



# AMNESTY SCOTLAND NEWS

SPRING 2010

## JUSTICE FOR BINAYAK SEN AMNESTY'S FESTIVAL CAMPAIGN: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED INVESTIGATING TRAFFICKING IN SCOTLAND

Biannual newsletter for Amnesty  
supporters in Scotland



Pilot project has given Taser weapons to beat officers © Oleg Volk www.olegvolk.net

## TASERS HIT THE STREETS IN STRATHCLYDE

**STRATHCLYDE POLICE** has become the first force in Scotland to issue Taser electro-shock weapons to ordinary officers.

Amnesty has urged Strathclyde's Chief Constable to rethink the six-month pilot, launched on 20 April and providing 30 police officers in Glasgow and South Lanarkshire with Tasers after only three-days training. The move represents a significant lowering of the threshold for use of Taser weapons and a watering down of the safeguards limiting their use.

A final decision on whether to extend Taser provision in this way will be scrutinised by the Strathclyde Police Authority – a body composed of 34 councillors from the 12 local authorities in the region. It provides the only avenue for democratic scrutiny of the decision and Amnesty asks supporters who live in Strathclyde to write to their local councillors to point out that:

- Tasers are dangerous weapons, giving one person the power to inflict excruciating pain on another.

- Tasers are already available as a back-up option when the need arises, but are issued only to specially trained firearms officers. Ordinary beat officers supplied with Tasers will receive considerably less training – and learning how not to use a Taser takes longer than learning to use it.
- Arming ordinary officers with Tasers, and significantly reducing the threshold for using them, risks undermining the culture of 'policing by consent' which serves our society well and means that our police set the standard internationally.

### TAKE ACTION

Find your local councillors at [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com), and ask them to pass on your concerns to the local members of the Strathclyde Police Authority. Or take action online at [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland) Please let the Amnesty office in Scotland know if you receive a reply.

## UNITING WOMEN WRITERS

AS PART of Refugee Week 2010, Amnesty International is hosting an event with the Glasgow Women's Library and Scottish PEN to highlight this year's theme: journeys. The event 'Womens writers unite: the journey' will feature novelist Louise Welsh reading from the works of persecuted female writers from around the world, as well as contributing her own words. It aims to reflect the experiences and contributions of refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland today.



### TAKE ACTION

To attend the event on 17 June, 4-5pm, at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, visit [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland). Refugee Week 2010 takes place 14-20 June. For a full events line-up visit [www.refugeeweekscotland.com](http://www.refugeeweekscotland.com)



Louise Welsh  
© Steve Lindbridge

## NEWS REVIEW

### HUMAN RIGHTS SUPPORT AT SNP CONFERENCE

Conservative Party plans to scrap the Human Rights Act 1998 were opposed by party members at the SNP 2010 Spring Conference in March, who voted unanimously for an Amnesty-backed motion supporting the Act. The SNP committed to oppose any proposals that would weaken the existing legislation and to incorporate 'clear human rights standards... in its domestic and international roles'.

### SCOTTISH MSPs CONDEMN MALAWI ARREST

MSPs across the political spectrum have condemned the arrest of two gay men in Malawi for holding a same-sex engagement ceremony. Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga face trial on charges of 'gross indecency'. If convicted, they face up to 14 years in prison with hard labour.

Following action by Amnesty International, the case featured prominently in a Scottish Parliament debate on relations with Malawi, with a string of cross-party MSPs calling for the Scottish government to take human rights into account in all of its international relations.

Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga have been in prison since 28 December 2009. They have been denied bail and were reportedly beaten in custody. Amnesty considers both men prisoners of conscience and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

#### TAKE ACTION

Send an appeal letter to the Malawian authorities at [www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbt](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbt)

## TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS UPDATE

# INVESTIGATION INTO MODERN-DAY SLAVE TRADE CONTINUES

**NEW RESEARCH** on human trafficking in Scotland over the coming months will provide a more accurate picture of the problem and the need for care for victims of trafficking.

In February, a formal inquiry opened to discover how many victims of human trafficking there are in Scotland. The investigation, launched by the Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland, will look at the sex trade and also report on whether the Scottish government is meeting its international obligations to protect victims.

In June, the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, a coalition of organisations including Amnesty International, will release new research into the performance of the UK authorities in delivering on the commitments in the recent European Convention Against Trafficking. Also, an Equal Opportunities Committee of the Parliament inquiry into how many victims there are in Scotland will include evidence from Amnesty.

This new research will build on Amnesty's 2008 report *Scotland's Slaves* and will, we hope, provide more evidence to back our call for

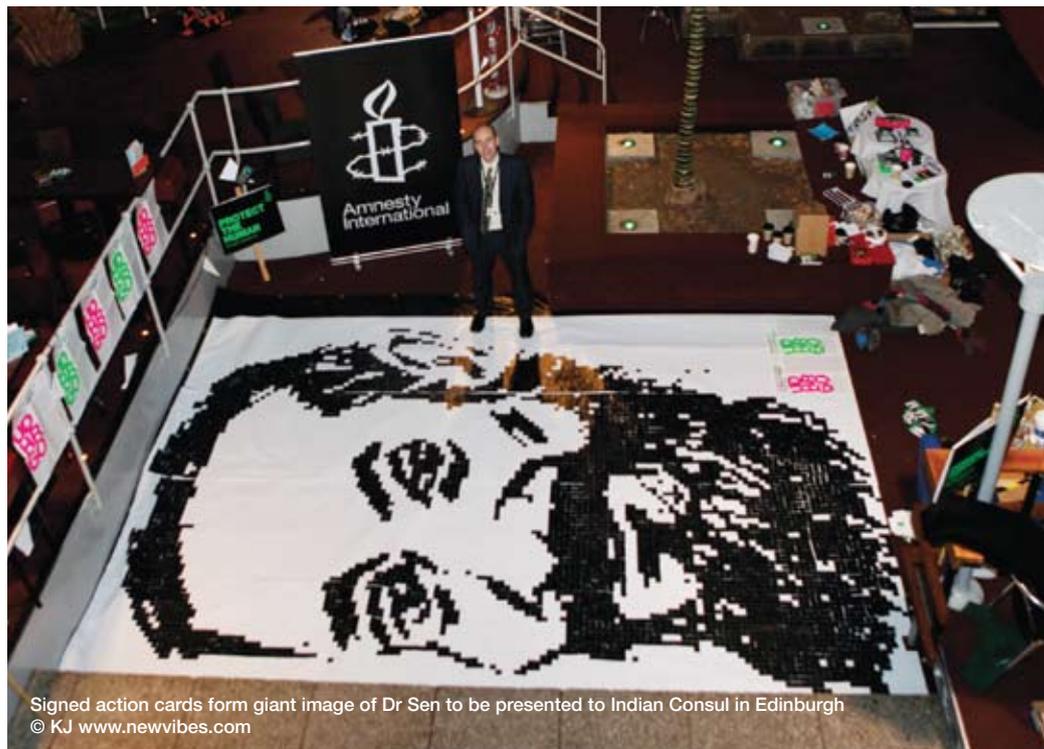
better services and protection for trafficking victims.

#### TAKE ACTION

For updates and the latest campaign developments visit [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland)



## ACTION FOR INDIVIDUALS INDIA



Signed action cards form giant image of Dr Sen to be presented to Indian Consul in Edinburgh © KJ [www.newvibes.com](http://www.newvibes.com)

# DEMAND JUSTICE FOR DR BINAYAK SEN

**OUR 2009** Edinburgh festival campaign focused on Indian doctor Binayak Sen, 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.

He is accused of aiding Maoist insurgents in Chhattisgarh state.

The campaign saw thousands of Scots demand that all charges against Dr Sen be dropped – support which culminated in the creation of a giant mosaic of his image. To mark the anniversary of his release and maintain pressure

on the Indian authorities until all charges are dropped, we will present the mosaic to the Indian Consul in Edinburgh in May.

#### FIND OUT MORE

To find out more and to join our campaign, visit [www.amnesty.org.uk/binayak-sen](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/binayak-sen)

# VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR FESTIVAL FORCE

**EVERY YEAR** Amnesty attends a range of festivals to talk to as many people as possible about our work for freedom of expression, highlighting one specific 'Festival' campaign.

In 2010 we are focusing on Burma (Myanmar) in the lead-up to the country's national election. It is the country's first election since 1990, when Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won a majority of parliamentary seats but was not permitted to take power. The opposition leader is currently under house arrest, keeping her locked away until after the election. She has already spent 13 of the past 20 years in detention, and is one of at least 2,200 political prisoners in Burma. In a February report, *Repression of ethnic minority activists in Myanmar*, Amnesty warned the election might lead to an even harder crackdown against activists.

We will be asking festival-goers to lend their support to ensure the people of Burma can exercise their right to free and fair elections. However, we can only do this with the help of volunteers and local group networks. So, for anyone who is interested in getting involved – we need you.

We will be going to music, literary, LGBT and eco-festivals, as well as the largest arts festival in the world – the Edinburgh Festival. And we will be looking for people



Speak out for others at this year's festivals  
© Michael Binon [www.michaelbinon.com](http://www.michaelbinon.com)

to help with everything, from coordinating the many elements of the campaign to talking to the public at the festivals.

## TAKE ACTION

For more information on volunteering for our Festival campaign, email **siobhan.reardon@amnesty.org.uk**

## GYPSY TRAVELLERS CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Following a resolution at Amnesty's 2009 AGM, our office in Scotland is tackling discrimination against Scottish Gypsy Travellers.

Discrimination against this group is well documented in Scotland, but despite a number of reviews and reports the underlying situation is proving difficult to change.

We have gathered information on the performance of the Scottish Government and local authorities and will challenge each of them on their records in this area. We have already revealed, for example, that the Scottish Housing Regulator is charged with regulating local authority services for Gypsy Travellers, but does nothing to meet this responsibility.

## UPDATES AND ACTION

[www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland)

## 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)

## AMNESTY IN SCOTLAND STARTS TWEETING

Amnesty International's Scottish office now has its own Twitter account so that you can receive the latest news and information any time of the day. Sign up to follow us at <http://twitter.com/@AmnestyScotland>

# NEW HUMAN RIGHTS MATERIALS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

**IN JUNE** Amnesty International will release two new educational resources for primary school teachers. A revised edition of the popular handbook *Our World Our Rights* and *Learning About Human Rights in the Primary School* are suitable for the Curriculum for Excellence, and include lesson plans, classroom games and activities and guidance on teaching younger children about human rights.

A special event will be held at the Scottish Storytelling Centre

in Edinburgh on 1 September to launch the human rights resources. It will feature a story reading from *Gruffalo* author Julia Donaldson and a human rights activity session. Primary school classes are invited to join us, and attending teachers will be provided with a copy of *Our World Our Rights*. You can register your class by emailing [scotland@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:scotland@amnesty.org.uk). For more information on the resources go to education on [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland).



## SCHOOL SPEAKERS

Amnesty International can arrange for an Amnesty member to come to your school to speak about our work or to run a workshop on one of our campaigns such as Control Arms, 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)

# REACHING OUT

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MEDIA

The media play a vital role in our campaign to raise awareness about human rights and human rights abuses. However, media portrayal of some sections of society can also fuel negative attitudes and compound the abuse.

In an effort to highlight the positive portrayal of human rights in the media, Amnesty International joined forces with National Union of Students in Scotland to invite the editors and reporters of the future to explore the complex relationship between human rights and the media – and we learnt a lot.

The one-day event included workshops, a panel discussion on celebrity in the media, and the launch of a new Media Placement in Amnesty's Scottish office. A huge thank you to Cian O Siochain, Sarah Howitt, Liz Rawlings, Lucy Christie and James Doherty for their involvement – and to NUS Scotland.

## AMNESTY DEBUTS AT BOOK FESTIVAL

In March, Amnesty International made its debut performance in Glasgow with our first series of Imprisoned Writers events at the Aye Write! Book festival.

We held three events looking at the issues of Freedom of Expression, Human Dignity and Violence Against Women – all of which were fully booked. Authors such as Christopher Brookmyre, Russell Celyn Jones, Alex Gray and Iyad Hayatleh gave their time to provide a voice for persecuted writers from around the world and raise awareness of the underlying human rights themes. We will be back again next year.

## MATERNAL HEALTH IS A HUMAN RIGHT



© Lee Karen Stow

In June, Amnesty International will team up with Oxfam and the Royal College of Midwives to host an event highlighting the importance of improving maternal healthcare and women's right to safe motherhood.

With the G8 meeting in Canada in June and the Millennium Development Goal Review Summit in September we have

a unique opportunity to make sure that maternal health is the priority at these meetings and real commitments are made. The event will take place at the STUC offices in Glasgow.

**FIND OUT MORE**  
[www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland)  
[www.amnesty.org.uk/mums](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/mums)

[www.amnesty.org.uk/join](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/join)

## KEEP IN TOUCH



*Amnesty Scotland News* will be produced every spring and autumn and will be distributed at events as well as to Amnesty members, local groups and contacts in Scotland. Its aim is to build understanding of the Scottish perspective to Amnesty's campaigning, and how the Amnesty Scottish office adapts its work to fit the Scottish context. In between editions, you can keep in touch with the latest developments and actions in Amnesty's Scottish campaigning through our web page, e-zine and Facebook.

## [www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland)

The Scottish pages on the Amnesty website are constantly updated. By creating your own 'My Amnesty' profile on the site you can register to receive information tailored to the issues that interest you.

## E-ZINE

Amnesty International produces a free, monthly electronic newsletter highlighting seven or eight stories, actions or announcements hot off the press. You can sign up to the Scottish version of this by registering your e-mail address on the website.

## FACEBOOK GROUP

Are you a member of social networking site Facebook? Join the Amnesty Scotland group for updates on our activities: search for 'Amnesty international Scotland'.

Amnesty International is a movement of ordinary people standing up for human rights and humanity. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

Amnesty's Scotland Office focuses on human rights campaigning, media and education work in the nation, including lobbying, working with schools, and bringing a human rights focus to events such as the Edinburgh Festival.

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To find out about Amnesty local groups, student groups and youth groups in Scotland please contact the Supporter Care Team at [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk) or 0207 033 1500.

**PROTECT THE HUMAN**