

Action

THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER



April 2017

Forthcoming Brighton & Hove Amnesty Group Meetings/Events

Group meetings take place on the first Thursday of each month from 8-10pm at Community Base, Queens Road, Brighton

April 6th
Group meeting with
Guest speaker
Elaine Orlitz
Founder of the
Hummingbird Project

May 4th
Campaign Meeting

June 1st
Group meeting with Guest speakers
Jack and Haider
Continuing their story of detention
without charge and house arrest

Monthly Collection

15th April

Contact Madeline
01273 508620

madeline@peasgood.plus.com

Monthly Stall

April

Sydney Street
Contact Jill 01273 621697
11am to 1pm

Brighton Pride

5th August
Stall and Parade
Details to follow

Write for Rights 2017

2nd December
10am to 4pm
Friends Meeting House
Ship St, Brighton

Fred Bauma



On Saturday 11 March I went to the Human Rights centre (aka Amnesty HQ) to hear Fred Bauma from the Democratic Republic of Congo speak. Along with Yves Makwambala, Fred is our adopted Individual at Risk. Having listened to him and knowing what President Kabile of the DRC gets up to, they are certainly at risk.

He spoke of the history of how he and his country have arrived where they are. He comes from the province on Goma (marked below) in the East of the country and bordering Rwanda and Uganda.



He grew up against the background of the floods of refugees from Rwanda and a series of "rebellions" in DRC. This motivated him to become an activist but, significantly, non violent. He helped to set up a youth organisation called LUCHA (Lutte pour le Changement or Struggle for Change) in 2012. This is a citizen's movement whose aim is to

create a peaceful, stable and prosperous country.

Unfortunately for him and Yves, the government doesn't like this idea and, along with 26 other activists, they were arrested in March 2015 and held in prison. In Fred's case this started with 50 days with no visits, no charges and no certainty that he would survive. Demonstrations continued across the country and their cases were taken up by Amnesty International.

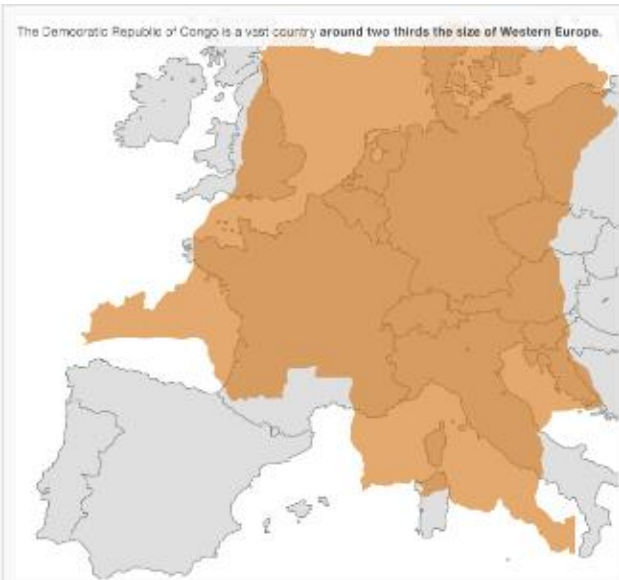
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Perhaps because of this he and Yves were released in August 2016. There are no restrictions on his activities or movements at present but the threat of re-arrest hangs over him. He left lots of people behind in prison.

Since then the campaign for change continues. DRC is riven with violence based upon the all too common African problems of great mineral and agricultural wealth, tribal fighting exacerbated by colonial heritage national boundaries and ineffective, rapacious and self serving government. Fred would not talk about why the conflicts arose nor, specifically, how to end them. Rather he said that what is lacking is a functional government capable of raising and maintaining the army necessary to put down the violence.

He kept coming back to this. He wants fair democratic elections, even if they initially don't produce much change from the Kabile kleptocracy. He believes this is the only way to move forward.

Coincidentally I met an old friend recently who has lived and worked extensively in DRC. He pointed out the size of the country and how this,



During our last meeting we took photos of the group with a message of support to Fred Bauma who we had campaigned for which was handed to him at the talk. Incidentally Musasa Tshibanda, the young Congolese man we campaigned for at our January meeting has also been released!



combined with very poor infrastructure made government from Kinshasa virtually impossible as a single national government.

Because we are conditioned to see the world using the Mercator Projection we think of the North as much larger than it is relative the countries along the equator. The map below is from the BBC.

The impact is that to ask a government in Kinshasa to connect with province of Goma would be like asking the government of Estonia to run Greece as a province. My friend thinks that the solution which LUCHA is working for should be based upon a federal state with very strong state level government coordinated from Kinshasa.

In the meantime the struggle for change continues. There are grave Human Rights abuses being perpetrated across the whole country. Fred asked, in response to a question about what we can do, that we should lobby the UK government to use it's influence to help the country to transition to true democracy. We should also, via AI UK, campaign for the release and fair treatment of Prisoners of Conscience.

This is the first time I have been privileged to meet a released Individual at Risk. Fred was inspirational in his quiet bravery, his unflinching commitment to the future of his country and the eloquence of his exposition of the problems and the peaceful way forward. There are so many countries in similar or worse situations. It is hard to know where to begin to try to help. I am sure that the AI model of focussing small to act big is the best for us.

We shall continue working for the release and continuing freedom of Individuals at Risk. We shall, I hope, widen our knowledge of the abuses taking place there. Don't ignore or forget these people.

Peter Gwilliam (Chair)

A Spring Day in Guildford South East Regional Conference

Peter and I attended the conference at the United Reformed Church in Guildford. There were about 50 people in all, I spoke to members from Tunbridge Wells, Maidenhead and Shoreham.

Krisztina Saroy (Country Co ordinator for West Africa) opened the meeting with a lively and informative talk about BOKO HARAM in Nigeria and Cameroon. (Boko Haram means 'Western education is forbidden') She visited our group recently to speak about the situation in the D R Congo with regard to Fred and Yves, our 'individuals at risk'.

She explained that corruption, poverty and unemployment had led to frustration amongst the people and this was the hot bed from which Boko Haram emerged. At the Almajin schools poor young men were taught about radical Islam. They were given a gun and money and told to follow the new path.

Founded in 2002 Boko Haram began as an isolated community then by 2012 they were making violent attacks on the secular state - security forces, civil servant and politicians and finally civilians. Schools were targeted including the girls' school in Nigeria where 276 girls were abducted and used as servants, wives and prostitutes.

Due to the worldwide publicity of #BRING BACK OUR GIRLS campaign the government responded in a heavy handed way. They made arbitrary arrests, killings and disappearances of 18 - 40 year old men. See March Amnesty stall campaign for similar treatment by the authorities in Cameroon.

The implications of the rise of Boko Haram are widespread, social and economic. Fear and poverty have caused more than 3 million people to be displaced in Nigeria and 2,000 people have left

the country as refugees.

Now for the Good News ! We were asked to bring the name of someone released from prison by an Amnesty campaign. I chose Khadija Ismayilova, an investigative journalist from Azerbaijan who was released in May 2016. These were then pasted on to a large poster and photographed for social media.

I walked by the canal that runs through the city in the lunch break, enjoying the spring sunshine and watching the ducks and the kayaks floating past ...

After lunch we split into groups for a brainstorm on 'Strengthening Local Groups' . Some of the points made were that there were mainly older members in the groups. Younger members made their actions via social media at home rather than attending a group. We talked about linking in with university and school groups. Talks at meetings attracted new members but there were difficulties in retaining committed people.

Finally Philip Strudwick (retiring Regional Organiser) spoke about his personal view on Amnesty's attitude to the use of force in war and linked arms sales to the proliferation of refugees. He was advocating that all use of military force in war should be opposed. Ruth Breddal (Chair of the Board of AIUK) spoke for the present Amnesty position which is to support the use of force in some cases. e.g. Rwanda

At 4 oclock we all dispersed to our various destinations hopefully with more information and ideas to bring to our groups. Certainly there was food for thought !

Jill Francis

Refugee Campaign

Order a poster for your workplace, school, community centre etc. Email Amnesty to ask for a copy of the poster and information pack on sct@amnesty.org.uk with Refugee Poster in the subject line. There's also an online petition you can sign via the link below:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/action/keep-refugee-families-together>

If anyone wants to download a paper petition, this can be done via the link below:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/i-welcome-campaign-keep-refugee-families-together#.WIoLn2WE9U>

March Stall Report

SENDING A TEXT LANDED IVO IN JAIL

Date Saturday 11th March

Time 11am - 1pm

Location Outside Amnesty Bookshop, Sydney Street, Brighton

Weather Mild, not too hot, not too cold !

Activists Andrew, Madeline, Celia and Jill

Campaign FORMOSOH IVO FEH - Student from Cameroon

In 2014 Ivo was set to start university in Cameroon. He sent a satirical text to his friends which was a joke about Boko Haram (the group who abducted the schoolgirls in Nigeria) A teacher saw it and showed it to the police. Ivo and two friends were arrested and charged with several offences including attempting to organise a rebellion. He has been given a 10 year prison sentence.

We gave out cards supplied by Head Office with the action to text the President of Cameroon and urge him to drop charges against Ivo and his friends and free them immediately. We also collected messages of solidarity written on the cards which will be sent to them in prison. We gave out 94 cards altogether.

Next stall will be a Saturday in April.

Contact Jill if you want to help (01273 621697)

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Amnesty Websites: international - www.amnesty.org AI UK -

www.amnesty.org.uk local group – www.amnesty.org.uk/brighton

Follow us on twitter @AmnestyBrighton

See our photos on Flickr— <http://www.flickr.com/groups/amnestybrighton/pool>

Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre - Tel: 0207 0331500

