

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2008

PODCAST

Duration 6'52''

Hello and welcome to the podcast for Amnesty International's Report 2008

Eleanor Roosevelt, Paris 1948

'This Universal Declaration of Human Rights may well become the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere...'

The 10th of December 1948 – and the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The world was recovering from the horrors of war and wanted a better future – it was designed to be a global document and was adopted without a single vote against.

'Those in favour. In favour 53. Against, nil.' Applause

Sixty years on and despite gains, justice and equality are still being fought for and fought over. The government in Myanmar used extreme violence to stop political protest. Amnesty International met with monks who witnessed the crackdown in Yangon.

Monk from Myanmar

'The monks sustained mainly head injuries. And some civilians sustained leg injuries. Some of the injured were so bloody that you couldn't tell where blood was coming from. Some of the monks lost the top part of their robes. I saw civilians helping the injured monks. Most of their injuries were head injuries. The riot police were aiming for the head.'

In Tibet, more protests, some violent, targeting ethnic Chinese, saw the authorities crack down, killing scores and detaining thousands. And in Kenya more than a thousand died and 300 thousand were left homeless after disputed election results.

Kenyan Man Vox Pop

'The government is not taking care of the people, of the children of this area.'

Irene Khan is the Secretary General of Amnesty International.

Irene Khan

'This is the 60th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is about time that governments apologised for six decades of human rights failures and its about time that they committed themselves afresh to living up to the promises that they made in 1948.'

The powerful countries that claim to stand up for human rights have ignored them time and again. As a consequence, Amnesty International says the USA and Europe have lost respect, are losing their ability to influence other countries and aren't winning the war on terror. Malcolm Nance was a Counter-Terrorism Advisor to the US government.

Malcolm Nance

Never before have nations, western nations, truly resorted to a systematic, organised, top-down, presidential-ordered, torture system. Now, the first thing that that does, is help the terrorist group. You've just met all the strategic objectives of the terrorist group.

2007 saw civilians continue to suffer in long-running conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Colombia, and Iraq. Ahmad is one of thousands of Palestinians who have fled Iraq to desert camps along the border with Syria.

Ahmad

'The majority of Palestinians decided not to return to Iraq and became refugees in Al-Tanf or Al-Walid Camp. They fear for their lives in Iraq because they are in danger and exposed to killings. They say they will stay in the desert and not go back to Iraq.'

Despite widespread outrage at the continuing murder, rape and violence in Darfur, the situation there also barely changed in 2007. Meanwhile Sudan's biggest trading partner and the country best placed to press for change has its own preoccupations.

Beyond its Olympic responsibilities, Amnesty International expects China to improve its human rights record because it's now a global power and has human rights responsibilities both at home and abroad and it can't live up to those by executing more people than any other country, by refusing to allow freedom of expression, by detaining people without fair trials and by harassing human rights activists and their

families. For peacefully promoting human rights, Hu Jia spent most of 2007 under house arrest in Beijing.

Hu Jia

'Two State Security Police agents hide behind my apartment for surveillance. They may be scared I'll escape, or have friends visiting at the back of the building. I hope the police will leave as soon as possible. Letting us gain our inherent freedom. The freedom we are born with.'

Hu Jia was formally charged with inciting subversion in January 2008, and is now serving a three and a half year prison sentence.

Like China, Russia has global human rights responsibilities. Will a change of leader give a chance for a new start and a chance to roll back the repression that demonstrators, journalists and NGOs have been facing? The crimes committed in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya, continue to go unpunished. Ibragim Gazdiev was seized by armed men in August 2007. His father Makhmut has not seen or heard from him since.

Makhmut Gazdiev

'The people from the authorities, they've concentrated all their efforts to not find the people who kidnapped my son. Whatever happens, they will not return him. Nobody who is kidnapped is ever returned.'

But where governments have failed their people, Amnesty International has seen people taking things into their own hands: the monks that marched in Myanmar, the lawyers in Pakistan and the vote at the UN for a global moratorium on the Death Penalty – all these have shown that in this 60th Anniversary year, there is a powerful force for change.

Irene Khan

'On the one hand, we've seen governments' denial, and on the other hand we have seen people's demand for human rights - and therefore the call for accountability. And that call for accountability is going to get stronger and stronger and stronger and governments ignore it at their peril.'

Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan concluding the podcast for the Annual Report 2008. Thanks for listening. For more information please go to www.amnesty.org