



Amnesty International

Group 524

June 2024



IAR Case News/Prisoner Releases US Asylum Ban/Leonard Peltier Urgent Action-Ramiro Gonzales

Welcome

Our focus this month is more discussion of our upcoming IAR case, the US asylum ban and additional case work. We hope to see you at the meeting June 18 at 6pm.

Individual At Risk Case

After last month's discussion we are awaiting a case to be assigned. See page 2.

Prisoner Releases

We have good news concerning the release of two prisoners, Zhang Zhan and Manizha Seddiqi. See pages 3 and 4.

End US Asylum Ban

Although we wrote last month on this issue, the President's new executive order has prompted additional action. Details are on Page 5 and an action letter on page 6.

Leonard Peltier Parole Hearing

We have written in support of Peltier's case for many years. Amnesty's statement on his latest hearing is on page 7.

Urgent Action – Ramiro Gonzales

Ramiro Gonzales is scheduled to be executed on June 26. Please act ASAP. A sample letter/email is on page 8.

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).



Individual At Risk Case News

Amnesty International USA helps to free prisoners of conscience, protect human rights defenders, and support individuals and communities who are at risk of having their human rights violated.

At our Group #524 meeting last month we discussed the cases we received and placed them in order of preference:

- Yu Wensheng and his wife Xu Yan, Lawyer, China, Arbitrary Detention
- Gao Zhisheng, Activist, China, Prisoner of Conscience, Torture and other Ill-Treatment
- Ilham Tohti, Economics Professor, China, Torture and other Ill-Treatment
- Zhang Zhan, Citizen Journalist and Lawyer, China, Torture and other Ill-Treatment *She has been recently released. See next page*
- Wang Quanzhang, Jiang Tianyong and the lawyers' crackdown, Human Rights lawyers, China, Torture and other Ill-Treatment, Detention
- 126 Individuals missing in Xinjiang, Muslim ethnic minorities, China, Arbitrary Detention, Torture and other Ill-Treatment

We received a response from the IAR coordinator: *She will reach out to the Country Specialist (China) so that a case file dossier can be created for our group. She will follow up with us once a dossier is established and will then connect us with the Country Specialist.*

Whichever case we are assigned, it will be our first IAR since the pandemic and we are looking forward to concentrate our efforts for their benefit.

Thanks to Sister Carol's efforts we will be tabling at the International Peace Celebration in North Park on September 22 and we hope that our case can be a focus of our work that day.





GOOD NEWS Human Rights Lawyer and Journalist Zhang Zhan Released



On May 13, 2024, Chinese citizen journalist and human rights lawyer Zhang Zhan was released after serving her 4-year sentence. Zhang was one of the first to report on COVID-19 in Wuhan and was detained in May 2020.

Amnesty has confirmed her release and reunion with her family. However, she and her family remain under heavy surveillance. Check out AIUSA's social media post [here](#). We continue to urge the Chinese government to ensure her true freedom, including freedom of movement and communication, access to medical care, and freedom from harassment.

Amnesty was an early advocate for Zhang Zhan, issuing our first Urgent Action in December 2020 and featuring her in the 2021 Write for Rights campaign. Our efforts, along with those of AIUSA members, significantly raised her profile, including her inclusion in Senate Resolution 342.

Thank you to all staff, members, and activist who have supported her case over the years



Additional Prisoner Release



Manizha Seddiqi was forcibly disappeared in October 2023. She was found weeks later in Taliban custody, detained without charges, and unable to access a lawyer or medical care for her deteriorating health.

The Taliban court in Kabul sentenced her to two years in prison. Her only "crime" was supporting the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls.

We campaigned extensively for the release of Manizha and three other women human rights defenders — and are thrilled to share that they have all been released! Their family members shared that their release would not have been possible without sustained pressure created through Amnesty's campaigning.



Amnesty International USA’s Reaction to Biden Administration’s Executive Order on Asylum

JUNE 4, 2024

In response to an executive order announced today by President Biden that effectively shuts down the U.S.-Mexico border and creates a first of its kind numerical cap on the number of people who can seek asylum in the United States, Amy Fischer, Director of Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty International USA, made the following statement:

“This executive action plays into false narratives about invasions at the border and advances a policy grounded in white supremacist ideas at the expense of people in search of safety in the U.S.

“President Biden’s action sets a dangerous international precedent as a first-of-its-kind numerical cap on asylum, limiting the number of people who can claim asylum in the U.S. and effectively shutting down the U.S.-Mexico border, using the same legal authority that the Trump administration used to implement the dangerous and xenophobic Muslim and African travel bans.

“To be clear, this executive action will not fix the problems plaguing the border, address the needs of big cities faced with high numbers of new arrivals, stop people from fleeing for their lives, nor will it not keep communities safe. It will only cause more chaos and cruelty, and inevitably, more [torture](#), violence, and deaths of women, men, and children seeking safety in the U.S.

“It’s deeply disappointing to see President Biden so hellbent on dismantling human rights for people seeking asylum and implementing policies that are plainly illegal under international and refugee law.

“This is an utterly shameful move for a country that once helped draft the Refugee Convention. We need real solutions that respect human rights, address root causes of forced migration, allow for safe and orderly pathways to safety, and meet the needs of communities at the border and in the interior of the United States.

“Amnesty International USA urges President Biden to put himself in the shoes of people forced to leave their homes and embark on a dangerous journey to escape harm, and finally consistently follow the human rights norms that he claims to champion.”

Call the White House comment line to denounce the latest executive order and demand President Biden reverse the action immediately.

CALL: (202) 456-1111. The phone line is open Tuesday-Thursday from 11 am to 3 pm EST

Group 524
June 2024



President Joseph Biden

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am disappointed to learn that you have chosen to adopt the same harmful policies first advanced by President Trump and "shut down the border." This new border shutdown is cruel and unconstitutional because it denies asylum seekers - including families and babies - their human right to seek safety.

This new executive order creates a dangerous new international precedent as the United States becomes the first country to adopt a numerical cap on asylum. This is a shameful move that is plainly unlawful under international and refugee law.

Amnesty International has new research that finds that asylum seekers traveling through Mexico to exercise their human right to seek safety at the U.S.-southern border are extorted, kidnapped, and experience discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence. Shutting down the border only puts people fleeing for their lives into more danger.

President Biden, you came into office promising to rebuild an immigration system that would center human rights and racial justice. With this new shut down of the border, you are going back on your promises, violating international law, and setting new, historic lows on how the United States treats people seeking safety.

Amid a global refugee crisis, your administration is embracing deadly policies grounded in racist and xenophobic ideas that aim to make the exercise of seeking asylum so painful that individuals and families just give up.

I write alongside thousands of other Amnesty International supporters to urge you to reverse course and uphold human rights at the border, rather than advancing policies of hate and exclusion, and ideologies of racism and xenophobia. You must immediately restore asylum at the border and invest in a robust welcoming system that allows asylum seekers to seek asylum at the border and pursue their asylum claims outside of detention while supported by community based organizations.

This was your commitment, this is what international law requires, and we are holding you accountable.

Sincerely,



Leonard Peltier's parole hearing was held on June 10, 2024 and a decision is expected in 21 days.

Amnesty International Urges Parole for Native American Activist Leonard Peltier

JUNE 5, 2024

In advance of a parole hearing on June 10 for Native American activist Leonard Peltier, Amnesty International urged the U.S. Parole Commission to grant him parole on humanitarian grounds.

In a [letter sent to members opens in a new tab](#) of the parole commission, Amnesty International USA's Executive Director, Paul O'Brien, reiterated concerns about the legal process that led to Peltier's conviction and sentencing, noted Peltier's age, length of time served, and his critical health issues, urging the commission to grant him parole.



“Given the ongoing, unresolved concerns about the fairness of Leonard Peltier's incarceration, that he has spent nearly 50 years in prison, his age, and ongoing and chronic health issues, granting parole on humanitarian grounds in this case is not only timely but a necessary measure in the interests of both justice and mercy,” wrote O'Brien.

Leonard Peltier, now 79 and in deteriorating health, was convicted in relation to the killing of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1975. He maintains his innocence and his June 10 parole hearing might be his last opportunity for freedom. Amnesty International joins Tribal Nations, Tribal Leaders, Indigenous Peoples, Members of Congress, former FBI agents, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and the former U.S. Attorney James Reynolds, whose office handled Peltier's prosecution and appeal, in urging his release.

Amnesty International has examined Peltier's case extensively for many years, sent observers to his trial in 1977, and long campaigned on his behalf.



Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

Clemency Section

8610 Shoal Creek Boulevard

Austin, Texas 78757

Phone 512-406-5852

FAX 512-467-0945

Email: bpp_clemency@tdcj.texas.gov

SAMPLE LETTER:

Dear Board Member,

Ramiro Felix Gonzales (TDCJ #999513) is scheduled to be executed in Texas on June 26, 2024 for the capital murder of an 18-year-old woman in January 2001. He himself was 18 years and two months old at the time of the murder and emerging from a childhood of serious neglect and abuse. A neuropsychologist testified at trial that Ramiro Gonzales “basically raised himself” and had the emotional maturity of a 13 or 14-year-old.

At the trial, the prosecution presented a psychiatrist who testified that Ramiro Gonzales posed a future danger of criminal violence, had “anti-social personality disorder”, and little or no prospect of rehabilitation. He also presented the jury with statistics of a very high rate of recidivism in cases involving sexual assault. In 2022, this psychiatrist acknowledged that these statistics were grossly inaccurate, and he effectively recanted his trial testimony. At the time of the crime, the psychiatrist concluded “Mr. Gonzales was barely 18 years old. With the passage of time and significant maturity he is now a significantly different person both mentally and emotionally”. It was now his opinion that Ramiro Gonzales “does not pose a threat of future danger to society.”

Ramiro Gonzales, who is now 41 years old, has not committed a single act of violence since he has been on death row. He has acknowledged his crimes and expressed remorse for them. He spends his time reading and studying and is a talented artist.

I urge you to stop the execution of Ramiro Gonzales and to ensure that his death sentence is commuted.

Yours sincerely,