

Action

**THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER**



March 2018

**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*

1st March
Group meeting

Monthly Collection

17th March
21st April

Contact Madeline
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Monthly Stall

24th March
Contact

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Fundraising gig

April 13th
Latest Bar

More info to follow

Write for Rights 2018

1st December
10am to 4pm

Friends Meeting House

**"Asylum Monologues"
a literary fundraiser held on 17th February**

"Asylum Monologues" is not an easy listen – it's a verbatim report of three asylum seekers who have fled from the most horrendous persecution and torture in Uganda, Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, only to find themselves further persecuted and tortured by the vagaries, deliberate or otherwise, of the UK immigration system.....left waiting in limbo, for months and even years on end, often destitute and begging for daily essentials as they are denied benefits and the right to work, while their case is considered.

Thanks to the skilled interpretation by four professional actors, "Asylum Monologues" became a very moving performance, which left the audience in no doubt that we do indeed have a "hostile" environment for immigrants, as Theresa May promised.

The second half of the evening was a collection of poems and prose on the theme of war, some by our own poet laureates, some by Palestinian poets and an extremely poignant one written by a very young girl from Somalia – again, passionately and movingly narrated by the four actors.

There was also some wonderful live music played on an "oud" by a Syrian musician.

The event, at the West Hill Community Hall, was sold out, despite an unfortunate and unforeseen "clash" with a Palestinian fundraising event, and raised £450, split between our group and Thousand4£1000, a local charity which supports destitute migrants.

Sue

The Animal and Insect Act

Finally, in order to ensure Absolute national security they passed the Animal and Insect Emergency Control and Discipline Act. Under this new act, buffaloes cows and goats were prohibited from grazing in herds of more than three. Neither could birds flock, nor bees swarm...

This constituted unlawful assembly.

As they had not obtained prior planning permission, mud-wasps and swallows were issued with summary Notices to Quit. Their homes were declared sub-versive extensions to private property.

Monkeys and mynahs were warned to stop relaying their noisy morning orisons until an official Broadcasting License was issued by the appropriate Ministry. Unmonitored publications and broadcasts posed the gravest threats in times of a National Emergency.

Similarly, woodpeckers had to stop tapping their morse-code messages from cocnut tree-top to chempaka tree. All messages were subject to a thorough pre-scrutiny by the relevant authorities.

Java sparrows were arrested in droves for rumour-mongering.

Cats (suspected of conspiracy) had to be indoors by 9 o'clock.

Cicadas and crickets received notification to turn their amplifiers down.

Ducks could not quack nor turkeys gobble during restricted hours. Need I say, all dogs - alsations, dachshunds, terriers, pointers and even little chichuahuas - were muzzled.

In the interests of security, penguins and zebras were ordered to discard their non-regulation uniforms.

The deer had to surrender their dangerous antlers. Tigers and all carnivores with retracted claws were sent directly to prison for concealing lethal weapons.

And by virtue of Article Four, paragraph 2(b) sub-section sixteen, under no circumstances were elephants allowed to break wind between the hours of six and six. Their farts could easily be interpreted as gunshot.

Might spark off a riot...

A month after the Act was properly gazetted the birds and insects started migrating south, the animals went north, and an eery silence handcuffed our forests.

There was now Total Security.

2017 in Review – based upon Amnesty International Reports

Amongst the **GOOD NEWS:**

The Istanbul 10 were freed

People like us around the world signed petitions and protested to demand **Turkey** free Amnesty's jailed staff. In October, Director İdil Eser and nine other activists were released on bail. We'll keep fighting until the charges are dropped and our Chair Taner is free.

Our words had power

Palestinian circus performer Mohammad Abu Sakha was released, and charges against **Peruvian** activist Máxima Acuña were dropped. Both had been sent thousands of messages for Write for Rights 2016.

A step forward for women's rights in Northern Ireland

We helped change the lives of women and girls in **Northern Ireland** by campaigning for an amendment in UK law meaning they can now access NHS-funded abortions in England. We're still calling for free and legal abortions everywhere in the UK.

Zimbabwe

Pastor Ewan Mawarire, founder of the #Thisflag movement and leader of protests in **Zimbabwe** in 2016 was acquitted of subversion on November.

Mass surveillance in the UK

The Court of Appeal declared key aspects of the **UK's** previous mass surveillance regime to be unlawful, with implications for the current system.

Cobalt in DRC

The London Metal Exchange is investigating whether cobalt mined by children in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** is being traded in the UK.

Kenya

The Supreme court in **Kenya** declared mandatory death sentencing unconstitutional.

Individuals

In **Gambia**, the government said it will compensate the family of journalist Ebrima Manneh, who was 'disappeared' and killed in 2006. French radio journalist Ahmed Abba was freed in **Cameroon** after a court squashed his 10 year sentence. In **Yemen** journalist Hisham al-Omeisy was released after being held for 6 months by Huthi forces

In **Ethiopia** opposition politician Merera Gudina was among 528 Prisoners of Conscience freed.

But amongst the **BAD NEWS:**

World leaders abandon human rights

In 2017, the world witnessed a rollback of human rights. Signs of a regression were everywhere. Across the world governments continued to clampdown on the rights to protest, and women's rights took a nosedive in the USA, Russia and Poland.

From Venezuela to Tunisia, there was mass social discontent, as people were denied access to their fundamental human rights to food, clean water, healthcare and shelter.

From the US to the European Union and Australia, leaders of wealthy countries continued to approach the global refugee crisis with outright callousness, regarding refugees not as human beings with rights but as problems to be deflected.

And hate of certain groups in our societies, endorsed by governments, threatens to normalise discrimination against minority groups. Xenophobic slogans at a nationalist march in Poland and sweeping crackdowns on LGBTI communities from Chechnya to Egypt showed how discriminatory persecution is being given a green light by authorities.

Among a sea of stories that caused shock were the horrific reports of ethnic cleansing carried out by Myanmar's military against its Rohingya population. The stories captured by our researchers were utterly heartbreaking.

"Shafi, my two-year-old son, he was hit hard with a wooden stick. One hit, and he was dead ... Three of my children were killed," said one woman, whose money, possessions – and children – were taken by soldiers.

But with few leaders willing to stand up for human rights on a global stage, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from Myanmar to Iraq have gone ignored, making the world a more dangerous place.

Unfortunately, our work as Amnesty activists is as vital as ever.

AMNESTY STALL SATURDAY 24TH FEBRUARY

Andrew, Madeleine and Celia campaigned on behalf of the 3,000 of more Iranian men and women imprisoned since December 2017 for peacefully protesting against 40 years of suppression, poverty and other abuses imposed on them. Families gathering outside Evin prison were threatened by guards telling them they would be arrested if they did not disperse. Many of those arrested have been severely tortured and at least 6 detainees have died in prison from the torture. They have no legal representation or access to their families. Members of the Bar Association in various Iranian cities have written to express their concern in regards to the conditions of the detainees and a campaign has been set up in Iran to pressurise the government to release these men and women.

We posted 70 letters to the head of the Judiciary, Mohammed Javad Larijani.

Three human rights defenders **GOLROKH EBRAHIMI IRAEE, ATENA DAEMI AND ARASH SADEGHIA**, also arrested in December, have been on hunger strike for the last month. Golrokh and Atena have been moved to the notorious womens' prison Shahr-e Rey in the city of Varamin which is a disused chicken house that holds hundreds of women in degrading circumstances. There is no safe drinking water, decent food, medicine or fresh air. There is a high incident of assaults towards inmates. These two women were assaulted and abused by prison guards when they protested that their prison classification did not warrant their removal to Shahr-e Rey.

Arash Sadeghia has gone on hunger strike in protest at the transfer of Golrokh to whom he is married, and Atena. His health is very poor as he suffers from severe digestive and respiratory complications, abdominal pain, also bleeding and an irregular heartbeat.

You can write to the High Council for Human Rights, Esfaniar Boulevard, Niyesh Intersection, Vali Asr Avenue, Tehran, Iran asking for the immediate release of these three prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for their peaceful human rights work.

Thank you. Celia

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