



Amnesty International Reading Group NEWSLETTER

September 2013

PROTECT THE HUMAN

We are ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

RECENT EVENTS AND NEWS

- **PRIDE – AUGUST 2013**



- A great annual event for our group, Reading's Pride saw over many actions taken for LGBT rights. Over 130 action postcards were signed for Noxolo, a South African activist who was brutally murdered, with no investigation into her murder. Streamers were signed to send support messages to the South African Pride later this year. Cards of support were signed and sent to a Turkish man who's partner was killed in an "honour" killing, many suspect by his father.
- In our September group meetings, we had a fascinating talk from **Ferran Nogueroles, Amnesty activist from the LGBT network**. He talked passionately about the challenges facing the Baltic Prides, where he has been a participant and an observer for many years.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

BIG EVENT FOR OUR GROUP – PUT IT IN YOUR DIARY!!!!!!!

Amnesty International - Reading Group

An Evening Without..

Filep Karma

Indonesia's image as a modern, dynamic democracy is tarnished by its shameful record on Freedom of Speech - especially in its treatment of prisoners of conscience like **FILEP KARMA**.

Speakers include West Papuan **BENNY WENDA** describing *his* experience as a prisoner and renowned activist **PETER TATCHELL**.

West Papuan music and refreshments.

Friday 18th October 7.30pm
RISC, 35 – 39 London Street RG1 4PS
Free/donations
Sean: 07976 283142 s.v.oleary@reading.ac.uk
Bente: 0118 958 6692 bente@risc.org.uk

- **AN EVENING WITHOUT FILEP KARMA – FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER AT 7.30PM**, with guest Peter Tatchell. Please follow this links to find out about the current situation in Filep's country
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/freedom-expression-suppressed-papua-third-peaceful-protester-dies-2013-05-09>
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA21/010/2013/en/9b5f1867-8d83-4130-b7dd-a9e624cb0442/asa210102013en.html>
- **CHANNY HOUSE CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT – SUNDAY 15TH DECEMBER** Keep this date in your diary- more information to follow.
- **QUIZ NIGHT – Saturday 1st March** at The Warehouse, Reading – more info to follow.

ACTIONS

Please click the link/scroll to the end of this document/follow the links for actions you can take to support issues that the Reading Group follows closely.

- Thongpaseuth Keuakoun and Seng-Aloun Phengphanh, two former student activists from **Laos**
- Pro-Democracy Activists face 12 years' imprisonment in **Azerbaijan**
- **Cuban** activist **Iván Fernández Depestre** who was arrested on 30 July during a peaceful march

OTHER NEWS

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
MALALA YOUSAFZAI**



**RECIPIENT OF AMNESTY'S
AMBASSADOR OF CONSCIENCE
AWARD FOR 2013**

What do Pakistani school girl **Malala Yousafzai** and American singer **Harry Belafonte** have in common?

They might be generations apart but they but they share a dedication to the fight for human rights, everywhere and for all. Today we honour them with our **2013 Ambassador of Conscience Award**. Congratulations Harry and Malala! <http://ow.ly/oX7Ta>

Don't forget to keep up to date with our group's news, frequently updated with photos and updates:

- Website = <http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/groups/reading>
- NEW facebook page –search for Reading Amnesty International – Town Group = <http://www.facebook.com/groups/187525074719402>
- twitter = @amnestyreading
- **A BRAND NEW WEBSITE FOR FILEP KARMA** - <http://www.freefilepkarma.org/>

MEETINGS: second Thursday of each month at 8pm. All are welcome. **All at RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS**

ALSO: We raise funds for Amnesty International, and can provide speakers about Amnesty and human rights issues for local organisations: contact our secretary Anne McFarlane, ammcf@o2.co.uk.

Amnesty Reading Newsletter editor Helen Ball- email: helenball03@yahoo.co.uk

Phongsavat Boupha

Head of the President's Office and Chair of the National Steering Committee on Human Rights

Presidential Palace

Setthathirath

Vientiane

Lao People's Democratic Republic

September 2013

Dear Minister

Thongpaseuth Keuakoun and Seng-Aloun Phengphanh

Thongpaseuth Keuakoun and Seng-Aloun Phengphanh are two former student activists who have spent 14 years in prison after organising a peaceful demonstration in Vientiane calling for political, social and economic change in Laos. The demonstration, in which students attempted to put up banners, occurred in October 1999.

They remain in Samkhe prison.

According to Lao official media, the National Steering Committee on Human Rights has been set up to 'stimulate the Lao government's efforts to promote and protect human rights'. Can I urge you then, as the Chair of the Steering Committee and also Head of the President's Office, to arrange for the unconditional release of Thongpaseuth Keuakoun and Seng-Aloun Phengphanh who I believe are prisoners of conscience. Pending their release, please ensure they are allowed visits from their families and have access to medical treatment.

Yours sincerely,

Prosecutor General Zakir Qaralov
Prosecutor General of the Republic of Azerbaijan
7 Nigar Rafibeyli Street
Baku AZ 1001 AZERBAIJAN

Dear Prosecutor General

Re: Pro-Democracy Activists face 12 years' imprisonment

We are concerned that additional charges of planning acts of 'public disorder' which carry terms of up to 12 years in jail have been brought against eight youth activists.

Pro-democracy youth activists **Bakhtiyar Guliyev, Mahammad Azizov, Shahin Novruzlu, Rashad Hasanov, Rashadat Akhundov, Zaur Gurbanli, Uzeyir Mammadli** and **Ilkin Rustamzade** were arrested between March and May 2013 and charged with possession of drugs and explosives, and hooliganism. Amnesty International declared them prisoners of conscience. On 12 September, they were additionally charged with planning to organize acts of public disorder and using Molotov cocktails on 10 March protest against deaths in the army.

Police claim to have found Molotov cocktails in **Bakhtiyar Guliyev** and **Shahin Novruzlu's** homes on 8 March, but their parents insist these were planted when plainclothes officers searched their houses. **Bakhtiyar Guliyev** and **Mahammad Azizov** attempted to withdraw "confessions" they had given without lawyers of their choice being present. **Mahammad Azizov** told his lawyer he had been beaten after refusing to testify against **Rashad Hasanov**. Their "confessions" were later shown on state television. Instead of investigating allegations of torture and ill-treatment by the state, the authorities continue to rely on their "confessions".

According to defence lawyers, there is no link between the three activists accused of preparing Molotov cocktails and the others, apart from organizing a peaceful protest. All eight deny the charges against them.

As the eight youth activists: **Bakhtiyar Guliyev, Mahammad Azizov, Shahin Novruzlu, Rashad Hasanov, Rashadat Akhundov, Zaur Gurbanli, Uzeyir Mammadli** and **Ilkin Rustamzade**, are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, we therefore call on the Azerbaijani authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally.

We further urge you to launch an urgent, objective and effective investigation into allegations of torture and ill-treatment, especially concerning **Bakhtiyar Guliyev, Mahammad Azizov** and **Shahin Novruzlu**.

Finally, we call on the authorities to ensure that the rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression are respected and no-one is persecuted for the peaceful exercise of their rights.

We look forward to your immediate response to these serious matters.

Yours sincerely

cc HE Mr Fakhraddin Gurbanov, Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan

TO:

FROM:

Raúl Castro Ruz

Head of State and Government

Presidente de la República de Cuba

La Habana

Cuba

Fax: +41 22 758 9431 (Cuba office in Geneva);

+1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)

Date:

Your Excellency,

I am very concerned to hear that Cuban activist **Iván Fernández Depestre** was arrested on 30 July during a peaceful march, was sentenced on 2 August to three years imprisonment and has been on hunger strike since.

I am calling on you to release Iván Fernández Depestre immediately and unconditionally, as I believe he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

I would also urge you to eliminate from the Criminal Code provisions regarding "dangerousness" and reform or repeal all legal provisions which unlawfully limit the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and bring them in line with international law and standards.

Finally, would you please ensure he is granted adequate access to qualified health professionals and also would you please refrain from taking any punitive measures against him or any other prisoners for undertaking hunger strikes.

Yours truly,

Copies to:

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra

Interior Minister

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior,

Plaza de la Revolución,

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: correominint@mn.mn.co.cu

Her Excellency Esther Armenteros Cárdenas

Cuban Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba
167 High Holborn,
London WC1 6PA

Fax: 020 7836 2602 embacuba@cubaldn.com

To:

FROM:

Dr. Darío Delgado Cura

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General de la República,

Amistad 552, e/Monte y Estrella, Centro Habana

La Habana,

Cuba

Date:

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