**Bognor, Chichester & District Amnesty Group**

**Newsletter: February 2018**

Dear Writers,

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| Dates for your diary  Thu 15/3/18 Group AGM, School of Music, Bognor  Sat 24/3/18 Chichester Street Collection  Tue 19/6/18: Kate Allen (Director, UK Amnesty) at Chichester Cathedral |

**LOCAL AMNESTY EVENTS**

THURSDAY 15/3: Our AGM, School of Music, Sudley Road, Bognor. 7.30 pm start.

1) REFRESHMENTS!!!!!!

2) Apologies for absence

3) Minutes of last year’s AGM

4) Matters Arising

5) Discussion and voting on the Reports in this newsletter

6) Election of officers: - CHAIR, TREASURER, POC CO-ORDINATOR, SECRETARY, MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, CAMPAIGNS/URGENT ACTION and up to three others

7) UK AMNESTY AGM Swansea

8) Future programme

9) Action

10) Any other business

SATURDAY 24/3. We want VOLUNTEERS for our STREET COLLECTION in Chichester. We can collect 10 am -3 pm, but any time you can spare in between is gratefully received. We are hoping for as many people as possible to rattle a tin, if only for an hour or so that day. Does anyone know any buskers, singers or musicians who can help by performing then? Tins and tabards provided. Please contact Jilli Webber on (01243) 371463.

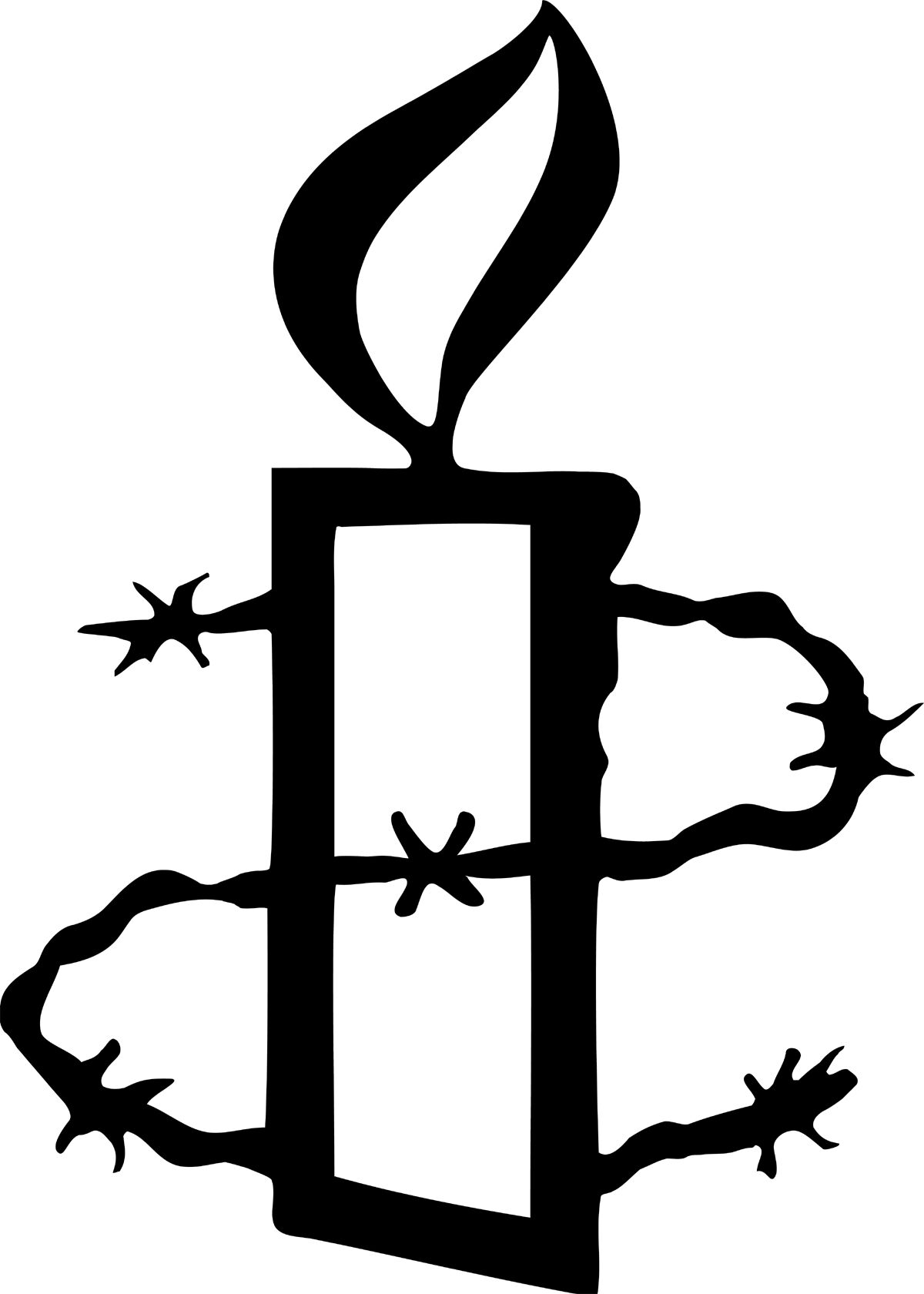
**OTHER EVENTS**

UK Amnesty AGM at Swansea 7/8 April. I will bring details of proposed resolutions to our AGM.

The new Chichester, MP Gillian Keegan has agreed to talk to the Quakers at the Friends Meeting House, Chichester on THURSDAY 22/2 at 7pm (on the New Economy and the arms trade). We hope to raise human rights issues. Contact me for details. (01243) 823016

Carry on Writing!!!!!!!!

Bob DEWICK

**Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing**

**Reminder: action on I Welcome Families Together campaign**

***Background to this action:***

Refugee families, separated by war and persecution, are being kept apart by restrictive UK rules on family reunion. On Friday 16 March 2018, MPs will debate an important bill to improve these rules and reunite refugee families. We need at least 100 MPs to turn up and vote on 16 March to change these unfair rules that keep refugees in UK apart from those they love. To win this vote we need MPs’ constituents (YOU) to tell them you support refugee family reunion.

***What you can do***

This action was introduced in the November 2017 Newsletter.

If you haven't yet written to your MP, you could email them here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/uk-stop-keeping-families-apart>

* Remember: always include your own address when you write to your MP, so that they will know you live in their constituency.

**Egypt: Drop charges against Azza Soliman**

***Background to this action:***

“This Azza Soliman only brings trouble… She is the epitome of ignorance... We should beat you to wake you up.”— Hatem Naaman, LTC News

Imagine a UK mainstream news presenter saying something like this. Their career would be over. They might even be sent to prison. Not in Egypt.

Azza Soliman has been under attack by the Egyptian government for 30 years. Her crime? Simply standing up for basic women’s rights. The right not to be harassed at work. The right not to be beaten. Not to be raped. Rights that we take for granted here at home.

Azza has been one of the most prominent women’s rights defenders in Egypt since the 80s. Her organisation the Centre for Egyptian Women Legal Assistance (CEWLA), set up in 1995, campaigns for legal equality of Egyptian women.

Sadly, this kind of intimidation is nothing new to Azza. Since 1988, because of her courageous work, Azza has been accused variously of spying and being a ‘threat to national security’, put under surveillance, targeted by smear campaigns, and harassed by security forces and pro-government media outlets.

She now faces years in prison on dubious accusations of:

* Tax evasion
* Operating a civil society organisation without proper registration
* Slandering Egypt’s image by claiming that women in Egypt face rape

We believe that these charges are politically motivated, part of a wider crackdown on rights groups in Egypt.

Azza’s freedom is under attack, with an assets freeze and travel ban preventing her from travelling outside Egypt until her trial. She is not a criminal: Azza is the victim of a cynical crackdown on human rights in Egypt, part of a desperate attempt by President al-Sisi’s military regime to hold onto power.

***What you can do***

* This Group has been writing in solidarity with Azza Soliman for many years now, and we need you to do so again.
* Tell President al-Sisi that the charges against Azza must be dropped immediately.
* This action is online: [https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/azza-soliman](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/azza-soliman?from=issue&utm_campaign=MCFR564_LG_February%20LG%20Monthly%20mailing&utm_source=Email&utm_medium=Groups)

**See www.amnesty.org.uk/bognor-chichesterand-district/about-0for further information about the group**

Bognor Regis, Chichester and District Amnesty International Group

Report for 2017 to AGM 15 March 2018

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Income** | **Expenditure** | **Total (£)** |
| Subscriptions |  | 621.00 |
| Donations |  | 50.00 |
| Plant and Book Sale |  | 176.86 |
| Jamnesty/MOxtoby |  | 75.66 |
| Street Collection |  | 614.77 |
| Amnestcoffee am |  | 104.70 |
| GreetingsCardsCathedral |  | 50.70 |
| Arias/Song for Amnesty |  | 688.55 |
| In Memorium |  | 550.00 |
|  | Secretary | -133.13 |
|  | Membership Sec | 00.00 |
|  | Rent | -225.00 |
|  | Greetings Cards postage | -11.05 |
|  | Arias/Song for Amnesty | -6.34 |
|  | AIUK affiliation fee | -72.00 |
|  | AIUK Donation | -1700.00 |
|  | AIUK I Welcome | -140.00 |
|  | ChristmasTreeEvent | -60.00 |
|  | AIUK In Memorium | -350.00 |
|  | *Brought Forward* | 723.25 |
|  | Balance | 957.97 |

Grateful thanks to everyone for their continued generosity towards the group. In the first 10 months of last year, local groups donated £93,000 to AIUK. With our donation of £1,700, I can safely say that we more than pull our weight in this area. We are particularly grateful to the family of the late Mrs Berry Wise, in whose memory donations were made to the group. Some of those donations were gift aided, increasing their value to Amnesty. Thank you also to Jilli for organising the street collection, with entertainment, and again raising a significant sum. The next collection is on 24 March; please do help with that if you can. Similar thanks are due to Rebecca, whose talents were put to use with those of her fellow singers in Arias for Amnesty. Our reliable regulars, Jamnesty, the Plant and Book Sale and the Amnescoffee morning all provided enjoyment and fun, together with additional funds. The group now has 61 members, and subs and donations are also acknowledged with gratitude. Thank you everyone.

Breege Gallagher

Treasurer

**Chair’s Review of the Year, March 2017 – February 2018**

I must express my deepest appreciation of all the committee members for their tireless work for this group; and my grateful thanks to those group members and their friends and families who have both initiated and supported this year’s programme of events: I hope you all enjoyed the events.

Highlights of the year included:

* **Concert: Aria and Song for Amnesty:** at Christ Church. We joined Rebecca Grove, Stephanie Peat, Charlie Wood and accompanist Chris Coote for an evening of beautiful music, as part of the Festival of Chichester. Our grateful thanks to Rebecca for successfully co-ordinating the event and gathering together such a group of talented individuals, helping us raise £512.00 for Amnesty.
* Jilli Webber co-ordinated an eighth successful **street collection** in Chichester in March. Buoyed by the talented buskers, we made a fantastic £614.77, our highest total so far – our grateful thanks to Jilli for the hard work in co-ordinating this event.
* **May’s Book Sale and Plant Sale**: Thanks all the volunteers who helped out on the day: another good contribution to funds in the lovely venue in Emsworth. Thanks particularly to Manya Oxtoby for her delicious preserves and pickles, which always do so well, and to Clare Apel and Ann Stewart for the lovely plants, both garden-centre sourced and home-grown.
* **Talks at Six** [http://talksatsix.co.uk](http://talksatsix.co.uk/) is a forum in Chichester, where you can enjoy interesting talks on a wide range of subjects in a relaxed atmosphere. We were pleased to support a fascinating talk on prisoners in North Korea
* Peter James researched and guided us on another **PUMBLE** (Pub ramble) from Boxgrove to the George in Eartham, on a lovely July day.
* **AmnesTea!** Maggie and Gary Courtnadge hosted an AmnesTea in Barnham to raise funds. Being a morning event, it was more of an Amnes-Coffee Morning! Guests happily scoffed biscuits and cakes: my thanks to Maggie and Margaret Robertson for the baking.

May I take this opportunity to encourage group members to think about taking a small part to support the work of the committee in 2018? The running of our Amnesty group, in terms of organising events and fundraising, is mainly done through monthly meetings, attended by the elected committee and both other members who have either taken one-off roles such as for a current campaign, or members who would like to take part but without taking a set role. The work we do is serious, but the committee never takes itself too seriously: we’re a friendly bunch: do come and join us!

*Kath*

**Review of the Year: campaigns**

**Action for Individuals:** Focussing on human rights abuses in **Egypt**: we were concerned to read that **Azza Soliman** had been re-arrested in December.

New global campaign launched: BRAVE, in response to the increased attacks and targeting of Human Rights Defenders (HRD), activists and civil society organisations around the world. We took action for outspoken lawyer **Eren Keskin** in **Turkey;** for housing rights activist **Tep Vanny** in **Cambodia; and for Saudi Arabian** human rights defender **Mohammad al-Otaibi.** We have also been involved in an on-going campaign to release **Amnesty staff in Turkey**, who have been detained with other Turkish human rights activists, and appealing against the harassing of **Kenyan** human rights organisations

**Write for Rights campaign:** Our annual event at the Cathedral Green was enhanced this year by the use of beautiful cards produced by local young people at the Chichester Cathedral print-making workshop. These cards were inspired by the colour and symbolism of the Reconciliation tapestry in the Cathedral and were used to decorate our Write for Rights Christmas tree on the Green.

**Other campaigns:** Actions were taken via the newsletter and at public and letter-writing meetings on:

* **Death penalty**: actions for those receiving death sentences in **Saudi Arabia**
* Action on the appalling situation in **Syrian** prisons, in solidarity for the 'disappeared' in Syria, and for Syrian patients waiting evacuation in order to receive urgent medical treatment.
* **Refugee** Actions: We participated in the new “I Welcome” campaign in support of refugees at our Group AGM, in newsletters, at the AmnesTea and at *Arias for Amnesty*, where Amnesty's I Welcome refugees photo exhibition was highlighted.
* Support for **Huang Qi**, a **Chinese** website founder who has been ill-treated in detention.
* Solidarity actions for **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe** and **Kamal Foroughi,** imprisoned in **Iran.**
* The snap election (remember that?) gave us an opportunity to lobby the various candidates on their human rights stance, particularly their attitude to scrapping the Human Rights Act

Thank you to those who have hosted letter-writing evenings in your homes during the year: please let the committee know if you would like to host a letter-writing event in 2018 (we will provide the cases and advice on how to do this, if you need some help).