



AI Group 48 March 2025 Newsletter

Next Meeting March 13th On Zoom

Good News: Rocky Myer's Death Sentence Commuted by Alabama Governor Kay Ivey

In response to Alabama Governor Kay Ivey commuting the death sentence of Rocky Myers, TJ Riggs, Alabama State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator for Amnesty International USA said: "We celebrate the news that Alabama Governor Kay Ivey has commuted Rocky Myers' death sentence, even more so at a time when the state had initiated the process to set his execution date.

Read More: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/commuting-death-sentence-is-step-toward-justice-for-rocky-myers/>



Summary of 2025 AIUSA Annual General Meeting

by Terrie Rodello

Amnesty International's hybrid Annual General Meeting occurred in Detroit, Michigan, from February 21-23, 2025. Although I was hesitant to fly to Detroit in February, the weather was like Portland's a few weeks ago when it snowed. Snow was on the ground, but the temperatures were in the 30s, the sidewalks walkable, and the sky blue. It was called a "heat wave". I am glad I attended in person.

Over 400 people attended the meeting. The key message of the meeting was that AIUSA must grow and broaden its movement to overcome the current threats to human rights at home and abroad.

Organizers held many workshop sessions, including one on justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which featured an interview with Christian Rumu, the International Secretariat Campaigner. Among other sessions were the campaign for the rights of garment workers in Sri Lanka, the International Criminal Court, police violence in Brazil, and Amnesty's genocide report.

Several "fireside chats" were held, including one focusing on the AIUSA governance process. Concern was expressed regarding the low percentage of Amnesty members voting for the AIUSA Board of Directors. Although AIUSA is a membership-based organization, only 1.1% of its 200,000 members voted in the last board election. Other chats focused on the Rocky Myers death penalty case in Arkansas, and the End Gun Violence Campaign.

In Action Alley, many action tables and displays covered several rooms and featured many actions, especially for the Middle East, Israel, Sri Lanka, and the death penalty. Representative Rashida Tlaib of Michigan gave a powerful speech about the challenges in Congress and answered questions.

Attending the AGM was an opportunity to ask Paul O'Brien, AIU-

SA's Executive Director, about the AIUSA assessment sent to the International Secretariat (IS). The IS faces a difficult financial situation. A hiring freeze is in place, and critical researchers and campaigners in other sections have left for other opportunities. Amnesty cannot afford to lose its researchers and campaigners, as research is the foundation of our work. Paul assured us he and other section leaders are addressing this issue to put the IS on a better financial footing now and in the future.

A round table discussion on the AISUA Strategic Planning 2027-2030 is underway, and the opinions of members are important. At my table, the discussion focused on how to grow our movement and reach out to other groups. This discussion is ongoing, and everyone can make their voices known. (See the strategic planning article on this page.)

Besides attending the working parties, I attended the Voting Plenary on Sunday. There were four resolutions. They involved adding youth to the board, changes to the terms and region requirement for the National Resolutions Committee members, and providing the use of boycotts, sanctions and divestiture (BSD) as a campaign tool for IS campaigns. This resolution was a member-led initiative passed by all regional conferences. Passage at the AGM plenary vote was the final step. With its passage, it goes to the AIUSA board, which we have learned supports it. The good news is that it passed overwhelmingly. Something like 130 for and 2 against, single-digit (6?) abstentions with no opposition, just questions.

The AGM allowed me to connect with old friends and members from other states, particularly students. The meeting energy was reinvigorating.

Returning to Portland and Group 48, I wonder how Group 48 will grow to meet the challenges faced by Amnesty International and human rights. Please join us at our next virtual meeting on Thursday, March 13th to discuss.

Amnesty International USA Strategic Planning, 2027-2030: Add your voice to shape AIUSA's future!

One session at the AGM was on AIUSA Strategic Planning for 2027-2030 to help shape the future of AIUSA and grow the movement. We have a chance to add our voices to this important discussion.

As shared last week by our Board Chair, Ann Burroughs, a new webpage has been set up to keep members informed and engaged in the process of shaping the future of AIUSA together. :

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/strategic-framework-planning/>

If you have not already done so, please take a few moments to respond to the polling questions on the webpage, and add your voice to the process!



Justice for the August 30th Goma Massacre

On August 30, 2023, a deliberate attack by the Congolese army against an unarmed, peaceful assembly of protesters left at least 56 people dead in Goma, the capital of North Kivu. Victims and their families still wait for true justice. Please send a message to President Félix Tshisekedi demanding justice and reparations for them.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/justice-for-august-30th-goma-massacre/>

Group Coordinators

Marty Fromer and Terrie Rodello

Treasurer -- Tena Hoke

Newsletter -- Daniel Webb

OR Area Coordinator -- Marty Fromer

Indonesia actions -- Max White

China / Uyghur actions -- Marty Fromer

Iran POC -- Tena Hoke

Concert Tabling -- Will Ware

Central Africa/ Oregon State Death

Penalty Abolition-- Terrie Rodello

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Thailand: 'Deportation' of Uyghurs to China 'unimaginably cruel'

Responding to reports that a group of about 40 Uyghurs who have been detained in Thailand since 2014 were today deported to China, Amnesty International's China Director Sarah Brooks said:

"The forcible return of these men, or indeed any Uyghurs, to China would place them at risk of serious human rights violations. We urge the government of Thailand to clarify their status.

"Their ordeal is already chilling: they fled repression in China, only to find themselves arbitrarily detained in Thailand for more than a decade. The fact that they now may be forcibly returned to a country where Uyghur and other non-Han ethnic groups in Xinjiang have faced torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance is unimaginably cruel.

"The Thai government should have protected these men, but instead it has wilfully exposed them to these grave risks. In doing so it has ignored pleas from Amnesty International and United Nations (UN) experts who urged it not to violate the internationally and domestically recognized principle of non-refoulement. And this just as Thailand has been elected to the UN Human Rights Council.

"We now call on the governments of Thailand and China to disclose the whereabouts of these individuals, and – if they continue to be in custody – to ensure that the full spectrum of their rights is respected, including their right to be free from torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

"Many of these men are in extremely poor health after enduring years in detention. They must have access to appropriate and adequate medical care. We call for an end to their ordeal, and urge authorities to uphold their right to freedom of movement. It is past time that they are allowed to safely rejoin their families."

The men deported today are among about 300 Uyghurs who were apprehended by the Thai authorities on 13 March 2014 after they had fled persecution and discrimination in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. A total of 109 people from the group were deported to China in July 2015.

Amnesty International has documented massive and systematic abuses by the Chinese government against Uyghurs in Xinjiang – including in internment camps, where over a million people have been arbitrarily detained.

In a 2021 report, Amnesty found that the Chinese government has committed at least the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture and persecution against Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

In a letter to the Thai government in January 2025, a group of UN experts said 23 of 48 men remaining in detention were reportedly suffering from serious health conditions including "diabetes, kidney dysfunction, paralysis of the lower body, skin diseases, gastrointestinal illnesses and heart and lung conditions".

Thailand is bound by the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the transfer of persons to any country or jurisdiction where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations.

Arrest and Detention of Mahmoud Khalil Is Chilling Attack on Human Rights

In response to the Trump administration's unlawful arrest and detention of Mahmoud Khalil, a lawful permanent resident and recent graduate of Columbia University, Paul O'Brien, Amnesty International USA's Executive Director, made the following statement:

"The arrest and detention of Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian student activist and lawful permanent resident, is the latest attack on human rights by the Trump administration. Each and every one of us – regardless of immigration status – has the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and due process.

"Targeting and threatening peaceful protesters and their immigration status for the content of their protest, such as advocating for the human rights of Palestinians, is a violation of human rights. This targeting sends a chilling message to people across this country, on and off campuses, that anyone exercising their rights will be subject to repression, detention, and possible deportation. And for the immigrant communities already living in fear throughout the U.S., they are now only further pushed into the shadows with fear that they could be deported for speaking out.

"No matter how the Trump administration tries to manipulate it, freedom of expression is a human right, not a deportable offense."

Urgent Action: United Arab Emirates Egyptian-Turkish Poet Forcibly Disappeared

NAME AND PRONOUN: Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi (he/him).

February 7th, 2025 -- Egyptian-Turkish poet, Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi, has been subjected to enforced disappearance since his extradition from Lebanon to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on January 8, 2025. Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi was arrested by Lebanese security forces on December 28, 2024 at the Masnaa border crossing between Lebanon and Syria. The Lebanese authorities accepted the extradition request by the Emirati authorities on charges of spreading “fake news” and “disturbing public security”, in connection to a video he posted on his social media platforms while in Syria criticizing Egyptian, Emirati, and Saudi Arabian authorities. Concerns for his safety and wellbeing are mounting as his family has been unable to obtain any information about his fate, exact whereabouts or legal status; and he has been denied consular visits by Turkish authorities.

Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi is an Egyptian-Turkish poet living and working in Türkiye. He is the son of late prominent Egyptian Islamic scholar, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. His sister, Ola Al-Qaradawi, was arrested in Egypt in June 2017 and has spent four years arbitrarily detained on bogus terrorism related charges. The Egyptian authorities sentenced Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi in his absence in 2017 to five years in prison on charges of spreading false news among others, in a politically motivated case. On January 26, 2025, the Egyptian Parliament discussed and approved a new treaty to transfer convicted prisoners between Egypt and the UAE. If extradited to Egypt, Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi would be at real risk of enforced disappearance, torture, and other ill-treatment, and unfair trial leading to prolonged unjust imprisonment.

Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi's arbitrary detention came after he made comments critical of the Emirati, Saudi Arabian, and Egyptian authorities, which is protected under the right to freedom of expression. Under international law and standards, freedom of expression applies to all kind of ideas, and speech can only legitimately be restricted under international law if it violates the rights of others, or, advocates hatred and incites discrimination or violence. Forcibly extraditing him to a country where he is likely to face persecution is a flagrant breach of the

principle of non-refoulement, which under international human rights law guarantees that no one is to be returned to a country where he or she would face torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, or punishment and other irreparable harm. On January 8, 2025, several UN Special Rapporteurs issued a press release urging the Lebanese authorities not to extradite him “to a country where there are substantial grounds to believe that he would be in danger of torture, enforced disappearance or other grave human rights violations”.

Since 2011, scores of people in the UAE have been detained in relation to the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. In 2012, after a grossly unfair mass trial of 94 defendants, known as the UAE94, 69 people were convicted and sentenced to between seven and 15 year prison terms, scores of them for their demands for reform and democracy. Fifty-nine of those imprisoned in the case remain arbitrarily detained after completing their sentences.

On May 17, 2023, Turkish-Emirati citizen Khalaf al-Rumaithi, was forcibly deported to the UAE from Jordan. He was one of the UAE 94 sentenced to 15 years in prison in his absence and had been living exile in Türkiye for the past decade but had flown to Jordan on May 7, 2023 in search of an Arabic school for his children. The state-owned Emirates News Agency, announcing his deportation from Jordan and arrest in the UAE, said that he will face a retrial on the charge of affiliation with an organization “that aims to oppose the foundational principles of the UAE government”.

The UAE has yet to ratify key human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Nonetheless, many of the provisions of the two covenants are drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which have over time become part of customary international law and are therefore binding to all states.

Sample Letter

Your Highness,

I write to you to express my grave concern over the enforced disappearance of Egyptian-Turkish poet, Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi. Lebanese security forces arrested him on December 28, 2024 upon his return

from a visit to Syria. During a visit to Damascus in December 2024, Abdul Rahman Al- Qaradawi filmed himself walking around the Umayyad Mosque and criticizing the authorities of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. According to his family and lawyers, this short clip widely shared on social media triggered his arrest, which followed a provisional arrest warrant issued by the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council, at the request of the Emirati authorities. The Egyptian authorities also made a separate provisional arrest request.

On January 7, 2025, the Lebanese authorities approved the extradition of Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi to the UAE despite concerns that he would be at risk of human rights violations including arbitrary detention and unfair trial. Since his extradition to the UAE, his family has been trying to locate him without success and have not had any communication with him. Requests for a consular visit by the Turkish authorities have not been granted.

I urge you to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi, allow him to communicate with his family and lawyers, ensure he has access to adequate healthcare, and is granted a consular visit from the Turkish authorities. Moreover, as his detention is solely related to the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression,

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- Click [here](#) to report your action(s) on UA 13.25. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahy-an President of the United Arab Emirates
Twitter/X: @MohamedBinZayed
Your Highness,

CC: Embassy of UAE in the United States
His Excellency Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba
3522 International Court, NW, Suite 400,
Washington DC 20008

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSI-
BLE UNTIL: July 7, 2025

I ask you to immediately release him and allow him to travel to Türkiye.
Yours sincerely,

The U.S. Must Respect, Protect, and Fulfill the Human Right to Education

March 11th, 2025--In response to the Trump administration slashing the U.S. Department of Education by 50 percent, Tarah Demant, Director of Programs with Amnesty International USA said the following:

“As President Trump’s administration makes drastic cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, we remind the U.S. government of its obligation to ensure all students in the U.S. continue to have equal access to education, which is the opposite of what dismantling this department will achieve.

“The Department of Education manages multiple federal programs and oversees the implementation of civil rights protections that work to ensure that all students – regardless of their race, gender, wealth, (dis)ability, immigration status, neighborhood, and other factors – are not discriminated against and have access to their human right to education. Mak-

ing cuts to the Department of Education means, among other things, weakening these protections for students across the country. The administration, completely disregarding its obligation to ensure all can fully access their right to education, knows that marginalized students will suffer the most from this move.

“While education is a human right in itself, it is also an empowerment right, indispensable to the realization of other human rights opens in a new tab, including the ability to actively participate in the political life of the country. An educated citizenry is a threat only to a government bent on violating human rights. The Trump administration should be working to increase educational protections and resources instead of weakening them, and should commit to fighting for human rights instead of working to strip them from people.”