



Game over on Human Rights abuse in China!



Wellington Girls on their marks at a ball and spoon race

"We wanted to highlight to people that there are serious human rights issues in China, and they need to be aware about these during the Olympics. It seems like the obvious thing to do, as a human, helping other people have their rights."

Kate Kan-Shaw, student coordinator at Wellington Girls' High School

Freedom Challenge has drawn to a close and many thanks to all teams who rose to the challenge and made such an inspirational contribution to the campaign!

Thousands of signatures have been amassed, there've been media hits galore and the coins have been counted, and this years Freedom Challenge has been a spectacular display of Kiwi activism at its finest.

Our 2008 theme, the Beijing Olympics, with the slogan "**Don't play games with human rights**" was relevant and accessible to students, with the issue so prominent in the media over the year.

Highlights

This week produced numerous activism highlights and including

- **Southland Girls' High School** held a caging event in the school's piazza during lunchtime, complete with inmates and soldiers in costume.
- **Otago Girls High School** more than 800 students formed the word 'rights' on their school's playing field and were photographed from a cherry-picker, creating a stunning visual petition against human rights abuses in China.
- The girls at **St Hilda's** in Dunedin kidnapped willing teachers and sold home-baking spiked with toothpicks featuring an article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

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Otago Girls High School aerial art photo



"It was a fantastic theme and to be able to campaign on the 8/8/08; Olympics Opening Day was really special and a unique opportunity to connect the event in Beijing whilst campaigning and raising awareness for the injustices occurring in China at the same time as all the Olympics hype is happening in the media."

Mahoney Turnbull, student at Rangī Ruru High School, Christchurch

- At **Rangī Ruru** in Christchurch, the group held a stall, collecting signatures and coins in return for fair trade chocolate and Amnesty merchandise which raised \$600. The Freedom Challenge website was assigned as the schools homepage for the week and directed students to the FC online petition.
- **Burnside High School**, Christchurch, held a human rights themed market day, with stalls informing on various Amnesty campaigns.
- **Canterbury University** held a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) debate and caging events, as well as a day of busking, together with **Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti School**.
- A Ping Pong tournament was held at **Nayland College**, Nelson, as was a cake and fair trade coffee sale and a petition board.
- At **Papanui High School, Christchurch**, a cage sit-in was staged in solidarity with housing activist Ye Guozhu. An ice cream sale dubbed "Ice cream for Amnesty, I scream for human rights!" and a talent quest topped off the groups campaigning, and fundraising reached \$1,500
- **Waihi College** held a delicious bake sale and a dance off during lunchtime, exercising their freedom of expression.
- **Otumoetai College**, Tauranga, held a public appeal event, with students chained to lampposts, a collection and petitioning.
- Students at **Aorere College**, Auckland, held a mock trial, a silent sit-in, a candlelit vigil, a bake sale and a coin trail. They made a creative Kiwi-Panda petition *and* had the rare chance to attend a talk with a survivor of the Tiananmen Square protest! Group leader and head girl Shirin Zeinalpour auctioned her hair-colour off for charity: urging her peers to donate and in return she dyed her brunette hair bleach blonde!



NZ First Party leader Winston Peters visited Tauranga, Otumoetai College's action day raising human rights concerns in China. He is pictured with group leader Brintyn Smith.

Their efforts raised \$1,183

"The students are sympathetic towards people who are just trying to live their lives. When you explained some of the cases of injustices like Ye Guozhu they were really supportive and more than happy to sign the petitions. Like anyone they think it is unfair that people are not allowed to live in peace. People should have the right to express themselves freely. Rights like free speech aren't available in other countries and that is what we are campaigning for."

Shirin Zeinalpour, student leader, Aorere College

- At **Green Bay, Auckland**, a peace quiz, origami and art exhibitions, calligraphy workshops, a peace parlour and a peace assembly extravaganza featured amongst a week's worth of wonderful events.
- **Pakuranga College, Auckland**, held an Amazing Race, quizzes, a Mini-Olympics, and a white-themed Peace mufti day and balloon sale.
- **Epsom Girls Grammar School** in Auckland held a henna stall, where students could have the Amnesty candle logo henna-ed on for a donation. They also donned orange jumpsuits and covered these with hundreds of signatures on behalf of Canadian detainee Omar Khadr. *Continued page 3...*

“This turned out to be a brilliant method of attracting people’s attention long enough to get them to listen to Omar’s story,” said Epsom Girls Grammar student leader Heather Dyche.

“We sent some of the suits back more black than orange because of the number of signatures. We also set up a highly successful fundraiser. Arguably though, more important than the money was the change in the students’ knowledge and attitude to the campaign by the end of the week. On the first day, in a lunchtime of walking around in orange overalls and collecting signatures, I did so much explaining that I was losing my voice. On the last, people were looking for me, saying “We want to free Omar.”

“I would say that were extremely pleased with the results of the week, but I’ll save that for the day we hear Omar Khadr has been released from Guantanamo Bay.”

- **Westlake Girls High School** on Auckland’s North Shore took on **Westlake Boys** in a debate with the moot "That this house would make NZ Olympic athletes sign a gag order". The boys also caged several teachers, while the girls wore gags and took to the streets and their classrooms in a collection appeal, totaling \$1,500!
- **St Cuthbert’s College**, Auckland, auctioned off their school prefects and held a caging.
- **Auckland Grammar** held a sausage sizzle and cake sale, and also organised a Trivial Pursuits games evening, raising \$700
- **Auckland University** held a hugely successful debate on the moot that 'NZ/Aotearoa has a human rights obligation to support the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights'.



Cashmere students receive gag order

Speakers included former National Party leader Don Brash and Maori Party co-leader Pita Sharples and the lecture theatre was so packed they had to relocate at the last minute!

Silence-a-thons. Great firewalls of China brick signing petitions, hand print petitions, mini Olympics and mufti days again proved popular.

This year’s top collector award went to Auckland’s Avondale College with a whopping \$3,687.40 raised!

“This has definitely been the best year for AI at our school in the past 5 years and I’m proud to have led an amazing team!”

Sonia Sharma, student, Avondale

FREEDOM CHALLENGE IN NUMBERS

- Fundraising total = **\$10,133.30 and counting.....**
- Letters and signatures on letters we received = 3189
- Schools which took part = 100
- Facebook group = 375 members

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K.O. – HUMAN RIGHTS WIN!

And it all started out so well.....

A magnificent opening ceremony, tons of gold medals, tears of joy and outstanding performances! The Beijing Olympics 2008 truly were eye-catching and kept millions of Kiwis glued to the TV to watch their heroes succeed in numerous late night showdowns.

What many missed out on and was all too rarely reported was the fact that the Olympics and China highly disappointed the world on another level: HUMAN RIGHTS!

Travelling back in time, about eight years ago when China was first awarded the Olympics and in media comment in between, China promised to improve its human rights record.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

To date, China has failed to live up to its Olympic promise. Basic workers' rights continue to be violated and innocent activists continue to be imprisoned. A significant number of activists remain in prison for their peaceful actions to defend their human rights. In fact, ever since China's Olympic promise to improve human rights, more people have been detained. Some have sentences extending well past even the next Olympics in 2012 in London. Journalists continue to be censored and there is no free media in the country.

EVEN iTUNES WAS BLOCKED DURING THE BEIJING OLYMPICS!

Ever wondered what Michael Phelps (eight times gold medal swimming champion) listened to while walking along the pool side to his starting block?

As China's restrictive laws limited what he could access while in China it was quite possibly not a lot.

After a few competitors from the United States, Canada, Britain, Spain, France and Australia downloaded songs from a "Free-Tibet" album produced by artists such as Alanis Morissette, Sting and Garbage, China's internet police unit decided that was enough free-minded sing song for a while! They blocked iTunes for a whole week,



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AMNESTY HOMEPAGE 14,000 HITS IN THE FIRST FOUR HOURS!

During the opening week journalists based at the Beijing Olympic centre advised that certain websites including Amnesty International's was blocked - despite assurances internet access would not be censored. The media attention this act generated saw an immediate unblocking of some sites including Amnesty. However Fulan Gong and Tibetans sites remained blocked throughout and continue to be blocked today.

Within the first four hours it was unblocked www.amnesty.org had some 14,000 hits and kept increasing the numbers of visitors over the following days dramatically. Under pressure China allowed its 253 million internet users a short glimpse into our internet world – a world of choice and no restrictions!

Gooolag

exporting censorship, one search at a time

THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST

Of 77 applications to protest in one of three designated 'protest parks' in Beijing City during the games, not one was granted.

Two women aged 79 and 77 applied for permission to demonstrate after they were evicted from their homes to make way for new Olympic facilities in 2001. They were interrogated and finally sentenced to re-education through labour, a process where suspected criminals can be imprisoned and undergo enforced labour for up to four years without a trial.

Hundreds of members of Muslim and Christian groups have been targeted and many arrested, while dissidents across the city were placed under house arrest or removed from Beijing during the Olympic period.

Freedom Challenge case study Ye Guozhu remains in prison, after his family were informed on his release date on 26 July not to collect him. His detention has been prolonged indefinitely, despite lobbying from activists around the world.

Chinese dissident Hu Jia has involved himself with political and environmental activism. The imprisoned AIDS activist and his wife Zeng Jinyan who is under house arrest with their daughter, are considered prisoners of conscience by Amnesty. They have consistently spoken out against human rights abuses and just as consistently been detained and persecuted.

The eyes of the world might no longer be on China but Amnesty's eyes continue to focus on the human rights abuses occurring there. We campaign 24/7 and around the year for those detained, tortured, ill-treated and persecuted.

All the more reason to continue to campaign against human rights abuse in China, after the glow of the Olympics has faded.

Once again well done and a huge THANK YOU from AINZ to all teams who participated in Freedom Challenge '08! We look forward to working with you again in '09.

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Ye Guozhu

Watch this space to see what the FC09 theme will be...

One last reminder, please use the enclosed reply-paid envelope to send in:

1. your Freedom Challenge completion form. This feedback is really useful for us to make FC09 an even bigger success than this year!
2. petitions and letters on behalf of Ye Guozhu and Huang Jinqi
3. your cheque or details of what you've banked
4. left over resources, like badges and stickers
5. Send your photos to youthcampaigner@amnesty.org.nz and we'll pop them on the facebook and bebo pages for you.

And for AI group school leavers this year – please don't forget to fill out and return the enclosed registration form which will ensure you are gifted a year's free Amnesty membership for 2009!



Aorere College's eye-catching, crowd-stopping Kung Fu Panda and Kiwi petition to the Chinese embassy

"As always it has been fantastic to be a part of freedom challenge, this year's cage sit-in has been a highlight of my time in Amnesty. I have enjoyed seeing students react and participate in human rights issues and it has been an amazing experience to see others get behind the group. I try to make the most of FW (even when it is stressful) because it really is one time in the year when we are full-on interacting with the body of the school. Our profile has continued to rise because of our freedom week activities so thank you for the great themes, ideas and support. Thank you for giving us all the opportunity to help others, it is always rewarding and I have been privileged to see the group grow and rise to the (freedom) challenge!"

Jess Fiebig, student leader, Papanui High School



STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS



Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Action needed – not just words ...

The mayi-mayi¹ took 12 girls and 10 boys from my village. I was 14. Some were younger, between 10 and 13. Everyone went to the front, even the little ones... It was terrible – you would be whipped if you did something wrong. Once, I'd been ordered to carry some bananas but they were too heavy so I left some behind. As a punishment, I was tied by my arms and feet and given 20 lashes with a rope.

Joseph², aged 15

Joseph was one of the lucky ones — he managed to escape and is now living with a host family in the town of Rutshuru. Others who try to escape are killed or tortured, sometimes in front of other children, to discourage further escapes.

One former child soldier told Amnesty International how two youths were beaten to death in front of him and other child recruits “as a lesson to all of us not to try to escape”:

“[The boys] were brought out of a pit in the ground and presented to us during a training session. [An armed group senior commander] then gave the order to beat them. Two soldiers and a captain pushed them down into the mud. When they tired of kicking them...they beat them with wooden sticks. The punishment lasted 90 minutes, until they died.”



Former girl soldier with a child she gave birth to in the armed group

At the height of the DRC conflict, around 30,000 children were estimated to be serving with the government armed forces and non-state groups party to the conflict throughout the DRC. Under a government and international demobilisation programme, which began in 2005, the majority of these children were released into the care of UNICEF or specialist child protection NGOs and, where possible, reunited with their families. The regular army formally ended the recruitment and use of children in November 2004. Between 3,000 and 6,000 children, however, are estimated to still be serving with the armed groups according to the government as well as, in a smaller number of cases, within its own army the FARDC.

The work of national and international child protection agencies has been badly disrupted by the fighting which worsened mid-2007. Former child soldiers have had to be evacuated from NGO reception centres in conflict zones and reintegration and family reunification programmes have had to be suspended in many areas. Child protection workers have been threatened or ill-treated and in some cases abducted by fighters.

The rebel CNDP forces were responsible for large-scale child recruitments, mainly of boys, in Masisi and Rutshuru territories from late 2007, including forcible recruitments from schools. One local children's organization recorded 236 recruitments from schools during September last year. Amnesty International has also received testimony indicating that the CNDP recruited from inside Internally Displaced Camps in the areas it controlled.

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¹ Ethnic militia, generally pro-government and opposed to the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP).

² His name has been changed to protect him.



Former child soldiers burn their uniforms

Commitments made in the January 2008 Act of Engagement by the armed groups of North and South Kivu to “a total and immediate halt ... of all new recruitment” and to a “prohibition of all recruitment and particular promotion of the rights of children in conflict (or post-conflict) zones” have been ignored in North Kivu with disastrous consequences for children. Armed groups there continue to use children aged under 18 – some are as young as eight – and there has been a surge in the recruitment of children. Although releases of children from the armed groups still take place in the province, these appear to have been outnumbered by new recruitments of children. “For every two children released, five are taken”, an international child protection worker told Amnesty International.

Many of those recruited had already been reunited with their families after having been freed from armed groups who had previously kidnapped them and forced them to fight as child soldiers. Of the former child soldiers who had been reunited with their families in North Kivu through a national demobilization programme, as many as half may since have been re-recruited by armed groups.

“It is precisely their previous experience with armed groups that makes them valuable recruits and puts these children at greater risk,” said Andrew Philip, Amnesty International’s expert on the DRC, who collected eyewitness testimony in the region earlier this year. *“The more they know, the more they are at risk of re-recruitment. In this case, experience can be deadly.”*

Take Action!

Please send politely-worded letters to the following addressees, expressing concern at the use of children in armed conflict. Call on them to:

- § protect all citizens from human rights violations, including the recruitment and use of children;
- § insist that the armed groups operating in North Kivu immediately release all children associated with their forces;
- § take robust legal action to bring to justice those who are alleged to have recruited and used children in the DRC, noting that the use and recruitment of children is considered a war crime under international humanitarian law and a violation of the DRC’s commitments under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict;
- § remind all military judicial personnel that the Military Penal Code does not apply to children aged under 18 and that any children detained by the military should be immediately released or transferred to civilian judicial structures;
- § ensure that allegations of arbitrary arrest or torture and ill-treatment in detention, including of children in military detention, are investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice;
- § support and cooperate fully with UN agencies and other international partners to prevent child recruitment and use.

Send your letters to:

Head of State

Son Excellence Joseph KABILA
Président de la République,
Cabinet du Président de la République
Palais de la Nation
Kinshasa/Gombe
REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

E-mail: cabinet_president@yahoo.fr

FARDC (army) Chief Military Prosecutor

Général de brigade Joseph Ponde Isambwa
Chief Military Prosecutor
Auditorat Général des FARDC
Kinshasa
REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO

E-mail : auditgeneral2007@yahoo.fr



HANDS UP!

On February 12, 2002, a new treaty came into effect, banning the use of children under age 18 in war. Unfortunately, the United Nations estimates that up to 250,000 children are still being used as soldiers in 20 armed conflicts worldwide.

Recent examples include Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Indonesia, Liberia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Philippines, and Sri Lanka

Armed groups and government forces continue to recruit and use children. Many are forced to join up and cannot leave once they are in the ranks. While the majority of child-soldiers are aged between 15 and 18, in some conflicts children as young as eight or nine have been recruited. Others are growing up in war zones and have few possibilities to survive other than by joining an armed group "voluntarily".

Children have established the Red Hand Campaign to urge officials at the United Nations to act. The aim of this global campaign is to present UN officials in New York with one million red hands on Red Hand Day 2009 (February 12), the anniversary of the day the treaty to ban child soldiers took effect.



Lighter, easier-to-use guns mean that children as young as eight or nine can become killers within armies they have been illegally recruited into.

Take Action!

On the centre of an A4 sheet of paper place your handprint in red paint. Write your protest or message on top and your name, town, and country at the bottom.



Students from around the world are taking action to collect one million red hands, like these young women from Cologne, Germany

Alternatively create a petition sheet from calico and encourage others to sign in support of banning child soldiers. If you have extra capacity host stalls in neighbouring schools or at local events.

Remember you'll need to be close to a water source or buckets to allow hands to be washed and dried before signatures and names can be added individually. Poster paint and small paint rollers are perfect for this action.

Please send your petitions through to Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand, PO Box 5300, Wellesley Street, Auckland and we'll make sure they get to the United Nations in New York in time for the presentation in February next year.

You can upload reports and photos from your event to the Red Hand Day website at www.redhandday.org copying AIANZ in via email to Youth Intern Elgin Feuschar youthcampaigner2@amnesty.org.nz.

What's with the red hand?

RED HAND DAY aims to raise global awareness of the plight of child soldiers through public protests, demonstrations and other activities. The Red Hand symbol, has been used all over the world by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and many civil society organizations to say no to the recruitment and use of child soldiers.



Red poster paint, a roller, and paper or calico is all you need to get collecting red hand signatures

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Stop Violence against women campaign.

White Ribbon Day

Amnesty International will again be participating in white ribbon day on Tuesday, November 25.

The day marks the International Day to stop violence against women and launches our 16 days of Activism on our priority Stop Violence against Women (SVAW) campaign.

In addition to circulating white ribbons we will also have a number of ready-to-sign appeal cases to feature and get signatures on.

Recognising that many of our student groups will be impacted by study leave and exams at this time we will only supply white ribbons on request. If you would like to participate please contact youth intern Elgin Feuschar youthcampaigner2@amnesty.org.nz or by phoning Elgin or Margaret on freephone 0800 266 378. Please detail how many ribbons you'd like to receive.



The history behind the white ribbon

White ribbons are a symbol of opposing violence against women.

The movement grew out of what became known as the Ecole Polytechnique massacre which occurred in Canada on December 6, 1989. Fourteen women were killed by an anti-feminist. In response a group of men protested those deaths and violence against women generally by wearing white ribbons.

That campaign has now spread around 35 countries globally including New Zealand.

For groups with capacity to take action on SVAW issues now please visit our www.standbyme.org.nz/take-action website and write on behalf of Iranian womens rights activist Zeynab Bayzeydi.

Zeynab was charged with being a member of unauthorised human rights associations and for her activities in support of women's rights. Amnesty International considers her to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association.



Zeynab Bayzeydi.

Zeynab was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and internal exile to the Turkish-speaking city of Zanzan, 246 km from her home, by Mahabad Revolutionary Court in August. On 10 August Zeynab went on hunger strike to demand her release. Prison officials promised her that she would be released on bail during her appeal to convince her to stop the hunger strike. On these assurances, she ended the hunger strike on 22 August after twelve days. However, the Mahabad Revolutionary Court failed to grant her bail.

Zeynab is a member of the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK) and the Campaign for Equality that advocates for an end to laws and policies which discriminate against women.

GOOD NEWS



Gorki Aguilé

CUBA - Banned Punk band criticise government

Gorki Aguilé, 39 year old lead singer of the punk rock band 'Porno para Ricardo' was arrested by Cuban authorities for the crime of "social dangerousness" in August.

His arrest followed the release of the band's latest song critical of the government. Gorki and the band regularly criticise the Cuban government, which has led it to ban the band from performing live or being broadcast nationwide.

Amnesty International released an urgent action on behalf of Gorki who risked a four-year jail sentence. At his two-hour trial a few days later lesser charges were laid and he was fined 600 pesos (about \$NZ50) and released.

SYRIA - Professor released earlier than expected

"I am thankful for all the efforts made by everyone at Amnesty International and all those who took part in actions on my behalf. We are united in the struggle for the causes of justice and democracy. This struggle is still ongoing".

Dr. Aref Dalila, leading economist, writer and dissident was freed on 7 August, after seven years in prison. He was arrested in 2001, and sentenced in early 2002 to 10 years in prison with hard labour for calling for democracy and the end of corruption in Syria.



Dr. Aref Dalila

Despite his Supreme Court hearing violating all international standards of a fair trial he was imprisoned for seven years. Poor prison conditions and harsh treatment led to Dr Aref suffering poor health while detained.

Soon after his release, Dr. Aref told the BBC that *'his views on the system had not changed and that he would continue to voice them.'*



U Win Tin

MYANMAR (BURMA) - prisoner of conscience released after 19 years

"I will keep fighting until the emergence of democracy in this country"

Amnesty's longest serving prisoner of conscience U Win Tin was released from prison on September 28 after 19 years in prison.

He was arrested in July 1989 because of his senior position in the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy. His party won 82 percent of seats in the 1990 general election, but Myanmar's military government refused to hand over power.

U Win Tin was held in solitary confinement for much of his time in prison and now has chronic health problems. He was tortured, denied access to medical treatment, and for three months in 1996 was held in a cell for military dogs. He was also made to sleep on concrete floors without bedding and deprived of food and water for long periods.

More than 2,000 political prisoners remain in jails in Myanmar.

UNITED KINGDOM - Gabriel 2008 Ambassador of Conscience

British rock and roller and the inspiration behind the World of Music and Drama (WOMAD) Peter Gabriel has been awarded Amnesty's Ambassador of Conscience Award for 2008.

The Award, now in its fifth year, recognises exceptional individual leadership and witness in the fight to protect and promote human rights.

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Peter Gabriel at the award ceremony with The Edge of U2, an earlier Ambassador of Conscience awardee

Peter has a long association with Amnesty International involved in the Human Rights Now! global concert series in the late 1980s. In 1989 Peter visited the USSR to help launch Greenpeace there.

Peter co-founded WITNESS (www.witness.org), in 1992, an organisation which arms human rights activists from around the world with hand held video cameras, computers and communication technology so they can document and put an end to human rights abuses. In 2001 Peter helped found The Elders – a gathering of world leaders who come together to guide and support the 'global village.' For their model they looked to traditional village elders, trusted by their people to resolve conflict within their communities. Today those elders include Africa's Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel and Desmond Tutu; Asia's Aung San Suu Kyi and Europe's Mary Robinson.

Mandela, Robinson, Vaclav Havel and U2 are amongst previous recipients of the Ambassador of Conscience award.

When presenting Peter with his award in September Art for Amnesty Bill Shipsey commented: "Pete had been at the very vanguard of the struggle for human rights and justice around the world."

CANADA - conscientious objector reprieved

American conscientious objector Jeremy Hinzman and his family have been allowed to stay in Canada until the country's federal court decides whether or not to review their case.

Jeremy and his family arrived in Canada in August 2004 and he applied for refugee status due to his opposition to fighting the war in Iraq. All his appeals to stay in Canada have failed and he was issued with a deportation order in July. Jeremy and his family were granted a stay on their deportation the day before they were due to be deported on 23 September.

if deported, Jeremy risks being court-martialled and jailed for between one and five years. If convicted, Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience.



Jeremy Hinzman

ECUADOR - Environmental activist freed

After almost 10 months in jail Guadalupe Llori was acquitted of all charges against her on 19 September.

The former governor of Orellana province was accused of organizing a strike that brought oil production in the Dayuma parish of Orellana, in Ecuador's northwest Amazonian region, to a halt. She was arrested in her home by the Ecuadorian army on 7 December last year, and accused of sabotage and terrorism related to the strike. Further charges, of fraud, were brought against her after she was imprisoned, in what appeared to be an attempt to keep her in prison long enough to remove her from her office.

Guadalupe is free of all charges against her, although it is not known whether or not she will be able to take up her former post as governor due to the length of time she has been detained.

ARGENTINA abolishes the death penalty

Argentina has become the latest country to abolish the death penalty, making it the 137th country to do so in law or practice.

The global trend is towards banning the death penalty and Argentina's move makes it the sixth country within the inter-American system to do so. It joins Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Argentina's last execution was carried out in 1916.