

# News

## Letter campaign to release prisoners Series honors Dexter Squibb

Sanna Raza  
Staff Writer

The Amnesty International chapter at UNCA started a new campaign to shed light on human rights violations in Saudi Arabia.

"Right now we are focusing on the death penalty and torture," said Elizabeth Allen, a junior independent major in causes and consequences of American poverty. "We consider (the) death penalty cruel and unusual, and it violates basic human rights. It is totally arbitrary, (and) torture is a really big issue in Saudi Arabia."

The group works to raise awareness through letter writing and other events. It is sponsored by Elmoiz Abunura, professor of political science and director of the Africana studies program.

"I became involved in AI when I was a freshman student at the University of Baghdad in Iraq," said Abunura. "I was imprisoned because of my political beliefs, and AI, at that time, considered me a prisoner of conscience. I was released as a result of the work of AI and other human rights organizations."

Prisoners of conscience are individuals in prison for their beliefs or political reasons, not because they have been breaking the law, according to Allen.

In 1996, Abunura established AI here at UNCA, and since then the AI chapter has become visible and active, according to Abunura.

"The work of AI stimulates an interest in establishing a human rights program at UNCA," said Abunura.

Torture is very common in Saudi Arabia, according to a May 27 article in *The London Free Press*. Authorities use torture as punish-

ments and to get confessions.

"Religious adherents are jailed, tortured, abducted or suffer harassment that is officially tolerated or even encouraged in many countries around the world," said Janet Epp-Buckingham, director of the religious freedom project, in the article. "In countries that have an officially sanctioned religion, those of other religions suffer harassment and persecution. Christians are persecuted in countries where fundamentalist Muslims hold political power, including Saudi Arabia."

"In Saudi Arabia, torture became a culture of brutality," said Abunura. "Political prisoners in Saudi Arabia have revealed a culture of police brutality, torture and ill treatment in many police stations, prisons and detention centers across the country. Beatings with sticks, electric shocks, cigarette burns and nail pulling are some of the torture methods often described."

Flogging is another method of punishment used for a variety of offenses, according to the AI Web site.

"It is applied for sexual offenses, and can also be used by judges at their discretion as a substitute, or in addition, to other punishments," according to the site. "The number of lashes handed down by courts in each case is not clearly prescribed by law, and can range from dozens to thousands. (The lashes) tend to be carried out at a rate of 50 lashes every two weeks."

Another focus of AI is the death penalty and the increase in those

cases, according to Allen.

"People do not have a right to a trial or a lawyer," said Allen. "I mean, they do on paper as far as the law goes, but they do not otherwise."

"The death penalty in Saudi Arabia is frequently imposed following summary and secret trials," said Abunura. "None of those executed has had access to a lawyer. Some have been convicted solely on the basis of confessions extracted by torture."

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-Elizabeth Allen, a junior causes and consequences of American poverty major.

"Saudi Arabia executes people for a wide range of offenses, including adultery and homosexuality," according to the site. "Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. At least 103 people were executed in 1999."

The situation for women in Saudi Arabia is also a concern

to AI, according to Abunura.

"Laws in Saudi Arabia discriminate against women in almost all aspects of life, (like) decision making, employment, education and family relations," said Abunura.

Saudi Arabia tolerates men punishing their wives for disobedience, although they are not supposed to cause pain or injury. Women face the judicial punishment of flogging for 'moral crimes' for which women are more likely to be suspected than men, according to the site.

"The unfairness of trial proceedings in cases of women facing capital punishment is extreme," according to the site.

AI is one of the largest human

rights organizations in the world. It was founded in 1961 in England, according to Abunura. The organization believes that human rights and fundamental freedom transcend national, religious and cultural boundaries.

"AI works to promote civil and political, social, economic, cultural, women's indigenous right to develop a sound environment," said Abunura. "The organization also works to release all prisoners of conscience."

Within the U.S., AI has 400,000 members and has chapters around N.C. In Asheville, there is a student chapter at UNCA and a local group in the city, according to Abunura.

"I hope to see more students involved with AI and other human rights organizations, said Abunura. "Human rights, to me, is more than merely academic interest, it is my destiny as a person who suffered torture and has seen with his own eyes his friends' tortured to death in Iraq or Sudan."

Letter writing is one of the main weapons that AI uses in its campaigns. A letter can be an important weapon in improving the human rights situation because it can make the difference between life and death for another person, according to Abunura.

"AI spreads the message through letter writing to the officials in Saudi Arabia and in the U.S. and building awareness of the situation," said Abunura. "From personal experience, I feel the letter-writing campaign will benefit the prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia."

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## Wilson

was arrested and taken to the Buncombe County Detention Center for processing. Wilson was released on a \$3,800 bond Oct. 31, according to Adams.

"At this time, he waived his rights so he could speak to us, and, in the process of that interview, he gave a statement admitting to one of the indecent exposures," said Adams. "Based on his description, eye witness accounts and positive identifications, he was also charged with (the other counts)."

On Oct. 30, officers received a report that someone had exposed himself to a woman in the fifth floor study lounge, according to Adams.

"A subject came into the room, and made several trips in and out," said Adams. "On his last trip he exposed himself to the girl in the room."

Soon after that report was taken, public safety received a report of another indecent exposure that occurred, this time on the first floor of Founders Hall in the snack room area, according to Adams.

"There were two girls sitting outside the door. A subject was in the snack room and exposed himself to

those girls," said Adams. "In each of these incidences, we got a very good description (of the subject), which, in both cases matched the description of the subject who opened the shower curtain on the girl Oct. 29."

After these incidences occurred, the housing office gave the description of the suspect to all the Resident Assistants. After being given the description, Somanna Muthanna, resident assistant on the third floor of Founders Hall, said he spotted someone who looked like the suspect in the computer lab.

"I went to a friend's room, and, on my way back, I noticed someone who I never saw before and matched the description of the flasher," said Muthanna. "I went back, and called the person involved in the shower incident to take a look at him. She came with me, and was pretty sure that was the person."

Muthanna said that after the victim identified the suspect, he immediately called public safety. Muthanna then returned to the computer lab to make sure the suspect did not leave until public safety officers arrived.

"They came in saying that they were checking up on something, and asked everyone for identification," said Muthanna. "The (suspect) said he did not have an ID."

According to Muthanna, the suspect gave contradictory statements to public safety officers. At that time, officers began to get suspicious of his story, and took him to the public safety office.

"The public safety officer asked (Wilson) what floor he lived on. (Wilson) said that he lived 'down there,'" said Muthanna. "They asked him for his name, and he gave the name of Jason."

"Officers then told him to go down to get his ID, and he then said he did not know what room he lived in," said Muthanna. "He finally told officers he was just visiting a friend."

According to Al Williams, assistant district attorney, Wilson will probably not receive the maximum penalty, due to the fact that he does not have a criminal record. He said the penalty for felony breaking and entering is a minimum of 25 months to a maximum of 30 months in jail. For both the indecent exposure and obstruction of officer charges, Wil-

son could receive a maximum sentence of 60 days in jail for each offense.

"I think the bond should have been higher, and he should not have been released so quickly," said John Tan, senior computer science major. "He could easily come back to campus, or go to another college campus nearby, and do the same thing. Next time he could be more violent."

According to Nancy Williams, associate director of housing, she commends Muthanna, other resident assistants and students for their leadership and teamwork in this matter.

"It is exciting to me that we have such a sense of community watch that when there are people in the building that do not belong here, students are asking questions and calling our staff," said Williams.

Students said that they are thankful for the quick response of public safety and housing staff in apprehending Wilson.

"It is good to know that we have RAs like Muthanna around who show good leadership skills," said Justin Lawlor, a sophomore computer science major.

Lauren Owens  
Staff Writer

The UNCA chemistry department hosted the third annual series of lectures in honor of Dexter Squibb, former professor of chemistry at UNCA. The lecture series lasted from Oct. 29 to Oct. 31, and featured several chemistry-related discussions.

"The series is important because it allows UNCA students to experience more diverse fields of the chemistry community that are not currently available here at UNCA," said Stan Howell, a senior chemistry major.

This year, the lecture series featured Nancy H. Kolodny, chair of chemistry at Wellesley College. Kolodny specializes in researching nuclear magnetic resonance, and effects of uveitis on rabbits, and then the MRI could function as a type of snapshot to study the rabbits' eyes.

"We used rabbits because they have broader lenses," said Kolodny. "We did not want to hurt the animals, but we also want to help people. We studied the animals over time

to see what processes were occurring. We also wanted to find out if uveitis causes problems." Once the research was concluded, according to Kolodny, three conclusions could be made regarding uveitis and MRI. First, MRI can be used over time in studies, MRI can show changes in blood barriers and two parameters regarding the rabbits emerged as normal.

"I have really had a great time during this series," said Kolodny. "I especially thank Squibb for making me feel so welcome."

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## Unity

the graffiti in Founders Hall, according to Roberts.

Wingfield "told our class that, the night before, she had seen some vicious graffiti painted on the walls of Founders Hall," said Roberts. "She gathered some friends together, and they cleaned the walls, but two hours later more hateful graffiti had been painted on the same walls."

Roberts said the class began to brainstorm for ways to react to the graffiti.

"(Wingfield) said 'I think we ought to do something about this,'" said Roberts. "The students talked about what they could do. They chose to organize an event that would celebrate the majority of UNCA students (who) show respect for people of different cultures and different opinions."

According to Wingfield, the event offered a time for UNCA faculty and staff to embrace its diversity.

"The people that came got a chance to show us, and everybody else, that they believed in unity and they did

series. Her first lecture was entitled "Ancient Microbes through Twenty-First Century Eyes" and her second lecture was called "Looking through the Eye with Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)." Her second lecture focused on the ways in which MRI (the medical application of field magnetic resonance, is the common method used for clinical diagnoses like spinal problems) can be used to study the eye disease uveitis.

"Uveitis is the inflammation of the sandwich of the eye," said Kolodny. "Its symptoms include eye pain, eye pain in light and clouded vision. It may lead to glaucoma and blindness."

According to Kolodny, she and several research students at Wellesley studied the ways that uveitis could affect rabbits that were left untreated or treated with the disease. They used MRI to study the

effects of uveitis on rabbits, and then the MRI could function as a type of snapshot to study the rabbits' eyes.

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not feel the same way as the people who wrote the graffiti," said Wingfield.

The class wrote a unity pledge for students and faculty to sign during the event Oct. 31. They also offered information on violence and sexually transmitted diseases, according to Kandria Long, an undeclared freshman.

"We had a pledge table, where people could sign our unity pledge," said Long. "They received a ribbon for their support and information on everything. We had information on AIDS, date rape and violence."

The African dance class performed during the celebration, and students served ethnic foods. According to Bray, participants could also paint a square for a patchwork quilt that Robert's class will sew together and hang in the Highsmith Center.

"We had a table where you could make a patch of a quilt as a symbol of what your beliefs are," said Bray.

**The Women's Resource Center will be open Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 3 to 6 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. The office is located on second floor of Mills Hall. The work of Debbie Misch, a senior art student, is on exhibit until Nov. 16. For more information, contact Afaf Omer at aomer@unca.edu.**

**Students, faculty and staff are invited to register for carpool/ride share online, available through the UNCA Web for Students menu. For more information, call Carol Diamond at (828) 689-5399.**