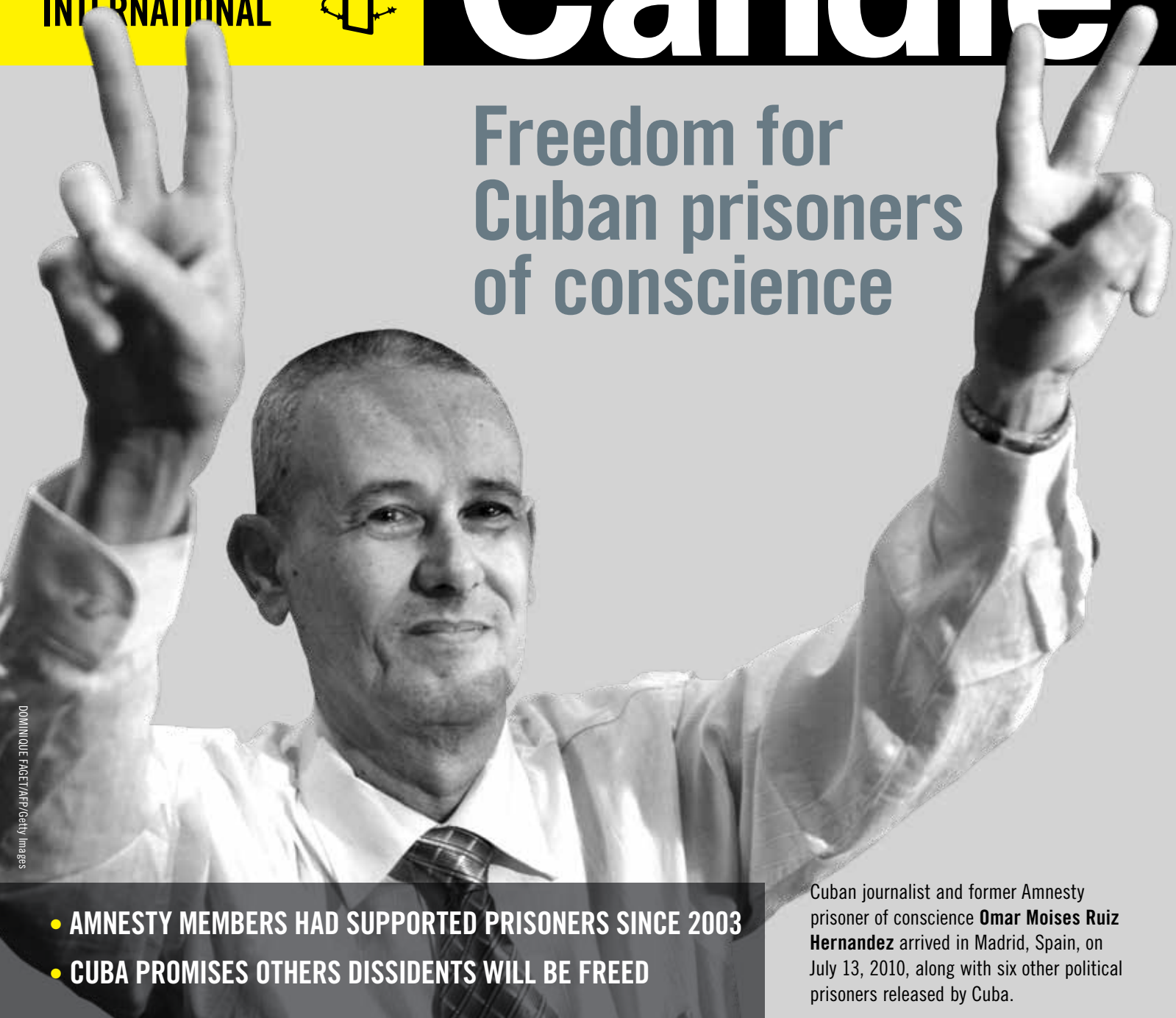




Freedom for Cuban prisoners of conscience



DOMINIQUE FAGET/AFP/Getty Images

- AMNESTY MEMBERS HAD SUPPORTED PRISONERS SINCE 2003
- CUBA PROMISES OTHERS DISSIDENTS WILL BE FREED

Cuban journalist and former Amnesty prisoner of conscience **Omar Moises Ruiz Hernandez** arrived in Madrid, Spain, on July 13, 2010, along with six other political prisoners released by Cuba.

In July 2010, the Cuban authorities released seven prisoners of conscience who had been imprisoned unjustly for more than seven years. The seven were reunited with their families, and together they flew to Madrid, Spain.

The seven former prisoners of conscience are the first of 52 political prisoners that Cuba has promised to release. The 52 have been held since the Cuban authorities ordered mass arrests on March 18, 2003. On that day, Cuban security agents searched homes across

the island, detaining 73 people and confiscating computers, fax machines, typewriters, books and papers.

Many opposition leaders were imprisoned during the crackdown. The authorities jailed teachers, librarians, journalists and doctors as well as political and human rights activists.

All faced hasty, unfair trials and were found guilty. Their crimes? They had spoken their minds. They had exercised their right to freedom of speech, and had voiced their support for democracy and for human rights.

For over seven years, Amnesty members have campaigned for the release of these prisoners of conscience. Your support has made a difference. In the years since the 2003 crackdown, more than 20 of the original 73 prisoners were released at various times.

Our hope is that the recent prisoner releases are a sign that Cuba is embarking upon an era of increased openness and respect for human rights.

Lawyer in stoning case flees Iran

Amnesty members have voiced outrage over stoning sentence of Iranian woman

Before fleeing Iran in August

2010, Mohammad Mostafaei was one of a handful of Iranian lawyers who defended political prisoners and people sentenced to death. Amnesty International has worked with him on cases for several years.

Mostafaei represented and had been outspoken in his defence of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani whose case provoked an international outcry after she was accused of adultery, lashed 99 times and then sentenced to death by stoning.

But Mohammad Mostafaei had to flee Iran after the authorities issued

a warrant for his arrest and detained three of his relatives. He escaped over the mountains to Turkey before finally finding refuge in Norway.

The Iranian authorities are increasingly targeting human rights activists and making it impossible for them to continue working. Numerous Amnesty reports and urgent appeals have described human rights defenders having to flee Iran in 2010.

Amnesty members and human rights supporters everywhere have voiced outrage over the stoning sentence handed down to Ms Ashtiani.

Another lawyer is now defending

Ms Ashtiani, but in a disturbing development in her case, she was shown on television on August 12 appearing to implicate herself in her husband's murder.

Amnesty strongly criticized the television 'confession'. Such confessions are not unusual in Iran, and many prisoners have described being forced to confess on television, sometimes under threat of torture.



Hakon Mosvold Larsen/AFP/Getty Images

The Iranian authorities harassed Mohammad Mostafaei after he spoke out about the case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani.

Amnesty supporters in Manila, Philippines, protesting against human rights abuses in Myanmar.



TED ALUBE/AFP/Getty Images

MYANMAR ELECTIONS: Human rights must be respected

Myanmar (Burma) is about to hold its first national election in two decades. The last elections ended in injustice when the military regime refused to hand over power to the opposition party that had won a landslide victory.

Many of Myanmar's 50 million people live in poverty and suffer serious human rights violations.

People who speak out against the government face torture and imprisonment. There are more than 2,200 political prisoners.

Amnesty International is calling for the Myanmar authorities to stop cracking down on opponents. The people of Myanmar must be allowed to exercise their human rights during the election period and beyond.

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FREED WITH YOUR HELP: Sri Lankan journalist J.S. Tissainayagam

Well-known Sri Lankan

journalist J.S. Tissainayagam has been freed after a presidential pardon. He arrived in the United States on June 19, 2010.

Tissainayagam was first detained in March 2008. He was almost certainly arrested for political reasons. Tissainayagam wrote for a popular Sri Lankan weekly newspaper, and his journalism focused on human rights issues such as the desperate plight of civilians who had fled fighting between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

(LTTE) in the northeast of Sri Lanka.

In August 2009, Tissainayagam was sentenced to 20 years in prison for his writing. The court said his articles caused “racial hatred” and promoted terrorism. Amnesty members spoke out against the verdict and called for Tissainayagam’s freedom.

Tissainayagam was granted bail on January 11, 2010 and released two days later. In February 2010, Tissainayagam’s wife Ronnata wrote to thank Amnesty International members. “I write today to thank you personally for all your help and



support over the past years for my husband, Tissa. We, his family, are certain that it is only through international pressure and attention that no serious harm came to him, that he was not killed or ‘disappeared’.”



© Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinolán

(Left:) Former prisoners of conscience Magdalena García Durán and Jacinta Francisco Marcial visit Raúl Hernández in prison in November 2009.

Freedom for prisoner of conscience Raúl Hernández

After serving two years in

Guerrero state prison in Mexico, prisoner of conscience and Indigenous rights activist Raúl Hernández was finally released on August 27, 2010.

Hernández smiled broadly as he walked out of the jail where he had been unjustly imprisoned on false charges of murdering an alleged army informant.

The Guerrero State judge who

ordered Hernández’s release stated that Hernández “is neither guilty nor judicially responsible for the murder.”

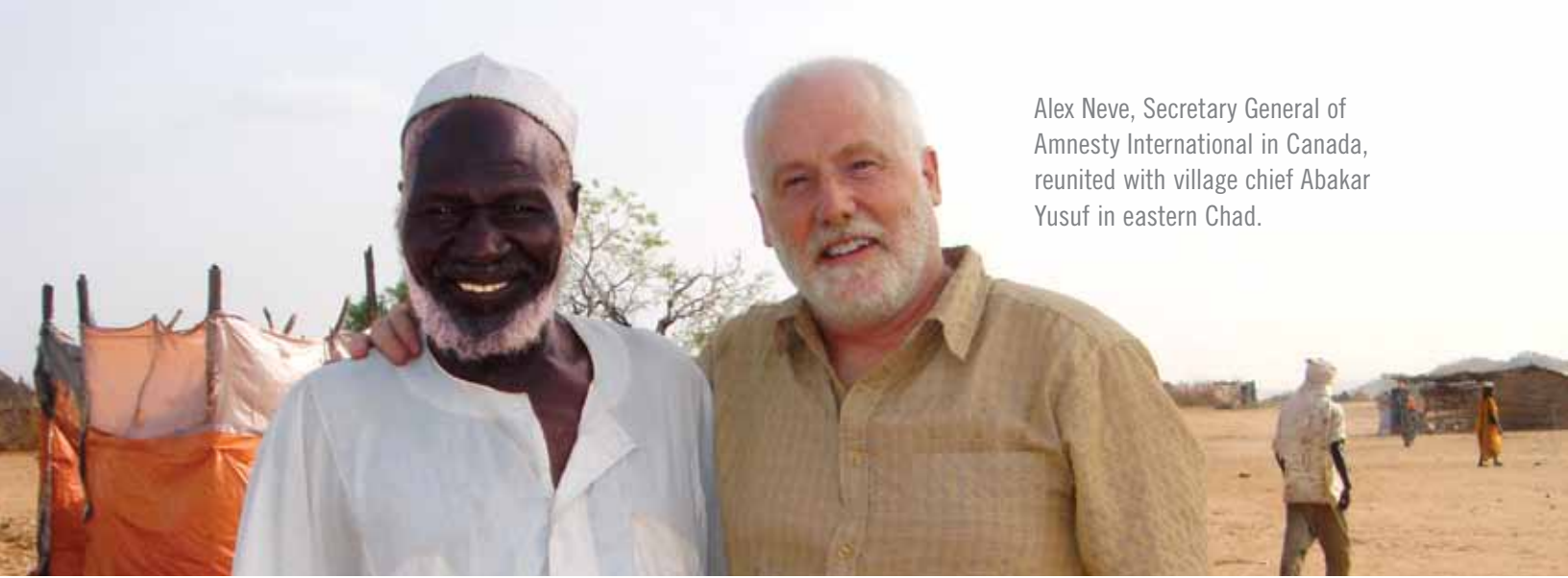
Amnesty International believes the local authorities falsely accused Hernández because of his activities promoting Indigenous rights with the Me’phaa Indigenous Peoples’ Organization.

Egypt releases Bedouin rights activist

After being held in prison in Egypt without trial for almost three years, Musaad Abu Fagr, a Bedouin human rights activist and novelist, was freed in July 2010.

He had been put in prison for protesting against the demolition of thousands of homes in the Sinai Peninsula.

Musaad Abu Fagr thanked Amnesty International members for campaigning for his release. “Amnesty International’s support is one of the reasons that I was released,” he said. “Your messages gave me a sense of solidarity.”



Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International in Canada, reunited with village chief Abakar Yusuf in eastern Chad.

IN EASTERN CHAD: A reunion with an old friend of Amnesty's

By Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International in Canada

On May 31, 2010, I was part of an Amnesty International research mission in eastern Chad making its way to Koudigou, a camp that is home to about 11,000 displaced Chadians. It was just a few days after the UN Security Council had passed a resolution to end its important peacekeeping mission in eastern Chad.

The road to Koudigou was a bumpy, sandy track through rough terrain. The sun was relentless and the heat suffocating. At the camp in Koudigou, a group of about 15 leaders had gathered to meet with us. We made our way into a small building that offered welcome shelter from the sun.

After we made our introductions, Abakar Yusuf, the first village chief to speak, astonished me by saying he remembered me from when I was there in 2006. He recalled that he had spoken to me about the tragic death of his wife, who was shot and then thrown into their burning home when their village had come under

attack by Janjawid militia.

I immediately remembered him. I recalled the heartwrenching story of his wife's death, which had happened only about two weeks before our arrival. In fact, the report we published in January 2007, following that mission, includes an account of Abakar's wife's death.

Abakar pointed out that when I had first met him and the others from his village, their conditions were wretched. Many people had been killed during the attack. The village had been destroyed and they were living and sleeping out in the open, uncertain where to find food and water and fearful of further attacks.

Abakar said, with a wry smile: "You can see that things are much better for us now, but I can tell you that the situation is still very hard and difficult."

Abakar said that the unexpected arrival of our Amnesty International team back in November 2006 was the only "sign of hope" that came their way during that terrible time,

something he could never forget.

He had been surprised that anyone coming from a country so far away wanted to know so much about what had happened to his wife, he said, and sharing it with me had eased some of his sadness.

I told him of the campaigning Amnesty had done and the visits I had made to New York to meet with members of the Security Council, as we pressed the UN to send a mission to eastern Chad. I assured him that our work would not have been possible if he and others had not trusted us with their very personal stories of loss and pain. I suggested that he should feel proud that his voice had played an important role in pressing the UN to agree to establish a mission.

With a clear twinkle in his eye he pointed out to me that since the UN was pulling out, and it was still too dangerous to return home, that "obviously there is still more for us to do together". I agreed. There most certainly is.

Russian prisoner knew he was not alone because of Amnesty members' support

On July 9, 2010, after 11 long years in several Russian prisons, Igor Sutyagin was suddenly a free man after the biggest spy swap of the post-Cold War era.

Sutyagin was one of several people convicted of spying in Russia who were exchanged for ten individuals that the US said were Russian spies.

Igor Sutyagin was arrested in 1999 and found guilty of espionage in 2004. Amnesty International believes that Sutyagin was charged for political reasons during a clampdown on freedom of expression in Russia. Over the years, many Amnesty members sent letters and cards of support to Sutyagin.

Now exiled in London, UK, and separated from his family, Sutyagin recently spoke of how Amnesty members' messages protected him and kept him going while in prison.

"It was a great pleasure to receive the letters because in prison even a single letter is a great event," he said. "The letters prove to [prison administrators] that a person is somehow 'untouchable'. In this way, the Amnesty letters defended me – and they will defend other people who are still in the same situation."

"It was very, very important for me and my family to know that we were not alone in this world and that people believed in my innocence," he said.



Igor Sutyagin with the messages of support from Amnesty members that he said protected him in prison.

Amnesty's global head visits Canada, speaks out on human rights



Salil Shetty's visit to Canada was extensively covered by the Canadian media.

Salil Shetty, Amnesty

International's new global Secretary General, visited Canada in August 2010 to speak at an international meeting in Montreal.

Shetty's visit was extensively covered by the Canadian media. In an in-depth interview with the CBC, Shetty described how human rights were in his DNA. His father is active in India in supporting the rights of the Dalit community who are often discriminated against, and his late mother worked for women's rights.

Growing up in India, Shetty had experienced the family phone being tapped and his father being arrested. Such experiences had shaped his

thinking and his values.

Shetty also talked about the many successes that Amnesty members had achieved over the years such as freeing prisoners of conscience and campaigning against torture, and how Amnesty's mission has evolved over time to encompass the full breadth of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

When asked what had attracted him to Amnesty International in the first place, Shetty said that he had been motivated by the way that Amnesty members hold those in power to account and demand that they respect and protect human rights.



INDIA: A landmark victory for Indigenous rights

As an Amnesty International member, you are standing alongside Indigenous communities around the world in their struggle to ensure that their human rights are respected.

Amnesty's new global *Demand Dignity* campaign targets the human rights violations that cause poverty, and a key campaign goal is ensuring that Indigenous communities are properly consulted before mining or industrial projects are allowed on their traditional lands.

In February 2010, Amnesty released a report describing how the Dongria Kondh and other Indigenous communities living on the Niyamgiri Hills in eastern India were threatened by plans for a new bauxite mining project.

The Indigenous communities were concerned that the mining project, which would have been situated on their traditional sacred lands, would violate their right to water, food, and health, and endanger their culture and identity.

During one protest, people from the communities formed a 17 km-long human chain around the Niyamgiri Hills. Amnesty International joined the Indigenous communities in pressing the Indian authorities not to allow the mine.

Finally, on August 24, 2010, the Indian government rejected plans for the mine. The government agreed that the project would result in abuses against the Dongria Kondh and other communities, and violate laws that protect the forests and environment of the Niyamgiri Hills.

Dongria Kondh people living in the Niyamgiri Hills, India. The Indian government has rejected plans for a mine that would have displaced the Indigenous community.



© Sanjit Das

KENYA: Amnesty workshops help slum dwellers

In July 2010, Amnesty

International joined local partner organizations in organizing a series of five workshops for residents of slums in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshops followed the release of an Amnesty *Demand Dignity* campaign report about women's experiences in slums in Kenya.

More than half of Nairobi's population – 2 million people – live in slums. Kibera, the largest slum, is home to at least 1 million people.

Women who attended the workshops focused on how to campaign on a number of serious issues affecting their communities including sanitation and safety. There is a lack of toilets and places to wash in Nairobi's slums. When seeking privacy, women in the slums are vulnerable to rape and other forms of violence.

Amnesty campaigner Dani Valls

participated in the workshops.

"You could feel the passion of the women as they were looking for solutions and strategies to the common problems they face," Dani reported.

"These courageous women are not asking for the impossible, but just for some basic rights, to ensure their dignity and their security are respected. These are rights that most of us take for granted in our everyday lives."



Amnesty International

A woman participating in an Amnesty workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, July 2010.



Raoul Shrade

Peter Benenson, the British lawyer who founded Amnesty International in 1961, rekindles the original candle on Amnesty's 20th anniversary, May 1981.

1961-2011: 50 years of Amnesty members protecting human rights

May 28, 2011, will be Amnesty International's 50th anniversary.

It was on May 28, 1961, that Amnesty's founder Peter Benenson published an article – The Forgotten Prisoners – in The Observer newspaper in London, UK. Benenson called on people to protest the jailing of men and women for their political and religious beliefs.

In the days and weeks following publication of Benenson's article, thousands of people in many

countries offered their help.

Amnesty International was born.

During 2011 we will be celebrating everything that Amnesty members have achieved since 1961 and looking forward to a future when everyone everywhere enjoys all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Next spring, our newsletters and website will bring you news about special events marking Amnesty's 50th anniversary year.

Are you thinking of leaving a gift to Amnesty in your will?



Heather can help

Heather Warren joined Amnesty International as a donor in 1982, because of her strong belief in the importance of human rights activism.

Heather soon became more involved, first through letter-writing and then by helping to start an Amnesty group in Lanark, Ontario. She later served as Treasurer on our national Executive Committee.

In 1999, Heather began working at Amnesty's national office. For 10 years she has been assisting people who plan to leave a gift in their will to Amnesty International.

If you ever have any questions about leaving a gift to Amnesty International in your will, Heather would be very happy to assist you. You can contact her at **613-744-7667 ext 239**, or by email at hwarren@amnesty.ca, or by filling out the enclosed coupon.



Carol Woolsey/Amnesty International

Chef Dan Macdonald with Kameleon restaurant owners Josephine and Shawn Anderson.

Quadra Island Taste for Justice event raises more than \$700

In June 2010, Kameleon, a vegetarian restaurant owned by Josephine and Shawn Anderson in Quadra Island, British Columbia, hosted a Taste for Justice event that raised more than \$700 for Amnesty International's work to protect and promote women's human rights.

The occasion was organized by long-time Amnesty International member Susan Westren who was proud of how enthusiastically the

community got behind the event.

"[Quadra Island] is a small community and Kameleon is a small restaurant so it feels particularly good to have raised so much money," she said.

Kameleon was one of 52 restaurants across Canada that took part in the sixth annual Taste for Justice event during 2010. To view a list of all participating restaurants, visit tasteforjustice.ca.

You're invited to a global celebration of human rights



On December 10, 2010 – International Human Rights Day – Amnesty supporters in Canada and around the world will be taking part in Amnesty's annual *Write for Rights* letter-writing event. They will be writing hundreds of thousands of letters to save lives, stop torture, free prisoners of conscience, and send messages of hope to those who have been unjustly jailed.

It's easy to take part!

There are many places where you can hold your own *Write for Rights* event:

- at your workplace
- at home
- at your school
- with friends
- at your faith group
- on your own

Register now

for *Write for Rights* 2010

Go to writeathon.ca or phone 1-800-266-3789 to register your event, or to find out more about how to get involved.

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