

Amnesty International Miami Chapter Local Group 248 Newsletter - July 2005

Meetings are at 8 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month:

July 13, August 10, September 14, ...

Join us at **Books and Books**, 265 Aragon Avenue, Coral Gables, 305-442-4408

Amnesty Wants You!

Our group is addressing many critical issues. More dedicated people need to be active despite our recent decision to give up some of the areas which we had been working on. We could still use more help in dealing with the issues of Iraq and the aftermath of 9/11. It would also be fitting to have a local presence on refugee issues. If you have been thinking about coming to a meeting, please attend the next one and lend a hand. Additional committee meetings are now regularly scheduled.

Visit our website at: <http://www.aimiami.org/>

For newsletter submissions: ai248ai@netscape.net (by the first week of each month.)



Abraham J. Bonowitz, of Citizens United for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, demonstrates in front of the U.S. Supreme Court during "[Starvin' for Justice](#)," the 7th annual Fast & Vigil to Abolish the Death Penalty, June 30th, 2000. Ofelia Adan-Fernandez (not in photo) attended this year's event on June 29th, 2005.

Please join us this month to help in selecting the recipient of our Annual Human Rights Award. The nominees are: Randall Berg, Lida Rodriguez-Taseff, and John de Leon. Your vote really counts.

Why We Do Human Rights Work

The current newsletter of AI's Urgent Action Network (at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent/newslett.html - releases>) has this entry:

PAKISTAN: Members of the Baloch Students Organization: Nawaz Ali, Akhter Nadeem, Imdad Baloch, Yusuf Baloch, Ghulam Rasool Allah Nazar, Naseem Baloch. Imdad Baloch, Yusuf Baloch, Ghulam Rasool and Naseem Baloch were reportedly released on May 24th. They had been detained incommunicado for two months, along with Nawaz Ali and Akhter Nadeem, and were reportedly tortured. Nawaz Ali and Akhter Nadeem are still detained at an unknown location and remain at risk of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This Urgent Action has been reissued to a portion of the UA Network for continued action. (*UA 111/05 issued May 5th, 2005 & reissued Jun. 8th, 2005*).

Human Rights After 9/11

(More information on AI's concerns can be found at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/usa/index.do>.)

One year after the Supreme Court ruled that the detainees at Guantánamo have the right to challenge their detention in federal court, the US Government continues to argue that the detainees have no legal rights. The Guantánamo detention camp has become a symbol of the Administration's refusal to put human rights and the rule of law at the center of its policies in the "war on terror". We ask that you send to President Bush the letter included below. This action can also be seen at: <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/action/index.asp?step=2&item=11939>.

On June 27th, the AI chapter on FIU's north campus, Veterans for Peace, our group and the ACLU joined to hold a demonstration against torture. We brought about 25 people to the Claude Pepper federal building downtown, gave speeches and held signs visible to rush hour traffic. Two television statements sent reporters.

The event was held to commemorate the eighth annual United Nations Day in Support of Torture Victims and Survivors. We spoke of the brutal reality of torture as used worldwide, including by the U.S. government in Iraq, Guantanamo, Afghanistan and secret CIA prisons abroad. Please bring us your ideas on how we can continue to speak out on this subject.

Human Rights in Miami

On June 15th, our group participated in an action seeking a moratorium on Taser use by the Miami-Dade police force until independent studies can be done of the health effects of this weapon, which is now used by some 7,000 police departments nationwide. This action was held by a coalition of local churches and groups including the NAACP, PULSE, the ACLU, and ourselves, and included speeches to a crowd of about 300, and a presentation later in the day to a committee of the Miami-Dade County Commission.

The committee was looking at a proposal by Commissioner Barbara Carey-Shuler to bar the use of Tasers on children under 12 years of age, except in situations where lives are threatened. The measure was referred to the Commission.

Over 100 deaths have occurred in the U.S. and Canada among people who have had Tasers used against them. Recently, the first such death occurred in Miami. Drugs and other factors have often been involved in such deaths, but the weapons themselves have been found to have been a contributing factor in at least some cases. AI believes that if this weapon is utilized, it should be so only in situations where there is a threat to life. In fact, it has often been employed against unarmed people in situations where deadly force against police was not used, and has even been used against people who have already been restrained.

This issue will continue to be debated in our community. If you have time to give to this subject, please let us know.

Stopping Violence Against Women

(For further information, please go to: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/stopviolence/index.do>.)

Between 2001 and 2004, over 1,188 Guatemalan women and girls have been brutally murdered. Exceptional cruelty and sexual violence characterize many of the killings. Some of the victims had their throats cut, or were beaten, shot or stabbed to death. Many of their bodies show signs of rape, torture, mutilation or dismemberment. Many victims were abducted; some were held for hours or even days before being killed. We've included, below, a letter to Guatemala's President, Oscar Berger, which we hope you'll send. Postage is 80 cents. You can also view this action at: <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/action/index.asp?step=2&item=11930>.

The Crisis in Sudan

(AI's main web page on Sudan is at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/index.do>)

The following is from an AI press release of July 1, outlining some of the organizations most current concerns re: Darfur, Sudan. The entire release can be seen at:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/document.do?id=80256DD400782B84802570310047ACE3>

The President of Sudan on 30 June promised to release political prisoners. Amnesty International has repeatedly called on Sudanese authorities to release all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally and to release other political prisoners unless they are to be charged promptly with a recognisably criminal offence and given a fair trial.

Of 355 political detainees known to Amnesty International, only **Shaikh Hassan al-Turabi**, the founder of the Popular Congress, is known to have been released so far, after 15 months under house arrest in Khartoum without charge or trial. (See Amnesty International list of political detainees published on 30 June 2005 (AI index AFR 54/062/2005), at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/eng-sdn/index>)

Amnesty International believes that there are many more political detainees in Sudan than those named on the list. Families do not often know where detainees are being held. Prisoners are transferred from one place to another, while families must search for any information at all about their relative's whereabouts. There is no public registry of detainees that relatives can consult.

The organization called for immediate access to all detainees by lawyers and families, United Nations (UN) monitors and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The organization said that only ten percent of the detainees on its list had ever been brought to trial.

Amnesty International also called on the government to lift emergency measures in all parts of Sudan which contravene human rights. Amnesty International is further calling for the abolition of Articles 31 and 33 of the National Security Forces Act; swift legal reforms to bring Sudan's detention procedures in line with international human rights standards; and for all places of detention to be registered and inspected by the Ministry of Justice.

Death Penalty News (Can You Make One Appeal?)

Further material on capital punishment is available on the websites of Amnesty International's Program to Abolish the Death penalty, at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/abolish/>, and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP), at <http://www.ncadp.org/>.

There were two positive developments last month regarding the death penalty in Texas. First, Governor Rick Perry signed a bill adding a sentence of life without parole to the choices presented to capital juries. Many in Texas resisted this for years on the grounds that it would reduce the application of capital punishment. (We hope that they were right.) Second, Governor Perry also commuted to life in prison the sentences of 28 people who had been convicted of capital murders that had been committed when they were juveniles. We can all be heartened that the death penalty's scope is being gradually reduced.

Two men were put to death in the U.S. last month: Jerry Henderson, in Alabama, and Alexander Martinez, in Texas. If you can make **even one single appeal** on the executions now pending in the U.S., you will have raised your voice against an abuse of human rights that does nothing to protect our society, and morally degrades it. We ask that, in each case, you see a commutation of sentence to life in prison. Where you see a web link after the name of someone now facing execution you can, if you are viewing this on a computer and are connected to the Internet, activate a link to an NCADP web page, from which you can send an appeal. Of course, you can use the contact information below to send a letter or fax, or make a phone call.

Texas: Now scheduled for execution are: **David Martinez**, on 7/28 http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=934, **Gary Sterling**, on 8/10 and **Robert Allen Shields**, on 8/23. Please request of Governor Rick Perry that he grant a 30-day stay of execution (the most he is allowed to do on his own under Texas law), and clemency if it is recommended by the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Please request of the Board that it make a recommendation to the Governor in favor of a commutation of sentence to life in prison, which is required before the Governor may grant one. Appeals may be made to: **Governor Rick Perry**, Office of the Governor / P.O. Box 12428, Austin, TX 78711-2418, phone: 512-463-1782 / fax: 512-463-1849, e-mail: Fill out the form at the bottom of the page at: <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/contact>. You may reach the **Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles** at: Attn: **Ms. Rissie L. Owens**, Presiding Officer, Executive Clemency Section: PO Box 132401, Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711-3401, phone: 512-406-5852, fax: 512-467-0945; 512-406-5482, email: bpp-pio@tdcj.state.tx.us.

Tennessee: An execution date of 8/10 has been set for **Andrew Thomas**. Please contact **Governor Phil Bredesen** at: State Capitol / Nashville, TN 37243-0001 / phone: 615-741-2001 / fax: 615-532-9711 / e-mail: phil.bredesen@state.tn.us.

Virginia: An execution date of 7/11 has been set for **Robin Lovitt** http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=930. Please contact Governor Warner, who has full power to grant a commutation of sentence. He may be reached at: **Virginia Governor Mark Warner** / State Capitol / Richmond, VA 23219 / Fax: 804-371-6351 / Tel: 804-786-2211 / http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Contact/email_form.html.

Arkansas: **Ricky Dale Newman** http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=940 faces a scheduled execution date of 7/26. Please make appeals to **Governor Mike Huckabee**. He may be reached at: 250 State Capitol Bldg. / Little Rock, AR 72201 / Fax: 501-682-1382 / Tel: 501-682-2345. email: mike.huckabee@state.ar.us. web: <http://www.accessarkansas.org/governor/gems/eletter/commentform.html>.

Georgia: **Robert Dale Conklin** http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=931 is facing execution on 7/12. In Georgia, the **State Board of Pardons and Paroles** has the sole power to grant clemency. They may be reached at: Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles / 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE / Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower / Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4909. Telephone: 404-656-5651. Fax: 1-404-651-8502 / 404-651-6723. Email: Clemency_Information@pap.state.ga.us. You may copy your appeals to: **Governor Sonny Perdue** / 203 State Capitol / Atlanta, GA 30334 / Tel: 404-656-1776. Fax: 404-656-2612 / 404-657-7332. Email: http://www.gov.state.ga.us/contact_dom.shtml.

Oklahoma: **Michael Pennington** http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=932 now faces death on 7/19, as does **Kenneth Turrentine**, on 8/11. Please make appeals to **Governor Brad Henry**, and to the **Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board**. The Governor can grant clemency only after receiving a favorable recommendation from the Board, but is not required to do so. They may be reached at: **Governor Brad Henry** / State Capitol Building, 2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., Room 212, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, Phone: 405-521-2342 Fax: 405-521-3353, <http://www.governor.state.ok.us/suggestions.php>, and **Oklahoma Pardon & Parole Board**, Director: Mr. Terry Jenks, 4040 North Lincoln, Suite 219, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, Phone: 405-427-8601, Fax: 405-427-6648, e-mail: terry.jenks@ppb.state.ok.us. The Board's website is at: www.ppb.state.ok.us.

Indiana: **Kevin Connor** http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=939 is scheduled to be put to death on 7/27. Appeals can be made to: **Governor Mitch Daniels**, 206 State House, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797, Fax: 317-232-3443, Tel: 317-232-4567. An appeal can be made online at: <http://www.in.gov/gov/contact.html>.

Pennsylvania: The execution of **Walter Ograd** has been scheduled for 8/2, and that of **Terrance Williams**, for 8/18. Please make appeals to **Governor Ed Rendell** / 225 Main Capitol Bldg. / Harrisburg, PA 17120 / Tel: 717-787-2500 / Fax: 717-772-8284 / email: governor@state.pa.us or http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Governor/govmail.html.

Alabama: **George Sibley** now faces death on 8/4. Please make appeals to Alabama **Governor Bob Riley** asking that his sentence be commuted to life in prison. The Governor may be contacted at: State Capitol N-104 / 600 Dexter Avenue / Montgomery, AL 36130-2751 / Fax: 334-353-0004 / Tel: 334-242-7100 / email: governorbobriley@governor.state.al.us / web: http://www.governor.state.al.us/email/contact_form.htm

China-Tibet News: Death Penalty News in China

June 24

CHINA: More than 5,400 executions were carried out in the world in 2004, slightly down on the previous year, with almost 90% of them in China, said an organisation that campaigns for the abolition of the death penalty. The **Hands Off Cain** organisation said on Friday, out of the 5,476 executions that took place in 2004, at least 5 000 were in China. The report said: "But, the number of reported executions in China, the top executioner worldwide, was always thought to be much lower than reality." In 2003, there were a total of 5 607 executions worldwide. Iran was in 2nd place with 197 executions, up from 154 in 2003, followed by Vietnam with 82.

Death penalty in US: It said the death penalty was carried on 59 people in United States, compared to 65 in 2003 and 71 in 2002. The report said: "Of the 38 states, out of 50 that practice the death penalty in the US, 11 carried out executions - the lowest number since 1993. "As has been the case since the reintroduction of the death penalty in 1976, the majority of executions took place in southern states, 80% of the total in 2003." Hands Off Cain also noted that a worldwide trend towards abolition in the last 10 years was confirmed in 2003. It said: "Throughout the year and the first 5 months of 2004, 5 retentionist states became abolitionist to different extents. "Benin, Ghana, Malawi and Morocco, passed the 10-year mark from the last execution to become de facto abolitionists." Hands Off Cain, founded in 1993, describes itself as "a league of citizens and parliamentarians for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide." (source: News 24)



CHINA REGIONAL ACTION NETWORK (CHIRAN)

[HTTP://WWW.AMNESTYUSA.ORG/COUNTRIES/CHINA/INDEX.DO](http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/china/index.do)



Gao Rongrong, prior to her detention. © Private



Gao Rongrong, ten days after she was hospitalized in May 2004. © Private

July 2005

CHINA: GAO Rongrong, a 37-year-old Falun Gong practitioner

AI Concerns: Unlawful detention, torture.

Summary: Gao Rongrong, a *Falun Gong* practitioner from Shenyang city, Liaoning Province, reportedly died in custody on 16 June 2005 at the China Medical University Hospital. Gao was initially sent to Longshan “Re-education through Labor” (RTL) facility in Shenyang on 8 July 2003, soon after her detention by police for “disturbing social order” on 22 June. According to reports, on 7 May 2004 Gao Rongrong was discovered reading *Falun Gong* material inside Longshan RTL facility, and subjected to seven hours of torture at the hands of officials demanding to know where she had acquired the material. This prolonged torture allegedly involved using electric-shock batons on Gao Rongrong’s face and neck and reportedly caused her severe blistering and difficulties with her eyesight.

Gao Rongrong reportedly attempted to escape by jumping through the window of the first-floor room where she was being held, breaking several bones in her foot, leg and pelvis. She was hospitalized for these injuries, and reportedly continued to suffer further physical and psychological abuse in the hospital.

According to some sources, officials at the hospital where Gao Rongrong was treated and officials from Longshan RTL facility claimed that the injuries to Gao Rongrong’s face and neck – on both the left and right sides – were sustained when she jumped from the first-floor window on 7 May 2004. Unofficial sources maintain that these injuries were sustained through torture as described above.

On 5 October 2004, Gao Rongrong was smuggled out of the hospital by a group of acquaintances. She was re-apprehended by police on 6 March 2005 along with Feng Gang, Wang Juan (f), Liu Qingming and Sun Shiyou, the people who reportedly helped her to escape.

Gao Rongrong’s whereabouts after her recapture were not disclosed until 12 June 2005 when her family was informed that she was being held at Masanjia Hospital. According to Gao’s family who visited her at that hospital, she was little more than “skin and bones”, had lost consciousness and was hooked up to a respirator. Gao was then transferred to China Medical University Hospital where she died four days later. Her family was reportedly being pressured to cremate her body quickly which would undermine any possibility of full, independent investigation of the cause of

her death and any evidence of torture and ill-treatment.

There is no further information available on the current whereabouts or status of Wang Juan or Liu Qingming. Feng Gang has reportedly been detained, and later hospitalized after he underwent a 13 day hunger strike to protest against his detention. Sun Shiyou has reportedly been tortured by the authorities, including by electric shocks to his genitals.

Goal of Action: An official review of the death of Gao Rongrong while in detention, determination of the whereabouts of associates of Gao, and the abolition of Re-education through Labor.

Background Information

Gao Rongrong was dismissed from her position as an accountant in the finance department of an art college in Shenyang in 1999, reportedly because of her adherence to *Falun Gong*, as well as for distributing materials about *Falun Gong* to her colleagues. Her detention in 2003 is believed to have been linked to petitioning the authorities to end the crackdown on *Falun Gong*, and for distributing materials publicizing abuse suffered by other *Falun Gong* practitioners in detention.

The *Falun Gong* spiritual movement was banned in China in July 1999 as a “heretical organization” and a “threat to social and political stability”. Since then, thousands of *Falun Gong* practitioners have reportedly been imprisoned, assigned to RTL, or forcibly institutionalized in psychiatric hospitals in which they are at high risk of torture and ill-treatment, in particular if they refuse to renounce their beliefs.

Overseas *Falun Gong* organizations claim that over 1,800 practitioners in China have died either in custody or shortly after they have been released, largely as a result of injuries sustained as a result of torture and ill-treatment while in custody. Amnesty International has been unable to independently verify these statistics and cases but remains concerned about the widespread use of arbitrary detention and reported torture and ill-treatment against *Falun Gong* practitioners.

Recommended Actions:

Please send appeals in English or fluent Chinese:

- calling on the authorities to launch a full, independent and impartial investigation into the death of Gao Rongrong including allegations that she was tortured in Longshan "Re-education through Labor" facility and again after her recapture in March 2005, with a view to bringing those found responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to launch a full, independent and impartial investigation into allegations that Sun Shiyou has been tortured after his capture in March 2005, with a view to bringing those found responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to clarify the current whereabouts and status of Wang Juan and Liu Qingming, and provide immediate guarantees for their safety;
- urging the authorities to ensure Feng Gang, Wang Juan, Liu Qingming and Sun Shiyou have full and regular access to their families, legal representation and medical treatment while they remain in detention;
- urging the authorities to release Feng Gang, Wang Juan, Liu Qingming and Sun Shiyou immediately and unconditionally unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on the authorities to abolish "Re-education through Labor" – a form of arbitrary detention imposed without charge or trial – ensuring that any alternative measures introduced comply fully with international human rights standards.

Addresses:

Director of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Public Security

LI Wenxi Tingzhang
Liaoningsheng Gong'anting
2 Qishan Zhonglu
Huangguqu
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director

Director of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Justice

LI Chengyi Tingzhang
Liaoningsheng Sifating
Chongshan Donglu 38 Jia,
Shenyangshi 110032
Liaoningsheng
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China

ZHANG Fusen Buzhang
Ministry of Justice
10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie
Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi 100020
People's Republic of China
Email: minister@legalinfo.gov.cn
Fax: +86 10 65292345
(c/o Ministry of Communications)
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council
9 Xihuangcheng Genbeijie
Beijingshi 100032
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

Copies to:

Secretary of the Liaoning Provincial Party Committee

Li Keqiang Shuji
Zhonggong Liaoningsheng Weiyuanhui
45 Nandajie, Hepinglu
Shenyangshi 110006
Liaoningsheng, People's Republic of China
Email: lnsr@pub.sy.ln.cn

Salutation: Dear Secretary

Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington DC 20008
Fax: 1 202 328 2582
Email: chinaembassy_us@fmprc.gov.cn

Airmail postage: 80 cents

Sample letter below:

Dear (pertinent salutation):

I call on your authority to launch a full, independent and impartial investigation into the following allegations of torture and into the torture and death, while in detention, of Gao Rongrong, with a view of bringing those responsible to justice:

Gao Rongron - there are allegations that she was tortured in Longshan "Re-education through Labor" facility, and again after her recapture in March 2005.

Sun Shiyou - there are allegations that he was tortured after his capture in March 2005.

I also request a clarification of the current whereabouts of Wang Juan and Liu Qingming, and provide immediate guarantees for their safety.

I urge you to ensure Wang Juan, Liu Qingming, Sun Shiyou and Feng Gang - reportedly being detained and later hospitalized after he underwent a 13-day hunger strike to protest against his detention - have full and regular access to their families, legal representation and medical treatment while they remain in detention. I further urge you to release Wang Juan, Liu Qingming, Sun Shiyou and Feng Gang immediately and unconditionally unless they are charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

I call on you to abolish "Re-education through Labor" - a form of arbitrary detention imposed without charge or trial - ensuring that any alternative measures introduced, comply with international human rights standards.

Sincerely,

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am deeply concerned by ongoing reports of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment at US detention centers in the “war on terror.” The detention camp at Guantánamo Bay is a disgrace that undermines international law, erodes basic principles of justice, and runs counter to the best US values and principles of truth and freedom Americans value so dearly.

The impact of US government policies at Guantánamo are pervasive; by lowering human rights standards, the US has weakened its own moral authority to speak out on human rights. Building permanent facilities at Guantánamo and releasing the details of meals served to detainees does not address the fundamental issues at hand – indefinite and arbitrary detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and a total lack of due process. The United States should bring its policies back in line with US principles and international standards. The facilities at Guantánamo should be closed and those currently detained there should be brought to the United States for charge and trial in federal court. If they are not to be charged, detainees should be released unconditionally and sent to a country where they would not face torture or other serious abuse.

Guantánamo is just the tip of an iceberg of abuse that encompasses US run detention centers in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in secret locations elsewhere. The United States should open all detention facilities to the International Committee of the Red Cross, UN experts, and independent human rights organizations like Amnesty International.

The best way to achieve security is through the promotion of human rights and the rule of law. Guantánamo has come to symbolize abuse of power and denial of fundamental rights. I urge you to close down the detention facilities at Guantánamo and bring other US detention facilities around the world into full compliance with US laws and international standards. I thank you for your attention and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

President Oscar Berger
6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1
Cuidad de Guatemala
Guatemala

Dear President Berger,

I am deeply concerned about the increasing number of women and girls who have been brutally murdered in Guatemala every year since 2001. While the nearly 1,200 killings reflect different motives and circumstances, overall, these crimes exhibit exceptional cruelty and sexual violence. A two-year study by Amnesty International has concluded that the victims’ gender is a significant factor – not only in the ways these girls and women are being killed, but also, in the level and type of response by police and Public Ministry authorities.

To date, over 1,188 women and girls have been killed. Yet according to the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office, only 9% of cases have been investigated at any level, and many of the cases are simply archived. In those cases that are investigated, the work is compromised by delays, lack of communication between state institutions, and other serious shortcomings, such as failures to collect and preserve vital evidence, and deficiencies in forensic examinations. And in addition, the discriminatory attitudes of some state authorities towards the victims compound the suffering of their families, and hamper investigative efforts.

First and foremost, I ask you to publicly condemn the abduction and murder of women and girls, and issue instructions preventing officials from dismissing or discrediting the serious nature of these crimes. Make clear that the full force of the law will be brought to bear on those accused of violence against women, and that those responsible, both members of the security forces and non-state actors, will be brought to justice. The National Civil Police must promote effective investigations of these killings, and must commit to providing timely, professional and impartial responses to all such cases. I am writing to ask that you do everything in your power to ensure that all officials involved collaborate fully, and that they have the training, resources and technical assistance to ensure crime scene investigations and autopsies meet international standards.

In addition, I urge you to press for concrete response and investigative measures, such as the creation of an urgent search mechanism for women and girls reported missing. Official crime reports and statistics should include the dimension of gender-related violence, such that these data can be used to implement effective policies toward ending violence against women. In particular, the Public Ministry’s Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Women should be granted sufficient resources to improve its role in investigations, to ensure the full collaboration by all other government departments, and extend its service to other areas of the country. Public security policies should specifically address violence against women in the home and in the community, and provide for adequate protection programs to prevent the abduction and killing of women. Public education programs could assist with campaigns promoting zero tolerance against violence and discrimination.

I hope that you will confirm your commitment to women’s rights, and all human rights, by putting an end to official inaction, and carrying out immediate, coordinated, and effective investigations into the killings of women and girls, bringing those responsible to justice. In addition, I hope you will encourage Guatemala’s legislature to ensure that laws meet international standards, including those of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women. I look forward to hearing from you about these important concerns.

Sincerely,



Amnesty International Miami Chapter
P.O. Box 141057
Coral Gables, FL 33114

Amnesty International Local Group 248 Contacts:

Michael Andrews – AIUSA Area Coordinator Steering Committee (305-673-2183)

Jessica Morris - Group Coordinator jessica9933@aol.com

Ofelia Adan-Fernandez - Urgent Action Coordinator (305-445-3608)

Adriana Zambrano – Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women (305-281-8928) azamb003@fiu.edu

Steven Wetstein – Coordinator, Campaign to Abolish the Death Penalty (305-226-2480) swetstein2@aol.com

Silvia Sarasua – Tibet and Action Files Coordinator (305-372-8236) miafriendstibet@hotmail.com

David Dowd – Newsletter Coordinator ai248ai@netscape.net

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights