



Welcome parliamentarians, government officials and staff to Amnesty International's new monthly Parliamentary newsletter.

This edition includes:

- Links to reports useful for your work;
- Details of Amnesty's work with the NZ government and overseas;
- Upcoming events;
- Other human rights news, facts and features to assist you in your work;
- Actions to take on behalf of fellow politicians at risk around the world.



INTRODUCTION TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of over 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries who contribute their time, money and expertise to the promotion of human rights and international campaigning against some of the most serious violations, including imprisonment for beliefs or identity, torture and killings.

Is Amnesty political?

Amnesty International has no political affiliation, endorses no political party, accepts no funds from governments or any political party. Amnesty International is impartial. It is independent of any government, political persuasion or religious creed. It does not support or oppose any government or political system, nor does it support or oppose the views of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect.

AMNESTY'S LATEST WORK

Amnesty International reports on all facets of human rights and which may be useful to your work. We would be happy to guide you to any information you might need, so please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing Olivia Rope at olivia.rope@amnesty.org.nz or calling 0800 AMNESTY.

NZ Human Rights Council Bid

We recently sent you all a copy of our media release on the Minister of Foreign Affairs decision to pull out NZ's bid for the HRC. To read this, [click here](#).

Changes to NZAID

As a member of the Council for International Development (CID), Amnesty International Aotearoa NZ is disappointed at

the recent decision to reintegrate NZAID into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade. Amnesty International is concerned that this move may threaten the commitment to human rights work in development and seeks assurances that vital human rights work within NZ AID's programme work are maintained.

don't corrupt aid

New Zealand's Universal Periodic Review (UPR)



On 7th May 2009 New Zealand's human rights record was examined under the new UPR process in the Human Rights Council (Geneva). Amnesty International made submissions directly to the Human Rights Council and to the New Zealand government on their report – and attended consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Click here](#) to see our submissions.

Image: National flags of the members states outside the United Nations Secretariat building, United Nations, New York. © UN Photo/Andrea Brizzi

Crisis in Fiji



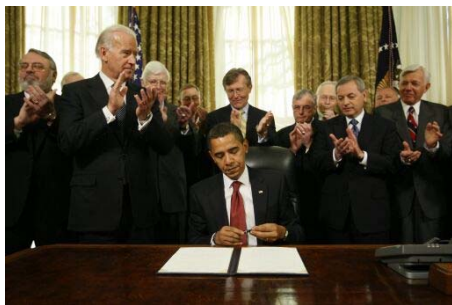
Amnesty's London-based Pacific Researcher found himself in the midst of the latest Fiji crisis (he was completing a fact-finding mission on slums in Fiji at the time). Once safe in Australia he spoke out and warned that the human rights situation in the country is getting worse by the day. Also, that the civilian population is living in fear as a result of draconian measures implemented by the military regime.

We are hearing reports first hand from human rights NGOs in Fiji that since the abrogation of the Constitution the media has no freedom and those speaking out against the military regime are being targeted. Please watch our website which we will be updating with developments and options to take action on the Fiji crisis. [Click here](#) to read more.

Amnesty NZ has launched an emergency appeal. You can make a difference by helping to fund Amnesty's effort to defend human rights in the Pacific and support Fijians fight to restore their freedoms. [Click here](#) to donate.

Image: Amnesty's Pacific Researcher Apolosi Bose.

Mixed messages: Counter terror and human rights: President Obama's first 100 days



Amnesty International's report on US President Barack Obama's first 100 days (released 29 April), finds that his human rights work amounts to "promises for change with only limited action". Amnesty NZ recently met with the USA Embassy in Wellington to brief them on the report and reiterate our concerns on human rights violations in the USA's 'war on terror.'

To read the report and our media release, click [here](#).

Image: President Barack Obama caps his pen after he signed an executive order closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay, 22 Januray 2009, in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. © AP/PA Photo/Charles Dharapak.

UN Durban conference on racism

Amnesty International expressed dismay that New Zealand joined Australia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland in their decision to disengage from the Durban Review Conference. To read our media release, [click here](#).

Gaza crisis



Amnesty's advocacy and campaigning team has lobbied Minister Murray McCully and Prime Minister John Key to speak out on the Gaza crisis, and call on full accountability for the alleged war crimes.

Amnesty were the first international organisation on the ground, and are due to release their post-mission report in June. To read more, [click here](#).

To find out more on AIANZ's position on the Gaza crisis, [click here](#).

Image: White phosphorus used by Israeli military forces over Gaza, January 2009. © Iyad El Baba/UNICEF-oPt

Amnesty's recent submissions to government

To read any of the following submissions [click here](#).

1. 3-strikes Bill
2. Criminal Investigations Amendment Bill
3. UPR on draft government report to the UN (Nov 08)
4. UPR on draft government report to the government (Mar 09)

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK (AIPN)

History of AIPN

The AIPN was first established in NZ in 1988 and was chaired by former Attorney-General Paul East. In 1996, just before the advent of MMP, the membership stood at around 45. A membership list from July 2003 indicates 35 members. At that time the group was chaired by Tim Barnett (Labour) and Dr Wayne Mapp (National) was the Secretary. Each of the other parties (Green, NZ First, United Future, ACT, and Progressive) held a Vice Chair position. Aside from these, the group had 26 Members (cross-party) and 2 Associate Members who were Parliamentary Staff.



What does the AIPN do?

Amnesty will inform AIPN members of upcoming events, workshops and seminars which they can attend. There will be 2 events annually specifically for the AIPN where a speaker will be invited to talk about human rights issues. Further to this, members will receive a monthly bulletin with all the latest human rights news and information. The AIPN will provide a network for like minded politicians to find out more about human rights issues and take action, if they so wish.

We will be contacting you by post shortly to see if you would like to hear more about formally joining Amnesty International's Parliamentary Network.

TAKE ACTION ON BEHALF OF A POLITICAL LEADER AT RISK



Take action on behalf of Ethiopian, Birtukan Mideksa - the leader of the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) Party.

Birtukan was arrested on 28 December 2008 and since then has been held without charge in solitary confinement in a cell measuring 2m square, which according to former inmates is often unbearably hot.

Her immediate family, including her mother and her four year old daughter, have been allowed to visit her, and she has reportedly had intermittent access to legal representation. There are concerns for Birtukan Mideksa's safety as, due to her

Image: Birtukan Mideksa, © Private.

isolation, she is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Please write urgently to your counterpart in Australia (as a donor government to Ethiopia) urging them to express your concerns to the Ethiopian Minister of Justice, Mr Berhan Hailu.

Messaging:

- Urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Birtukan Mideksa from detention;
- Ask them to give Birtukan Mideksa regular and unhindered access to legal representation of her choosing, her family, and full medical assistance should she require it;
- Ask them to remove Birtukan Mideksa from solitary confinement and provide assurances that she is not being subjected to any form of torture or ill-treatment.

If you would like to hear about other ways to take action Amnesty International please email info@amnesty.org.nz or visit www.amnesty.org.nz.

AIPN Launch Event

We are having a launch event in Wellington in August 2009. More details to follow.

We will be in touch shortly with more details. If you would like to be notified by email about Amnesty events, then please contact Olivia Rope on: Olivia.rope@amnesty.org.nz

You, your colleagues and human rights



ELECTION 2008
HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE

To find out what your colleagues said in our pre-election human rights survey [click here](#). Amnesty asked questions on 12 key human rights issues from human rights in the Pacific to trade agreements.