

WIRE

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AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



**WOMEN
WILL BE HEARD**



© AP/PA Photo/Khalil Hamra

CRISIS IN GAZA

Amnesty International has called on the UN Security Council to establish full accountability for war crimes and other serious abuses of international law committed in Gaza and southern Israel during the recent conflict and to deploy human rights monitors in the area.

**TO READ MORE GO TO
WWW.AMNESTY.ORG/EN/GAZA-CRISIS**

THIS IS YOUR WIRE

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU LIKE IT

- » Have you used the actions?
- » Have you shared the information with anyone?
- » What would you like to see more of in future issues?
- » Do you have photos or articles that you would like to share with other members?
- » And finally, have you visited the new blog www.amnesty.org/livewire?

Send all your comments and suggestions to:

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Cover photo: Survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system before and during World War II demonstrate outside the Japanese Embassy, Seoul, March 2005. The women demonstrate every Wednesday to call on the government of Japan to apologize for the crimes committed against them.
© Paula Allen

This page: A Palestinian woman covers her face as smoke rises following an explosion caused by Israeli military operations in Gaza City, January 2009.

GETTING WIRE

Would you like know more about Amnesty International's campaigns or use the Wire actionzine for your own activism?

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INSIDE THIS WIRE

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Violence against women is a shocking reality for many, particularly in times of social insecurity and armed conflict. Read stories of women who have become agents of change despite enormous difficulties and help others to get their voices heard. **PAGES 2-5.**



LIVEWIRE

Get a taste of the updates on Gaza and the DRC from the Livewire blog on **PAGE 6.**

LIVEWIRE

WORLD WATER DAY

Wire looks at the lack of access to adequate supply of water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories ahead of World Water Day on 22 March. **PAGE 7.**

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Forcible returns of Roma to Kosovo, death by stun weapons in the USA, the use of torture in south Thailand and the long struggle to end impunity in Guatemala. Read about these issues and take action on **PAGES 8, 18 AND 19.**



Q&A

Jenni Williams, award-winning human rights defender and leader of Zimbabwean women's civic movement WOZA, talks to Amnesty International members about the struggle for change in her country. See **PAGE 13.**



NO EXCUSE, NO DELAY

PROTECT CIVILIANS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



SPREAD THE WORD

This issue, our poster is calling for the protection of civilians in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Turn it over and you will find another poster, 'Women Make History', to help you celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March.

**WORLDWIDE APPEALS
READ, DISTRIBUTE, ACT NOW
SEE OUR INSERT**

ACTION PAGE

Want to know more about aerial art activism but did not know whom to ask?

See our beginners guide on **PAGE 16.**



WAR IN EASTERN CONGO

Explore the background to the current situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the roots of the conflict. See **PAGE 15.**



Clockwise from left:

Palestinian girls confront an Israeli soldier at a checkpoint in Hebron, December 2005;
 Rita Mahato Chamar, human rights defender, Nepal, November 2008;
 Pakistani woman holds a placard during a protest against honour killing in Multan, October 2004;
 A student reads as she attends a class at the 'Republic of Panama' school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, September 2007;
 Campaign for Equality meeting, Iran, July 2007;
 Member of trade union organization UNISON joins EuroPride Parade, London, UK.



© AP/PA Photo/Nasser Shiyoukhi



© Dixie



WOMEN MAKE HISTORY

ON 8 MARCH, INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, WE WILL CELEBRATE THE HISTORIC STRUGGLES OF WOMEN THROUGH THE CENTURIES TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

On 8 March 1857, women garment workers in New York City, USA, marched and picketed, demanding improved working conditions, a 10-hour day and equal rights to men. Their ranks were broken by the police. Fifty-one years later, on 8 March 1908, 15,000 New York women garment workers marched again, this time demanding the vote and an end to sweatshops and child labour.

Today, International Women's Day is marked on this date by women's groups around the world. It is commemorated at the UN and is designated in many countries as a national holiday.

The landscape for women's rights has changed dramatically over the past century. In many countries women are active participants in the political process and have made significant strides towards economic equality. Globally, there are legally binding agreements to protect and promote women's rights.

While women make history, they do so in circumstances they have neither chosen nor created. At times of social insecurity, for example – in particular when tensions degenerate into armed conflict – women almost invariably face heightened levels of sexual violence.

In Sierra Leone, it is estimated that one in every three women and girls were raped, or suffered some other form of sexual violence, during the armed conflict that raged from 1991 to 2002. All the major armed groups in the conflict – government forces, civilian militias and opposing armed factions – were responsible for these crimes. Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission concluded: "It is clear that there were deliberate policies systematically to target women and girls and systematically to rape and sexually violate them."

Sexual violence is also closely related to the cycle of insecurity and poverty. In Haiti, for example, many girls cannot afford to pay the school fees and can be forced into sexual abuse or exploitation in exchange for gifts and money for their education. Others have been raped in streets no one could afford, or chose, to light properly.

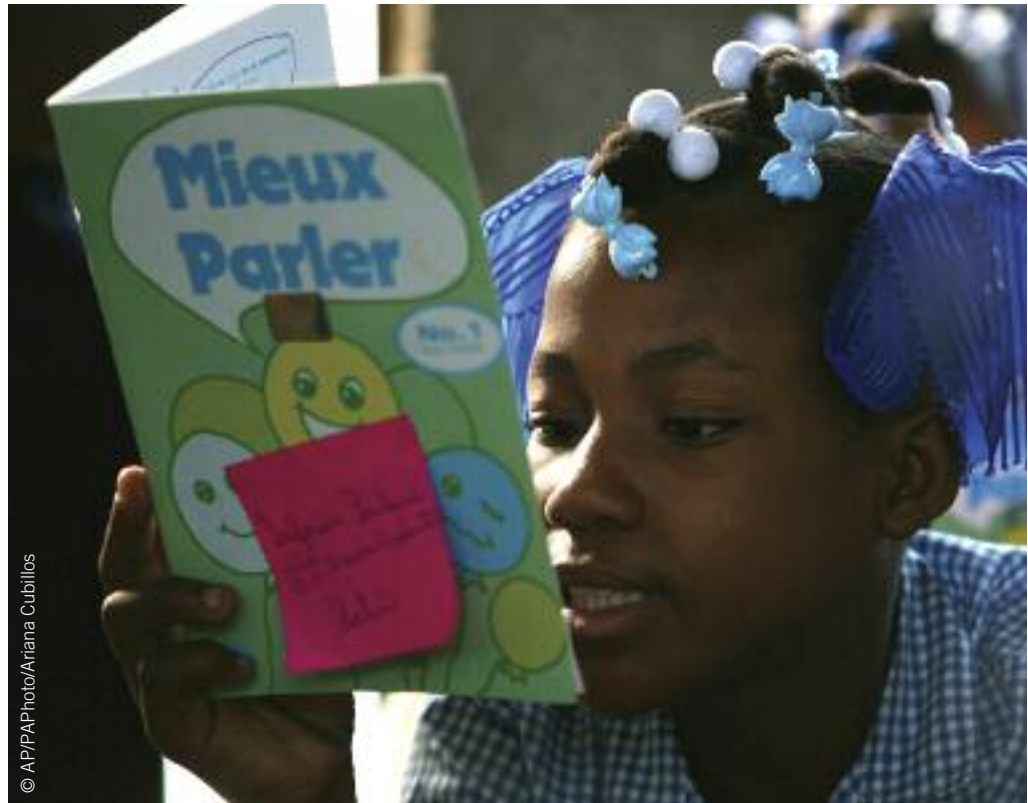
The case of Blanche is emblematic. One evening, 16-year-old Blanche left her grandmother's home in Port-au-Prince. Like many other schoolchildren living in parts of the city without electricity, she was going to do her homework by the light of one of the few streetlamps in her neighbourhood. As she was studying, a group of men arrived and threatened



© Private



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© AP/PAPPhoto/Ariana Cubillos

her with guns while one man ripped her clothes and raped her. Eventually, some neighbours helped Blanche to get back home. Blanche's grandmother took her to a clinic, but discouraged her from reporting the attack to the police. She believed that nothing could be done because Blanche did not know the names of her attackers.

WOMEN BRINGING CHANGE

Although we live in a world where social insecurity is liable to manifest itself in violence against women, it is also a world where women, individually and collectively, have overcome enormous obstacles and improved their societies.

Doreen Lawrence, whose son Stephen was murdered in 1993 in London, believed that her family was denied justice because they were black. Doreen, Stephen's father Neville, and others accused the UK's largest police force, the Metropolitan Police, of racism and fought a long and difficult campaign to expose the truth. Eventually, an inquiry into Stephen's death, the MacPherson Inquiry, found that "institutional racism [...] exists both in the Metropolitan Police Service and in other Police Services and other institutions countrywide". The Lawrence campaign led to changes in policing, law and government policy.

In Liberia, women who fought as girl soldiers are working for justice for women who faced violence during the conflict. Liberia was racked by conflict between 1989 and 1997 and again between 1999 and 2003. It is estimated that women made up more than 30 per cent of the fighting force, playing roles as commanders, spies, cooks and porters. Florence Ballah and Jackie Redd were abducted from their homes by armed groups and fought for opposing factions during the conflict. They have now come together to campaign for a better life for the women of Liberia. Social stigma is a major factor in preventing women from re-integrating into society, and from reporting sexual



© Campaign for Equality, photo by R. Asgarizadeh





violence. Florence and Jackie, who took part in the documentary film *Women of Liberia: Fighting for Peace*, are actively breaking the stigma around sexual violence by speaking openly about what happened to them. "At first, people said to us that it wasn't right to talk [openly] about rape," Florence Ballah told Amnesty International. "But I want my face to be seen."

Their courage has led many other women to talk about their experiences, and to create a vision for the future. "If I tell my story and listen to other people's stories, we cry together," Jackie Redd explained to us. "[Then] we come together and make a decision about what we want for our country and for women in Liberia. Because we are part of the decision-making, and we have our rights."

PRESSURED INTO SILENCE

In many situations, women are working to change their societies but their voices are not being heard. Either people are not listening, or the state and community are trying to silence them.

In Nepal, violence against women is a widespread problem despite some positive change in women's public presence since the end of monarchy in 2006. Women human rights defenders who struggle to prevent violence against women are facing harassment, intimidation and violence by state and non-state actors. In one case in June 2008, around 65 men arrived at the Women's Rehabilitation Centre in the Siraha District and threatened its staff. The centre's health counsellor, Rita Mahato Chamar, has received threats of rape, death and kidnapping.

The activists of the Campaign for Equality in Iran are regularly harassed by state authorities because of their demands to end legalized discrimination against women. The denial of equal rights for Iranian women leaves many with little protection from domestic violence and inadequate access to justice.

The campaign protests against inequality in law and its volunteers travel across Iran collecting signatures for their petition and educating local women about their rights. Its activists are continually targeted by the Iranian authorities: in 2008, Parvin Ardalan, Nahid Keshavarz, Jelveh Javaheri and Maryam Hosseinkhah were sentenced to six months' imprisonment for their writings on websites belonging to the campaign and to another women's

Clockwise from top left:

Women in Panama demonstrating for women's rights, April 2006; Protesters in Cairo, Egypt, demonstrate against alleged sexual attacks on women, November 2006; Women's rights activists outside the Johannesburg High Court, South Africa, February 2006.

organization. They are currently free pending appeals against their convictions and sentences. Over 50 in all have been detained by the authorities. The campaign website has been repeatedly blocked and activists have been banned from travelling outside Iran. Despite all this, their struggle for change continues.

Women of imagination, courage and determination in every country are working to build a better world. Their voices must be heard. Their contributions must be recognized and encouraged. Human rights abuses cannot be stopped without the active participation of those affected, which in so many cases are women and girls. **W**

ACT NOW

Amnesty International is celebrating and supporting International Women's Day with various actions around the world. You can take part in all of them. If you want to act for the women of the Campaign for Equality, for example, you can do so now!

Call on the Iranian authorities to drop all charges against activists and demand an end to the arrests and harassment of women human rights defenders. Call for an immediate review of Iranian legislation with a view to ending all legalized discrimination against women.

Write to:

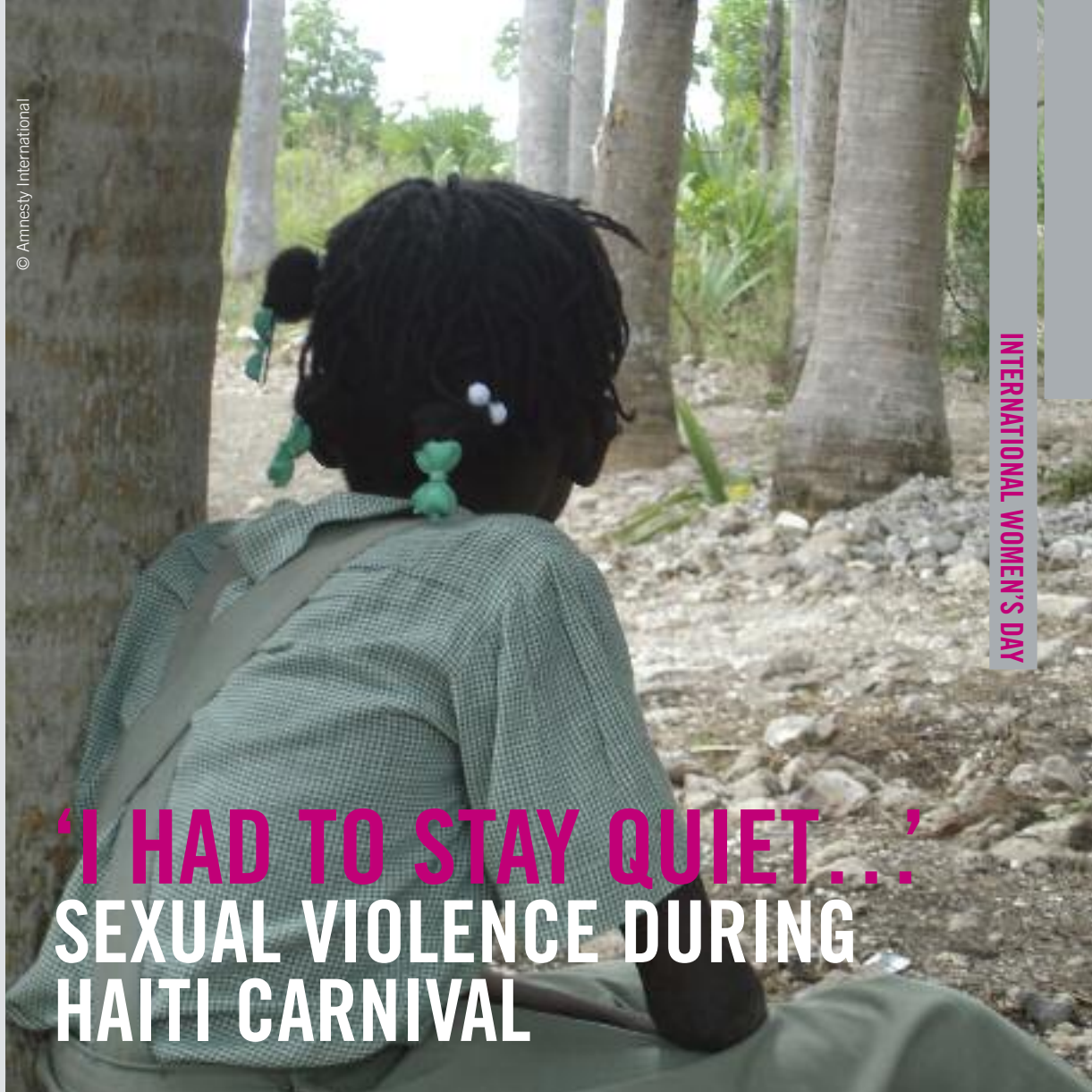
Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi,
Head of the Judiciary,
Howzeh Riyasat-e Goveh Qazaiyeh/Office of the Head of the Judiciary,
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave. south of Serah-e Jomhouri,
Tehran 1316814737,
Iran

Go to www.amnesty.org/en/svaw for information on various other actions that you can take part in ahead of 8 March.

Stéphanie*, now 19 years old, began working in domestic service when she was 12. In order to pay for her education, she also worked as a street seller. One evening during carnival in February 2007, as she was on her way home with her merchandise and a day's earnings from her trading, she was attacked by three men wearing balaclavas. They raped her at gunpoint. Her attackers stole all her goods and money.

Stéphanie did not tell anyone in the house where she lives and works about what had happened. She told Amnesty International: "I am not able to go to the police because I am really frightened. The attackers really pressured me not to report them although I didn't know them... This is all so humiliating... I had to stay quiet."

Stéphanie is still a domestic worker, but losing all her money during the attack means she can no longer afford to pay her school fees and has had to abandon her education. She told Amnesty International that she lives in fear of reprisals by her attackers and of the rejection she will face from members of her community should they ever find out.



'I HAD TO STAY QUIET...' SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING HAITI CARNIVAL

*Not her real name

Sexual violence in the home and community is pervasive and widespread in Haiti. Although there is little reliable information on the extent of the violence, it is clear that certain factors increase the likelihood of attack. Being young is an important risk factor. Organizations providing support to survivors of sexual violence have revealed alarming levels of sexual violence against girls – more than half of reported rapes in the past four years have involved girls 18 years old or under.

Women's organizations and other NGOs have also highlighted the shocking number of rapes which are reported each year around carnival time. In February 2007, for example, 50 cases of rape of women and girls were reported in just three days in Port-au-Prince. Amnesty International's interviews with survivors of sexual violence and support workers revealed a pattern where armed gangs use their weapons to intimidate and disperse small crowds. Once they have isolated the girls and women, they abduct them and rape them at gunpoint.

The authorities have taken steps in recent years that acknowledge the need to tackle violence

against women and girls. For example, in 2005, a National Plan to Combat Violence Against Women 2006-2011 was adopted which, if implemented, could bring about significant improvements in the prevention and punishment of violence against women and girls. However, the reality is that the justice system remains weak and largely ineffectual and the police unit in charge of protecting children is woefully understaffed; in March 2008, the unit had 12 officers to cover the entire country.

The health consequences of sexual violence are profound and lasting. In addition to the immediate physical injuries, survivors may face unwanted pregnancy; sexually transmitted infection, including HIV; and mental health problems. These can have particularly serious consequences on girls. Unwanted pregnancy can also result in girls' education being disrupted or in permanent exclusion from school. This in turn can further entrench gender-based discrimination and poverty among women and girls.

The public security situation in Haiti over the last decade has been the focus of much international

concern. The country continues to grapple with considerable challenges in strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring public security and rebuilding after a number of devastating humanitarian disasters. Clearly, in this context, supporting efforts to strengthen development, good governance and the rule of law in Haiti should continue to be important priorities for the international community. However, there can be no security if a large section of the population is prevented from participating fully in their community by the threat or consequences of violence. Sexual violence against girls in Haiti can no longer be ignored. **W**

Please take action now by signing and sending the attached postcard to the Haitian authorities, calling on them to implement the National Plan to Combat Violence Against Women and to put an end to the continuing scandal of violence against girls in Haiti. In particular, the postcard calls on them to mobilize all necessary resources to protect girls and women from sexual violence during carnival.



Go to www.amnesty.org/livewire to catch up with what people around the movement are doing, watch footage and listen to audio clips from actions, missions, high-level meetings and events.

COMING UP

Amnesty International will be blogging from the World Social Forum in Belem, Brazil, from 27 January to 1 February. The World Social Forum is a crucial meeting space for social movements, individuals and NGOs who seek to advance social and environmental justice.

ACCOUNTS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

“Around midday we heard the sound of gunfire in the distance on the Congolese side of the border. In the course of the next two hours, the gunfire came closer, at 12.30 it was about 2km from where we were.

Around 1pm, we were standing on the road looking towards the bridge and the stream of refugees suddenly stopped. When the last people up the road had crossed, a police officer told us that they were the last ones and we understood that at that point the CNDP had taken Ishasha on the DRC part of the road, across the bridge.”

Andrew Philip, Amnesty International researcher, blogging from Uganda/Democratic Republic of Congo border



Amnesty International delegation collects testimonies from Congolese refugees, Nakivale camp in Uganda, November 2008.

VIDEOS

About 150 activists (*right*) came together in London to call for urgent and effective protection of civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. They gathered outside the UK Prime Minister's residence at 10 Downing Street to urge him to take immediate and decisive action.

AT THE GAZA BORDER

“The Israeli authorities are not allowing human rights organizations, as well as the media, into the Gaza Strip [...] not being able to go to Gaza has left us with no option than to speak to people on the phone. What I hear from the people on the ground is that the situation is nothing short of a humanitarian disaster. What makes this conflict somewhat different than many other conflicts is that the civilian population has nowhere to escape to. Nowhere is safe in the Gaza Strip, it's a very small area with a very high density of population.”

Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International researcher on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, reports from the south of Israel

STATEMENT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

“I'm in New York for the delivery at the UN General Assembly of a joint statement on human rights and sexual orientation and gender identity. It doesn't sound very important does it, a statement? It's not a resolution or even a declaration – the usual focus of our work at the UN. But nonetheless, this is a huge step forward for LGBT rights.”

Kate Sheill, Amnesty International's Identity-based Discrimination Team Coordinator, blogging from the UN in New York





PALESTINIANS FACE WATER SUPPLY CRISIS

We are all entitled to water. Lack of water kills people, destroys livelihoods and uproots communities. One in eight people in the world does not have access to safe water. Shortage of safe and accessible water affects people's rights to life and to food, as well as their rights to housing education and self-determination.

Lack of access to an adequate supply of water has been a long-standing problem for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). It has hindered social and economic development, contributed to denying Palestinians their right to a decent standard of living and caused health and sanitation problems. This situation is principally a result of Israeli water policies that discriminate against the Palestinian inhabitants of the OPT and are part of a much wider pattern of abuses under the Israeli occupation.

In Gaza, the blockade imposed by Israel in the last three years has compounded the long-standing problems in the water sector. With 80 per cent of drinking water unsafe for human consumption, Gaza's water infrastructure is exceptionally poor at the best of times; the recent conflict has made the situation considerably worse. Israeli air strikes have damaged

water mains supplying residential areas, including al-Nuseirat refugee camp, destroyed a well in the town of Jabalia and caused multiple disruptions to sewage networks, creating a health hazard of major proportions. As of January 2009, the damage had left 500,000 Palestinians, a third of the population of the Gaza Strip, with no access to running water.

In the West Bank, more than 200 rural communities are not connected to water networks. They depend on water delivered by tankers, the cost of which has dramatically increased due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli army on the movement of Palestinian vehicles.

Rain water harvesting has traditionally been a very important source of water for both domestic use and for animals and crops. However, eight consecutive years of drought have compounded an already difficult situation, limiting the amount of rain water which rural communities can collect to supplement their meagre supplies. To make matters worse, in recent years the Israeli army has stepped up efforts to prevent Palestinian communities from harvesting rain water by destroying their rain-harvesting cisterns.



Above: Destroyed water cisterns in Beit Ula, March 2008. Below: A water tank in the West Bank village of 'Aqaba, May 2008.

On 15 January 2008, the Israeli army demolished nine rain-harvesting cisterns belonging to nine families in Beit Ula, a village between Hebron and Bethlehem, in the southern West Bank. The cisterns had been built by two local NGOs as part of a European Union funded agricultural project to improve food security in the area. An Amnesty International delegate visited the area and found that the cisterns had been methodically smashed beyond repair and the orchards around had all been uprooted.

Farther south, in Susya, most of the rain-harvesting water cisterns were demolished by the Israeli army in 1999 and 2001. The remaining cisterns and a small latrine have demolition orders pending. Um Naser, a Palestinian woman who lives in the

village told Amnesty International: "Water is life; without water we can't live; not us, not the animals, or the plants. Before we had some water, but after the army destroyed everything we have to bring water from far away; it's very difficult and expensive. They make our life very difficult, to make us leave."

Although most of the fresh water resources in Israel and the OPT are shared, they are almost entirely controlled and used by Israel. The Western Mountain Aquifer, the West Bank's main fresh water source, lies beneath Israel and the West Bank and is mostly recharged in the West Bank. However, Palestinians are only allowed a tiny percentage of its water – 22 million cubic metres (MCM) per year, while Israel uses the remaining 340 MCM per year. **W**

Go to www.ochaopt.org to learn more on the affects of the current crisis in Gaza on the supply of water.

World Water Day is on 22 March 2008.

Go to www.wateraid.org to learn more.





ROMA AT RISK OF BEING FORCED TO RETURN TO KOSOVO

TEN YEARS AFTER THE WAR, ROMA COMMUNITIES FACE YET MORE DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION

In June 1999, after the end of the war in Kosovo, members of the Kosovo Albanian community burned Roma houses and forcibly expelled Romani communities whom they considered to be allies of the Serbs. Thousands of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians fled from Kosovo to Europe seeking protection from persecution. Several hundred Romani men were abducted by armed individuals believed to be from the Kosovo Liberation Army. These men have not been seen since, and the perpetrators have not been brought to justice; indeed many continue to enjoy positions of power.

Other Roma were forced to flee Kosovo in March 2004 during inter-ethnic violence between Albanians and Serbs, which also affected Ashkalia and Egyptians. Impunity for past inter-ethnic violence continues; in July 2008, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe reported that around 1,000 cases of inter-ethnic violence remained unresolved after March 2004, partly because of a fear of intimidation and a lack of witness protection.

Now several European Union (EU) governments plan to forcibly return Roma to Kosovo, where they face severe discrimination. Although the intensity and frequency of inter-ethnic violence has declined, low-level intimidation continues, including against people of all ethnicities returning to places where they are in the minority.

Fewer than 2,500 Roma have so far voluntarily returned to Kosovo since 2000; others have been forcibly returned. Yet there are no resources available to aid the reintegration of these people into the community. While the Kosovo government has developed an action plan for integrating the Romani, Ashkalia and Egyptian community, and another for the integration of returning refugees, both remain unimplemented. Tens of thousands of Roma may be forcibly

returned in 2009. The Kosovo government has reported that it does not have the capacity to deal with such a mass-scale return.


ONGOING DISCRIMINATION

Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians in Kosovo face continued discrimination. According to official figures, 37 per cent live in extreme poverty, on less than US\$1 a day. These communities were excluded from the 2007 talks on the final status of Kosovo and from consultations on the constitution in 2008. They are also rarely employed in local or municipal government.

Approximately a third of Romani, Ashkalia and Egyptian people in Kosovo are not registered as citizens or habitual residents. Measures to remove barriers to their registration are not yet in place, and they therefore remain at risk of being stateless. They are also unable to repossess their homes or access basic rights, including employment, social security, health care and education. Even when

registered, many are unable to afford health care, including charges for basic medicines. In the most invidious case of discrimination, some of the 700 Roma who have been internally displaced in northern Mitrovica are suffering from congenital disease and long-term damage to their health – having lived in camps for internally displaced people sited on lead-contaminated land.

Several EU member states, including Germany, where there are an estimated 23,000 Roma from Kosovo, Belgium and Switzerland, have indicated that Roma and other minorities currently enjoying temporary protection – or as in Germany, “tolerated status” – will be forcibly returned to Kosovo.

Amnesty International is urging EU and Council of Europe member states not to forcibly return Roma to Kosovo, but to provide Roma and other vulnerable individuals with continued international protection, including by allowing them to claim asylum. 

TAKE ACTION

Send a clear message to the German government that Roma from Kosovo are in need of continued international protection and that Germany must refrain from forcibly returning Roma to Kosovo.

Please send appeals to:

(Federal Ministry of the Interior)
Bundesminister des Innern
Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble
Alt-Moabit 101 d, 10559 Berlin
Germany
Email: poststelle@bmi.bund.de


(Standing Conference of the Interior
Ministers and Senators of the Länder)
Ständige Konferenz der Innenminister
und – senatoren der Länder
Der Vorsitzende
Senator Ulrich Mäurer
Contrescarpe 22/24, 28203 Bremen
Germany
Email: office@inneres.bremen.de

Romani woman at Plemetina village
where many displaced Roma still live,
Kosovo, 2008.

© Alicia Gimenez (Romawood)

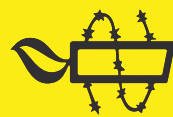






WOMEN WAKE HISTORY

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2009



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

NO EXCUSE, NO DELAY

PROTECT CIVILIANS IN THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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JENNI WILLIAMS

Q What sparked your interest in human rights?

A First of all, my background. I come from a mixed race family and have suffered from racial discrimination all my life. In 2002 I felt that time had come to begin working for change in Zimbabwe. I then co-founded WOZA (Women of Zimbabwe Arise) with Sheba Dube and started leading women on street protests for social justice.

Q If you could change one thing about the state of human rights in Zimbabwe, what would it be?

A Zimbabweans live in a community where if a person dares to talk about human rights abuse they are accused of being a foreign agent. Criticizing the leadership is a dangerous thing to do – for both men and women. But for women human rights defenders, it is even harder. If I could change one thing I would remove Robert Mugabe from power. Non-violently. If we achieve this, we can then tackle everything else.

Q What impact does your work have on your life and/or your family?

A It has been an incredible challenge for my family. My work and WOZA's determination to speak the truth means that my family needs to stay committed. I have been arrested 33 times – my family is missing a wife and a mother. They need to have faith that justice will be done and that the sacrifice is worth it. I was arrested with my son Christopher in 2003, when he was 18. To see him arrested was unbearable. I was so terrified for him that I forgot to be terrified for myself. My arrests are also very hard on my mother, who is 74.

Q What does Amnesty International mean to you?

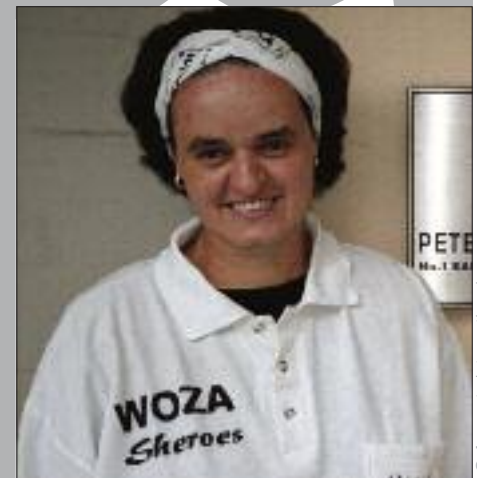
A Amnesty International is our big sister. When I'm in prison, if I know that someone, my big sister, is shouting for me, telling people about me, then I feel less distressed, less frightened and less alone. When we began WOZA as a non-violent civil disobedience movement, people thought we were crazy. Civil society didn't want to engage at all before Amnesty International started writing about us. It helped us arrive as human rights defenders. And there is a personal note as well. When I was in prison, Amnesty International's people called my mother every day and kept her up to date. It helped her through.

Q Do you have a message for our readers?

A WOZA is on the streets in Zimbabwe. We are in Zimbabwe's jails. And we need your help. Phoning the police, faxing a protest, signing a postcard – all these things make a difference because they send a clear message. I believe that the phone calls to the police in Zimbabwe during my arrest saved me from torture and rape. You might think it is unimportant, but the police station was so swamped with calls that they stopped picking up the phone. And what does it tell you? That sometimes, just by dialling a number you can save someone.

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

A That we need to stand up. We need to hold people accountable for the suffering that they are inflicting. We need to demand the truth and not be afraid. I sometimes have nightmares. Fear stretches the imagination and you end up terrifying yourself, and sometimes that's worse than what actually happens. We should try not to allow our imagination to terrify us but face the situation in front of us.



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“ WE NEED TO HOLD PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SUFFERING THAT THEY ARE INFLECTING. WE NEED TO DEMAND THE TRUTH AND NOT BE AFRAID ”

JENNI WILLIAMS is the leader and co-founder of WOZA, a Zimbabwean women's civic movement with more than 35,000 members countrywide. The movement unites women in Zimbabwe and encourages them to stand up for their civil and human rights. WOZA was awarded the 5th Human Rights Award by Amnesty International Germany on 16 November 2008. Jenni Williams accepted the award on behalf of WOZA 10 days after her release from Mlondolozhi prison. **To read other interviews with woman rights defenders go to www.amnesty.org/news-and-updates/feature-stories**



AS RENEWED FIGHTING IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO CREATES FURTHER HUMAN MISERY, WIRE EXAMINES THE CURRENT SITUATION AND THE ROOTS OF THIS COMPLEX, PROLONGED AND BLOODY CONFLICT.

A single shot in the back of the neck killed Didace Namujimbo, a reporter for Radio Okapi, on 21 November 2008. His body was found in the street outside his home in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province. He left a wife and three children.

This killing closely echoes the 2007 murder of another Radio Okapi journalist in Bukavu, Serge Maheshe. Radio Okapi was created by the UN and the Hironde Foundation (formed by a group of Swiss journalists horrified by the role of partisan radio in the Rwandan genocide). It started broadcasting in 2002 as a “radio for peace amidst war”. The commitment of Radio Okapi’s journalists to reporting the news continues. So does the war.

On 5 November, in the town of Kiwanja, North Kivu, fighters from the rebel movement National Congress for Defence of the People (CNDP) went from house to house, searching for supporters of the pro-government militias, the *mayi-mayi*. According to a witness, large numbers of young adult men – “young fathers and newly-weds” – were taken from their homes and shot or stabbed to death. At least 72 people were buried after a night of carnage, and the real death toll may never be known.

There were UN peacekeepers in Kiwanja, struggling to protect thousands of civilians who fled to the shelter of the UN Mission (MONUC) base. They reportedly did not intervene to stop the killings.

The events that night were just one incident in a conflict that goes back years. A conflict that at its height, between 1996 and 2003, involved troops from five other African countries, each with their own interests and backers. A conflict characterized by sexual violence against women and by the recruitment of child soldiers. A war over power and resources waged against women and children.

RENEWED FIGHTING

The attention of the world turned to eastern Congo when the CNDP launched a fresh offensive against government forces in late October 2008. In four days the CNDP routed the national army, captured the major town of Rutshuru and moved to within 15km of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, before declaring a unilateral cease-fire on 30 October.

Human rights violations by all the fighting forces were reported, including forced recruitment of children, rapes, deliberate killings of civilians and extensive looting.

THIS IS A WAR OVER POWER AND RESOURCES WAGED AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

At least 250,000 civilians, most of them women and children, were displaced by the fighting, bringing the total number of internally displaced in the province to well over 1 million. On 26 November, an Amnesty International delegate described seeing thousands of people fleeing across the bridge over the river that divides the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda; “Some are lucky and get accommodated in large tents, but today, thousands of people will sleep outside, many of them with no food and very little water remaining after the 20km they had to walk to make it to the border.”

This latest phase of fighting began in North Kivu in August 2007, after a plan to integrate Laurent Nkunda’s forces into the national army fell apart. In a bid to end that fighting, there were two major initiatives, both brokered by the international community. In November 2007, the governments of Rwanda and the DRC agreed to prevent illicit cross-border movement of arms and recruits, and the DRC government agreed to dismantle the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR), by force if necessary.

INVOLVEMENT OF NEARBY STATES

In 1998 armed groups backed by Rwanda and Uganda rose up against the then DRC President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola sent troops to repel them. The following year, the six African countries involved in the war signed a ceasefire accord in Lusaka, Zambia, but it was not until 2002 that Uganda and Rwanda withdrew their troops.

ARMED FORCES IN EASTERN CONGO

Civilians in eastern Congo are at risk of abuse from a confusing array of armed groups and militias.

The **CNDP** has between 4,000 and 6,000 fighters and claims to be fighting to protect the Tutsi community from attacks by the **FDLR** Rwandan Hutu armed group, who fled to the DRC after Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

The **FARDC** is the national army, now in disarray. Extensive human rights abuses have followed the breakdown in FARDC discipline.

The **FDLR**, several thousand strong, is made up mainly of Rwandan Hutu who retreated from Rwanda in 1994. It contains remnants of the interahamwe militia and former Rwandan army (ex-FAR) responsible for the Rwandan genocide.

The **mayi-mayi** are pro-government militias, most of which are grouped in a coalition known as **PARECO**. In the absence of the FARDC, it has become the main fighting force against the CNDP.

MONUC, the UN Mission in the DRC, is authorized to use "all necessary means" – including deadly force – to protect civilians and humanitarian personnel under imminent threat of violence. At the end of 2008, it had around 17,000 peacekeepers, 6,000 of them in North Kivu. On 20 November, the UN Security Council authorized, through Resolution 1843, the temporary reinforcement of MONUC with up to 3,000 more military and police personnel.

A peace agreement in January 2008 was signed by the government and armed groups including the CNDP, but not the FDLR. However, the disarmament process, paralyzed by political wrangling, never really started. The CNDP withdrew in April 2008 and the ceasefire broke down.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY ALL THE FIGHTING FORCES WERE REPORTED, INCLUDING FORCED RECRUITMENT OF CHILDREN, RAPES, DELIBERATE KILLINGS OF CIVILIANS AND EXTENSIVE LOOTING

The government failed to dismantle the FDLR, leading both the CNDP and Rwanda to claim that the government and international community were not acting to protect the Tutsi community in the DRC. The CNDP was also angered by the government's apparent use of the multiple mayi-mayi parties to the Goma peace accord to dilute the CNDP's influence in the peace process.

Negotiations between the CNDP and the government resumed in January 2009, but a peaceful outcome in North Kivu, particularly one that addresses the root causes of the conflict, is still far from certain.

ROOT CAUSES

Behind the continuing conflict lies the national and international failure to address its underlying causes. Much of this failure can be laid at the door of the DRC government, which has failed to deliver meaningful reform of its mining, justice and security sectors. Responsibility must also be taken by international donors, who have failed to insist on such reforms.

One root cause is the issue of control of natural resources in North Kivu. Most of North Kivu's mineral resources – gold, coltan and tin – are found in



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WE DEMAND THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



© UNHCR/P. Taggart

Opposite: A CNDP fighter on patrol in Rutshuru, 80km north of Goma, eastern Congo, November 2008.

This page: A displaced woman prepares firewood for cooking outside two UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) tents at the internally displaced people's site in Kibati, Democratic Republic of Congo, November 2008.

Walikale territory, in the west of the province. Part of the output of the mines is transported through Goma and into Rwanda. The Walikale mining sector is outside effective state control and many mines are under the physical control of renegade national army soldiers or armed groups, including the FDLR. The commercial interests in these mines are shadowy but reportedly extend to important figures in government circles as well as to Congolese Tutsi businessmen. These latter are rumoured to be the financial backers of Laurent Nkunda's rebellion. In early 2008 the DRC government signed multi-billion dollar contracts with a group of Chinese companies, giving these companies important mining rights in the DRC in return for investment in infrastructure projects. At around the same time, the government moved to exercise greater control over the Walikale mines. These developments created alarm among those with interests in the unregulated Walikale mining trade and may be one of the prime causes of the fighting. One of Laurent Nkunda's reported demands is the renegotiation of the Chinese contracts.

WHAT IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLING FOR?

In this complex web of economic and political interests, shifting alliances and covert international links, Amnesty International maintains a clear focus. We demand the protection of civilians. In the short term, that means reinforcing MONUC. In the longer term, a sustainable and secure solution for the people of eastern Congo can only be achieved if the armed groups are dismantled, the proliferation of arms is brought to an end and impunity is addressed effectively. Justice and accountability are vital to break the repeated cycle of massive human rights violations. [W](#)

Please pull out and use the DRC poster in the centrefold.

Previous page: Displaced Congolese protect themselves from a rain storm in the Kibati camp north of Goma, eastern Congo, November 2008.

STUN WEAPON RELATED DEATHS IN THE USA

Twenty-one-year-old Baron Pikes died in January 2008 after being shocked nine times by police in Winnfield, Louisiana. The first six times he was lying on the ground after being handcuffed. Police then pushed the Taser against his chest and shocked him in stun-gun mode (drive-stun) in the police car and shocked him twice again as he was dragged from the car. Dr Randolph Williams, Winn County Coroner, said that it was possible that Baron Pikes was already dead when he was shocked the last two times as he did not show any movement after the drive stun to his chest. Dr Williams commented: "This case may be the most unnecessary death I have ever had to investigate."

Baron Pikes' death is not an isolated case. More than 340 people have died in the USA since June 2001 after being struck with police Tasers or similar weapons. In most cases, coroners have attributed the deaths to other causes. However, in at least 50 cases, coroners are reported to have listed the Taser as a cause or contributory factor in the death.



The manufacturers of Tasers and similar devices which deliver high-voltage electric shocks (usually described as "conducted energy devices", CEDs) maintain that they are safer than many conventional weapons and have saved lives by avoiding the resort by officers to lethal force. However, Amnesty International's research found that the vast majority of those who died were unarmed, and many did not appear to present a serious threat.

Most of those who died were subjected to multiple or prolonged shocks, often far more than the standard five-second cycle, despite

warnings for several years of the potential health risks of such deployment. Many were shocked in the chest and a significant number were shocked while they were held in other forms of restraint, often using restraint methods known to impair breathing or limit the flow of blood to the heart.

Go to www.amnesty.org to read "*Less than lethal? – the use of stun weapons in US law enforcement* (AMR 51/010/2008). [W](#)

Please write to President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and express concern at the spread of electro-shock weapons in US law

A police officer aims a Taser at protesters opposing the demolition of 4,500 public housing units, City Hall, New Orleans, December 2007.

enforcement. Note that such weapons are potentially lethal and open to abuse. Urge him to call on police departments to limit the use of CEDs to life-threatening situations or to suspend their use.

Russell B. Laine, President
International Association of Chiefs of Police
515 North Washington St
Alexandria, VA, USA 22314
Fax: +1 703 836 4543
Email: rlaine@algonquin.org

TORTURE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND CONTINUES

Villagers in southern Thailand are living in a climate of fear. Violence between government security forces and insurgents, which has disrupted life in the region since 2004, has escalated in recent months and is worsening. Civilians are increasingly the victims. Detainees are being systematically tortured or otherwise ill-treated by security forces and in several documented cases have been tortured to death.

The current violence was triggered in January 2004 when insurgents raided an army depot in Narathiwat province, stealing hundreds of guns and killing four soldiers. The attack reignited tensions which have simmered for a century among the mainly Muslim population who have long felt disenfranchised and have resented efforts at assimilation by the Buddhist central government.

Now entering its sixth year, this new phase of violence and counter-insurgency is marked by widespread and escalating human rights abuses. At least 3,500 people have been killed.

Since 2005 insurgents in the area have committed serious human rights abuses such as bombings of civilian areas, beheadings and shootings of both Buddhist and Muslim security forces and civilians. The security forces have spread fear among the local population to intimidate them and to force them to withhold support for the insurgents.

A woman who was subjected to physical and psychological torture while in detention in 2008 was so traumatized that she was not able to speak directly about the ill-treatment of her young son who was held with her. [W](#)

Amnesty International's report on the issue is titled *Thailand: Torture in the southern counter-insurgency* (ASA 39/001/2009).

ACT NOW

Write to the Thai government urging it to immediately ensure that its security forces stop committing torture and other ill-treatment under all circumstances, including in its counter-insurgency operations in southern Thailand.

Please write to:

Abhisit Vejjajiva
The Secretariat of the Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Government House
Pitsanulok Road
Dusit, Bangkok 10300, Thailand
Fax: +66 2 280 0858



GUATEMALA'S LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE KILLED OR WERE VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE, DURING THE THREE DECADES OF INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT. ESTIMATES SAY AT LEAST 200,000. THIRTEEN YEARS ON, JUSTICE IS STILL TOO SLOW TO ARRIVE. IMPUNITY FOR THESE HORRORS MUST END. NOW.



On 25 February 1999, the Historical Clarification Commission (CEH) published its landmark inquiry into the gross human rights violations that devastated Guatemala during the internal armed conflict (1960-96). The report contained a series of key recommendations designed to deliver justice and reparation, and to ensure that such atrocities could never happen again.

Ten years on, as the cases of the Dos Erres and Río Negro massacres demonstrate, justice continues to be denied.

On 5 December 1982, Guatemalan security forces entered Dos Erres, La Libertad, Petén Department. When they left three days later, more than 250 men, women and children had been massacred, the women after mass rapes. The village was then razed to the ground. Since the investigation into the massacre was formally opened in Guatemala in 1994, the defence has put in at least 30 appeals, as well as applying other judicial remedies on approximately 49 occasions. In effect, the investigation has now been open for almost 15 years and has not resulted in a single conviction.

Five massacres were carried out against members

The clothing and remains recovered at Dos Erres clearly illustrate that many of the victims of the massacre were children.

of the Achí village of Río Negro, Rabinal municipality, Baja Verapaz Department between 1980 and 1982, including the March 1982 massacre of 177 women and children. Local human rights groups say 4,000 to 5,000 people were killed during that period in the wider Rabinal area, and that 444 of the 791 inhabitants of Río Negro were extrajudicially executed. After years of efforts by human rights defenders to move the case forward, three members of the Civil Defence Patrol (Patrulla de Auto-Defensa Civil, PAC), a government-backed militia, were convicted in December 1998 of three of the killings; this was changed on appeal to conviction for two of the killings. In 2008, six other former PAC members were convicted of the murder of 26 people. However, none of the senior military officials who planned, ordered or participated in the massacres have been brought to justice.

Two painstaking and comprehensive inquiries were carried out into human rights violations during

Guatemala's internal conflict: the CEH, carried out under the terms of the UN-brokered Peace Accords which ended the conflict, and the Recuperation of the Historical Memory Project (REMHI), carried out by the Catholic Church in Guatemala. Both unequivocally laid the responsibility for the vast majority of violations, widely recognized as crimes against humanity, at the feet of the Guatemalan military and their allies.

Some 200,000 people were the victims of enforced disappearances or political killings during the conflict. The extent and nature of the violations were such that the CEH concluded that the army was guilty of the genocide of Guatemala's Indigenous Peoples in four parts of the country.

These inquiries should have laid the foundations for establishing justice for the victims of these violations. However, their recommendations in the area of justice, almost without exception, have never been implemented. Of the 626 massacres which the CEH attributed to state security forces and their allies, less than five have resulted in convictions in a Guatemalan court, and even then only of low-ranking officers or their civilian allies. No high-ranking officer or official has ever been brought to justice for their role in instigating or endorsing the widespread and egregious human rights violations over which they presided.

On the 10th anniversary of the CEH report, Amnesty International is calling on the Guatemalan authorities to commemorate this National Day for the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict by making renewed and concerted efforts to end impunity for those responsible for past human rights violations, and by ensuring that any of those suspected of committing past abuses are removed from the security forces.

Please write to:

President of the Republic
Lic. Álvaro Colom
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial, 6ª Avenida, 4-41, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: +502 2221 4423

Call on the president to bring to justice those responsible for crimes such as extrajudicial executions, torture and enforced disappearance committed during the internal armed conflict, including those who planned and ordered such crimes.



Amnesty International's exhibition on human rights defenders in Zimbabwe, *My Rights, My Struggle*, toured six African countries in the second half of 2008. A 2009 calendar, *Zimbabwe: Time for Accountability*, is out now.

To read more about Zimbabwe, go to: www.amnesty.org/en/zimbabwe-collapse

Please sign and send the postcard insert.

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CAMBODIANS BORN SAMNANG AND SOK SAM OEUN RELEASED

Good news! Born Samnang (*pictured above left*) and Sok Sam Oeun (*above centre*), who have been serving a 20-year prison sentence for murder, were released on bail on 31 December 2008 following a Supreme Court hearing. *The Wire* published World Wide Appeals for their release in 2006 and 2007 and continued to follow their case in 2008.

Born Samnang and Sok Sam Oeun were sentenced in August 2005

for the murder of prominent trade unionist Chea Vichea in 2004. The criminal investigation and the trial were widely criticized as flawed and unfair. Both men had strong alibis at the time of the murder and the prosecution presented no direct evidence, apart from a confession extracted from one of the defendants under duress.

To find more information go to: www.amnesty.org/en/cambodians-released

EXECUTIONS CONTINUE IN SAUDI ARABIA

The rate of executions in Saudi Arabia continues to be high. At least 102 people were executed in 2008.

Around 38 Syrian men are currently at risk of execution after having been sentenced to death on drug-related charges in the town of al-Qurayyat in the Jawf region of north-western Saudi Arabia. Very little is known about their cases. One of them, Mohamed al-Hariri, was arrested in

April 2007 and sentenced to death in June 2008 for smuggling Captagon (a stimulant whose breakdown products include amphetamine). He had no lawyer, during either the interrogation or the trial, and has had no access to his family since his arrest. Amnesty International is campaigning for these and other death sentences to be commuted.

www.amnesty.org/en/region/saudi-arabia

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign on human rights.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

DID YOU KNOW?

BARACK OBAMA TAKES POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS STEP

Within days of taking office, President Barack Obama took major steps to meet Amnesty International's human rights checklist that *Wire* published last issue. He issued executive orders to close Guantánamo and ban torture, he also suspended military tribunals. *Wire* will keep you up to date with any other progress on the checklist for President Obama's first 100 days.

In the meantime, you can keep up to date with the 100 days campaign, get widgets, sign a petition and watch a video, here

<http://obama100days.org>

UN STRENGTHENS LAST YEAR'S CALL TO END EXECUTIONS

The UN General Assembly adopted a second resolution on a "Moratorium on the use of the death penalty" on Thursday 18 December 2008 when 106 countries voted in favour of the resolution. Forty-six voted against with 34 abstentions, compared to 104 in favour, 54 against and 29 abstentions in the 2007 vote. Eighty-nine countries co-sponsored the resolution, two more than last year.

www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty

WHETHER IN A HIGH-PROFILE CONFLICT OR A FORGOTTEN CORNER OF THE GLOBE, **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL** CAMPAIGNS FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM FOR ALL AND SEEKS TO GALVANIZE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

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

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

Together we can make our voices heard.

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

NAME

ADDRESS

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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, 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



Mayan girls play a game of hand clapping, Guatemala, 2003.

**‘SOMETIMES, JUST BY
DIALLING
A NUMBER
YOU CAN
SAVE SOMEONE’**

Jenni Williams

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

