

Action

THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER



September 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

September 7th
Campaign meeting

Monthly Collection

See Street collection for September

Contact Madeline
01273 508620

madeline@peasgood.plus.com

Monthly Stall 30th September

Refugees Welcome

Contact Celia@yahoo.co.uk

Annual Street Collection 23rd September

Brighton Town Centre

Contact Peter

brightonand-

hoveai@googlemail.com

Refugee campaign "Hairy Arms Action"

30th September

In 2016 5.8 million people became refugees. Only 0.18 were granted asylum in the UK.

On 30th September we will be out and about with a pair of giant yellow hairy arms asking the people of Brighton to join us to send a message of welcome to refugees.

To see the arms in action:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByGAjRob2PrLdG1pYldCNTlwbnM/view>

Write for Rights 2017

2nd December

10am to 4pm

Friends Meeting House

Annual Street Collection



"This year, you helped us free **more than 650 people** – that's **nearly two each day** – from unfair and often abusive imprisonment. Together, we helped **change laws in 40 countries**. We brought football's global governing body to account, and **helped convict war criminals**. And in a year of so many uncertainties we found one thing we could be certain about: Outrage is not enough. Change happens when we take action together."

This extract from a Report on AI successes in 2016 (<http://bit.ly/2gRpG3l>) demonstrates what Amnesty International achieves.

To do this it needs money. Money for researchers, money to raise more money, money to support branches in countries such as Nigeria, Peru, India which cannot support themselves from within their own country, money to lobby, to publicise, to achieve change such as above....

The article about Syria in this newsletter highlights a small part of the need for Amnesty's continuing work.

As a local Amnesty Group one of our important functions is to raise money to support this work. On Saturday September 23rd we will be holding our Annual Street Collection around North Street and Western Road. **If you could give a bit of time on that afternoon** please contact us at brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com and we will make arrangements for you. It only requires you to stand with a tin and smile at passers-by. Half an hour or longer would be wonderful.

If you can't commit to that, look out for our collectors in their Amnesty Tabards. Or you could send a donation by cheque (payable to Amnesty Brighton and Hove) to Peter Gwilliam
30 Roundhill Crescent
Brighton
BN2 3FR
Thanks

PRIDE 2017

There seems to be something special about the first Saturday in August. For the third year running of my participation in the Pride parade the weather was glorious (mostly).

We gathered on Hove Lawns where I, in my hippy best, was interviewed for Heart Radio and had my photo taken many times. These later appeared on the BBC website coverage, in the Argus photo spread and in quite a few Facebook and Twitter postings. Given that the primary reason we participate is to raise awareness of Human Rights issues around LGBTI+ issues I was very pleased I had made the effort - albeit not a great effort on my part to relive my hippy roots.

We were 14 in total (limited by the organisers for security reasons). This number included Kate Allen, the director of AIUK, and several representatives from London HQ. Thanks for the support!

And so we set off, fairly promptly, into the tunnel of noise and faces. Our big message this year was to remember the plight of the Chechnya 100, gay men locked up there for their homosexuality. In truth they are, alas, just the external face of a much wider problem in Chechnya and too many other countries round the world. While we celebrate the progress made on LGBTI+ rights in the UK and in Brighton, it behoves us to remember that it is not like this in other parts of the world. And, as Amnesty supporters, to tell others about it.

Lots of photos, waves, cheers as we went up West Street and down North Street. A very noticeable ramping up of the volume as we got to Grand Parade. I suspect the sunshine, the time it had taken us to get there and the availability of liquid refreshment may have contributed to this. We were also parading behind the Virgin Holidays float which had a great DJ blasting out a wide ranging set. Lots of people singing along to music I didn't know. Ah well, you can't still be a hippy and up to speed with modern musical trends.... At least that is what I tell myself.

After two hours we got to Preston Park just as it started to rain. Thanks to the rain gods for holding off, to all who took part under the Amnesty banner and to the thousands along the route who recognised us and cheered our work.

Peter



Pride Stall

Japan Action and Chechnya 100

On the stall the day after the Pride parade we got over 150 postcards signed for the Chechnya action. So many people had heard distressing reports of what is happening there at the moment and were only too happy to add their signature in protest.

We also did a photo action for Japan. The aim of this campaign is the adoption of a national bill as well as ordinances and guidelines at local municipality level for eliminating discrimination against LGBT people and ensuring the access and entitlements to human rights of LGBT people in Japan. We got people to have their photo taken with our rainbow photo frame which were then tweeted #BeyondGenders and

#EqualLove for the East Asia team to collate. This is a little selection:



Syria

It's been going on for so long now that it is difficult to remember that the conflict in Syria started with peaceful protests against the treatment by the Assad regime of the people of Syria. An extract from Wikipedia gives some background to the complaints of the protestors

"According to a 2011 UN report, Syrian armed and security forces may be responsible for:

- *unlawful killing, including of children (mostly boys), medical personnel and hospital patients ("In some particularly grave instances, entire families were executed in their homes");*
- *torture, including of children (mostly boys, sometimes to death) and hospital patients, and including sexual and psychological torture;*
- *arbitrary arrest "on a massive scale";*
- *deployment of tanks and helicopter gunships in densely populated areas;*
- *heavy and indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas;*
- *collective punishment;*
- *enforced disappearances;*
- *widescale and systematic destruction and looting of property;*
- *the systematic denial, in some areas, of food and water; and*

the prevention of medical treatment, including to children - in the period since 15 March 2011"

Despite, or perhaps because of, the civil war, this seems to have got worse and is not headline (or much reported news). There are recent reports in the Independent and the Guardian, amongst other outlets, giving graphic, harrowing accounts of the sexual and physical tortures being carried out in the Assad regime detention centres and prisons. Tens of thousands have disappeared. More are vanishing daily. Few emerge unscathed.

Contd from page 3—Syria

A recent call at the UN for the regime to be charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity was blocked by Russia using its veto in the Security Council. Typically Russia is more concerned about its geopolitical priorities rather than Human Rights.

'Veteran war crimes prosecutor Carla del Ponte is quitting the UN's Independent

International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, the [panel confirmed on Sunday](#).

Del Ponte was one of three members on the UN-appointed panel tasked with probing human rights violations in Syria, including chemical weapons attacks, torture of prisoners, and the targeting of hospitals.

"I am quitting this commission, which is not backed by any political will," she told a panel discussion at the Locarno Film Festival, [Reuters reported](#).

"I have no power as long as the Security Council does nothing," she added. "We are powerless, there is no justice for Syria." (Source CNN)

The article cited above (search for Syria Human Rights within Wikipedia) is a long and depressing tale of the human race's capability for complete disregard for the rights of those with whom we disagree.

<http://bit.ly/1OR8Jwi> links to a recent overview of the situation from Amnesty International. It is a case study in why Amnesty exists and why we need to continue our work.

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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.

