



# AMNESTY SCOTLAND NEWS

AUTUMN 2010

## URBAN ART FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HANDS UP FOR BURMA GRUFFALO AUTHOR LAUNCHES AMNESTY BOOK CHALLENGE TO TASERS

Biannual newsletter for Amnesty  
supporters in Scotland

Freedom of Expression by Derm © AI



## DEFENDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL** took a strong programme of theatre, comedy, readings, campaigning and debate to this year's Edinburgh Festivals.

What was missing, however, was a way of raising human rights issues through the visual arts. And so Amnesty teamed up with six Scottish spray-paint artists who created works depicting the struggle for freedom of expression for Amnesty's first Urban Art Exhibition.

### TAKE ACTION

Six images (each 8 feet by 6 feet) are available free for display. For more information, contact [scotland@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:scotland@amnesty.org.uk)

Throughout August, thousands of people saw the paintings which interpreted stories of human rights defenders that particularly inspired the artists. Five of the artists also collaborated on a live painting session on the 88 Generation pro-democracy campaigners in Burma as part of the festival-wide campaign for their release.

*Full festival report overleaf*

### SEE THE FILM

Watch the urban artists create the mural (in fast motion) at [www.amnesty.org.uk/edfest](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/edfest)

## SCOTTISH ELECTIONS: PUT HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE AGENDA

**IN THE** run up to the Scottish elections on 5 May next year, Amnesty is calling on candidates to sign up to a pledge to support human rights if elected.

The campaign to keep human rights high on the political agenda will be launched on Human Rights Day, 10 December, at the Scottish Parliament.

Our focus is to engage candidates as early as possible. The event will be the first of many opportunities to show MSPs that human rights are an essential part of their elected role and introduce them to some examples of human rights concerns that fall within the devolved Parliament's powers, including people trafficking, education and China.

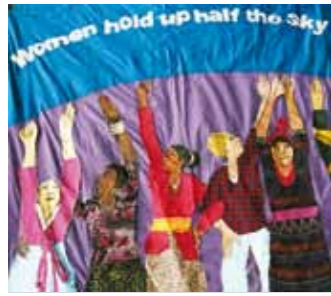
With 73 constituencies, eight regions and hundreds of candidates, Amnesty's network of groups, activists and supporters around Scotland will be crucial in the months leading up to the election. We are asking you to let candidates know that human rights are a priority and real commitments need to be made. They are more likely to stop and listen to someone eligible to vote for them.

To help with this work, we will be producing a campaign pack with background on the campaign and surrounding issues, information on the election process, tips on contacting your candidates and instructions on our campaign ask.

### TAKE ACTION

Register to receive an election lobbying pack at [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland) or call 0131 313 7012.





## WOMEN'S RIGHTS STILL HUMAN RIGHTS

**AFTER SIX** years of vigorous work, Amnesty International is winding down the Stop Violence Against Women campaign. Instead, we will be running a women's rights programme, and integrating a gender analysis across all of our campaigns.

Our focus on human trafficking has generated pressure on the Scottish government with the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Parliament using information supplied by Amnesty to quiz the Justice Secretary and the Lord Advocate. Following this, guidance has finally been issued to prosecutors to presume against convicting any trafficking victims for offences committed under duress.

Trafficking in Scotland is also being investigated in a major inquiry by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, with a particular focus on commercial sexual exploitation.

Our calls for the Scottish government to provide support to ensure that women with 'no recourse to public funds' are not denied access to domestic abuse refuges in Scotland is proving a tougher challenge. Amnesty and Scottish Women's Aid have suggested that human rights obligations not to leave people destitute provide a way around the reserved nature of immigration issues, but Ministers are proving evasive.

We continue to support the White Ribbon Scotland campaign, which is taking forward work on changing public attitudes and engaging men in tackling violence against women.

### TAKE ACTION

Visit [www.whiteribbon.scotland.org.uk](http://www.whiteribbon.scotland.org.uk) to take the White Ribbon pledge and support the campaign.

# ALL HANDS ON FOR BURMA

**DURING THE** festival season, Amnesty asks festival-goers to make a stand for and celebrate freedom of expression. This year the focus was on Burma – and the campaign for the release of more than 2,200 political prisoners.

Amnesty tents popped up in fields from Knockengoroch to Falkland via Leith and Edinburgh. Amnesty volunteers signed people up to the campaign by taking action and joining our photo petition – posing with the name of a Burmese political prisoner written on their hand – to support the Burmese people.

Comics came together for Amnesty's 13th Stand Up For Freedom comedy show – and to support fellow comedian Zarganar, Burma's top comedian jailed for 59 (reduced to 35) years in 2008 for speaking out against the government. It was a sell-out again, with 1,200 people coming to see a line-up that included legend Emo Philips, Doc Brown, John Bishop, Mark Watson, Josie Long, Tim Key, Dan Antopolski and Danielle Ward. Fred MacAulay and Adam Hills were impressive comperes.

Another regular feature of our Edinburgh festival programme is the Freedom of Expression Award, given to an outstanding festival production which builds understanding and engagement of human rights. The 2010 winner, chosen from a record-



breaking 64 productions, was sex trafficking drama *Roadkill* by writer and director Cora Bissett. It tells the real-life story of a girl trafficked from Nigeria to Scotland, and was described by the judges as 'a worthy winner' because '*Roadkill* does something that great theatre often does – shakes people up.' A follow-up run in Glasgow sold out immediately.

The Amnesty Lecture was delivered by Philippe Sands QC, author of *Torture Team*, which exposes the authorisation of torture by the Bush administration. As an expert in international law, he establishes that the treatment of

Guantanamo detainees meets international legal criteria to merit indictment as a war crime. The Book Festival also saw the return of our Imprisoned Writers Series. Each day top authors such as Julian Baggini and Louise Doughty read extracts from the work of jailed and silenced writers. It included work by imprisoned democracy leader in Burma Aung San Suu Kyi and Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.

### TAKE ACTION

For more information on Burma, go to [www.amnesty.org.uk/burma](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/burma) Join the photo petition at [www.amnesty.org.uk/hand](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/hand)

# TIME TO END DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GYPSY TRAVELLERS

**WITH THE** plight of Scottish Gypsy Traveller communities well documented, Amnesty is committed to speaking out against the discrimination that these people continue to suffer on our own doorsteps.

We are asking the Scottish government to take a leading role by developing an action plan to challenge the negative attitudes towards Scottish Gypsy Travellers. We also urge candidates in the forthcoming Scottish Parliament election to commit to a fair hearing for all their constituents.

Our office in Scotland has researched the performance of each of Scotland's 32

local authorities against key recommendations of a report into the issue published by the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee. The research found some good practice, but also highlighted widespread gaps in service provision and policies such as how some councils cater for gypsy travellers in its housing strategy and equality scheme.

We are now writing to each authority individually, challenging them on their record of support and highlighting areas where we would like to see improvement.

'As the main providers of housing, sites and education, local authorities have a crucial part to

play in improving the situation for Scottish Gypsy Travellers in Scotland,' said Amnesty's Scottish programme director, John Watson.

We will also seek to confront unfair and negative portrayals of Gypsy Travellers by engaging with the local media where much of the public debate around settled and travelling communities takes place.

### TAKE ACTION

Sign up to help us monitor local media in your area, or see the letter for your own local authority at [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland) or by calling 0131 313 7012.

# UNLAWFUL TASER SCHEME MUST BE ABANDONED

**STRATHCLYDE POLICE** have now completed a six-month pilot issuing Taser electro-shock weapons to ordinary officers.

In the absence of any major public incidents, the pilot is likely to be branded a success, but Amnesty continues to challenge the scheme.

We have repeatedly highlighted that the move failed to adhere to human rights standards, and there is no evidence to justify such a major shift in policing policy. The Strathclyde pilot also never received political sign-off from Ministers, as required by the 1968 Firearms Act and as happened with new Taser deployments in England and Wales.

In addition the pilot was not governed by any overarching policy to ensure adherence to human rights standards, as demanded by case law from the European Court. With evidence from other countries suggesting that Taser use

impacts most heavily on certain groups, such as those with epilepsy or mental health problems, an equalities impact statement should have been produced but never was.

John Watson, Amnesty's programme director for Scotland, said: 'What has surprised me is the lack of political oversight of what is a major shift in policing policy. Scottish government Ministers have washed their hands of the issue, directing all questions to the local Police Authority. Yet the Chief Constable insists the Police Authority has no powers in the matter. So who exactly are the police accountable to when they bring dangerous weapons onto Scottish streets?'

Tasers are potentially lethal weapons, inherently open to abuse. Amnesty International believes that they have a role to play in policing but that they should be restricted to



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specially trained and accountable firearms officers for use as a less-lethal alternative to guns.

### TAKE ACTION

Write to Cllr Stephen Curran, Convenor of the Strathclyde Police Authority, asking him to commission an independent legal review of the pilot. A briefing sheet and template letter are available on [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland) or by phoning the Scottish office on 0131 313 7012.

# GRUFFALO AUTHOR HELPS LAUNCH AMNESTY PRIMARY RESOURCES

**IN SEPTEMBER**, Julia Donaldson, author of hugely popular *The Gruffalo*, joined pupils from Royal Mile and South Morningside primary schools to launch Amnesty International's new educational resources for primary school teachers.

*Learning About Human Rights in the Primary School* is a free school pack, and a taster for a revised edition of *Our World Our Rights*, a 148-page handbook full of activities and lesson plans for teachers. Both are linked to the Curriculum

for Excellence. The special event took place at Edinburgh's Scottish Storytelling Centre, and began with a human rights activity session with the pupils followed by a reading by Julia Donaldson.

'I am delighted to be helping Amnesty International to bring human rights into the classroom,' said Julia Donaldson. 'Children seem to have such an innate sense of what is fair and what is not fair. It's so important for them to understand that this sense of fairness, these rights, apply to everyone of all ages

and all backgrounds.'

A month later Amnesty launched a pack for secondary schools about the death penalty. *A Matter of Life and Death* contains a script for a short play, presentations and lesson plans to inspire young people aged 14 plus to learn more about the reality of the death penalty.

### TAKE ACTION

Order materials and sign up to receive the TeachRights newsletter at [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotlandeducation](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotlandeducation)



Julia Donaldson



## DR BINAYAK SEN: DROP THE CHARGES

Scottish support for the campaign to release Indian doctor Dr Binayak Sen from jail included campaign work at the 2009 Edinburgh festival. Dr Binayak Sen, who has spent three decades serving poor communities in the Chhattisgarh area, was jailed on politically motivated charges that Amnesty believes were brought because of his human rights work. He was released on bail on 26 May 2009 after two years in prison, but is still awaiting trial. We will continue to work on his case until all charges against him are dropped. Meanwhile, Dr Sen continues to defend human rights despite the risks.

## TEACHER TRAINING

In June, Amnesty ran a free training event for Scottish secondary teachers, providing ideas, resources and knowledge to teach students about human rights and empower young people to take action. Training is linked to the Curriculum for Excellence and enables teachers to approach human rights with confidence. For information about similar events, please contact [scotland@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:scotland@amnesty.org.uk) or 0131 313 7012.

## LOCAL GROUPS

For information on Amnesty local groups, student groups and youth groups around Scotland, contact the Supporter Care Team on 020 7033 1500 or [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)

## SCHOOL SPEAKERS

Amnesty International can arrange for an Amnesty member to come to your school to speak about our work or to turn a workshop on one of our campaigns such as Demand Dignity, the Death Penalty or Refugees. To invite a speaker, email [scotland@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:scotland@amnesty.org.uk)

If you would like to join our network of volunteer school speakers, sign up for one of our free training days. It will help develop the skills you need, gain confidence in speaking to school groups, discover a wide range of human rights resources and share good practice. For more information on the next training day, contact [scotland@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:scotland@amnesty.org.uk)



