

**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS NETWORK**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**  
Aotearoa New Zealand



---

**OCTOBER 2009**

**Co-ordinators – Joan & Peter Sutton, Jan Marsh**

---

### **Editorial**

We have some very good news about the international children's rights seminar organised by the Danish Section in Copenhagen to mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20th November 1989. This seminar follows the success of moves at the ICM to have Amnesty accord greater priority to children's rights and will seek to plan for co-operative action to make this aim effective.

We had been concerned that financial constraints and the inability of your co-ordinators to travel would mean that the NZ Section would not be represented at the seminar. We were delighted when CEO Patrick Holmes offered to represent us there because he would be attending a Directors meeting in Copenhagen after the seminar. We will be preparing a report for him to present on the network's history, structure and activities.

We are very pleased that the network will be represented at the highest level and thank Patrick for his willingness to do this. We also wish to record our thanks to the NZ delegates who attended the ICM in August, Patrick, Stephanie Rixecker and Nicola Mutch, for their support of children's rights at that meeting.

### **Changes to ACC rules for support of victims of child sexual abuse**



The Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) has changed the conditions under which adult victims of child sexual abuse or sexual assault receive financial support for therapy or counselling. The psychotherapists believe that the changes will reduce and restrict the long term treatment their patients require and pose other difficulties for them.

Although no firm proposals for such changes for child victims of sexual abuse have been tabled, discussions have suggested that similar restrictions will be applied to child victims once the conditions for adult victims have been finalised.

Amnesty International Aotearoa NZ has sent a letter to Nick Smith, Minister for ACC, pointing out that any changes which adversely effect the recovery and rehabilitation of such children would be in breach of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child to which NZ is a state party. The letter, signed by CEO Patrick Holmes and Peter Sutton on behalf of the network, asked the Minister to ensure that no such restrictions were applied. We understand that Youth Law has sent a similar letter to the Minister.

(Image above: Minister of ACC, Hon Nick Smith)

### September Action on Roma in Milan

Thank you to those members who were able to take action on this short notice case. We have received a reply from the Italian Ambassador to New Zealand in which he supports the eviction and gives the background of concern about the presence of Roma by “respectable” neighbours. However he did not address the legal and human rights conditions which must be met in the case of eviction or deal with the provision of alternative housing.



We have forwarded the reply to the International Secretariat and await their advice about further action. If you received a reply to this or any other action, please let us know by email.

(Image above right: A Roma settlement in Italy)

### WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, October 10 - Take Action



Children’s rights groups throughout the world will be taking the lead in Amnesty’s observance of this day against the Death Penalty (DP) this year. Here in New Zealand we are asking you to write to those countries with have the worst records in the sentencing and execution of juvenile offenders (those under the age of eighteen at the time of their alleged crimes).

As you are undoubtedly aware, such use of the DP for juveniles is contrary to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CORC) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the American and European Conventions on Human Rights.

According to the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), **Iran** executed at least 346 people in 2008, twice as many as in 2007 and four times the number in 2005. In 2008 Iran executed at least eight juvenile offenders and according to Amnesty’s estimate at least 140 more were on death row.

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) figures indicate that **Saudi Arabia** executed at least 102 people in 2008 including at least one juvenile offender and executed two more juvenile offenders so far this year.

In **Sudan**, WCADP states that four juvenile offenders were on trial this year facing the DP and two others were sentenced to death in July and August 2008.

**Pakistan** executed at least 36 people in 2008 with about 7,000 on death row according to WCADP. Although Pakistan has not executed any juvenile offenders for several years an unknown number have been sentenced to death and remain on death row.

***Please write for World DP Day to the authorities in these countries making these points in your letters:***

1. stating opposition to DP in all cases as a violation of the right to life
2. deplore the increased use of the DP in that country (where appropriate)
3. stating particular opposition to the DP for juvenile offenders (quoting prohibitions in the ICCPR and CORC)
4. calling for commutation in the cases of all juveniles on death row (the main point for Pakistan where no executions of juveniles have taken place for several years)
5. calling for a change in legislation to remove the use of the DP for juveniles as a first step towards abolition of the DP.

**IRAN Use all points to-**

Head of the Judiciary

H.E. Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh

Pasteur Strret, Vali Asr Ave – south of Serah-e Jomhuri

Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran.

Email: [shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir) (subject line-FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)

Salutation: Your Excellency

**Copy to**

H.E. Mr Morteza Rajmani-Movahed

Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran

PO Box 14773, Kilbirnie, Wellington.

Email: [info@iranembassy.org.nz](mailto:info@iranembassy.org.nz)

Salutation: Your Excellency

**SAUDI ARABIA Use points 1,3,4 and 5 to**

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud

Minister of the Interior

PO Box 2933, Airport Road

Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Fax +966 1 403 1185 (Please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

**Copy to**

H.E. Mr Hassan T Nazer

Ambassador of Saudi Arabia

PO Box 9162, Deakin,  
Canberra, ACT, Australia.  
Email: [auemb@mofa.gov.sa](mailto:auemb@mofa.gov.sa)  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**SUDAN Use points 1,3,4 and 5 to**

His Excellency Lieutenant General Omar Hassan al-Bashir  
President of Sudan  
Office of the President  
People's Palace  
PO Box 281  
Khartoum, Sudan  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**PAKISTAN Use all points with emphasis on 4 and 5 to**

H.E. Mr. Asif Ali Zardari  
President of Pakistan  
President's Secretariat  
Islamabad  
PAKISTAN  
Fax: +92 51 922 1422, 4768/ +92 1 920 1893 or 1835  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**Copy to**

High Commissioner for Pakistan,  
182 Onslow Road,  
Khandallah, Wellington 6035.  
Fax: +4-4794315  
Email: [pakhcwellington@xtra.co.nz](mailto:pakhcwellington@xtra.co.nz)  
Salutation: Your Excellency

*(Image above: AI's Secretary General, Irene Khan protesting the execution of Delara Derabi by the Iranian government in May this year)*

**LITHUANIA – Parliament again moves to criminalise homosexuality**

On July 4 2009, the Lithuanian Parliament (the Seimas) adopted a "Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information", despite an earlier Presidential veto. ([See August 2009 newsletter](#)). This law bans materials that "agitate for homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relationships" from schools or public places and media where they could be viewed by children. The law has been widely criticised as institutionalising homophobia, violating the freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination. It enters into force on 1 March 2010.

The Seimas has not stopped with this law. Further homophobic legislative amendments have been put

forward for consideration during the Autumn session which has just begun. These legislative proposals would criminalise the “promotion of homosexual relationships in public places”. There is a real risk that these amendments will be adopted.

Amnesty is seriously concerned that these proposed changes would criminalise almost any public expression or portrayal of, or information about, homosexuality. They are so vague that it would permit prosecution of individuals for such activities as campaigning on human rights issues relating to sexual orientation or gender identity or anyone providing sexual health information or services to gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. Amnesty would consider anyone imprisoned under these laws a prisoner of conscience.

The Law already passed and these new amendments violate a number of human rights including freedom of expression and association, and the principle of non-discrimination and will strengthen homophobia in Lithuania. The Law violates the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which guarantees the right to freedom “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of any kind” as well as the right not to be discriminated against.

***Please write to the Lithuanian authorities calling on them:***

- To respect their obligations not to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity;
- To reject the proposed amendments to the Penal and Administrative Codes;
- To repeal the “Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information”;
- Not to endorse any legislation that would criminalise, or otherwise prohibit, the public portrayal, expression or promotion of homosexuality, or any information relating to it;
- To ensure that all persons in Lithuania, including children, fully enjoy the right to freedom of expression – including the rights to seek, receive and impart information;
- To provide adequate, non-discriminatory information and support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, including children;
- To ensure that human rights defenders working on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are able to carry out their work without the threat of criminal prosecution or other legal or administrative obstacles.

**ADDRESSES**

Remigijus Simasius, Minister of Justice  
Gedimino Ave 30/1  
LT-01104 Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania.  
Fax +370 5 262 5940 or +370 5 262 4732

Arunas Valinskas, Speaker  
Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania  
Gedimino Ave 53  
LT-01109, Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania.  
Fax +370 5 239 6279  
Email: [Arunas.Valinskas@Irs.lt](mailto:Arunas.Valinskas@Irs.lt).

## **COPIES TO**

Mr Stasys Sedbaras, Chair  
Committee on Legal Matters  
Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania  
Gedimino Ave 53  
Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania.  
Fax +370 5 239 6469  
Email: [Stasys.Sedbaras@Irs.lt](mailto:Stasys.Sedbaras@Irs.lt)

Mr Arminas Lydeka, Chair  
Committee on Human Rights  
Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania  
Gemino Ave 53  
Vilnius, Republic of Lithuania.  
Fax +370 5 239 6499  
Email [Arminas.Lydeka@Irs.lt](mailto:Arminas.Lydeka@Irs.lt)

## **WORLD NEWS**

### **South African Children Push for Better Schools**

A new protest movement with practical goals, youthful organisers and an idealistic name, EQUAL EDUCATION, has evolved as a result of a failing education system in South Africa.

According to a New York Times report on September 25th, thousands of children in their school uniforms marched to City Hall in Cape Town with their polite demands for libraries and librarians. "We want more information and knowledge", said protester, Abongile Ndesi.

The idea for a new movement dedicated to educational equity came from Zackie Achmat, a keen campaigner for AIDS treatment. On the same day 33 years ago, Mr Achmat had protested along the same route during the Soweto uprising of school children against the government's plans to give education in Afrikaans rather than native languages.

He had helped Equal Education by counselling its young leaders to work with teachers and government officials whenever possible. He says that the country's leadership, which had been slow to grapple with the AIDS virus, now understands the need for better education.

"In building a citizens' movement, the most important element is giving people a sense of their own power and, to change things with little victories," Mr Achmat said.

The present organisers of Equal Education are two law school graduates. Last year they gave students in Khayelitsha disposable cameras to document problems in their high schools. They recorded leaking roofs, cracked desks and children crowding round a single text book. One school in Luhlaza recorded five

hundred windows which had been broken for years leaving children shivering in winter.

After Equal Education's first campaign the school agreed to match the amount raised by the students to replace the windows. Finally the provincial education officials announced that the windows would be fixed and a sum almost ten times what the students had requested had been invested in the school.

Other students successfully agitated for the appointment of a science teacher at Chris Hani High School when it had had none for years. They also led a drive to get their schoolmates to come to school on time, with early morning pickets at school gates – an effort which also showed up late arriving teachers.

The libraries campaign is the group's first attempt to tackle a national issue.

---

**This newsletter prepared for Amnesty International  
by Joan and Peter Sutton and Jan Marsh.**

**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 1010

Copyright (C) 2009 Amnesty International Aotearoa NZ Inc All rights reserved.

