



# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Bromley & Orpington Group

### Summer 2017 Newsletter



Our thanks to Dr Roger May of Orpington for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

#### COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November

Speaker: Jihyun Park & AI North Korea country co-ordinator

Speaker: 'Worker Rights in the medical supply chain

Speaker: Cindy Asokan, AI Zimbabwe country co-ordinator

## Speaker Event: North Korea

*We are delighted to welcome Jihyan Park a North Korean national to the meeting with Amnesty country co-ordinator, Kenny Latunde-Dada. All welcome!*

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm.

#### Liu Xiaobo

News came through on 13<sup>th</sup> July that our long-standing prisoner **Liu Xiaobo** had died of inoperable liver cancer. Liu was the first Nobel Prize winner to die in unjustified captivity since 1938. He had been sentenced to 11 years imprisonment for calling for peaceful democratic reform in China. As one obituary said *'even when notionally free, his life was shadowed by harassment, questioning, house arrest and surveillance'*. He had married the poet **Liu Xia** in 1996 whilst serving time in a labour camp – she has been subjected to continual harassment and close house arrest despite not being charged with any crime. Her whereabouts are unknown since her husband's hurried funeral carried out at sea. We will continue to campaign for her freedom to leave China, and to celebrate Liu Xiaobo's life of heroic suffering and resistance to tyranny.



#### **Irina Ratushinskaya – Editor's comment**

*Some years ago I remember we went around the Group asking each member one by one why each had joined Amnesty. Each had a different, inspiring story of why they had wanted to 'pick up a pen and save a life'. For me, it was the women of the 'Small Zone', the notorious Soviet Gulag that sent women to perish in horrendous conditions for offending the Soviet regime. Notable among these was Irina, whose ability to find haunting and inspiring words, smuggled out on tiny bars of soap, spoke for all of the nameless incarcerated. She was the former Soviet Union's most famous woman dissident who was sentenced in 1983 to seven years hard labour followed by five years internal exile for 'agitation'. My sense of injustice at her treatment made me join Amnesty in 1986. Her release in October 1986 as part of the thaw under Gorbachev was the best news imaginable. Irina's death on 5<sup>th</sup> July from cancer made me reflect on the long distant battle for human rights in a long-collapsed tyranny. It reminded me that hope is never extinguished, and Amnesty exists to continue to hold the worst human rights abuses to account. Her two slim volumes of prison poetry, 'No, I am Not Afraid' and 'Pencil Letter' as well as her memoir, 'Grey is the Colour of Hope; remain vital dissident literature.*



#### Find us on Facebook

Bromley & Orpington Group has a Facebook Group page where updates and news are regularly posted, log on and join up!

# *Cudham Fair*

## *Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August from Noon*

### **Join us on the Amnesty Cakes Stall!**

#### **The Council of Europe and Human Rights**

We were delighted to welcome **Stuart Sweeney** to talk about the European institutions that protect human rights within the EU. The Council of Europe has jurisdiction over the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. The EU operates the Fundamental Rights Agency and determines the state of human rights in accession countries. Core institutions owe their origins to the aftermath of World War II and the determination to prevent similar atrocities in the future. Stuart showed how the Human Rights architecture has taken action over Russia (right to a fair trial), and also within the EU. Stuart noted that historically there have been some 'blind spots' over human rights in the EU such as the rights of minorities in the Baltic states; he also noted the seeming impotence to address the rising tide of anti-human rights rhetoric in Hungary and Poland. The Roma remain perhaps the most significant and enduring human rights problem in Europe. In conclusion he praised the Council of Europe for much good work but noted there was still much to do. The future of the human rights regime post-BREXIT is still in doubt with the UK Government seemingly keen to remove the Court's jurisdiction in UK affairs. There is a greater need for the EU institutions to criticise member states that were failing to live up to their obligations.

#### ***The Maldives – Paradise Lost?***

*At this holiday time of year it is worth reflecting that self-proclaimed 'paradises' are not always what they seem. The Maldives may conjure images of unspoiled white sandy beaches and azure seas, but the Indian Ocean paradise is about to resume executions after a 50 year lull. The deepening authoritarian political crisis led by President Abdulla Yameen announced the resumption of executions once a facility has been built. The military led government is presiding over deepening unrest and civil strife and says the death penalty is a response to rising crime. No executions have been carried out in the Maldives since the islands ceased to be a British run territory and Amnesty is greatly concerned at the darkening mood.*

#### **Monthly Action: Turkey**

The Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, **Taner Kilic**, was detained in June wrongly accused of belonging to a terror organisation. He has been remanded in pre-trial detention. The charges, including plotting a coup, are wholly spurious and must be dropped. No credible or substantive evidence has been provided and is viewed by Amnesty as wholly arbitrary. He is one of thousands of activists, lawyers and defenders caught up in the clamp down by the Turkish government. We signed a letter to the Minister of Justice calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

#### **Monthly Letter: Egypt**

This month's letter draws attention to a contentious court order directed against foreign and Egyptian NGO workers in Egypt. The Order allows legitimate, peaceful campaigners to be closed down and subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention. In 2013, 43 individuals were imprisoned under the order and many organisations closed down. Prominent human rights workers have been particularly targeted and subjected to arrest, detention and asset freezes. Please address, sign and post this letter, which will cost £1.17 if within 10g.

**Present on 11<sup>th</sup> July:** Vivien Glanz (in the Chair), Patsy Paine, Chris Purnell, Margaret Coppard, Waultraut Gilchrist, Wendy Simmons, Gladys Edmonds and Peter Martin and Stuart Sweeney. **Apologies:** Neville White, Ted Burke, David Howkins and Vivienne Andrews.

Meetings are held in the Wesley Room, Orpington Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington commencing at 7.30pm. **E-mail** [amnestybromley@gmail.com](mailto:amnestybromley@gmail.com) **website:** [www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley)

**Neville White (Chairman) 01689 896368**  
[Neville.white@waitrose.com](mailto:Neville.white@waitrose.com)

**Vivien Glanz (Secretary)**  
[vivienglanz@hotmail.com](mailto:vivienglanz@hotmail.com)