

The Wire

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Children maimed by Israeli cluster bombs in Lebanon

Hundreds of thousands of children in Lebanon did not start school on time this September. Many of them had to change schools, either because theirs had been destroyed or because they had fled their villages after losing their homes. According to UNICEF, some 50 schools were destroyed and up to 300 were damaged by Israeli bombardments in the recent 34-day conflict between the Israeli army and Hizbullah militants. Thousands of homes were also reduced to rubble.

When the children eventually returned to school they found that many desks remained empty. Of the 1,000 civilians killed by Israeli bombardments during the war, one third were children.

Even though the war is over children continue to be killed and injured by unexploded cluster bombs launched by the Israeli army into south Lebanon during the war. Cluster bombs contain hundreds of small but lethal bomblets which spread across an area up to twice the size of a football field. These bombs often fail to explode on impact, but thereafter the slightest movement can set them off, killing or injuring those nearby. Their small size and shape – some deceptively like tennis balls, others like large torch batteries – make them particularly difficult to detect and attractive to children.

“They seem innocuous, especially to the curious mind of a child,” commented Chris Clark of the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC) in Lebanon. “They’re small, they easily conceal themselves amongst all the rubble or the debris of the bombing. We find that children unwittingly pick them up and then, sadly, suffer injuries from them.”

Speaking from a hospital bed, six-year-old ‘Abbas Yusef Shibli told AI how he was playing with three friends near his home in Blida village on 26 August when one of the children tried to pick up what looked like a perfume bottle. It exploded, rupturing his colon and gall bladder, and perforating his lung.

His three playmates were also injured. Eleven-year-old ‘Ali Hassan suffered a broken leg and both he and his nine-year-old sister, Sahar, sustained shrapnel injuries. “Ali’s leg has to stay in a cast for one and a half months and he can’t go play outside,” said Sahar, “and now it’s better to play in the house because of the bombs. I told other children not to touch anything outside, not even a stone, and even under a leaf there could be a bomb”.

UNMACC estimates that about one million unexploded cluster bombs remain in and around villages across south Lebanon. According to the UN, 90 per cent of the cluster bombs were fired in the last three days of the conflict, after the ceasefire had already been agreed. To date the Israeli authorities have failed to provide maps of the exact areas targeted by their forces when using cluster bombs. Without those maps, de-mining experts face an arduous and perilous task, and relief and reconstruction efforts are hampered. Meanwhile, Lebanon remains a deadly minefield for adult and child alike.

To take action now, go to AI’s website at www.amnesty.org/actnow/

[Picture caption: Twelve-year old girls, Marwa and Sikne Mer’i stand with friends near the remains of their home in the village of Ait al-Shaab, Lebanon. The girls suffered shrapnel wounds from a cluster bomb explosion near their home on 17 August.]

Pakistan sells ‘terror suspects’ to USA

“We got you cheap, for only \$5,000.”

This is what US guards told Adel Kamil Abdallah, a Bahraini national, after he was taken into custody. Despite having legal travel documents allowing him to enter Pakistan, he was seized by Pakistani military officials, handed over to US forces and flown to Kandahar in Afghanistan and then to Guantánamo Bay where he was held for four years without charge or trial.

Adel Kamil Abdallah is just one of hundreds of individuals who were abducted, sometimes by Pakistani local police or border officials, and sold into US custody. From 2002, the USA began distributing flyers offering substantial financial rewards for suspected enemies. Pakistani officials have stated that some 700 terror suspects have been arrested and of those some 370 have been handed over to the USA. However, far from being identified terror suspects issued with arrest warrants, these were people of different nationalities captured apparently at random.

Of those arrested, most have not had any access to due legal process, many have been subjected to enforced disappearance, some have later turned up in US custody, while the whereabouts of others remain unknown to this day.

Abdur Sayed Rahman, a Pakistani chicken farmer, was arrested in January 2002 in his village home near the Afghan border. During 36 days in Pakistani detention, he was asked by Pakistani officials if there was anyone in his village with the same name. He was told that police “were looking for someone else, but now they had me. So they were going to throw me in jail to make the report look right.”

He was transferred to Kandahar and then to Guantánamo Bay where US officials told him that he was Abdur Rahman Zahid, Taleban Deputy Foreign Minister. He was subsequently accused of being a military judge under the Taleban, responsible for torturing and killing Afghan nationals.

Enforced disappearances were almost unheard of in Pakistan before the “war on terror”. Now they are a growing phenomenon, spreading beyond terror suspects to Baloch and Sindhi nationalists, journalists and medical personnel who allegedly treat terror suspects. Many of those detained have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated and their families have been harassed and threatened when seeking information.

In response, AI and the non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan gathered family members, lawyers, journalists and members of parliament at an October workshop in Islamabad to encourage action. As Amina, wife of Masood Janjua, explained: “When your dear person is missing, in prison maybe being tortured, you cannot breathe properly. It’s the worst thing that can happen. It’s the bitterest of agonies.”

See AI’s latest report, *Pakistan: Human rights ignored in the “war on terror”* (ASA 33/036/2006).

[Picture caption: Amina shows journalists a photograph of her husband, Masood Janjua, at an AI press conference in Islamabad, Pakistan, on 29 September 2006.]

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Sudan: ‘If you leave the camp, we will kill you.’

Fresh fighting and attacks by government-backed forces are again threatening the people of Darfur and forcing thousands to flee their homes. Even in the camps where 1.8 million displaced people are effectively imprisoned, the occupants still face killings and rape by the Janjawid militia that have appropriated their homes and land.

“The Janjawid attacked the outskirts of the camp, killing men, raping women and stealing goods,” said a 24-year-old Masalit woman from Tullus, West Darfur. “They use camels and are in khaki uniforms. Shortly before I left the Habila camp, I was told, along with other women: ‘If you leave the camp, we will kill you.’ The Janjawid are at the camp entrance and the army is inside... The only way to escape is by night. During the day the Janjawid can find you.”

Her words are echoed by numerous other men and women who have fled the camps for neighbouring Chad. The voices of those inside Darfur have been silenced. No outsiders can get into the areas currently under attack.

Darfur is on the brink of chaos. Despite a peace agreement in May, the fighting and killing has not stopped. Instead, the agreement has opened up a new conflict, pitting the government and its allies against opposition forces that did not sign up to it. A major new government offensive is targeting the areas of Darfur still under the control of the non-signatory groups, which include the largest faction of the opposition Sudan Liberation Army. The non-signatories share the widespread mistrust in Darfur of government promises, so frequently made and broken before, to disarm the Janjawid militias.

Civilians are being killed in large-scale aerial bombardments and in ground attacks by government forces and Janjawid militia. Those most at risk of attack are mainly in North Darfur, but government and Janjawid attacks are also reported in West and South Darfur. In large parts of West Darfur, the Janjawid have almost complete control and are gradually occupying the land which was depopulated by the massive forced displacements in 2003 and 2004. Hundreds of thousands of people – most of the original population – now live in camps for the displaced or in refugee camps across the border in Chad.

The increased insecurity has led to the total withdrawal of humanitarian aid in some areas. Less than 60 per cent of the population in Darfur now has access to aid, and thousands of people face death or serious damage to their health. If the fighting spreads, the entire Darfur aid operation will be under threat.

The regional repercussions of the conflict are felt most strongly in eastern Chad. Janjawid attacks on civilians directly across the border from Darfur began in late 2005 and continue still. The communities under attack in Chad have begun arming themselves, and are now providing new recruits to the Darfur armed groups opposing the Sudanese government.

The peacekeeping forces of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in Darfur have been powerless to protect civilians, as refugees in eastern Chad have testified. They are too few in number and seriously under-resourced. They cannot fulfil their mandate to stop attacks by the government and Janjawid, or to investigate ceasefire violations. Repeated failures to provide protection have discredited AMIS in the eyes of Darfuris, who look now to the UN to provide them the protection they desperately need.

The government of Sudan has fiercely resisted the deployment of international peacekeepers in Darfur, despite its support by nearly all political parties in Sudan. AI calls on members of the UN Security Council and the African Union to ensure the deployment of an effective peacekeeping force with a strong mandate to proactively protect civilians.

The fighting could escalate further along the Chadian border and potentially into the Central African Republic. It will be the unarmed and unprotected civilians who pay the price for the continuing neglect of this region.

[Picture caption: Thousands of activists and AI members took part in a global show of support for the people of Darfur on 17 September, calling on the Sudanese government to allow the deployment of UN peacekeepers. AI Netherlands' collage shows some of the activities taken by AI members around the world.]

Arbitrary deadlines hamper tribunals

The UN Security Council has set a deadline of 2010 for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR) to complete their work.

The Tribunals were established by the UN Security Council to ensure the investigation and prosecution of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. So far, the ICTY has completed proceedings on 96 out of 161 individuals indicted. The ICTR has completed proceedings on 21 out of 90 individuals.

The arbitrary deadline of 2010 does not recognize the problems facing the Tribunals, including the failure of states to arrest and surrender a number of those accused. Eighteen people indicted by the ICTR remain at large as well as six people indicted by the ICTY, including Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. The outstanding cases include people accused of being most responsible for the crimes. AI believes that they should be prosecuted by the Tribunals established for that purpose.

AI supports the ICTY Prosecutor's call for a one-year extension to finish its work. Further extensions may be required for it to complete its cases.

The ICTR Prosecutor, who has yet to request an extension, has indicated that the ICTR cannot complete its cases by 2010 and is seeking to transfer up to 12 cases to national courts, including in Rwanda. However, the weak Rwandan judicial system needs major legal and practical reforms and currently does not have the capacity to try cases effectively.

AI has called for the creation of comprehensive action plans to end impunity before the Tribunals are closed, including measures to strengthen national justice systems to prosecute the thousands of other crimes.

In December, the Security Council will review the completion strategy of both Tribunals.

ACT NOW!

Please write, calling for an extension to the completion strategy deadlines for the International Criminal Tribunals to ensure that all indicted people are prosecuted by the Tribunals. Urge that the strategies include a comprehensive action plan to tackle impunity ensuring that national courts can prosecute other crimes effectively.

Send letters to: Ambassador Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN Security Council President, Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, 809 United Nations Plaza, 4th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA. Fax: +1 (212) 758 4952 / 5630. Email: qatar-e@qatarmission.org

Women in Mexico denied justice

“They pushed me to the ground and also kicked and punched me as well as hitting me with sticks and truncheons. They pulled my hair and stamped on me and then picked me up and pushed me face down into a police van, all the while beating me.”

Testimony of a woman arrested in Mexico State, May 2006

Several women have complained that they were subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence by the Mexico State police officers when they were arrested in Mexico State. At least 211 people were arrested, 47 of them women, on 3 and 4 May in the towns of Texcoco and San Salvador Atenco.

On 3 May, state police officers, evicting some flower sellers from the municipal market in Texcoco, clashed with members of a peasant organization from San Salvador Atenco who were demonstrating against the evictions. In the clashes that followed, 12 police officers were temporarily held hostage by some of the demonstrators and at least four of them were held until the following day.

Thousands of police officers were drafted in to quell the violence and hundreds of arrests followed. Dozens of homes were searched and damaged, and residents were threatened and arrested with no warrants. Those arrested were repeatedly beaten and forced into overcrowded vans and transferred to the state prison.

One woman told AI: “Inside the vehicle there were loads of people lying down handcuffed. The police were trampling on top of them.” She said that police inside the vehicle dragged her to the back seat and ripped off her underwear. They pulled her trousers down to her feet and pushed her t-shirt up over her head so that she could not see anything. A policeman hit her on the buttocks while threatening to kill and rape her. At least three policemen pinched her nipples and squeezed her breasts. All three of them raped her with their fingers. Throughout the journey she was forced to remain naked. “I could hear the people who were raping me. They were there the whole time. They kept beating me whenever they felt like it.”

The National Human Rights Commission recorded 23 reports of sexual violence which occurred during the police operation.

Immediately after the arrests the Mexico State authorities failed to provide the women with appropriate medical or psychological attention or to carry out sensitive medical examinations to secure evidence. Several of the women were not initially allowed to file criminal complaints.

In February 2006, the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Crimes of Violence against Women was created to prevent and punish violence against women in Mexico. It is authorized to investigate offences committed within state jurisdiction “in terms of the applicable legal provisions”. However, it has so far been denied the chance to fully investigate these complaints of abuses, some of which AI believes amount to torture.

For more information see *Mexico: Violence against women – justice denied in Mexico State* (AMR 41/028/2006).

[Picture caption: Community meeting in San Salvador Atenco demanding the release of the detainees following the events in May 2006

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Worldwide Appeals

Peru

Activist threatened and intimidated

Pamela Huaranga Félix has been repeatedly threatened apparently to intimidate her into dropping her legal action against the police officers who allegedly fatally beat her brother in November 2004.

Her brother, Ricardo Huaranga Félix, was reportedly beaten by two police officers in the street near his house, while a third police officer prevented neighbours from intervening, saying that Ricardo had been disrespectful to them. He died in hospital as a result of his injuries.

The police officers were charged with “torture leading to death” which carries a sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment. However, when the trial started in May 2006, they were charged with the lesser offence of “torture”, which carries an eight-year prison sentence. The victim’s family appealed against this decision.

Pamela Huaranga Félix has been actively fighting for justice since her brother died. She was reportedly abducted in November 2005, by two men who held her prisoner for six hours and beat her. The men covered her face, forced her into the boot of a nearby car and drove to a garage. They opened the boot and beat her with a blunt instrument while she was still inside. She was left that evening near a shanty town on the outskirts of Lima.

In August 2006, two of the police officers accused of fatally beating Pamela Huaranga Félix’s brother were released as they had been held in pre-trial detention longer than the 18 months allowed by law. Two weeks later Pamela Huaranga Félix received anonymous phone calls including one that threatened, “...even with police protection we are going to kill you.”

AI has documented a pattern of threats and intimidation of people involved in legal action against the authorities over human rights violations.

Please write, calling on the authorities to do everything in their power to guarantee the safety of Pamela Huaranga Félix, according to her wishes. Call for a thorough investigation into the death threats made against her and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

Send appeals to: Adelaida Bolívar Arteaga, Attorney General, Fiscal de la Nación, Fiscalía de la Nación, Av. Abancay, cuadra 5 s/n, Lima 1, Peru. Fax: +51 1 427 1792.

[Picture caption: © Private]

Morocco/Western Sahara

Prison sentence for human rights defender

Sahrawi human rights defender Brahim Sabbar has been sentenced to two years’ imprisonment and faces additional prison terms in an upcoming trial. AI believes he may be a prisoner of conscience.

Brahim Sabbar, Secretary-General of the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, is well known to AI as a long-standing human rights activist. He and his colleague, Ahmed Sbai, were arrested on 17 June at a police checkpoint at the entrance to the city of Laayoune in Western Sahara, after returning from the nearby town of Boujdour, where they were reportedly supervising the creation of a branch of their association.

Brahim Sabbar was sentenced to two years in prison on 27 June for assaulting and disobeying a police officer. An appeal court confirmed the decision on 20 July. AI is concerned that the conviction appears to have been based exclusively on the record of a police interview with him. He says he was never allowed to read and check the accuracy of the record, in breach of Moroccan law. He denies the accusation and maintains that the police officers kicked and slapped him on arrest.

Brahim Sabbar, along with Ahmed Sbai, is now awaiting a separate trial on charges which include belonging to an unauthorized association and inciting violent protest activities against the Moroccan administration of Western Sahara.

Brahim Sabbar appears to have been targeted for his role in collecting and disseminating information about human rights violations in Western Sahara, as well as his public advocacy of self-determination for the people of the territory. In May 2006, his association published a 121-page report detailing dozens of allegations of arbitrary arrest and torture or ill-treatment in recent months.

Please write, calling for the immediate release of Brahim Sabbar unless he is promptly tried on all charges in full conformity with international fair trial standards.

Send appeals to: His Excellency Driss Jettou, Prime Minister, Département du Premier Ministre, Palais Royal, Touarga, Rabat, Morocco. Fax: +212 37 769995.

[Picture caption: © Private]

Belarus

Election monitors imprisoned

Prisoners of conscience Mikalay Astreyka (left), Tsimafey Dranchuk (right), Enira Branizkaya and Alyaksandr Shalayka were arrested at their offices on 21 February by State Security Committee (KGB) officers. They were preparing to independently monitor the presidential elections to be held on 19 March. The KGB initially claimed that the four were organizing fraudulent exit polls and planning a violent uprising after the election.

All four are members of the independent election monitoring group, Initiative Partnership, which monitored the parliamentary elections in 2004. The group has twice been refused permission to register as a non-governmental organization.

Following a trial, to which neither families nor journalists were given access, the four were sentenced on 4 August. They were accused of “organizing and running an unregistered organization that infringes the rights of citizens,” in accordance with an article added to the Criminal Code in December 2005 which penalized outspoken critics of the government in the lead-up to the presidential elections.

Mikalay Astreyka was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, Tsimafey Dranchuk to one year, and Enira Branizkaya and Alyaksandr Shalayka to six months each. Enira Branizkaya and Alyaksandr Shalayka were released on 21 August, having served the full term of their sentences.

The sentences were widely condemned by the international community, including by ambassadors from several European Union countries. Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht, Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, said: “All four have done nothing to merit imprisonment.”

AI is concerned that these sentences reflect the systematic and ongoing campaign of obstruction, harassment and intimidation by the Belarusian authorities intended to stifle civil society activity in the country.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mikalay Astreyka and Tsimafey Dranchuk, both members of the independent election monitoring group, Initiative Partnership. AI considers them prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their human rights.

Send appeals to: President Alyaksandr G. Lukashenka, ul. Karla Marxa 38, 220016 Minsk, Belarus. Fax: +375 172 26 06 10 or +375 172 22 38 72.

[Picture captions: Mikalay Astreyka and Tsimafey Dranchuk]

Updates

Saudi Arabia

Kamil ‘Abbas al-Ahmad was released from detention on 11 September after five years’ imprisonment. He was not given legal representation and after he was moved to al-Mabahith (the Intelligence Office) on 16 July, he was denied access to his family. He was arrested in September 2001 and subsequently sentenced to five years in prison after an unfair trial and on unclear charges.

AI believes that Kamil ‘Abbas al-Ahmad may have been detained solely for the non-violent expression of Shi’a religious beliefs.

See *Worldwide Appeal* March 2003.

[Picture caption: Kamil ‘Abbas al-Ahmad © Private]

Iran

Ramin Jahanbegloo, a prominent writer on democracy and non-violence, was released on bail on 30 August after four months’ detention. After his release, he said he had been detained in connection with “acting against national security and having contact with foreigners” and that his case was under investigation by the Prosecutor’s Office.

Some 500 prominent thinkers, including American linguist Noam Chomsky, Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk and dozens of Iranian expatriates had called for his release.

See *Worldwide Appeal* July 2006.

USA

“Thank you for your support,” wrote Kevin Benderman in an email to AI. “You have made a difference and it is appreciated.” The former US Army mechanic was released from detention on 18 August after serving over 12 months of a 15-month sentence imposed for refusing to fight for the US Army in Iraq.

His religious beliefs and military experiences led him to object to the war in Iraq, and he applied for status as a conscientious objector. This was turned down and he was court-martialled and sentenced. He is continuing to appeal against his conviction.

[Picture caption: Kevin Benderman ©]

Peru

Peru's Congress is considering three pieces of legislation which, if passed, would broaden the scope of the death penalty. Article 140 of Peru's Constitution provides for the death penalty for those convicted of treason and terrorism. However, the draft bills propose that the death penalty be extended to include cases of rape of children and of mentally or physically disabled people.

The draft bills are being discussed by the Constitution and Congress Regulations Commission, which has the power either to reject them or pass them on to other legal commissions for comment, before the bills are voted on in Congress.

Greece

Irene Khan, AI's Secretary General, received an award from the Athens Bar Association in September in recognition of AI's "contribution in the struggle to promote human rights and justice worldwide".

AI has called on the Greek government to address key human rights concerns relating to the treatment of refugees and migrants, ill-treatment at the hands of police, discrimination against minorities, trafficking and forced prostitution, and discrimination against women.

Crucially, Greece still fails to recognize the right to claim conscientious objector status at any time.

[Picture caption: AI Secretary General Irene Kahn receiving an award from the Athens Bar Association © AI]

Ending impunity for police in Angola

A police officer was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment on 8 August 2006 for unlawfully killing Antóninho Tchiswungo "Toi" – a boy about 16 years of age.

The day after the killing, which took place on 1 January 2005, two police officers reportedly took the body to the police Operative Unit before burying it in an unknown place. Apparently, no autopsy was carried out and the police made no effort to inform the victim's relatives of his death.

The court found that the police officer had threatened Toi and other homeless young people in an abandoned building where they lived. He then handcuffed Toi, shot him in the head at close range and threw his body down the elevator shaft. The officer was arrested a few hours later but escaped with the help of his colleagues. He was re-arrested in March 2005 and eventually sentenced in August 2006.

AI hopes that this unprecedented judgement is a step towards ending police impunity in Angola.

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Canadian inquiry vindicates case of Guantánamo detainee

AI welcomes the findings of the Canadian public inquiry into the role of Canadian officials in the deportation and detention of Maher Arar, published on 18 September.

Among other findings, the inquiry concluded that Maher Arar, a 34-year-old Canadian telecommunications consultant of Syrian origin, was tortured while in detention for almost 12 months in Syria. In light of this, AI is repeating its call to the Syrian authorities to urgently

establish their own independent investigation into the torture and other ill-treatment of Maher Arar in Syria.

AI played an active role in establishing the inquiry into Maher Arar's case. Over many years the organization has repeatedly documented incidents of torture in Syria and called for proper investigations. However, it has never received information to indicate that any of these cases, including some which reportedly led to deaths in custody, have been investigated or that any officials responsible for torture have been prosecuted.

Maher Arar was detained in Syria between 9 October 2002 and 5 October 2003. He was held in incommunicado detention in a tiny, unlit basement cell at the Palestine Branch of Military Intelligence, Damascus, before being released without charge.

During his detention in Syria he was beaten with a shredded thick black electrical cable. He was threatened with other torture methods, including the metal "German chair", "the tyre" and electric shocks.

Interrogators, who may have been working on information supplied by Canadian and US intelligence agencies, alleged that he was involved with al-Qa'ida. The findings of the public inquiry have indicated that much of that information was inaccurate and had been improperly shared by Canadian police with their US counterparts. The inquiry has concluded that after extensive investigations "there is nothing to indicate that Mr Arar committed any offence or that his activities constitute a threat to the security of Canada."

Maher Arar was detained in the USA on 26 September 2002 while changing flights on his journey from Tunisia back home to Canada. He was detained in the USA for 12 days. On 8 October 2002 he was taken from his cell in the middle of the night and flown on a private plane via other US airports and Rome, Italy, to Jordan, where he was beaten and driven to Syria.

AI reiterates its call on the Jordanian authorities to make public the names of all individuals who have been transferred into or out of Jordanian custody from or to US custody, or via the assistance of US or other intelligence and security services. The dates and locations of the individuals' detention in Jordan should be provided, as well as the legal basis for their detention.

For more information visit AI's website www.amnesty.org/stoptorture

[Picture caption: Rhuheh Ahmed signs an AI postcard calling on US President George W. Bush to close Guantánamo Bay and other secret US detention facilities. Former Guantánamo inmates, Rhuheh Ahmed and Asif Iqbal – better known as two of the 'Tipton Three' – were guests of AI Iceland in early October. Their two-day visit coincided with the screening of the film, Road to Guantánamo, at the Reykjavik International Film Festival. Both men took part in AI events, including a symposium attended by over 200 people. © AI]

Ambassador of conscience award

Nelson Mandela has honoured AI by agreeing to accept the 2006 Ambassador of Conscience award. The award recognizes exceptional individual leadership and witness in the fight to protect and promote human rights. It was inspired by a poem written for AI by Seamus Heaney – *From the Republic of Conscience*.

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison before leading South Africa to multi-racial democracy.

Recently he has campaigned globally on HIV/AIDS, which he views as a human rights issue.

“One of the things that are destroying people with AIDS is the stigma which we attach to it,” he said. “He or she loses the determination to fight.”

Previous winners include U2, Václav Havel and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson.

[Picture caption: Nelson Mandela © Jurgen Schadeberg]

Control Arms

[Picture caption: Control Arms campaigners build a model attack helicopter, based on the Chinese Z-10, to mark the launch of a new report, Arms without Borders. The helicopter, made with components produced in different countries, was put together opposite the Houses of Parliament, London. The globalization of the arms industry has enabled companies to circumvent arms regulations by selling components and subcontracting manufacturing overseas. Control Arms is a campaign jointly run by AI, IANSA and Oxfam. See www.controlarms.org © AI]

25 years of renouncing religious intolerance

This November marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The anniversary is especially timely, said Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, as it is “particularly important to challenge the rising tide of intolerance that we witness today.”

The Declaration forbids discrimination on the basis of religion and belief, and reminds states of their duty not only to prohibit such discrimination but take effective measures to prevent and eliminate it.

In commemoration of the Declaration’s adoption, a special event will take place in Prague, Czech Republic, on 25 November. UN and AI representatives will take part in workshops along a number of themes, including protection of religion or belief vis-à-vis freedom of expression.

“Freedom of religion or belief is core to human rights,” Asma Jahangir told *the Wire*. “Respecting it upholds one of the most cherished aspects of our very humanity.”

For more information visit www.1981Declaration.org

[Picture caption: Asma Jahangir © Private]

Activist murdered in Russian Federation

Anna Politkovskaya, Russian journalist and human rights defender, was murdered outside her flat in Moscow on 7 October. An outspoken critic of the Russian government’s action and inaction in the face of human rights violations in the country, she worked closely with AI on several occasions and won a 2001 AI UK award for her activities. Her murder silenced one of the few journalists working in the country who have dared to expose human rights violations in the Russian Federation. At vigils and memorial events around the world, AI members and

other human rights activists paid tribute to a woman who inspired many with her courage in fighting for justice.

[Picture captions: Vigil by AI Finland outside the Russian Embassy in Helsinki, Finland, to mourn murdered journalist, Anna Politkovskaya © AI
and
Anna Politkovskaya © Katja Tähjä]

Recent Publication

[Picture caption: A Guide to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (IOR 63/005/2006)]