



Volume 4, Issue 2 October 2011

## Amnesty to Abolish Maryland Death Penalty

Andrea Hall

“Maryland is next.” This is the refrain of activists in the state and nationwide, who believe that 2012 will see the end of capital punishment in Maryland, following on the heels of Illinois, and Amnesty is front and center in this campaign.

Repeal is indeed a foreseeable goal, with 21 senators and 61 delegates in the Maryland General Assembly co-sponsoring a repeal bill, and many more agreeing to vote for it. The goal is to get the measure to the floor for a full vote when the legislative session begins in January.

The Maryland abolition campaign was formally launched in July with a canvass in the state’s 11th District, a key target for the effort to move a repeal bill forward in January. Thirteen volunteers spent four hours knocking on doors and identified 40 new supporters in Baltimore

County. The event was capped off that evening by a crab feast in Reisterstown.

Amnesty’s two State Death Pen-



Activists around the world held rallies in the final days of the struggle for Troy Davis. RIP.

alty Abolition Coordinators (SDPACs) in Maryland, Kevin Scruggs and Andrea Hall, are helping to build momentum at the grassroots level this fall, speaking to... *Continue on Pg. 3*

## Group Corner - Villanova University

Serena Fahnbulleh

Looking to get involved in a club that made an impact; not just locally, but on a national and international level as well, I joined Villanova University’s chapter of Amnesty International in the Spring semester of 2009. Later that Spring that I attended the Annual General Meeting held in Boston and I learned just how much of a force Amnesty International really is

in the world. That weekend, I began to develop a passion for human rights and felt as though I could make a difference. Almost three years later, as the Coordinator for my group, that is the very message we try our hardest to foster in our... *Continue on Pg. 2*

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### LOOKING FORWARD

- Mon, Oct. 24 screening “Doctors of the Dark Side” Georgetown Univ. Law Center. Contact: Chris Morgan-Riess cmorganriess@yahoo.com
- Nov. 11 Fri - 14 Mon. Amnesty Mid-Atlantic Conference
- Tues, Nov. 15 at 7 pm Kirk Bloodsworth, first U.S. DNA exoneree, speaks about 9 years in a MD prison Contact: andrea@rockville@yahoo.com Hood College in Frederick, MD
- December Write-a-Thon www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon



"I'm from MD and I oppose the death penalty" campaign supporter

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## Villanova ...from front page

...members. The light from one candle may not give much light, but the light resonating from millions of candles cannot be easily dimmed, nor ignored. When we find ourselves united for a cause there is nothing that we cannot accomplish.

With graduation looming for myself and

most of the executive board members, we are using this year to establish a long lasting foundation for Amnesty's legacy to continue on Villanova's campus for the next thirty years as it has until now.

Most of our members love to leave the campus and interact with members of the community. The most fun activity we've had to date was to participate in a protest to release Filep Karma with staff from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office last October in Washington, D.C.

Being able to raise our voices for justice and freedom and share Amnesty's mission, was definitely one of the highlights of our year.

We also hosted Dr. Larry Cox who spoke about events across the Middle East and North Africa and his visit really reinvigorated our group, and was an amazing kick-off for the year.



White House October 2010 rally for Filep Karma, Patrick Borja (left), Serena Fahnbulleh, (right)

**"Amnesty reached one million tweets for Troy Davis"**

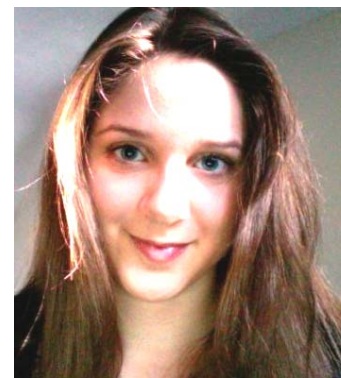
## Steph's Tech Corner - #HowToHashtag?

Stephanie Viggiano

Social media is one of the most influential forms of modern-day grass-roots campaigning. We've seen it recently with the coverage of Troy Davis: an incredibly moving, tragic case with a simultaneously successful social media campaign with Amnesty reaching one million tweets for Troy.

Despite the unconscionable decision of Troy's case, the death penalty abolition campaign is stronger than ever. Social media outreach is indisputably responsible for its worldwide reach via Twitter and Facebook. Twitter hashtags "#TooMuchDoubt", "#WholsTroyDavis?" and eventually "#RIPTroyDavis" were trending high both nationally and internationally in the final push for his case and to abolish the death penalty.

Hashtags are a way of conversing about a



particular subject using Twitter. They're used to tie comments of unique users together. In a sense, they tell a story. Hashtags can be used for campaigns, events or meeting for example.

*Continue on pg. 5*

# 13th Judy Patterson Memorial Croquet

Amnesty International group 532 and the Northern Virginia Cluster celebrated AI's 50th anniversary during the 13th annual Judy Patterson Memorial Croquet Tournament in Purcellville VA on June 25th 2011. Each year the event hosts a different style of music along with local bands. This year we presented acclaimed Sitarist Alif Laila and Master Tabla drummer Debu Nayak. We are still charging only \$20.00 for a day of music, food and drink which are included in the price. A croquet tournament honors our groups founder Judy Patterson a former AIUSA board member. We also had letter writing and petitions to sign.

We have now awarded 33 beautiful glass trophies in Judy's honor and have had a great time doing it! We had about 90 people attend and raised \$270.00 for AIUSA.

We invite you to attend our rain or shine event and will keep raising the number of attendees by continuing to offer a great music, food and fun croquet experience! This year's weather was perfect. Save the date for next year. June 23rd 2012 in Northern Virginia!



Alif and Debu help celebrate Amnesty's 50th

For information contact Eric at: [Plainpath@rstarmail.com](mailto:Plainpath@rstarmail.com)

## Amnesty to Abolish... from front page

...to the legislators that Marylanders want to see repeal in 2012.

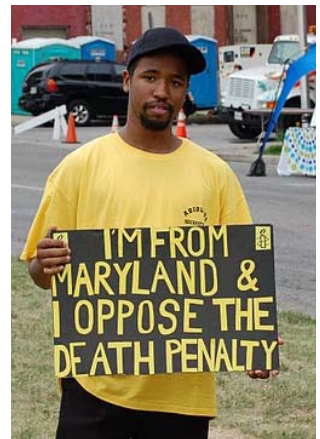
This summer, AI intern Lexi Merrick designed a photo petition, inviting activists to pose with a sign reading "I'm from Maryland and I Oppose the Death Penalty." The photos were used to create a mosaic of the state of Maryland. Andrea and Kevin have also used the local media to their advantage. The Washington Post published a letter to the editor from Kevin Scruggs, and this summer, Andrea Hall called into WAMU's Kojo Nnamde show to speak with Kumar Barve, majority leader of Maryland's House of Delegates, about the death penalty.

Follow MARO's death penalty abolition



activities via Facebook (Amnesty International – Maryland Death Penalty Abolition Group) and Twitter (AIEndMDDP), or contact SDPAC Andrea Hall at 301-633-9447, [andrainrockville@yahoo.com](mailto:andrainrockville@yahoo.com)

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"I'm from MD and I oppose the death penalty" campaign supporter

*"2012 will see the end of capital punishment in Maryland"*



"I'm from MD and I oppose the death penalty" campaign supporter

# Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference Nov. 11-14

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## Amnesty Hosts 6th Annual Iftar

Mandana Afshar

The 6th annual Amnesty Iftar was held at the MARO offices on April 16th 2011. An overflow crowd of more than 200 people came to mark the break of fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

A diverse group of attendees enjoyed traditional halal food from chicken with rice to baklava, dates, and tea.

The event is a way for Amnesty to reach out to various groups from Muslim Americans, to Amnesty activists, to officials and representatives from other institutions.



Moderator Mandana Afshar and speaker Jonathan A. Brown at the Iftar.

This year's speaker was Jonathan A. Brown, Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Muslim - Christian Understanding at Georgetown University.

## Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 2011 Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

Amnesty International members and supporters from the six states of the Mid-Atlantic Region will converge in National Harbor, MD for our 2011 regional conference on Nov 11-14, 2011.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 2011 Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference

The theme of 2011 conference is Rise Up: Be the Change! and will highlight the popular uprising in the Middle East and North Africa for individual freedom and human dignity, reflecting a deep desire on the part of our members to tap into the energy and inspiration of this protest movement in our global fight against injustice and oppression.

We are proud to host Amy Goodman, award-winning investigative journalist, syndicated columnist, author and the host of Democracy Now! as opening keynote speaker. Conference participants will learn about priority AIUSA campaigns, network, participate in organizational governance process, hear from inspiring speakers and in the true spirit of the conference team rise up in protest rally on Saturday for the AI Prisoner of Conscience and our regional special focus case, Filep Karma. Congressional legislative lobbying action will be on Monday, Nov. 14. Please stay an extra day to join us for this action.



Key Note Address

Amy Goodman

Register Today for the Amnesty International USA Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference, November 11-14, National Harbor, MD

Extensive information on the conference at [www.amnestyusa.org/2011MARC](http://www.amnestyusa.org/2011MARC)

# PA Write-A-Thon July 15 - Aug 15

Edwin Everhart

In summer 2011, the Pennsylvania state network of Amnesty International USA organized a state-level Write-a-thon in which groups wrote letters simultaneously on five state-level human rights issues. Pennsylvania activists encourage other states to organize their state-level Write-a-thons.

Many human rights issues in the U.S. can be successfully addressed at the state level, most notably the death penalty, immigration law, and others by lobbying the State Senators and other decision makers.

Amnesty International groups across a state like Pennsylvania have limited ways of coordinating efforts on state-level human rights campaigns. However, one established way for distant AI groups to work together is the Human Rights Day Write-a-thon, a simultaneous letter-writing marathon organized worldwide every Decem-

ber. Pennsylvania activists decided to use the well-known Write-a-thon model to facilitate state action.

Activists prepared a packet of sample letters and background information on five human rights cases (three letters to Harrisburg capitol, and two letters directed at PA's federal representatives). All groups were asked to mail their letters simultaneously on August 15.

The Pennsylvania Write-a-thon was an enormous success in groups' participation and activism. Since this project was carried out in the summer, student groups did not participate. Seven local groups promised to participate; five confirmed their participation; three reported back the number of letters sent. Reports confirmed a total of 156 letters sent, and it is likely that many additional letters, not reported, were sent.

## #HowToHashtag? ...from Page 2

...each "new" person using a hashtag, the more likely it will trend. Trending is geographical in that Hashtag trends occur in cities and countries.

Twitter and Facebook are very powerful free promotional tools (the Internet's "word of mouth", so to speak). Hosting a statewide meeting, major event or just want to promote your group events, make sure you tell everyone to tweet using your hashtag. Keep hashtags short and sweet. Tweets are 140 characters. Happy Tweeting!

Example Hashtags:

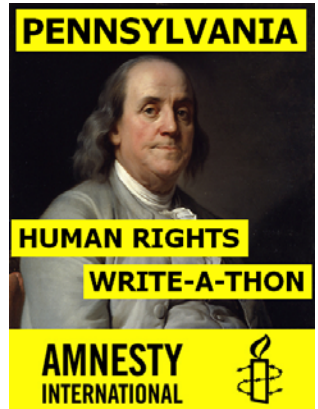
- #TooMuchDoubt** – Troy Davis/ Death Penalty abolition
- #AmnestyPA** – possible hashtag for statewide meeting
- #AIPSU** – possible hashtag for student group (Penn State University)

Example Tweet with Hashtag:

*"Keep memory of Troy Davis alive. Continue the fight for human rights for all! <http://bit.ly/mVEUqo> #TooMuchDoubt"*

Questions about using Twitter for Amnesty, please consult your Core Action Kit, or email Stephanie at [stephanievigiano@gmail.com](mailto:stephanievigiano@gmail.com)

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*"This could be a nationwide model to coordinate state-wide actions"*

Jibrán Mushtaq ([mushtaqj@gmail.com](mailto:mushtaqj@gmail.com), La Roche College group) and Edwin Everhart ([edwin.everhart@gmail.com](mailto:edwin.everhart@gmail.com), 919 260 9535, Local Group 39) propose state Write-a-thons across the United States.



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The Mid-Atlantic Region:  
DE, DC, MD, PA, VA and WV



Amnesty International Newsletter non-profit mailing

Not In My Name! Keep Troy Davis' legacy alive, and keep building the  
movement to abolish the death penalty!

[www.amnestyusa.org/notinmyname](http://www.amnestyusa.org/notinmyname)

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Amnesty International  
Mid-Atlantic Region

- November 11-14, National Harbor, MD. Amnesty International USA Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference
  - Sun, Nov. 13 Free Filep Rally at the White House, contact [jmanske@aiusa.org](mailto:jmanske@aiusa.org)
  - Mon, Nov. 14 Lobby Day DC; contact [rfarrar88@gmail.com](mailto:rfarrar88@gmail.com)
- Mon, Oct 24. The Security with Human Rights Committee of Georgetown Human Rights Action – Amnesty International at Georgetown University Law Center will host a screening of a new documentary “Doctors of the Dark Side” followed by panel with powerful voices about the human rights implications of our national security policies and practices. Contact Chris Morgan-Riess, [cmorganriess@yahoo.com](mailto:cmorganriess@yahoo.com)
- Tues, Nov. 15 at 7 pm Kirk Bloodsworth, the nation's first DNA exoneree, speaks about nine years in a MD prison (two years on Death Row) for a rape and murder he did not commit. Contact: [andrainrockville@yahoo.com](mailto:andrainrockville@yahoo.com) Hood College in Frederick, MD
- December 2011 Write a Thon for [www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon](http://www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon)