



Amnesty International

Group 524

May 2022



**No May Meeting
Sri Lankan Urgent Action
Tiananmen Square Commemoration
Ukraine**

Welcome

Apologies for the delay of this month's newsletter. I hope this spring season is enjoyable for all.

Urgent Action: Sri Lankan Student

Thirty years ago our group worked a case in Sri Lanka concerning the disappearance of ethnic Tamil minorities. This month's action is on behalf of Mohamed Imaam Mohamed Imran, a student who has been detained without charge for three years. See the details on this case on page 2 and a sample letter on page 3.

Tiananmen Square Commemoration

June 4 is the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown in China. Those citizens in Hong Kong who are fighting to keep its memory alive are facing repression of their own. An online only action concerning Chow Hang-tung is detailed on page 4.

Ending Gun Violence Statement

A statement from Amnesty's Ending Gun Violence chair concerning the latest shooting incidents is on page 5.

Amnesty's Ukraine Crisis Campaign

Amnesty has set up a page on their website to coordinate actions and information concerning Ukraine. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/UkraineCrisis/> A press release detailing the rights of Ukrainian POW's is on page 6.

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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).



CHARGE OR RELEASE STUDENT MOHAMED IMRAN

Mohamed Imaam Mohamed Imran was 20 years old when he was detained, on May 9, 2019, under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Three years after his arrest, the now 23-year-old has still not been charged with an offense, and the state has yet to provide any evidence of him committing an internationally recognizable crime. Mohamed Imran must be immediately released, or promptly charged with recognizable offense, in accordance with international standards.

23-year-old Mohamed Imaam Mohamed Imran is a computer engineering student and sales representative for electrical bulbs who lives in Kattankudy, a town on the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. He is the breadwinner who provides for his 54-year-old mother, a single mother who sold her house to pay for Imran's education, and his late grandmother who passed away while Imran was in detention.

According to the detention order signed off by the President in his capacity as the Minister of Defense, Imran is detained on suspicion of being "connected with or concerned in unlawful activity" for "aiding and abetting the suicide bombers of the Easter Sunday attacks on 21.04.2019, attending weapon training and extremist lectures conducted by Mohomad Casim Mohamed Saharan and his followers and concealing such information from security forces" – an allegation law enforcement officials are yet to substantiate with any credible evidence, three years after Imran's arrest. This detention order does not amount to charges against Imran

In 2017, then UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, Ben Emmerson, highlighted the history of Sri Lankan authorities of prosecuting minorities on charges of terrorism and noted that "the PTA had been used to commit some of the worst human rights violations, including widespread torture and arbitrary detention, in the run-up to and during the conflict, particularly to target minorities and suppress dissent". The report also highlighted the history of Sri Lankan authorities persecuting individuals under terrorism related law with "various real or perceived links or associations with armed groups, and detaining for years without charge or trial, without any judicial review of their detention, and with almost no possibility of release".

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), in its 2016 submission to the UN Committee against Torture, highlighted the use of torture in Sri Lanka with "torture being routinely used in all parts of the country regardless of the nature of the suspected offense for which the person is arrested." Another study conducted by the Commission, published in December 2020, found that PTA detainees faced a continuum of violence. The study documented that "violence in police custody was found to be an inherent element of the investigation process, whereby torture is inflicted to extract information, confessions, and evidence from detainees." The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has called on the Sri Lankan government to establish a moratorium on the use of the PTA for new arrests until it is replaced by legislation that adheres to international best practices.

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Director of Terrorism Investigation Division
Mr. A.R.P.J. Alwis
No. 149, Bootani Capital Building,
Polhengoda, Colombo 05
Sri Lanka

Dear Mr. A.R.P.J Alwis,

I write in relation to the case of **Mohamed Imaam Mohamed Imran**, a computer engineering student, who was arrested by the police in Kattankudy on May 9, 2019, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), when he was just 20-years-old. Three years since his detention, Imran is yet to be charged and the state has not produced any evidence of him committing an internationally recognizable crime. This is a violation of Imran's rights to be free from arbitrary arrest, and to be promptly informed of any charges against him.

According to Imran's family, upon his arrest, no arrest receipt or detention order was provided to them. A detention order was only issued to Imran on March 29, 2022, two years and ten months after Imran's arrest. These procedural lapses, along with abusive provisions within the PTA, violate due process safeguards and international human rights law.

Imran has only been produced in court four times since his arrest, the last time being September 2021. The lack of judicial oversight and prolonged administrative detention in this case leaves Imran at risk of torture or other ill-treatment at the hands of the police.

The prolonged detention without charge of Mohamed Imaam Mohamed Imran is a violation of international fair trial standards and the authorities' legal obligations in line with Sri Lanka's obligations under the ICCPR.

I therefore urge you to release Mohamed Imaam Mohamed Imran, or if there is sufficient evidence of criminal wrongdoing, promptly charge him with a recognizable offense, in accordance with international standards. Pending release or charge, authorities must ensure his fair trial rights are guaranteed, that he has the right to challenge the lawfulness of his detention, and has access to fair bail hearings.

Sincerely,

Copy to:

Ambassador Mahinda Samarasinghe
Embassy of Sri Lanka
3025 Whitehaven Street NW
Washington, DC 20008



As the Chinese government escalates its clampdown on free expression in Hong Kong, the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown risks being erased from the memory of the people. Chow Hang-tung is in prison for peacefully remembering the victims. Take action and call for her immediate release now.

On June 4, 1989, hundreds if not thousands of peaceful protesters were killed by Chinese troops in and around Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Thousands were imprisoned. In the 33 years since public remembrances have been criminalized in mainland China.

This has made the annual commemoration in Hong Kong crucial. For over three decades, the Hong Kong Alliance had organized the world's biggest candlelight vigil in Hong Kong to commemorate the Tiananmen crackdown.

But the memory of the crackdown is at risk of being erased from Hong Kong too. Chow Hang-tung, a human rights lawyer and the former vice-chairperson of the Hong Kong Alliance, is serving 22 months in jail for "unlawful assembly" for peacefully commemorating the crackdown. She is also awaiting trial for "inciting subversion" under the Hong Kong National Security Law which could result in up to 10 years jail.

The Chinese government wants people to forget, but we must keep the victims of the Tiananmen Square crackdown alive in our memories. History cannot be erased and those detained for peacefully commemorating must be released.

Sign the petition and call on the Hong Kong authorities to release Chow Hang-tung and other activists being punished for peacefully commemorating the victims of the 1989 crackdown now.

The online action is available at <https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/106081/petition/1>



Congress Must Commit To Funding Community Violence Prevention, As US Sees Wave of Gun Violence From Coast To Coast

May 16, 2022

Ahead of President Biden’s visit to Buffalo, New York and responding to this weekend’s mass shootings across the country, Ernest Coverson, End Gun Violence Campaign Manager at Amnesty International USA, said:

“Tomorrow, President Biden arrives in Buffalo, New York as the community mourns the murder of 10 of its residents. Americans should not have to wonder if they will be killed while grocery shopping, or in any other part of their lives. In the span of 48 hours, the United States saw 312 incidents of gun violence – from Laguna Woods, to Chicago, to Milwaukee, and beyond – resulting in the deaths of 127 people and wounding a further 294 people. Every single life lost, every single survivor of gun violence marks a profound failure of the U.S. government and leadership to protect its own people.

“We must be clear-eyed in our shared understanding of the facts: white supremacists have fed a narrative of replacement theory, a pernicious and dangerous view that is propagated by some U.S. politicians, political commentators, and journalists. What took place this weekend in Buffalo was racism, antisemitism, and bigotry. We must all stand united in understanding the forces that have brought the United States to this dangerous juncture.

“Speeches alone are not enough. Unfortunately, there will be another Buffalo and more weekends of violence – it’s not a matter of “if,” but when. Right now, Congress has the ability to pass the *Break the Cycle of Violence Act* (H.R. 4118, S. 2275), which would provide **\$5 billion in funding** for community violence prevention and intervention programs across the country. In city after city, these programs save lives and lower the number of gun homicides by nearly 50%. This legislation alone is not a solution, but it’s a start to rebuilding safety in affected communities. This moment requires more than thoughts and prayers, it requires leadership. The United States has compromised credibility to advance human rights globally while it tolerates systemic racism and violence stoked by racial hatred at home.

“We remain committed and in solidarity with the families affected by this weekend’s violence.”



The Rights of Ukrainian Prisoners of War From Azovstal Must Be Respected

May 17, 2022

Responding to the news that the Ukrainian soldiers who were besieged in Mariupol's Azovstal steel plant for months have surrendered themselves to Russia's armed forces, Denis Krivosheev, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, said:

"Ukraine's soldiers deployed in Mariupol area have been dehumanized by Russian media and portrayed in Putin's propaganda as 'neo-Nazis' throughout Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This characterization raises serious concerns over their fate as prisoners of war.

"Amnesty International has documented [summary killings](#) of captives by Russia-backed separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, as well as the [extrajudicial executions](#) of Ukrainian civilians by Russian forces in recent weeks. The soldiers who surrendered today must not meet the same fate.

"Prisoners of war must not be subjected to any form of torture or ill-treatment, and should be given immediate access to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The relevant authorities must fully respect the rights of prisoners of war in accordance with the Geneva conventions."

Background

On May 17, Ukraine's armed forces confirmed that the soldiers who were holed up in Mariupol's besieged Azovstal steel works had been ordered to surrender to Russia-led forces.

According to Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, 264 soldiers, including 53 wounded servicemen, have already left Azovstal and now are being held in Novoazovsk and Olenivka, two villages under the control of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.

