

Keeping you connected 6 Aug 2016

Dear All:

Quick updates and developments

Angie Hougas

Member, AIUSA BD of Directors

Director & Co-Founder, Rhythm N' Rights

1 GOOD NEWS

2 LETHAL USE OF FORCE (USA)- Policing Tactics (NYT's article and Margaret's letter to editor)

3 OLYMPICS -Refugees & Brazil Lethal Use of Force

4 MUSIC -Steve Earle, Anit-Flag, and more, to #FreeLeonadPeltier (includes photos)

5 REPORTS

1 GOOD NEWS

Iran: Ehsan Shah Ghasemi, a 25-year-old Iranian man who had been on death row since October 2014, was released from prison on 13 March after he was pardoned by the victim's family in September 2015.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Vano Kiboko, a former Member of Parliament who had been in detention since December 2014, was released from prison on 5 May after completing his sentence.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Stop Action: Six Lucha Activists "Forced" Out of Prison

Myanmar / Burma: Thank-you letter from Phyoe Phyoe Aung who was Released in April (She was a 2015 Write for Rights case). Her letter is directed towards Amnesty activists around the world.

Thank you to all those who wrote on her behalf.

Dear friends from Amnesty International around the world,

I am Phyoe Phyoe Aung. Many of you campaigned for my release from prison, and sent me letters of support while I was in prison. I have been wanting to reply to you all since I was released – I would like to apologize to you for my late message.

As the daughter of a former political prisoner, I know very well the name of Amnesty International, and heard about your campaigns to free prisoners of conscience including Aung San Suu Kyi since I was young. In 2015, I became an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience myself. After that, I received so many postcards, handmade cards with drawings of lovely animals full of warm wishes, encouraging letters and beautiful poems from people all across the world. I still receive your letters via the Amnesty International office, as well as from political prisoners' organization. I plan to collect some of these letters and cards and use them to create an archive of political prisoners' history.

I am so grateful to Amnesty International and all of the people who participated in the campaign for my release. International movements like yours create pressure on governments for our physical freedom, but knowing we have your solidarity also supports us mentally.

We feel that international organizations like Amnesty International never forget the people who are facing injustice in their struggle for democracy and human rights. Amnesty International's big solidarity campaigns support our fight for human rights – you are people from around the world who love and fight for human rights. We need to be strong and remember how important it is to join together in our struggles.

Thank you very much each and every one of you. Not just for campaigning for my release, and the release of other prisoners, but for helping to keep our hope and our beliefs alive. I hope that together we will continue our struggle until our shared dream for human rights and justice for all come true.

*Best regards,
Phyoe Phyoe Aung*

2 LETHAL USE OF FORCE (USA)- Policing Tactics (NYT's article and Margaret's letter to editor)

The Times published an in-depth look at police use of lethal force last week (29 July 2016), including information on the lack of standards/accountability and a link to AIUSA's report on lethal force, which has generated strong traffic to the report over the last few days. Here is a link to the story:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/29/nyregion/is-a-police-shooting-a-crime-it-depends-on-the-officers-point-of-view.html>

Margaret Huang's, AIUSA Interim Executive Director, New York Times letter-to-the-editor hammers home AIUSA's messaging on this issue. Link and full text to the letter below.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/opinion/lethal-force-by-the-police.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

To the Editor:

Re “[Is Fatal Shooting by Police a Crime? It Depends on the Officer's Point of View](#)” (news article, July 29):

The international standard for the use of lethal force by law enforcement is clear enough: Lethal force should be used only as a last resort in the face of imminent death or serious injury. And yet according to a [study](#) we at Amnesty International did last year, not one state in the United States has laws that meet this simple criterion.

The patchwork of laws allows for officers to use deadly force even in the absence of any physical threat, like stopping a fleeing burglar, killing a nonviolent offender escaping from prison, or firing at protesters.

This, combined with the lack of official data of killings by the police, all but ensures that convictions, or even indictments, will remain elusive. All United States laws must be brought in line with international standards if the police are to be held accountable for their actions.

MARGARET L. HUANG
Interim Executive Director
Amnesty International USA
New York

3 OLYMPICS -Refugees & Brazil Lethal Use of Force

AIUSA, working with the International Secretariat (IS) and other AI Sections, is using the opportunity of the **Olympic Games to Shine A Light**.

We plan to highlight human rights abuses in Brazil and build support for refugees (upcoming global campaign) by focusing on the historic team of refugee athletes competing in the games. An AIUSA focus will spotlight human rights aspects of what's happening inside the games (with the refugee team) and outside the games (with the situation in Brazil).

Everyone's rights must be protected from the refugees struggling to find safety around the world, to the families living in favelas in Rio.

Efforts AIUSA is engaged in: refugees and lethal force:

Specific to the refugee team: To focus the world's attention on the global refugee crisis. Together, we're rallying behind the refugee team / athletes, taking a stand for the dignity and safety of refugees worldwide, and demanding that governments do more to address this crisis.

Raise awareness: Conditions in Brazil and connect it to issues in the U.S. and elsewhere.

1. [Team Refugees](#)

This is a coalition of 40 organizations, including Amnesty, that are cheering on the athletes via social media and using this moment to engage more people in advocating on behalf of refugees globally. This effort is being done in cooperation with the International Olympic Committee; in addition to Amnesty, other partners include UNICEF, Sesame Street, UNHCR, and Save the Children. Right now, we're posting introductory graphics and videos to social media.

2. [The Refugee Nation](#)

Initiative started by a group of refugees (and people who support them, working at the large PR firm Ogilvy & Mather, a pro bono partnership with AIUSA) to give the refugee athletes a "nation" of supportive people. This includes a flag designed by a refugee artist and an anthem

composed by a refugee musician and performed by the Refugee Orchestra. Amnesty is a supporter of this effort, spreading the word via social media. (this is separate from an effort last year by the same name, which advocated creating a new country to house refugees. This new effort, related to the Olympics, has disclaimers making clear the two are totally unrelated.)

3. Brazil human rights issues (The lack of standards and accountability for police use of lethal force in Brazil – which we also see in the U.S. – is a human rights issue that must be addressed.)

(This work that is in close coordination with the IS and other Sections. AIUSA shaped the public awareness campaigns around the refugee team and brought this work to the IS for other Sections to engage in, as well.)

Since last year, AIUSA's been working with AI Brazil and others to underscore human rights issues in the country, particularly police use of lethal force and forced evictions of impoverished families. We continue promoting Amnesty research, apps, and announcements about human rights abuses in Brazil, via social media and earned media in the U.S. (In addition to AIUSA public awareness work, in April AIUSA's Advocacy team, moderated a congressional briefing on police use of lethal force in Brazil.)

Links

Links to some material AI / AIUSA produced/released.

- AIUSA's [press release](#) this week on the refugee team at the Olympics
- [Team Refugees](#) home page
- [The Refugee Nation](#) home page
- A Team Refugees [video](#)
- A Refugee Nation [video](#)
- Amnesty [report](#) on human rights abuses on Brazil
- [Press release](#) this week on the rise in police killings in Brazil
- [Press release](#) on Amnesty's app to document police killings in Brazil
- [Social media gif](#) on the app documenting police killings
- [Twitter post](#) with graphic on Team Refugees

Here are links to just a couple of the relevant media pieces that have already run:

- [Newsweek](#) on Team Refugees (and a new Sesame Street video on refugees), quoting AIUSA
- [ABC News](#) on human rights abuses in Brazil, quoting AIUSA
- [The Nation](#) on a range of concerns in Brazil, including human rights abuses, with Amnesty research
- [USA Today](#) on human rights issues in Brazil, with Amnesty research and experts
- [Think Progress](#) on the connections between activism against lethal force in Brazil and in the U.S., with Amnesty research and content

4 MUSIC - Newport Folk Festival, Indigo Girls, Steve Earle, Anit-Flag, and more, to #FreeLeonadPeltier

A. Great, great time at Newport Folk Festival in RI. Blaine Mineman hosted the tent and collect 100's and 100's of signatures on AI actions! (photos attached)

B. Steve Earle tour: Mr. Earle along with Shawn Colvin made a concert stop in Madison. Rhythm N' Rights was there. See (attached) photo of Steve Earle signing petitions to Free Leonard Peltier and The American I Believe In, in Madison, WI
The tour hit Chicago last night, and will be moving to TN, WA, OR, & AZ. Amnesty will be at all of these.

C. Also RN'R is on the Indigo Girls tour, which is moving across the country and doing well. Attached is a picture from KS City.

D. Wrecking Ball Festival is coming 13-14 Aug in Atlanta GA. We are very excited to again be working with Anti-Flag who will be doing a Meet & Greet at our Amnesty tent. Graphic they've done for us, which will also be available in postcard size at the festival for band signing attached

You can follow the music adventures on FB's [Rhythm N' Rights](#) page. We have lots more pictures, and connections there.

Thanks to all the Amnesty International volunteers across the country who make this happen, who staff the tables, who give their precious time, and who rock out with us.
If you are interested in helping, let us know.

5 REPORTS

Title: **South Sudan:** 'We are still running': War crimes in Leer, South Sudan

Website link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/4486/2016/en/>

AI index number: AFR 65/4486/2016

Publish date: 28/07/2016 00:05 BST [GMT+1]

Abstract: In August 2015, after more than 20 months of intermittent negotiations, South Sudan's warring parties finally agreed to the terms of a peace agreement—the Agreement on the Resolution of the Crisis in South Sudan (ARCSS). Despite this agreement, fighting continued in several parts of the country, and along with it a number of violations of international humanitarian law including murder and/or directing an attack against the civilian population or an individual civilian, sexual violence, slavery and sexual slavery, and destruction of civilian property, including food and other items needed for survival. This report describes events in Leer county, Unity state, between August and December 2015, where government forces violated their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

Title: **Americas:** How the state promotes violence against women - sexual and reproductive rights in Latin America and the Caribbean

Website link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/4140/2016/en/>

AI index number: AMR 41/4336/2016

Publish date: 26/07/2016 06:00 BST

Abstract: Sexual and reproductive rights are not new rights. They are recognized in human rights instruments. They include rights such as the right to privacy, to physical and mental integrity and to freedom from discrimination and torture or other ill-treatment.

Title: **Indonesia:** Open letter on Amnesty International's concerns at reports of planned executions

Website link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/4560/2016/en/>

AI index number: ASA 21/4560/2016

Publish date: 27/07/2016 00:00 BST

Abstract: In this open letter to the Minister of Law and Human Rights of Indonesia, Amnesty International expresses its concerns on violations of fair trial and other international safeguards in the cases of five of the 14 prisoners at imminent risk of execution in the country. Amnesty International renews its call on the Indonesian authorities to immediately establish a moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Title: **Maldives:** Open letter on the UN Human Rights Committee's request to halt Humaam's execution

Website link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa29/4551/2016/en/>

AI index number: ASA 29/4551/2016

Publish date: 27/07/2016 09:00 BST

Abstract: Amnesty International is writing to express its concern about recent statements made by Maldives newly appointed Foreign Minister, Mohamed Asim, on the UN Human Rights Committee's request to halt the execution of Hussain Humaam Ahmed (Humaam). The organization urges you to immediately halt plans to carry out the execution of Humaam or any other prisoner and establish a moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty with a view to its abolition.

Title: **Thailand:** Open letter on human rights concerns in the run-up to the constitutional referendum

Website link: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa39/4548/2016/en/>

AI index number: ASA 39/4548/2016

Publish date: 26/07/2016 00:00 BST

Abstract: In this open letter, Amnesty International raises human rights concerns in the lead up to the constitutional referendum.