



Amnesty International

Group 524

August 2023



**August In-Person Meeting
Summer Postcard Action
Urgent Action: Mariano Catalayud**

Welcome

I hope everyone is well and have enjoyed the bounty of our local farmer's markets. We are planning to meet in person on 8/15 and this month's focus is on the summer postcard action and several Urgent Action cases including the one featured below.

Summer Post Card Action: Leonard Peltier and Rocky Myers

If you haven't had a chance to participate in the summer postcard action in support of these prisoners the details are on page 2.

Urgent Action: Spanish Humanitarian Detained in Ukraine

Mariano Garcia Calatayud was "disappeared" by Russian authorities. Details on page 3 and a sample letter on page 4.

Asylum Ban: Operation Lonestar

Amnesty's response to the ongoing tragedy at the Texas border is on pages 5 and 6.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd.



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).



SUMMER SOLIDARITY POSTCARD ACTION

FROM JULY TO AUGUST 2023 SEND A POSTCARD AND
TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS!



TAKE ACTION

Scan the QR code to report back on your action and your name will be entered into a raffle to win a \$50 gift card to support your local bookshop!



SCAN ME

LEONARD PELTIER

SEND A POSTCARD TO PRESIDENT BIDEN URGING TO GRANT CLEMENCY AND FREE NATIVE AMERICAN ACTIVIST LEONARD PELTIER

Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist, and member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), has been imprisoned for nearly 50 years in the USA for a crime he maintains he did not commit. Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the fairness of the proceedings leading to his conviction, and we believe that bias against Native Americans may have influenced the trial. Given these concerns, time served, and his serious health issues, the interests of justice are best served by clemency and his release. Tribal Nations, Nobel Peace Laureates, former FBI agents, and even the former U.S. Attorney, whose office handled the prosecution, have also called for his release. Your postcard to President Biden will be part of a larger, global campaign to convince the President to free Leonard Peltier.

Mail to: President Biden; 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20500



ROCKY MYERS

SEND A POSTCARD TO ROCKY MYERS IN SOLIDARITY



Rocky Myers has been on Alabama's death row for nearly half his life despite serious flaws in his case including racial and class bias, inadequate legal representation, and allegations of police pressure. On July 16th Rocky Myers turns 62. His birthday wish is to travel with his family. To celebrate his birthday, Amnesty International is taking Rocky on a world tour through postcards. Please send postcards from your hometown or travels and include birthday wishes, a short description of the location portrayed in the postcard, and a message with a mention of "Rocky's postcard world tour", to help connect all postcards and give a sense that he is traveling with us all during this action. For example, "I hope you enjoyed this stop in Rocky's postcards world tour". For this action, we are symbolically taking Rocky Myers on a journey outside of the prison, so we encourage you to focus on messages of hope and avoid messages that focus on his case or life on death row.

Mail to: Rocky Myers, AIS 0000Z563 Holman Correctional Facility, M-44 Holman
3700 866 Ross Road Atmore, AL 36503

Please keep messages simple ("We are thinking of you"), refrain from discussing politics or particular accusations against the individual, and choose postcard images (in the case of picture postcards) with sensitivity to different cultural and religious symbols.



URGENT ACTION

SPANISH CITIZEN HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Mariano García Calatayud, a 75-year-old Spanish volunteer humanitarian worker, was forcibly disappeared by the occupying Russian authorities on March 19, 2022 in the Ukrainian city of Kherson. He disappeared after he attended a peaceful protest against the occupation.

Russian authorities have been holding him incommunicado since then, and first officially acknowledged his detention in April 2023 only but gave no legal grounds for it. In May 2023, independent Russian media sources published testimonies of former prisoners who confirmed his poor health and claimed they'd witnessed Mariano García Calatayud being tortured by prison guards.

Background:

Mariano García Calatayud had been working in Ukraine as a volunteer since 2014, delivering humanitarian aid to war-affected children. He went missing in Kherson on March 19, 2022, after joining a peaceful protest against the Russian occupation. There were grounds to believe that, like hundreds of other civilians detained by the occupying Russian forces, he was transferred to the Russian-occupied Crimea and secretly placed in a detention center. No official information was disclosed as to his fate and whereabouts. According to unofficial reports, such as information from former prisoners or messages passed on by fellow detainees in possession of Russian passports who were allowed visits by their lawyers, he was held in the pretrial detention center No. 1 (SIZO-1) Simferopol until April 2023. According to Mariano García Calatayud's lawyer, he was later moved to the newly established pretrial detention center No. 2 (SIZO-2) in Simferopol. This detention center was reportedly built to house the numerous detainees from the territories occupied by Russia after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Some individuals recently released from Russian detention (such releases are rare, with some becoming possible due to prisoner exchange or for other reasons) have reported that they had seen Mariano García Calatayud in SIZOs in Simferopol and witnessed his injuries, including those caused by the use of electric shocks, dog bite and other.

Secret detention is unlawful and enforced disappearance is a crime under international law. The forcibly disappeared person is placed outside the protection of the law, which impedes their recourse to legal remedies and guarantees of protection and places them in a situation of complete defenselessness. This in turn makes them vulnerable to other human rights violations, such as torture or even killing. These concerns are entirely consistent with the reported human rights violations suffered by Mariano García Calatayud and countless other prisoners who forcibly disappeared in Russian-occupied Ukraine and were reportedly held by the Russian authorities in unacknowledged detention.



Group 524
August 2023



Valeriy Georgievich Petrov
Chief Military Prosecutor
Pereulok Holzunova 14,
Moscow 119160
Russian Federation

Dear Chief Military Prosecutor,

I am writing to demand the immediate release of Mariano García Calatayud, a Spanish citizen who was forcibly disappeared by the occupying Russian forces in Kherson on March 19, 2022.

After 13 months of uncertainty about his fate and whereabouts, the Black Sea Fleet Military Prosecutor's Office acknowledged, in a letter to a lawyer, his incarceration in a pretrial detention centre in Simferopol "to verify information about [his possible] involvement in the commission of actions aimed at causing damage to the security of the Russian Federation." No legitimate grounds for his detention were given in the letter, and no further details were provided, since they purportedly constitute a state secret.

According to media reports, Mariano García Calatayud has now been in incommunicado detention all this time, media have reported, quoting eyewitness accounts have reported his torture and other ill-treatment, including repeated electrocution and being bitten by a guard dog, and his poor, deteriorating health.

There are reports of hundreds of civilians from occupied Ukrainian territories who have similarly been forcibly disappeared by the Russian authorities and remain in unlawful, incommunicado detention.

I urge you to immediately release Mariano García Calatayud and give him free passage to a destination of his choice, so he can be reunited with his family, unless he is charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offense and tried according to international fair trial standards; to effectively investigate all allegations of his and other detainees' torture and other ill-treatment and ensure the accountability of all those found responsible in fair trial proceedings; immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of all persons detained by the occupying Russian forces in Ukraine, ensure their immediate contact with their families and a lawyer of their choice, clarify their legal status, and release every person held in detention without legitimate legal grounds.

Yours sincerely,



Amnesty International Urges the Biden Administration to End the Asylum Ban and Investigate Operation Lonestar

August 3, 2023



LA JOYA, TEXAS - JUNE 21: A migrant family watches the sunset while waiting to be accounted for and taken to a border patrol processing facility after crossing the Rio Grande into the U.S. on June 21, 2021 in La Joya, Texas. A surge of mostly Central American immigrants crossing into the United States has challenged U.S. immigration agencies along the U.S. Southern border. (Photo by Brandon Bell/Getty Images)

Responding to reports of family separation and more deaths – including the death of a child – at the buoys in the Rio Grande River as part of Texas Governor Abbott’s Operation Lone Star, Amy Fischer, Director of Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty International USA, said:

“Governor Abbott’s spectacularly cruel Operation Lonestar (OLS) will continue to result in loss of life, family separation, and other violations of human rights as long as it exists. OLS is callous at its core, with a clear aim to cause lasting harm to vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers at any cost. It must be abolished immediately.”

continued



“Just weeks ago, Amnesty International USA warned that border barriers only serve to push people to take more dangerous routes to exercise their human right to seek asylum. We called upon Governor Abbott to immediately remove any barriers, including buoys, from the border. Today two more people died desperately trying to seek asylum and safety with barriers before them that may have contributed to their deaths, that violate human rights, and that are undeniably preventable.”

“Amnesty International USA also strongly condemns family separation as the newest tactic of Governor Abbott’s Operation Lone Star. Ripping children from a parent’s arms in order to criminally prosecute a parent is an abhorrent practice that will cause severe mental suffering for these families. This devastating practice meets the definition of torture under both U.S. and international law and it must immediately come to an end.”

“It is unconscionable for the Biden Administration to stay silent while the Texas Governor embraces cruel policies that then-candidate Biden campaigned against. In fact, it is Biden’s cruel asylum ban that forces people seeking safety to wait for an appointment via the CBP One mobile application in a humanitarian crisis on the Mexican side of the border or take the dangerous trip to cross the border at dangerous river crossings.

Amnesty International USA calls upon the Biden Administration to immediately end the asylum ban and restore access to asylum at the border, and for the Department of Justice to open an investigation into the cruel and unlawful practices of Operation Lonestar.”

