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Make Some Noise - case studies

The following are examples of cases on which Amnesty International is campaigning.

Gospel singer Helen Berhane

Helen Berhane is a 30-year-old gospel singer who has been detained incommunicado since May 13, 2004. She is a well-known singer who has made several recordings, and her music is particularly popular with young people. Helen Berhane is a member of the Rema church, one of several minority churches not officially recognised by the state of Eritrea. She is one of almost 150 women members of banned evangelical churches who have been detained without charge or trial on account of their religious beliefs.

Helen Berhane has refused to abandon her faith and religious singing, despite reportedly receiving promises of release from detention if she would do so. She is held at Mai Serwa military camp near Asmara, in a metal shipping container with little ventilation that alternates between hot and cold temperature extremes and has no washing or toilet facilities.

Amnesty International is campaigning for the release of Helen Berhane and the many other prisoners of conscience in Eritrea, who are locked up without charge or trial and routinely denied all access to family, friends or lawyers.

Guantánamo Bay detainee Mohammed el Gharani

Eighteen-year-old Mohammed el Gharani says he was arrested without cause, hung by his wrists and beaten for up to 16 hours a day. He says he was interrogated, tortured and burned. He could cry out but no one would hear. He could beg to be freed or beg for a trial but no one cared.

When he was fifteen, Mohammed el Gharani says he was praying in a mosque in Pakistan when it was raided by Pakistani police. He was accused of being in Tora Bora, an area of Afghanistan believed to be an al-Qa'ida hideout. In an instant, his life was transformed. With his body reportedly covered in scars from torture, he remains in Guantánamo Bay to this day. When he finally told his lawyer his story, it was his first contact with the outside world for years.

"They did not ask me my age until I had been in Cuba for a year," said Mohammed. "Before I came to Camp V, I had hope. After this I lost all hope."

Amnesty International is campaigning for the release or fair trial of Mohammed el Gharani and all Guantánamo detainees, amidst reports of torture and ill-treatment.

Student activist Thet Win Aung

Thet Win Aung, a student and human rights activist, is serving a 59-year prison sentence in Myanmar on

politically motivated charges. Amnesty International has received reports that Thet Win Aung is in very poor health, suffering from a range of illnesses including malaria.

Thet Win Aung was arrested on 4 October 1998 for participating in peaceful demonstrations protesting the poor quality of education and human rights in Myanmar. Military authorities reportedly tortured him during interrogation. His original sentence of 52 years in prison was later increased to 59 years.

As a member state of the United Nations, Myanmar must uphold all of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to freedom of expression is defined in Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thet Win Aung was exercising these rights when he was arrested.

Amnesty International considers Thet Win Aung to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his fundamental right to freedom of expression. Amnesty International is campaigning for the Burmese authorities to grant the immediate and unconditional release of Thet Win Aung and all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar.

Speaking out for women in Zimbabwe, Jenni Williams

"Strike a woman and you strike a rock. We are not going to be deterred."

As one of the leaders of the human rights activist group Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), Jenni Williams has been arrested or detained by police in Zimbabwe at least 15 times in the last two years.

In March 2005 hundreds of WOZA women were arrested when they tried to hold a peaceful post-election prayer vigil in Africa Unity Square, Harare. As they were gathering they were surrounded by police.

"They started intimidating and provoking us," recalls Jenni. The police crammed 150 women into open-topped vehicles, beating them as they did so, then took them to the station where they beat them again as they got out. Despite continued intimidation, Jenni and WOZA have continued their struggle in an inspiring display of strength and courage.

Public Document

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