amnesty International how, in the face of a catalogue of delays, they strive, against the odds, to keep hope alive.
The January 2010 earthquake, in which more than 200,000 people died, devastated Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince, and caused severe damage to many outlying towns. More than eight months later, over 1.3 million Haitians are still living in makeshift camps and more than 600,000 have left the affected areas and are living with host families. Their former homes, reduced to rubble by the earthquake, remain in ruins.

The tremors wreaked catastrophic damage on the poorly constructed and inadequate housing that has long blighted deprived neighbourhoods in Haiti. The UN has described the Haitian earthquake as the major humanitarian challenge it has faced in recent history. Responding to a crisis of this magnitude clearly poses enormous difficulties. Resources need to be mobilized on a massive scale. Yet, the clearing-up operation has been largely carried out by hand because heavy lifting equipment remains scarce. Steps towards reconstruction to enable people to rebuild their homes and livelihoods remain painfully slow.

So far, only a tiny fraction of those displaced by the earthquake (between 10,000 and 12,000 people) have been relocated to settlements that meet international humanitarian standards and where access to basic services are guaranteed for the time being. So far, there is little evidence on the ground that the urgent need to relocate hundreds of thousands of people to safe and sustainable settlements, where they can rebuild their lives with dignity, will be met in the coming months.

Amnesty International and the Haitian authorities and the UN Programme and NGOs that allow people to earn some money for a limited period of time by helping clear debris. CC Attribution – Share Alike 2.0.

The Haitian authorities and the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) lack the personnel and resources to meet security needs in the more than 1,300 camps where displaced people have sought shelter. Even in the few camps in the capital where the Haitian National Police ensures a minimum permanent presence, rapes continue to be reported.

Displaced people themselves have coordinated security committees in many camps, sometimes in response to requests from displaced women. These committees carry out regular patrols during the night. In the early days following the earthquake, such initiatives gathered considerable momentum and support. However, as the months have dragged on, many committees have become unsustainable because of the heavy toll of camp living conditions on people’s health. Men involved in security committees told Amnesty International that night patrols combined with the unbearable heat in the tents during the day and the scarcity of food put an intolerable physical strain on them. Women have also established security committees. KOFAVIV members, for example, have armed themselves with whistles so that they can alert others when there is an emergency.

Combating sexual violence poses numerous challenges in any setting. Where communities have been uprooted by natural or man-made disasters, the risks facing women and girls increase. Those in authority responsible for ensuring their safety must take this into account and adopt measures proportionate to the risk. In Haiti the response has been wholly inadequate. Women and girls who had been raped told Amnesty International that when they went to the police to report the crime, they were told that nothing could be done to find their attackers or that they should find their attackers themselves and bring them to the police. The challenges facing police officers in Haiti are no justification for such a complete failure to provide survivors with support and access to justice. Even before the earthquake Amnesty International had stressed the urgent need for extensive training of police officers so that they could respond adequately to women and girls reporting sexual violence. In post-earthquake Haiti, the need is even greater.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND RECONSTRUCTION

So far, displaced people have not had an opportunity to participate meaningfully in decisions...
Children in the camp at Lycée Pinchinat, Jacmel, June 2010. Relief agencies provided emergency food aid to displaced people in the months following the earthquake. However, without any possibility of earning an income and rebuilding destroyed livelihoods, families in the camps are facing food insecurity.
about how the reconstruction will be carried out. National and international organizations operating in Haiti are discussing the planning and co-ordination of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. However, these initiatives are continuing largely independently of those made destitute by the earthquake. Little, if any, information about government plans or current activities has reached those most affected. Trapped in squalid conditions, denied the opportunity to be involved in decisions about their futures, millions of Haitians are waiting to restart their lives.

The reconstruction of Haiti should be an opportunity to leave behind the pervasive poverty that characterized the country before the earthquake. The government of Haiti and the international community, jointly directing the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) which is charged with developing and refining Haiti’s reconstruction plans, need to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. As co-presidents of the IHRC, Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive and the UN Special Envoy for Haiti, former US President Bill Clinton, will be responsible for ensuring that the reconstruction does not recreate the social inequalities that denied more than half a million children access to education and contributed to the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the Western hemisphere. To meet this challenge, internally displaced people will have to be fully involved and given a chance to play an active role in shaping their future.

ACT NOW

Write to President René Préval, calling on him to intensify efforts to tackle overcrowding and lack of security in the camps. These must involve discussing with internally displaced people how the layout of existing camps can be changed to improve security and taking steps to acquire more land in appropriate locations to alleviate overcrowding and reduce the risk of flooding.

Write to the co-chairs and board members of the IHRC calling on them to ensure that every project for which they approve funding includes steps to effectively improve the rights of women and girls. They must also ensure the rights of all internally displaced people, including their right to meaningful participation in and consent to projects that will affect them.

Commission Intérimaire pour la Reconstruction d’Haiti
Ancienne Ambassade des États-Unis
Boul. Harry Truman
Bicentenaire, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Salutation: Dear board members of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission

President of the Republic
René Garcia Préval
Palais National
Champ de Mars, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Salutation: Mr President
Burundi: A question of justice?
By Tom Gibson, Amnesty International’s campaigner on Burundi

“Today in Bujumbura, we attended the first session of the hearing into the death of Ernest Manirumva, a human rights defender killed on 9 April 2009. Manirumva was vice president of the Burundian civil society organization Anti-corruption and Economic Malpractice Observatory, an organization that works on corruption.

“We arrived at the courtroom just after nine. The proceedings started around half past ten. The trial has generated a lot of interest. The courtroom was packed with people. There seemed to be people of all ages and professions, human rights defenders, journalists, families of those concerned, mothers with children… It seemed hotter in the courtroom than outside.

“It was vital for Amnesty International to attend. This case is so important to civil society in Burundi. To see justice done – and done well – could spell an end to impunity for attacks on civil society.”

Read more at http://sn.im/10t9ve

Omar Khadr: Trial begins, but when will it continue?
By Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International in Canada, who will be observing the military trial of Omar Khadr

“In a case that has moved so slowly for so long – it is now nearly five years since Omar Khadr was first charged under the Bush administration – much happened during the first day of his military commission trial here at Guantánamo, both expected and unexpected. Proceedings began with opening statements from the prosecution and defence. They ended in drama when Omar Khadr’s military lawyer, Lieutenant Colonel Jon Jackson, collapsed in court late in the afternoon while cross-examining a witness. He was taken to hospital by ambulance and as I write it is uncertain when the trial will resume.

“Earlier, the commission heard from two prosecution witnesses and viewed a video that US forces had retrieved from the compound in Afghanistan where the firefight took place that is at the heart of the case against Omar Khadr. It is there that, as a 15-year-old, he is alleged to have thrown a grenade that fatally wounded a US soldier, Sergeant Christopher Speer.”

Read more at http://sn.im/10t9wi

Amnesty International on tour with U2
By Lucy Macnamara, Demand Dignity Campaign Co-ordinator at Amnesty International

“Uno, dos, tres, catorce! Welcome to U2 world! Last night Amnesty was present as the European leg of the amazing U2 360 tour kicked off in Turin, Italy. In fact, rather amazingly, we’re here for the whole leg of the tour. Because for the first time ever, Amnesty International will have a tour ‘embedded’ travelling with the production crew.

I’m Lucy Macnamara and I’m travelling for the first three weeks of the tour from Turin to Moscow, where my colleague Danielle Solick will pick up and travel through to Rome.

U2 have supported Amnesty for over 27 years and their passion and commitment to human rights have inspired thousands of people to engage with Amnesty’s work. I’m just one of them. As a huge U2 fan, at the tender age of 13 it was listening to “Mothers of the Disappeared” on The Joshua Tree (followed by my first ever gig at Wembley Stadium, with Mum and sisters in tow!) that moved me to join Amnesty, igniting a passion for justice that has never dimmed.”

Read more at http://sn.im/10t9vv
In Nairobi's slums, many women risk rape and other violence just to get to a toilet, because they do not have one at home. The Kenyan government must ensure that they are protected.

Violence against women in Nairobi's slums is rampant. Women face violence at home, on the street, at work, from landlords and by security officials. There is little or no police presence in slums and if women fall victim to violence they are highly unlikely to see justice done.

Women’s insecurity increases still further because of their lack of access to toilets and places to wash. Many women in Nairobi’s slums have to walk for up to 10 minutes to reach a toilet. At night the risk of rape and other violence is too high to attempt to walk to a toilet – they are forced to find alternatives.

The situation for women in Nairobi’s slums is documented in Amnesty International’s latest report on Kenya, Insecurity and indignity – women’s experiences in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, (AFR 32/002/2010) which was launched in Nairobi on 7 July this year in partnership with some of the affected groups of women.

The report highlights the obligation under Kenyan law on landlords to provide toilets and places to wash when they build structures. The local authorities, including the city council and public health officials, are supposed to ensure that landlords comply with these obligations.

Although the existing laws and standards on sanitation are enforced in non-slum areas in Nairobi – some landlords have even been taken to court for not providing adequate services – this is not the case in slums and informal settlements.

Housing structures are often built by landlords and private developers without access to toilets or places to wash. Landlords are often reluctant to invest in such facilities as many of the buildings lack security of tenure and could be destroyed at any point. The government does not hold them to account.

In advance of the launch of the report, Amnesty International delegates met and lobbied representatives of the Kenyan government to improve security for women in slums.

Bearing in mind that people living in poverty themselves are key in overcoming poverty, Amnesty International is working with groups of women from slums in deciding on the focus of the research and in determining the direction of the campaign.

Following the launch, Amnesty International returned to the communities where the research was done and presented the final report, including a summary in Swahili, to the groups of women who had contributed to it. One-day workshops were held in the four slums in Nairobi – Kibera, Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Mathare and Korogocho – which were the subject of the research. There, the women were consulted on how to shape the campaign for increased security and dignity for women in Nairobi’s slums.

ACT NOW

Highlight the dangers that women face in Nairobi’s slums as a result of limited access to toilets by forming a symbolic toilet queue on World Toilet Day, 19 November 2010. You could do this outside the Kenyan embassy in your country.

Call on Kenya’s: Minister for Local Government and the Minister of Public Health and Sanitation to ensure equal protection under the law to all those living in informal settlements and enforce the Public Health Act and by-laws – including the local authority Building Code – requiring landlords to construct toilets and bathrooms in the immediate vicinity of each household.

Also call on the Ministers to provide assistance to structure owners who are unable to meet the costs of constructing toilets and bathrooms.

Wycliffe Musalia Mudavadi, MP
Office of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Local Government
Jogoo House A, Taifa Road
PO Box 30004
Nairobi, Kenya
Fax: +254 20 224 8377
Email: molg@nbnet.co.ke

Beth Wambui Mugo, MP
Minister of Public Health and Sanitation
Afya House, Cathedral Road
PO Box 30016
Nairobi, Kenya
Fax: +254 20 224 8552/271 3234
UK TORTURE INQUIRY: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REAL ACCOUNTABILITY?

The UK government and intelligence agencies are facing a growing number of allegations about their involvement in human rights violations of people detained overseas since 11 September 2001. The allegations include involvement or complicity in torture or other ill-treatment, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and renditions of individuals detained overseas in the context of counter-terrorism operations.

On 6 July 2010, UK Prime Minister David Cameron confirmed that he would establish an inquiry into the allegations of involvement of UK officials and members of the intelligence services in torture and other human rights violations. The non-statutory inquiry is expected to focus in particular on cases of UK nationals and residents held at the Guantánamo Bay detention centre.

The government has appointed Sir Peter Gibson, currently the Commissioner for the Intelligence Services, to lead the three-member inquiry panel.

Announcing the inquiry is an important first step towards achieving genuine accountability for past human rights abuses. But to be effective, the inquiry needs to be thorough, independent and impartial.

The exact terms of the inquiry are not yet known, and Amnesty International has concerns about whether the inquiry will be sufficiently independent from the government. There is also the stifling blanket of “state secrecy”: it remains unclear how much of the inquiry will be held in secret for reasons of national security and to what degree its findings will be kept from the public and from the victims of the alleged human rights violations.

And while Amnesty International agrees that an inquiry should be carried out promptly, expediency is no reason to compromise on its thoroughness. Any such inquiry must fully investigate the policy and practices (including the role of intelligence agencies, the armed forces, civil servants, government lawyers and ministers) in these grave violations.

Individuals have the right to know the truth about the human rights abuses they have suffered and they have a fundamental right to justice and accountability. No state should be able to commit human rights abuses with impunity.

To find out more about the UK torture inquiry, go to www.amnesty.org/en/region/uk

30,000 PEOPLE UNLAWFULLY DETAINED IN IRAQ

Since 2003, armed groups opposed to the Iraqi government and the US forces have been committing gross human rights abuses, targeting thousands of civilians, mainly in suicide bomb attacks. In an attempt to quash these armed groups, including al-Qa’ida, the Iraqi government and the US forces have also been guilty of violating human rights – arbitrarily detaining thousands of people without charge or trial for lengthy periods of time. Many detainees have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated and held in solitary confinement.

There is no indication that the situation is about to change. The transfer of prisoners from US custody to Iraqi custody was completed on 15 July 2010; Amnesty International fears that it was conducted without any guarantees of fair and prompt trial and without any safeguards against torture or other ill-treatment.

Walid Yunis Ahmad has been detained without charge or trial for more than 10 years. “I haven’t seen my children [all this time]”, he told Amnesty International. “I did not want them to see me in this terrible predicament”. He is one of an estimated 30,000 detainees who are held unlawfully in Iraqi prisons, including in the Kurdistan region.

He was arrested on 6 February 2000 in Erbil, capital of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq, by members of the Asayish, the Kurdish security police. For three years after his arrest, his family did not know where he was or whether he was dead or alive.

During his enforced disappearance, Walid Yunis Ahmad was tortured. After he went on hunger strike to protest against his detention and torture, he was kept in solitary confinement. He was then moved from one prison to another without explanation. He is currently held at the Asayish headquarters in Erbil.

Amnesty International visited Walid Yunis Ahmad in prison in June 2010. He said that he greatly appreciated the campaigning Amnesty International members have done on his behalf. He added that this has boosted his morale and helped him to stay hopeful that one day he will be released.

ACT NOW
Please sign and send the postcard in our insert calling for Walid Yunis Ahmad and other detainees to be released or charged with a recognizably criminal offence and promptly brought to trial in line with international standards.
END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

On the morning of 28 August 2009, Nigerian armed police and soldiers accompanied demolition teams to the informal settlement of Njemanze waterfront in Port Harcourt, capital of Rivers State. Thousands of people were forcibly evicted before witnessing their homes and businesses being demolished. Residents were formally notified of the demolitions just seven days before they took place.

These forced evictions were carried out as part of the state government’s plans, announced in 2008, to demolish all informal settlements along the waterfronts in Port Harcourt. They were undertaken without adequate prior consultation, notice or compensation or the provision of alternative accommodation. Over a year later, scores of people are still homeless, sleeping in cars, in a nearby church and even under a flyover.

On 6 November 2009, scores more lost their homes when Njemanze Street, next to Njemanze waterfront, was also demolished. Some residents who had previously been living in Njemanze waterfront were forcibly evicted from their homes for a second time. At the time of writing, Abonnema Wharf waterfront, adjacent to Njemanze Street, is under imminent threat of demolition.

The waterfronts are among the most densely populated areas of Port Harcourt, with more than 40 informal settlements. If the authorities continue with their planned demolitions of all informal settlements there, it is estimated that over 200,000 people will be at risk of forced eviction.

The state government claims that the demolition of the waterfronts is a necessary stage in the regeneration of the city. The demolitions of Abonnema Wharf and Njemanze were to make way for a private commercial development, Silverbird Showtime.

Nigeria’s international human rights obligations require it to refrain from and prevent forced evictions. Evictions may only be carried out as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives have been explored in consultation with affected communities. The authorities must ensure that no one is made homeless. Adequate alternative housing and compensation for all losses must be made available, prior to eviction, to those affected.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION CRIMINALIZED IN RWANDA

Up to 800,000 Rwandans were killed during the 1994 genocide, most of them ethnic Tutsi, but also some Hutu who opposed this organized killing and the forces that directed it. Aware of the role that hate speech and the infamous radio station Radio Télévision Libre des Milles Collines played in inciting genocidal violence, the post-genocide government, led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), enacted laws to encourage unity and restrict speech that could promote hatred.

Amnesty International’s new report, Safer to stay silent: the chilling effect of Rwanda’s Laws on “Genocide Ideology” and “Sectarianism”, examines how such laws, through their vague and sweeping wording, criminalize freedom of expression. It shows how prohibiting hate speech is a legitimate aim, but that the Rwandan government’s approach violates their obligations under international human rights law. The report shows how the laws are deliberately exploited to violate human rights. “Genocide ideology” is a form of intimidation, a Rwandan human rights activist told Amnesty International. “If you dare to criticize what is not going well, it’s ‘genocide ideology’. Civil society and the population prefer to shut up.”

Accusations of “genocide ideology” and “sectarianism” have a dangerous and chilling effect on Rwandan society. In the run-up to the 2010 elections, legitimate political dissent was conflated with “genocide ideology”, compromising the freedom of expression and association of opposition politicians, human rights defenders and journalists critical of the government.

Calls for the prosecution of past war crimes committed by the RPF have also been suppressed. Individuals have exploited gaps in the law for personal gain. In some cases, teachers were discredited for local political capital, and in the context of land disputes or personal conflicts. Rwandans, including judges, lawyers and human rights defenders, expressed confusion about what behaviour these laws criminalize. One defence lawyer for a 16-year-old student accused of “genocide ideology” expressed concern that his client had not lived through the genocide, did not have “a historical experience of genocide” and consequently could not have a “genocide ideology”.

An opportunity to change the laws has presented itself. Following six years of extensive reforms to the conventional justice system, the Rwandan government announced a review of the “genocide ideology” law in April 2010. However, this review is still pending, and freedom of expression remains a scarcity in post-electoral Rwanda.

In our insert, calling on the President of Nigeria to end forced evictions in Port Harcourt now.

Please sign and send the postcard action

To find out more, go to
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/takeaction/177207
PROTECT HER RIGHT TO A HOME

WORLD HABITAT DAY
4 OCTOBER 2010

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

© George Osodi
A displaced Makoko resident carries her belongings from the rubble of her makeshift home following its demolition, Nigeria, May 2005. To watch short films on life in the slums, go to slumstories.org.
In the name of security, the Yemeni authorities are rolling back human rights gains – with terrible consequences for the people of Yemen.

Challenged by growing calls for secession in the south, an intermittent conflict with a rebel movement – known as the Huthis – in the north, and the presence of al-Qa’ida in the country, the government has increasingly resorted to repressive and illegal methods.

The authorities have been egged on by other governments, particularly those in the USA, Europe and the Gulf, who want them to take tough action to combat al-Qa’ida and to prevent Yemen fracturing or imploding into a failed state.

Islamist militants have indeed carried out suicide and other attacks in Yemen, and the government has a duty to protect people and to punish the perpetrators. However, the main security fear for many Yemenis is to be caught up in the government’s sweeping responses to the challenges it faces in the south and north, which are often described as counter-terrorism operations.

In the south of the country, security forces have allegedly targeted for killings people prominent in the loose coalition of individuals and groups known as the Southern Movement and have killed or injured hundreds of protesters during peaceful demonstrations. Many suspected of links to the Huthis or the Southern Movement have been arbitrarily detained and jailed after unfair trials.

DESTRUCTION OF SA’DAH

In the conflict with the Huthis in the northern Sa’da region, hundreds, possibly thousands, of civilians have been killed, many as a result of apparently indiscriminate attacks, and over a quarter of a million people have been forced to flee their homes.

In August 2009, the conflict resumed with new intensity when the government deployed fighter jets and tanks in a military offensive code-named “Scorched Earth”. In November 2009, the fighting spilled over into Saudi Arabia, whose forces then bombarded Sa’da with particular ferocity for around two months.

Access to Sa’da was closed off at the time, yet pictures of the aftermath reveal a devastated region. Houses and apartment blocks, market places and mosques, petrol stations and health centres – no type of building appears to have been spared.

Several accounts of the attacks indicated the use of cluster bombs and the targeting of residential areas which, if carried out deliberately, constitute war crimes. There were also allegations of human rights abuses by the Huthis, including the use of child soldiers and the laying of land mines. Amnesty International could not verify these.

A makeshift market by the ruins of shops and homes, Sa’da region, March 2010.

Many people captured or arrested in connection with the Sa’da conflict have disappeared; some for months, others are still reported missing. Many have allegedly been tortured under interrogation while held for long periods without contact with the outside world and without access to a lawyer. Many remain behind bars even though they have never been charged.

Abdul Jabar Ahmed al-Jarmozi was 17 and in a lesson at al-Kuwait secondary school in Sana’a when he was arrested by three members of the security forces on 11 March 2007 and taken to Political Security. Three years on, he remains held without charge or trial. Political Security claims that he was suspected of wanting to change the regime, apparently for distributing pro-Huthi leaflets. “We have been stressed for three years now”, says his father, Ahmed Muhammad al-Jarmozi. “We agonize because he was denied his education.”

All over the country, those speaking out against government policies or human rights violations have also been targeted, among them journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers. Legislation and specialized courts created to counter terrorism have been used to imprison those who merely discuss what is happening in Sa’da or the south.

The largely uncritical international support for Yemen’s security operations has facilitated the government’s resort to unlawful methods. It is high time the international community put a different kind of pressure on the Yemeni authorities and other governments involved in Yemen – pressure based on the understanding that by violating human rights, security is jeopardized, not enhanced.

ACT NOW

To read Amnesty International’s briefing Yemen: security at what price? (MDE 31/01/2010), go to http://snipr.com/112wel
For more details see the report Yemen: Cracking down under pressure (MDE 31/010/2010) on http://snipr.com/112wf4
The Sri Lankan government has appointed the latest in a long line of presidential commissions – this one on ‘Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation’ – to look into the armed conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which ended last year. This cynical gesture – vague in its particulars and bound to fail – in no way substitutes for an independent international investigation by the UN into allegations of war crimes committed in Sri Lanka.

“I have served on two presidential commissions appointed by the Sri Lankan government to look into serious human rights violations, including tens of thousands of enforced disappearances and massacres of civilians by state forces. Their detailed conclusions and recommendations aimed at securing justice and redress for victims and their families have never been implemented by the Sri Lankan government, and their inquiries had no deterrent effect on future violations.

“Abductions, illegal arrests and detentions, kidnapings, extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances (many politically motivated or committed in the context of supposed anti-terror operations) continue in Sri Lanka. Police blame ‘unknown persons’ for these incidents and rarely investigate. Torture in custody is almost the norm. When deaths in custody occur police often claim the victim was shot while trying to escape.

“Domestic commissions of inquiry have failed to prosecute more than a handful of perpetrators in the security forces despite the fact that hundreds of officers have been named in reports. This failure to challenge a culture of impunity gives the security forces carte blanche to continue to carry out violations.

“Periodically, the world wakes up and takes notice of Sri Lanka’s terrible human rights record, as it did briefly last May when the Sri Lankan government sacrificed the lives of thousands of innocent civilians and maimed thousands of others in its efforts to wipe out the LTTE. The government is accused of ignoring several international conventions relating to the conduct of war. Only an independent body can confirm the facts.

“The Sri Lankan government has appointed presidential commissions of inquiry only when the government is under extreme diplomatic pressure for violating the rights of its citizens. These may serve to temporarily derail international criticism, but nobody in Sri Lanka is really fooled by such dubious tactics. We all know these commissions are only window dressing.

“I wish our justice system worked as it should and that we could rely on domestic institutions to protect our rights. But we cannot, and the magnitude of the crimes that have been committed demand an international response.

“Only a credible independent international body appointed by the UN to investigate what happened prior to, during and after the end of the conflict in May 2009 would bring to light the atrocities committed by the state, the LTTE and other armed groups during the war.

“No commission appointed by the President is going to turn around and point fingers at its creator and say you have violated international conventions in fighting the war; you are responsible for killing a large number of civilians’. If the President expects this commission to be just and fair in the conduct of its inquiries, and expects the people and the international community to believe him, he is very naive indeed.”

SRI LANKA’S FAILURE TO CHALLENGE A CULTURE OF IMPUNITY CONTINUES.

M.C.M. IQBAL, FORMER SECRETARY TO TWO COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY INTO ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES, EXPLAINS WHY HE BELIEVES RECENT EFFORTS AT ACCOUNTABILITY ARE FLAWED.

LETTER FROM SRI LANKA: HARD LESSONS TO LEARN
SECOND-CLASS STUDENTS

ROMANI CHILDREN IN SLOVAKIA ARE SEGREGATED FROM THE REST OF THEIR CLASSMATES AND TAUGHT A REDUCED CURRICULUM IN SPECIAL CLASSES. THE CONSEQUENCES REACH FAR BEYOND THE SCHOOL GATES, LEAVING ROMA EXCLUDED FROM HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAPPED IN LOW-PAID JOBS.

Jakub is 16 years old and lives in Plavecký Štvrtok, a village 20km north of Bratislava in Slovakia. He finished elementary school in a special class for children with “mild mental disabilities” after being transferred out of his mainstream class in grade five. Until then, Jakub had been acknowledged by teachers as an excellent student and even received a scholarship for his achievement. But Jakub is Romani, like all the other children who attend the special class.

Jakub was sent for special needs assessment following an argument with a teacher. His parents were not informed beforehand about his assessment or transfer to the special class. During his time in the special class, he studied a significantly reduced curriculum, at least two years behind that of his old class, effectively stunting his education and future prospects. He says of his experience: “What they did to me [at school] was nasty… They made an idiot out of me. I was one of the best pupils in fourth grade.”

Jakub’s case is not exceptional. Almost half of the Roma children in Plavecký Štvrtok’s elementary school are taught in de facto Roma-only special classes, as are thousands of other Romani children across Slovakia. In several districts, Romani children attend ethnically segregated mainstream schools and classes that also operate reduced curriculums. In regions with large Romani populations at least three out of four special-school pupils are Roma; across the country as a whole, Roma represent 85 per cent of children attending special classes. Yet Roma comprise less than 10 per cent of Slovakia’s total population.

Within Slovakia’s education system, entrenched anti-Roma attitudes have led to situations in which Romani children from kindergarten onwards are sometimes literally locked into separate classrooms, corridors or buildings, separated even at lunchtimes to prevent them from mixing with non-Romani pupils.

The denial of Romani children’s right to an education free from discrimination deprives them in the longer term of a wide range of other human rights, including the rights to health, work and freedom of expression. They are effectively excluded from accessing many public services, and from full participation in Slovak society.

AN EDUCATION SYSTEM FAILING ITS PUPILS

Slovakia’s mainstream elementary-school system is ill-equipped and education professionals are often unwilling to provide the additional support that pupils from different ethnic and social backgrounds often need. For many Roma, Slovak is not a first language. Cultural differences and high levels of poverty among Roma mean that they often need additional language, pre-school or classroom assistance. When these needs are not met, many Romani children fall behind and are transferred out of mainstream education – either to special classes in mainstream schools or to dedicated special schools.

In Slovak law, social disadvantage is categorized alongside mental disability in assessing pupils for special educational needs. In a context where Roma are invariably viewed as socially disadvantaged, the system effectively

Romani children attending a segregated special class at the Krivany elementary school kindergarten, Slovakia, April 2010.
ROMA DISCRIMINATED AGAINST AT SCHOOL
predisposes Romani children to be identified as having special needs. It also entrenches their disadvantage for life by effectively equating poverty with mental disability.

Diagnosis of special educational needs in Slovakia involves a complex assessment process, administered by a network of school advisory centres, which takes little or no account of Romani children’s cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic differences. Communication skills are assessed in Slovak only, for example. Additionally, decisions to place children in special schools are often made at the age of entry into compulsory education, a practice which some child psychology experts in Slovakia consider to be too early. Romani children are also commonly placed in special education after a single intelligence test lasting 90 minutes or less. Slovak and international mental health experts and educational psychologists have indicated, however, that one-off assessments should not be used to determine such placements.

In order for a child to be placed at a special elementary school or class, the parents have to give their consent. This is often presented by the authorities as an important safeguard against incorrect placement. However, Amnesty International is concerned that the decision by, or agreement of, Romani parents to place their children in a special school or class is often taken without adequate information.

Romani parents are often unaware of the impact of special education on their children’s future prospects. They also feel that the prejudice and lack of support their children experience in mainstream schools mean that they would be better off receiving a lesser education in a friendlier environment.

In most of the special classes that Amnesty International visited in Slovakia, Romani children were not allowed to take books home with them because staff assumed that books in their care would be mistreated or never returned. Such restrictions clearly limit opportunities for learning and development among Romani children. Irena, a mother from the Romani settlement in Krivany, a village in eastern Slovakia, explained: “I went to the school and told… (the teachers) to write me the homework because I wanted to help my children with studying… But (they say) they cannot give them books to take home… How could (the children) learn to read, write or [do] maths if they don’t have books?”

Romani children who are placed in special schools or classes have very little chance of being reintegrated into mainstream education. The reassessment of pupils is not required by law and would generally take place only at the parents’ request. Also, time spent at special school is generally such a backward step in the child’s curriculum that it is unlikely they would be able to catch up.
When pupils finish elementary school under a special curriculum, they receive lower graded certificates, which restrict them to attending special secondary school. This involves a programme of two or three years’ vocational training to become, for example, butchers, bricklayers, shoemakers, domestic workers or gardeners. Romani children with aspirations to become engineers, doctors or academics have little chance of realizing their dreams.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE
The segregation of Roma in Slovak schools is a result of racial discrimination within the education system, reflecting entrenched prejudice and intolerance in Slovak society in general.

Slovakia’s 2008 Schools Act bans all forms of discrimination, particularly segregation. But it fails to clearly define segregation, or include robust guidelines and measures to help education authorities identify and monitor segregation and enforce desegregation. Effective measures to implement the ban have yet to be put in place.

The bodies responsible for monitoring the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation and the Schools Act (the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights and the State School Inspectorate respectively), currently lack and must be given the necessary resources and tools as a well as a clear mandate to enforce the prohibition of segregation.

The new coalition government’s recently stated commitment to eliminate segregated schooling of Roma, included in its programme adopted in August 2010, is a welcome development. However, segregation remains a major obstacle to Romani children’s realization of their right to education and contributes to the cycle of poverty, discrimination and exclusion that Roma suffer in general.

Slovakia cannot continue to deny its Romani children their right to dignity and equal treatment. The choices that the government makes now can trap Roma in poverty and marginalize them for decades to come. Or it can ensure that they enjoy their right to an education free from discrimination and allow them to fully participate in and contribute to the life of Slovak and European society.

ACT NOW
Sign and send the postcard in our insert to Slovakia’s Prime Minister, calling on her to end the segregation of Romani children in Slovak schools.
To find out more information, go to www.amnesty.org/en/region/slovak-republic
What sparked your interest in human rights?
In 1995, during the Mobutu regime, I felt the need to join friends in founding an organization that we called Promotion of Democracy and Protection of Human Rights (Promotion de la Démocratie et Protection des droits humains, PDH). We hoped to help reduce human rights violations, which were reaching their most extreme level. We acted in response to all the arbitrary arrests and to the way people were taken to secret places and tortured. We promised to denounce these things, hoping that this would reduce the human rights violations that were taking place around us.

What do you think is the main challenge in the struggle against human rights abuses in the DRC?
Insecurity for human rights defenders, because of the presence of Rwandan (FDLR), Ugandan (LRA and ADF-Nalu) and Congolese (the Mai-Mai and the CNDP) armed groups and the Congolese army, and also because of the security forces, who are not paid a decent wage. This insecurity is a real problem and is a fundamental obstacle.

If you could change one thing about the situation in the DRC, what would it be?
Awaken the conscience of the Congolese about the need to share and to take responsibility for ensuring security and freedom in the DRC.

What impact does your work have on your life?
On the positive side, it is exhilarating to defend human rights, to speak on behalf of those who cannot make themselves heard, the oppressed and the victims of arbitrariness, and to be involved in establishing the rule of law. These are the positive aspects. However, on the negative side, I fear for my life. My family is also afraid, because my commitment to defending human rights means that I risk torture, I risk becoming disabled. My family is afraid that when I speak up and denounce serious human rights violations and the violence in my country, my involvement in these activities might put my life in danger.

What keeps you motivated when times are hard?
The freedom to be able to say what I think and to participate without being “the property” of a party; the democratization of our society, given that democracy is the key to ensuring respect for human rights. Working for peace, democracy and justice is part of my nature and is what keeps me going.

“Everybody should respect human rights, whether they are in the West, in Africa or in Asia”

In 2008, during a visit to the Munzenze central prison in Goma, the prisoners held me hostage thinking that my presence would alert the authorities and NGOs to the lack of food and water in the prison and encourage them to take action on their behalf. For the second time, I saw that I represented hope, that I was a saviour for all these people in detention.
What does Amnesty International mean for you?

In the same way that victims of human rights violations think of us as saviours or liberators, I think of Amnesty International as a saviour, a liberator, when I see all the action it takes all over the world.

On three occasions, when I was arrested, it was thanks to Amnesty International that I was released. I was kidnapped in 2006 in Goma and taken to T2 (military intelligence services). Amnesty International appealed to the Congolese government, demanding our unconditional release. In the context of the wars in eastern Congo, everybody thought we would be killed, but thanks to the urgent action taken by Amnesty International, we were released the same day, even though we had found out the previous evening that they planned to kill us.

Do you have a message for our readers?

I ask them to continue to defend human rights by publicizing the situation of victims of violations and violence in places such as Somalia, the DRC, Darfur, and of victims of the dictatorships that oppose the fundamental rights that God gave every human being. I also call on the human rights defenders who read this article to take action about the human rights situation in the DRC because the situation is serious and justice should be done, for example, regarding the killings of Floribert Chebeya, Pascal Kabungulu and other defenders of freedom, who have paid with their lives.

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

The universality of human rights. Human rights should be respected by the authorities. It is wrong that some leaders see respect for human rights as the prerogative of western countries. There are human rights violations in many countries and everybody should respect human rights, whether they are in the West, in Africa or in Asia. Every human being has the right to expect respect for the rights given them by God.

Watch a video interview with Joseph Dunia Ruyenzi on http://snipr.com/10p53o
SUCCESS!
MINING PLANS AXED IN INDIA

In a landmark victory for Indigenous rights, the Indian government rejected plans to mine bauxite in the Niyamgiri Hills, eastern India. The decision, announced on 24 August, followed years of campaigning by the Dongria Kondh and other Indigenous communities who described the proposed mining project as a threat to their survival.

Amnesty International joined the campaign in mid-2008 and published a damning report in early 2010 documenting human rights abuses and violations of the law. Six months later, an Indian government report, which came to similar conclusions, formed the basis of the government’s decision to axe the mine. Plans to expand an alumina refinery in Lanjigarh, at the base of the hills, have also been put on hold. The refinery has been linked to water and air pollution and has blighted the lives of local communities.

The Indian government found that the proposed bauxite mining project had already extensively violated forest and environmental laws and would perpetrate further abuses. The refinery expansion plans were found to be illegal.

The ruling was a blow to the companies involved – a subsidiary of UK-based Vedanta Resources and the state-owned Orissa Mining Corporation – who were behind the proposal to mine the Niyamgiri Hills.

Amnesty International worked with the Dongria Kondh communities to challenge the environmental clearance granted for the mine at an appeals tribunal; more than 30,000 Amnesty International members wrote to the Indian authorities while the organization engaged in talks with the company. Amnesty International’s campaign and advocacy helped to stall the mining and refinery expansion plans for several months before the ultimate decision was made.

A Dongria Kondh leader told Amnesty International: “After years of struggle and visits by committees our voice has finally reached Delhi.”

To find out more, go to http://snipr.com/1114ox

NEW PUBLICATION

Amnesty International collaborated with human rights organization Conectas to produce a special issue of Sur: International Journal on Human Rights, on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and issues of corporate accountability.

As the UN High-level Summit on the MDGs takes place in September 2010, the articles are available to read free of charge at www.surjournal.org
WHETHER IN A HIGH-PROFILE CONFLICT OR A FORGOTTEN CORNER OF THE GLOBE, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS FOR JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND DIGNITY FOR ALL AND SEEKS TO GALVANIZE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Activists around the world have shown that it is possible to resist the dangerous forces that are undermining human rights. Be part of this movement. Combat those who peddle fear and hate.

- Join Amnesty International and become part of a worldwide movement campaigning for an end to human rights violations. Help us make a difference.

Together we can make our voices heard.

I am interested in receiving further information on becoming a member of Amnesty International

NAME

ADDRESS

COUNTRY

EMAIL

Please return this form to the Amnesty International office in your country.

For a full list of the offices worldwide please go to www.amnesty.org/en/worldwide-sites

If there is no office in your country, you can become an International Member and join our International Members’ online community.

To do this, please visit www.amnesty.org/en/join where you will be able to access joining information and sign up online in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Or alternatively write to Online Communities Team, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

To be an International Member you need to agree to an International Members Code of Conduct. The Code is available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish at: www.amnesty.org/en/code-of-conduct
‘WORKING FOR PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE IS WHAT KEEPS ME GOING’

JOSEPH DUNIA RUYENZI
**Five Prisoners of Conscience**

Five former members of the Progress Party of Equatorial Guinea (PPGE) continue to be held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in conditions which could amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Gerardo Angüe Mangue, Cruz Obiang Ebele, Juan Ecomo Ndong, Emiliano Esono Michá and Guemersindo Ramirez Faustino were arbitrarily arrested in March and April 2008. They were reportedly tortured and made to sign statements under duress. They were then charged with illegal possession of arms and ammunition and illicit association and assembly, a charge that referred to their previous membership of the PPGE. They were not given access to a lawyer until a few days before the trial. Between 17 and 19 June 2008 they were tried and found guilty of illegal possession of arms and ammunition. No evidence was produced in court to substantiate the charges and no arms were found on them or in their homes. Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, whose arrest and conviction were politically motivated for their past membership of a non-violent political party. The men were held incommunicado until November 2009. Since then, their families have been allowed to visit every Saturday for up to 15 minutes. However, visits can be suspended at any time without reason or notice by the prison officials. Food in the prison is inadequate and the men’s families have to provide food to supplement their diets. In addition, they do not receive medical care and their families have to provide medicines for chronic ailments.

**Equatorial Guinea**

**Former Members of Political Party**

Munir Said Thalib was in constant danger as a result of his human rights work. In August 2003, a bomb exploded outside his home in Jakarta. In 2002 and 2003, the Kontras office where he worked, was attacked by a mob. Although two people have now been convicted for their involvement in his death, credible allegations have been made that those responsible for his murder at the highest levels have not been brought to justice. Indonesia’s human rights defenders continue to be threatened, intimidated and attacked. They believe they would be better protected if there was true accountability for Munir Said Thalib’s killing.

Human rights activist Munir Said Thalib was found dead on a flight from Jakarta to the Netherlands on 7 September 2004. An autopsy carried out by the Dutch authorities showed that he had been poisoned with arsenic.

One of Indonesia’s most prominent human rights campaigners, Munir Said Thalib took up the cause of dozens of activists who had been subjected to enforced disappearance. He co-founded two human rights organizations and played a significant role in uncovering evidence of military responsibility for human rights violations in Aceh and East Timor, making recommendations to the government on action to take against high-ranking officials. In September 1999, the National Human Rights Commission appointed him to the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations in East Timor (KPP-HAM). Munir Said Thalib was appointed him to the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations in East Timor and the East Timor provincial government.

**Canada**

The Lubicon Cree First Nation is an Indigenous community of about 500 people in the western Canadian province of Alberta. Unlike most other Indigenous Peoples in the province, the Lubicon have never entered into a treaty or other legal arrangement with the federal government to set out the boundaries of their land. Government promises to establish a Lubicon reserve, or legally recognized land base, have never been honoured.

In the 1970s, the Alberta authorities promoted massive oil and gas development on Lubicon land without any consultation and without the agreement of the Lubicon. They declared the Lubicon “squatters” on their own land. Oil and gas extraction led to the rapid collapse of the traditional hunting and trapping economy, plunging the once largely self-sufficient community into extreme poverty and ill-health from which they have never recovered.

An estimated 14 billion Canadian dollars’ worth of oil and gas is believed to have been extracted from the Lubicon land to date. The Lubicon have benefited from none of this wealth. They have received no compensation and little assistance to establish alternative sources of livelihood. As much as 90 per cent of the community now depends on federal assistance payments, which are insufficient to meet basic needs. The community has no sanitation and no safe drinking water. Housing is severely overcrowded and illnesses associated with poverty, such as tuberculosis, are much more common than in the general population.

**Equatorial Guinea**

**Five Prisoners of Conscience**

Please write, calling for the five men to be released immediately and unconditionally. Express concern that the reports of torture have not been investigated. Urge the authorities to allow the men to continue to receive visits from their families and to provide them with adequate health care while they remain in prison. Send appeals to:

- General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
  - President de la República
  - Gabinete del Presidente de la República
  - Malabo
  - Equatorial Guinea
  - Fax: +240 333 09 3313/3334
  - Salutation: Your Excellency

Please write, noting the importance of respecting Lubicon land rights and the need for a just settlement that would enable the Lubicon to rebuild their economy and way of life. Pending resolution of the land dispute, the government of Alberta should agree to stop licensing new oil and gas development without the consent of the Lubicon community. Send appeals to:

- The Honourable Ed Stelmach
  - Premier of Alberta
  - 307 Legislature Bldg
  - 10800 - 97 Avenue
  - Edmonton, AB
  - Canada TSK 2B6
  - Fax: +1 780 427 1349
  - Email: premier@gov.ab.ca

Please write, calling on the authorities to establish a new independent investigation into the murder of Munir Said Thalib and bring the perpetrators at all levels to justice in fair trials. Urge them to recognize and publicly support the legitimate work of human rights defenders and condemn any type of harassment or attacks against them. Send appeals to:

- President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
  - Istana Merdeka
  - Jakarta 10110
  - Indonesia
  - Fax: +62 21 3452885, +62 21 3442759
  - or +62 21 3845774
NEPAL

SIX-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR JOURNALIST

Sanjiv Kumar Karna, a 24-year-old student, was picnicking with a group of friends on 8 October 2003 in Janakpur, Nepal, when he and 10 others were arrested by joint security force personnel. They were brutally beaten and then interrogated. Six were subsequently released, but Sanjiv Kumar Karna and four friends – Durgesh Kumar Labh, Pramod Narayan Mandal, Shailendra Yadav and Jitendra Jha – have not been heard from since.

Sanjiv Kumar Karna’s arrest is believed to be linked to his interest in student politics and his former membership of the All Nepal National Independent Student Union (Revolutionary) (ANNISU-R), which is aligned with the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (Maoist). However, he left the ANNISU-R in 1998 and his family say that he had no involvement with the CPN (Maoist).

The police and the Home Ministry deny any police involvement in the arrests, and the Nepalese Army have said that all five young people were killed in a “police action” on the day that they were arrested. There has been no confirmation of these claims. The Nepalese Army told Amnesty International that their investigation is complete and that they were not involved in the enforced disappearances.

Although Sanjiv Kumar Karna’s father and one of the other families filed a First Information Report with the Nepalese police in July 2006, which legally requires them to investigate what has happened, no progress has yet been made.

Please write, calling on the authorities to promptly establish the fate of Sanjiv Kumar Karna and his four friends, identify and prosecute those responsible for their disappearance, and make their findings public.

Sites of suspected burial should be protected and professional exhumations conducted that allow evidence gathered to be admissible in a court of law. Send appeals to:

Ramesh Chandra Thakuri
Inspector General of Police
Police Head Quarters, Naxal
Kathmandu
Nepal
Fax: +977 1 4415593

UKRAINE

TORTURE ALLEGATIONS IGNORED

Aleksandr Rafalsky was detained in Kyiv in 2001, suspected of being involved in the deaths of four people. Following a flawed trial, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2004. He is currently in prison in Vinnytsya, central Ukraine. Aleksandr Rafalsky reported that between 13 June, when he was detained, and 26 June 2001, when he was accused of murder, he was subjected to repeated torture and other ill-treatment, including a mock execution. He insists that he is innocent and that his torture and other ill-treatment were intended to force him to confess to the murders. There have been no investigations into the torture allegations and his complaints have so far been rejected. Amnesty International has ongoing concerns about systemic torture and other ill-treatment in police detention in Ukraine. Impunity for perpetrators is rife.

Energetic campaigning by Aleksandr Rafalsky’s mother, Tamara Rafalskaya; mothers of other prisoners; and human rights organizations has brought torture in police detention to the attention of the Ukrainian public. “If we succeed in this case it will be a big step forward for Ukraine”, Tamara Rafalskaya told Amnesty International in January 2010.

Amnesty International believes that a positive result in this case would have a big impact and contribute to ending impunity for torture and other ill-treatment in Ukraine.

Please write, calling for a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the allegations that Aleksandr Rafalsky was tortured and otherwise ill-treated in custody. Call for a retrial, due to concerns that the trial was not fair. Send appeals to:

General Prosecutor of Ukraine
Oleksander Medvedko
Riznitska Str. 13/15
01601 Kyiv
Ukraine
Fax: +380 44 280 26 03
Salutation: Dear General Prosecutor

IRAN

SIX-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR JOURNALIST

Hengameh Shahidi, a journalist and political activist, is serving a six-year sentence in Evin Prison in Iran’s capital, Tehran. Arrested shortly after Iran’s disputed presidential election in June 2009, she was held in solitary confinement in a tiny cell for 50 days. She was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during the first four months of detention. Released temporarily on bail, she was later rearrested to serve her sentence. She is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association.

Hengameh Shahidi wrote for the newspaper Nowrouz until it was closed down in 2002, after which she worked freelance, writing on world affairs. She acted as an adviser on youth affairs to President Ahmadinejad’s predecessor, President Khatami, and served on Tehran’s city council. At the time of her arrest she was studying for a PhD in the UK, but had returned to Iran for the election, in which she was an adviser on women’s issues to unsuccessful presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi. She was a member of his now-banned National Trust political party.

For the first 50 days of her detention, Hengameh Shahidi was held in solitary confinement in a cell that measured only 1m x 2m. She said that during this time she was beaten and threatened with execution. She suffers from heart problems for which she may not be receiving adequate medical treatment.

Please write to the Head of the Judiciary, calling for Hengameh Shahidi’s immediate and unconditional release. Urge the authorities to provide her with adequate medical treatment while she is detained and to conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into reports that she was tortured in detention. Send appeals to:

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani
Howzeh Riaysat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.
south of Sarah-e Jomhour
Tehran 1316814737
Iran
Email: info@dadiran.ir (Subject line: FAO Ayatollah Larijani)
Whether in a high-profile conflict or a forgotten corner of the globe, Amnesty International campaigns for justice, freedom and dignity for all and seeks to galvanize public support to build a better world.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Be part of this movement. Combat those who peddle fear and hate.
- Join Amnesty International and become part of a worldwide movement campaigning for an end to human rights abuses.

HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
Your Excellency,

Walid Yunis Ahmad was arrested on 6 February 2000 in Erbil and has been detained without charge or trial since then. He was tortured following arrest and held in solitary confinement for long periods. He has frequently been moved from one prison to another without explanation.

Amnesty International visited him in prison in mid-2010 and has repeatedly raised his case with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

I urge you to:

- Order Walid Yunis Ahmad’s immediate and unconditional release unless he is to be promptly brought to trial on a recognizably criminal charge and offered full fair trial guarantees;
- Order the release of all detainees held for long periods in the Kurdistan region unless they are immediately charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial promptly and fairly and without recourse to the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

Name:

Country:

Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK.

www.amnesty.org