

WIRE

FOR ACTIVISTS AND INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS
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Cover photo: Shiite Muslim women attend the festival of Ashoura in north Baghdad's al-Kadhimiya neighbourhood, Iraq, December 2009.
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**ACT NOW
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PUSHED INTO POVERTY

THE INDIGENOUS GUARANI-KAIOWÁ PEOPLE ARE PAYING A HIGH PRICE FOR BRAZIL'S ECONOMIC GROWTH. IT IS COSTING THEM THEIR LANDS, THEIR RIGHTS AND THEIR CULTURE.

Thirty-three Guarani-Kaiowá families of the Laranjeira Nanderu community, including around 85 children, are living by the side of the B-169 highway in Brazil's Mato Grosso do Sul state, at the edge of their traditional lands. The families are refusing to leave despite threats from armed security guards, hired by the landowner. They have no running water or adequate shelter, the area is frequently flooded and their camp is teeming with insects and leeches.

The community was evicted on 9 September 2009 from the traditional lands they had reoccupied in 2007. The Federal Police, which oversaw the eviction, told the landowner that the community would return to collect their remaining belongings, including the straw roofs that they needed to rebuild their shacks. The landowner, however, burned the families' houses and all their belongings. Without the straw roofs, the community are now living in shacks covered with sheets of black plastic, in temperatures of more than 30°C. They are now threatened once more with eviction from the highway agency.

Brazil is home to more than 700,000 Indigenous People, including the majority of the world's uncontacted tribes; more than 200

Indigenous groups, speaking over 180 different languages. Traditional lands are of central importance to their identity and their social, cultural and economic wellbeing – a fact acknowledged by the government-coined term “Indian is Land”. Yet for hundreds of years, Indigenous People in Brazil have been driven from their lands – a process that continues to this day. The consequences are devastating. Without their lands, Indigenous communities have been pushed into a life of poverty. Many have become easy targets for discrimination, exploitation and violence.

That so many Indigenous cultures and ways of life have resisted centuries of such abuse of rights is a testament to their capacity for survival. Since the 1990s, the growth of autonomous Indigenous organizations has enabled Indigenous Peoples to become protagonists in their struggle at the local, regional, national and international level in new and dynamic ways.

POCKETS OF POVERTY

Although Brazil has become a major world economy in the last three decades, the country's economic growth and new-found wealth has bypassed millions

of people living in poverty. Nowhere are the disparities more apparent than among the country's Indigenous Peoples. According to official figures, over a third of Indigenous People in Brazil live in extreme poverty.

The Guarani-Kaiowá and the Nhandeva are by far the largest Indigenous groups living in Mato Grosso do Sul state. The south of the state is home to some of the poorest and most densely populated Indigenous areas of the country. Impoverished rural communities are surrounded by large cattle ranches, soya and sugarcane plantations. While in overcrowded urban reservations malnutrition and illness thrive.

According to the 2009 report on Brazil by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Mato Grosso do Sul “has the highest rate of indigenous children's death due to precarious conditions of health, access to water and food, related to lack of lands.”

PROMISES AND DELAYS

The 1988 Brazilian Constitution enshrined the right of Indigenous Peoples to “lands traditionally occupied by Indians”. It makes the federal government responsible for protecting and transferring traditional lands back to Brazil's Indigenous Peoples. The complex transfer process, which is administered by the National Indian Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Índio, FUNAI), includes five stages: identification, delimitation, demarcation, ratification and registration.

The Constitution ordered the demarcation of all such lands by 1993. However, the process of land transfer has proved painfully slow. It can take years, if not decades, to settle a claim. Many factors have contributed to these delays. In many cases, the use of political and economic power by vested interests to delay and thwart the process has proved a major obstacle. The judiciary has also been slow to rule on the many appeals against the demarcation process.

The 2002 election of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his party raised hopes that the issue of land rights would be addressed. However, despite some landmark demarcations, Indigenous Peoples continue to face serious obstacles in achieving recognition and fulfilment of their rights.

In November 2007, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office signed an agreement with the Ministry of Justice and FUNAI which committed

Guarani-Kaiowá Indigenous leader on the Dourados reservation where poverty, overcrowding and lack of provision of adequate basic services have led to social breakdown, May 2008.





them to identify and delimit 36 separate Guarani-Kaiowá traditional lands by April 2010. The move was opposed by the Mato Grosso do Sul state government and the farming lobby, which managed to derail the process by lodging a series of appeals. Now that the deadline has expired, Federal Prosecutors have said they will seek compensation from the federal government for damages caused to the affected Indigenous communities.

Even in those cases which have managed to get as far as demarcation, communities may still face obstacles over the completion of the process. The lands of the Ñande Ru Marangatu community in Mato Grosso do Sul state, Antonio João municipality, were officially ratified by President Lula in March 2005. However, appeals by landowners have delayed implementation and, as of June 2010, the

case remained stalled because of outstanding state-level judicial appeals.

Denied access to their traditional lands and prevented from working on local farms because of local hostility to their land claims, many men from the Ñande Ru Marangatu community are now travelling hundreds of kilometres to work as cane cutters on plantations, often in harsh and exploitative conditions.

José, aged 34, used to work as a cutter. He described the chaotic situation that he faced when he arrived in the cane fields in the municipality of Sidrolândia after a six-hour bus trip. “You arrive there and you are in the middle of a hell”, he said. “We didn’t have soap, nothing for us to take a shower, to sleep. They rent you the room, and they deduct it from your pay; you’re promised R\$450,

but you never see it, everything you drink, eat is deducted. There were people who wanted to hang themselves. [When we left, groups of workers who had not been paid for months were] crying in the middle of the cane fields.”

KILLED FOR RETAKING THEIR LANDS

In the 1990s, against a backdrop of deteriorating conditions on the reservations, the Guarani-Kaiowá adopted a strategy known as *retomada* – the peaceful reoccupation of small plots of land on their traditional territories – to try and speed up the process of demarcation. These actions were met with threats, violence and evictions carried out by armed groups hired by landowners. Several Indigenous leaders have been killed. Lengthy delays

Left: Members of the Guarani-Kaiowá community of Passo Piraju, May 2009. After years fighting for the rights to their ancestral lands, they live on a small plot surrounded by sugar cane plantations. **Right:** Members of the Guarani-Kaiowá community of Passo Piraju, August 2005.

and a widespread failure to punish those who have carried out attacks and killings of Indigenous People in the past, have laid the foundations for continuing violence.

Cousins Rolindo Vera and Genivaldo Vera, both in their twenties, were literacy teachers in Pirajuí, a 3,000-strong Guarani-Kaiowá community. On 29 October 2009, a group of approximately 25 members of the community reoccupied farmland near the town of Paranhos. The land should have been surveyed by government anthropologists so that it could be identified and delimited, in line with the 2007 agreement, but local farmers repeatedly blocked attempts to carry out the surveys.

The following day, dozens of armed men arrived and the group fled into a nearby forest. Community members say that they saw Genivaldo Vera being taken away by the gunmen and Rolindo Vera fleeing into the forest. On 7 November 2009, Genivaldo Vera's body was found in a nearby stream. Photos of the body released by the police show that his head had been shaved and there was extensive bruising on his body. Rolindo Vera's whereabouts remain unknown. The community fear he may have been abducted and taken to Paraguay.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. Brazil was involved in drafting the Declaration and voted for its adoption, noting that Indigenous Peoples in Brazil "were crucial to the development of society at every level, including the development of spiritual and cultural life for all."

The Declaration provides a clear, authoritative statement of the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to culture; identity; free, prior and informed consent; and traditional lands.

Brazil has also ratified International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. This requires governments to respect the special importance of traditional land for Indigenous Peoples and to recognize their rights of ownership and possession. It also states that Indigenous Peoples should not be removed from the lands that they occupy.

As Brazil's profile on the world stage rises, the federal government must take the commitments it has made on human rights seriously. It must resolve all outstanding land claims and ensure that free, prior and informed consent is sought and gained for any decision affecting traditional Indigenous lands.



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ACT NOW

Call on the Brazilian government to complete the demarcation process in Mato Grosso do Sul without delay. The government must adopt effective measures to prevent human rights abuses against Indigenous Peoples and identify, investigate and bring to justice those responsible for abuses.

Urge the government to guarantee the rights contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples – in particular the right of Indigenous Peoples not to be removed from their traditional lands and to give their free, prior and informed consent to any economic development on their lands.

Please write to:

Federal Minister of Justice
Exmo. Sr. Luiz Paulo Teles Ferreira Barreto
Esplanada dos Ministérios,
Bloco "T"
70712-902 - Brasília/DF Brazil
Fax: + 55 61 3322 6817/ + 55 61 3224 3398
Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Ministro

Federal Human Rights Secretary
Secretaria Especial de Direitos Humanos
Exmo. Secretário Especial
Sr. Paulo de Tarso Vannuchi
Esplanada dos Ministérios - Bloco "T" - 4º andar,
70064-900 - Brasília/DF Brazil
Fax: + 55 61 3226 7980
Salutation: Exmo. Sr. Secretário

International Day of the World's Indigenous People is on 9 August 2010.



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TO CATCH UP WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S BLOG

KUWAIT: THE CASE OF MUHAMMAD 'ABD AL-QADER AL-JASEM

By Ghanim Alnajjar, human rights activist and professor of political science at Kuwait University

"Until Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem was detained on 11 May 2010, we in Kuwait had prided ourselves that we lived in a country that had no political prisoners. His arrest was a shock to many people, and his release on 28 June will certainly add to the pressure on the government to keep its record clean in a region of the world that, unfortunately,

could be described as the 'Empty Quarter' for political freedoms.

"Al-Jasem, a lawyer and a blogger, who has been writing critically of the Prime Minister and other officials since 2005, was summoned to State Security Headquarters on 11 May 2010 and arrested... He was charged with spreading false news, insulting the head of the state, and attempting to eradicate the foundation of the state."

Read more at livewire.amnesty.org/category/kuwait/



Demonstration in support of Muhammad 'Abd al-Qader al-Jasem, Kuwait, May 2010.

HAITI'S DISPLACED PEOPLE FEEL NEGLECTED BY THE STATE

By Chiara Liguori, Amnesty International researcher on Caribbean countries

"Where is the state in Haiti? In the week we have spent here so far, we have been hearing this question again and again. Displaced people living in makeshift

camps haven't seen any improvement in their living conditions in the six months since the earthquake, and in some cases their situation has been deteriorating. They wonder if they still have authorities to address and if they will ever get any help. They feel abandoned and betrayed.

"Since early April, the government announced the end of food distribution

because it found that aid was creating dependency and blocking the national economy. Since then, more and more people have reported difficulties in acquiring adequate food. Reports of malnutrition are increasing and more and more girls are being forced into sexual exploitation in order to eat."

Read more at livewire.amnesty.org/tag/haiti/

MEETING THE WOMEN OF NAIROBI'S SLUMS

By Dani Valls, Amnesty International campaigner

"After good media coverage of Amnesty International's report in the Kenyan and international media, we started workshops with most of the women who were interviewed during the research.

"Staff members from Amnesty International and partner organizations held the first of two one-day workshops in Kibera yesterday, where we presented the research findings to a group of 30 women and consulted with them on next steps for

the campaign at local, national and international level from their perspective.

"It would make such a difference if the people affected would genuinely participate with the relevant decision-makers in finding and implementing the appropriate solutions. These courageous women are not asking for the impossible, but just for some basic housing rights, to ensure their dignity and their security are respected. These are rights that most of us take for granted in our everyday lives."

Read more at <http://snipr.com/zdhzj>



A woman reads Amnesty International's report on slums in Nairobi (AFR 32/006/2010), July 2010.

HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS AFFLICTS MILLIONS IN NORTHWEST PAKISTAN

Millions of people in the tribal areas of northwest Pakistan have been caught in a humanitarian and human rights crisis that has gripped the region since 2004. They are vulnerable on all sides – targeted by the Taliban and caught in the crossfire between government and Taliban forces.

At least 1,300 civilians were killed in the conflict in northwest Pakistan in 2009, by Amnesty International's very conservative analysis of publicly available information. This was out of a total of more than 8,500 casualties, including combatants.

More than 1 million people remain displaced by the conflict. Divested of their livelihoods, they are in desperate need of aid.

"The government just gave away our lives to the Taliban", a teacher who fled Swat with his family in March 2009 told Amnesty International. "They kicked out the girls from school,

told the men to grow their beards, threatened anybody they didn't like. Our government and our military never tried to protect us from this."

Amnesty International's recent report, "As if hell fell on me": *The human rights crisis in northwest Pakistan* (ASA 33/004/2010), is based on nearly 300 interviews with people living in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and adjacent areas of the Northwest Frontier Province. Interviewees recounted how the Taliban targeted teachers, aid workers and political activists, and how they destroyed schools and health clinics specifically used by girls and women. They also described how the Pakistan armed forces at times used indiscriminate and excessive force in aerial attacks on the Taliban which killed and injured civilians.

"We heard bomb blasts in the area of Kala Pani, which is just 2 kilometres away", said one man in



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Bajaur Agency, FATA. "Later we came to know that the jets had dropped three bombs on a water spring in Kala Pani. Six women were killed while four were injured."

The Pakistani government has done little to ensure that the rights of those living in the region are protected. The Pakistani Constitution of 1973 explicitly excludes FATA from the legal, judicial and parliamentary system of Pakistan.

Amnesty International urges both the Pakistani government and the Taliban to comply with international humanitarian law by taking all measures to prevent loss of civilian life

Families flee fighting between the Taliban and Pakistani government forces in the Maidan region of Lower Dir, northwest Pakistan, April 2009.

and ensure that buildings, including hospitals and schools, are not targeted. They must also allow NGOs unfettered access to provide aid to the injured and displaced.

ACT NOW

Read more and watch a video on these issues at <http://sn.im/y81ka>

A BULLET IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD: EXECUTIONS CONTINUE IN BELARUS

On 14 May, two men were sentenced to death by the regional court of Grodno for the murder of three people during an armed robbery which took place in October 2009. If their appeals to the Supreme Court are rejected and President Alyaksandr Lukashenka refuses to grant them clemency, they will be executed by a gunshot to the back of the head. As is usual in Belarus, neither the two men nor their families will be informed of the date of execution and they will be refused a

final meeting with their families. Their bodies will be buried in a secret location.

The death sentences were passed only two days after a UN session at which a number of member states called on Belarus to abolish the death penalty; the Belarusian delegation replied that the government was considering working towards abolition. The Council of Europe condemned the sentences and called on Belarus to immediately commute them. Belarus is now the only country in

Europe and the former Soviet Union that still carries out executions.

The two new death sentences follow the executions, after unfair trials, of Vasily Yuzepchuk and Andrei Zhuk on 18 March this year, despite appeals for clemency from the international community. Andrei Zhuk's mother has described her continuing grief at not knowing where her son is buried, and also how her eight-year-old grandson often stands silently in front of his father's portrait. "What he thinks about now, I don't know", she said.

Sustained international pressure on the Belarusian authorities is vital if Europe and the former Soviet Union is to become a death penalty-free zone.

ACT NOW

Call on President Alyaksandr Lukashenka to immediately commute all death sentences, immediately declare a moratorium and demonstrate a commitment to the eventual abolition of the death penalty.

Please write to:
Alyaksandr Lukashenka
President
ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk
Belarus
Email: press@president.gov.by
Salutation: Dear President

NO TURNING BACK?

THE CHALLENGE TO OVERCOME THE PAST IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Andrew Philip, former Amnesty International researcher, looks at the future of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), marking the country's 50th anniversary.

I have worked in and on the DRC for more than 10 years. From the height of the conflict, when Rwanda and Uganda and their client Congolese armed groups occupied roughly half the country, to today's highly uncertain "peace", the country has experienced seemingly interminable insecurity in the east and sudden outbursts of violence in other regions.

The world has become so inured to violence and human rights abuses in the Congo that the atrocities there rarely make the headlines. The beginning of this century alone has witnessed the horrors of Ituri, where perhaps 60,000 people were killed and countless others mutilated

between 2000 and 2003, the bloodletting of the Kisangani "diamond wars", in which the Rwandan and Ugandan armies traded artillery fire in the heart of one of the DRC's biggest cities, and countless other massacres. The east contains numerous mass graves from the last 15 years, which farmers occasionally turn up in the soil. The memory of such crimes and the grief they provoke among the Congolese are still vivid.

Then there are the wars within wars: the war against women and girls, characterized by widespread rape, including gang rape and the rape of infants and elderly women. Such actions are a product of conflict, but they also reflect a wider landscape of discrimination, where women, despite often being the main source of family income and pillars of communal life, remain politically and economically marginalized. The war against children also continues.

Recruiting children and sending them into combat is one of the most appalling crimes imaginable; one from which the children of the DRC have suffered deeply. Even today children from refugee camps in neighbouring countries are lured back to the Congo with promises of education, only to find themselves press-ganged into the service of an armed militia, where they endure beatings, sexual violence and slavery.

The overriding impression of the period following the December 2002 Global and All-Inclusive Peace Agreement, which was supposed to bring a definitive end to the conflict that began in 1998, is of missed opportunities. The Congolese people were entitled to expect a durable peace, improved security and respect for their human rights, and social and economic development. Although repeatedly promised, these have not arrived. Today, the eastern Kivu provinces are still mired in conflict

and human rights violations. More than 1.8 million people are displaced by conflict, political prisoners still languish in Congolese jails and the Congolese army, police and intelligence services remain factional, predatory and abusive. The justice system offers the average Congolese citizen no defence or redress against routine abuses of power. Apart from a few scattered initiatives, there has been little concerted effort to rehabilitate the country's infrastructure and ruined public services. Poverty and malnutrition remain endemic in a country that boasts incredible natural resource wealth. Corruption again appears to be on the rise.

Undeniably, some progress has been made since 2002. State authority, although weak, is now present in all but a few areas of the country and most of the DRC is at peace. In the wake of the landmark 2006 national elections (the country's



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first democratic elections since independence), new civic institutions are steadily finding their feet. The Senate and National Assembly have on occasion shown that they are prepared to challenge the executive. The 2006 Constitution and some of the country's recent legal reforms incorporate extensive commitments to human rights and political freedoms.

MORE ACTION NEEDED

Yet no real action has been taken to tackle the root causes of conflict and political instability. These causes – entrenched impunity for human rights abuse, arms proliferation, the illicit exploitation of the country's natural resources, ethnic divisions manipulated for political ends, broken justice, health and education systems, and unreformed security forces – have been evident for more than 10 years. The government and international

community have repeatedly sidestepped these problems in search of quicker political fixes. As a result, the country has been wracked by a series of political and military crises since 2002 and is likely to continue to experience upheaval.

Addressing these problems would be a long and complex task in any context. The solutions depend, ultimately, on the political will and consent of the DRC's leadership. But the leadership is reluctant to make such commitments where it perceives its own vested private interests to be threatened. Kabila loyalists occupy the senior political, military and economic positions. Most of them have strong links to the presidential family and usually originate in Katanga province, the Kabila family's traditional heartland. This "clan katangais", whose existence is never publicly acknowledged, holds all the true levers of power. Those outside this circle are excluded from high power.

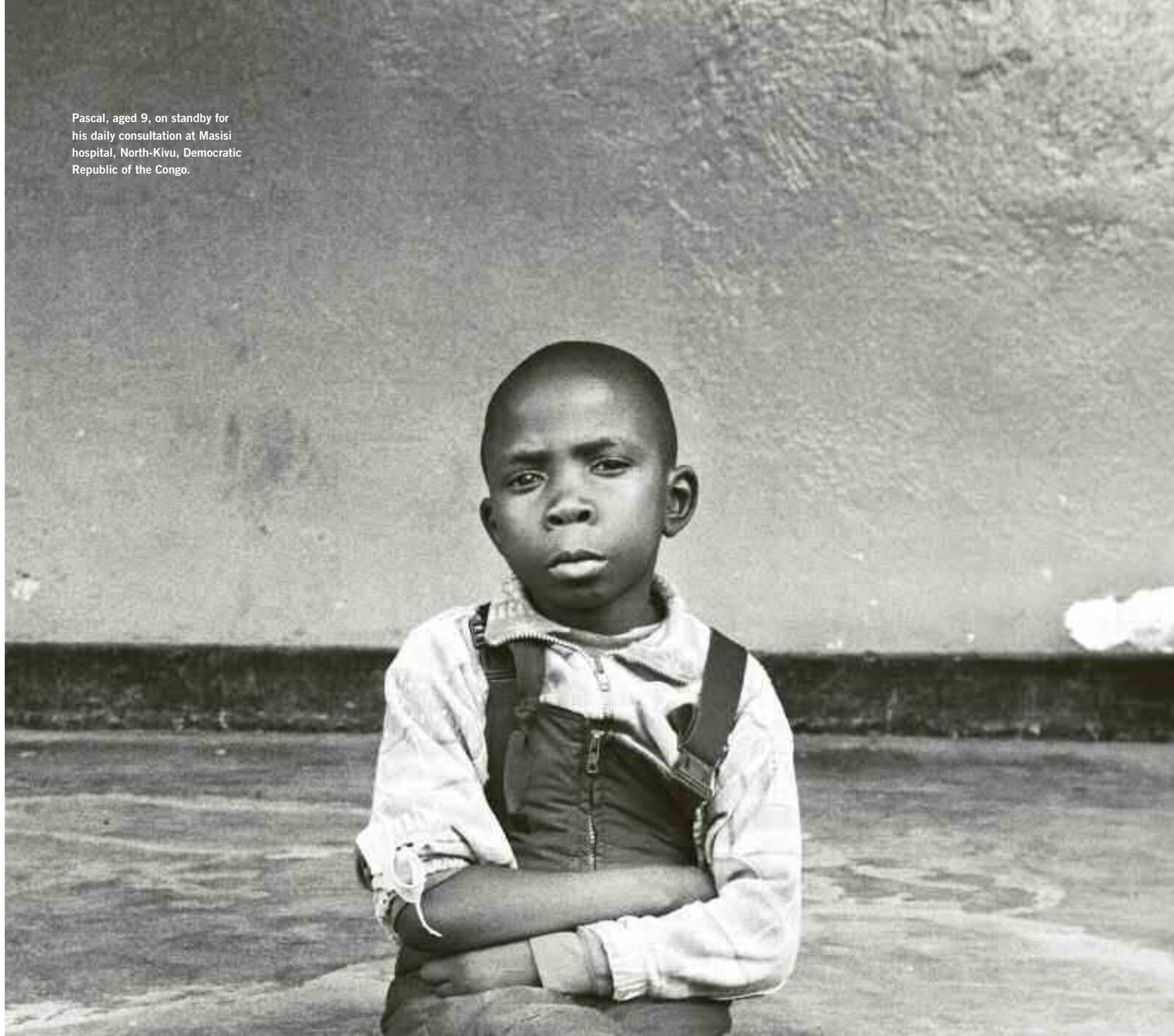
Security sector reform (SSR), the project to reorganize and professionalize the Congolese security forces so that they are capable of assuring security in a manner that upholds human rights and the rule of law, is one area where lack of genuine political engagement is evident. From the outset of the political transition in 2003, the SSR project has been at the centre of the international reconstruction effort for the Congo, but for all the millions of donor dollars lavished on it, remarkably little has been achieved. While accepting donor assistance for training and supplies, the government has not implemented deeper reforms. These include a reorganization of the army's pay and rationing systems, over which senior officers have resisted ceding control because they represent lucrative sources of corrupt income. They also include the Garde Républicaine, the presidential guard which has never been included in the army reform

Two women working in the fields near Nyanzale camp for internally displaced people, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, July 2008. Women try not to stray too far from the camp because they are at risk of being raped.

programme. Under the direct authority of the President, the Garde is the nation's best equipped and most powerful military unit. Its retention as, in effect, a private army outside democratic state control breeds suspicion and unease across the political and military spectrum.

Impunity for war crimes and other serious human rights violations is rife, particularly among senior army, police and armed group commanders. The DRC recycles its warlords, many of whom now occupy positions in the government and security forces. Ultimately this serves no-one. When challenged on why he has not

Pascal, aged 9, on standby for his daily consultation at Masisi hospital, North-Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo.





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BUILD A SAFER FAIRER FUTURE

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
THE CONGO

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surrendered former warlord Bosco Ntaganda to the International Criminal Court, President Kabila replied that the interests of peace and stability were more important than justice. Quietly, the international community has largely taken the same view. Amnesty International's experience, however, is that durable peace and the reconciliation of divided communities can only be achieved through the effective delivery of justice. It should be no surprise that the DRC has suffered repeated cycles of conflict and human rights abuse, when the authors of that violence are more likely to be rewarded than punished by the state.

SECURING THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE

Harnessing the country's full economic potential and directing this to meet the needs of the Congolese people is, Amnesty International believes, one of the major tasks and primary rights that the government should begin to fulfil. The DRC is one of the world's poorest states with limited capacity to meet all its public service obligations immediately. Yet the capacity it does have, from mineral deposits and other sources, is still considerable. It is just that public finances are mismanaged and not directed towards priorities that would bring most benefit to the Congolese

people. The potential of the DRC to prosper from agriculture, minerals and hydroelectric energy, and to use that wealth progressively to meet the socioeconomic needs of its people is sizeable ("All peoples shall freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources. This right shall be exercised in the exclusive interest of the people. In no case shall a people be deprived of it." – African Charter, Article 12). Unfortunately, the current and preceding governments have done little to combat corruption or to introduce transparent state financial controls. At the beginning of 2010, the DRC parliament's Economic and Financial Commission documented the disappearance, through alleged theft and misappropriation, of more than \$108 million from the public purse in 2008/09.

Lastly, much more government and international investment needs to be made into one of the DRC's most overlooked resources, its human rights activists. Congolese human rights defenders work tirelessly on behalf of victims and the dispossessed, on a minimum of resources. They are often the only people offering frontline services of care and assistance to rape survivors, child victims of conflict and poverty and other vulnerable and dispossessed groups. Most have suffered torture or rape, beatings and wrongful arrests for speaking out on behalf of their communities. Many

have suffered family or personal breakdowns because of the pressures loaded on them. Some have lost their lives – Pascal Kabungulu was murdered in 2005, but his killing has never been satisfactorily investigated; Floribert Chebeya, a prominent human rights activist, was found dead in his car on 2 June 2010. Many have been forced into exile, but the best have never left.

If the country is to make greater progress and fulfil its true potential, the interests of the Congolese people need to be the primary focus of government and international efforts. For as long as the underlying causes of conflict remain unaddressed, the country and its people will remain in limbo between an unsatisfactory peace and the threat of further approaching crises. These are just three of the steps that the DRC government, with international support, must take in order to provide a longer term solution to the conflict:

- Exclude all suspected perpetrators of war crimes and other human rights violations from the national army, police and intelligence services, pending investigation and trial. Reform and train the army so that it is capable of protecting all of the DRC's ethnic communities professionally, impartially and in a manner that upholds human rights and the rule of law.

- Reform and rehabilitate the country's justice system so that it is fully independent and capable of

Call for food distribution in Mugunga camp for internally displaced people near Goma, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, July 2008.

mounting investigations and prosecutions into all war crimes and serious human rights violations committed in the DRC. In line with the Constitution, limit the jurisdiction of military courts to purely military offences committed by military personnel.

- End the war against women and children. Reform those areas of Congolese law that still discriminate against women and children. Ensure the full participation of women and representatives of child rights organizations in all peace-building, reconstruction and reconciliation initiatives.

- Promote, encourage and protect the DRC's human rights activists, who are often the only people providing frontline services of care and assistance to victims and the dispossessed.

The full version of this article appears in *Congo in Limbo* by Cédric Gerbehaye, published by le bec en l'air Éditions, 2010. www.congoinlimbo.com

VALDÊNIA A. PAULINO LANFRANCHI

Growing up in Brazil's favelas, Valdênia A. Paulino Lanfranchi had first-hand experience of how poverty stifles people's choices and stunts their aspirations. Today, she is a lawyer and the founder of the Sapopemba Center for Human Rights in São Paulo, and campaigns against human rights violations in the favelas. In June, Valdênia A. Paulino Lanfranchi took part in informal hearings with the UN General Assembly ahead of the Millennium Development Goals Summit in September. At the hearings, non-governmental and civil society organizations voiced their opinions on the global fight against poverty.

Q What sparked your interest in human rights?

A I was born in Minas Gerais state. When I was a child, my family moved to São Paulo. Like many others, they were lured by promises of a better life that never came true. I witnessed hunger, death, child labour and institutional violence – particularly arbitrary use of police force in the favelas. Racial and social discrimination. Indifference from the authorities. It made me want to do something. When I was 14, I helped to improve child literacy in the slums. When I was 18, I organized a home for girls who were trying to quit prostitution. There were other initiatives, all aimed at overcoming human rights violations – the Center for Defending the Rights of the Child and Adolescent; initiatives for creating income opportunities for women; public hearings within the community; and many more.

What was important was that all these initiatives came about in the favelas – using local people's courage and creativity. Within this context, the focus of our work has always been on empowering children, young people and women, who are the main victims of human rights violations.

Q What do you think are the main issues in the struggle against human rights abuses in slums?

A Life in a slum is characterized by all kinds of human rights violations. They range from lack of decent housing, to restrictions to the right to free movement (because of the curfews imposed by drug traffickers and the police) to summary executions by state agents. Against this backdrop, our work aims to strengthen the community, and channel the strength that comes from the struggle for survival in the midst of destitution and social exclusion. We focus on

education, so that the local people know how public institutions work or should function, what their rights are and how to have access to them.

Q If you could change one thing about the situation in the favelas, what would it be?

A Our biggest challenge has always been to fight the institutional violence: the police violence; the lack of public services such as health, education, leisure centres, etc. People need to be aware of their rights. Human rights are the passport for those living in poverty to be recognized as human beings and citizens. Being recognized as a human being is the essential premise to enjoying fundamental rights, and awareness of human rights is the starting point of overcoming poverty. When people become aware of their basic rights, they discover they are the main actors of their own development and stop being content with left-overs. →



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They start to take part in the political process, claim their rights and make those in power accountable.

Crucially, communities need to be aware of the power of being socially and politically organized. The first important lesson learned by those living in poverty is that access to basic rights and services comes from the community's ability to organize and mobilize itself. It is also important to highlight the contribution of women. As women become aware of their rights, they usually become more committed and more involved in social issues and actions that benefit the community.

Q What should be the message to governments at the UN Millennium Development Goals Summit in September?

A That they should apply the international human rights treaties they signed and that they need to face squarely the structural causes of

world poverty which lie in the economic system we have today in the world. We urgently need a new economic paradigm that is based on respect for human rights, just multilateral trade relations and the preservation of the environment. Basic human rights and poverty eradication policies, such as education, health, housing, income redistribution, gender and racial equality must be established by law and have budgets fixed in law.

Q Do you have a message to our readers?

A Universal and indivisible human rights is the only way to ensure the inclusion of marginalized and neglected groups in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) process. A great portion of the world's population – the poorest in all countries and the poorest countries – haven't yet been significantly affected by the efforts to achieve the MDGs. We will have an estimated 1.4 billion people living in slums in 2015. We are not dealing with "minority"

Residents in favelas across São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, are trapped between domination by armed criminal gangs and violent military style police operations. Many are forced to leave their homes during confrontations between police and criminals as whole communities are put at risk.

groups here. Millions of homeless and landless people cannot be a minority. They can't be left out. A holistic human rights perspective must spur discussion towards a new socially inspired economic and political world order as the only way to overcome poverty, hunger and disease and sustain common life on this resource-limited planet. Such an immense task will call for collective action well beyond 2015.

WHERE WE STAND

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OPPOSES COMPREHENSIVE BANS ON FULL-FACE VEILS. WIRE EXPLAINS WHY AND LOOKS AT SOME OF THE KEY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES.

© AP/PA Photo/Christophe Ena



WHERE WE STAND ON THE BAN

In the last few months, Belgium, France, the Canadian province of Québec and a number of municipalities in Spain have moved to ban the wearing of full-face veils in public. There is a strong possibility that similar bans will be introduced in other countries.

In opposing these bans, Amnesty International has, not for the first time, gone against the current of popular opinion. Why have we done this?

Our starting point is international human rights law – in this case, the rights to freedom of expression and religion. As a general rule, people should be free to choose what and what not to wear. This is why Amnesty International opposes mandatory dress codes in Iran and Saudi Arabia just as strongly as it objects to state-imposed restrictions prohibiting certain forms of dress anywhere else in the world.

The rights to freedom of expression and the manifestation of religious belief are not absolute. Restrictions may be imposed where they are demonstrably necessary in the interests of public safety, the protection of public order, health, morals or the protection of the rights of others. However, comprehensive bans on full-face veils are not necessary in order to achieve any of these goals.

FAILING TO PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

One of the main arguments in support of the bans is that they are necessary to ensure gender equality and to protect women from being pressured at home or within their communities to wear full-face

veils. Advocates for this argument include members of the human rights community and the women's rights movement.

These are clearly important considerations, and states are obliged to safeguard the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of expression and religion against interference by others (including private individuals, such as family and community members). But comprehensive bans are not the way to do this. Protecting some women from being forced to wear full-face veils does not justify denying others the right to wear them if they choose to. In addition, there is the risk that women who currently wear full-face veils will become confined to their homes, less able to work or study and to access public services.

Governments should instead be looking to strengthen efforts to combat the discrimination faced by Muslim women, both in their communities and in the broader societies in which they live. Their focus should be on empowering women to make their own choices, rather than limit the range of choices available to them.

PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS

Some argue that comprehensive bans on full-face veils are necessary for public safety. However, legitimate security concerns can be met by allowing restrictions on covering the face completely in certain high-risk locations, or requiring people to reveal their faces to officials when deemed necessary, for example during identity checks. In most countries, the law already allows for this.

A woman in Le Mesnil-Saint-Denis, France, January 2010.

One of the main reasons for the popularity of so-called “burqa bans” is the feeling that full-face veils are alien to western traditions and values. International human rights law is quite clear on this point, however: the disapproval or discomfort of some, even a majority, can never be a legitimate reason for restricting the freedom of expression or religion of others.

The willingness of western governments and societies to proceed with such bans is indicative of a worrying attitude towards human rights in general. When the enjoyment of a right by a minority is subjected to popular or parliamentary vote, it ceases to be a right at all. Instead, it becomes a privilege, whose enjoyment is conditional on the approval or goodwill of the majority.

This downgrading of rights to privileges strikes at the very core of the human rights system. All those concerned for the integrity of this system should strongly oppose these bans.

WIRE [AUG/SEPT 10]

THEY WILL NEVER GIVE UP

THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES AROUND THE WORLD ARE STILL WAITING TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR DISAPPEARED SONS, WIVES, BROTHERS OR DAUGHTERS. UNABLE TO GRIEVE OR TO CARRY ON WITH THEIR LIVES, THEY CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE.

Student Sanjiv Kumar Karna was last seen by his family on 8 October 2003. He was picnicking in Janakpur, Dhanusha District, Nepal, when according to witnesses he and 10 others were beaten and arrested by a group of 25 to 30 army and police personnel. Witnesses say that they were then taken into police detention where they were interrogated. Six of the men were subsequently released, but Sanjiv and four friends – Durgesh Kumar Labh, Pramod Narayan Mandal, Shailendra Yadav and Jitendra Jha – have not been heard of since. His arrest is believed to be linked to his interest in student politics; he was a former member of a student union affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M, now called UCPN-M) who at the time was leading an armed insurgency against the government.

Sanjiv Kumar Karna's relatives registered complaints with the authorities and were repeatedly

assured that investigations were underway and that they would be informed of the results. However, nearly seven years on, no one has been arrested and brought to trial.

In 2006, the army claimed that they were not involved and that all five had been killed in a "police action" on the day of their arrests. The police refute the army's claim and deny involvement.

Sanjiv's father, Jai Kishore Labh, never stopped pursuing the truth about what happened to his son.

A lawyer by profession, he used his expertise to seek justice at both national and international levels. Over the years, Jai Kishore compiled valuable evidence and became a focal point for the campaign. Sadly, he died of a heart attack on 17 April this year, leaving a wife and younger son.

"My husband worked tirelessly to push the government to take action; even though he suspected justice

may not come in his lifetime he didn't give up and neither will we", says Bimila Labh. "There are some out there, those responsible, who think we will give up, that money will silence us, but it is not about compensation – it is about punishing those who did such a crime."

Amnesty International continues to seek justice for the family and is campaigning for a thorough and independent investigation into the disappearance of Sanjiv Kumar Karna and his friends, including the exhumation of a site where a number of bodies may have been buried at the time the five men were detained.

FALSE PROMISES

The true number of those who disappeared during the 10-year conflict between Nepal's security forces and the armed wing of the CPN-M may never be known. Amnesty International has repeatedly

raised concerns over enforced disappearances in Nepal, committed by both sides in the conflict, which began in 1996. In 2003/4, Nepal recorded the highest number of disappearances in the world.

In June 2007, the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal reported that the whereabouts of a total of 839 people, believed to be victims of enforced disappearance, were unknown. The small number of investigations by the police into individual cases of enforced disappearance, such as the investigation into the fate of Sanjiv Kumar Karna, remain stalled. To date, not one person has been brought to trial in a civilian court. Families of victims are no closer to establishing the truth, achieving justice or receiving reparations for what has happened to their loved ones.

Following the bilateral ceasefire in May 2006, the new coalition government and the CPN-M pledged their commitment to human rights in a series of agreements, culminating in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in November 2006. The Peace Agreement included a pledge to publicize the whereabouts of victims of enforced disappearance within 60 days, but to date this remains unfulfilled. Equally, a Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, although presented as bills in parliament, have yet to be established.

STOLEN HAPPINESS

All around the world, the whereabouts of thousands of victims of enforced disappearance remain unknown. People disappear at the hands of agents of the state or groups acting with its direct or indirect support to silence dissent, to eliminate political opposition, or simply because they belong to certain ethnic or religious groups. Those who disappear are beyond the protection of the law. Many are tortured. Many are killed. They all leave behind families desperate for information and for justice.

In Libya, thousands of families have relatives who have disappeared or been killed by agents of the state in



© Libyan Human Rights Solidarity

Families protesting for truth and justice, holding photographs of relatives who were killed in Abu Salim Prison in 1996. Benghazi, Libya.

ACT NOW

Please sign and send a solidarity card to Bimala Labh, the mother of Sanjiv Kumar Karna.

The card is written in Nepalese.

This is what it says:

Front:

Jai Kishore did not give up. Neither will we.

Back:

I stand in solidarity

Dear Bimala,

Your husband Jai Kishore's campaign for justice was inspiring and invaluable, not only in regards to the disappearance of your son Sanjiv Kumar Karna, but also for the hundreds of cases of conflict-related impunity in Nepal. Amnesty International members extend their condolences to you and your family at this time. Your husband and your son will not be forgotten. Amnesty International members will continue to support you and your campaign for truth, justice and reparations in the future.

Best wishes,

Please also sign and send a postcard (see insert) to Libya's Secretary of the General People's Committee for Justice, calling for full accountability for the enforced disappearances of Abu Salim prisoners.

30 August 2010 is International Day of the Disappeared.

past decades. These include families of up to 1,200 detainees believed to have been extrajudicially executed by the Libyan authorities on 29 June 1996, following a riot sparked by the appalling conditions at Abu Salim Prison in Tripoli.

Arrested at various dates from 1989 onwards and held unlawfully without charge or trial, or following grossly unfair trials, the detainees were not seen by their families again and were denied any contact with lawyers. The authorities refused to disclose their fate and whereabouts before the prison killings and, after June 1996, denied the killings took place. Many families continued to bring food and clothes to the prison gates until the early 2000s, believing their relatives were still alive.

Mohamed Hamil had three brothers who died in custody: Khaled, Saleh and Sanoussi Hamil. Two died in Abu Salim Prison in 1996 and one in a detention centre in the city of Benghazi. Throughout their detention between 1995 and 1998, the three men were completely cut off from the outside world. The family had to wait until March 2009 for the first official acknowledgement that the brothers had died. The circumstances of their deaths were not provided. "They [the Libyan authorities] stole the

happiness from the life of a whole family", Mohamed Hamil said.

The first official acknowledgement that any disturbances had taken place in Abu Salim Prison came eight years later; but to date promises of investigations have not been fulfilled.

FAMILIES REFUSE TO FORGET

Having suffered in silence and isolation for over a decade, the families of victims of the Abu Salim Prison killings started to air their demands publicly. In Benghazi, a court case ruled that the authorities must make public the exact fate of 33 individuals believed to have died in the custody of the Libyan security forces. An Organizing Committee of Families of Victims of Abu Salim in Benghazi has been established, although the authorities have refused to register it.

Protests are held regularly in Benghazi, where families demand justice and to know where their loved ones are buried. They insist that only when these demands are met will they accept financial compensation. "All we want is to live a secure life, a stable life, a life with some dignity", says Fathi Tourbil, a member of Organizing Committee of Families of Victims of

Abu Salim in Benghazi. "A person is abducted from his house, his work, the public street, and for years the mother, the wife, the children live in pain."

While the Libyan authorities generally tolerate such protests, some participants have faced harassment, threats and even arrest. In March 2009, five members of the Organizing Committee of Families of Victims of Abu Salim in Benghazi were arrested and denied any communication with the outside world, including their families and lawyers, for several days before being released without charge. Two Amnesty International delegates were prevented by the authorities from boarding a flight from Tripoli to Benghazi on 21 May 2009.

Far from responding to the families' legitimate demands, the authorities first ignored the families and later tried to pacify them by offering financial compensation – accepted by some families but rejected by many others. The authorities have not revealed the truth about the fate of thousands of individuals who disappeared or died at the hands of the security forces and no perpetrators have been brought to justice. Some allegedly still hold official positions.



LEAVING NOTHING TO CHANCE IN MYANMAR ELECTIONS

Later this year, Myanmar will hold its first national elections in two decades. The date has not yet been set, but what is certain is that the polls will take place against a backdrop of political repression.

Many of Myanmar's 50 million people live in poverty and suffer from ongoing human rights violations. Those who express dissenting views face harassment, arbitrary arrest, torture, imprisonment and sometimes even extrajudicial executions – political prisoners now number over 2,200.

When elections were last held in 1990, the National League for

Democracy (NLD) won a resounding victory, but the military government ignored the election results and arrested scores of opposition activists. This has haunted the government both domestically and internationally ever since. Now they have an opportunity to place the 1990 elections firmly behind them.

However, in June, political parties were banned from undertaking campaigning activities that could “harm security, the rule of law and community peace”. This provision is so broad that it allows for the criminalization of peaceful political

activity. For decades, the government has used vaguely worded security laws to suppress peaceful political dissent and there is a real fear that activists, especially those from ethnic minorities and the NLD, which is boycotting the elections, will come under increased repression as the election approaches.

Myanmar's government must halt its repression of activists. The people of Myanmar must be allowed to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association throughout the election period and beyond.

ACT NOW

The international community, especially Myanmar's neighbours in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), has a key role to play.

Call on Viet Nam, the Chair of ASEAN, to work with other ASEAN states to press Myanmar to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience and ensure that all people in Myanmar can enjoy the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association throughout the elections and beyond.

Please write to:
H.E. Dr Pham Gia Khiem
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister
of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Ton That Dam Street
Ba Dinh District
Ha Noi
Viet Nam
Fax: (84-4) 3 823 1872
Email: bc.mfa@mfa.gov.vn
Salutation: Your Excellency

GEORGIA: TIME TO END THE CRISIS OF DISPLACEMENT

About 250 people, all internally displaced, are living in a dilapidated building in the city of Zugdidi, Georgia. The site, a former printing house, has no running water, so when the electrical wiring caught fire residents had to get water from a nearby well to avert disaster. The building, which has only two toilets, is in such poor condition that the authorities deemed it too rundown to be repaired. However, no alternative accommodation has been provided to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants.

This story is not unique. Six per cent of the country's population, around 247,000 individuals, are displaced within its borders – referred to as internally displaced people (IDPs) in international law. Most of them were forced to leave their homes as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent territorial conflicts. Their government has been failing them for nearly two decades; far too many of them have been living on the margins of society, with

inadequate housing and little access to work and education. Many survive on an IDP allowance of 22 lari (US\$12) a month. Poor living conditions and insufficient access to healthcare also compromise their right to health and many of those displaced struggle to pay medical costs – “the medical insurance is useless, unless you almost die”, one woman told Amnesty International.

The war with Russia in August 2008 brought about the most recent wave of internal displacement in Georgia, uprooting around 192,000 people. Around 26,000 of them are still displaced. This latest flood of displaced people focused the world's attention on the ongoing crisis and the Georgian government finally acknowledged its obligations to uphold their rights. It re-housed the majority of those displaced in August 2008 and adopted an action plan for IDPs.

However, after two years of international donor money pouring into the country, the daily reality for



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many of the displaced has not changed. Thousands continue to be trapped in “collective centres” such as the one in Zugdidi.

“It is very hard to sit here. It feels so idle”, an elderly couple in a Tbilisi collective centre told Amnesty International. “We used to have a small plot of land. We could have been working in our garden and not require any assistance from the government.” In the city of Gori, an internally displaced woman told Amnesty International: “I am not young anymore. But I should have the chance to live the rest of my life in

A man outside his accommodation at a collective centre near Gori, Georgia, March 2010.

dignity.” It is time that the Georgian government ensures that she, and many others, are able to do just that.

ACT NOW

Amnesty International's report on economic and social rights of IDPs in Georgia is published on 5 August.

HELP US ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY IN GHANA

AS GHANA REVIEWS ITS CONSTITUTION, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GHANA CALLS ON WIRE READERS TO SUPPORT ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY.

Twelve men condemned to death stared down the barrel of a gun. Each had been found guilty of armed robbery or murder; serious crimes that require serious punishment. Yet the moment the firing squad squeezed their triggers and the 12 bodies collapsed to the ground, a greater crime had been committed.

Seventeen years have passed since the Ghanaian government ordered the 12 executions in July 1993. Since then, courts have continued to impose death sentences but presidential pardons have either commuted such sentences to life imprisonment or released the prisoners. According to the Ghana Prisons Service, 99 prisoners, including two women, are currently on death row.

Everyone has the right to life. The death penalty violates this right and constitutes the ultimate denial of human rights. It is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, without exception, regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to kill the prisoner.

Amnesty International Ghana has campaigned for the abolition of the death penalty for many years and this is a unique opportunity to end this brutal practice. As part of the review of the 1992 Constitution, currently underway, the government has invited civil society groups and ordinary Ghanaians to submit suggestions for reforms. Article 13 of the current Constitution guarantees the right to life. However, the same article allows the state to execute citizens in "execution of a sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence under the laws of Ghana of which he has been convicted." Amnesty International strongly urges President John Evans

Atta Mills and the Ghanaian parliament to abolish the death penalty as soon as possible.

NOW IS THE TIME

The death penalty has been on Ghana's statute books since English common law was implemented in 1874. Ghana has applied a de facto moratorium on the death penalty since 1993. However, it still retains the death penalty for armed robbery, treason and first-degree murder. Despite the lack of implementation, the threat of death by execution still hangs over ordinary Ghanaians. "The death penalty is kept as part of our legal system because it makes the government appear tough on crime", says Vincent Adzahlie-Mensah, Chair of Amnesty International Ghana.

Ghana's retentionist policy is out of step with the rest of the world. A total of 139 countries – more than two thirds of the nations of the world – have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. In 2007 and 2008, the UN General Assembly adopted resolutions calling for a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

The African Commission on Human and

Peoples' Rights has repeatedly called on African Union member states to abolish the death penalty. Burundi and Togo did recently abolish the death penalty, reflecting the changing views of people in West Africa about capital punishment.

Ghana has been a leading light in the fight to protect human rights in Africa. Its death penalty policy is a brutal exception. Amnesty International calls on President Mills to formally abolish the death penalty in Ghana.

ACT NOW

WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GHANA

Join us in the fight for human rights and write to the President, asking him to take all necessary steps to abolish the death penalty, and to vote in favour of a third UN General Assembly resolution for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty when this is considered in late 2010.

Please write to:
President of the Republic of Ghana
H.E. Professor John Evans Atta Mills
Office of the President
PO Box 1627
The Castle, Osu
Accra
Ghana
Salutation: Your Excellency

For more information, visit www.amnestyghana.org

Students at the Accra High School protesting against state executions and calling for the abolition of the death penalty in law as part of Amnesty International Ghana's campaign. Accra, Ghana, June 2010.



DID YOU KNOW?

ONLINE ACTIVISM – NOW EASIER THAN EVER

Amnesty International's new Activism Centre is now up and running on our website. Sign online petitions, use other activism tools and find out which appeals are doing well and where your support is really needed. You can start right now – go to www.amnesty.org/en/activism-center

JUSTICE NOW FOR VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE IN SUDAN

On 10 May 2008, members of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a Darfuri armed opposition group, attacked the city of Omdurman, near the capital Khartoum. Sudanese security forces stopped the attack within hours. More than 200 people were killed. In the weeks following the attack, the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) arrested hundreds of individuals of Darfuri origin.

Al Ghali Yahya Shegifat, a Sudanese journalist, was among those arrested. He was detained on 14 May 2008 and was initially held with about 150 others. During his detention, Al Ghali Yahya Shegifat was deprived of sleep and his bathroom use was restricted. Initially, the authorities interrogated detainees regularly and forbade them to speak to each other.

Until his release on 22 July 2008, Al Ghali Yahya Shegifat was denied access to his lawyers and to his family. Other families of detainees still do not know the whereabouts of their relatives as many of those arrested remain unaccounted for. Amnesty International considers them to be victims of enforced disappearance.

In April 2010, the government announced that it had identified and buried 108 alleged JEM fighters who, it claimed, had been killed during the attack on Omdurman. The government has denied holding any other detainees.

The use of secret and unofficial places of detention has been a long-standing practice in Sudan. In the 1990s, political detainees, students and human rights defenders were commonly held for long periods of time in unofficial places of detention, known as "ghost houses", without access to lawyers, medical assistance or their families.

The UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances has requested permission to visit Sudan in July 2009. The request, like all previous ones, has been denied.

ACT NOW

Sign and send a postcard (see insert) calling on the Sudanese government to acknowledge the whereabouts and condition of all victims of enforced disappearance in Sudan.

Members of Amnesty International France protest against human rights violations in Russia. Paris, June 2010.





© Pierre-Yves Brunaud

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

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www.amnesty.org

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



**‘MILLIONS OF
HOMELESS AND
LANDLESS PEOPLE
CANNOT BE LEFT
OUT’**

**VALDÊNIA A. PAULINO LANFRANCHI
ON THE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



GUATEMALA

CLAUDINA VELÁSQUEZ

**“PLEASE
DON’T TIRE OR
FORGET US”**



© Private

19-year-old university student Claudina Velásquez had been studying to become a lawyer when she was shot dead in August 2005. Amnesty International is deeply concerned that her killers may never be brought to justice as serious deficiencies have been reported in the murder investigation.

No tests were performed on the primary suspects to establish whether or not they had fired a gun. It is likely that critical forensic evidence has now been lost and potential witnesses have still not been interviewed.

A high number of similar cases in Guatemala are shelved on the grounds of lack of evidence, due to poorly conducted investigations. Families seeking help from the authorities are often faced with indifference and discrimination. Meanwhile, the number of women killed in

Guatemala continues to rise: according to government figures, 717 women were killed in 2009, an increase on the previous year.

In 2009, Claudina Velásquez father Jorge thanked Amnesty International members for their support so far: “Thank you, thank you very much for your big hearts... and for your constant and unconditional support in the search for justice for Claudina, for us and for Guatemala... Please don’t tire or forget us, keep us always in your hearts, minds and pens; because without you, without your help, we couldn’t carry on in this struggle that seems to have no end.”

Please write, asking President Álvaro Colom Caballeros what steps have been taken to ensure that Claudina Velásquez’s murder investigation is conducted in a co-ordinated,

full and effective manner so that those responsible can be brought to justice without further delay. Ask also what steps have been taken to open new lines of investigation and question possible witnesses. Send appeals to:

President Álvaro Colom Caballeros
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Casa Presidencial, 6a. Avenida, 4-18 Zona 1.
Guatemala City
Guatemala
Fax: +502 2383 8390
Salutation: Dear President/ Estimado Sr. Presidente

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

MORDECHAI VANUNU

**WHISTLE-BLOWER
IMPRISONED
AGAIN**



© Adeline O’Keefe

Mordechai Vanunu, an anti-nuclear whistle-blower, was sentenced to a further three months in jail on 23 May 2010. He had previously served an 18-year sentence for revealing information about Israel’s secret nuclear programme. A former technician at Israel’s nuclear plant near Dimona, Mordechai Vanunu was abducted in Rome by Israeli secret service (Mossad) agents in 1986 after revealing details of Israel’s nuclear arsenal to the British newspaper *The Sunday Times*.

Following his abduction, Mordechai Vanunu was tried and sentenced to 18 years’ imprisonment, the first 11 of which he spent in solitary confinement. When he was released in 2004, the Israeli authorities placed restrictions on his freedoms of expression, association and movement. He is forbidden from communicating with foreigners, including journalists. He also

cannot leave Israel, go near foreign embassies, borders or ports and must inform the police if he changes his place of residence. His latest jail sentence was handed down for breaching these arbitrary restrictions by speaking to foreigners. Since he is imprisoned merely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association, Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Israeli officials claim that restricting his freedom is necessary to prevent him from divulging further secrets about Israel’s nuclear programme. Mordechai Vanunu has, however, repeatedly stated that he revealed all he knew about Israel’s nuclear arsenal in 1986 and that he has no further information. He has not been employed in Israel’s nuclear programme for 25 years.

Please write, calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mordechai Vanunu, and lift the restrictions imposed on him. Send appeals to:

Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan St.
Hakirya,
Jerusalem 91950
Israel
Fax: +972 2 566 4838, +972 2 6496659
Email: bnetanyahu@knesset.gov.il
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

LIBYA/EGYPT

‘EZZAT YOUSSEF AL-MAQRIF AND JABALLAH MATAR

**OPPOSITION
MEMBERS
FORCIBLY
DISAPPEARED**



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‘Ezzat Youssef al-Maqrif (left) and Jaballah Hamed Matar were forcibly disappeared in Cairo in March 1990. Both men were prominent members of Libyan opposition group, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, and it is thought that they were handed over to the Libyan authorities by their Egyptian counterparts. These cases illustrate the widespread pattern of enforced disappearances of Libyan nationals suspected of being opponents of the Libyan system.

Jaballah Matar’s son, Hisham Matar, said: “The silence and uncertainty surrounding my father has at times been nearly impossible to bear. I thank the members of Amnesty and urge them to keep on their good work.”

Please write to the Libyan authorities, calling for full, impartial and independent investigations into the enforced disappearances of Jaballah Matar and ‘Ezzat Youssef al-Maqrif, for the truth about their fate to be disclosed to their families, adequate reparation for their families and for those responsible to be brought to justice. Send appeals to:

His Excellency Mustafa Abdeljalil
Secretary of the General People’s
Committee for Justice
Secretariat of the General People’s
Committee for Justice
Tripoli, Libya
Fax: +218 21 4805427
Email: secretary@aladel.gov.ly

Please also call on the Egyptian authorities to conduct full, impartial and independent investigations into the enforced disappearances of Libyan nationals in Egypt and make the results public. Any Egyptian officials or individuals involved in the enforced disappearance of Libyan nationals in Egypt should be brought to justice. Send appeals to:

Prosecutor General
Counsellor Abd El-Megeed Mahmoud
Dar al-Qadha al-Ali
Ramses Street
Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20 22 577 4716
Email: abmahmoud@idsc.net.eg
Salutation: Dear Counsellor

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

GERMAIN NDABAMENYA ETIKILOME, MÉDARD MABWAKA EGBONDE AND BOSCH NDALA UMB

DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

Three former members of the security services in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are being held without charge or trial in the neighbouring Republic of Congo. Germain Ndabamenya Etikilome, Médard Mabwaka Egbonde and Bosch Ndala Umba have been detained since March 2004 by the military security service, Direction Centrale des Renseignements Militaires (DCRM) in the capital, Brazzaville.

All three men say that they fled the DRC to avoid being arrested by the authorities. They allege that they were being falsely accused of seeking to overthrow the DRC government. They all claimed asylum in Brazzaville. Bosch Ndala Umba was granted refugee status while the other two men are still awaiting a decision on their asylum applications.

Their detention constitutes a violation of the Republic of Congo's obligations under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. It also violates the country's Code of Penal Procedure. The Code provides that a suspect should be brought before a judicial official within 48 hours of being arrested, and should either be charged with an offence or released. The Code also provides that an accused person should be brought to trial within six months of his or her arrest. The unexplained and prolonged detention of the three men constitutes an unlawful deprivation of their liberty.

Please write, calling for Germain Ndabamenya Etikilome, Médard Mabwaka Egbonde and Bosch Ndala Umba to be released immediately. Send appeals to:

Son Excellence M. Denis Sassou Nguesso
Président de la République
Chef du Gouvernement
Présidence de la République
B.P. 2006, Brazzaville
Republic of Congo
Fax: + 242 2 81 32 55
Salutation: Dear President

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

AVDO PALIĆ

END IMPUNITY FOR ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

In August 2009, the remains of Colonel Avdo Palić were identified by the authorities, eight years after being exhumed from a mass grave in Rogatica municipality in November 2001. Avdo Palić was a war-time commander of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the UN "safe haven" of Žepa. He was forcibly taken from the UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) compound in Žepa by soldiers from the Bosnian Serb Army on 27 July 1995.

While Amnesty International welcomes the identification of the mortal remains of Avdo Palić, it is concerned about the length of time taken by the authorities to reach this stage. The organization is calling on the authorities to take meaningful steps to bring those responsible for his enforced disappearance to justice.

According to different estimates, the

whereabouts of between 10,000 and 12,000 people who were forcibly disappeared during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still unknown. In addition, about 3,000 bodies which have been located and exhumed are still unidentified.

In the vast majority of cases, impunity for enforced disappearances and other war crimes prevails and families of the victims continue to be denied their rights to redress and reparation.

Please write to the Chief Prosecutor of Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) comprises two semi-autonomous entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, expressing concern about the continuing impunity for enforced disappearances and other violations of human

rights and international humanitarian law during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, voice your concerns about the lack of justice and redress for the victims and their relatives. Please send appeals to:

Amor Bukić
Chief Prosecutor of Republika Srpska
Vladike Platona bb
78000 Banja Luka
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Fax: +387 51 316 168
Email: rjt@inecco.net
Salutation: Dear Chief Prosecutor

VIET NAM

THICH QUANG DO

MONK UNDER HOUSE ARREST

Thich Quang Do, an 81-year-old Buddhist monk and prominent scholar and writer, has spent much of the past 30 years under house arrest or in prison for persistently calling for religious freedom, human rights and democracy. He is currently under house arrest at Thanh Minh Zen monastery in Ho Chi Minh City, where he has been confined since 2003. He has been nominated nine times for the Nobel Peace Prize. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Thich Quang Do is the head of the Unified Buddhist Church of Viet Nam (UBCV), which the authorities banned in 1975 when they established a new state-controlled Buddhist

Church. Since then, UBCV members have been targets for repression at various times for trying to continue their peaceful activities, including social welfare projects and criticism of human rights violations by the Vietnamese authorities.

In 1995, Thich Quang Do was arrested while on a relief mission to help flood victims in the Mekong Delta. He spent three years in prison and was released following international pressure. In February 2001, he wrote an eight-point plan for peaceful democratic change, "Appeal for Democracy in Viet Nam". He was arrested again and sentenced to two years' administrative detention. In October 2003, he was arrested while returning to Ho Chi Minh City from a UBCV

meeting in another province. Security officials told him that he had been placed in administrative detention for an indefinite period.

Please write, calling for Thich Quang Do to be released immediately and unconditionally from house arrest. Send appeals to:

Nguyen Tan Dung
Office of the Prime Minister
Hoang Hoa Tham
Ha Noi
Viet Nam
Fax: +8443 823 1872
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister



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जयकिशोरज्यू त्यसै
बस्नु भएको थिएन
हामी पनि त्यसै बस्दैनौ

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



ABU SALIM PRISON
KILLINGS
JUSTICE FOR FAMILIES

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



PASS IT ON, AND ON, AND ON....

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.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



JUSTICE NOW
FOR VICTIMS
OF ENFORCED
DISAPPEARANCE
IN SUDAN



Your Excellency,

The thousands of families of the Abu Salim Prison victims have the right to know why their relatives were arrested, disappeared, victimized and killed in June 1996. These families deserve answers and reparation from the Libyan authorities for the long years of suffering and waiting to discover the fate of their loved ones.

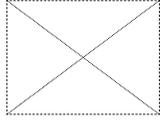
Families will only be able to mourn and move on with their lives once their suffering is recognized. I urge you to ensure that impartial, independent and full investigations are conducted immediately, that the results are made public and the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____

Index: MPE 19/016/2010

Image: Families protesting for truth and justice and holding photographs of relatives who were killed in Abu Salim Prison in 1996. Benghazi, Libya.
© Libyan Human Rights Solidarity
Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom. www.amnesty.org



**His Excellency Mustafa Abdeljailil
Secretary of the General People's Committee
for Justice
Secretariat of the General People's Committee
for Justice
Tripoli
Libya**

PASS IT ON, AND ON, AND ON....

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.
Visit www.amnesty.org/en/join for info in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.
You can also write to:
Online Communities Team, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom
www.amnesty.org

**TOGETHER
WE CAN MAKE
OUR VOICE
HEARD**



म ऐक्यवद्धता व्यक्त गर्दछु

प्रिय विमलाङ्ग,

तपाईंका श्रीमान् अवैक्यवद्धताको न्याय प्राप्तिका लागि उन्मुक्तको बर्नामान उन तपाईंको छुट्टा कन्वेन्सनमा कसैलाई जफत बनाइएको संदर्भमा मात्र नभई नेपालमा भएको इन्डिया कानडा विधायक दण्डनीयता कसैको खोजि विद्यो त्यो प्रविधान ज्यादै उल्लंघनाकारी र मानवपूर्ण विद्यो । एउटाको इन्टरनेसनलमा हामी सम्बन्धन यस विषय सम्बन्धन तपाईं र तपाईंको परिवारले तार्किक सम्बन्धन ज्ञान गर्नुपर्ने । तपाईंका श्रीमान् र छोरालाई विभिन्न देश । हामी एउटाको इन्टरनेसनलमा सम्बन्धन तपाईं र तपाईंको साथ, त्याग र पीडनमा प्राप्तिका लागि तपाईंको विचारहरूमा तपाईंको अवैक्यवद्धता विरुद्ध चलाउनु पर्नेछ ।
हार्दिक गुनगुन साथ

नाम/नामा: _____
आपको/आपको: _____



Your Excellency,

I am concerned that many people arrested following the May 2008 attack on Omdurman are still unaccounted for.

I urge you to acknowledge the whereabouts and condition of all victims of enforced disappearance in Sudan. All of these individuals must either be immediately charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial promptly and fairly and without recourse to the death penalty, or released.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____

Image: (a) Kabura and (b) Salah Latah in their house in Amroha, Nepal © IHR
Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW UK. www.amnesty.org

**President Omar Al Bashir
Office of the President
People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum
Sudan**

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