

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS NETWORK

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



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**May 2009**

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

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### **Annual Meeting 2 & 3 May 2009 - by Jan Marsh, Network delegate**

On a cold wet Auckland day we gathered at AUT's conference centre to a warm welcome from Ngati Whatua o Orakei Maori Trust Board Chair, Grant Hawk, and Governance team member, Tu Williams. Grant and his grandson lit the Amnesty candle and the team was introduced to the meeting. We learned about the Dignity Campaign, a new direction for Amnesty which will look at human rights issues as they relate to poverty and in particular to maternal mortality, adequate housing and domestic violence. A little cardboard slum house stood in the foyer as a symbol of this campaign and we heard how Amnesty will contribute, not by digging wells and providing medicine, as other groups do that, but by maintaining our focus on human rights.



Keynote speaker Sacha McMeeking gave a lively and well-informed presentation on human rights issues relating to Maori in Aotearoa. From her address and a later session where she answered questions it was possible to understand the issues behind the Foreshore and Seabed Act and the Government's refusal to sign the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Her clarity in discussing these issues was impressive and enlightening.

The business plenary followed and, thanks to the thorough preparation by the Leadership Team and the excellent technological support, business was conducted efficiently. From the annual report we learned that a lot of changes had taken place over the past year and the team were now settled in the new office in Grafton Road, financially solvent, fully staffed with very capable people and ready for the coming year. Throughout the weekend we learned of the huge contribution made by bright, enthusiastic interns from around the world. We had personal experience of their skills after lunch when they ran ice-breaker games which gave us an opportunity to meet each other and have some fun.

I was pleased to learn that, following discussions in previous annual meetings, the section will be working more closely with Tangata Whenua. One of the workshops looked into this, drawing on the experience of

Grant Hawk in the occupation of Bastion Point/Orakei and other issues, and the skills and connections of Tu Williams, with contributions from Sacha McMeeking.

The networks each had an opportunity to present the work they had been doing and I did that on behalf of the Children's Network, letting the meeting know that we had been working closely with Children's Networks in other countries, particularly Denmark, Spain, France, Germany and the UK, looking at issues such as the death penalty for minors, child soldiers, education for minority groups and also at Amnesty's profile regarding the needs of children.

A video presentation filmed by Nelson Group member Fiona Baker allowed Peter Sutton to eloquently introduce our resolution: "This Annual Meeting strongly urges the New Zealand representatives to the 2009 International Council Meeting to advocate and support measures within the new Integrated Strategic Plan to give greater priority to campaigning for children's rights especially those contained within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child." The resolution was passed unopposed. It is worth noting that there will be a Spanish resolution before the ICM and the UK and Danish AGMs have also passed similar resolutions.\*\*

The day's business concluded with a moving address by Imrana Jalal whose perspective on human rights in Fiji and the Pacific generally was based in intimate personal experience and a high level of knowledge and research.

On the second day the sun was shining, those delegates who had attended the dinner and the dove awards were keen to tell stories of fun and solidarity and there was a sense of being on the home straight which made the business flow smoothly. The Governance Team vacancies were filled unopposed and the candidates introduced themselves and their skills, giving a sense that the section will be in good hands in the coming year. We learned more about the Dignity Campaign and in particular New Zealand's role which will focus on the Pacific and look at accountability, corporate responsibility and access to rights. We look forward to hearing about progress in getting researchers into the Pacific and finding ways to engage with local people. After lunch and 'Birds of a Feather' interest groups, it was time to wrap things up and be on our way into the Auckland sunshine.

\*\* The Italian Section AGM has just passed a similar resolution-ED.

### **USA: Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of The Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was passed by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989. Since then it has been ratified by all members of the UN except the USA and Somalia making it the most widely ratified human rights treaty. The USA and Somalia have both signed the Convention binding themselves, under international law, to refrain from acts which would defeat the object of the treaty.

Recent changes in the US government and the election of President Obama appear to open the door to a reconsideration of ratification of the CRC by the United States. This, the 40th anniversary year of its adoption, make this a most appropriate time. In October 2008, President Obama stated "It's important

that the United States return to its position as a respected global leader and promoter of human rights. It's embarrassing to find ourselves in the company of Somalia, a lawless land. I will review this and other treaties and ensure that the United States resumes its global leadership in human rights."

**Please write to the Chargé d'Affaires at the US Embassy making these points in your letter:**

- Introduce yourself as a person very concerned about the human rights of children;
- Express concern that the USA is one of only two states yet to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Welcoming (and quoting) the statements made by President Obama during the presidential election campaign and pointing out that no country can claim to be a champion of human rights without ratification of the CRC;
- Noting that this year, the 40th anniversary of the CRC, is a most opportune time for ratification;
- Ask the Chargé d'Affaires to forward your concern to the US government that they ratify the CRC without any reservations or conditions that limit its provisions or applicability.

**Address:**

Mr David Keegan, Chargé d'Affaires

United States Embassy

PO Box 1190, Wellington 6140.

Fax: (04) 472 3537

Email: [wellington.arc@state.gov](mailto:wellington.arc@state.gov)

Salutation: Dear Counsellor

**IRAN: Further Executions of Juvenile Offenders.**

Iranian authorities executed Delara Darabi on Friday 1 May 2009 despite her having been granted a two-month stay of execution by the Head of the Judiciary on 19 April. Her lawyer was not informed about the execution despite the legal requirement that he should receive 48 hours notice. Her case had been featured in this newsletter in August 2007. She was 17 at the time of the alleged crime. During her time in prison, Delara Darabi developed considerable talent as a painter and several of her paintings are known internationally.

Two more child offenders were reportedly executed on Wednesday 6 May in Iran. They were reported to have been Amir Khaleghi and Safar Angooti. They were aged 17 and 16 years at the time of the crimes for which they were convicted.

Amnesty International supporters laid white lilies on the steps of the Iranian Embassy in London in protest against these executions on 6 May. Irene Khan, Secretary General of AI, and Alistair Carmichael, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, handed in a letter to the Embassy.

**SAUDI ARABIA: Executions including Juvenile Offenders**

Amnesty has prepared a short action concerning the imposition of the death penalty and discrimination in Saudi Arabia. It summarises concerns relating to the high rate of executions and death sentences imposed; the wide scope of the death penalty; the failure to adhere to fair trial guarantees in death penalty cases; death sentences and executions of juveniles; and the discriminatory nature of the death penalty particularly with regard to nationals from developing countries.

Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of execution in the world. At least 140 people are currently reported to be at risk of execution but the real number held on charges which could incur the death penalty is likely to be several hundred. In 2008 at least 102 people were executed, almost 40 of them were foreign nationals mainly from Middle Eastern, Asian or African countries.

Saudi Arabia imposes the death penalty against and executes juvenile offenders ie those convicted of crimes committed before their 18th birthday including some who are executed before they reach the age of 18. This is contrary to its obligations as a state-party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child(CRC) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights(ICCPR). At least 10 juvenile offenders are known to be on death row in Saudi Arabia.

This short action runs until the end of June 2009.

### **SAUDI ARABIA: Executions and Flogging - UA 86/08 Further Information**

**Sultan Bin Khalid Mahmud al-Maskati (m), aged about 23**

**Yusef Bin Hassan Bin Salman al-Muwallad (m), aged 23**

**Qassim Bin 'Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Nakhli (m), aged 23**

**Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad (m), aged 20 \*\***

**'Issa Bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad (m), aged 21, Chadian national \*\***

**Bilal Bin Muslih Bin Jabir al-Muwallad (m), aged 20 \*\***

**Ahmad Hamid Muhammad Sabir (m), aged 18, Chadian national \*\***

\*\* Juvenile offenders

Please refer to our newsletter of October 2008, heading "Saudi Arabia : Death Penalty and Flogging". These seven men were arrested in 2004, charged with theft, robbery and assault and held incommunicado at a police station in Madina. In February 2008 five of these men were sentenced to death including two convicted of crimes alleged committed at the age of 17. These men, the first five above, were executed in Madina on 10 May. The remaining two, Bilal Bin Muslih Bin Jabir al-Muwallad who was 15 at the time of the alleged offences and Ahmad Hamid Muhammad Sabir who was 13 at that time, were sentenced to "severe flogging" and 15 years imprisonment. They were sentenced to 1,500 and 1,250 lashes respectively, the "severe lashes" to be administered at 10 day intervals and in public.

Saudi Arabia is a state party to the CRC and ICCPR which both prohibit the execution of persons convicted of offences committed before the age of 18. It is also a state party to the Convention Against Torture, etc, which expressly prohibits the use of cruel punishment such as flogging.

**Please write to the Saudi authorities making these points in your letter:**

- expressing dismay that the five men named above were executed;
- expressing particular concern that two of them, Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad and 'Issa Bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad, had been convicted of crimes they allegedly committed while aged 17, and that, by executing them, Saudi Arabia had breached its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- calling for the sentences of flogging against Bilal Bin Muslih Bin Jabir al-Muwallad and Ahmad Hamid Muhammad Sabir to be commuted to a humane punishment, particularly given Saudi Arabia's obligations as a state party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

**Addresses:**

His Majesty King 'Abdullah Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques  
Office of His Majesty the King  
Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior) +966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)  
Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road  
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)  
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

**Copies to:**

Mr Bandar Mohammed Abdullah Al Aiban  
President  
Human Rights Commission  
P.O. Box 58889, King Fahad Road, Building No. 373  
Riyadh 11515, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 1 4612061

His Excellency Mr Hassan T Nazer,  
Ambassador to New Zealand  
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia  
PO Box 9162, Deakin,  
Canberra, ACT 2600, Australia.  
Fax: + 61 2 6282 8911

Email: [auemb@mofa.gov.sa](mailto:auemb@mofa.gov.sa)

Salutation: Your Excellency

### **GREECE: Alleged Abuses in the Policing of Demonstrations.**

Amnesty International has longstanding and continuing concerns regarding the failure of the authorities in Greece to ensure that the police respect and protect human rights. Allegations of human rights violations committed by the police continue to be made in the context of policing demonstrations and during arrest and detention. These allegations have been documented over many years. Amnesty's concerns have been exemplified in the case of the fatal shooting in Athens of Alexandros Andreas (Alexis) Gregoropoulos on 6 December 2008 and the conduct of officers- including the use of force – while policing subsequent demonstrations, many of which erupted into riots.

Amnesty has been receiving mounting allegations of violations by police against civilians during and immediately after these demonstrations and riots, including excessive use of force and firearms, torture or other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and denial of prompt access to lawyers.

Among those who reported being ill-treated were two members of AI Greece who described how they were peacefully demonstrating when at least two officers beat them with truncheons when a riot police squadron of around 20-25 officers confronted the crowd attending the demonstration they were part of in the afternoon of 7 December in Alexandras Avenue in Athens.

17 children aged between 15 and 17 were arrested and detained in the town of Larisa on 8 December 2008. The children were reportedly detained overnight at the local police station and denied prompt legal assistance while in detention. Lawyers for the children reported to AI that during their overnight detention, the children were not allowed to contact their families or their lawyers. In addition, police authorities refused to provide information in answer to repeated requests from the detainee's parents about whether their children were indeed arrested or in which police station they were being held. Amnesty has also learned that several of those arrested alleged that they were beaten by police officers during their arrest but were unwilling to report it.

#### **The case of Alexis Gregoropoulos**

The 15-year-old Alexis Gregoropoulos was shot dead in the area of Exarchia in Athens, Greece. He was killed by a bullet through the heart fired by a police officer, serving as a special guard. \*\*

According to bystanders, two police officers in a vehicle drove up near Alexis Gregoropoulos and his group of friends at around 9pm and verbally abused them. As the officers left, someone in the group threw a bottle towards the police vehicle. The police officers parked their vehicle and returned to the scene on foot, engaging in further confrontation with the youths. During this exchange, an officer fired three shots, one of which killed Alexis Gregoropoulos.

Within days, both officers had been suspended. Epaminondas Korkoneas has been charged with unlawful use of firearms and manslaughter with intent. Vassilios Saraliotis has been charged with complicity. Both were subsequently detained.

\*\*Special guards are special recruits in the police force that have limited policing duties. Special guards are mostly recruited from military Special Forces (which include, among others, commando units, marines, parachutists, and mine clearance units) and are graduates of Higher or Technical Educational Institutions. There are currently 2000 special guards operating throughout Greece, either as patrol units or part of larger police units. Special guards receive training that is shorter than other police recruits, reportedly four months' duration.

**Please write to the Greek Minister of the Interior either using this specimen letter or making the same points in your own words:**

**Specimen letter**

*Dear Minister,*

*I am writing to express my concern regarding the failures of the authorities in Greece to ensure that the police respect and protect human rights.*

*Specifically, I am concerned about reports of human rights violations received in connection with the fatal shooting of Alexis Gregoropoulos by a police officer, serving as a special guard on 6 December 2008, and the policing of demonstrations and riots in the aftermath of his death.*

*In many cases police officers were said to have arbitrarily arrested, ill-treated and detained peaceful demonstrators including children and denied them prompt access to legal assistance.*

*Therefore, I urge you to set up an independent commission of inquiry, mandated to investigate the full circumstances surrounding the death of Alexis Gregoropoulos and the police response to the demonstrations and the riots that began on 6 December. The inquiry should include scrutiny of the training provided to law enforcement personnel on the lawful use of force and firearms as well as on respect for human rights.*

*The inquiry should also investigate the treatment of children arrested and detained with a view to revising practices to ensure that they fully accord with the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

*I look forward to your response.*

*Yours sincerely,*

**Address:**

Prokopis Pavlopoulos  
Minister of Interior  
P. Kanellopoulou 4  
10177 Athens, Greece  
Fax: +30/210-6929764

Email: [ypourgosypes@ypesdda.gov.gr](mailto:ypourgosypes@ypesdda.gov.gr)

Salutation: Dear Minister

**Copy to:**

His Excellency Mr Evangelos Damianakis,

Ambassador of Greece

PO Box 24-066, Wellington 6142

Fax: (04) 473 7441

Email: [gremb.wel@mfa.gr](mailto:gremb.wel@mfa.gr)

Salutation: Your Excellency

**CHINA. Echoes of Tiananmen Square**

Last week, the publishing of Zhou Ziang's memoirs focussed attention again on the massacre of hundreds of students and others in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989. Zhou was Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party at the time and tried to resolve the situation by negotiations. However he was deposed by "hard-liners" and spent the next 15 years until his death under house arrest.

In the posthumous book he stated, "I told myself that no matter what, I would not be the general secretary who mobilised the military to crack down on students."

WE urge you to take action on the 20th anniversary of these protests via the e-action all members will receive next week.

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**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)**

