

# URGENT ACTION

## NEWSLETTER



• Urgent Action Program Office • PO Box 1270 Nederland CO 80466-1270 USA • ph 303 258 1170 • uan@aiusa.org • amnestyusa.org/urgent/ •



Bangladeshi journalist Sumi Khan. © AI

**“The support of AI is a big support to us to carry on this job... to establish what criminals are doing. The peaceful way is the only way we can stop them. What we are doing is too tough without the cooperation of Amnesty International.”**

— Journalist and human rights defender Sumi Khan has worked to expose those responsible for crimes such as child- and arms-trafficking in her role as a reporter in southern Bangladesh. This almost cost her life last year.

[Read more on page 2 ▶](#)

### Also inside:

[Urgent Action Appeal for Le Thi Hong Lien, a prisoner of conscience in Viet Nam, on page 4 ▶](#)

## Releases!

### COLOMBIA: Enrique Chimonja, Edwin Mosquera, Johana López, Mónica Suarez and Fabio Ariza.

The five human rights activists abducted on March 31, were released unharmed on April 8. However, Danilo Rueda and other members of the *Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz*, Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, have been followed, and watched by gunmen. Enrique Chimonja, Edwin Mosquera, Johana López, Mónica Suarez and Fabio Ariza had been abducted by the guerrilla group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. In mid-April, unidentified individuals have kept watch on the *Justicia y Paz* offices in the capital, Bogotá. Cars with tinted windows have followed activists with the organization. This Urgent Action has been re-issued to a portion of the UA Network for continued action.

*(UA 78/05 issued Apr. 1, 2005 & re-issued Apr. 4 & 11, 2005)*

### SYRIA: ‘Ammar ‘Umar, Kahdar Khaled, Mas’ud Khaled, Hasan ‘Umar, Murad Aslan, Daglash Khalil, Shenidar Muhammad Yusuf,

### Shiyar Muhammad Yusuf, Zerdeshtha Muhammad Yusuf, Zibar Muhammad Yusuf, Tawfiq Husayn, Manal ‘Abdi, Diyar‘Ali, Juwan Khaled, and Jivara Shukri.

On March 30, the Syrian authorities announced the release of 312 Syrian Kurds, including the 15 men named above, after they were pardoned by President Bashar al-Asad. The Supreme State Security Court sentenced them on February 15, to between two and three years imprisonment, following an unfair trial. All those released were apparently amongst over 2,000 Syrian Kurds arrested following clashes that erupted at a football match in Qamishli, northeastern Syria in March 2004. Hundreds of those detained have now been released.

*(UA 15/05 issued Jan. 19, 2005 & re-issued Feb. 18, 2005)*

### SYRIA: Muhannad al-Dabas and Muhammad ‘Arab.

On March 31, university students and prisoners of conscience Muhannad al-Dabas and Muhammad ‘Arab were released from Adra Prison, just outside the capital Damascus. It has been reported that their release followed President Bashar al-Asad’s refusal to ratify their sentences. The two men had served less than four weeks of a three-

year prison sentence handed down by the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) after a grossly unfair trial. They were arrested on April 24, 2004 after a sit-down protest organized by students at the University of Damascus against a new government policy ending guaranteed employment of engineering graduates by the state. They were convicted of “opposing the objectives of the revolution”.

*(UA 155/04 issued Apr. 26, 2004 & re-issued May 17, Sep. 1, Oct. 5, 2004, & Mar. 11, 2005)*

### MYANMAR: Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, general secretary of the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) political party; Ma Ohn Mar Kyu Kyu, her daughter; and U Thu Wai, aged 73, former Chairman of the Democracy Party.

Daw Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, her daughter Ma Ohn Mar Kyu Kyu and U Thu Wai (m) were reportedly released without charge on March 4. They had been detained incommunicado since February 7. Others named in this Urgent Action and its first update, are still in detention and this Urgent Action has been re-issued to a portion of the UA Network for continued appeals.

*(UA 38/05 issued Feb. 16, 2005 & re-issued Mar. 2 & 30, 2005)*

## Sumi Khan: “The support of AI is a big support to us...”

*This story is excerpted from an article of “Urgent Action Network,” an international newsletter of UA coordinators produced by the UA Team at AI’s headquarters in London, UK.*

On March 8, Bangladeshi journalist Sumi Khan visited Amnesty International in the United Kingdom to talk about her experiences as a campaigning journalist and human rights defender. Soon after her return to Bangladesh, she received a written death threat, purportedly from local Islamist groups, saying that her home and office would be attacked with grenades if she reported on their activities again (UA 51/05 issued on March 14, 2005).

Sumi Khan has worked to expose those responsible for crimes such as child- and arms-trafficking in her role as a reporter for the magazine *Weekly 2000* in the port city of Chittagong in southern Bangladesh. This has almost cost her life last year. On April 27, 2004, as she was on the way to the courier office to send a report to her editor, a three-wheeled taxi pulled up and three men got out and began to beat her and stab her hands and face. Though Sumi fought back, she was beaten unconscious. Her attackers shouted at her that she would be killed if she continued writing. They deliberately harmed her hands so that she would not be able to write.

The scars on her hands were still visible when she visited AI UK, and spoke of her determination to continue exposing corruption and human rights abuses.

The prospect of further attacks does not scare her: **“Who is the criminal?”** she says. **“If I was a criminal, I would be afraid. My power is in my honesty and commitment”.**

Even though at least four journalists have been killed in the past year in Bangladesh, Sumi Khan is optimistic that the pressure put on the authorities by AI and other organizations will give journalists and human rights defenders the courage to continue their work: **“The support of AI is a big support to us to carry on this job... to establish what criminals are doing. The peaceful way is the only way we can stop them. What we are doing is too tough without the cooperation of Amnesty International”.**

She thanked all those who wrote letters on her behalf for inspiring her and other human rights defenders to carry on, saying, **“Please carry on and don’t give up. All over the world you have friends in people like us!”**

## Executions / Stays / Commutations

### UZBEKISTAN: Farid Nasibullin.

Death row prisoner Akhrokhuzha Tolipkhuzhaev was executed at the beginning of March, even though the Uzbekistani authorities assured the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee that he was still alive on March 21, 2005. This heightens fears that Farid Nasibullin could be executed at any time. On April 6, Akhrokhuzha Tolipkhuzhaev’s father received a death certificate confirming that his son had been executed five weeks earlier, on March 1. On March 21, members of the UN Human Rights Committee had questioned

## Urgent Action In Focus

An insight into the stories behind UAs

visited her the day before she was put to death. This had been one of her last wishes. In her last words to the public prosecutor, Astini reportedly expressed the hope that her three children would live a good religious life, and that her husband would continue to raise them well. Astini was sentenced to death in October 1996 on three counts of murder. She was found guilty of murdering three women between August 1993 and January 1996 and of dismembering their bodies. (UA 303/04 issued Nov. 10, 2004)

### USA/MISSOURI: Stanley Hall.

Stanley Hall was executed in Missouri on March 16, 2005. He was sentenced to death in March 1996 for the murder of Barbara Wood in January 1994. The US Supreme Court refused to intervene in the case, and Governor Blunt denied clemency, despite the evidence that Stanley Hall has mental retardation, that another man involved in the crime was never even charged, and that racial aspects and prosecutorial misconduct tainted Hall’s trial.

(UA 58/05 issued Mar. 11, 2005)

### USA/OKLAHOMA: Jimmie Ray Slaughter.

Jimmie Ray Slaughter was executed in Oklahoma on March 17, 2005. He was sentenced to death in 1994 for the murder of Melody Wuertz, with whom he had had an affair, and their 11-month-old daughter, Jessica Wuertz. Key evidence against Jimmie Slaughter had been called into question. A single hair found at the crime scene was found after DNA analysis not to link him to the crime, and the reliability of ballistics evidence raised by the state was also disputed. Jimmie Slaughter maintained his innocence to the end. In his final statement, he said: **“It was a lie from the beginning. God knows it’s true, my children who were with me know it’s true, and you people will know it’s true someday. May God have mercy on your souls”.**

(UA 32/05 issued Feb. 10, 2005 & re-issued Feb. 18, 2005)

## Other News

### BELARUS: Mikhail Marinich.

Mikhail Marinich (m), aged 65, was transferred to a hospital in Minsk, on March 15, from the Orsha prison colony. He had suffered a stroke on March 7: the hospital, which is part of the prison system, has a neurological department and will reportedly be able to give him adequate treatment. Mikhail Marinich is now at the republican hospital of correctional institutions No.1. In an interview published in the newspaper *Komsomolskaia Pravda v Belarusii* on March 16,

Uzbekistani government representatives about allegations that the execution had taken place, despite an earlier request by the Committee for a stay of execution. The government representatives had insisted that Akhrokhuzha Tolipkhuzhaev was still alive. The fact that Akhrokhuzha Tolipkhuzhaev had not been the subject of mass international appeals appears to have been a decisive factor in his death. Many Urgent Action activists are still working on behalf of Farid Nasibullin.

(EX 5/03 issued Jan. 15, 2003 & re-issued Mar. 7, Jun. 24, 2003, Apr. 29, 2004, Mar. 18 & Apr. 8, 2005)

### INDONESIA: Astini.

Astini (f), aged 49, Indonesian national, was executed by firing squad on March 20. Newspapers reported that her granddaughter

the head of the Ministry of Interior Department of Execution of Punishments said that Mikhail Marinich had been officially diagnosed as having had a stroke; he had been examined by a doctor of the Belarusian Scientific and Research Institute of Neurology, who had recommended that he be transferred to Minsk for further examination. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to monitor Mikhail Marinich's case closely, and take further action as necessary.  
(UA 59/05 issued Mar. 11, 2005)

### PHILIPPINES: Angelina Bisuna Ipong

Angelina Bisuna Ipong (f), aged 61, was produced before journalists on March 15. Newspapers reported that she had been arrested on March 8, by a military intelligence unit. Military officials claimed that she was a senior member of the regional branch of the Communist Party of the Philippines, and that there was an outstanding arrest warrant against her on charges of murder and robbery. Military officials stated that she had not been maltreated and that she remained in a healthy condition, but noted that her blood pressure levels had increased. She is said to have a heart condition. This Urgent Action has been re-issued for further action.  
(UA 67/05 issued Mar. 15 & Mar. 17, 2005)

### UZBEKISTAN: Mannopzhon Rakhmatullayev

On January 20, 2005 the Andizhan Regional Court in eastern Uzbekistan sentenced Mannopzhon Rakhmatullayev (m), aged 54, to 16 years in prison. He had reportedly been held incommunicado at an unknown location in Uzbekistan since being abducted from the Russian Federation in July 2004. He was charged with eight crimes, including "terrorism," "national, racial or religious incitement" and "attempting to overthrow the constitutional order." His trial reportedly fell far short of international standards for fair trials. Mannopzhon Rakhmatullayev's appeal was turned down by Andizhan Regional Court on March 2; however, an appeal is still pending with the Supreme Court.

(UA 352/02 issued Dec. 4, 2002 & re-issued Jul. 21, 2004)

### PAKISTAN: Dr Shazia Khalid

Dr Shazia Khalid (f), medical doctor, who was raped by a masked intruder at her home in Sui, Balochistan on January 2, fled to London with her husband on March 18. A "Judicial Tribunal," consisting of a single judge, was set up to investigate the rape, but failed to identify any suspects. The case was covered extensively in local newspapers, and

many human rights organizations held public demonstrations calling for justice. However, Shazia reportedly did not believe that justice would be done, as those behind the attack are thought to have connections to high-ranking army officials. Dr Shazia did not want to relive the rape amidst media and political controversy, and decided to leave the country as soon as she had permission from the government. The police enquiry into the rape is continuing.

(UA 35/05 issued Feb. 15, 2005)

### RUSSIAN FEDERATION: Yuri Samodurov, Director of the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center; Ludmila Vasilovskaia, curator of the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center; and Anna Mikhailchuk, artist.

Yuri Samodurov and Ludmila Vasilovskaia were convicted and fined on March 28, while Anna Mikhailchuk was found not guilty, on charges relating to the art exhibition that they helped to organize. **Yuri Samodurov said he believed that Amnesty International's declaration that it would adopt them as prisoners of conscience if they were given custodial sentences had had a positive influence on the outcome of the court case.** He was speaking to the Moscow-based radio station *Ekho Moskvy* on March 28. Yuri Samodurov and Ludmila Vasilovskaia were found guilty by the Taganskaia Inter-district Court in Moscow of "carrying out actions aimed at inciting enmity, and humiliating the dignity of a group of people due to their nationality and their religious affiliation, carried out in public, and with the use of their official positions" under Article 282 part 2b of the Russian Criminal Code. The charges arose from their role in an exhibition that used religious symbols, called

"Caution, Religion!", at the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Center in Moscow in January 2003. Each was fined 100,000 roubles (about US\$3,600). The court found Anna Mikhailchuk not guilty of similar charges. Amnesty International does not believe that any of the exhibits of the "Caution, Religion!" exhibition, as portrayed on the museum's website, amounted to an incitement to violence, although some people may have found the exhibition offensive.  
(UA 72/05 issued Mar. 23, 2005 & re-issued Mar. 31, 2005)

### BRAZIL: 400 members of the Guarani-Kaiowá Indigenous Community in Cerro Marangatú.

On March 29, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ratified the disputed Cerro (Ñande Ru) Marangatú indigenous area, from which the 400 members of the Guarani-Kaiowá tribe were threatened with eviction. The indigenous community in the area is celebrating and is awaiting the final formal step in the process of obtaining land rights, the registration of the indigenous area. The President ratified the land the day before Amnesty International launched its report, "Foreigners in our own country": *Indigenous Peoples of Brazil* (AMR 19/002/2005). The report addresses the link between the failure of successive Brazilian governments to resolve the problems of indigenous land rights and violence committed against indigenous leaders by those interested in preventing the indigenous population from obtaining the rights to their ancestral lands. The connection between land rights and violence is illustrated with a description of the situation of the Guarani-Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul.  
(UA 13/05 issued Jan. 18, 2005 & re-issued Mar. 7, 2005)



Nicholas, 11-years old in this photo, participated in the Human Rights Day Global Write-a-thon on December 10, 2004 during the Open House at the AI-Canada's Toronto office. © AI-Canada 2004

## Success Stories

Many of us often get asked by our friends and family why we continue to write appeal letters - asking if we might be a bit naïve to think that our letters have a positive effect on the lives of others so far away. In the future, when you are asked such questions, we offer this web site, that has dozens of UA success stories, to make that explanation a bit easier for you:

[www.amnestyusa.org/urgent/success.do](http://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent/success.do)

If you prefer a hard-copy, formatted version that you can share with friends and family, or use during a presentation about AI, you may contact the UA office to receive copies of the current edition of **UA Quotes**, a collection of stories and quotes from Amnesty International's Urgent Action Network.

### **CÔTE D'IVOIRE: Brian Hamish Sands and 35 Ivorian alleged militiamen.**

Brian Hamish Sands, New Zealand national, died on April 5, in the custody of the armed opposition group *Forces Nouvelles* (FN), New Forces, who control the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire. They had arrested him on March 11, as a suspected mercenary. On April 1, the FN had transferred him from the city of Bouaké, their stronghold in the center of the country, to Korhogo, the main city in the north. The FN had said that they found his body in his cell and that "apparently the death was of natural causes". The New Zealand authorities asked for an immediate autopsy. Other reports indicated that Sands might have committed suicide. His family had reportedly said that he had mental health problems but was not suicidal. The 35 alleged

militiamen who were also arrested in March were transferred on the same day to Korhogo, where they are allegedly still held incommunicado and this Urgent Action has been re-issued to a portion of the UA Network for continued action.

*(UA 65/05 issued Mar. 15, 2005 & re-issued Apr. 6, 2005)*

### **USA: Abdullah William Webster.**

Abdullah Webster, imprisoned in the USA because of his conscientious objection to the war in Iraq, is now receiving appropriate medical care. He had not been getting the regular blood tests required to check for the side effects of a drug he needs to take for high blood cholesterol. Shortly after the last update to this UA, a medical enquiry was set up into Abdullah Webster's medical condition and an Army major took over the supervision

of his medical care. Abdullah Webster has now had a further blood test that showed no abnormalities and no apparent permanent damage to his liver. He has also been taken off the medication and the prison authorities are looking into alternative medication, with less severe side effects, to regulate his high cholesterol.

Abdullah Webster is the second active-duty soldier imprisoned by the US authorities solely on the basis of his conscientious objection to the war in Iraq. Amnesty International adopted both men as prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International continues to call for the immediate and unconditional release of Abdullah Webster.

*(UA 267/04 issued Sep. 17, 2004 & re-issued Mar. 10, Apr. 13, 2005, & was the April 2005 UA Newsletter Appeal)*

## UA Newsletter Appeal for May 2005

**Each month we include one case that may benefit from appeals sent by those in the UA Network who wish to work on an additional appeal. You are encouraged to write on behalf of this individual until June 10, 2005. Thanks!** (This appeal is based on Urgent Action 1/05 issued Jan. 7, 2005 & re-issued Apr. 14, 2005).

### **Prisoner of conscience/medical concern/torture and ill treatment**

#### **VIET NAM: Le Thi Hong Lien (f), teacher, aged 21**

**P**risoner of conscience Le Thi Hong Lien, who is reportedly suffering from severe mental illness, has been moved to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, where she is reportedly receiving treatment for the first time. Her family has been able to visit her but have reported that her physical and mental health is still very poor. Amnesty International is concerned that she may not be receiving appropriate medical treatment.

She had been held at Chi Hoa Prison, in Ho Chi Minh City, since her arrest in June 2004, when she was arrested. Her mental health is reported to have deteriorated seriously since her arrest. Guards at Chi Hoa Prison reportedly told her relatives that they did not have the means to care for inmates with such a severe illness. On January 25 the prison authorities finally acknowledged that Le Thi Hong Lien was suffering from mental illness. On February 17, she was moved to another prison distant from her family home. Ten days later she was moved from there to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, 50km northeast of Ho Chi Minh City, where she is reportedly held in the prison section under the charge of prison guards rather than medical staff.

Guards beat Le Thi Hong Lien while she was held at Chi Hoa Prison, according to fellow inmates, and received a particularly savage beating from a guard escorting her to and from her trial.

Le Thi Hong Lien, a teacher for the Vietnamese Mennonite Christian Church, was arrested in June 2004 along with a number of other members of the Mennonite community. On November 12 she was sentenced to 12 months in prison on charges of "resisting a person performing official duty".

Amnesty International considers Le Thi Hong Lien to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association. Members of the Mennonite Church, and other religious organizations that are not sanctioned by the state, have suffered official harassment and imprisonment for many years. Le Thi Hong Lien had taken part in a number of demonstrations against the government's policies on religion, and had been arrested many times.

**Recommended Action:** Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- welcoming the news that Le Thi Hong Lien has been moved to Bien Hoa Mental Hospital, but expressing concern that she may not be receiving appropriate treatment;
- expressing concern that she is currently in the prison wing of the hospital and that her care-givers reportedly are prison staff, not medical staff;
- urging the authorities to ensure that she receives the medical attention she needs;



Le Thi Hong Lien © Compass Direct

- calling on the authorities to order an investigation into reports that she was beaten by guards at Chi Hoa Prison, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for Le Thi Hong Lien to be released immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of her fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

#### **Appeals To:**

##### **Prime Minister:**

His Excellency Phan Van Khai  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Hoang Hoa Tham  
Ha Noi

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

Fax: 011 844 823 4137 / 199 2682 (c/o

Ministry of Foreign Affairs – please mark  
appeals "For the attention of Prime  
Minister Phan Van Khai")

Salutation: Your Excellency