

AGM Resolutions 1995

A1 Including the US in the Upcoming Campaign on International Campaign Against Racist Torture and Ill-Treatment

CONSIDERING, ongoing and escalating abuses against immigrants and refugees including uninvestigated and unprosecuted beatings, and killings by agents of the US government such as members of the US Border Patrol and mistreatment including rape in detention by prison personnel under contract to the US Immigration and Naturalization Service; and

CONSIDERING, long-standing abuses against people of color in the US, for example the hangings of African-American men in Mississippi jails, killings in police custody in Indian country, the widespread pattern and practice of police brutality, disproportionate arrest and imprisonment, disparities in sentencing and unfair trials; and

CONSIDERING, the continuing use of the death penalty in the US since the federal government itself (in a GAO report) has formally recognized the death penalty as racially biased;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of AIUSA formally petition the International Secretariat (IS) to undertake (1996) International Campaign Against Racist Torture and Ill-Treatment as soon as possible;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the work on the United States be featured as a significant component of any campaign on racism and/or torture and ill-treatment.

Passed Unanimously

A2 Resolution on Expanding Sections' Work in Their Own Countries on Behalf of Detained Asylum Seekers and Refugees

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTING that in several countries, including the USA and throughout Europe, legislation has been adopted which allows the detention of asylum seekers and refugees under conditions that are incompatible with internationally recognized minimum standards;

AWARE of recent initiatives in other countries aimed at changing legislation or regulations so as to permit conditions of detention of asylum seekers and refugees that fall below the internationally recognized minimum standards;

RECOGNIZING that conditions of detention of asylum seekers in some countries amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;

BEARING IN MIND, that sub-standard conditions of detention can significantly impair the access of asylum seekers to a fair asylum determination procedure, including by leading some asylum seekers to forego legitimate claims;

RECOGNIZING that in some countries asylum seekers and refugees are detained on discriminatory grounds, particularly owing to their color or nationality;

NOTING that AI plans to launch a campaign in 1996 on behalf of refugees;

SUBMITTING that the effectiveness of the campaign will be enhanced if sections in countries where refugees are detained have the ability to investigate and bring to the attention of the government conditions of detention and discriminatory practices;

REFERRING to Article 1 of the "IEC-Approved Guidelines on Refugee Work: Detention of Asylum Seekers and Refugees" (POL 33/01/90)", which incorporates the following paragraph of Decision 8 of the 1989 ICM (Dublin):

"AI calls on governments to demonstrate legitimate reasons for any detention of asylum seekers, in accordance with international standards and by means of a prompt, fair, individual hearing before a judicial or other similar authority whose status and tenure afford the strongest possible guarantee of competence, impartiality and independence. AI opposes the practice of detaining asylum-seekers when adequate and effective safeguards, as set out above, do not exist or are not followed."

**A2 Resolution on Expanding Sections' Work in Their Own Countries
on Behalf of Detained Asylum Seekers and Refugees
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NOTING that AI sections already are authorized to raise with their governments the conditions of detention of asylum seekers in their own country "if elements of the detention affect the ability of the individual to pursue his or her asylum claim, to obtain adequate legal advice, to learn and take full advantage of all rights accorded by law, etc." (IEC Approved Guidelines for AI's Work on Behalf of Refugees, POL 33/02/85 of 25 June 1985, Section 1.6);

NOTING FURTHER that sections are not currently authorized to raise with their governments the following two concerns that lie within AI's mandate, namely: (a) "if it is shown that detention practice with respect to would-be refugees is discriminatory to the extent that the detentions would appear to be on the basis of conscientiously held belief, color, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion, rather than on the fact of being an asylum-seeker;" and (b) "if the treatment accorded those detained constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (IEC Approved Guidelines, 1985, Section 1.6, above-referenced);

RECALLING that the "Guidelines on AI's section's activities concerning violations of human rights in their own countries", adopted by the 1987 ICM, provides in paragraph 2 that "A section may not make representations to the authorities in its own country or territory concerning human rights violations in its own country or territory, except in accordance with guidelines 3, 4 and 8," and provides in guideline 8 that "The guidelines for refugee work will prevail. In that context, a section may monitor and make representations on government policy on individual cases or general refugee matters.";

INSTRUCTS our ICM delegation to strongly support our resolution to amend the "IEC Approved Guidelines for AI's Work on Behalf of Refugees" so as to increase the ability of sections to request permission from the IEC to work on detention of asylum seekers and refugees in their own countries in the following two circumstances: (1) when the conditions of detention constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or (2) when the detention practice is discriminatory within the meaning of the Guidelines.

Passed Unanimously

A3 Calling for a Study on Strategic Approaches to Multinational Corporations

WHEREAS, Amnesty International policies allow for sections to work to protect human rights by addressing Military Economic and Cultural Relations (MEC) and Military, Security and Police Transfers (MSP). *

WHEREAS, the 1993 ICM amended these policies to permit a wider range of actions;

WHEREAS, AIUSA's strategic plan and the Integrated Strategic Plan, both call for increased research and action on MEC/MSP issues;

RECOGNIZING that multinational corporations have an infrastructure and economic power worldwide and whose influence on governments are often considerable;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AIUSA ask the IEC to undertake an international study to develop a coordinated strategy within AI to see how actions by multinational corporations may contribute to violations of human rights within AI's mandate and how they may be held accountable for their actions, negligence or omissions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AIUSA request that results of this study be presented at the 1997 ICM;

* see AI Policy Manual 1992.

Passed Unanimously

A4 Work on Own Country Resolution (#1)

WHEREAS, the Standing Committee on Development's (SCOD) "Report on Own Country: A New Approach" (ORG 20/01/94) has recommended that the principles of impartiality, independence, international solidarity, and security be maintained in any new policy which would replace the current Work on Own Country Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, it also endorses the need for greater flexibility and a more strategic role for membership in AI's actions, consistent with the priorities set for the movement by the International Council Meeting (ICM) and respecting the principles of impartiality and balance; and

WHEREAS, the draft policy statement contained in the SCOD report includes the statement "Final responsibility for strategic decisions on research and action on human rights violations in any country rests with the international movement," and that "sections are accountable to the international movement" in carrying out their responsibility for strategic planning; and

CONSIDERING that Resolution A1 of the 1994 AGM resolved that the AIUSA Board of Directors support the principle that members of Amnesty International do not work on cases (Action Files) from their own countries without consulting the International Executive Committee (IEC); and further

CONSIDERING that the SCOD report stipulates that "(a) sections do not normally research or act on cases of human rights violations in their own countries," and that "(b) sections should not on their own initiative make public their opinions or assessments about such cases or about the general human rights situation in their own country;"

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AIUSA Board of Directors instruct the 1995 AIUSA ICM Delegation to support the IEC enabling resolution on the WOOC before the 1995 ICM, and to substitute clause (e) below for the similar clause in the enabling resolution;

(e) sections may request that the International Secretariat (IS) permit exceptions to the policies in sections (a) and (b) in particular cases which are consistent with that section's strategic plans. If the IS refuses to allow an exception to these policies as per the section request, the section may appeal its decision to the IEC, whose decision shall be final.

Resolution Passed (108 in favor, 59 against, 25 abstentions)

A6 Training of Human Rights Monitors

WHEREAS, the object of Amnesty International is to contribute to the observance throughout the world of human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and

WHEREAS, Amnesty International may adopt any appropriate methods for securing its object and mandate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AIUSA strongly urge the International Secretariat to begin budget plans for or find external sources for the funding of an annual institute whose purpose shall be to provide training to interested persons, particularly those who are affiliated with small, domestic, nongovernmental human rights organizations in many parts of the world, in the methods and techniques of human rights monitoring and documentation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that participation in this training program be facilitated by subvention grants to selected applicants;

Passed Overwhelmingly

B2 Entitlement of Individuals to Receive the Monthly Mailing

WHEREAS, the Monthly Mailing, of which one copy is sent to the coordinator of each group, is Amnesty's chief channel of communication to group members, and is extremely important, useful, and interesting, containing a variety of items which would appeal to or be usable by different people;

AND WHEREAS, it is not widely known that individual members of AIUSA can, by asking their Regional Offices, be added to the mailing list for receiving the Monthly Mailing;

BE IT RESOLVED that the entitlement of any member of AIUSA to receive the Monthly Mailing on paper or by electronic mail shall be made known at least three times a year through reasonably prominent mention in the monthly mailing and other appropriate channels of communication;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if this would cause a significant extra cost to AIUSA, and if a subscription basis is feasible, then the basis for individuals, as opposed to groups, to receive the Monthly Mailing should become one of subscription.

Passed Overwhelmingly

B3 Facilitating Local Group Work on Living Prisoner Cases/Action Files

WHEREAS, volunteer groups are the backbone of Amnesty International--when they are strong, AI is strong, and when they are weak, AI is weak;

AND WHEREAS, Amnesty's classic system was for local groups to adopt prisoners of conscience, and such a bond with a living sufferer in another country was magnificently successful in engaging the emotions of group members and eliciting extraordinary endeavors from them;

NOTING that twelve years ago each local group was expected to work on behalf of three living prisoners at once, each prisoner offering the realistic possibility of a measurable success, namely a release; now, however, each local group is encouraged to work on only one action file, which might involve an individual who is dead or likely to be dead;

AND WHEREAS, veteran group members are frequently well educated as to AI's goals and methods and are committed to work on the most difficult action files, yet many newcomers are most motivated to work on behalf of a living prisoner;

AND WHEREAS, groups that are failing now in part because of the lack of work that attracts and educates newcomers will not be around to fight against "disappearances" in 1996, against deaths in detention in 1998, and against torture in 2000;

AND WHEREAS, the International Secretariat could share more cases of prisoners believed to be living ("living prisoners") across countries, in the form of multiple adoption, without needing to research and produce more prisoner cases;

AND WHEREAS, AIUSA permits case sharing, as noted in The Casework Manual (p.xxvi), but many group coordinators are unaware of this policy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that every local and student group shall be made aware that it may, if the group so wishes, work on a living prisoner case/action file; that starting in January 1996 each issue of the Monthly Mailing and appropriate mailing to student groups (or any successor publications) shall include the following sentences after the advisory that groups must contact the Casework Office to receive new action files: "To improve group health, groups are encouraged to incorporate into their activities work that will be attractive to new members. Any group may, at the group's discretion, share the action file of a living prisoner."

**B3 Facilitating Local Group Work on
Living Prisoner Cases/Action Files**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of AIUSA write the International Secretariat no later than March 1, 1996, and request that, in the interest of AIUSA group health and therefore the long-term strength of the movement, more living prisoner cases be multiple-adopted by groups in AIUSA; be it further resolved that the Board of Directors of AIUSA write the International Executive Committee and request that an international study be conducted to examine (i) the effectiveness of the action file technique at achieving AI's goals and (ii) the effect of the change from cases to action files at the membership level;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that coordination-group members shall, before March 1996, contact all groups with on-going living prisoner cases (except those few groups whose prisoners would not benefit from additional work) and recommend that, for the benefit of the prisoner and the benefit of AIUSA group health, the group be willing to share the action file. Coordination-group members shall report to the Casework Office no later than May 1996 the list of groups willing to share their action files;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, starting no later than January 1996, all AIUSA groups accepting the action file of a living prisoner who would benefit from case sharing shall, as a condition of accepting the action file, be willing to share that action file with other AIUSA groups.

Passed (130 in favor, 70 against)

B4 Resolution on Genocide

WHEREAS, in recognition of the murder of a million Rwandans, the membership of AIUSA at its 1994 Annual General Meeting passed unanimously a Special Resolution resolving "that the use of the word 'Genocide' is, for Amnesty International, a necessary tool for human rights action;"

WHEREAS, the term "Genocide" as defined in the United Nations Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is congruent with our mandate's definitions of politically motivated acts of repression, murder, and torture for reasons of ethnic, religious, political, or national affiliation;

WHEREAS, AI's public profile is such that our organization's holding-back on the subject of Genocide has an additional effect of inhibiting the public's understanding and response to such a tragedy, and is looked upon as a retreat from our commitment to just and impartial investigations and condemnation of all executions;

WHEREAS, stating that specific actions constitute Genocide and then not putting adequate resources into dealing with it is irresponsible and undermines Amnesty International's credibility;

WHEREAS, stating that specific actions constitute Genocide and then not devoting adequate resources to it leads to a situation where AI has made the most serious charge that can be made without taking action commensurate to the magnitude of the violations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- that the Amnesty International International Secretariat develop criteria and procedures as to whether events constitute Genocide, independent and irrespective of the findings of other non-governmental organizations, international organizations, or governments;
- that the Amnesty International International Secretariat develop criteria which state that when such a determination is made (that of Genocide), an increase of resources shall be made by the International Secretariat to cover the magnitude of such gross human rights violations, acknowledging and working on the principle that extraordinary events warrant extraordinary funding consistent with a results orientation;
- that increased funding for research and action will include resources for Crisis Response in order to stop the violations and to provide for the long-term work necessary to document the Genocide, and which will assist in trials of the perpetrators and the rebuilding of a human rights infrastructure;

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CALLS UPON the AIUSA International Council Meeting (ICM) delegation to ensure that AI's response to events in Rwanda is discussed at the 1995 ICM with the aim of ensuring that from here on, AI is doing adequate work on the genocide in Rwanda; and

FURTHER CALLS UPON the AIUSA ICM delegation to ensure that AI's response to events in Rwanda is discussed at the 1995 ICM with the aim of ensuring that such an inadequate response never occurs again.

Passed Overwhelmingly

B6 RAN Implementation

WHEREAS, Regional Action Networks (RAN) are AI's structure that was created to further AI's work in regions where there is a consistent pattern of human rights violations; and

WHEREAS, RANs are key tools for membership involvement in AI's campaign strategies and the effective monitoring of human rights violations; and

WHEREAS, some of AIUSA's RANs are currently inactive due to a lack of coordinators who can organize and disseminate the work prepared by the International Secretariat; and

WHEREAS, human rights violations and impunity continue unabated in countries objects of RANs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that AIUSA include in the Monthly Mailing, no later than January, 1996, a job description of the Co-Group RAN coordinator and notice of openings as RAN coordinators.

Passed Overwhelmingly

B7 Student/Youth Representation on all AIUSA Task Forces and Committees

WHEREAS, AIUSA's membership is the foundation of the section's work for the promotion and protection of human rights;

WHEREAS, AIUSA's planning of activities, development of new strategies and overall implementation of AI's mandate often includes the formation of task forces and committees;

WHEREAS, the nomination to such task forces and committees is informal;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that to ensure student's/youth's participation at all levels of AIUSA's decision making process, task forces and committees an effort be made to include in such task forces and committees student /youth representatives from FY 1996 to 2000;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the National Campus Advisory Committee function as a clearinghouse for openings on committees and task forces, examine and assess the process by which these committees and task forces are formed and make public these findings;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this task force be responsible for a 5 year review of the effect of this resolution with the intention to eliminate its mandate when no longer necessary.

Passed Overwhelmingly

C1 Resolution on Deadline for Election Reform

WHEREAS, the 1994 AGM approved a reform of the AIUSA election of Board of Directors procedure, by which members who wished to receive ballots would indicate that desire prior to the election;

WHEREAS, at its February 1995 meeting, the AIUSA Board of Directors approved this resolution but deleted from it the date by which the procedure should be instituted;

NOTING that the Board has many challenging tasks to accomplish, and some tasks that have no deadline have been repeatedly delayed and postponed, sometimes resulting in no action whatsoever;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of directors designate a small study group to continue the valuable research already undertaken on the revision of the election process towards cost cutting and voter education.

Passed (106 in favor, 71 against)

C3 Resolution on Resolution Deadlines

WHEREAS, the yearly deadlines to submit resolutions are determined by the dates of the regional conferences; and

WHEREAS, the dates of the regional conferences are set in the late autumn and change every year, with the result that the resolution deadlines also change every year; and

WHEREAS, these changing deadlines make it impossible to adequately inform the membership of the dates selected as deadlines, resulting in the submission of resolutions after the deadlines; and

WHEREAS, because of this late submission of resolutions, Regional Resolution Committees are unable to adequately analyze resolutions received after the deadlines and are therefore unable to advise the membership about the advantages, disadvantages and costs of these resolutions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 1st of January each year, (or if the regional conference are held in the fall, the resolution deadline will be the first of August of each year) be adopted as the deadline to submit resolutions (“Resolutions”) to all regional conferences and that this date be well publicized during the year to AIUSA members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AIUSA members be permitted to introduce “Emergency Resolutions” after the 1st of January, to deal with issues that, in the reasoned opinion of the applicable Regional Resolutions Committee after careful analysis, arise after the January 1st deadline, and that these Emergency Resolutions be treated at the regional conferences in the same manner as Resolutions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AIUSA members be permitted to introduce “Special Resolutions” after the 1st of January, to deal with issues that could, in the reasoned opinion of the applicable Regional Resolutions Committee after careful analysis, have been presented to that Committee before the 1st of January, with the provision that such Special Resolutions may be debated and voted on in working parties and final plenary only after all Resolutions and Emergency Resolutions are considered.

Passed (76 in favor, 56 against)

C4 Resolution on Voting Requirements

WHEREAS, relatively few AIUSA members attend either their regional conferences or the Annual General Meeting and even fewer vote at working parties and at the final voting plenary; and

WHEREAS, this statistical minority of the AIUSA membership has a disproportionate influence on critical AIUSA policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, it would be more responsible and democratic to demonstrate clear and significant membership support for those very important resolutions that seek to modify the mandate of AI;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that resolutions which seek to modify AI's mandate shall obtain a 2/3 "Yes" vote to pass at any regional and AGM working party or plenary.

Passed (82 in favor, 75 against)

C7 Group Health Resolution

WHEREAS, from its earliest days, Amnesty International has sought to stop human rights abuse by activating the energies and the talents of people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, this fundamental human rights strategy has engendered for the organization its one distinctive asset among all human rights organizations: a huge volunteer membership base; and

NOTING with great regret, that the commitment to realizing the potential volunteer activism in AIUSA has slipped over the past few years, as evidenced by the collapse or decline of membership structures in many areas around the country;

RECOGNIZING that the group health portions of the Membership Development Task Force report (MDTF) of April 1993, while containing many fine ideas, fall short in important respects to meet the membership development needs of the 90's; and

NOTING FURTHER that since the MDTF report was written the situation has deteriorated to such a condition that not only development but also reclamation of groups is necessary for the health of the section; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Regional Development Committees be empowered to address the needs of group health, with an emphasis on the hiring of field organizers to target areas in need of development/ reclamation; and that these committees devise plans for implementation of the MAT report recommendations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED to increase local media visibility by the use of local members and/or groups specializing in obtaining media exposure who are trained and given authority to function independently.

Resolution Passed