



Amnesty International

Group 524

January 2022



No January Meeting Write For Rights Recap and Release News Guantanamo Anniversary

Welcome

As we await the first major winter storm of the season this weekend, I hope all are warm and avoiding the latest surge of the COVID pandemic.

December Write For Rights Recap

Pittsburgh Group 39's Write for Rights event on December 9 produced 200 letters for the 10 cases and included those written by our members as well. A donation in support of the postage for the event was made by us from the sale of Amnesty merchandise.

2016 Write For Rights Prisoner Released

Fomusoh Ivo Feh, of Cameroon, was released from prison. Details are on page 2.

Guantanamo Prison Anniversary

This January marks the 20th anniversary of the prison at Guantanamo. Details and an action to President Biden are on pages 3 and 4.

AGM Local Group Narrative

As part of the Annual General Meeting of AIUSA, which will be held virtually in March, local groups are asked to detail their experiences during 2021. Group 524's is reprinted on page 5.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Providence Heights

9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).



Cameroon: Release of students sentenced for 10 years for sharing joke on Boko Haram is a great relief

Following the release of three Cameroonian students sentenced in 2016 to 10 years in jail for sharing a sarcastic text message that referenced Boko Haram, Samira Daoud, Amnesty International's West and Central Africa Director, said:

“The release of Fomusoh Ivo Feh, Afuh Nivelles Nfor, and Azah Levis Gob, three young men who were absurdly punished for simply sharing a joke on their mobile phones is a great relief.

“All those who have tirelessly campaigned for their release, including the more than 300 000 people across the globe who wrote in 2016 to President Paul Biya asking him to end this injustice, were also delighted that they are finally free.

“These three students who were only exercising their right to freedom of expression should never have been arrested in the first place. Cameroon's authorities should protect human rights and ensure all people can speak freely without fear of reprisal.”

Background

Fomusoh Ivo Feh, Afuh Nivelles Nfor, and Azah Levis Gob, three students who had been handed a 10-year jail sentence on 2 November 2016 by a military court which convicted them for “non-denunciation of terrorist-related information” have left the prison over the weekend.

This follows the 16 December 2021 supreme Court ruling to reduce their sentence from 10 to five years in jail, which they have already spent.

According to their lawyer, Victorine Chantal Edzengte, the Court upheld the charges of “non-denunciation of terrorist-related information” against them but quashed the 10-year sentence.

In December 2014, Fomusoh Ivo Feh received a text message from a friend, saying: “Boko Haram recruits young people from 14 years old and above. Conditions for recruitment: 4 subjects at GCE, including religion”.

His friend's message was intended as a comment on the difficulty of finding a good job without being highly qualified – joking that even the armed group Boko Haram won't recruit you without good exam results.

Ivo forwarded the message to Afuh Nivelles Nfor, who sent it to Azah Levis Gob. One of their teachers saw the text, having confiscated the phone, and showed it to the police. Ivo and his friends were all arrested. They were transferred to prison in Yaoundé on 14 January 2015.

Amnesty International campaigned for their release and over 310 000 people across the globe, including former Cameroonian football striker Patrick Mboma, wrote to President Paul Biya.



Close Guantanamo Tactical Campaign

This week marked 20 years of detainees held at Guantánamo Bay. Guantánamo is a horrific symbol of torture, indefinite detention, and injustice. But it's more than a symbol: 39 men, all Muslim, are still held there in violation of international law, most without facing charges or trial. Despite decades of promises by multiple U.S. presidents to close the facility.

Here's the good news: the U.S. Senate just met for the first time in thirteen years to discuss next steps, and after massive grassroots outcry, two detainees were cleared for release. That's the power of our advocacy, and exactly why we must ramp up the pressure:

The military detention facility at Guantánamo Bay is a glaring, longstanding stain on the human rights record of the United States. Today, it continues to hold 39 Muslim men, most without facing charges or a trial. Many, like Toffiq al-Bihani, were tortured by the U.S. government. And Toffiq, along with five other detainees, has been cleared for transfer to other countries, yet he remains behind bars without charge or trial.

Now, with growing support in Congress, President Biden has an opportunity to end these ongoing abuses by closing the detention center.

Help us close Guantánamo and ensure the transfer of all cleared detainees to countries where their human rights will be respected.

Act Now to tell President Biden to shut down the Guantánamo Bay detention facility!



Group 524
January 2022



President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

After twenty years of injustice, I ask you to please shut down the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay. The U.S. government's use of indefinite detention without charge as a response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 has been unlawful from the outset. This detention regime must be brought to an end.

The impunity that persists in relation to the enforced disappearance, torture and other ill treatment, and other human rights violations committed against these detainees is unacceptable, and a stain on the U.S. human rights record. Torture and enforced disappearance are crimes under international law.

As an Amnesty International supporter and supporter of human rights, I urge you to work toward a lawful solution for the detainees still held at the Guantánamo Bay facility by: either transferring them for release, or bringing individuals to trial in civilian federal courts, if this can be achieved in accordance with international law and standards and without recourse to the death penalty.

All detainees already cleared for transfer should be transferred immediately to countries where their human rights will be respected. The remaining men who have not been charged with a crime should likewise be transferred as soon as possible. Those who were subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment must receive genuine access to rehabilitation and redress. Finally, those responsible for torture and enforced disappearance must be brought to justice in a fair trial.

This appeal is long overdue. You made a promise to end this ongoing injustice and close the Guantánamo Bay facility. But after nearly a year in office, you haven't lived up to that commitment. Please, do the right thing – I urge you to close Guantánamo Bay once and for all.

Thank you.



AGM Local Group Narrative

As part of the Annual General Meeting of AIUSA, which will be held virtually in March, local groups are asked to detail their experiences during 2021. The write-up for Group 524 is reprinted below.

Local Group 524—Pittsburgh North Hills, PA

AI Group 524, located in the North Hills area of Pittsburgh, PA, maintained our work on human rights despite the challenge of the ongoing pandemic shut down of our monthly in person meetings.

We publish a monthly newsletter to our members and give at least one letter writing opportunity to work on. Usually these are taken from active AI campaigns or items from the Local Group Weekly Updates. In 2021 we participated in more than 13 actions ranging from legislative and ICE detention issues to death penalty and immigration cases. In addition we wrote letters to support cases during Banned Books Week and Write For Rights. Each year we cooperate with Group 39 Pittsburgh on their larger events and this year, those that could, participated in their December Write for Rights event and contributed to their letter total. We expect to continue these efforts in 2022 to start our 32nd year of Amnesty activism and can't wait to see each other in person on a regular basis.

(Submitted by John Belch)