

Amnesty International Miami Chapter Local Group 248 Newsletter - September 2005

Meetings are at 8 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month:
September 14, October 12, November 9, ...

Join us at **Books and Books**, 265 Aragon Avenue, Coral Gables, 305-442-4408

Amnesty Wants You!

Our group is addressing many critical issues. More dedicated people need to be active despite our recent decision to give up some of the areas which we had been working on. We could still use more help in dealing with the issues of Iraq and the aftermath of 9/11. It would also be fitting to have a local presence on refugee issues. If you have been thinking about coming to a meeting, please attend the next one and lend a hand. Additional committee meetings are now regularly scheduled.

Visit our website at: <http://www.aimiami.org/>

For newsletter submissions: ai248ai@netscape.net (by the first week of each month.)



Florida Drivers License Photo
of accused terrorist José Padilla

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, September 9, 2005

CONTACT: Gwen Fitzgerald
202-544-0200 x302

[Go to Original](#)

**Statement of Curt Goering
Senior Deputy Executive Director, Amnesty International USA
On Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals Decision
In *Padilla vs. Hanft***

Today's decision stating that the president can label a U.S. citizen arrested on U.S. soil an "enemy combatant" and hold him indefinitely without charge is appalling, chilling and contrary to international law.

The Court's ruling shows an extraordinary and damaging deference to the executive branch's asserted ability to detain individuals arbitrarily and indefinitely in the broad and ambiguously defined "global war on terror." Today's decision has rubber-stamped the president's specious assertion that these detentions are not bound by the rule of law.

All governments should take seriously their responsibility to protect their citizens from violent attacks. But an indefinite regime of "preventative detention" flies in the face of the fundamental principles on which the U.S. justice system was founded. Suspicion and innuendo cannot be used to deny anyone due process and a fair trial as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and international human rights law.

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Please join us this month to help in selecting the recipient of our Annual Human Rights Award. The nominees are: Randall Berg, Lida Rodriguez-Taseff, and John de Leon. Your vote really counts.

This is a reminder that annual dues are payable in September to renew your membership. For your convenience, dues may be mailed directly to our Treasurer, Donna Ragland.

Why We Do Human Rights Work

AI's current Urgent Action Network newsletter (at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent/newslett.html>) has this entry:

GUATEMALA: "After the Urgent Action Amnesty issued on my behalf I received protection from Peace Brigades International and this really saved my life."

- *Eloida Mejia Samayoa, 2004.*

Eloída Mejía Samayoa, President and Legal Representative of **Friends of Izabal's Lake Association**, is no longer receiving death threats. She had been threatened as a result of her work opposing the reactivation of mining activities in Izabal Department. The authorities have begun investigations into the threats.

Human Rights After 9/11

(More information on AI's concerns can be found at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/waronterror/index.do>.

Actions can be seen at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/waronterror/actions.do>)

Ali-Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, the first non-US national to be held as an "enemy combatant" on US soil, is now known to be held in conditions that appear to amount to torture, and has not received adequate treatment for his declining mental and physical health. He has now been held in solitary confinement without charge or trial for over three-and-a-half years.

Please send the letter below, protesting Mr. Al-Marri's treatment, to **President Bush**. This action can also be seen online at <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/action/index.asp?step=2&item=12072>.

Stopping Violence Against Women

For further information, please go to <http://www.amnestyusa.org/stopviolence/index.do>.)

Amnesty International is concerned that **Ghada Jamsheer** faces possible imprisonment on criminal charges that may be motivated because of her activism in advocating for women's rights in Bahrain. The charges pose a threat to her basic rights and freedoms as a human rights defender and may restrict her ability to campaign for women's human rights. They may also be intended to deter other women human rights defenders. Call on Bahrain to address these concerns.

The Crisis in Sudan

(AI's main web page on Sudan is at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/countries/sudan/index.do>)

We must continue to act on the outrages occurring in Darfur. By some estimates, as many as 400,000 people have been killed, and over two million have been displaced. We ask, this month, that you consider the case of some of those displaced people.

Over 200 residents, including a 13 year old disabled boy, **El-Amin Kuku**, of Soba Aradi IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) Camp in Khartoum North are said to be held in police custody, where they are reportedly beaten daily. Amnesty International is concerned for their lives, as four of the Soba Aradi detainees have already died in custody. We have reprinted a letter below that you can send to the Sudanese embassy in Washington.

Death Penalty News (Can You Make One Appeal?)

(Further material on capital punishment is available on the websites of Amnesty International's Program to Abolish the Death penalty, at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/abolish/>, and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP), at <http://www.ncadp.org/>.)

Five men were executed in the U.S. last month: **Timothy Johnston** in Missouri, **Robert Alan Shields** and **Gary Lynn Sterling** in Texas, **Kenneth Turrentine** in Oklahoma and **George Sibley** in Alabama. There have now been 981 executions in this country since 1977.

AI also notes, and condemns, the resumption of executions in Iraq. On September 1st, **Ahmad al-Jaf**, **Uday Dawud al-Dulaimi** and **Jasim Abbas** were hanged, after being convicted of kidnapping, rape and murder. Amnesty has strongly condemned all such violence, but realizes that social stability and development can never occur without the protection of human rights.

More hopefully, in Indiana, **Governor Mitch Daniels** commuted the death sentence of **Arthur Baird** to one of life in prison without parole. Mr. Baird, who tragically murdered his family in the 1980s, suffers from severe mental illness.

We have made progress over the last few years in limiting the extent of the death penalty. Please try to find time to make **even one appeal** on the executions now pending. We ask that, in each case, you seek a commutation of sentence to life in prison. Where you see a web link after the name of someone now facing execution, you can, if you are connected to the Internet, activate a link to an NCADP web page, from which you can send an appeal. Of course, you can use the contact information below to send a letter or fax, or make a phone call. It's helpful to make different types of appeals.

Texas: Now scheduled for execution are: **Frances Newton**, 9/14 http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1132; **Michael Riley**, 9/22 http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1137; **Ronald Ray Howard**, 10/6; **Luis Ramirez**, 10/20; and **Pedro Sosa**, 10/25. Please request of Governor Rick Perry that he grant a 30-day stay of execution (the most he is allowed to do on his own under Texas law), as well as clemency, if it is recommended by the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Please request of the Board that it make a recommendation to the Governor in favor of a commutation of sentence to life in prison, which is required before the Governor may grant one. Appeals may be made to: **Governor Rick Perry**, Office of the Governor / P.O. Box 12428, Austin, TX 78711-2418, phone: 512-463-1782 / fax: 512-463-1849, e-mail: Fill out the form at the bottom of the page at: <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/contact>. You may reach the **Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles** at: Attn: **Ms. Rissie L. Owens**, Presiding Officer, Executive Clemency Section: PO Box 132401, Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711-3401, phone: 512-406-5852, fax: 512-467-0945, 512-406-5482, email: bpp-pio@tdcj.state.tx.us.

Ohio: **John Spirko** is scheduled to be executed on 11/15. http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1133, **Herman Ashworth** http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1150, on 9/27 and **William Williams, Jr.** on 10/25. **John Spirko** received from Governor Taft, on 9/9/05, a delay of his execution date from 9/20 to 11/15. This followed a decision by the Ohio Parole Board to rehear his case. There is a question regarding Mr. Spirko's guilt, as no physical evidence ties him to the crime in question. Please make appeals to **Governor Bob Taft** at: Vern Riffe Center / 77 S. High Street, 30 Floor / Columbus, OH 43215 / phone: 614-644-0813 / fax: 614-466-9354 / e-mail: <http://governor.ohio.gov/contactinfopage.asp>.

Pennsylvania: **Daniel M. Saranchak** now faces execution on 9/22. Please make appeals to **Governor Ed Rendell** / 225 Main Capitol Bldg. / Harrisburg, PA 17120 / Tel: 717-787-2500 / Fax: 717-772-8284 / email: governor@state.pa.us or http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Governor/govmail.html.

Alabama: **John W. People's, Jr.** now faces death on 9/22 http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1148. Please make appeals to Alabama **Governor Bob Riley** asking that his sentence be commuted to life in prison. The Governor may be contacted at: State Capitol N-104 / 600 Dexter Avenue / Montgomery, AL 36130-2751 / Fax: 334-353-0004 / Tel: 334-242-7100 / email: governorbobriley@governor.state.al.us / web: http://www.governor.state.al.us/email/contact_form.htm

Indiana: **Alan Matheny** is scheduled to be put to death on 9/28 http://www.demaction.org/dia/organizations/ncadp/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=1156. Appeals can be made to: **Governor Mitch Daniels**, 206 State House, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2797, Fax: 317-232-3443, Tel: 317-232-4567. An appeal can be made online at: <http://www.in.gov/gov/contact/index.html>.

China / Tibet Human Rights News

September 2005

CHINA: Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, age 16

AI Concerns: unlawful detention, freedom of religion

Summary:

On 14 May 1995, the **Dalai Lama**, Tibet's exiled religious leader, announced that six-year old **Gendun Choekyi Nyima** was the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. Shortly after this announcement Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family are reported to have been taken from their home to Beijing and their whereabouts have been unknown ever since. The Chinese authorities have disputed the Dalai Lama's authority to announce the discovery of the reincarnated Panchen Lama and rejected Gendun Choekyi Nyima in November, choosing instead another six-year old boy, **Gyaltzen Norbu**, as the 11th Panchen Lama.

On 28 May, 1996, **Wu Jianmin**, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, acknowledged to the Committee on the Rights of the Child that Gendun Choekyi Nyima had not been seen in public for over a year and that he had been put under the protection of the government at the request of his parents. Wu Jianmin added that the boy was at risk of being kidnapped by Tibetan separatists and his security had been threatened but that he was in good condition and was living with his parents. No information was given concerning the whereabouts of the boy or his family and no independent observer has had access to them since they were last seen in May 1995.

Goal of Action:

To determine the whereabouts of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, and secure freedom of movement for him and his family.

Background Information

The type of Buddhism practiced in Tibet is sometimes known as Lamaism, because of the importance of priests known as lamas. The Panchen Lama is the second highest-ranking lama after the Dalai Lama in the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The successive Panchen Lamas are said to be incarnations of Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of the West. Traditionally, the Dalai Lama bears ultimate responsibility for identifying the new incarnation of the Panchen Lama and vice versa.

Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyaltsen was recognized as the Tenth Panchen Lama in 1949. Shortly thereafter he was taken into custody by the Chinese Communist army when it occupied western Tibet. He was raised under Chinese tutelage and throughout his life, the Chinese attempted to use him to lessen the Tibetan people's loyalty to the Dalai Lama.

In 1959 the Dalai Lama fled into exile. Still in Tibet, the 10th Panchen Lama resisted Chinese control. In 1968, he was imprisoned; in 1977 he was released from prison, but held under house arrest in 1982. He died in 1989 during a trip to Tibet at the age of 51.

That same year, a search committee for the next Panchen Lama was appointed by the Chinese authorities. Its leader was **Chadrel Rimpoche**, abbot of Tashilhunpo monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama. However, Chadrel Rimpoche was detained in May 1995, reportedly on suspicion of having communicated with the Dalai Lama over the choice of the reincarnation. He was accused in newspaper articles of "manipulating religious rituals and the historical conventions" and was sentenced to six years in prison. His term ended on 13 May 2001, but it is believed that he is now kept under house arrest.

A large number of monks left or were expelled from Tashilhunpo monastery after the identification of Gendun Choekyi Nyima as the Panchen Lama. Monks throughout Tibet are not permitted to voice their belief that Gendun Choekyi Nyima is the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. Nine monks from a monastery in Shigatse are reported to have been detained in January 1996 after burning pictures of seven year-old Gyaltsen Norbu, the boy approved by the Chinese authorities. (See AI documents: *Appeal for Ngawang Choephel*, ASA 17/49/96, 28 March 1996; *6-year-old boy missing and over 50 detained in Panchen Lama dispute*, ASA 17/07/96, 19 January 1996; *Three detained in Panchen Lama controversy*, ASA 17/40/95, 20 June 1995; *Crackdown on Tibetan dissent continues*, ASA 17/74/95, 29 September 1995.)

Recommended Actions:

Please send appeals in English or fluent Chinese to national and provincial authorities:

- expressing concern that Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family have not been seen at their home since May 1995 and that it is feared they may be under restriction;
- calling on the Chinese authorities to disclose their whereabouts and demanding that any restrictions are lifted immediately and that Gendun Choekyi Nyima and his family are free to return to their village and live without restriction or harassment.

Addresses:

Premier of the People's Republic of China

WEN Jiabao Zongli

Guowuyuan

9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie

Beijingshi 100032

People's Republic of China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of the State Council Bureau of Religious Affairs

YE Xiaowen Juzhang

Guowuyuan Zongjiao Shiwuju Guowuyuan

22 Xianmen Dajie

Beijingshi 100017

People's Republic of China

Salutation: Dear Director

Airmail postage: 80 cents



Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 51/140/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 242
6 September 2005

USA: Ensure the safety of victims of Hurricane Katrina

Amnesty International today expressed deep concern over reports that victims of the hurricane that devastated New Orleans and surrounding areas were left for days in increasingly desperate and unsafe circumstances.

The organization called on authorities to urgently deploy adequate resources to ensure that all those now evacuated or who remain in need in the affected areas are protected from attacks and are provided with food, water, adequate shelter and appropriate medical care.

Noting that many victims were rendered especially vulnerable to the impact of the disaster due to prevailing conditions of poverty, Amnesty International further called for a full, independent inquiry into whether authorities could have done more to ensure the safety of the affected population, and what should be done to facilitate their recovery.

In addition to the authorities' failure to ensure that basic human rights such as adequate shelter, water, food and medical attention were provided to the degree and speed required in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the organization noted with concern reports that thousands left trapped in a convention center and other locations were preyed on by armed gangs, and risked being shot, knifed or raped.

The government's duty to protect includes securing the city and surrounding areas, as well as bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice. However, Amnesty International is concerned that a "shoot-to-kill" policy authorized by Louisiana's governor and reportedly implemented by security forces could lead to a disproportionate and unlawful use of lethal force. This may apply, for example, in the case of unarmed individuals described as "looters," some of whom may be trying to seek supplies to survive in the absence of aid.

Amnesty International urged that police firearms be deployed only in response to an immediate threat of death or serious injury that cannot be contained by lesser means, as required by international standards. All shootings must be rigorously and impartially investigated, with the results made public.

Authorities should also ensure that all those in custody, including the thousands of prisoners reported to have been evacuated to other locations, have access to their families and attorneys at the earliest opportunity.

The organization expressed its deepest sympathy for the victims of the tragedy and support for survivors, relief workers and others working to provide relief, health care and other aid.

LATEST NEWS

- [Colombia](#): The Justice and Peace law will benefit human rights abusers
Sep 12, 2005
- [International Criminal Court](#): Amnesty International calls for all states to nominate candidates to be International Criminal Court judges
Sep 12, 2005
- [United Kingdom/Israel-OT](#): Amnesty International deplors failure to arrest Israeli war crimes suspect
Sep 12, 2005
- [UN](#): Governments must overcome obstacles and agree to adopt strong human rights provisions in outcome document
Sep 9, 2005

LATEST REPORTS

- [Summary of Amnesty International's International Criminal Court](#): Checklist to ensure the nomination of the highest qualified candidates for judges (Katherine Booth)
Sep 12, 2005
- [Indonesia](#): A briefing for EU and ASEAN countries concerning the deployment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission to Nangroe Aceh Darussalam Province
Sep 9, 2005
- [Myanmar](#): Leaving Home
Sep 8, 2005
- [Contracting out of Human Rights](#): The Chad-Cameroon pipeline project
Sep 7, 2005

Sample Letters

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

I am deeply concerned that the United States has held Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri without charge or trial in solitary confinement for over three and a half years. He has been held in conditions that appear to amount to torture, and has not received adequate treatment for his declining mental and physical health. I urgently request that he be given appropriate treatment for his physical and psychological health problems immediately, and given access to his family. I further request that he be released unless he is brought to a full and fair trial.

Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri is said to have been denied basic hygienic necessities such as adequate bedding, clothing and toilet paper. The prison doctors who have seen him have refused to deal adequately with his complaints. His lawyers were first allowed to meet him in October 2004, when he had been in custody for almost three years.

According to a lawsuit filed by his lawyers on August 8th, Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri has been held, shackled, in a cell measuring approximately 3x2 meters since June 23rd, 2003. The small cell window is covered with plastic, so he is not able to see the outside world. He is allowed only brief periods out for exercise. To make it difficult for him to sleep, a portable industrial fan is left on 24 hours a day near the door of his cell, and is reportedly turned up high when he is deemed to be "non-compliant." Sometimes when he is sleeping guards wake him by shaking him, or by banging constantly on his cell door.

As a devout Muslim, Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri prays five times daily at scheduled times; however, he has been denied a prayer rug and has not been given a clock, making it impossible for him to know when to pray. The lawsuit also alleges that prison officers have mistreated and disrespectfully handled his copy of the Qu'ran. The US Religious Freedom Restoration Act prohibits US authorities from discouraging free religious practice unless there is a compelling governmental interest. The lawsuit also describes how the cell is often made extremely cold and how the water supply is sometimes turned off, forcing him to defecate on his food tray so that the feces did not remain for days in the same cell where he lives and prays. The lawsuit also states that he has developed a number of medical conditions resulting from his detention, including "sharp and debilitating tingling pains in his leg," "vision problems, including seeing flickering lights and white spots ... constant headaches, back pain, dizziness, uncontrollable tremors ... and ringing in his ears." It would appear that he has not received adequate medical treatment for these conditions. The doctor who treated him for the tingling pains recommended that a special x-ray was needed to assess nerve damage, but that medical procedure has been denied. Further medical recommendations that he be given a chair with a good cushion and a thicker mattress were also denied.

The lawsuit says that he "has experienced a number of symptoms that demonstrate severe damage to his mental and emotional well-being, including hypersensitivity to external stimuli, manic behavior, difficulty concentrating and thinking, obsessive thinking, difficulty with impulse control, difficulty sleeping, difficulty keeping track of time and agitation." His lawyers argue that this behavior is a direct result of the prolonged isolation and other inhumane treatment.

During the first year he was held as an "enemy combatant" he was interrogated repeatedly. On one occasion he says that interrogators threatened to send him to Egypt or Saudi Arabia where, they told him, he would be tortured and sodomized, and his wife would be raped in front of him. Interrogators are also said to have falsely told him that some of his brothers and his father were in jail because of him, and promised that they would be released if he cooperated. He has not been interrogated for the past year.

Ali-Saleh Kahlah al-Marri reportedly entered the USA legally with his wife and five children on September 10th, 2001 to pursue postgraduate studies. He was arrested in December 2001 and held as a material witness in the investigation into the September 11th attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. He was subsequently charged with credit card fraud and making false statements to the FBI, but in June 2003, less than a month before he was due to stand trial, you designated him an "enemy combatant" and he was transferred to US military custody in the Naval Consolidated Brig in Charleston, South Carolina. He is the first non-US national to be held as an "enemy combatant" on US soil.

His treatment in detention may amount to torture, and I thus urge you to ensure that Ali-Saleh Kahlah al-Marri's allegations of ill-treatment be investigated and urge that anyone responsible be brought to justice.

Sincerely,

Sample Letters

Deputy Chief Yasser G. Shaheen
The Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain
3502 International Drive N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Deputy Chief Shaheen,

I am writing to express my serious concern that women's human rights defender Ghada Jamsheer faces charges that may be politically motivated and may be designed to deter her from carrying out her human rights work. She has been a critic of the family court system, and an advocate for the codification of family laws. As a result of her activism, she was charged with "insulting the judiciary," under articles 216 and 222 of the Penal Code and article 70 of the law on Press and Publications on 2002. These charges were apparently brought because of petitions and articles issued by the Women's Petition Committee, of which Ghada Jamsheer is the Director. Though the petitions and articles in question were issued between October 2002 and June 2003, the charges were not brought until April 13th, 2005. Ghada Jamsheer denied the charges, which were eventually dropped.

Ghada Jamsheer was also charged with defamation and slander by the husband of a victim of domestic violence, and by a family court judge. Such charges and legal actions, which carry with them the possibility of imprisonment, appear to be a violation of her right to freedom of expression, and seem to be aimed at harassing Ghada Jamsheer and intimidating her from working for the safety and dignity of women in Bahrain. I urge you to work to ensure that freedom of expression in Bahrain is guaranteed, so that activists such as Ghada Jamsheer can carry out their important work without fear of criminal charges. Though the charges brought by the husband of a victim of domestic violence have been dropped, the charges brought by the family court judge have not. If these charges against Ghada Jamsheer are based on her human rights work they should be dropped immediately and unconditionally.

The government of Bahrain should develop a national plan for implementing the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which requires States to respect and protect the rights of every person to carry out legitimate human rights work without fear. Article 12 of the Declaration states unequivocally: "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms." This includes women's human rights defenders such as Ghada Jamsheer.

I would also like to bring to your attention how important it is that family laws and the family court system in Bahrain guarantee justice and fairness and freedom from discrimination for all women. The rights and dignity and safety of women in Bahrain will not be sufficiently protected until such guarantees are in place and women's human rights activists are able to carry out their work without fear. Thank you for your consideration of this most serious matter, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Khidir Ahmed
2210 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington DC 20008

Tel: 202-338-8565
Fax: 202-667-2406
info@sudanembassy.org

Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to express concern for the safety of thirteen year old El-Amin Kuku, who is disabled and facing torture while detained in Khartoum. Kuku is one of some 208 detainees from the Soba Aradi Internally Displaced Persons camp who were arrested beginning on 19 May after violence broke out between IDPs and police attempting to forcibly relocate them in contradiction with standards established by the international community.

Among those who were arrested in May, only 19 have thus far been brought to court, and this was the first time they had had access to lawyers or to the outside world. Four of the Soba Aradi detainees, including Abdallah Daw Al-Bait Ahmed, have now died in custody; the others are reportedly beaten daily and I fear that they are being held in incommunicado detention after having been arrested arbitrarily. I am also concerned that the special conditions required of a disabled boy are not being met, and that his health is therefore being compromised further.

I join Amnesty International, the world's largest grassroots human rights organization, in expressing shock at the treatment of these individuals, in calling on the Government of Sudan to immediately and publicly condemn the beatings of the Soba Aradi detainees, to take action to prevent such ill-treatment from continuing, and to ensure for all detainees due process and access to lawyers, family members, medical care, and UN human rights monitors. In particular, the special needs of El-Amin Kuku, who is both a child and disabled, must be met according to the standards of international law. I also call for the deaths in custody to be fully and impartially investigated, and for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice. Finally, I urge the authorities to immediately reveal the names, number and whereabouts of all those arrested at Soba Aradi since the May clashes.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this important matter. I hope to receive a response from you informing me of progress in this situation.

Sincerely,

Human Rights Award Nominees

Randall Berg

Executive Director of the Florida Justice Institute, public interest law firm in Miami.

Mr. Berg, worked on the largest jail conditions class action lawsuit ever brought in the USA, *Arias v. Wainwright*. Result: significant improvements to conditions in Florida's 211 jails. The relief obtained spanned at least two decades until the Legislature repealed the statute underpinning the litigation.

Mr. Berg participated in making the Interest on Trust Accounts (IOTA) program a reality in Florida and spreading it through the country. The IOTA has created over \$2 billion nationwide since its inception in Florida, most of which has gone to fund legal services to the poor.

Mr. Berg won an appeal in the Florida Supreme Court in 2000 throwing out the Amendment Two that would have enshrined the death penalty in the Constitution after it had passed statewide by 72% in 1998. However, the victory proved to be short lived as the Legislature changed the statute for legislative resolutions to amend the Constitution, placed it back on the ballot in 2002 – this time properly – and passed.

Mr. Berg, in April 2005, reached one of the largest civil rights settlements in the history of Miami-Dade County on a suit that the Florida Justice Institute filed against the county in March 2004. Thousands of women illegally strip searched at the Women's Detention Center and other Miami-Dade County correctional facilities may qualify for a piece of the \$6.25 million a federal court judge approved in a class-action settlement.

Mr. Berg was the lead attorney of a coalition with the ACLU, the Black Caucus, the NAACP, and others statewide on the issue of felon disenfranchisement. A class action lawsuit was filed in 2001 on behalf of black lawmakers, several ex-offenders and a number of community groups challenging the state's failure to assist ex-felons in applying for the restoration of their civil rights, including the right to vote. The class action lawsuit asks the court to order Michael Moore, Secretary of the Department of Corrections, to comply with provisions of Florida law that require the Department of Corrections to assist ex-felons, prior to their release from supervision, with the lengthy and complicated application process of restoring their civil rights, including the right to vote. Florida is one of only 14 states in which convicted felons are permanently disenfranchised, or disqualified from voting in elections, until they apply for and are granted restoration of their civil rights by the Clemency Board made up of the Governor and members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Berg has several pending cases for prisoners, combating housing discrimination, and class actions for poor people.

John de Leon

John de Leon is a former Assistant Public Defender and former President of the Greater Miami Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, 1997-2001. Currently, he is a partner with the firm with of Sayre, Chavez & De Leon where he practices mainly litigation and criminal law.

He represented and continues to represent individuals on a pro bono basis. In fact, he was the recipient of the Voluntary Pro Bono Award presented by the Florida Supreme Court for group participation in assisting detainees at Guantanamo.

He has written several articles, given interviews to newspapers and television channels on different human rights issues. He has been very vocal regarding the police reaction and treatment of demonstrators in Miami during the FTAA summit. In fact, he cooperated with the ACLU in preparing a lawsuit against local authorities. Mr. de Leon was also very engaged in defending Cuban exiles' right to protest the Latin Grammys and wrote articles in newspapers to that effect.

Mr. de Leon was also very involved in monitoring the "Weed and Seed program" to combat drugs in Miami in 1998. African-Americans were being arrested for talking and walking on the streets of Miami in the so called "Weed and Seed area" – Liberty City. As the president of the ACLU at the time Mr. de Leon directly contacted the Department of Justice to complain about the discriminatory treatment of African-Americans as it relates to arrests. He also gave interviews to newspapers and was quoted saying that "the ACLU is not against lawful actions by police; we do take umbrage when police officers are involved in violating the rights of people who aren't doing anything wrong."

Mr. de Leon was featured in "ACLU: Freedom's Watchdog," a program that focused on civil liberties issues that impact South Florida in 2001.

Mr. de Leon spent a year in Colombia, where he helped modernize the court system. He is also a legal adviser to the Mexican Consulate and is a Board Member and Chair of the Nominating Committee of the Urban Environment League.

Lida Rodriguez-Taseff

Lida Rodriguez-Taseff practices in the area of commercial litigation and appears weekly on CNN's Saturday morning segment, Legal Briefs, and is the national Spanish media spokesperson for the American Civil Liberties Union on broad range of civil liberties issues including all aspects of First Amendment, press, religion, assembly and protest, association and expression, personal freedoms and privacy and criminal justice. As a Spanish-language spokesperson for the National ACLU, Rodriguez-Taseff had no qualms about criticizing U.S. Customs Agents on national television for their intrusive search tactics across airports nationwide. Even when Florida Governor Jeb Bush talked about charging foreigners to put their kids through schools, it was Rodriguez-Taseff who labeled it blatant discrimination on Spanish media outlets. And time after time in her native Spanish, she has debated hard-line advocates of "zero tolerance" policies on local Spanish-language radio stations, teaching immigrant parents about their kids' rights in schools.

From 2001 to 2003, she served as President of the American Civil Liberties Union's Greater Miami Chapter. As the president of the ACLU Miami Chapter she was front and center on a wide range of constitutional conflicts, from defending Cuban exiles' right to protest the Latin Grammys to opposing the repeal of the county's gay-rights ordinance. She has been a vociferous and relentless critic of city officials' handling of protests at the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in November 2003. She also played a pivotal role in establishing Miami's Civilian Investigative Panel, which is now pursuing allegations of police brutality during those FTAA protests.

She also served as Secretary for the Spanish Media Relations of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida and Secretary of American Civil Liberties Union of Dade County Chapter. Ms. Rodriguez-Taseff was listed in South Florida Business Journal's "Top Forty Under 40," 1998 and received the President's Award of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers, Dade Chapter, 1995-1996.

A Reminder

This is a reminder to members to renew their dues for the year. Please mail your payment (\$18) to our Treasurer:

Donna Ragland
526 North Rainbow Drive
Hollywood, FL 33021-6060

Thank you!

Announcement

A special invitation....



S O U T H B E A C H CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Sat., September 17, 2005
8:00pm – 9:30pm

Britto Central, Miami Beach

Festive reception, auction, and program
with composer and Villa-Lobos devotee
Ricardo Tacuchian & SBCE members.
\$25 suggested donation

RSVP and donation information: 305-673-2183

Sun., September 18, 2005

Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach

1:30 - 2:30pm

Lecture by Ricardo Tacuchian –
Brazilian composer, Fulbright scholar
and Rockefeller fellow will speak about
Heitor Villa-Lobos, Brazil's
most famous classical composer.

2:30 - 4:00pm

Concert by South Beach Chamber Ensemble

Villa-Lobos: Piano Trio No. 1
Copland: Vitebsk
Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No. 1



Bass Museum Concert Tickets:

\$5 members, \$10 non-members + \$8.00
museum admission. Reservations: call
305-673-7530 ext. 1015 or
rkornbluth@bassmuseum.org

Thomas Moore, Violin
Michael Andrews, Cello
Michael Linville, Piano
Ricardo Tacuchian, Composer

Images: Romero Britto, "Piano Man" © 2000, "Music" ©2004



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We envision a world where music inspires and energizes all people.

The South Beach Chamber Ensemble is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.

Please send contributions to the South Beach Chamber Ensemble, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, #8C, Miami Beach, Florida 33139

For more information call 305 673-2183.



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Coral Gables, FL 33114

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“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights