



UA QUOTES

for AIUSA activists, speakers, and staff

March 2003 – September 2003

These stories from people whose lives have been touched by our efforts give names and faces to the impact that the Urgent Action Network of Amnesty International has worldwide. We hope that the information in **UA Quotes** can be used to complement an AIUSA presentation or to inspire your continued letter-writing. You are welcome to copy any part of **UA Quotes** for others. We issue **UA Quotes** periodically; if you would like us to put anyone else in AIUSA on our **UA Quotes** mailing list, please let us know. Email us at uan@aiusa.org if you would like a text version of this paper emailed to you.

Sincerely,

Ellen Moore, Natasha Nummedal and Scott Harrison
for the Urgent Action Network



TURKISH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER THANKS LETTER-WRITERS FOR EFFECTIVE, IMPORTANT WORK.

Sevim Yetkiner, chair of the Mus branch of the Human Rights Association (*Insan Haklari Dernegi* – IHD) and Baki Çelebi were released from Erzurum prison in eastern Turkey on August 6, 2003. Sevim Yetkiner and Baki Çelebi were imprisoned in Mus province, southeast Turkey, on July 17, 2003 after attending the funeral of a member of the illegal armed group the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). **Sevim Yetkiner** told Amnesty International, *"The 21 days that I spent in prison reinforced my commitment in the struggle for human rights. This is a struggle that everyone in society should join"*. She is convinced that appeals from UA network had a huge impact on her treatment in the prison; she noticed a positive difference in her conditions and the attitude of the prison administration towards her. She also attributes her swift release to the pressure of the Amnesty International's campaigning. She thanked the organization warmly and said, *"The appeals sent by AI members are effective and important -- I have seen first-hand how important they are"*.

[Turkey: Sevim Yetkiner (f), human rights defender (UA 218/02, July 17, 2003, August 27, 2003)]



Sevim Yetkiner



CELEBRATING FREEDOM FOR MALYSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS!



The Six Released Internal Security Detainees!

After many appeals from UAN members, **Saari Sungib, Tian Chua, Hishamuddin Rais and Mohd Ezam Mohd Nor** were unconditionally released from detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) on June 1. The four had been held without charge or trial under the ISA for over two years. The detention orders for the four expired on June 1, with the Home Minister deciding not to exercise his power of renewal. **Saari Sungib** immediately walked free from Kamunting Detention Camp, located in the northwest state of Perak, on the evening of June 1. **Tian Chua** and **Hishamuddin Rais** were transferred to Taiping prison on June 1 pending bail hearings on other charges against them. They were both unconditionally released on June 4. **Mohd Ezam Mohd Nor**, although no longer detained under the ISA, remained in detention for offences under the Official Secrets Act (OSA). He was later released on bail on June 10. **Dr Badrul Amin Baharom** and **Lokman Noor Adam** were unconditionally released upon the expiration of their ISA detention orders on June 12. On release, **Dr. Badrul Amin Baharom** was reunited with his family, while

Lokman Noor Adam was initially transferred to a local police station due to a pre-existing charge of illegal assembly. He was released on bail in the afternoon. **Amnesty International believes that the decision by the Home Minister not to renew the detention orders of the six men was strongly influenced by the domestic and international campaign to free them. Activists in Malaysia have thanked Amnesty International members for all of their work on behalf of these individuals and hope A.I. will continue to work for the release or prompt trial of all those held under the ISA.**

[Malaysia: Tian Chua, Mohd Ezam Mohd Nor, Saari Sungib, Hishamuddin Rais, Badrul Amin Baharom and Lokman Noor Adam (UA 94/01 issued April 11, 2001 and re-issued April 26, 2001; May 9, 2001; June 1, 2001; June 14, 2001; November 9, 2001 and June 19, 2003)]



Tian Chua and Hishamuddin Rais celebrate their freedom



FAMILY OF RELEASED TUNISIAN PRISONER IS GRATEFUL FOR SPEED OF AMNESTY RESPONSE.

Mohammed ben Hedi Naouar was released from detention without charge on July 16. Earlier on the same day he had been brought before an examining judge in Tunis where he was reportedly questioned about his links with Amnesty International. **His brother thanked Amnesty International on his behalf for the fast and effective action on this case.**

[Tunisia: Mohammed Ben Hedi Naouar (UA 209/03 issued July 11, 2003)]



TOGO JOURNALIST APPRECIATES HELP FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

Philippe Evegno and **Colombo Kpakpabia** were released on July 23. **Dimas Dzikodo** was fined for “attempting to publish false news”. He was released on July 24 after paying the fine. **Colombo Kpakpabia** and **Dimas Dzikodo** confirmed in court that they were tortured during their first days of pre-trial detention. One of the journalists said to Amnesty International “**I would like to express my deep thanks to all those who contributed to our release and who prevented the worse from happening**”.

[Togo: Dimas Dzikodo, Philippe Evegno, and Colombo Kpakpabia (UA 179/03 issued June 20, 2003)]

LETTERS HALT DEPORTATION/TORTURE!

Exiled government critics **Khudayberdy Orazov**, **Nurmukhammet Khanamov** and **Orazmukhammet Yklymov** are no longer in imminent danger of deportation from Russia to Turkmenistan, where they would have been at risk of torture or ill-treatment. **Khudayberdy Orazov**, the former Deputy Prime Minister and Director of the Central Bank of Turkmenistan, arrived in a European country on May 21. He had been seeking permission to leave the Russian Federation, where he was exiled, since January 2003. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recognized **Khudayberdy Orazov** as a refugee on January 19. By refusing to return **Khudayberdy Orazov** to Turkmenistan, the Russian authorities acted in line with their obligations under international human rights law, particularly, Article 3 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This convention prohibits the return of a person to a country or territory where they may be subjected to torture. One of **Khudayberdy Orazov's** supporters told Amnesty International: ***“Orazov is safe now. We thank you so much for all the work Amnesty International has conducted on Orazov's case. We believe that it was very important for this positive outcome.”*** **Orazmukhammet Yklymov**, a freelance journalist, left the Russian Federation in mid-January 2003 on a tourist visa and is currently applying for asylum in Austria. **Nurmukhammet Khanamov**, the former Turkmen ambassador to Turkey, managed to travel to Western Europe and is also applying for asylum in a European country. Amnesty International supports their asylum claims.

[Russian Federation/Turkmenistan: Khudayberdy Orazov, Nurmukhammet Khanamov and Orazmukhammet Yklymov (UA 6/03 issued January 8, 2003)]



UA APPEALS ADD INTERNATIONAL MEANING TO ABUSES SUFFERED IN ARMENIA.

Artur Sakunts was arrested after organizing a public meeting to discuss the Vanadzor branch of Helsinki Citizens Assembly's monitoring of the Armenian presidential election held in February and March 2003. **Artur Sakunts**, Coordinator of Vanadzor branch of Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, was released from prison on March 25 after serving 10-days for disobeying the authorities. He wrote to Amnesty International: ***“First of all I want to thank you for your support which is dear to anyone being in an illegal arrest. I want to say that without that support we could not win but we really won as the truth is with us. The basis of truth is the protection of human rights and superiority of law ... I also want to mention that with our cooperation and with your support we proved that protection of human rights can't be limited in the frame of a state, it has an international meaning.”***

[Armenia: Artur Sakunts (UA 73/03 issued March 17, 2003)]



IRANIAN PROFESSOR THANKS UA LETTER-WRITERS FOR EFFECTIVE WRITING CAMPAIGN.

According to information received by Amnesty International on April 2, **Qasem Sho'leh Sa'di**, aged 58, lawyer and political science professor at Tehran University, was released from prison. **Qasem Sho'leh Sa'di**, who went on hunger strike during his detention, remains charged with propaganda against the government and “spreading lies to mobilize the public opinion against the government”. ***Qasem Sho'leh Sa'di specifically wishes to thank all who sent appeals on his behalf.***

[Iran: Qasem Sho'leh Sa'di (UA 62/03 issued March 4, 2003)]



EGYPTIAN ANTI-WAR ACTIVIST THANKS AMNESTY FOR LETTERS LEADING TO HIS RELEASE.

On March 7, 2003, anti-war activist, **Kamal Khalil**, an engineer, was released from detention at Mazra'at Tora Prison near Cairo, where he had been held since February 19. **Kamal Khalil** was blindfolded during the early hours of his detention but he has reported no torture. Several other anti-war activists, who had been detained in Mazra'at Tora Prison without being charged, were released the same day. ***Kamal Khalil thanked Amnesty International for the action on his behalf.***

[Egypt: Kamal Khalil (UA 51/03 issued February 21, 2003 and re-issued February 26)]

LETTERS OFFER SUPPORT AND PROTECTION TO FAMILY OF MURDERED DAUGHTER.



Natalia Melman was murdered in Argentina in February 2001.

Gustavo Melmann, members of his family and family friends were subjected to harassment and intimidation following the conviction of three policemen for the murder of Gustavo and Laura Melmann's daughter **Natalia**. They are continuing their legal struggle for justice, but have not received any new death threats. A.I. will continue to closely monitor the situation but asks for no more appeals to be sent at present. Gustavo Melmann has sent this message of thanks to all those who sent appeals.

[Argentina: Gustavo Melmann, Laura Melmann, his wife, their four children, other relatives and family friends. Also Yesica Mariela Alvarengo, witness,

May 8, 2003

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to thank you for the network of solidarity that you created for Nati, our daughter. It has been very important for us. When our spirits weaken, when the pain of the passing of time pierces us, where our daughter does not come back, when her cries for help sound most strongly in our minds, when we seem to see the torture carried out on her, when the authorities of our country try to forget the punishment for all those who took part in the murder of our child..., the arrival of your LETTERS put us back on our feet again. We ask you to accompany us with your action until all these evil people are prosecuted and sentenced.

We would like to send you a big hug and emphasize that with you and other organizations which fight for human rights we will achieve that dreamed-of world of JUSTICE AND PEACE, of equal opportunities for all.

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH. WITH ALL OUR LOVE.

-THE MELMANN FAMILY

Carlota Del Valle Soria, witness, Haydee Susana Lima, witness, and other witnesses and members of the judiciary involved in the Natalia Melmann murder trial (UA 324/02 issued November 1, 2002 and re-issued January 31, 2003).]



APPEALS TO CONGO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

The ten detainees have all been released by the security forces. **Prince Kumwamba Nsapu and Grégoire Mulamba Tshisakamba have expressed their thanks to all those who took action on their behalf and on behalf of the other detainees.**

[Democratic Republic Of Congo: Prince Kumwamba Nsapu, Grégoire Mulamba Tshisakamba, Victor Tshisola, Mpiana Ngoie, Mbuye Ngalula, Mbuya Mbombu, Maboy Lusambaye, Yvette Kenge, Mutombo, Kabongo Kabemba and Kilima Bisaku (UA107/03 issued April 19, 2003)]



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER IN GUINEA-BISSAU SPARED TORTURE.

João Vaz Mané, a human rights defender, was released from prison on February 19. He had not been charged or tried and was held incommunicado for 21 days, well in excess of the period of pre-trial detention allowed by Guinea-Bissau law. He was arrested after criticizing President Kumba Ialá on a national radio program. **João Vaz Mané confirmed that he had not been ill-treated in detention and thanked Amnesty International for its work on his behalf.**

[Guinea-Bissau: João Vaz Mané (UA 41/03 issued February 12, 2003)]



NOT ALONE IN STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY.

On April 7, 2003, the UA Team at Amnesty International's headquarters in London had a visit from Tamara Chikunova, the mother of **Dmitry Chikunov**, who was executed in Uzbekistan following an unfair trial on July 10, 2000. Since Dmitry's death, Tamara has been working to abolish the death penalty in Uzbekistan, and has set up a group of Mothers Against the Death Penalty. Since the group was set up, 10 men have had their death sentences commuted following action by the UA network and by local pressure groups such as the Mothers.

Tamara came to see UA staff members because she expressly wanted to pass on to the UA Network her thanks for your work. She said the following:

"We offer our gratitude and respect to the UA network. Your help and support means so much. Your actions are a sign not only to the people sitting on death row, but to their families as well, that there is a chance that we might succeed in getting the death penalty abolished. And the fact of knowing that there are thousands of people for whom abolishing the death penalty is as important as it is for us, gives us hope. It gives us hope and strength, and the faith that it is possible to get the death penalty abolished. And all of a sudden we're no longer alone, we're surrounded by people who want to help. In the struggle to abolish the death penalty, that kind of support is such an important element."

At this point, Tamara took a faded color passport photo of her son from her wallet. She wanted us to see his amazingly blue eyes. She paused, and continued:

"All I have left of my son is memories. The important thing is the people that we have saved, we have them, they send me messages. I am not alone. When these people finish their sentences and come out of prison I know I won't be alone. The day on which they are brought out of their dungeons will become their second birthday. This achievement is our joint achievement, yours and ours."

Tamara then spoke of being in Rome, where she said they put the lights on in the Coliseum every time someone is taken off death row, anywhere in the world. She said she was there on May 10, 2002 to see the lights being shone for **Valery Agabekov**.

"When we see the lights, we know that somewhere in the world, someone has had their life saved."

[Uzbekistan: Dmitry Chikunov (UA 184/00) and Valery Agabekov (EXTRA 31/02)]



WORLDWIDE PRESSURE CONTRIBUTED TO RELEASE OF ENVIRONMENTALIST IN TURKMENISTAN.

Prisoner of conscience **Farid Tukhbatullin**, aged 41, civil society activist and co-chair of the Ecological Club, has been released and is now reunited with his family. His release came as the result of immense international pressure, including letters sent by members of the Urgent Action network. [Turkmenistan: Farid Tukhbatullin (UA 4/03 issued January 7, 2003 and re-issued March 5, 2003)]



Farid Tukhbatullin

URGENT ACTION LETTERS BRING RELEASE AND HAPPINESS TO CONGOLESE PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE.



N'sii Luanda Shandwe

N'sii Luanda Shandwe was released January 26, 2003, having spent nine months in prison. He was detained as a result of his human rights activism, but was never formally charged with a criminal offence. His release appears to have been a measure of presidential grace, announced on the second anniversary of President Joseph Kabila's accession to power. ***In a letter written after his release, N'sii Luanda Shandwe thanked Amnesty International members throughout the world for the support they had given him during his detention. "Perhaps they can't quite imagine how much courage, moral comfort, protection and happiness their actions gave me," he wrote. "I will remain forever grateful..."***

[Democratic Republic Of Congo: N'sii Luanda Shandwe (UA 120/02 issued April 22, 2002 and re-issued April 29, 2002 and September 30, 2002)]



LOCAL INDONESIAN NGO BELIEVES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTION SECURED RELEASE OF ACTIVIST.

Abdullah, a 22-year-old activist with *Sentral Informasi Referendum Aceh*, (SIRA), was released from Aceh Selatan Police Resort (Polres), Tapaktuan Sub-district, Aceh Selatan District, Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD) Province on February 11, 2003. SIRA, the Aceh Information Referendum Center, is an organization that campaigns peacefully for a referendum for independence in NAD. ***A local organization has stated that they believe that Amnesty International's action may have helped facilitate Abdullah's release.***

[Indonesia: Abdullah (UA 39/03 issued February 10, 2003)]



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LETTER-WRITERS THANKED BY RUSSIAN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP FOR HELPING TWO TEENAGERS.

After receiving information about the investigation into the alleged torture of two boys in a detention center in Nizhnii Novgorod, east of Moscow, the Nizhnii Novgorod Committee against Torture (NNCAT) has passed on its findings to Amnesty International. **Andrei Osenchugov** and **Aleksei Shishkin**, both then aged 16, were arrested on 5 March 2002 and charged with robbery. They were remanded to a pre-trial detention center, where they claimed they were tortured and ill-treated by other detainees at the instigation of officers. The regional procuracy's investigation into these allegations found that they were supported by eyewitness statements. However, both the victims and witnesses were reportedly threatened and intimidated by officers at the center after cooperating with the regional procuracy. The investigation was closed in November 2002 after both boys and a key witness withdrew their statements apparently as a result of this intimidation, but it was reopened in December 2002. In an official document, the regional procuracy stated that "international pressure" was one of the factors which led to further investigation in the case. NNCAT has acknowledged that this largely refers to Amnesty International's campaigning on behalf of the boys. On 5 June 2003, NNCAT sent an e-mail to Amnesty International saying, ***"We would also like to express our gratitude to the Urgent Action participants as well to the AI Secretariat for support"***. NNCAT also states that the fact that the boys were not further physically harmed while the regional procuracy's investigation was in progress was due to the international attention that the case attracted through the efforts of Amnesty International members.

[Russian Federation: Andrei Viktorovich Osenchugov, aged 17 and Aleksei Vladimirovich Shishkin, aged 17 (UA 285/02 issued September 20, 2002 and re-issued July 7, 2003)]

PLEASE PASS "UA QUOTES" ON TO A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE. TO JOIN THE URGENT ACTION NETWORK, CONTACT THE UA OFFICE AT THE ADDRESS, PHONE, FAX, OR EMAIL ON THE COVER.