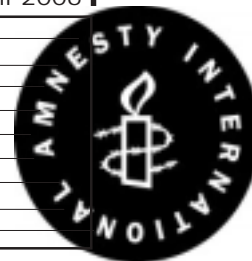


urgent
action
voices



— stories & quotes about effective action —

NEPAL

Gagan Thapa appeared before the Special Court in Kathmandu in August 2005, where he was charged with sedition before being released pending trial. He told trial observers that such international attention had been instrumental in ensuring his safety. *"If the international community had not been present at the right moment, the action taken against me would have been even more serious... As soon as the international pressure started, the police changed their tone."* Gagan Thapa, a student leader and former Secretary General of the Nepal Students Union (NSU), was detained by police in Kathmandu on July 27, 2005. He chose to stay with the other prisoners so as not to appear privileged. [UA 199/05]

"After I was arrested I was held in a cell in Hanuman Dhoka police station in Kathmandu along with sixteen others. We slept eight at a time as the cell was so cramped."

"As soon as the Urgent Actions began to arrive the authorities immediately offered to transfer me to a cell where I would be held alone."

- Gagan Thapa



Gagan Thapa at Amnesty International's headquarters in London. © AI

MEXICO

Environmental activist and prisoner of conscience Felipe Arreaga was acquitted of murder and released in September 2005. Amnesty International believes that the investigation and criminal charges brought against Felipe Arreaga had been politically motivated due to his leading role in peaceful protests against excessive and illegal logging of forests of Guerrero State. [UA 50/05]



Felipe Arreaga, environmentalist activist in Petatlán, Guerrero State, with wife and granddaughter after his release. © Private

"... I want to tell you that during the long time of my detention, I always felt accompanied because of the expressions of support that never ceased... I always said that I can die for the cause I believe and that I will not cease in a clean, legal and unselfish struggle that encourages me. I will continue to walk in the mountains and advocating for human rights and a healthy environment. I will work very hard with my wife, caring for the forests and planting trees..."

- Felipe Arreaga, in a letter to those who worked on obtaining his freedom.

SUDAN

In the evening of February 13, 2006, five human rights defenders in Sudan were released without charge by security forces. Alrayah Ibrahim Eldaw, Alfaris Ibrahim, Dawalbeit Kabbur and Osman Ali Ismael, staff members of the non-governmental organization, Sudan Development Organization (SUDO), and Sayed Abu Bakr, a volunteer for SUDO, had been arrested on the morning of February 13 at Ed Dain University in South Darfur, as they conducted a training session on human rights monitoring. The head of SUDO thanked Amnesty International for its action on behalf of the men. [UA 33/06]

"The Governor received the first faxes sent by Amnesty International - very soon thereafter the five were released. They asked me when they were released, 'Why were we released so quickly?'"

"The pressure exerted by you has really worked, thanks for your solidarity."

- Dr. Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, head of the Sudan Development Organization (SUDO)

CUBA

Prisoner of conscience Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina was released in July 2005, after five years and four months in prison. He had been detained in March 2000 and sentenced to a six year prison term for “disrespect,” “public disorder,” and “damage.” [UA 39/05]



Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, © Private

“I would like to give my deepest thanks to Amnesty International [members] for all the work that they have done to help in my release from prison...”

I am deeply grateful for all of this, and want to tell this prestigious organization that it has here a volunteer, an activist always at its service as well as my modest efforts to work and cooperate alongside it in this altruistic and humanitarian work.”

- Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina

RUSSIAN FEDERATION / CHECHEN REPUBLIC

Imran Ezhiev, head of the regional department of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society for Ingushetia and Chechnya and a regional coordinator of the Moscow Helsinki Group, has been detained more than a dozen times in the course of the last five years. But he has not stopped his human rights work. In September 2000, he was detained by police for a week, and has stated he was tortured and threatened with “disappearance.” [UA 46/04]

“They tortured me with electric shocks, they pulled out my teeth and fingernails, but they did not dare to kill me.

Without Amnesty International’s Urgent Actions I would not be alive today.”

- Imran Ezhiev



Imran Ezhiev with a copy of AI’s “Fair Trials Manual” © AI

UNITED STATES / VIRGINIA

Virginia’s Governor Warner commuted Robin Lovitt’s death sentence to life imprisonment in November 2005. Had the execution gone ahead, Robin Lovitt would have been the 1000th person to be executed in the USA since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. He was sentenced to death in 1999 for the murder of Clayton Dicks the previous year. His lawyers claim that he could prove his innocence if DNA evidence used at his trial had not been illegally destroyed.

According to news reports, Governor Warner, who had not commuted a single death sentence since he took office nearly four years ago, reportedly came to his decision because a court clerk had illegally destroyed much of the evidence. *A spokesman for the governor reportedly told the Reuters news agency that he had received roughly 1,500 phone calls, letters and e-mails from across the world about the case, almost all of them urging clemency.* [UA 285/05]

“No case has been more troubling... There’s no case I’ve spent more time thinking about, praying about.”

- Virginia Governor Warner, commenting on his decision to commute Robin Lovitt’s death sentence to life imprisonment.



TURKEY

Dogan Genç, Erken Kesken and Saban Dayanan, three members of the İnsan Haklari Dernegi (IHD), a human rights association in Turkey, have not received any further death threats following threatening letters sent to their home and work addresses in April 2005 by the ultra-nationalist group Türk Intikam Tugayi (Turkish Revenge Brigade). The Turkish authorities have informed Amnesty International that the Ministry of the Interior is investigating the threats against the three and that they have warned all the provincial governors in Turkey to take "the necessary security precautions" to protect the branches of IHD and other non-governmental organizations in case of possible attacks. [UA 94/05]

"We are indebted to all those who thought of us and sent Urgent Action appeals. We need such solidarity.

The reactions to these appeals will prevent these attacks. We believe this from our hearts.

We send warm greetings to all those who showed concern for our security."

— Saban Dayanan



Dogan Genç, Erken Kesken and Saban Dayanan (at front).

PERU

The police in Cuzco are investigating threats made against the human rights organization Asociacion por la Vida y la Dignidad Humana (APORVIDHA), Association for Life and Human Dignity, including staff members Iskra Chavez Loaiza, Freddy Rodriguez Olivera, and Evelyn Zevallos Enriquez. AI believes that the lives of APORVIDHA staff are no longer in imminent danger. APORVIDHA is currently providing legal representation to victims of human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict of 1980-2000, and their relatives. It appears that AI's campaigning on this case led directly to the opening of the police investigation into threats made against APORVIDHA staff: in his communication with the police ordering the investigation, Interior Minister Dr. Romulo Pizarro Tomasio stated that he was taking this action at the request of Amnesty International. [UA 7/06]

"Your support helps to strengthen the work of human rights defenders and makes us even more committed to continuing our work."

- APORVIDHA staff



UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan's Supreme Court commuted 19-year old Yuldash Kasymov's death sentence to 20 years in prison in November 2005. Shortly after the Supreme Court's decision, guards led Yuldash Kasymov out of his death row cell in Tashkent prison. *"They read out the Court's ruling to him. Yuldash Kasymov was in a state of shock; he could not believe what they were telling him. He thought they were joking and he was about to be executed,"* said Tamara Chikunova, director of the human rights group Mothers against the Death Penalty and Torture. Yuldash Kasymov was moved to the prison in Andizhan. [UA 169/05]



Yuldash Kasymov
© Private

"When his brother Mansur visited him shortly afterwards Yuldash was overjoyed and was making plans for his future... He said he wanted to finish his studies in the medical institute."

- Tamara Chikunova, director of Mothers Against the Death Penalty, on Yuldash Kasymov's release.

BRAZIL

468 families squatting in the Prestes Maia building in central São Paulo, who had been scheduled for eviction on April 15, 2006, secured a last-minute court order postponing their eviction indefinitely. Lawyers working for the *Movimento Sem-Teto do Centro* (MSTC), Homeless Movement of Central São Paulo, had lodged an appeal against the eviction order, and on April 4 the São Paul State Supreme Court ruled in their favor. The appeal hinged on the fact that since the families had lived for over a year in the building, they had rights as residents. [UA 71/06]

"This means that now we can breathe a little..."

We still don't know for how long, but the important thing is your support has been very effective here. We don't know how to thank you but in the name of the 468 families of Prestes Maia, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and the important thing is that today we know that we are not alone and this gives us the courage to continue our fight."



- Ivaneti de Araujo, coordinator for *Movimento Sem-Teto do Centro*

HAITI

Gérard Jean Juste, reportedly suffering from leukemia, was granted a provisional release from detention on health grounds on January 29. The interim government in Haiti apparently granted his release to allow him to seek treatment abroad, as there are no medical facilities in Haiti able to offer treatment for leukemia. Gérard Jean Juste was granted a conditional release, but is expected to return to Haiti to face charges following his recovery. [UA 195/05]



"...I am very grateful to Amnesty International and to all of you for helping fight for the human rights of all political prisoners, here in Haiti and across the world. Let's keep the momentum on for justice, peace, love, and sharing to prevail all over the world as God wants it."

- Gérard Jean Juste

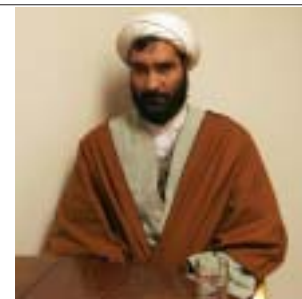
IRAN

Hojjatoleslam Ezimi Qedimi was returned to prison on March 26, 2006 after an appeal against a one-year prison sentence was rejected on February 20, 2006 by Branch 2 of the Special Court for the Clergy. If charged, Hojjatoleslam Ezimi Qedimi could be a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of his peaceful beliefs and activities on behalf of the Azeri Turk community in Iran. [UA 219/05]

"I am very grateful for the campaign which Amnesty started for my sake. I heard about the action while I was imprisoned. After I was released I saw letters while I was being interrogated by the security service."

Your letters meant very much to me."

- Hojjatoleslam Ezimi Qedimi, in December 2005, to Amnesty International in Sweden.



Hojjatoleslam Ezimi Qedimi, © Private.

Take Your Human Rights Activism to the Next Level:

Join Amnesty International's Urgent Action Network!

Amnesty International's Urgent Action Network (UAN) serves as the organization's "emergency room" for human rights violations. Every day, UAN members in over 70 countries write personalized appeals to authorities who are in the position to ensure the safety and fair treatment of those whom Amnesty International seeks to protect.

While we celebrate our successes, we also recognize that we must strive to become stronger and more effective. Will you be on call to respond to these emergencies? We invite you to join the Urgent Action Network if you are not already receiving the actions. If you enjoy writing appeals and can respond quickly to urgent human rights concerns, please take this opportunity to step up your commitment by getting personally involved in the global fight for human rights.

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email: uan@aiusa.org * amnestyusa.org/urgent