

Newsletter: June 2019

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Sat 20/07/2019 PUMBLE [=PUB raMBLE], Centurion Way, Chichester Sat 31/08/2019 Bognor Regis Pride march (and publicity table?) Sat 19/10/2019 Arias and Songs for Amnesty: The Regis School of Music, Bognor Regis
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Dear writers

The final total for the CHICHESTER STREET COLLECTION was £362.69. Well done all!

Local events

- Our yearly PUMBLE will take place, weather permitting, on **Saturday 20/07**. We meet at the old Station House, Lavant, on the Centurion Way at 10.30 to walk to West Dean and back. Bring sandwiches; liquid refreshments can be bought at the "Dean" or the local village café-shop. Ring Peter James on (01243) 533745.
- Bognor Birdman is being revived together with a Pride event the day before (**Saturday 31/07**) to which we have been invited. Ring me in (01243) 823016 for details.
- Further ahead, we have another Concert for Amnesty at the REGIS SCHOOL OF MUSIC on **Saturday 19/10** at 7.30 pm, featuring Rebecca Grove, Stephanie Peat and Chris Coote.

Other events

Festival of Chichester 15/06/2019 - 14/07/2019. The Festival of Chichester is always an excellent mix of events, with something for everyone. This year, there are some interesting events with a human rights theme: you can find out more about and book these events, and find out other events of interest, at <https://festivalofchichester.co.uk/spoken-word/>

Embassy Crawl: London 28/09/2019 Lambeth Local Amnesty Group are busy planning for the 2019 "Embassy Crawl". For those of you who don't know about the Embassy Crawl, they take a current Amnesty campaign and (on foot) visit select embassies one-by-one, delivering a letter about a case at each embassy. This year's theme, "Laws Designed to Silence" is particularly relevant to our North African countries. The video of the 2017 Embassy Crawl which focused on the BRAVE campaign gives you an idea of what the crawl is like if you haven't been on one before. You can have a look at it here: <https://tinyurl.com/y4lokk97>. More details of the 2019 crawl nearer the time.

You may have heard of troubles at Amnesty's International Secretariat (based in London, but quite separate from Amnesty UK). Apart from staff problems, it is deeply in the red (£7.7M this year) and the new Secretary-General has asked for money from national AI sections, including UK AMNESTY. The UK Amnesty Board are pondering this at the end of June; I'll keep you posted.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Update on Egypt

There is startling news from Egypt about the government's policy of using the country's judicial system to wipe out its opponents. In February 2019, no fewer than 15 people were hanged in three separate series of executions. This outbreak of executions is particularly worrying because of the enormous number of people already under sentence of death in Egypt.

Amnesty's worldwide Death Penalty Report for 2018, out in April, confirmed that 717 people had received death sentences in Egypt in 2018 – nearly 30% of the 2,500+ people known to have been given death sentences in most of the world last year. That total excludes China, which generally keeps its many death sentences and executions secret.

Egypt ranked 6th worldwide for executions in 2018, with 43 people known to have been hanged. The fear is that Egypt could execute far more, given the approximately 2,000 people who have received death sentences since President Al-Sisi took power in 2012.

Many of these were sentenced in grossly unfair mass trials, often involving more than 100 people at the same time. Notorious cases of injustice include death sentences for 183 people in a single trial in relation to an attack on a police station that killed 13 policemen in 2013; 103 people sentenced to death in a single trial that included former democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi; and 75 death sentences among the 738 co-defendants in the trial involving photojournalist Shawkan – who was himself subsequently released.

Our North Africa team is considering options for a planned campaign to raise the profile of Egypt's judicial killing spree, following meetings with, the NGO the Egyptian Coordination for Rights and Freedom, and the UK government and all-party parliamentary group for Egypt.

Our Egypt actions co-ordinator, Margaret, advises that there are some urgent action cards due soon, so please let her know if you would like to get involved mn_robertson@hotmail.com or (01243) 552113.

Action: Sri Lanka - Pakistani Christian family at risk of deportation

A Pakistani Catholic family – ages ranging from 11 to 57 - have been arrested for overstaying their visas in Sri Lanka. The family fled Pakistan when their lives were threatened and arrived in Sri Lanka seeking asylum. Amnesty International learnt on 31/05/2019 that they are currently detained in deplorable conditions and that there are plans to deport them immediately. Forcibly returning them to Pakistan will put them in harm's way, as safety for minorities has deteriorated in recent years.

ACTION: Write an appeal in your own words or use the model letter below

To: Minister Tilak Marapana, Sir Baron Jayatilaka Mawatha, Colombo 00100 Sri Lanka Emails: publicity@formin.gov.lk, cypther@mfa.gov.lk, sfa@mfa.gov.lk

Copy to: Her Excellency Mis Manisha Gunasekera [Salutation: Your Excellency], High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 13 Hyde Park Gardens, London, W2 2LU mail@slhc-london.co.uk

Dear Minister Tilak Marapana,

*I am writing to urge you to stop the deportation of a Pakistani Christian family from Sri Lanka, who have been arrested and are being kept at the refugee centre in Mirihana for overstaying their visas. **Naseem John, Nida John, Nobil Zain, Sylvester John, Hina Milword and Keshwan Milword** fled serious threats to their lives in Pakistan and were forced to seek sanctuary in Sri Lanka. In addition to the trauma faced in their home country, the family had to endure the trauma of being displaced by violent mobs following the Easter Sunday attacks from their home in Dalupotha. They are currently being kept in terrible conditions, where the youngest member of the family has been separated from his mother because of the segregation in camps.*

The John family should not be deported to Pakistan where more harm awaits them. I ask you to ensure that they have a safe place to stay with access to food and medicine. There must be a fair process before a deportation, to properly evaluate the threat that these families might be exposed to upon return. No one should be forcibly returned to a country where they are at risk of serious human rights violations.

Yours sincerely

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