

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS NETWORK

**AMNESTY**  
**INTERNATIONAL**  
Aotearoa New Zealand



---

**June 2010**

**Co-ordinators – Christine Richardson and Jan Marsh**

---

1. **Editorial**
2. **Take Action!**
3. **AIANZ News**
4. **International News and Issues**
5. **Domestic News and Issues**
6. **Useful links**

### **1. Editorial**

In this issue we farewell Children's Network Coordinators Peter and Joan Sutton and gratefully acknowledge the enormous and dedicated contribution made by them over many years. In addition to writing the newsletter, Peter has made many submissions to Select Committees on a variety of issues affecting children in this country. Peter and Joan received an AIANZ Long Service Dove Award in 2005. Peter and Joan have regretfully come to the decision that for health reasons, it is time to place responsibility for AIANZ's Children's Rights Network in other hands. Peter will not be totally retiring - he is continuing an international liaison role in regard to the allocation of resources by the IS to children's rights.

A little about me as the new Children's Rights Network Coordinator: my name is Christine Richardson and I have been a member of Amnesty International since the early 1980's. I worked for AIANZ in the Wellington Office from 1997 to 2002 as the Urgent Action Network Coordinator and the Information and Finance Manager. Between 2002 and 2007, I was actively involved with the campaign for repeal of s59 of the Crimes Act 1961. In 2009 I spent several months as a volunteer in Tanzania working in education projects with some of the very poorest children in that country. I look forward to working with all AIANZ members who have a particular interest in Children's Rights and I thank Peter and Joan Sutton, Jan Marsh, Margaret Taylor, Chris Kerr and other AIANZ staff for their continuing support in my new volunteer role.

*Peter and Joan, thank you so much for all you have contributed to Amnesty's work. Children all over the world have benefitted from your willingness to take action and to enable others to do likewise. We wish you all the best for the future.*

### **2. Take Action!**

#### **Crisis in Kyrgyzstan!**

On 10 June, clashes between rival gangs of Kyrgyz and Uzbek youths rapidly escalated into widespread violence, arson, and looting directed at mainly Uzbek-populated districts in Osh. The numbers of killed and wounded rose as the violence spread across southern Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyzstani security forces were authorized to shoot to kill in an attempt to restore order. Amnesty International then received reports that the security forces were colluding in attacks on ethnic Uzbeks. Hundreds of deaths and thousands of

casualties have already been reported, with the final figure likely to be even higher. AI is calling for an international independent and impartial investigation into the violence and for those responsible to be held accountable.

The violence and destruction of property caused around 400,000 refugees, many of them children, to flee their homes. Around 100,000 are reported to have taken sanctuary in Uzbekistan. However, Uzbekistan has closed its borders, leaving thousands of refugees stuck at the border. Amnesty International has also received reports that the Uzbekistani authorities are now forcibly returning refugees to Kyrgyzstan. The issue of refugees is a very urgent one and AI is calling for the countries bordering Kyrgyzstan to provide full protection to the refugees and for these countries to allow humanitarian organizations unfettered access to refugees.

Amnesty is concerned that the forthcoming referendum on 27 June may trigger new eruptions of violence in Kyrgyzstan. Amidst reports that the interim government is not in full control of its security forces, the security situation in southern Kyrgyzstan remains very volatile and unstable, triggered by the referendum on the new constitution to take place. At the same time, no contingency plan seems to be in place should the electorate not agree with the constitution or not confirm Roza Otunbaeva as interim President.

Please take [action](#) requested in this Urgent Action asking for Kyrgyzstan's neighbours to open their borders to refugees and protect refugee's rights.

### **Discrimination and violence against Roma in the EU**

This network has previously taken action on behalf of Roma rights and we are urging all network members to do so again via this web action.

We are calling on the Mayor of Plavecký Štvrtok, a village 20km north of Bratislava, to stop the forced eviction of approximately 600 Roma, who live in the settlement at the edge of the village. Approximately 90 families with children may become homeless, as the authorities have failed to consider alternatives to the eviction or engage in a consultation with the community on alternative housing, which the municipality is not willing to provide.

Amnesty International has been working with the community as part of the campaign to end segregation of Romani children in Slovak schools, within its Demand Dignity campaign. But if the community is pushed out of their homes, education cannot be a priority for these children and their families.

The web action can be found here: <http://bit.ly/bWxul6>.

### **Israeli blockade of Gaza must be lifted**

The attack by Israeli Defense Forces that led to at least nine deaths on the Gaza Aid flotilla has again highlighted a brutal blockade that is disproportionately impacting children.

Children make up more than fifty percent of 1.4 million Palestinians trapped in an area of land just 40 kilometres long and 9.5 kilometres wide. The blockade has been imposed by Israel for three years.

It has led to mass unemployment, extreme poverty and food price rises caused by shortages and has left four in five Gazans dependent on humanitarian aid and many living in abject poverty. As a form of collective punishment, Israel's continuing blockade of Gaza is a flagrant violation of international law.

As a member of Amnesty you would already have received an e-action calling on Israel to independently investigate the flotilla killings and to lift the Gaza blockade. Please do take action and circulate this link <http://bit.ly/aMiAz9> to friends and family, and urge them to do the same.

## **3. AIANZ News and Events**

Peter and Joan Sutton put forward a remit for consideration by the Annual Meeting on 8 May 2010:

“That this annual meeting notes with concern the lack of an officer at the International Secretariat dedicated to the human rights of children and to maintaining contact with all Amnesty groups working for those rights. The meeting calls on the Aotearoa New Zealand Section to use its best endeavours to urge the International Secretariat to re-establish and reinforce the post as quickly as possible to ensure that campaigning for children’s rights can be resumed effectively.”

The Motion was carried by consensus.

#### 4. International news and issues

##### a) USA

*We learn, sometimes, from our mistakes’ - Supreme Court outlaws life imprisonment without possibility of release for children who commit non-homicide crimes*

The US Supreme Court has taken another step towards bringing the USA into line with international human rights law on the treatment of young offenders. On 17 May 2010, a majority held that the imposition of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for a non-homicide offence committed by an under-18-year-old is “cruel and unusual” punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment to the US Constitution. In such cases, the individual must be given “some meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation” (18 May 2010).

##### b) Denmark

**“You have the right to run away if there is a dictator or a war going on....”**

Watch Danish children talk to Amnesty International about Human Rights on YouTube.



#### 5. Domestic News

##### a) New Zealander honoured with international award for work as advocate for children

New Zealand’s first Commissioner for Children, Dr Hassall, received the [UN Children’s Fund Aldo Farina Award](#) in Seoul earlier this month, in recognition of his sustained contribution to child rights advocacy. It is awarded only every second year and is open to all 194 countries in which UNICEF operates.

Read more here: <http://bit.ly/9KDjCr>.

**b) A report on 'Child Witnesses in the New Zealand Criminal Courts' launched by Auckland University of Technology's Institute of Public Policy on 22 April 2010.**

"Testifying (in Court) can be difficult for adults, let alone children. Indeed concerns have been raised in New Zealand about the treatment of child witnesses since at least the 1960s. The purpose of this study is to see how far we have come today in addressing the concerns since then, and the extent to which measures adopted to ameliorate conditions for children—while protecting accused adults—have achieved their aims."

For more information read: <http://bit.ly/aJXadU>.

In a Press Release welcoming the report, Hon Simon Power, Minister of Justice, said "Officials will work with other government agencies to develop best-practice guidelines that ensure children receive the best possible care."

For more information read: <http://bit.ly/cLC16o>.

**c) ACYA (Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa)** is a coalition of non-governmental organizations, families and individuals whose purpose is to promote the well-being of children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand through education and advocacy on the rights of children and young people and encouraging the Government to act on the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ACYA is preparing the NGO report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and you can read the 3rd draft at [www.acya.org.nz](http://www.acya.org.nz).

## 6. Useful Links

Many members of the Childrens' Network will already be familiar with the links set out below. They are included here for ease of reference.

- Amnesty International's ChildNet Facebook page which is great source of international information <http://bit.ly/c61mg9>.
- Office of the Childrens' Commissioner in New Zealand [www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz).
- Unicef New Zealand [www.unicef.org.nz](http://www.unicef.org.nz).
- YouthLaw Tino Rangatiratanga Taitamariki [www.youthlaw.co.nz](http://www.youthlaw.co.nz).

---

**This newsletter prepared for Amnesty International  
by Christine Richardson**

**Contact us by email - [childrensrightsnetwork@amnesty.org.nz](mailto:childrensrightsnetwork@amnesty.org.nz)**



Share on:   

For more information about all our campaigns please visit [our website](#)

Our mailing address is:

P O Box 5300  
Wellesley St  
Auckland 1141

Copyright (C) Amnesty International Aotearoa NZ Inc All rights reserved.

