

DAILY NEWS

**PUBLIC • FORUM**

8/2/96

# Death penalty and human rights

As a long-time supporter of the human rights organizations Americas Watch, Amnesty International, Witness for Peace and the Southern Poverty Law Center, I was pleased to read of Matthew Yedlin's concurrence that "human rights means securing the liberties of decent and innocent human beings" (Public Forum, July 25).

However, my own experience indicates the opposite of his conviction that most of the Americans who support the death penalty also support human rights: None of the many death-penalty supporters of my acquaintance was much concerned about the liberties of decent and innocent Guatemalans, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans who were tortured and murdered with impunity by U.S.-supported dictatorships and "freedom fighters" during the

Reagan-Bush years.

Nor are they now particularly concerned with the appalling labor conditions in the Third World, where U.S. corporations contract with corrupt governments and rich oligarchs for the production of most of our apparel and many other consumer goods that require dirt-cheap labor. In many Third World nations, it's worth one's life even to talk about improved working conditions.

There are human-rights advocates whose vision, action and principles apply both at home and abroad, and there are those who demand no more than that the murderers of their compatriots be executed. Let us not confuse the two.

— Bill Becker  
Woodland Hills

Public Forum, Daily News  
P.O. Box 4200  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365-4200

as submitted. Text deleted by editor  
enclosed in  
" [ " ] "

July, 27, 1996

Dear Editor,

As a long-time supporter of the human rights organizations Americas Watch, Amnesty International, Witness for Peace, and the Southern Poverty Law Center, I was pleased to read of Matthew Yedlin's concurrence that "human rights means securing the liberties of decent and innocent human beings." ("Death Penalty Justified," Public Forum, July 25, 1996). However, my own experience indicates the opposite of his conviction that most of the Americans who support the death penalty also support human rights: none of the many death penalty supporters of my acquaintance were much concerned for the liberties of decent and innocent Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans who were tortured and murdered with impunity by U.S.-supported dictatorships and "freedom fighters" during the Reagan-Bush years. Nor are they now particularly concerned with the appalling labor conditions in the Third World, where U.S. corporations contract with corrupt governments and rich oligarchs for the production of most of our apparel and many other consumer goods that require dirt-cheap labor. In many Third World nations, it's worth one's life even to talk about improved working conditions [Perhaps Yedlin and other death penalty advocates should take their human rights concerns to Haiti, where they can advocate protection for advocates of the poor women who sew up baseballs. I recommend an increase in their life insurance, though ]

There are human rights advocates whose vision, action, and principles apply both at home and abroad, and there are those who demand no more than that the murderers of their compatriots be executed. Let us not confuse the two.

Sincerely,



Bill Becker

cor  
ris  
les  
in  
yc  
dr  
vi  
th  
st  
e  
breathe.

Response To  
174 8-2-96  
Letter

ob-  
day-  
t be  
chil-  
to  
runs  
water  
ng it  
e to

— Josh Jordahl  
Sylmar

### Amnesty International a sham

As a longtime supporter of human rights and the death penalty for the taking of a precious human life, I was reminded why I have never joined Amnesty International (Public Forum, Aug. 2). My own experience is that this group panders to the America-hating extreme left. None of the many far-left supporters of my acquaintance was much concerned with the liberties of decent and innocent Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Germans, Romanians, Nicaraguans, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Laotians, Koreans and Ethiopians who were tortured and murdered with impunity by communist-supported dictatorships.

Nor are they now particularly

concerned with the appalling slavery in the Sudan, China's coercive abortion, slave labor and the raping of Tibet, or Islamic oppression of women in Algeria. In many of these Third World nations, it's worth one's life to even talk about human rights.

There are human rights advocates who can put political ideology or party affiliation aside to work for the basic principle of liberty and freedom for all law-abiding people of the world. There are others who subvert justice for cold-blooded killers and call themselves compassionate. Let us not confuse the two.

— R. Richards  
Westlake Village

**How to write to us**

We welcome letters to the editor on all issues of public concern. All are subject to editing and condensation, and they can be published only with the writer's true name. Only the writer's home community, rather than full address, will be published. *Letters must include the writer's complete home address and daytime telephone number.*

- Mail letters to: Public Forum, P.O. Box 4200, Woodland Hills, Calif. 91365-4200.
- Fax: (818) 713-3723.
- E-mail: 74511.2472@compuserve.com

DAILY NEWS Public Forum, 8-19-96