



**Amnesty International**

**Group 524**

**June 2020**



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# June Meeting Cancelled

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## Another Cancellation; Exploring Online Options

Once again, our monthly meeting at Providence Heights has been cancelled. At this point, we cannot predict just when we will be able to resume our meetings there. In the meantime, most of us are gaining experience and confidence in participating in online meetings via Zoom. That may be an option for next month. We will keep you posted via email.

AIUSA has very effectively adapted its human rights activities to our country's present situation. One such example is coming up this week. Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, is World Refugee Day. AIUSA has organized a nationwide online program, featuring the screening of a short film about **Isatou Jallow**, a woman from West Africa who came to the U.S. in 2012, gained asylum, settled in Seattle, and became a tireless human rights advocate while pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Washington. See Page 2 for a link to register for this free Zoom program.

## Letter-Writing Opportunities: China and Saudi Arabia

We wrote in May to the Chinese embassy, calling for the release of **Buzainafu Abudourexiti**, a Uighur woman imprisoned in one of China's "re-education" concentration camps. We have that same model letter again this month, and it is coupled with a relevant article from a website that we frequently cited during our work over the years on Vietnamese cases – Radio Free Asia. See Pages 3 – 6 for that article and the model letter.

Thanks to a press release at the AIUSA website, we were reminded that two years have now passed since Saudi Arabia arrested a group of women for the "crime" of peacefully advocating on issues concerning women. See Pages 7 – 8 for a model letter calling for their release.

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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 web site ([www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site ([www.amnestypgh.org](http://www.amnestypgh.org)).

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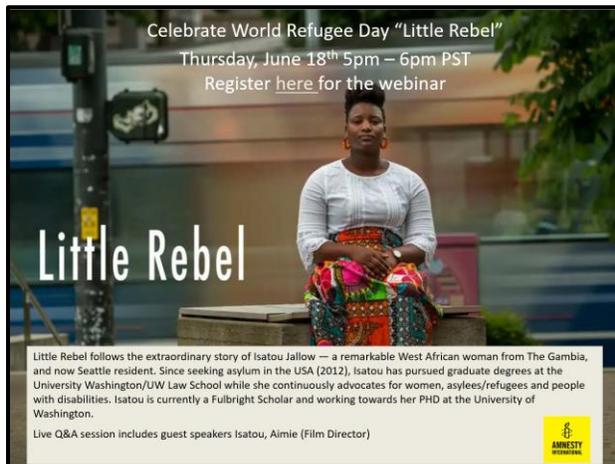
**World Refugee Day: AIUSA Organizes Nationwide Online Event**

Here is the announcement of the event on World Refugee Day – **Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>**.

**Please note that the time displayed in the announcement translates to 8 p.m. Eastern time.**

Here is the link to register for the event.

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJ0sceyorD0uGNYgcEqDxy9jmg4W2Kxozo1o>



When you click the link above, you will be taken to a registration page for this free online event. Below you see the introductory text which appears on the registration page.

Topic	Celebrating World Refugee Day - Film Screening & Live Q&A on "Little Rebel"
Description	<p>We'd like to invite you to learn more about refugees from guest speakers, watch a documentary film screening for "Little Rebel", and ask your questions during a live Q&amp;A on Thursday, June 18th 5pm - 6pm PST in celebration of World Refugee Day.</p> <p>Info Session from Amnesty Researcher for Refugee and Migrant Rights (Denise Bell) and Human Rights Activists and Writer (Leno Rose-Avila) (15 mins) Denise Bell is a Researcher for Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty USA. Previously, she worked in the U.S. Department of Justice as an Attorney Advisor on the New York Immigration Court.</p> <p>Magdaleno ("Leno") Rose-Avila is the Executive Director of Building Bridges that takes activists and donations to the border to meet and support those who are fighting for immigrants and asylum seekers. Leno has spent his lifetime working on behalf of civil and human rights.</p> <p>"Little Rebel" Film Screening (15 mins) Little Rebel follows the extraordinary story of Isatou Jallow – a remarkable West African woman from The Gambia, and now Seattle resident. Since seeking asylum in the USA (2012), Isatou has pursued graduate degrees at the University Washington/UW Law School while she continuously advocates for women, asylees/refugees and people with disabilities. Isatou is currently a Fulbright Scholar and working towards her PHD at the University of Washington.</p> <p>Live Q&amp;A (15 mins) with - Isatou Jallow, the subject of the film - Aimee Vallat, the Film Director - Denise Bell, Amnesty Researcher for Refugee and Migrant Rights - Leno Rose-Avila, Executive Director of Building Bridges</p> <p>Amnesty USA Group 30 San Francisco Chapter, is hosting this event.</p>
Time	Jun 18, 2020 05:00 PM in <a href="#">Pacific Time (US and Canada)</a>



**China: Model Letter Calling for Release of Buzainafu Abudourexiti**

*Last month we introduced you to the case of **Buzainafu Abudourexiti**, a young Uighur woman who has been imprisoned since 2017. We adapted the text of our appeal from an online petition at the website of Australia’s Amnesty section. Her husband, Almas Nizamidin, is a Uighur man who has already settled in Australia. Buzainafu is simply seeking to leave China and join him in Australia. What appears below is the text of the Australian petition, which can be sent as a brief letter to the Chinese embassy in Washington. (Due to the pandemic, international mail has been disrupted, so our focus is on targets in DC.) You can also send email to the Chinese embassy: ([chinaembpress\\_us@mfa.gov.cn](mailto:chinaembpress_us@mfa.gov.cn)).*

*Shortly after the Amnesty Urgent Action had been updated in early August of 2019, an article about this case appeared on the website of Radio Free Asia. It described how Buzainafu had not been heard from, but her mother-in-law (who had also been imprisoned by the Chinese) had managed to make a phone call to Buzainafu’s husband. This wasn’t much, certainly, but it did confirm that Buzainafu and her mother-in-law were still alive.*

*It is worth mentioning that the Radio Free Asia article was based on information provided by Buzainafu’s husband, who was cautious about saying anything that might cause her Chinese captors to inflict punishment on Buzainafu. This illustrates clearly the challenges faced by Radio Free Asia in trying to report the truth to the world, without making things worse for the individuals who are imprisoned in China.*

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

Dear Ambassador:

I am extremely concerned for **Buzainafu Abudourexiti**, who is serving a seven-year sentence at Urumqi Women’s Prison following a secret trial in June 2017. No official documentation about her case, nor the charges she has been convicted of, has been provided to her family.

I am calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Buzainafu Abudourexiti, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that she committed an internationally recognized offense and is granted a fair re-trial in line with international standards.

Please ensure that Buzainafu Abudourexiti has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of her choice, is not subject to torture and other ill-treatment, and receives regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request or as necessary.

### **China: Model Letter Calling for Release of Buzainafu Abudourexiti (continued)**

*Here is the article, dated 8/19/2019, from the website of Radio Free Asia (RFA). It describes the phone call that Buzainafu's husband received from his mother, who is also a prisoner. Note the use of the alternative spelling for 'Uighur'. The article also used the Uighur spellings for the names of Buzainafu and her mother-in-law, Zuyipiya. We have changed those names to make them consistent with the Amnesty case documents.*

### **Australian Uyghur Gets Surprise Phone Chat with Incarcerated Mother**

An Australian citizen of Uyghur ethnicity whose wife and mother are being detained in internment camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) had a surprise telephone chat with his mother this month when he called his grandparents to extend Eid holiday greetings.

Almas Nizamidin's wife, **Buzainafu Abudourexiti**, and mother, Zuyipiya Jiala, were taken into custody in the XUAR in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

On August 12, Almas's father, Juret Nizamidin, posted a message on his Facebook page, saying: "My two sons have had a telephone conversation with my wife, who has been in a camp."

The U.S.-based Juret said his wife, Zuyipiya, had been released from the camp for three days for Eid, the Muslim holiday, and had spoken to her sons, Almas and Izmurat, on Eid day. "On Eid day, I called my grandparents to give them my Eid greetings, and unexpectedly my mother answered the phone," Almas told RFA's Uyghur Service.

"I was very surprised, at the same time I became very excited. I didn't know what to say, because my mother had been taken inside (the camp) for over 20 months," he told RFA by telephone from Australia.

"Despite my campaigning in the West for her release, the Chinese government didn't take any notice and continued incarcerating her for the last 20 months. She was given three days to spend time at home for Eid," he said.

Almas said he spoke euphemistically to his mother about the camps, using China's description that the facilities are schools, asking her: "So, are you going back to school again?" He quoted his mother as saying: "Yes, but there is only a short time left. It is a vocational training school, we are all studying hard, and we are all fine. Do not worry about me. I am doing well and in good health. Darling don't make too many calls, concentrate on your study, and do well in everything," his mother said.

Buzainafu was sentenced to 7 years in prison after returning from Egypt to the XUAR in 2017. Zuyipiya was also arrested in January 2018, after having visited her son in the United States and returned in November 2017. Since their arrests, Almas and Juret have been campaigning for their release.

Almas was informed by the Australian embassy in April that Buzainafu was sentenced to seven years imprisonment and two years deprivation of political rights on June 5, 2017 for the crime of "assembling a crowd to disturb social order," while Zuyipiya was arrested on Nov. 6, 2018 on the same charges.

### **China: Model Letter Calling for Release of Buzainafu Abudourexiti (continued)**

Buzainafu's arrest came slightly more than a year after she and Nizamidin were married in the XUAR capital Urumqi, and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said it had been informed that a medical examination conducted before she was detained "showed that she was not pregnant."

Buzainafu had been preparing documents to join her husband in Australia at the time of her arrest.

Almas told RFA recently that he had heard "no news about my wife at all," but was encouraged to hear his mother's voice.

"I felt my heart almost jumped out of my chest. From her voice, my mother sounded like a warrior. I had never expected to hear my mother's voice in such a (positive) way," he told RFA. "Upon hearing her voice I regained confidence and hope," added Almas.

"When I said, 'Mother, you are a good mum and you don't need to study,' she replied, 'Don't say that, my son. Knowledge is never ending, we must study, and you should also study hard.'"

"In that way she gave us comfort, I was happy to hear that," he said. "I heard that most of the people in concentration camps are forced into hard labor, so I was very worried if my mother was also forced to participate in heavy labor work," said Almas.

"But hearing her voice, I felt reassured and comforted. Hearing my mother's voice made me feel I'd accomplished something after campaigning for her freedom for the last two years," he said.

"I will not stop my campaign until my mother and my wife safely arrive in Australia. After speaking to my mother, I saw some hope," added Almas.

As part of his tireless campaign to find his wife, Almas Nizamidin provided the documents he obtained to London-based rights group Amnesty International.

Amnesty issued a statement on Sept. 28, 2017 saying that Buzainafu's arrest and subsequent sentencing was believed to be "part of a wider crackdown on Uyghur students who studied abroad," noting that she had spent two years in Egypt as a student before returning to the XUAR in 2015.

"Held incommunicado, she is at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment," Amnesty said at the time.

But Almas said they were likely targeted because Buzainafu attended university in Egypt, while he and his father, who resides in the U.S., live and work abroad.

Beginning in April 2017, authorities have held up to 1.5 million Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities accused of harboring "strong religious views" and "politically incorrect" in a network of political re-education camps in the XUAR.



**China: Model Letter Calling for Release of Buzainafu Abudourexiti (continued)**

Though Beijing initially denied the existence of re-education camps, China has shifted to trying to deflect international criticism by describing the facilities as “boarding schools” that provide vocational training for Uyghurs, discourage radicalization, and help protect the country from terrorism.

Reporting by RFA’s Uyghur Service and other media organizations, however, has shown that those in the camps are detained against their will and subjected to political indoctrination, routinely face rough treatment at the hands of their overseers, and endure poor diets and unhygienic conditions in the often overcrowded facilities.

Adrian Zenz, a lecturer in social research methods at the Germany-based European School of Culture and Theology, has said that some 1.5 million people are or have been detained in the camps—equivalent to just under 1 in 6 members of the adult Muslim population of the XUAR—after initially putting the number at 1.1 million.

Michael Kozak, the head of the State Department’s Human Rights and Democracy bureau, in an apparent reference to the policies of Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union, said in March that people “haven’t seen things like this since the 1930s” and called the internment of more than a million Uyghurs “one of the most serious human rights violations in the world today.”

## Saudi Arabia: Model Letter Calling for Release of Political Prisoners

*On May 14<sup>th</sup>, AIUSA issued the press release below. On the next page is a model letter based on a petition that we have signed on this case.*

## **Two Years in Detention for Saudi Women Pushing for Human Rights**

Amnesty International is calling on King Salman bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia to release several notable women's rights defenders, two years after they were detained.

On May 15, 2018, a number of prominent Saudi women's human rights activists were arrested. They had been peacefully advocating for years for the right of women in the kingdom to drive, as well as broader reforms related to the repressive male guardianship system.

In the days and weeks that followed, more of their fellow peaceful activists were detained as part of the Saudi authorities' crackdown and smear campaign.

"It is heartbreaking that two years have now passed with these brave women still behind bars, especially as during this time Saudi women have been enjoying some of the newfound rights they had fought so hard for," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty's Middle East Research Director.

"In prison, many suffered mental and physical anguish – including torture, sexual abuse and solitary confinement. Scores of others, though released, still face trial based on charges relating to their peaceful activism.

"It is time the Saudi Arabian leadership stopped using the judiciary as a Damocles sword hanging above activists' heads. Saudi Arabia's 'reform drive' cannot be considered credible as long as these women and other peaceful activists are still being targeted for their work."

Amnesty International is calling on Saudi Arabia to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders solely detained in connection with their peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Currently, 13 women's rights activists remain on trial facing prosecution for their human rights activism. Of the 13, five remain in detention: **Loujain al-Hathloul, Samar Badawi, Nassima al-Sada, Nouf Abdulaziz** and **Maya'a al-Zahrani**.

While the eight other activists have been temporarily released, they all continue to face trial, and many remain at risk of being sentenced to prison under anti-cybercrime legislation for their human rights work.

Those eight are: Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef, Amal al-Harbi, Dr. Ruqayyah al-Mharib, Shadan al-Anezi, Dr. Abir Namankni, Dr. Hatoun al-Fassi, and an anonymous activist.

At least 10 activists have endured a range of human rights violations while in prison, including torture, sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment. For the first three months of their detention, the women were held incommunicado with no access to family or lawyers. Several have also been subjected to lengthy spells in solitary confinement.

**Saudi Arabia: Model Letter Calling for Release of Political Prisoners (continued)**



*The model letter below has been adapted from a petition that our group has signed on a number of occasions since September of 2018.*

*Pictured at left is Samar Badawi.*

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

Your Excellency:

We are concerned about the imprisonment of Raif Badawi, Samar Badawi, and Nassima al-Sada. We believe that each of these individuals is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Each one should be released from prison, immediately and unconditionally.

Raif Badawi has been detained since June 2012, while Samar Badawi and Nassima al-Sada were arrested in July 2018. They are three of the many activists in Saudi Arabia who have been persecuted for the “crime” of openly expressing their views.

Your government must stop arresting, charging, prosecuting, and sentencing your citizens for simply exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly.