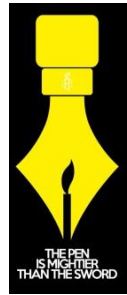




# Amnesty International

## Group 524

### January 2018



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**Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 16 – 7:00 p.m. – Providence Heights**

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#### **Group 39 Write-a-thon: Lots of Letters!**

The turnout for this year's Write-a-thon was smaller than usual, but the folks in attendance were really productive. By the end of the evening, more than **400 letters** had been written!

Our colleagues from the Sisters of Divine Providence were not able to attend this year's event, but Sister Bernie, with assistance from Sister Cathy, organized a letter-writing effort that produced **60 letters**. Other members of our group, working from their homes, wrote at least **three dozen** more letters.

As always, the "Write for Rights" event was a truly appropriate way to celebrate the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### **Amnesty International Announces New Secretary General**

At the end of July, Salil Shetty will complete his second term as Amnesty's Secretary General. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, the International Board announced that his successor as Secretary General will be Dr. Kumi Naidoo, a man of considerable experience in leading human rights and environmental organizations. See Page 3 for more on this important development.

#### **January 16th at Providence Heights**

When we get together next week at Providence Heights, there will be lots to discuss, including action opportunities opened up by the presence – at long last – of a U.S. ambassador in Vietnam (see Pages 4 and 5 for details).

We'll have a number of petitions to sign, including appeals in behalf of **Thich Quang Do** (Vietnam), **Sing Chanthakoummane** (Laos) and **Raif Badawi** (Saudi Arabia – see Page 2).

This month marks the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the group. We hope you can join us!

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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 Warren (jf.warren@verizon.net or 412-766-2506) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA website ([www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)) or the website of Amnesty International Group 39 ([amnestypgh.org](http://amnestypgh.org)).

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**Saudi Arabia: Model Letter in Behalf of Raif Badawi**

*As of this month, it has been three years since Raif Badawi received 50 lashes (out of a sentence of 1000 lashes). An international outcry has forced the government to back away from executing the rest of that sentence, but this prisoner of conscience remains in detention. This model letter is adapted from the petition that we will sign at next week's meeting.*

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud  
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques  
Office of His Majesty the King  
Royal Court, Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Your Majesty:

I am writing to ask you to release **Raif Badawi** immediately and unconditionally, because he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Raif Badawi has been unjustly detained since June 2012. In January 2015, he was subjected to 50 lashes, and the threat of 950 more lashes hangs over him.

**I urge you to drop all charges against Badawi, immediately and unconditionally.**

His sentence must be quashed, and the authorities currently holding him prisoner must be prevented from completing the flogging punishment against him.

I am deeply concerned that Raif Badawi is one of many activists in Saudi Arabia who have been persecuted for the “crime” of openly expressing their views online. Your government must stop arresting, charging, prosecuting, and sentencing your citizens for simply exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly.

cc: Ambassador Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud  
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia  
601 New Hampshire Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20037

## London: International Board Names Dr. Kumi Naidoo as Next Secretary General



This photo of Dr. Kumi Naidoo was taken in France in December 2015, during a United Nations conference on climate change. At that time, Dr. Naidoo was serving as the Executive Director of Greenpeace International.

It is fair to say that Kumi Naidoo has been an activist all his life. In 1980, at the age of 15, he was expelled from high school in his native South Africa, because of his anti-apartheid activities. Continuing to work as a community organizer, he was arrested several times and had to go underground before having to leave South Africa.

He ended up at Oxford University in England – as a Rhodes Scholar – before returning to South Africa in 1990, after Nelson Mandela was released from prison. At the beginning of the post-apartheid era, his focus was on adult literacy and voter education. He soon moved into leadership positions in various civil society organizations, culminating in his work for Greenpeace from 2009 to 2015. He currently chairs three start-up organizations in his home country: Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity; the Campaign for a Just Energy Future; and the Global Climate Finance Campaign.

His appointment as Amnesty’s Secretary General followed an extensive global search by the International Board. A professional search firm reviewed close to 200 applications, with a greatly diverse field in terms of gender, background and geographical base. Individuals on the resulting short list of seven applicants were interviewed by a Board sub-group, and then the three final candidates were interviewed by the entire International Board.

The December 21<sup>st</sup> announcement included this quote from Dr. Naidoo: “I have been an activist and campaigner all my life, so I am naturally excited to be joining the world’s largest people movement for human rights at a time when we need to counter increasing attacks on basic freedoms and on civil society around the globe. This means adapting to a fluid fast-changing global environment with urgency, passion, and courage. Amnesty International’s campaigns for justice and equality today are more urgent than ever, and I am humbled and honored to be leading the organization in these challenging times.”

## **Washington: Career Diplomat Confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam**

*Over the past twelve months, Donald Trump has established a shameful record of nominating grossly unqualified individuals to fill important government positions. This case, however, appears to be an exception.*

*Daniel Kritenbrink, as you can see below in his bio from the State Department website, does not speak Vietnamese, but he certainly does have a great deal of relevant experience in the region.*

### **Daniel J. Kritenbrink**



**U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam**  
**Term of Appointment: 10/2017 to present**

Daniel J. Kritenbrink is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, who has served as an American diplomat since 1994. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam on October 26, 2017, and presented his credentials to Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang on November 6, 2017.

Mr. Kritenbrink has completed multiple assignments related to Asia. Most recently, he was the Senior Advisor for North Korea Policy at the Department of State. Prior to that, he was Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council (2015-2017), where he worked extensively on Vietnam and oversaw the negotiation of two Joint Statements regarding our Comprehensive Partnership with Vietnam. At the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, Mr. Kritenbrink served as Deputy Chief of Mission (2013-2015), Minister Counselor for Political Affairs (2011-2013), and as Political Officer (2006-2009). He also served in Tokyo (1994-1995 and 2000-2004), Sapporo (1995-1997), and Kuwait City (1997-1999). In Washington, his other assignments have included Director of the Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs at the Department of State (2009-2011), and Staff Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs (1999-2000).

Mr. Kritenbrink earned an M.A. from the University of Virginia and a B.A. from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. He speaks Chinese and Japanese.



**Washington: Committee Chair’s Letter to Ambassador Kritenbrink**

*Obviously, Ambassador Kritenbrink will have a number of human rights issues to discuss with the government of Vietnam – if the Trump administration allows him to do so.*

*Here is one such issue. From the website of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, this is a letter from the chair – Edward Royce of California – to Ambassador Kritenbrink. Note the mention of **Thich Quang Do**. Incidentally, Congressman Royce will be retiring at the end of this term.*

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Daniel J. Kritenbrink  
American Ambassador  
Hanoi, Vietnam

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I am writing to urge you to raise serious concerns about the “Law on Belief and Religion” directly with the Vietnamese Government prior to its implementation on January 1, 2018. I fear that this new law will form the basis for continued mistreatment of those who seek to practice their faith in Vietnam.

This law requires all religious groups to register with the government and report on their activities. Its prohibition on religious activity that would “undermine national defense, national security, national sovereignty, public order, public safety, and the environment” is of particular concern. This vague language appears to give the Vietnamese Government broad authority to arbitrarily restrict religious activity.

The abhorrent treatment of Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh and his wife are emblematic of the widespread mistreatment of the faithful in Vietnam. Pastor Chinh was recently released after six years in custody, on the condition that he and his wife leave the country. I was honored to welcome him to my district office in Southern California. In this meeting, and a subsequent meeting with Members of Congress in Washington, he told of the beatings and harassment he and his family received at the hands of Vietnamese authorities.

While Pastor Chinh has been released, Thich Quang Do, the Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, and prominent Christian human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai remain in prison. They are just a few examples of the hundreds of prisoners of conscience in Vietnam.

Ambassador, as you raise concerns with this new law—as well as the cases of these brave men and women who remain detained—I urge you to make clear to the Vietnamese Government that security cooperation between the United States and Vietnam cannot advance if national security is used as pretext for religious persecution.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. ROYCE  
Chairman