

Newsletter: April 2019

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	17-23 June: Refugee Week (details later) 20 July: Pumble (PUb raMBLE)
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Dear writers,

Many thanks to those who came to our AGM in Chichester, and to Maggie Courtnadge's marvellous AmnesTEA with its wonderful and (too,too) delicious cakes. Although not a fundraising event, people gave £150!

At our AGM, the existing committee were re-elected; please ask me if you want the minutes. My apologies for giving my wrong mobile number; it should be 07908 524151, though it's usually better to use my old-fashioned landline (01243) 823016.

Local events

Margaret Robertson has sent 50 signed cards for AZZA SOLIMAN to the Egyptian Embassy and will send 25 signed cutouts to Azza herself for her 9 April birthday. These cards and paper chain of cut-out dolls 'hand in hand with Azza' were created at various events in February and March, including the AmnesTEA. You can see the photo and article on page 8 of this edition of the *Bognor Post* https://issuu.com/postnewspapers5/docs/bognor_regis_post_issue_150.

We hope to do something for Refugee Week and will be having another PUMBLE on 20 July – details later.

Other events

- UK Amnesty is having its AGM in Nottingham on 13-14 April. I have copies of the resolutions if anyone wants them, and hope to get the results afterwards.
- National Amnesty subscriptions are going up on my birthday (1 July) – ask me for details.
- I can only echo the advice of the Foreign Office and warn anyone against travelling to Brunei after the full imposition of Sharia law. Amnesty, and others, have pointed out that many of the new penalties flagrantly breach the human rights treaties that Brunei had freely signed. I shall certainly not patronise the Dorchester Hotel.
- **2 May 2019 Football Welcomes.** There have been significant developments over the past year for local refugee football team Nations United, with team members from Eritrea, Sudan, Iran, Egypt and Syria. There are currently about 18 players turning up for training sessions, and a similar number that City of Sanctuary support playing in two teams in a six-a-side league. The Amnesty **Football Welcomes** 2019 campaign runs 27 & 29 April and celebrates the contribution that refugees make to football (around half of the Premier League is taking part, as well as teams from other leagues, national and local). There is a local event with Nations United on **2 May** at the Chichester City football ground from 6.00- 9.30, with 12 teams in a six-a side tournament. Please do go along to support.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Families Together Action

Amnesty is proud to be running our Families Together campaign in partnership with [Oxfam](#), [UNHCR](#), [Refugee Council](#), [British Red Cross](#), [STAR](#) (Student Action for Refugees) and [others](#) to call on our government to change the rules that keep refugee families apart.

For many thousands of refugees in the UK, safety from conflict has come at a heavy price. The UK government's strict and unfair rules have forced apart mums and dads from their children, sisters from brothers, and elderly parents left behind to fend for themselves. They may have reached safety but instead of feeling relief, the agony and guilt of separation from loved ones weighs down on them.

Earlier this year, MPs packed out Westminster to support a Bill introduced by Angus MacNeil MP proposing the necessary changes to bring more refugee families together. Thanks to many thousands of people like you writing to your MPs, [the Bill passed with an overwhelming majority](#) with 131 MPs voting in favour from all sides of the political spectrum. But now we need the government to listen to these MPs and also support these changes. The Home Secretary Sajid Javid has the power to do this with the stroke of a pen. Please sign Amnesty's petition urging him to reunite more refugee families, here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-secretary-reunite-refugee-families>

Update: Egypt - thank you for taking action on behalf of Shawkan

Egyptian photojournalist Mahmoud Abou Zeid, known as Shawkan, has finally been released after spending more than five and a half years in prison on trumped-up charges. Shawkan's long overdue release ends a painful ordeal for him and his family. But despite this great news, he still faces ludicrous probation measures which require him to spend 12 hours of each day at a police station from 6pm to 6am for the next five years.

- Shawkan was 25 when he was arrested simply for doing his job on 14 August 2013. He was covering a sit-in protest when Egypt's security forces burst in, killing between 800 to 1,000 protesters in cold blood. This came to be known as the Rabaa Massacre.
- He was convicted in September 2018 in a mass trial of more than 700 people, including senior leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, and was sentenced to five years in prison, which he had already served in pre-trial detention, plus a fine followed by five years of probation. A six-month prison term was added to his sentence because he could not afford to pay the fine. He was finally released on 4 March 2019.
- Amnesty supporters campaigned for years to help free Shawkan, with thousands of you sending him messages of support as part of Write For Rights 2016, and over 30,000 signing a petition for his release. This Group continues to work on behalf of Azza Soliman in Egypt.

Want to do more?

Real Lives is issued by Amnesty twice a year, for those wishing to write more letters in support of individuals at risk. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/real-lives-spring-2019>

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Action: Saudi Arabia - Women activists on trial

On 13 March 2019, 11 women activists were brought to trial at the Criminal Court in Riyadh after being detained without charge since May 2018. The women were charged with contacting international organizations, including Amnesty International, foreign media and other activists. Some of the women were also charged with promoting women's rights and calling for the end of the male guardianship system. The activists have had no access to their lawyers throughout their detention. Amnesty calls on the Saudi authorities to drop these charges and release the women activists, and others who remain detained without charge, immediately and unconditionally.

What you can do:

Please use this template, or write in your own words.

Your Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud,

Loujain al-Hathloul, Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef, Amal al-Harbi, Dr. Ruqayyah al-Mharib, Nouf Abdulaziz, Maya'a al-Zahrani, Shadan al-Anezi, Dr. Abir Namankni, Dr. Hatoun al-Fassi and another woman are among a group of Saudi Arabian activists who were detained following a sweeping wave of arrests since May 2018. Many of the women activists brought to trial have campaigned against the long-standing ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia, and for the end of the male guardianship system. On 13 March 2019, several of the women activists were charged with contacting international organizations, including Amnesty International, journalists and other activists.

Up until the first trial session on 13 March, the women activists remained in detention without charge. They were detained incommunicado with no access to their families or lawyers during the first three months of their detention. Several women were subjected to sexual violence and other forms of torture and ill-treatment.

I urge you to drop all charges against all 11 women activists, and to release them immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, solely detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association. I also urge you to allow all those detained to access their lawyers, and to allow independent monitors into the prisons to investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment including sexual abuse.

Yours sincerely

Please write to (by 29/04/2019) to:

- **His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud**, The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, Office of His Majesty the King, Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- **Copy to** His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz, Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in London, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 30 Charles Street, Mayfair, London, W1J 5DZ, email: ukemb@mofa.gov.sa; twitter: @SaudiEmbassyUK, Salutation: Your Royal Highness

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