**Amnesty International**

### **Blackheath and Greenwich**

### **Newsletter**

# May 2017

## Group Meeting 09.05.2017

**Present:**

Ann Hillary

Babak Sedigh

Brigitte Hurrell,

David Webbe-Wood

Elisabeth Neumeier

Geoff Torry

Rachel Errington

Roger Hardwick

Simon Ware

Sogol Shohgoli

Steph Boulter

**Apologies:**

Amanda Kipling

Andres Crespo

Angela Dock,

David Weekes

Dee Weekes

Graham Dock

Ken Ryder

Olwen Pearson

Rachel Lanza

**Introductions.** We warmly welcomed Babak Sedigh and Sogol Shohgoli to the meeting and they offered support for several group activities and drew our attention to the urgent action for Hengameh Shahidi. Please act on this if you have not already done so.

**Campaign updates.** On Dee’s behalf Geoff circulated two letters regarding prisoners in Iran.

Roger reported on several Central American issues (see appendix) and circulated urgent letters about abortion rights in El Salvador and intimidation in Guatemala.

**Booksale.** Brigitte is concerned that there will be fewer donations than in recent years. Elisabeth and Steph will contact friends who work for publishers.

Key dates

Monday 15 May move books from Rachel’s garage to Dartmouth Row 7.00pm. Cars needed. Ann and Ken will open Greyladies garage at 6.00pm

15 May to 11 June. Sorting and Pricing. Greyladies Cottage, Dartmouth Row. Weekdays 7 to 9pm. Weekends and Bank Holiday 4-6pm.

Monday 12 June Moving books to church 7.00pm. Cars needed.

Saturday 17 June The sale! 9am to 5pm. Clearing the church 5.00pm. Help is really needed for this.

Leaflets will be available at garage next week.

Ann needs donations of home made cakes on the day.

AFRIL will be invited to publicise their work.

There will be campaigns re Refugees; Nazanin and other Iranians; Human Rights Defenders including LGBTI activists.

Happy Fish offered a donation for books collected in November; agreed that more important to persuade them to come again this November.

Mobile signal booster not possible.

**Presentation.** Simon wearing his LGBTI network chair hat gave an interesting run down on the network’s activities. A formally recognised AIUK group with 8,500 members, 10,000 Twitter followers. Equality and non-discrimination a core underpinning of most Human Rights legislation so the network strives for equal HR for LGBTI people. Chechnya a major concern. AI has interviewed some of those detained recently and found their allegations credible despite denials from Chechen President and Putin. There was a recent Urgent Action in support of journalists who broke the story.

The network also has concerns about homophobia in migrants’ detention centres in UK; marriage equality in Taiwan and lack of discrimination legislation in Japan. There will be an awareness raising activity about inter-sexuality and a transvestite activist will feature in the forthcoming Human Rights Defenders campaign.

**Letter writing** There will be a session at the Greenwich Tavern on 23rd May despite book sorting. Please get your letters to David W-W by Sunday 21st and circulate group about which ones you have prepared to avoid duplication.

**Future Meetings.** No June meeting, booksale preparation. July, presentation on Iran by Babak. September to be decided in July.

**AOB Steph** is trekking to Machu Picchu to raise fund for AI. She has a ‘Just Giving’ page and there is a Curry and Quiz night at the HRAC on 27 June in support.

Next London Region meeting 7 June at HRAC 7.30pm.

**Group Action.** Video action was recorded for marriage equality in Taiwan and in support of Hengameh Shahidi, Iranian journalist.

**México & Central America Newsletter**

**Human rights defenders campaign to be launched soon**

The Central America region will feature in the upcoming human rights defenders campaign, which will be launched next month. For anyone in and around London, there will be a panel discussion on Tuesday 16 May to launch the campaign at the Human Rights Action Centre.

**México**

**Promising news from the Mexico Team**

The lower house of the Mexican congress has approved a torture law that the International Secretariat are generally happy with. Actions on all urgent actions can stop at this time. The bill will next be voted on in the Senate.

**Fourth reporter shot dead in six weeks**

Mexico is ranked third in the world for the number of journalists killed per year, Reporters Without Borders reports. The Latin American country follows Syria and Afghanistan in crimes against journalists.

**Campaigning about the Ayotzinapa students continues.**

**Honduras**

**Demonstrators confront president in Washington DC**

Angry protestors greeted Honduran President Hernández during his visit to Washington DC in March, demanding justice for murdered activist Berta Cáceres. He faced chants of “murderer” and calls for an independent investigation into Berta’s death. During his meeting with Congressmen, the president appeared to side-step the demands for an independent inquiry, saying that local officials had done an adequate job.

**Berta’s nephew says Honduras and the USA have learned nothing from the loss of his aunt**

A year after Berta Cáceres was killed, her nephew Silvio Carrillo says the situation in Honduras has worsened. Activists and [journalists critical of the government continue to be targets of violence](http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Honduran-Journalist-Felix-Molina-Survives-2-Murder-Attempts-20160503-0013.html). The public prosecutor’s office consistently fails to conduct proper investigations into the killings of activists.

**Trans activist murdered amid rising hate crimes**

Honduran medical investigators have confirmed that trans activist Sherlyn Montoya, was tortured and strangled to death in Tegucigalpa. Between 1994 to 2017, 269 violent deaths of LGBTIs have been registered in Honduras. The majority have occurred in the last 10 years and 97 were transgender people.

**El Salvador**

[El Salvador](https://www.theguardian.com/world/el-salvador)**bans metal mining**

Lawmakers passed the ban in a unanimous vote on Wednesday, declaring El Salvador a mining-free territory.  The decision followed [a long and bitter struggle](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/jun/10/el-salvador-mining-ban-water-security) to protect the country’s diminishing water sources from polluting mining projects.

**Nicaragua**

**Government denounces activist**

Governmental officials openly stigmatised Nicaraguan activist Vilma Nuñez, director of the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights, after her nomination for the International Women of Courage award. The nomination, presented by the US government, was described as an “act of hostility” by government officials in a letter to the US ambassador.

**Government once again blocks canal protest**

Police forcibly prevented thousands of farmers and rural residents from holding a march against a government plan to build a canal across the country, potentially carving up their land.

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|  | **EVENTS 2017** |
| Tuesday 23 May | Letter Writing, Greenwich Tavern, SE10 |
| Saturday 17 June | Book Sale |
| Tuesday 27 June | Letter Writing, Greenwich Tavern, SE10 |
| Tuesday 11 July | Group Meeting, St. Margaret’s Crypt |
| Saturday 18 November | Book Sale (clearance) |

Group Meetings: Second Tuesday every month (apart from June) at 7.30pm in the crypt of St. Margaret’s Church, Lee Terrace, SE13 5DL

Letter writing evenings: Fourth Tuesday every month (apart from December)

Book Sale: A Saturday mid-to-late June; a Saturday after Remembrance Sunday in November; both at Church of the Ascension (COA), Dartmouth Row, SE10 8BF

Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC): 17–25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA; for any official events please register via the website at [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/) or tel: 020 7033 1675

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| AIBG Contacts | | | |
| **Position** | **Name** | **Phone** | **E-mail** |
| Chair | Rachel Errington |  | rerrington852@btinternet.com |
| Deputy Chair | Geoff Torry |  |  |
| Secretary (enquiries contact) | David Webbe-Wood |  | David.webbe-wood@ntlworld.com |
| Treasurer | Dee Weekes |  | weekesdee@hotmail.com |
| Membership | David Webbe-Wood | 020 8244 0995 | [david.webbe-wood@ntlworld.com](mailto:david.webbe-wood@ntlworld.com) |
| Publicity | Simon Ware |  | simontware@gmail.com |
| AIBG Website | David Webbe-Wood |  | david.webbe-wood@ntlworld.com |
| London Region Representative | Simon Ware |  | simontware@gmail.com |
| Newsletter | Rotating:  Ken Ryder,  Ann Hillary,  Brigitte Hurrell,  Roger Hardwick  Graham Dock | 020 8856 5377  020 8853 3405  020 8852 6080 020 8852 5225  020 8699 9980 | anneliz.hillary@btinternet.com  [brigittehurrell@gmail.com](mailto:bhchurrell@tiscali.co.uk)  [roger2543@aol.com](mailto:roger2543@aol.com)  g.dock@btinternet.com |

**Email List**: [aibg@googlegroups.com](mailto:aibg@googlegroups.com) (posts to **all** subscribed members)

**Website**: [www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/blackheath-and-greenwich](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/blackheath#_blank)