



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

October 2018 Newsletter



COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 9th October

Tuesday 13th November

Tuesday 11th December

Campaign Meeting

Speaker: Ulrike Schmidt – Human Rights at Risk in Eastern Europe

Greetings Card 'Write for Rights' campaign

Our thanks to Vivien Glanz of West Wickham for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

We are back after our extended summer break. There has been much happening, and this bumper edition of our Newsletter brings you all our news and views including a speaker event in November, a public meeting with one of our local MPs and of course our Charity Preview at Bromley Little Theatre in October. Why not join us at a future meeting?

Public Meeting
Bob Neill MP, Bromley & Chislehurst, speaking on
'Human Rights & The Law'
Saturday 20th October 10.30am-12.30pm
Bromley Town Church, 2 Ethelbert Road, BR1 1JA
Refreshments - ALL WELCOME

+++ Open Garden +++ One of the highlights of the long hot summer was Margaret's 'Open Garden' on July 8th. On a beautiful Sunday Margaret opened her stunning Mediterranean garden in aid of Amnesty and in the process raised £331.60. We are most grateful to Margaret for her kindness in making the day possible!

We would also like to thank all of our supporters who 'Sponsored a Newsletter' in our recent Chairman's Appeal; this has raised a terrific £430 and sees us self-funding the Group through to late 2019. Thank you!!

Ablajan Awut Ayup



We wrote to the Chinese Ambassador to the UK protesting at the forced disappearance of young Uighur poet, musician and lyricist, **Ablajan Awut Ayup**. Often referred to as the Uighur Justin Bieber, he was abducted in February 2018 as part of the latest repression and clamp down of Uighur culture. He has not been seen since, and his family have no knowledge of his whereabouts. Ablajan was celebrated not only for his songs for children but as a model of cultural integration, translating his songs into Han Chinese and working to bring the two cultures together. We have protested his arrest and called for his immediate release. Videos of Ablajan performing Uighur pop songs can be found on YouTube (and he's rather good!).

Westminster Corner

We received a reply from Jo Johnson MP, to our letter about defending the rights of women. Mr Johnson notes that this 'remains a priority for the Government', and goes on to say that it is supporting efforts across 30 countries to eliminate 'all forms of violence against women'. The



Government has allocated a flagship £35m to end FGM, and specifically £12m to end the practice in Sudan. A further £39m has been allocated by DFID to end early forced marriage. The Government is also supporting UN programmes with £12m of funding to support 750,000 girls and women caught up in violence.

Are Human Rights at Risk in Eastern Europe?

Speaker: Amnesty Regional Action Co-ordinator Ulrike Schmidt

Tuesday 13th November at 7.30pm

All Welcome!

Prisoner of Conscience on Hunger Strike



Human rights defender **Hanan Badr el-Din**, who we have featured before has started a hunger strike in protest at her continual detention without trial, and follows yet another extension of her pre-trial detention. She has now been in pre-trial detention since May 2017 on fabricated charges of belonging to a banned group. A judge has been renewing the detention every 45 days without explanation, and her next hearing is imminent. Hanan Badr el-Dinn suffers from a rare genetic disorder and there are fears for her health. We wrote to the Egyptian Public Prosecutor protesting at her continuing detention and calling for her immediate, unconditional release.

Beaten, Burnt and Given Electric Shocks

On 14 December **Ali Aarrass**, a Belgian-Moroccan national was forcibly returned to Morocco despite warnings from the United Nations that he would be at risk of torture and arbitrary arrest. And so it proved; he has been detained ever since, held incommunicado and subjected to torture including beatings and electric shocks. He has been accused of belonging to a terrorist group, for which there is no evidence. His torture claims have been confirmed following a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Ali has been held in prolonged solitary confinement since 2016, and his health is now very fragile. One of the few pleasures he has are cards and letters of support from the international community – we therefore wrote to Ali sending our heartfelt solidarity. Torture and other human rights violations are endemic and routine throughout Morocco, and we will continue to call for Ali's unconditional release.



After a 21 year moratorium in which all executions were commuted, the State of Nebraska resumed executions on 14th August with the killing of Carey Dean Moore. He waived his right to further appeals having 'given up' after nearly four decades on Death Row. This was the first execution in Nebraska using a new cocktail of four lethal drugs. He has faced execution no less than six times before, on each occasion, an 11th hour stay was issued. There have so far been 16 executions in the US in 2018 carried out in seven states.

Bromley Little Theatre
Charity Preview in Aid of Amnesty International
CHARLES III by Mike Bartlett
Thursday 11th October at 7.45pm; Tickets £12
From David Howkins 01689823793

Tickets are going fast for our much anticipated Charity preview of Charles III at BLT on 11th October. We have just a handful or so left so don't miss out – tickets are priced £12 from David on 01689 823793.

Mexico: Human Rights in Crisis



We were delighted to welcome Amnesty country co-ordinator for Mexico, **Tilly Levenas** to the meeting. Hardly a day goes by without a human rights atrocity being reported in a country torn apart by drugs gangs. Tilly gave us a compelling picture of a country losing the war against extreme violence, but she maintained it is not a failed state with an affluent Middle Class, growing economy (15th largest in terms of GDP), and vibrant tourism. She indicated that much of the recent escalation of violence was due to the 2006 'war on drugs'. Prior to this,

Governments had historically tolerated gang warfare over drugs so long as it did not infect the civil population, turning a blind eye to inter gang violence. However, the officially sanctioned war against the drug barons saw extreme levels of violence translated to the streets. This has been coupled with corruption and violence used by law enforcers and the army. Freedom of Expression has also been severely repressed, and on the border with the US murders are so frequent they fail to go recorded. It is also appalling being a woman in Mexico with impunity for severe levels of physical and sexual violence against women. A defining case was the murder of 43 students in 2014, murdered it's believed by local gangs. Amnesty has focused on this case to bring the perpetrators to justice – between 2007 and 2014 the Mexican Government estimates 164,000 people have died as a result of the ongoing drug wars; the death toll in 2017 at 29,168 was the heaviest for many years. The situation is bleak but not, according to Tilly, hopeless as the new Government has considerable popular support to change things for the better.



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*Don't forget to find us on Facebook; we now have **35 members** who have found us on Facebook; if you use and enjoy social media why not join us for news updates and campaign information. You can also find us online*

at www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/bromley-and-orpington

Good news! Tep Vanny is free!

On 20 August Cambodian land rights activists received a royal pardon and so Tep Vanny is free from prison! She was jailed just for protesting the destruction of her home to make way for a luxury development. Thank you so much to all who took action and campaigned for her release. We have campaigned continuously for her release so this is marvellous news.

Present on 11th September: Neville White, Vivian Glanz, Wendy Simmons, Patsy Paine, Waltraut Gilchrist, Margaret Coppard and Peter Martin. **Apologies:** David Howkins, Vivienne Andrews, Gladys Edmonds.

Meetings are held in the Wesley Room, Orpington Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington commencing at 7.30pm.

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