ACTION #1: HOLD DOW ACCOUNTABLE FOR BHOPAL

Time: 12:30 PM
Location: Indian Consulate
3 East 64th Street

BHOPAL: TWENTY YEARS WITHOUT JUSTICE

"Burial of a Child"

"There were thousands of bodies. There were bodies everywhere. And people were dying all round."

Mohammad Owais, a volunteer at Hamidia Hospital, Bhopal, India

More than 7,000 people died within a matter of days when toxic gases leaked from a chemical plant in Bhopal, India on the night of December 2/3, 1984. Over the last 20 years exposure to the toxins has resulted in the deaths of a further 15,000 people as well as chronic and debilitating illnesses for thousands of others for which treatment is largely ineffective.

The disaster shocked the world and raised fundamental questions about government and corporate responsibility for industrial accidents that devastate human life and local environments. Yet 20 years later, the survivors still await just compensation, adequate medical assistance and treatment, and comprehensive economic and social rehabilitation. The plant site has still not been cleaned up. As a result, toxic wastes continue to pollute the environment and contaminate the water that surrounding communities rely on.

Despite determined efforts by survivors to secure justice, they have been denied adequate compensation and appropriate and timely medical assistance and rehabilitation. Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), then owner of the pesticide factory in Bhopal, and Dow Chemical, which merged with UCC in 2001, have publicly denied all responsibility for the leak and the resulting damage. Astonishingly, no one has been held responsible.

The Bhopal case illustrates how companies evade their human rights responsibilities and underlines the need to establish a universal human rights framework that can be applied to companies directly. Governments have the primary responsibility for protecting the human rights of communities endangered by the activities of corporations, such as those employing hazardous technology. However, as the influence and reach of companies have grown, there has been a developing consensus that they must be brought within the framework of international human rights standards.

In its report, Clouds of injustice: Bhopal disaster 20 years on, Amnesty International is:

- Urging people around the world to put pressure on Dow Chemical and the Indian Government demanding that the site is cleaned up and affected communities are compensated.
- Calling on the Indian Government to promptly assess the damage to health and the environment caused by the leak and the contamination, provide healthcare and clean, safe drinking water for the affected communities, and ensure that Dow Chemical/Union Carbide clean up the site of the disaster and fully and fairly compensate the victims.
GET-ON-THE-BUS AND BHOPAL – A GLOBAL EVENT!

On April 15, 2005, at Amnesty International Group 133’s tenth annual Get-on-the-Bus action in New York City, we will be demonstrating at the Indian Consulate on behalf of the victims and survivors of the Bhopal catastrophe of twenty years ago. We will be delivering a letter to the consulate on behalf of all our participants, asking the Indian Government to meet the demands made by Amnesty International in its report “Clouds of injustice: The Bhopal disaster 20 years on.”

Four main demands for our demonstration are:

- Enforce the clean-up of the contaminated Bhopal site by the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC)/Dow Chemical Company.
- Ensure that Dow Chemical/UCC provide full compensation for the damage done to health and the environment by the ongoing contamination of the site.
- Supply clean, safe water for the affected communities.
- Provide free healthcare for everyone affected by the disaster, including the children born of parents affected by the gas leak.

This is a global event! Simultaneous demonstrations for justice in Bhopal (on a smaller scale) are also planned to take place at the Indian Consulates in Washington DC, San Francisco, Houston and Chicago, and at government offices in Delhi and Bhopal in India. This has been organized with the help of several other activist groups: Students for Bhopal; Dow Accountability Network; Association for India’s Development; Alliance for a Secular and Democratic South Asia; and the Environmental Health Fund.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BHOPAL

Here are some resources for learning more about the details of the horrific disaster of December 1984, and the struggle of the survivors over the last twenty years:

Amnesty Report:
Clouds of injustice: The Bhopal disaster 20 years on
(download from http://web.amnesty.org/pages/ec-bhopal-eng)

Books
Bhopal Gas Tragedy: Accident or Experiment by Brojendra N. Banerjee
The Bhopal Reader: Remembering twenty years of the world’s worst industrial disaster by Bridget Hanna, Ward Morehouse and Satinath Sarangi (Apex Press 2005)

Videos
One Night in Bhopal by the BBC. (can be viewed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/bhopal/default.stm)
Litigating Disaster by Ilan Ziv (www.frif.com/new2004/lit.html)
Twenty Years Without Justice by Sanford Lewis (short film to be shown on the buses to NYC) www.strategicvideo.net/

Websites
Amnesty International: http://web.amnesty.org/pages/ec-bhopal-eng
Students for Bhopal (contains a wealth of information and activist resources): www.studentsforbhopal.org
The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal: www.bhopal.net

TAKE ACTION!

To put pressure on the Indian government and Dow Chemical to provide justice for the people of Bhopal, visit:
http://www.amnestyusa.org/business/bhopal_action.html
http://www.petitiononline.com/bhopal/
Send a free fax to the Indian Government: http://bhopal.aidindia.org/waterwebfax.htm
For many more ideas of what you can do: www.studentsforbhopal.org/GettingActive.htm
Join AIUSA’s Corporate Action Network (CAN): http://www.amnestyusa.org/business