



Dear <<First Name>>,

EDITORIAL

The human right to water and sanitation: Trace of a new understanding

Human dignity is a principle and value in itself. The protection and promotion of the whole human rights spectrum is based on recognition of this value, which is held by every human being at all times and without exceptions. Whether we are talking about the right to life or to freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly and association or the right to cultural diversity, in every case the analysis requires the full understanding of dignity. This particular condition makes all of us part of humankind, regardless of our nationality, culture, religion, gender, physical aptitude, political ideology and so on.



The recent UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution recognising the right of access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation is one of those cases advancing dignity-based human rights. It is not a coincidence that Bolivia led the process before the UNGA acknowledged the global right to water. This Latin American country has recently undertaken an essential constitutional reform, involving the recognition of cultural diversity as a right, and the Earth as an entity that deserves respect and recognition too. The inclusive and intercultural perspective of the constitutional text inspired Bolivian leadership to push for the latest international advance to guarantee the access to water and basic sanitation as a human right.

Nevertheless, there is a long way to approve a fully binding international covenant. Recent facts locate the discussion about the right to water in the broader debate of resource exploitation. The respect and preservation of the Earth and its resources becomes a commitment that can be understood through the particular comprehension of the relationship between human beings and nature promoted in the Bolivian Constitution, and shared as well by many communities around the world.

Nowadays, climate change, global warming, starvation, shortage of natural resources and a decadent oil economy frame the debate of our future in terms of our relationship with the planet. Are we ready to face this complex issue too? Are we willing to question our own cultural boundaries in terms of a sustainable use of natural resources? Are we able to find a new direction for humankind?

Exploration of links between cultural diversity rights and environmental rights becomes a suggestive pathway to overcome established frontiers on human rights and find alternatives to preserve our species.

Guest editorial by Felipe Forero a Colombian lawyer and human rights activist, and current Campaigns Intern at Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand.

PRIORITY CAMPAIGN UPDATES

India: Government rejection of Vedanta bauxite mine in Orissa!

"After years of struggle and visits by committees our voice has finally reached Delhi," a Dongria Kondh leader.

Amnesty International strongly welcomed the Indian government's decision, late last month, to reject the bauxite mine project in Orissa's Niyamgiri Hills as a landmark victory for the human rights of Indigenous communities.

[See the full release here](#)

India's Ministry of Environment and Forests finally rejected the mine project proposed by a subsidiary of UK-based Vedanta Resources and the state-owned Orissa Mining Corporation, after finding that the project already extensively violates forest and environmental laws and would perpetrate abuses against the Dongria Kondh adivasi and other communities on the Hills. The Dongria Kondh and other local communities have been struggling for years for this decision.



The government has also suspended the clearance process for the six-fold expansion of the Lanjigarh refinery at the foothills of Niyamgiri, operated by Vedanta Aluminium, after a government's expert committee found it to be illegal. The Ministry-commissioned expert report that underpinned the decisions, documented the companies' legal violations and human rights abuses. Its findings and the rejection of the project are consistent with Amnesty International's extensive report published in February 2010, *Don't Mine us out of Existence: Bauxite Mine and Refinery Devastate Lives in India*. [See the full report here](#)



One less positive outcome however has been a police crackdown on workers at Vedanta's refinery site. Amnesty International is calling on Indian authorities to order an independent and impartial investigation into the police crackdown in which at least 25 contract workers were injured and several others detained by police.

[Read the full release here](#)

[See also](#) this welcome news of a release of activists following an Urgent Action Amnesty International sent out on their behalf.

Thank you to everyone who has taken action on this issue. We will keep you updated about any future action required. [For updates visit our webpage](#)

Nigeria

Amnesty International has challenged the credibility of data cited by a senior UN official investigating oil-impacted sites in the Niger Delta, last month.

A United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) official is reported to have said that 90 per cent of oil spills in Ogoniland were due to sabotage and criminal activity, and just 10 per cent due to equipment failure and negligence by companies such as Shell.



"Relying on these figures would be a serious misjudgement, with potentially significant ramifications for those living in the Niger Delta," said Audrey Gaughran, Director of Amnesty International's Global Thematic Issues Program. "The people of the Niger Delta have been lied to and denied justice for decades. If UNEP is going to comment on the cause of oil spills it should do so only on the basis of hard and credible evidence, not figures that are a source of conflict."

[Read more here](#)

[See our webpage](#) on the Niger Delta campaign which focuses on poverty, ill health and environmental destruction caused by massive oil pollution.

There are still postcards available for sending to Shell. If you need larger quantities for events please contact Campaigns Intern Felipe Forero on campaigns.intern@amnesty.org.nz. Please keep sending the postcards to help maintain the pressure.

TAKE ACTION

Myanmar (Burma) Freedom Campaign



The Myanmar Government is a consistent abuser of human rights, including abuses against environmental activists and the environment.

Amnesty International is calling on the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution ensuring the urgent establishment of an international commission of inquiry into serious human rights violations committed in Myanmar, including crimes against humanity and possible war crimes. [See more here](#)

With an election now called for November 7, we have two months to build pressure for positive change and the release of Prisoners of Conscience in Myanmar. Please help us to do by:

- Signing this [Petition](#) today
- Signing and returning the photo/image petition postcard on the back page of the latest issue of the *Flame* (You can download an electronic copy of the *Flame*, [Here](#)).

Disappearance, possibly murder, and a community at risk

A Colombian community is being targeted for what is believed to be its opposition to the construction of a major road in the Cacarica River Basin.

Jhon Jairo Palacios, a member of an Afro-descendant community in the Cacarica River Basin in the north-east of the country, was abducted after he left his home in the Barranquilla area of the Cacarica River Basin, to take a boat to the municipal capital, Ríosucio, department of Chocó. On 30 July he telephoned his family to inform them that he would be returning to the Cacarica River Basin the following morning.

His family called his mobile phone the next day. A man answered who said he was a member of a paramilitary group operating in the region, and went on, "*Tell his family that he is already dead*" (*dígale a su familia que él ya está muerto*). The family asked where his body was, and the man told them only that he had been abducted in Ríosucio and taken far away. On 9 August, sources close to the paramilitaries claimed that paramilitaries had killed Jhon Jairo Palacios.

[Read more and take action](#)

Climate change

Amnesty International continues to support the development of a long term, fair and just response to climate change. [See more](#)

OTHER NEWS

Japan urged to protect right to protest after anti-whaling activists convicted

Amnesty International has called on the Japanese government to preserve the right to legitimate protest in the wake of the conviction of two Greenpeace activists for the theft of a box of whale meat.

Junichi Sato, 33, and Toru Suzuki, 43, were convicted of theft and trespass by a court in the northern city of Aomori and were each sentenced to one-year jail terms, suspended for three years.

[Read more](#)

Amnesty International activists detained before U2 concert in Russia

Five Amnesty International activists were temporarily detained by police and the organisation's stalls closed before the U2 concert in the Russian capital Moscow last month.

The detained Amnesty International activists had been holding placards inside the concert venue and collecting signatures for the 'Demand Dignity' campaign, which aims to end the human rights violations that drive and deepen global poverty. They were trying to raise awareness about human rights and collecting signatures to a petition.



Amnesty International's activists were invited by U2 to join their European leg of their 360° tour. Police officers ignored the activists' protestations that they were there invited and forced them to close their stalls.

[Read more](#)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Park Rangers on the front line

People protecting the planet's parks and wildlife reserves and face danger and death in protecting nature. Three recent reports:

Gilberto Vicente, the Warden of the Maputo Special Reserve in Mozambique was murdered by unknown assailants on July 25, 2010. The 39-year-old Mozambican wildlife officer was on duty travelling from his Reserve to Maputo, when six criminals ambushed his car and killed him with eight shots from pistols and assault rifles. A fellow traveller, Carlos Nunes, was injured. The attackers left the scene in several vehicles without stealing anything. This supports the police assumption it was a contract killing, as Vicente was a thorn in the flesh of organized groups of poachers. Source: <http://bit.ly/bRv1NF>

In the Democratic Republic of Congo's Virunga National Park three rangers have been shot and seriously wounded by poachers and a fourth ambushed and killed in three separate incidents.

In one incident Mbusa Valava from the Vikingi ranger post in the northern sector of the park –was killed on Monday, July 26th. Mbusa has left behind a widow and four orphans. A group of Mai Mai rebels ambushed him on his way back from Kyavinyonge, a village located close to Lake Edward opposite Uganda. Nobody knows the cause of this death, but we assume the Mai Mai rebels. It could be that they were manipulated by politicians during this period, as they are preparing for elections in 2011. The park is being used as tool in the campaign to convince the communities in need of fertile land for agriculture. Source: Jean Pierre Jobogo Mirindi, IRF Representative in DRC (jmirindi@yahoo.com). Deanne L. Adams President of the International Rangers Federation says; "The Congolese rangers, the men and women who work in the World Heritage Sites and protected areas, are the true heroes of conservation. The whole world owes them a tremendous debt of gratitude. The International Ranger Federation calls on officials at the highest levels to find a way to better protect the people who have been assigned the duty

of protecting the natural and cultural heritage that belongs to us, our children and our children's children."

[Read more](#)

Amit Jethwa, former President of the Gir Nature Club (India) who recently took-on the illegal "mining mafia" operating around Gir National Park in Gujarat and was tragically murdered on 20 July 2010 outside the High Court in Ahmedabad. [Read more](#)

What is the future of Tuvalu?

[Read about it here](#)

EVENTS

The Amnesty International Otago University group is organising the NZ premiere screening of *H2Oil* with Students for Environmental Action (SEA). Niger Delta postcards will be available as the Amnesty action at this event.

[See more](#)



HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Keep writing letters and sending postcards (if you receive replies to your appeal letters, please forward copies to the AI office).

- Volunteer to attend events as an EDeN member.
- Share with us your specialised skills or knowledge in human rights and the environment.
- More resources are available on the [AIANZ website](#). Keep checking the site eden.amnesty.org.nz regularly for more information.

Want to do more?

We are very interested to hear from you if you would like to take a more active role in EDeN. We would like to expand the co-group to include two or three more people who bring new skills, energy and enthusiasm to our team. We meet every six weeks at the Amnesty office to plan actions, discuss strategy and coordinate the network. Some areas we are interested in developing are: membership support, utilising social networking sites, event coordination, newsletter editing, policy and strategy.

If you would like to know more please email: eden@amnesty.org.nz

That's all for this edition.

Regards,

Nick Keenleyside

The Environmental Defenders Network (EDeN) is co-ordinated by Kit Howden and Nick Keenleyside in conjunction with Activism Support Manager Margaret Taylor.

You can contact us by email at: info@fragileworld.org.nz or eden@amnesty.org.nz