

HORSHAM AMNESTY

January 2014



Write for Rights Update

Our **Write for Rights** event on 7 December was very successful. The cards we had prepared for Laísa Santos Sampaio in Brazil, Jabeur Mejri in Tunisia and the villagers of Nabi Saleh in the Occupied Palestine Territories were covered in signatures and messages of support.

Following up our card to Jabeur Mejri, you can send a letter to President Marzouki or email him on boc@pm.gov.tn. A sample letter is included at the end of this newsletter.

Writing letters does work! Amnesty has received good news of two of the cases included in this year's campaign.

Following the passing of Russia's 'amnesty bill', criminal proceedings against **the Bolotnaya Three** have been stopped and Vladimir Akimenkov has been freed. While this is great news, the charges have not been dropped, they will just not be prosecuted.

Yorm Bopha, a Cambodian activist, who was imprisoned on false charges to keep her quiet, has been released after more than 85,000 people signed our global petition including nearly 18,000 from the UK. She wrote: 'Thank you to Amnesty International's supporters! Your campaign has been successful, as my release shows! But my case is not over yet. Please keep pushing the Cambodian Government to end the case against me. We can achieve the most success when we all work together!'

Yorm has been able to get home to her son and husband, but she has only been released on bail and the charges haven't been dropped.

Horsham Street Collection

Rewarded at last with reasonable weather, this year's street collection was a great success raising a magnificent £628.42. An increased number of collectors meant we were able to have people in place throughout Horsham for the whole of the Saturday. Many thanks to all who volunteered to help.

Horsham Amnesty AGM

Our group AGM will be on Tuesday 14 January 8pm.

This is a chance to review the past year and a good opportunity for new members to find out what we do and help to shape our programme for 2014.

Demonstration calling for the closure of Guantanamo

There will be a demonstration taking place on **Saturday 11th January in Trafalgar Square 2pm – 4pm** to mark the 12th anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo.

Shaker Aamer (the last remaining British resident in Guantanamo and an Amnesty 'Individual at Risk') has now been detained without charge or trial for over 11 years.

Speakers include Jeremy Corby MP, Tony Clark (Green Party), Ben Griffin (Veterans for Peace UK), Joy Hurcombe (Save Shaker Aamer Campaign) and representatives from Reprieve and Amnesty International.

SE Regional Conference

Dorking is the venue for this year's regional conference so not too far to travel. It will take place on Saturday 22 February from 10am - 4pm at Dorking Christian Centre, Church St, Dorking RH4 1DW.

If you would like to attend please contact the regional coordinator, Philip Strudwick, by email or phone philynda@btinternet.com or 01483 503876

National AGM

Booking is now open for Amnesty International's AGM, 12 -13 April 2014 at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the event where Amnesty members from around the UK come together for a weekend of learning, discussion, and decision-making. We're a membership-led organisation, so decisions made at the AGM are reflected in what we work on, and the way we work.

This is your chance to

- Share your skills, experience and interest in human rights with like-minded activists
- Learn from others in the Amnesty community and develop your passion for human rights
- Hear from inspiring speakers on pressing human rights issues
- Raise issues that matter to
- Shape Amnesty's future.

You can book on line via the Amnesty website: www.amnesty.org.uk

Looking Forward

11 January	Close Guantanamo demo	2pm – 4pm Trafalgar Sq, London
14 January	Horsham group AGM	
11 February	Horsham Group meeting	for venue contact Jackie at horsham.amnesty@btinternet.com
22 February	SE Regional conference	Dorking Christian Centre, Church St, Dorking, RH4 1DW
12-13 April	National AGM	Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh

For more information about group events please contact:

Horsham.amnesty@btinternet.com

President Moncef Marzouki

Palais Présidentiel

Tunis

Tunisia

Your Excellency

RE: Jabeur Mejri

I am writing to you regarding Jabeur Mejri and his friend Ghazi Beji who were sentenced on 28th March 2012 to seven and a half years in prison and a fine of 1200 Tunisian Dinars after the first instance court in Mahdia deemed posts that they had made online to be insulting to Islam and Muslims under the Tunisian Penal code and the Telecommunications Code.

Jabeur Mejri's posts included articles and images of the Prophet Mohamed on his Facebook page and Ghazi Beji's posts included a manuscript he had written called "The Illusion of Islam" in which he expressed his atheistic views, satirised Islam and depicted the Prophet Mohamed in cartoons.

International human rights law protects the expression of ideas that are perceived as being offensive. Criticism of religions and other beliefs and ideas is a vital component of the right to freedom of expression, and laws that criminalise criticism of (or insult to) religious beliefs violate freedom of expression.

Jabeur Mejri is currently in Mahdia prison whilst Ghazi Beji fled the country before being arrested and was tried in absentia.

I ask you to do all that you can to ensure Jabeur Mejri's immediate and unconditional release. Jabeur Mejri is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

I also ask you to call on the Tunisian authorities to quash the conviction and prison sentence against Jabeur Mejri and Ghazi Beji and to do all that you can to ensure that the Tunisian authorities respect the right to freedom of expression and that they meet their international human rights obligations.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to hearing from you further.

Yours faithfully