

## **The Wire**

October 2006 Vol. 36. No. 09  
AI Index: NWS 21/009/2006

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### **Will China honour its Olympic promises?**

*“The Olympics is good for China... But it should not be used as an excuse to hurt ordinary citizens, to drive people from their homes.”* A resident of Beijing’s Qianmen district, whose home is to be demolished

When China won the 2008 Olympics bid in 2001, it promised to improve its human rights record. Beyond enhancing procedural safeguards in death penalty cases, that promise remains largely empty.

Hundreds of people have become casualties of Beijing’s frenzied construction and “clean-up” operation. Some have lost their homes, others have been condemned to imprisonment without charge or trial in “Re-education through Labour” (RTL) facilities, still others have been arrested and even tortured.

In July, 10 families were forcibly evicted from their homes. They had reportedly refused to leave their building, which is located next to the new site of China Central Television (official broadcasters of the 2008 Olympics), claiming that local authorities offered inadequate compensation.

Other Beijing residents have been similarly affected. Qi Zhiyong has been forced to move his small shop several times due to Olympic-related construction. Shot in the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, Qi Zhiyong has an amputated leg and was dismissed from his job due to his disability. The shop is his primary source of income.

The authorities had revoked his license and detained him for 51 days after he participated in a hunger-strike in February protesting against the recent beatings of activists. Qi Zhiyong’s wife also lost her job, apparently as a result of her husband’s campaigning activities.

It has recently emerged that Ye Guozhu, sentenced to four years’ imprisonment in 2004 after campaigning against Olympics-related forced evictions, has been tortured in detention in Beijing. He was reportedly suspended from the ceiling by his arms and has suffered beatings with electro-shock batons for refusing to “admit his guilt”. AI considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and calls for his immediate and unconditional release. A renewed crackdown on lawyers, journalists and Internet users has targeted many others across the country. Like Ye Guozhu they seek to expose violations and protect their rights through legal channels.

Beijing local authorities also remain determined to expand their powers to “cleanse” the city’s image. In May, they decided to widen their use of RTL against “offending behaviour” to include “serious” cases of “unlawful advertising or leafleting, unlicensed taxis, unlicensed businesses, vagrancy and begging.” This is apparently the first time since mid-2003 that officials have specifically used RTL at the local level to address public order issues in cities.

These developments undermine the government’s commitment to “complete media freedom” for the Olympics, to improve human rights and to the “preservation of human dignity” considered fundamental to the Olympic Spirit.

With less than two years remaining, human rights improvements in law and practice are urgently needed so that when August 2008 arrives the Chinese people can be proud in every respect of what their country has to offer the world.

To take action, go to *Worldwide Appeals*, p.3. Also see: *People's Republic of China – The Olympics countdown* (ASA 17/046/2006).

[Picture caption: Protesters gather at the entrance to a 333 hectare site on the outskirts of Beijing, where a water sports venue is planned for the 2008 Olympics, June 2005. The banner reads: "Support Olympics. Reasonably settle farmers who lose land." © EMPICS]

## **Government maligns Colombian activists**

President Álvaro Uribe began his second term on 7 August after winning the general elections on 28 May. Despite earlier promises to protect human rights organizations – promises made before he first took office in 2002 – human rights defenders continue to be threatened, intimidated and killed by paramilitary groups acting in an atmosphere of impunity fomented by government inaction. Not only are these activists physically vulnerable, but their reputations are openly discredited, with officials branding them “subversives” and “terrorists”.

In 2004, President Álvaro Uribe publicly accused one member of the organization José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers Collective of hiding behind his human rights work in order to defend guerrillas. In May this year, the organization, which represents victims of human rights violations, received an email warning them to abandon their work or suffer grave consequences.

The message was sent to them from an address which included the phrase “Colombia Libre”, the name used online by United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia, the paramilitary umbrella organization. The email warned that its authors would “make the international community see that you are nothing but protectors of terrorists, fomenters of terrorism on a grand scale”.

The Collective had worked on several high-profile cases in which senior members of the security forces had been implicated and had also actively criticized the demobilization process. As a result of their work they have repeatedly been subjected to paramilitary death threats and criticism by government officials.

The continued harassment of human rights defenders directly contradicts the much-vaunted demobilization programme launched by the government in 2003. Instead of fully disarming paramilitary groups, the process has resulted in paramilitaries being “recycled” into the conflict, still committing human rights violations with impunity (see *the Wire* October 2005). Activists campaigning for justice are often presented as “enemies of the peace process”.

Those who suffer most in Colombia's protracted internal armed conflict are marginalized communities whose voices are rarely heard: communities of African descent, Indigenous communities, and peasant and shanty-town dwellers.

Many such groups have responded by demanding that all parties to the conflict (the security forces and their paramilitary allies, and guerrilla groups) respect their right not to be drawn into it. They do not bear arms and will not provide information or logistical support to either side in the conflict. Some have called themselves peace communities.

In response, President Álvaro Uribe has said: “Nobody can be neutral in the state's fight against criminality.” Those who are and who continue to expose human rights violations and criticize the government are accused of collaborating with guerrilla groups.

As Wilson David, member of the San José de Apartadó peace community, told AI: “The government doesn’t admit that it doesn’t want anything to do with us. The government knows its responsibilities, but it doesn’t have the will to act.”

See *Colombia: Fear and intimidation – The dangers of human rights work* (AMR 23/033/2006).

[Picture caption: Hermes Vallejo, peasant farmer leader in Tolima, addresses members of the community. He is unable to return to Tolima for fear of attack by paramilitaries. © AI]

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### **3 October World Habitat Day – Focus on Africa**

*“[T]he practice of forced evictions constitutes a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing.”* UN Commission on Human Rights

Across Africa hundreds of thousands of people each year are forcibly evicted. They are removed from their homes without notice or compensation and in many cases are left homeless, stripped of their possessions. Often they are displaced far from sources of clean water, food, sanitation, livelihood or education.

Forced evictions violate international law, yet many governments justify them on the grounds that they are essential for the development of infrastructure or in preparation for international events. The tragic outcome in most of these cases is that the poorest and most vulnerable members of society are placed at even greater risk.

AI has documented cases from across Africa, including Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea (see below).

In Sudan, approximately 1,800,000 people, driven from their homes by prolonged conflict, face forced eviction from camps around the capital, Khartoum. They are often left on barren land in the desert (see *the Wire* May 2006).

In Ghana, hundreds of residents from the Dudzorme Island (in the Digya National Park) were forcibly evicted from their homes in 2006. On 8 April, some evictees were reportedly forced into an overloaded ferry, which subsequently capsized, leaving around 30 people dead according to official sources, while many may never be accounted for.

In the last year in Kenya, tens of thousands of people, including Indigenous peoples, were violently evicted from forests with no resettlement arrangement. Many informal settlements in the capital, Nairobi, have been subject to intermittent demolitions. However, Kenya is adopting guidelines to prevent and remedy forced evictions.

Forced evictions in Angola’s capital, Luanda, since 2001 have left thousands of people homeless when their homes were destroyed. Police and security guards have shot at, beaten and kicked residents, including pregnant women, and arrested those who tried to resist the evictions (see *the Wire* May 2006).

In May, AI called on the African Commission to adopt a resolution condemning the practice of forced evictions in Africa. AI also calls on African governments to acknowledge that adequate housing is a human right, and to publicly commit to an immediate halt to forced evictions.

## **Thousands made homeless in Nigeria**

Hundreds of Nigerians are still sleeping out in the open more than a year after their homes were smashed to pieces by the authorities. In April 2005, bulldozers and armed police descended on the Makoko community of Lagos, obliterating large parts of the community in three days. Homes, churches, a mosque and a medical clinic were all destroyed. About 3,000 residents, many already destitute, were left homeless.

“On the day the bulldozers came,” said one 17-year-old resident, “I went to the market in the morning and before I came back... there was fire everywhere. There was nothing left of my house. I was only carrying the clothes that I was wearing. I have nothing else left. I saw how pigs, cows and chickens were burnt to death.”

Eyewitnesses told AI how, after razing concrete and iron-sheet houses to the ground, officials set fire to what remained, thus ensuring that materials could not be re-used to rebuild homes. Makoko is situated next to a large bridge, one of Lagos’ main transportation thoroughways. Its convenient location makes it an attractive proposition for property developers, and has substantially increased its value. It is Makoko’s poorest who must pay the heaviest price for this.

Since the turn of the century, more than 2 million people across Nigeria have been forcibly evicted from their homes. Not only have they been made homeless, but many have been beaten, arbitrarily arrested and left without adequate food, clean water or sanitation. Some women told AI that they had been raped.

Nigeria is a party to international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, prohibiting forced evictions. The UN Commission on Human Rights has recognized the practice as a grave violation of a range of human rights, particularly the right to adequate housing. Yet Nigeria continues to ignore its duty under international law.

Meanwhile, women give birth in the rubble of Makoko where the only homes are those that dwell in the memories of its lost residents.

[Picture caption: An unidentified woman sells drinking water amidst the rubble of houses demolished by the government in the Chika area of Abuja, Nigeria, December 2005. © EMPICS]

## **Oil fuels evictions in Equatorial Guinea**

Rufina, a widow with three children, was forcibly evicted from her home, in the Atepa district of the capital, Malabo, on 22 July.

She was already at work when the then Prime Minister and the Minister of Urban Planning arrived with a demolition team at 8.30am. They were accompanied by soldiers, who slapped and shoved anyone who complained or resisted the demolitions.

Rufina’s neighbour phoned, telling her to come home urgently, but by the time she arrived at midday her house and all her possessions had been destroyed. Her children, all aged under 10, were driven out of the house.

Recent forced evictions in Malabo have left hundreds of families homeless and AI fears that more will follow.

Equatorial Guinea is Africa's third main oil producer. The new wealth from recent oil production has led to pressure on the land for commercial purposes, as well as luxury housing. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema has on several occasions publicly expressed his wish to eradicate "chabolismo" (shanty towns) which he says make the city look ugly and may put off investors. However, many of the houses demolished recently were solid structures in well-established neighbourhoods where the majority of the occupants had titles to the land.

Mariano's house in Atepa district was also destroyed on 22 July along with about 60 other similar houses, leaving more than 600 people homeless. His wife and their four children had lived in their large wooden house for two years. The title to their land had been granted by President Obiang.

The authorities justified the demolitions claiming that the land was needed for the construction of a road. But the road has already been built and the houses were 80-90 metres away. There was no consultation with the community, no prior warning and no compensation. When people from the community asked those marking the houses for demolition in April for a formal committee to discuss the situation they were told to go and live in the forest like animals.

Forced evictions are contrary to Equatorial Guinea's expropriation law and to the Constitution which protects the right to property and to a home. The reason often given for demolitions is to use the land for public utility developments. However, no such use has so far been made. The land is frequently usurped by the President, his family and other members of the government to build luxury homes, supermarkets or other businesses for themselves.

The densely populated district of Comandachina in the city of Bata, is currently under threat. Situated near President Obiang's palace, he has reportedly said that he does not want to look at those "chobolas" on his way home. In April he ordered residents to build two or three floor houses, giving them three months to comply or vacate their properties. Forced evictions and demolitions could begin at any time.

## **No justice for victims of forced evictions in Zimbabwe**

In May 2005 the government of Zimbabwe launched Operation Murambatsvina (Drive Out Rubbish), a programme of mass forced evictions and demolitions, which resulted in an estimated 700,000 people losing their homes, their livelihoods or both. The victims were among the poorest people in Zimbabwe and as a direct consequence they were driven deeper into poverty and exposed to further serious human rights violations.

Under international law the government is obliged to ensure access to effective judicial or other appropriate remedies for victims of human rights violations committed during Operation Murambatsvina. The government claimed it would provide housing to those who had lost homes, but a much publicized "rebuilding programme" – Operation Garikai/ Hlalani Kuhle (Better Life) – has in reality achieved almost nothing for the victims.

During a recent visit to nine sites, AI found that only a tiny fraction of the victims of Operation Murambatsvina have benefited from the "rebuilding programme".

By May 2006 only 3,325 houses had been constructed under Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle compared to 92,460 housing structures destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina. Construction in many areas now appears to have stopped. The majority of the houses are uninhabited, and uninhabitable. Many are unfinished – lacking doors, windows and even roofs. They do not have access to adequate safe water or sanitation. Moreover, despite their inadequacy, they are rarely available for purchase, and even if offered, are largely

unaffordable. The process for allocating the new – albeit incomplete – houses lacks transparency and the criteria used to decide who gets a house or plot are unclear. Houses have been allocated to people who did not lose accommodation during Operation Murambatsvina.

Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle is the only government response to the gross human rights violations perpetrated under Operation Murambatsvina. No other assistance or remedy has been offered by the government to the hundreds of thousands of victims. As such, Zimbabwe is clearly violating its obligation to provide effective remedy and reparation to individuals whose human rights have been violated.

The government has also hindered victims' attempts to help themselves, frustrated humanitarian efforts to provide emergency shelter, and subjected some of the most vulnerable people to repeated forced evictions.

AI considers that the government, by such actions, has compounded its own failure to provide an effective remedy to the victims.

Until forced evictions are recognized as serious human rights violations – in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa – and the victims assisted to rebuild their lives, forced evictions will continue to push hundreds of thousands of people deeper into poverty, and lay the foundations for further human rights violations.

See *Zimbabwe: No justice for the victims of forced evictions* (AFR 46/005/2006), *Zimbabwe: Quantifying destruction – satellite images of forced evictions* (AFR 46/014/2006) and *the Wire* April 2006. To find out what you can do to help, go to [amnesty.org/actnow](http://amnesty.org/actnow)

[Picture caption: Residents of Porta Farm are forcibly removed by police on the back of a truck, May 2005. © AI]

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## **Worldwide Appeals**

### **United Arab Emirates Human rights activists harassed**

Mohamed al-Mansoori, a lawyer and human rights activist, was issued with an arrest warrant on 17 June. He was accused of “insulting the Public Prosecutor”. AI believes that the authorities' real motive was to silence him after he gave several interviews to Arabic satellite television channels in which he spoke critically of the human rights situation in the country. He is currently out of the country and would face arrest if he returned to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Mohamed al-Mansoori is president of the UAE Jurists' Association, an independent group of judges, lawyers and legal experts, which has organized seminars on various human rights issues. In September 2005 in the Emirate of Fujairah, the authorities banned a conference on civil rights, women's rights and democracy that the Association was organizing. No reasons were given for the ban.

AI is alarmed at the recent intimidation and harassment of human rights activists in the UAE.

In July Mohamed 'Abdullah al-Roken, former president of the UAE's Jurists' Association, was arrested and detained overnight after giving an interview to an Arabic satellite television channel about the recent conflict in Lebanon. He was released without charge.

In August he was arrested at his office in Dubai, and detained for two days before being released, after which his passport was confiscated. The reasons for his arrest are still unclear.

Both Mohamed al-Mansoori and Mohamed ‘Abdullah al-Roken had been barred for several years from giving interviews or writing articles for the local media.

Please write, calling on the UAE authorities to take concrete steps to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is respected and that human rights defenders are free from harassment.

Send appeals to: Minister of the Interior, His Excellency Major-General Shaikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ministry of the Interior, PO Box 398, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Fax: + 971 2 4414938. E-mail: moi@interior.gov.kh

[Picture caption: Mohamed al-Mansoori © Private]

## **China**

### **Prisoner of conscience sentenced**

Prisoner of conscience Chen Guangcheng, a human rights activist, was sentenced to four years and three months in prison on 24 August. Charged in June with “damaging public property and gathering people to block traffic”, he was detained incommunicado for three months.

Chen Guangcheng was convicted after a trial lasting less than two hours. His lawyers were obstructed at every stage – from collecting evidence to representing him in court. During the trial, local police reportedly closed off a 300-metre area around the court, preventing any supporters from approaching. Three of Chen Guangcheng’s brothers were allowed inside. Meanwhile his wife, Yuan Weijing, was prevented from leaving her home by 10 police officers. Even his lawyers were denied access, leaving Chen Guangcheng in the hands of two court-appointed lawyers.

The trial was the culmination of months of beatings and arbitrary detention which began in September 2005. His family and defence lawyers have also been subjected to beatings, harassment and intimidation.

Before his detention, Chen Guangcheng, who is blind, had been helping villagers launch a lawsuit against local authorities in Linyi City, Shandong province. The lawsuit alleged that the authorities had carried out an illegal policy of forced abortions and sterilizations which reportedly affected thousands of local women.

AI considers the charges against Chen Guangcheng to be a politically motivated attempt to prevent him from pursuing his peaceful and legitimate activities as a human rights defender, including his legal case against the local authorities. He has appealed against his sentence.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Chen Guangcheng.

Send letters to: Minister of Justice Aiying Wu Buzhang, Sifabu, 10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie, Chaoyangqu, Beijingshi 100020, China. Fax: +86 10 65292345. Email: minister@legalinfo.gov.cn or pfmaster@legalinfo.gov.cn (c/o Ministry of Communications)

## **United Kingdom**

### **Risk of torture if returned to Algeria**

On 24 August the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) dismissed the appeal of an Algerian man, known as “Y” for legal reasons, against his deportation on national security grounds.

“Y” is a torture survivor who had been granted refugee status in the UK. In 2005, he was acquitted, together with others, of all charges in connection with an alleged conspiracy to produce poisons and/or explosives. He was released from custody in April 2005, where he had been held since January 2003. He was later re-arrested and held pending deportation.

“Y” appealed to SIAC against being labelled a risk to national security by the UK authorities, as well as on the grounds that returning him to Algeria would expose him to a real risk of torture.

In reaching its decision, SIAC relied on secret intelligence provided by the UK authorities that was withheld from “Y”, his lawyers of choice and the public. The SIAC proceedings did not afford “Y” the right to due process of law nor his right to court procedures that treat both parties equally, making it impossible for him to effectively refute the UK authorities’ case that he was a national security risk.

SIAC also failed to recognize the real risk of torture “Y” faces if returned to Algeria. If returned, he is likely to be taken into the custody of Algeria’s “Military Security”, an intelligence agency officially known as the Department for Information and Security (DRS). It specializes in interrogating people thought to possess information about terrorist activities, and is widely known to practice torture and other ill-treatment. The risk of torture faced by individuals who are arrested by the DRS has been extensively documented by AI.

See *UK: Algerian national security deportation an affront to justice and a green light to torture* (EUR 45/014/2006).

Please write, calling on the UK authorities not to return “Y” to Algeria. Urge them to rescind the deportation order against him and release him immediately, unless he is charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial.

Send appeals to: Dr John Reid MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department, Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF, UK. Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7035 4745

[For translators: Département du renseignement et de la sécurité]

## Updates

### Guantánamo detainee released

Murat Kurnaz was released from Guantánamo on 24 August 2006 after four years and eight months in detention, without charge or trial. The only contact he had with his family was through heavily censored letters. His German lawyer said: “He is now again in the circle of his family. Their joy at embracing their lost son again is indescribable.”

It was only after intense lobbying from his family, lawyers and AI members around the world that the German authorities began to act on his behalf, finally paving the way for his return.

More than 400 men remain detained in Guantánamo. AI members worldwide continue to call on US authorities to close Guantánamo, and for the release or fair trial of all those held.

See *Worldwide Appeal* June 2005.



[Picture caption: Murat Kurnaz © Private]

## Turkmenistan

On 14 September Ogulsapar Muradova's relatives were informed that she had died in custody. AI is concerned at allegations that she was tortured and ill-treated in custody. On 25 August she was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khadzhiiev were each sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Their trial, which reportedly lasted less than two hours, was grossly unfair.

The three were charged with "illegal acquisition, possession or sale of ammunition or firearms". It is believed that they were ill-treated in pre-trial detention in order to extract "confessions" and to incriminate each other. They have been denied access to their relatives since their arrest in June. Their lawyers have lodged appeals against the verdicts.

Please send appeals, calling for a prompt and impartial investigation into Ogulsapar Muradova's death. Express concern that the trial of Ogulsapar Muradova, Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khadzhiiev was unfair and urge the authorities to conduct a full and impartial investigation into reports that the three were ill-treated in detention.

See *Worldwide Appeal* August 2006.

[Pictures available on ADAM of Ogulsapar Muradova and Annakurban Amanklychev]

## Viet Nam

Dr Pham Hong Son was released from jail as part of an amnesty to mark Viet Nam's National Day on 2 September. He will remain under house arrest for up to three years. While it is good news for Dr Pham Hong Son to be released from jail, he now faces three years under house arrest and AI still considers him a prisoner of conscience.

Please continue to send appeals urging the government to release Dr Pham Hong Son from house arrest and to free all those imprisoned simply for expressing their peaceful opinions.

See *Worldwide Appeal* December 2005.

## Australia scraps migration bill

AI welcomes the Australian Prime Minister's decision to abandon the Migration Amendment (Designated Unauthorised Arrivals) Bill on 14 August. If passed, the Bill would have resulted in denying some of the world's most vulnerable of their fundamental rights.

The Bill would have penalized asylum-seekers arriving by boat by detaining them in remote locations, as well as by refusing them legal assistance and the right to an independent appeals process.

This represents a significant victory for the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers. A clear signal has been sent that Australia will not abandon desperate people fleeing persecution.

## Violence flares in Sudan

On 28 August, the government launched a major offensive in North Darfur, reportedly with the assistance of Janjawid militia. On 31 August, the UN Security Council passed a resolution establishing a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur which the Sudanese government rejected. At

the time of going to print, the peacekeeping force led by the African Union was due to withdraw from Darfur at the end of September unless Sudan and the UN find an agreement. A peacekeeping gap can only mean more death, destruction and displacement for Darfur's people.

On 17 September AI members and other activists took part in a global day of action for Darfur.

Join AI's call for a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur now. Go to: [www.amnesty.org/actnow](http://www.amnesty.org/actnow)

## Cluster bomb carnage in Lebanon

Hassan Hussein Hamadi, 13, was seriously injured when he picked up an object which turned out to be an Israeli cluster bomb. In Lebanon, AI delegates found numerous unexploded cluster bombs in civilian areas. Ninety per cent of Israeli cluster bomb strikes occurred in the last 72 hours before the ceasefire. Up to 100,000 unexploded bomblets may remain.

AI is calling for a worldwide moratorium on the use of cluster bombs and for a UN investigation into all violations of international humanitarian law committed by Israel and Hizbullah during the conflict.

Take action! Go to: [www.amnesty.org/actnow](http://www.amnesty.org/actnow)

Also see: *Israel/Lebanon: Under fire – Hizbullah's attacks on northern Israel* (MDE 02/025/2006).

## USA defends secret detention

US President George W Bush admitted to holding "terror" suspects in secret CIA prisons. These include cases which have amounted to enforced disappearance, a crime under international law. In a speech given on 6 September he revealed that 14 men held in secret CIA custody have been transferred to Guantánamo in preparation for their trial. He is seeking congressional authorization for trials by military commission. He also defended secret detention and "alternative" interrogation techniques as key instruments in the "war on terror". These techniques, which he refrained from elaborating upon, have reportedly included "water-boarding" (simulated drowning) and other methods which violate international law and standards.

See [www.amnesty.org/stoptorture](http://www.amnesty.org/stoptorture)

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10 October

## **The World Day against the Death Penalty**

### **Activists say no to death penalty**

On 10 October – the World Day against the Death Penalty – activists and campaigners around the world will make a concerted stand against this most final and irrevocable of punishments. This year, the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, of which AI is a member, will organize a day of local actions along the theme of "a failure of justice".

Application of the death penalty itself is a failure of justice, but it is usually accompanied and compounded by a host of systemic breakdowns including unfair trials which can lead to the execution of the innocent, mentally ill or child offenders.

This year, the campaign focuses on child executions in Iran, discriminatory application of the death penalty on foreign nationals in Saudi Arabia, executions of the innocent in China and of the mentally ill in USA, and unfair trials in Nigeria. Events include public debates, concerts, film screenings and the collection of hundreds of signatures on appeals calling for an end to the death penalty.

The World Day will be followed on 30 November by Cities for Life, organized by the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio, Italy. Public buildings and spaces worldwide will be lit up – in effect acting as beacons affirming the value of life and signalling opposition to the death penalty. An annual event, it also commemorates the abolition of the death penalty in Tuscany on 30 November 1786 – the first such abolition in a European state.

[Picture caption: The Atomium in Brussels, Belgium, is illuminated for the Cities for Life – an annual initiative organized by pro-abolition groups. “No to the death penalty” was projected on to the sculpture in different languages. © Sant'Egidio Community]

[Picture: World Coalition Against the Death Penalty poster]

Errata in World Coalition Against the Death Penalty poster, Setback No 3: Please send appeals to the Nigerian authorities.

### **Iran continues to execute children**

Iran continues to sentence child offenders to death, despite signing up to international treaties that expressly prohibit this heinous practice. It was the only country to execute children in 2005. In 2006, it shares this invidious position with Pakistan – the only other country to have executed a child so far this year.

According to AI figures, Iran executed eight child offenders in 2005. It carried out its first child execution of 2006 on 13 May with the hanging of an unnamed 17-year-old boy. He was executed along with an unnamed 20-year-old man, in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province. They had reportedly been sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a 12-year-old boy.

Iran shows little sign of curbing its use of the death penalty on child offenders. Nazanin Fatehi, aged 18, remains at risk of losing her life after being sentenced to death in 2005 for killing a young man. The man, along with others, allegedly attacked and tried to rape her and her niece.

Speaking in tears at the trial, Nazanin Fatehi said: “I wanted to defend myself and my niece... However, I did not want to kill that boy. At the heat of the moment I did not know what to do because no one came to our help.” The Supreme Court subsequently rejected the sentence in June and her case is currently being retried.

Ne'mat, aged 17, faces imminent execution for a crime committed when he was 14. He was arrested in 2003 for the murder of his brother-in-law – a crime he confessed to after lengthy interrogation. It is not known where he is held.

**Act now!**

Please write, urging the Iranian authorities to commute immediately the death sentences of Ne'mat, Nazanin Fatehi, and any other individuals sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were under the age of 18.

Send letters to: His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, Ministry of Justice, Park-e Sharh, Tehran, Iran. Fax: 011 98 21 3 311 6567.

To find out what you can do for Nazanin Fatehi, visit [www.helpnazanin.com](http://www.helpnazanin.com)