

Amnesty International

Group 524

October 2019

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 15 – 7:00 p.m. – Providence Heights

October 15th at Providence Heights: Special Visitors!

Back in late September, Ayres Freitas, one of our good friends from Group 39, sent word that Angelina Nastasi, the AIUSA field organizer for our region, was planning to visit Pittsburgh in October. Ayres suggested that he and Angelina, and perhaps some other folks from Group 39, could come to our October 15th meeting.

Needless to say, that sounded like a great idea! It will be a pleasure to welcome these Amnesty colleagues. In addition to everything that Angelina will have to share with us, we will be able to talk with Ayres about plans for Group 39's annual Write for Rights event on **December 9th**.

Our group will also have some news to share – information about our new prisoner case. Kathy Herbst, our case coordinator, was unable to attend our September meeting, so this is the month when she will give us a brief introduction to the additional Vietnamese prisoner case that she has obtained from AIUSA. See Page 2 for details.

Letter-Writing Opportunity: China Case from Write for Rights 2019

In recent years, AIUSA has been good about sending out the Write for Rights case material well in advance of the December event. This has enabled us to use one case per month in our Oct/Nov/Dec/Jan newsletters.

This year, there are 10 cases. Here are the target countries: Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, Greece, Iran Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, South Sudan. See Page 4 for the China case.

Amnesty Announces 2019 Ambassador of Conscience Award

Climate change activist Greta Thunberg and the Fridays for Future movement of school-children have been honored with Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience Award for 2019. See Page 6 for this announcement, and a link to a transcript of her acceptance speech.

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) or the website of Amnesty International Group 39 (amnestypgh.org).

Vietnam: New Prisoner Case – Tran Thi Nga

For several months during the summer, our case coordinator, Kathy Herbst, communicated with officials of Amnesty USA, pursuing our request to take on an additional prisoner case. That request was approved, and Kathy has now received the case documentation for a Vietnamese prisoner of conscience named **Tran Thi Nga**. She prepared this introductory paragraph about our new prisoner:

Tran Thi Nga is a Prisoner of Conscience, sentenced to nine years imprisonment in 2017, to be followed by five years of house arrest. She was a prominent activist in the aftermath of the environmental disaster caused by the industrial waste spill at the Formosa Steel plant. She took part in demonstrations in Hanoi and used social media to urge the government to help local communities. In response, she was arrested for her “propaganda against the state.”

Our first action on this case will be a letter to the prime minister, which Kathy will bring to our October 15th meeting, in the form of a petition. We are then going to feature that letter as a writing opportunity in the November newsletter.

Incidentally, an Irish human rights group called Front Line Defenders has included Tran Thi Nga among 11 human rights defenders highlighted in their “Set Them Free” campaign. See this link: <https://www.irisht Examiner.com/breakingnews/ireland/human-rights-group-challenging-authoritarian-and-unjust-governments-954838.html>

We will continue to follow any developments concerning **Thich Quang Do**, through Kathy’s line of communication to Penelope Faulkner in Paris. At each month’s meeting, we sign a message of support to mail to him.

Vietnam: Update on Nguyen Van Hoa

In June we responded to an Urgent Action by featuring **Nguyen Van Hoa** in the newsletter. He is a journalist who reported for Radio Free Asia on the catastrophic toxic chemical spill from a Formosa Steel plant in the spring of 2016. We have been following that event and its aftermath.

In January 2017, Nguyen Van Hoa was arrested for the “crime” of reporting on a demonstration protesting the Formosa environmental disaster. As of May 2019, when Amnesty issued the Urgent Action, he was being held in solitary confinement. We wrote letters on the case in June, and have signed petitions at each meeting since then.

Radio Free Asia has continued to follow the case, and through their website we have learned that Nguyen Van Hoa is no longer being held in solitary confinement. At our October meeting, we will have a modified petition, calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

On the next page is the text of the RFA article, which appeared on September 16th.

Vietnam: Update on Nguyen Van Hoa (continued)

Detained Vietnamese Activist Comes out of Solitary Confinement after Four Months

A Vietnamese activist and RFA blogger serving a seven-year prison term for his role in protesting a chemical waste spill on Vietnam's coast three years ago is no longer in solitary confinement, according to a fellow prisoner.

RFA reported in May that Nguyen Van Hoa, now held at An Diem Prison in south-central Vietnam's Quang Nam province, had been placed in solitary after suffering abuse at the hands of a prison guard.

The news of Nguyen's release from solitary after four months came from Hoang Duc Nguyen, who had Saturday visited his brother, Hoang Duc Binh, a fellow political prisoner serving a 14-year sentence in the same facility.

"Today, Nguyen Van Hoa returned to the camp after more than four months of being disciplined and placed in solitary confinement," Hoang Duc Nguyen told RFA's Vietnamese Service.

"The day I visited my brother, he said Nguyen had just come back [from confinement]. Although my brother did not have time to talk to him, he looked over and saw that Nguyen is very weak," said Hoang.

Nguyen Van Hoa, 24, was jailed by the People's Court of Ha Tinh in Nghe An province on 27 November 2017 after filming protests outside the Taiwan-owned Formosa Plastics Group steel plant, whose spill in 2016 killed an estimated 115 tons of fish and left fishermen and tourism industry workers jobless in four central provinces.

Nguyen, who had blogged and produced videos for RFA, was arrested on 11 January 2017 for "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the state" under Article 258 of the Penal Code, but the charges against him were later upgraded to the more severe "conducting propaganda against the state" under Article 88.

He was last seen by a member of his family on 28 May, when his sister, Nguyen Thi Hue, visited him shortly after he had been assaulted and confined.

She told RFA that prison authorities said that in upcoming visits she would be limited, and that the separation order was valid for six months.

A number of high-profile political prisoners, including Hoang and Nguyen Bac Truyen, recently staged a hunger strike when they learned that prison authorities assaulted Nguyen Van Hoa and threw him into solitary without informing the other prisoners in camp.

Write for Rights 2019: China -- Yiliyasijiang Reheman

*From 1999 until 2005, our group wrote letters and signed petitions calling for **Rebiya Kadeer** to be released from a Chinese prison. Now living in exile in the U.S., she is recognized as a leader of the Uighur ethnic and religious minority which is being oppressed by the Chinese.*

*In August, responding to an Urgent Action, we focused on persecution of her family members still living in China. In September, for Banned Books Week, it was a similar case, involving persecution of family members of **Gulchehra Hoja**, an exiled Uighur journalist now in the U.S.*

*This month, from the Write for Rights cases, we have another Uighur case. This one involves a young man, **Yiliyasijiang Reheman**, who was forcibly separated from his family. Here is the narrative from the case sheet. A model letter from Amnesty appears on the next page.*

Note that Amnesty uses the spelling “Uyghur” in their case materials.

Yiliyasijiang Reheman and his wife **Mairinisha Abuduaini** were expecting their second baby when Yiliyasijiang went missing. The young couple were building a new future for themselves, studying at a university in Egypt while looking after their growing family. But their lives were shattered in July 2017 when China pressured the Egyptian government to round up hundreds of Uighur people in the country. Yiliyasijiang was among them.

Three weeks later, Mairinisha gave birth to their new baby alone. She was just 19. Since 2017, she has been searching for her husband, never losing hope that their family will one day be reunited.

Mairinisha, who now lives in Turkey, learned through friends that Yiliyasijiang had been sent back to Xinjiang in China. She suspects he’s in one of China’s secret internment camps, where Uyghurs are brainwashed with Chinese government propaganda.

Up to 1 million mainly Muslim people have been torn from their families and locked up in these camps since 2017 – a scandal that has unleashed a powerful movement for truth around the world.

Mairinisha just wants her husband back safely with her and her children. “My husband should be released as soon as possible,” she says. “Our children need their father. I will never give up until we can be reunited with my husband.”

Tell China to release Yiliyasijiang now.

Write for Rights 2019: China -- Yiliyasijiang Reheman (continued)



Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
Zhongnanhai,
Xichangan'jie
Xichengqu, Beijing Shi 100017
People's Republic of China

Dear President Xi:

In 2017, **Yiliyasijiang Reheman** was studying at a university in Egypt and looking after his growing family. Then, in July of that year, people from your government pressured the Egyptian government to round up hundreds of Uyghur people in Egypt. Yiliyasijiang was among them.

It is likely that Yiliyasijiang is now in one of your country's secret internment camps, where numerous human rights violations are taking place.

It is shocking and not right that up to one million mainly Muslim people have been taken away from their families and locked up in these camps since 2017.

Please release Yiliyasijiang Reheman immediately and unconditionally, and return him to his family – he has done nothing wrong.

cc: Ambassador Cui Tiankai
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
3505 International Place NW
Washington, DC 20008

Amnesty Announces 2019 Ambassador of Conscience Award

Here is Amnesty International's announcement of the Ambassador of Conscience award for 2019. For a transcript of Greta Thunberg's acceptance speech, click this link:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/greta-thunberg-speech-ambassador-of-conscience-award-2019/>

Climate change activist **Greta Thunberg** and the Fridays for Future movement of school-children have been honored with Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience Award for 2019, the human rights organization announced today.

The awards ceremony took place in Washington D.C., while further events were held in cities around the world, honoring Fridays for Future activists who represent the movement.

Upon receiving the award, Greta Thunberg said:
"This award is for all of those millions of people, young people, around the world who together make up the movement called Fridays for Future. All these fearless youth, fighting for their future. A future they should be able to take for granted. But as it looks now, they cannot.



"We, who together are the movement Fridays for Future, we are fighting for our lives. But not only that, we are also fighting for our future children and grandchildren, for future generations, for every single living being on earth, whose biosphere we share, whose biosphere we are stealing, whose biosphere we are ruining. We are fighting for everyone. Activism works. So, what I'm telling you to do now, is to act. Because no one is too small to make a difference. I'm urging all of you to take part in the global climate strikes on September 20th and September 27th."

The Ambassador of Conscience Award is Amnesty International's highest honor, celebrating people who have shown unique leadership and courage in standing up for human rights – people who have acted on their conscience and used their talents to inspire others. Amnesty International chose to give the 2019 award to Greta because of her efforts to raise awareness of the climate crisis. Her decision to miss school every Friday starting in August 2018 and instead protest outside the Swedish parliament until it took more serious action to tackle the climate emergency kicked off the Fridays for Future movement. It has since mobilized more than one million young people from all over the world.

This award was presented ahead of the Peoples' Summit on Climate, Rights and Human Survival Summit, co-organized by Amnesty International. The event will welcome a considerable number of youth leaders and aims to galvanize the human rights community to urgently scale-up its efforts on climate justice. And with youth activists from 115 countries planning to stage climate protests from September 20-27, these young leaders aren't about to let up the pressure.

"Millions of people are already suffering the catastrophic effects of disasters whose impacts have been made far worse by climate change. It is young people like Greta and those involved in the Fridays for Future school climate strike movement, who are proving that it is possible to change our ways," said Amnesty International's Secretary General Kumi Naidoo. "These young leaders have laid down the challenge. In an apathetic world drifting towards calamity, they have stood up as our collective conscience and said, 'Enough is enough'. They have demanded that we stop ignoring the magnitude of the crisis and stop making excuses, and instead start mobilizing. Now it's time for every single one of us to follow them. A mass movement is needed if we want to force governments and corporations into long-overdue action."

The Ambassador of Conscience Award was founded in 2002 to celebrate individuals and groups who have furthered the cause of human rights by acting on their conscience, confronting injustice and using their talents to inspire others. Previous awardees include Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Harry Belafonte, Ai Weiwei, the Youth Groups of West and Central Africa, Angélique Kidjo, the Indigenous rights movement in Canada, Alicia Keys and Colin Kaepernick.