

High School Action Pack

Issue 8 / April 2008



IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Maze of Injustice
- 6 Beijing Olympics
- 8 Plan for Next Year
- 10 Graduating this Year?

Greetings from the National Student & Youth Program

Whew, you made it! Congratulations on finishing another school year. As we finish up finals, dreams of summer vacation dance through our heads: sunshine, barbecues, swimming, movies, fun trips (maybe even college visits?) and friends. Most importantly: HUMAN RIGHTS! This summer as your mind is breaking free from the confines of the classroom, flex your mental muscles by staying active and involved in your human rights work.

The summer is a great time for you to participate in human rights activities and to learn more about issues that are interesting to you. Just because school is not in session doesn't mean that your high school Amnesty group can't get together. Keep in touch with other members and organize fun events. Staying active always keeps a group strong and motivated. Invite your friends and your community out; make them aware of the issues. The more people you get involved, the stronger impact you can make.

In this edition of the High School Action Pack, you'll find actions and activities that Amnesty will be focusing on in the upcoming summer months, such as the Beijing Olympics Campaign and AIUSA's Maze of Injustice Campaign.

If your Amnesty group has something exciting planned for the summer or would like help organize an event, please feel free to e-mail us at youth@aiusa.org.

Have a great summer and we look forward to hearing from you!

In solidarity,

National Student & Youth Program
600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20003

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Quick Takes
Take Action Against Torture
On-Campus Film Festival
2008 Summer Postcard Action
- 4 Maze of Injustice
- 6 Beijing Olympics Campaign
- 8 Celebrate, Evaluate and Plan for Next Year
- 10 Are You Graduating this Year?

UPCOMING EVENTS

April - September

ALL Amnesty student groups must re-register online for the 08-09 school year at:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/activism/studentgroup.jsp>

April 25-28

AIUSA's Annual General Meeting (Arlington, VA)

April 30 – May 4

Amnesty International Global Week of Action – Beijing Olympics Campaign. www.amnestyusa.org/chinaolympics

June-August

Summer Postcard Action 2008. www.amnestyusa.org/iar

June 26

International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (Day of Action). www.amnestyusa.org/torture

Quick Takes

Take Action Against Torture

On **June 26** join Amnesty International activists around the world to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. There are a number of ways you can participate.

- Come to Amnesty International's major demonstration in Washington, D.C. featuring a life-size replica of a Guantánamo cell. Go to www.amnestyusa.org/torture for more information.
- Organize a demonstration in your area! AI's demonstration guide is available online at: www.amnestyusa.org/torture.
- Sign our global online petition to close Guantánamo and end illegal U.S. detentions: www.tearitdown.org
- Write letters on behalf of Maher Rafat al-Quwari, a stateless Palestinian eligible for release from Guantánamo, but with nowhere to go. Urge the U.S. government to help relocate al-Quwari, investigate his allegations of torture, make the findings public and hold anyone responsible accountable. Then tell them to CLOSE GUANTÁNAMO. Go to www.amnestyusa.org/torture for more information.

The Cell

Can you imagine what being detained in Guantánamo is like? This summer, AIUSA is touring a replica of a Guantánamo cell in support of shutting down Guantánamo and stopping the abuse of prisoners at other US detention facilities. The cell is an exact replica of a Camp 5 cell-including a steel toilet, florescent light, frosted windows, and sliding metal door. The result is an incredibly interactive experience, which gives visitors a tangible way to get an idea about the situation in Guantánamo.

Tour Dates

Miami: May 8-12
Philadelphia: May 30-June 2
Portland, ME: June 4-8
Clearwater Festival, NY: June 21-22
Washington DC: June 24-27
Los Angeles: September 18

More locations may still be added. Check out www.amnestyusa.org/torture for tour updates!

On-Campus Film Festival (OCFF)

Student chapters across the country have been busy hosting film festivals this spring, screening more than 50 films on seven different campuses. But the OCFF is getting a facelift. Starting immediately the program is on temporary hiatus as we revamp it to build on its success. As a result, we will not be taking any new requests for the rest of the spring 2008 semester. Email any questions to ocff@aiusa.org, or call (202) 544-0200 ext. 281.

Ignite Hope – Take Part in the 2008 Summer Postcard Action!

For many people, summer is a time for vacations, picnics and recreation. But for prisoners of conscience or those who defend human rights in many countries, summer brings no relief from the potential danger and sense of isolation they may face. But you can help support these women and men by simply sending a postcard, and sharing words of encouragement and solidarity.

For more information visit: www.amnestyusa.org/iar

Issue Highlight

Maze of Injustice

More than one in three Native American or Alaska Native women will be raped at some point in their lives. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in at least 86 per cent of reported cases survivors report that the perpetrators are non-Native men. Sexual violence is 2.5 times more likely to occur against Native American and Alaska Native women than to other women in the United States. Most Indigenous women in the United States do not seek justice because they know they will be met with inaction or indifference.

The Indian Health Service (IHS) is the principle and in some areas, sole provider of health services for Native American and Alaska Native communities. The IHS continues to lack consistent protocols and resources for treating sexual assault survivors and IHS facilities often lack access to very basic services provided to rape victims. Many facilities do not even have rape kits or sexual assault nurse examiners on hand. As a result, many Indigenous women are unable to document the assault and thus produce the evidence to hold their perpetrators accountable. Many also do not receive the kind of trauma support they need following a sexual assault.

Last October, Robert McSwain was named the new acting Indian Health Services Director. To mark the first anniversary of *Maze of Injustice*, Amnesty International's ground-breaking report documenting the serious human rights crisis of sexual violence against Native American and Alaska Native Women, Amnesty members around the country will be sending a flower petition to the new IHS director demanding that his agency take immediate action, including adapting standardized protocols at all IHS facilities that ensure rape kits and trained nurses are available.

Join AIUSA's Stop Violence Against Women campaign and help end violence against Native American and Alaska Native women and break down the barriers Indigenous women face in overcoming crisis.

The power of change is in our hands.

Action

Make a Difference Today

Please join other Amnesty members around the country in sending a flower petition to the Director McSwain, demanding that his agency take immediate action, including adapting standardized protocols at all IHS facilities that ensure rape kits and trained nurses are available.

TAKE ACTION ONLINE For every ten emails sent, Amnesty International USA will send a flower to McSwain who any day now will step into the official role of IHS Director. Our goal is to fill his office with so many flowers that IHS officials will recognize that hundreds of activists around the country are watching and noting their inaction to protect Native American women. Take meaningful action and ensure proper healthcare for Native American and Alaska Native women.

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.php?id=302>

GET CRAFTY! A fun way to send a message for women's human rights is to make paper and origami flowers. Get your friends together and get creative. Learn how to make flower-themed crafts and help women's rights bloom. Send us your flowers and they will be delivered to IHS headquarters by an AIUSA led delegation. For instructions and more information, go to:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.php?id=301>



Issue Highlight

What Will Be the Beijing Olympics Legacy?

When China made its bid to host the 2008 Olympics, the government promised improvements in human rights. But with the recent crackdown on peaceful dissent in Tibet, the rounding up and jailing of prominent human rights activists, and increased media censorship, China's human rights violations have only increased in the months leading up to the games. The final countdown to the Beijing Olympics has begun, and it's time for the Chinese government to make good on its promises and uphold the legacy of the Games.

Since 2001, the Chinese government and the International Olympic Committee have focused on improvements to the economy, environmental issues and China's international image. They have placed little emphasis on the human rights legacy of the Games. The incredible growth of China's economy in the last two decades has led to great social transitions, but there continues to be a large gap between economic progress and individuals being able to freely enjoy all their human rights.

This deliberate stalling must end. Human rights reforms must be implemented at a much faster rate. Without these improvements the Beijing 2008 Olympics will not be remembered in a positive light, but China's image will remain one of a country that represses its citizens.

AI will focus on the Beijing Olympics Campaign during the Global Week of Activism between April 30 and May 4. During the week, Amnesty activists from around the world will call on the Chinese government to:

- Abolish 'Re-education through Labor': End arbitrary police detentions, arrests without trial, and forced labor programs.
- Protect Human Rights Defenders: Release human rights activists and allow them to carry out peaceful actions in accordance with international law.
- Ensure Freedom from Censorship: Provide full media freedom to journalists, both foreign and domestic, and end censorship of the internet.
- Stop Executions: Lower the number of crimes punishable by death and ensure fair trials for the accused.

Together we can help individuals facing human rights abuses and encourage China to make long-term reforms and improve its human rights record. For more info and resources such as downloadable post-card actions, petitions, and case sheets, go to www.amnestyusa.org/chinaolympics

Action

LEVEL 1

(5-30 MINUTES)

SEND TWO LETTERS

How will China define its Olympic legacy? Will it be one where freedom of expression is respected and protected? Not if journalists like Shi Tao continue to be unjustly oppressed, sentenced and imprisoned. Shi Tao, is serving a 10 year prison sentence for sending an email from his Yahoo! account. Write to Chinese State Council Minister, Cai Wu and call on the government to free this Chinese journalist from detention immediately and unconditionally. Ask the minister to ensure that foreign and domestic journalists are provided full media freedom and that the right to freedom of expression and information is protected online. For more information and mailing address, go to: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.php?id=309>



LEVEL 2

(5-10 HOURS)

ORGANIZE A MOCK OLYMPIC EVENT

Educate the public and urge them to take action by organizing a torch relay, mock Olympics or take advantage of an existing sports event at your school or in your community. Here are some ideas:

Stage a Legacy Dreams Banner on which people are asked to record their hopes and dreams for the legacy of the Beijing Olympics on a series of four banners, each of which represents one of the four thematic areas of the campaign. These themes include abolishing 'Re-education through Labor', Protecting Human Rights Defenders, Providing Freedom from Censorship and Stopping Executions. Be sure to videotape or take pictures of these events and send them to: umoroz@aiusa.org

Modify sporting events to include human rights messages on the equipment. Be creative and have fun! Here are just a few ideas to spark your creativity:

- **Hurdling:** Use foam blocks in place of real hurdles. Print or paint phrases describing human rights obstacles or goals on the hurdles and make sure they are large enough to be seen from a distance.
- **Relays:** Use large wooden dowels or foam/cardboard tubes as batons with Amnesty International's logo, Olympic Legacy or human rights slogans.
- **Divide into Teams:** Divide participants into several teams each representing a human rights concern or a particular party involved in upholding human rights. Each team could wear a different color t-shirt and, if possible, print or paint the Amnesty International logo or human rights slogans on the shirts.

Skills Building

Celebrate, Evaluate and Plan for Next Year

As the school year begins to wind down, it is time for your group to evaluate and wrap up your work and begin planning for the 2008-2009 school year. First, celebrate your achievements. Then assess your work and start planning your goals and activities for next year.

CELEBRATE:

Have fun and share your successes: the more visible your achievements, the more people will be inspired to join your group.

- **Have fun first!** Organize a meal or a party. Try to get out of the school or the regular meeting context. That helps people make new connections and get to know each other better. Invite parents, teachers, students, officials and other Amnesty groups in your community to congratulate your members and recognize their hard work.
- **Make your celebration visual** with flyers, posters, t-shirts, and decorations.
- **Share information about our Human Rights victories** (visit the “Our Successes” section of AIUSA’s website for a complete list). Then, make a list of what your group has done to make these victories possible (letters you sent, contacts you made, events you organized...).
- **Award certificates or prizes** to students to recognize their enthusiasm and commitment.
- **Write thank you cards** to people who helped your group this year.

EVALUATE: Learn and build upon your group’s experience.

Have an evaluation meeting and assess your group’s work over the past school year.

- **Ask each member to reflect on their experience.** Did you learn new skills from participating? Did you enjoy your role in the group? How would you like to be involved next year? What did you like/not like to work on? What would you like to learn or do next year?
- **Reflect on your goals:** If your group set goals at the beginning of the year, take a look at those goals now and discuss what was accomplished. Be sure to focus on the positive and learn from the challenges.
 - Make a list of your group’s successes and another list on things your group would like to improve.
 - Have a discussion about your group’s strengths and weaknesses, how you can improve next year and any new opportunities.

- **Make an End-of-the-Year checklist:** What resources/materials do you have at the end of this year that you need to pass on? Did you pay your annual group assessment fee?
- **Keep track** of your thoughts so that you can revisit them when you get together in the fall.

PREPARE FOR 08-09 SCHOOL YEAR:

Give your group a jumpstart for the fall by planning ahead.

Don't forget to re-register:

Be sure to register before June 20 to guarantee your group receives everything in early September. Register at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/activism/studentgroup.jsp>. Have questions? Contact your regional office toll free at (1-866 A REGION).

Next year's leaders:

If your current leader is graduating or stepping down, you need to select a new leader:

- **Don't know who the next leader will be?** Identify a member (or members) of your group that demonstrate a strong potential for leadership.
- **Organize a meeting** between the new leader and the previous one.
- **Make sure the new leader is aware** of the group's structure and vision, last year's activities and planning of the group.
- Provide the new leader with the necessary **Amnesty materials** (Activist toolkit) and key contacts.

Set new goals and priorities:

- Ask your members what human rights issues interest them.
 - What **activities** and **events** do you would like to organize? What **school groups or individuals** would you like to connect with?
- Make sure to distinguish **human rights goals** (accomplishments for a particular campaign or action) and **organizational development goals** (such as strengthening your membership or leadership).

Stay connected, informed and involved during the summer:

- **Set up a contact list** or email list so that people can stay in touch.
- Subscribe to our free newsletter at <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/join/pluggedin.asp> and visit our website for news, information and resources through the summer.
- **Open your mind**, visit other activism web resources, inform yourself about other human rights organizations.
- **Volunteer or intern** in a human rights organization; **attend** events, meetings or trainings.

Are you Graduating this Year?

Congratulations! Graduating high school is an exciting time: you've just accomplished something major and now you're poised to make a huge transition.

As you move on to the next phase of your life—whether it is college or another adventure—here are some great ways to take your human rights activism with you:

Find a group at your college: There are hundreds of AIUSA groups at colleges across the country doing amazing human rights work. Go to: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/activism/groups/index.jsp> to see if your future college has an existing group. You can also get in touch with the Field Organizer in your area (or your future area) to ask them to put you in touch with the group leader on your new campus! Call them (toll free) at 1-866-A-REGION.

No group at your new school? Start one! One of the great things about college is that it's the perfect breeding ground for new ideas and new groups. When you bring your enthusiasm for human rights to campus, you'll be surprised how many people are ready to get on board. Go online to get all the information you need to start a group. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/activism/studentgroup.jsp>

Become an individual member. You've been part of a student group; now take your involvement to the next level. You'll get a subscription to the Amnesty magazine and access to the members area online. Visit <http://www.amnestyusa.org/JoinUs.html>

Join the Online Action Center. Whether you're stuck in the library or backpacking through Southeast Asia, you'll be able to make a difference with a mouse-click at the Online Action Center. Sign up and select the issues you care about most. The Action Center will send you actions! Join at <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/join>

Become a Volunteer Leader. Not only are you a high school graduate, you're already a human rights expert! Show others the way by becoming a Volunteer Leader. There are a variety of positions available that help you share your knowledge and dedication with others, whether it's helping people in your area or focusing on a specific issue. Learn more at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.do?n=1297>

Intern at an Amnesty International Office! One of the great ways to expand your knowledge about human rights and to gain valuable experience is to be an AI intern. All AIUSA offices offer internships for students during the summer and the school year. To find out more go to <http://www.amnestyusa.org/page.do?id=1011304>

This list is just the start of how you can stay involved – pick what suits you best and go with it! Have a great summer and keep in touch!

