



Welcome to the Legal Network Newsletter, September 2010 Edition. Amnesty International's Legal Network is a group of people who have an interest in human rights law to help defend human rights, especially those of human rights lawyers.

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LATEST NEWS

Lisa Young and the Legal Network feature in NZ Lawyer

Lisa Young and the Legal Network feature in a fantastic article in NZ Lawyer magazine, highlighting the plight of human rights lawyers in many parts of the world who suffer systematic intimidation and oppression "for just doing their job". NZ lawyer is heavily subscribed to by lawyers in New Zealand and there has been a notable increase in interest in the network since the article was published. The article is available online [here](#)

Nominations now open for Amnesty's Human Rights Defender Award 2010

This year, we've been telling everyone how much we ♥ human rights. New Zealand celebrities, MP's and Amnesty supporters have been telling us why they love human rights too.

Human rights mean different things to different people and all around the world every day hundreds of people are working in countless ways, to promote, protect and defend human rights.



Lawyers are often at the forefront of the human rights struggle. If you know any here in New Zealand and around the Pacific deserving to be nominated for Amnesty New Zealand's Human Rights Defender Award, [click here](#).

Julia Gillard's proposal for a Regional Processing Centre

Tired of the glib misrepresentation of asylum seekers and refugees as illegals? Amnesty NZ has created two factsheets that provide the facts and figures and challenge the rhetoric around this vulnerable sector of society. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Pacific leaders weak in failing to address violence against women

Amnesty International has condemned the statement on violence against women in the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting communiqué as weak and disappointing. Pacific Islands Forum leaders made a pledge one year ago to "eradicate sexual and gender-based violence," but since then have done very little to address the epidemic.



"It is not enough just to pay lip service to eradicating gender violence," said Pacific researcher Apolosi Bose. "Violence against women is an issue of gender equality and human rights, not just of regional stability as it has been framed by the Forum."

"Culture is often used as an excuse for inaction on this issue, but it is not a Pacific tradition to rape, torture, abuse or murder women and young girls," said Bose.

"No Pacific Island government will achieve the Millennium Development Goals or the aims of the Pacific Plan if it does not take responsibility for the violence being committed against its own female citizens. Solving this problem is at the heart of social and economic advancement in the Pacific region."

To read more about Amnesty International's comments on the Port Vila Declaration, [click here](#)

Release of Mexican social protestors exposes abuses in the justice system

Mexico's Supreme Court ruled on June 30th that the 12 activists, who were convicted of kidnapping government officials and police during a protest in the town of San Salvador Atenco in 2006, should be freed because they had been denied a fair trial.

Amnesty International has documented a series of subsequent violations, including failure to effectively investigate serious human rights violations committed by police officers, such as torture – including sexual assault of some female detainees.

"It is unacceptable that a case must reach the Supreme Court before the victims can access justice," said Rupert Knox, Amnesty International's Mexico researcher.

To read more about the abuses in the Mexican justice system, [click here](#)

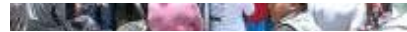
Turkey urged to stop unfair prosecution of children under anti-terror laws

Amnesty International has warned that draft legislative amendments scheduled to be discussed by the Turkish Parliament would not, on their own, prevent violations of the rights of children.

"To end unfair prosecutions under anti-terrorism laws, the authorities must amend the definition of the crimes themselves, not only the ones under which children are sentenced," said Andrew



Gardner, Amnesty International's researcher on Turkey.



Amnesty International's research has shown that children, some as young as 12, have been prosecuted under anti-terrorism laws in adult courts, in violation of present domestic law, in provinces where no Children's Courts exist.

To read more about the prosecution of children under Turkey's anti-terror laws, [click here](#)

Argentina legalises same-sex marriage

Amnesty International has welcomed Argentina's landmark decision to become the first country in Latin America to legalise same-sex marriage. Argentina's senate passed the law - which will also pave the way for same-sex couples to be able to adopt - by 33 votes to 27 with three abstentions, at the end of a 14-hour debate.



"This is a landmark step in the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Argentina to equality," said Louise Finer of Amnesty International. "The modification of Argentina's Civil Code to allow same-sex marriage is one of many steps that need to be taken to put an end to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the country."

To learn more about Argentina legalising same-sex marriage, [click here](#)

Justice urged for Russian human rights defender's murder

One year after the murder of human rights defender Natalia Estemirova, Amnesty International has called on the Russian authorities to stop the harassment and intimidation of her colleagues and to bring those responsible for her murder to justice in an open and fair trial.



"The murder of Natalia Estemirova highlights the very real threat which human rights defenders are facing in the course of their legitimate activities in the Russian Federation," said Nicola Duckworth, Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Programme Director. "President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin should make the investigation into the murder of Natalia Estemirova and her colleagues a high priority. This will send a clear message that attacks against human rights defenders, independent lawyers or journalist will not be tolerated."

To learn more about the dangerous situation in Russia for human rights defenders, [click here](#)

TAKE ACTION

Russian human rights defender at risk of torture

A Russian human rights defender and head of the Russian organisation, Legal Base, is at risk of torture and ill treatment. It is believed Aleksei Sokolov's work in highlighting co-ercion of suspects to confess by police officers has led to his imprisonment and ill treatment.



[Click here](#) to take action on behalf of Aleksei Sokolov.

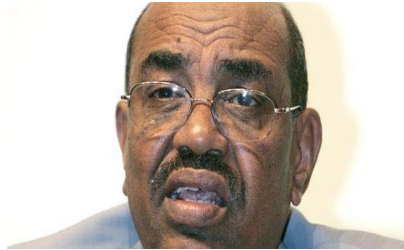
NB: - As this is an Urgent Action case, please send appeals before 14 October 2010.

- An alternative fax number for the Director of the Department of Execution of Punishments, the primary target is: +7 495 955 59 12

Crackdown on freedom of expression in Sudan

There has been a clampdown on freedom of expression in Sudan since the April 2010 elections.

The National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) has closed down newspapers and journalists have been harassed and stopped from doing their work. A number of people, including journalists, have been arrested with some reportedly tortured for carrying out their work or expressing their opinions.



Take action to urge Sudan to cease its censorship of the press and immediately and unconditionally release imprisoned journalists who are detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression [here](#).

Want to get more involved?

The Legal Network is looking for a few motivated law students or lecturers to be the network liaison for their respective law schools. Our goal is to have one representative from each of the law schools in New Zealand. If you are interested please contact Lisa Young at lisyoung@gmail.com.