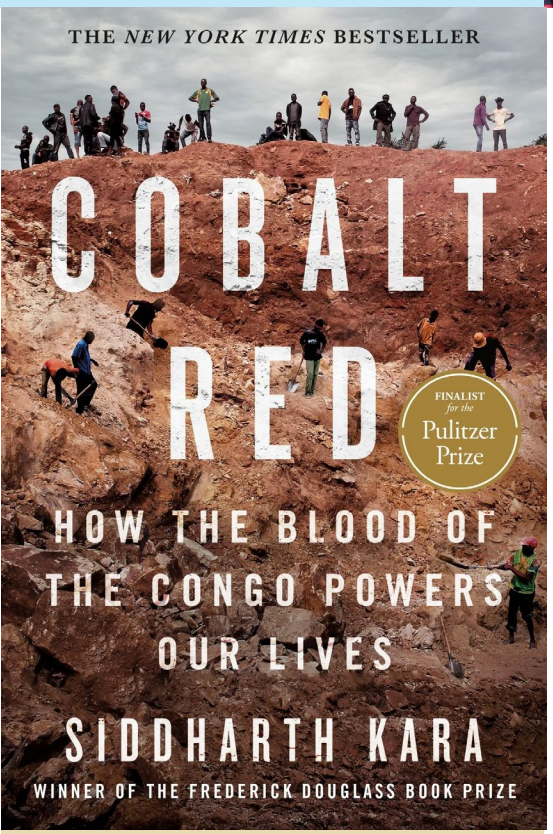
# Group 48
# Portland, Oregon

**November 2026 Newsletter**

**Next Meeting November 12th on Zoom**




## AI Group 48 Book Discussion

**November 19th, 7:30 pm**

See details on page 2

## Write for Rights 2026

AI Group 48 will be at Bold Coffee and Books, 1755 SW Jefferson Street, **Saturday, Dec. 12 from 2-5pm** for this year's Write for Rights Campaign. For more information see the article on page 5.

## Governor Newsom Moves California Closer to Ending the Death Penalty

November 5, 2026--In response to California Governor Gavin Newsom's announcement today that he will grant clemency and commute the death sentences of those he can on California's death row and recommend the California Supreme Court review the other cases, Nadia Daar, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA, said:

"This is a day that will be remembered in California's history and resonate globally for years to come. Responding to calls from Clemency California, Amnesty International, and more than 40 international organizations, Governor Newsom has announced a decisive and powerful step away from the use of the death penalty – the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

"Governor Newsom's moratorium on the use of the death penalty upon taking office almost 8 years ago was an important step, but it was always temporary. Now, as he leaves office, he has taken another step to correct the injustice of the death penalty and solidified his position against the death penalty and building a foundation for others in California to continue to move the state towards full abolition.

"California has gone two decades without an execution, yet, with more than 550 people, has the largest death row in the nation. Governor Newsom's decision turns that long pause into meaningful and lasting progress against an inherently cruel, discriminatory and irreversible system that is antithetical to human rights.

"The death penalty should be abolished, everywhere. Today marks a significant moment for human rights in California and across the country, but it is not the finishing line. The world is watching, and this decision is showing that progress is possible, and the United States, which remains among a small group of 17 countries that continues to carry out executions, can move beyond the death penalty."

According to the California Constitution, a governor can directly grant clemency or commute sentences for individuals with only one conviction (which accounts for roughly 40% of the state's death row). For people with multiple felony convictions, the governor cannot grant

*Graphics used are either in the public domain or from Amnesty International*

clemency unless a majority of the California Supreme Court formally approves it.

As of 2025, 113 countries had abolished the death penalty for all crimes, and 145 had abolished it in law or practice. Year after year, the United States is consistently in the top handful of countries that uses the death penalty. According to Amnesty International's latest annual report, only 17 countries carried out executions in 2025. Meanwhile, in 2025, executions in the U.S. climbed to their highest level since 2009.

In 2025, the U.S. carried out 47 executions in 11 states, reaching the highest annual total since 2009.

Florida drove the spike with 19 executions. South Carolina, Texas, and Alabama followed with five executions in each state. Other states that used the death penalty were Tennessee (3), Arizona (2), Indiana (2), Mississippi (2), Oklahoma (2), Missouri (1) and Louisiana (1). The U.S. was among the top five highest-executing countries of 2025.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, without exception, regardless of the circumstances of the crime, the guilt or innocence of the person, or the method of execution.

***Terrie Rodello***

***AIUSA Oregon State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinator***

## Our Banned Books Event at Bold Coffee and Books a Great Success

Group 48 members wrote 113 letters at last month's event. Thanks to everyone who was able to participate!

## Group 48 Book Discussion on November 19th

We are having our first book discussion group session on November 19th, featuring ***Cobalt Red,*** written by Siddharth Kara. We will be meeting at 7:30pm at the Cedar Hills New Seasons, 3495 SW Cedar Hills Blvd, in Beaverton, in the seating area near the hot food bar, which serves food till 8pm. The store is open till 9pm.

From the publisher's blurb for Cobalt Red: "An unflinching investigation reveals the human rights abuses behind the Congo's cobalt mining operation—and the moral implications that affect us all.

Cobalt Red is the searing, first-ever exposé of the immense toll taken on the people and environment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by cobalt mining, as told through the testimonies of the Congolese people themselves. Activist and researcher Siddharth Kara has traveled deep into cobalt territory to document the testimonies of the people living, working, and dying for cobalt. To uncover the truth about brutal mining practices, Kara investigated militia-controlled mining areas, traced the supply chain of child-mined cobalt from toxic pit to consumer-facing tech giants, and gathered shocking testimonies of people who endure immense suffering and even die mining cobalt.

The book is available in hardcover, paperback, and as an audio book. If you don't have time to read the book, there are interviews with the author on youtube that would also be helpful, such as this one on Democracy Now. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7I3K7fhLmcE&t=212s

We have several other books under consideration for later discussions, and will have more discussion of these at our next group meeting.

**Group Coordinators**
Marty Fromer and Terrie Rodello
**Newsletter** -- Daniel Webb
**OR Area Coordinator** -- Marty Fromer
**Indonesia actions** -- Max White
**China / Uyghur actions** -- Marty Fromer
**Central Africa/ Oregon State Death Penalty Abolition**-- Terrie Rodello

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Within the United States
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**$0.65** - Domestic Postcard
International Postage
**$1.75** - Up to 1 oz

## Urgent Action: China Artist Given Maximum Sentence for Art

**Name and pronoun: Gao Zhen (he/him/his)**

Gao Zhen, 70 years old, is a prominent figure in contemporary Chinese art and a member of the renowned Gao Brothers duo. On August 26, 2024, Gao was detained while traveling in China with his wife and son. Around 30 police officers raided his studio in Yanjiao, a town in Sanhe City, Hebei province. The authorities photographed his artworks and confiscated several sculptures – most of which were created over a decade ago—before sealing the studio.




On August 25, 2026, the Sanhe City People's Court, in Hebei Province, convicted Gao Zhen of "slandering China's heroes and martyrs" and sentenced him to the maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment. His sentence is due to end on August 25, 2027. Gao Zhen has appealed both the conviction and sentence, and the case has been transferred to the Langfang Intermediate People's Court.

In his final court statement, Gao Zhen argued that the charges were based on artworks created between 2005 and 2009, many years before the offense used against him was introduced into criminal law. He questioned the retroactive application of the law and defended his work as legitimate artistic expression. He also spoke of his desire to return to his family, stating that his greatest wish was to reunite with his wife and young son.

There are serious concerns regarding Gao Zhen's health and wellbeing in detention. Prior to sentencing, reliable sources reported that the 70-year-old artist suffered from multiple health conditions, including lumbar spine disease and fluid accumulation in his knees, and had reportedly collapsed several times while detained. Following his sentencing on August 25, 2026, Gao Zhen reportedly vomited blood several times and was taken from the detention center to hospital for examination. Although the immediate symptoms later subsided, the cause remains unknown, increasing concerns about his access to adequate medical care while in detention.

His wife and young child have also suffered. Gao's wife remains banned from leaving the country under the pretext of "national security," though no formal charges have been filed. Their 8-year-old son, a U.S. citizen, has the legal right to leave the country but is in practice unable to do so without being accompanied, ideally by his parents. The de facto travel ban has hindered his schooling for over two years.

Since the 1980s, the Gao Brothers have employed satirical humor to shed light on the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution, consistently challenging the limits of social commentary. Their work offers a sharp critique of the Cultural Revolution and former Chinese leader Mao Zedong, exposing the extent of the authoritarian practices employed during Mao's regime. These subjects remain deeply sensitive and for many, taboo, in contemporary China.

Sample letter

*Dear Secretary liu*

*I am writing to express my deep concern about the continued deprivation of liberty of artist Gao Zhen, who on August 25, 2026, was convicted of "slandering China's heroes and martyrs" and sentenced to the maximum three-year prison term simply for his peaceful artistic expression. He has appealed the verdict, and the case has been transferred to the Langfang Intermediate People's Court.*

*It is also alarming to learn about Gao Zhen's deteriorating health in detention. According to recent information, the day after his sentencing he reportedly*

*vomited blood several times and was taken to hospital for examination. Although the immediate symptoms have reportedly subsided, this underscores the urgency of ensuring that he receives appropriate medical care and is protected from any form of torture or ill-treatment, so as not to worsen the situation. My distress further extends to Gao Zhen's family members. It has been reported that his wife and child, despite not being accused of any crime, have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, and restrictions on their rights, including a de facto exit ban, since his initial detention. Such treatment is punitive and violates their rights to freedom of movement.*

*I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Gao Zhen. Pending his release, ensure that Gao's right to communicate with his family is fully respected and protected, and that he is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment. He must receive adequate and independent medical assessment and treatment. Finally, I urge you to stop harassing and threatening his family and allow them to leave the country freely and safely;*

*Yours sincerely,*




TAKE ACTION:

• Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter above as a guide or use your own words.

• Click here to report your action(s) on Third UA 106.24. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Secretary Liu Xiaopeng
Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the CPC Langfang Municipal Committee
Building 9, Citizen Service Center No. 58 Yunpeng Road
Guangyang District, Langfang City
Hebei Province 065000
People's Republic of China

Send a copy of your letter to the address below.

Ambassador Xie Fang
Embassy of China in the United States
3505 International Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Email: chinaembpress_us@mfa.gov.cn

Please take action as soon as possible until February 28th, 2027.



## Indonesia: Military silences dissent with disinformation campaigns branding activists and journalists 'foreign agents'

"When Amazon reportedly paid $40 million to acquire the Melania Trump documentary, I recalled covering corruption in Indonesia in the 1990s, when the wife of the president, Madame Tien, was nicknamed Madame Tien Percent…" (Nicholas Kristof, New York Times, Oct 24)

The trend of increasing corruption in the United States Administration is mirrored in present day Indonesia. The President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto, is directly connected to dictator Suharto by family and by practices. Corruption in both countries is accompanied by governmental misinformation on social media. Amnesty details the Indonesian problem in a recent report. From the report: "Meta, TikTok, X and YouTube allow harmful content to spread rapidly… This disinformation is a political weapon, deployed to consolidate the government's power when public criticism intensifies, while demonizing and weakening those who dare to speak out. By branding protesters, journalists and human rights defenders as 'foreign agents', Indonesia's authorities and their supporters are deliberately shifting attention away from people's legitimate grievances."

What Amnesty describes in Indonesia has ramifications for human rights in many countries. One a particularly egregious example is Brazil. "Five days after his defeat in the first round of the Brazilian presidential election, leftwing president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva spent almost 24 hours unable to boost his [Meta owned] Instagram posts, while his opponent, far-right senator Flávio Bolsonaro could… about a dozen watchdogs and research groups published reports describing what they called indications that Meta may have favoured the senator's campaign." (The Guardian Oct 21)

The US Administration has since welcomed Flávio Bolsanaro to the United States.

--Max White



The case of Ruth Lopez is one of the nine cases Group 48 will be writing on in the **Write for Rights** Campaign

## Group 48 Write for Rights 2026 at Bold Coffee and Books on Saturday, December 12th from 2-5pm

Since 2001, millions of people around the world have come together with a simple but powerful belief: that ordinary people, wherever they are, can help change someone else's life. Together, they have helped secure the release of people unlawfully detained, reunite families, challenge abusive laws and remind countless individuals that they have not been forgotten.

You can find all the materials for the cases we will be writing on here. Please join us!

