



## The Amnesty International Government Network E-Newsletter

### Issue 5



This e-newsletter informs you of Amnesty International's current human rights work and is sent every six weeks to MPs and government staff.

## THIS MONTH'S TOP STORIES

### **CHOGM 2009: Sustainability Through Human Rights**

The theme for this year's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is "Partnering for a more Equitable and Sustainable Future". That outcome will only be achievable if human rights are at the heart of the upcoming meeting, as enshrined in the Commonwealth's own Harare Declaration. While Amnesty International has numerous human rights concerns across the Commonwealth, we have selected two key issues which reflect both an urgency of concern and a relevance to New Zealand. Our focus is on the internally displaced and impunity for past human rights violations in Sri Lanka; and the rising levels of human rights abuses following the 2006 coup in Fiji. To read the briefings, click [here](#)

### **Debunking the "queue jumping" asylum seeker myth**



Australia's appalling treatment of asylum seekers has again hit the headlines on both sides of the Tasman. In the case of the Sri Lankan "boat people" they are escaping the aftermath of a brutal conflict costing 70,000 lives. Legally both Australia and New Zealand have obligations to asylum seekers and refugees. This Opinion Editorial by Margaret Taylor, Amnesty's Refugee and Individual at Risk Co-ordinator, seeks to contribute light, not heat, to the debate. To read the full article, click [here](#)

### **Fiji: Harassment of government critics continues**





New Zealand's top diplomat and the Australian High Commissioner were both expelled from Fiji under the orders of Commodore Bainimarama. Further to this, the recent arbitrary detention and ill-treatment of Fiji-born Australian academic Professor Brij Lal by the Fijian military highlights the continued deterioration of the rule of law. To read more on the harassment of government critics, click [here](#)

To read our latest report *Paradise Lost*, click [here](#)

### Israel and Palestine: the Goldstone report is a defining step for accountability



The UN General Assembly passed a resolution on November 6 based on the UN Fact Finding Mission led by Justice Goldstone. Both Israel and Hamas in Gaza have been served due notice that they must immediately conduct credible, independent investigations into the alleged grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

Amnesty's report, *Troubled Waters – Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*, has highlighted the lack of access to adequate, safe and clean water for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), principally as a result of discriminatory Israeli policies and practices.

To read more on the Goldstone report, click [here](#)

To read more on the water situation, click [here](#)

### The US joins Arms Trade Treaty talks, but at a very high price



The US Government announced its support for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on October 16 which is conditional on the requirement that future negotiations must be made by consensus. Amnesty International and others have expressed reservations over the consensus requirement as it could give every State the right of veto over final decisions at the UN Conference. This could lead to a small number of sceptical States hijacking the ATT process when

it is clear the world wants a strong treaty.

To read more, click [here](#)

## SUBMISSIONS

Since the last newsletter Amnesty has made two submissions on:

- **The Search and Surveillance Bill 2009**

Amnesty International's submission made recommendations on the search and surveillance of electronic information, the multiple executions of a warrant, safeguards for items of uncertain status, warrantless searches in public places and plain view searches.

- **PACER Plus**

PACER Plus covers the trade negotiations between New Zealand and Australia and the Pacific Forum Island Countries (PFIC). In our submission we encouraged New Zealand, throughout the negotiations, to assist PFICs to commit to international human rights instruments, pursue an agreement that is focused on development and human rights and to prioritise broad and timely consultation both within New Zealand and PFICs.

To read any of AIANZ's submissions, click [here](#)

# WRITE FOR RIGHTS WRITING MARATHON

Amnesty International's global annual Write for Rights letter writing marathon takes place December 5-13. We have two cases featuring parliamentarians unfairly detained in Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea - both offer opportunities to send messages of solidarity to the individuals affected.

Birtukan Mideksa, an opposition party leader, is serving a life sentence in Kaliti Prison in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Amnesty International considers her a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression and association.

Five former members of the opposition Progress Party of Equatorial Guinea, PGGE (Partido del Progreso de Guinea Ecuatorial) have been held incommunicado for more than a year in Black Beach prison in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in conditions that may amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Amnesty considers these men to be prisoners of conscience solely held for their past peaceful political activities. They are at risk of torture and ill treatment.

## TAKE ACTION

- Request information and supporting resources from Campaigns Intern, Alex Bayfield, [campaigns.intern@amnesty.org.nz](mailto:campaigns.intern@amnesty.org.nz)
- Host your own Write for Rights event at parliament and encourage colleagues to take action on behalf of those striving to make the democratic process work
- Add these individuals to your festive season card list
- Participate in AIANZ events nationwide. Click [here](#) for details.

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