

# Newsletter: September 2019

## Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



<b>Dates for your diary</b>	<b>Sat 19/10/2019 Arias and Songs for Amnesty:</b> The Regis School of Music, Bognor Regis <b>Sat 07/12/2019 Card signing at the Cathedral Green, Chichester:</b> Write for Rights campaign
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Dear writers,

Although we had a presence at the Bognor Pride event, we are hoping to have more next year, both in Bognor and Chichester. Thanks to those who went on the Lambeth Group's EMBASSY CRAWL in London on Saturday 28/09

### Local events

- On 19 October, we have a Concert for Amnesty at the REGIS SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Bognor, at 7.30 pm, featuring Rebecca Grove, Stephanie Peat and Chris Coote, providing an evening of beautiful music.  
46 Sudley Road, Bognor PO21 1ER. There is very limited parking space at the venue, so please park on Sudley Road or in a public car park. <https://www.arun.gov.uk/bognor-regis-car-park-information-charges>. Admission free; all donations go to Amnesty International.
- Would anyone like to be the organiser for a possible CHICHESTER STREET COLLECTION next March? If so, contact me (01243) 823016.

### Other events

**Live Better Together 2019.** This is a programme of events taking place in Chichester to mark International Peace Day 2019. To explore the programme, visit <https://www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/news/live-better-together-reflection-meaning-peace>. Programme includes:

- **Tuesday 01/10/2019, 18:30** Talk at Chichester Cathedral. **From swords to ploughshares: conflict and climate, peace and prosperity** by Dr Ruth Valerio. To celebrate International Day of Peace, what is the connection between conflict, climate and natural resources? Event is free but booking essential (tickets either from the Cathedral shop or online, via the link above).
- **Thursday 17/10/2019, 14:00 - 15:30** **Interfaith Panel on Climate Change** will discuss the question of 'What role, if any, should faith-based organisations play in efforts to combat climate change?' This free event will be held in Vicar's Hall, and booking is essential (via the link above).
- **Saturday 09/11/2019, 18:00** The Annual Quaker Peace Lecture, at the Chichester Quaker Meeting House, is the final event in the series, with the theme of '**Stopping Wars Before They Start.**' Speaker Tim Gee is a Quaker, a London-based writer, political activist and author of 'Why I am a Pacifist'. There will be a retiring collection of the speaker's choice.

**Guildford Book Festival** (events promoted by Guildford Amnesty International).

- **Monday 07/10/2019, 20:00 - 21:00**, The Guildhall, Guildford. **Christy Lefteri and Mike Thomson - Books & Bees: Hope and survival in war-torn Syria** <http://www.guildfordbookfestival.co.uk/mike-thomson-christy-lefteri?rq=amnesty%20international>
- **Thursday 10/10/2019, 19:00 - 20:00**, St Nicholas Community Centre, Guildford. **Daniel Trilling: Lights in the distance - exile and refuge at the borders of Europe.** <http://www.guildfordbookfestival.co.uk/daniel-trilling?rq=amnesty%20international>

UK Amnesty have emailed me to prepare for a snap General Election, when we should campaign while preserving Amnesty's neutrality.

Carry on writing!

*Bob Dewick, Amnesty*

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### Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

#### Egypt Campaign: Update from Margaret Robertson, campaign co-ordinator

##### Urgent appeals

A big thank you to all those of you who responded to the appeal in our recent summer newsletter on behalf of **Aser Mohamed** (the teenager tortured into making false confessions) and also those who have supported our campaign on behalf of lawyer, **Azza Soliman**. In view of the fact that Egypt will be facing a United Nations **Universal Periodic Review** (UPR) in November, it is more important than ever to keep up the pressure. The UPR is a kind of 'Ofsted' for human rights so it is a critical opportunity to shame the Egyptian authorities by highlighting their widespread violations of human rights.

##### Petition signing

As a result of our recent joint meeting with Horsham and Haywards Heath Amnesty groups, we have decided on joint action to petition the Egyptian Embassy in London on behalf of Azza and Aser by the end of October. If you would like to sign our petition, there will be an opportunity at our next event, the Amnesty Concert on 19 October at 7.30 pm at the Regis School of Music. However, if you are unable to make it to the concert, please contact me at [mn\\_robertson@hotmail.com](mailto:mn_robertson@hotmail.com) for further details of how to get involved.

##### And now for the good news ...

##### Prisoners released

In spite of the depressing reports of the draconian measures in force in Egypt, there is substantial evidence that our actions do make a positive difference. Already this year many of the prisoners for whom we have written have been released including : **Amal Fathy** (women's rights); **Islam Khalil** and **Hanan Badre-el Din** (human rights defenders); **Shawkan** (blogger); **Malak al-Kashef** (transgender activist).

##### Review of NGO Law

Following international pressure from EU leaders, President al-Sisi has promised to review this law and 43 NGO workers were acquitted in the notorious Foreign Funding Case. Whilst changes to the legislation seem, so far, to have been mainly cosmetic, he seems to be holding back on enforcing it as harshly as before.

##### Feedback from Human Rights defenders

It is clear from comments from the human rights defenders themselves that not only do they receive strength and encouragement from messages of support but they also feel that cases which come under international scrutiny are treated less harshly. As one Egyptian activist commented: *campaigning by Amnesty in support of human rights activists meant they had shorter jail sentences; they are released and those (like Azza) who are subjected to assets freezes/travel bans are spared jail.*

### Our campaigning does make a difference – please continue your support at this crucial time!

#### Action 1: EGYPT: Researcher forcibly disappeared

On 11 June 2019, **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din**, a housing rights researcher with an Egyptian NGO, was arrested by security forces from a street near his house in Moqattam, Cairo, and forcibly disappeared. Since his arrest, the authorities have continued to deny that he is in their custody and his family have not been informed of his fate or whereabouts. Ibrahim is a researcher at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), where he focuses on the right to housing. He has

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been investigating Egypt's record of ensuring that everyone has access to safe and affordable housing, documenting forced evictions and Egypt's urban planning policies. He is the fifth person affiliated with ECRF to have been arrested since 2016.

Ibrahim's arrest comes amid a human rights crisis and crackdown on Egypt's civil society that has led to the arrest of hundreds over their legitimate work or peaceful expression or assembly. Amnesty International has extensively documented Egyptian security forces' use of enforced disappearances as a tool against political activists and protesters, including students and children in Egypt (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/4368/2016/en/>)

### What you can do:

Write in your own words or using the template letter below to

- Public Prosecutor Nabil Sadek, Office of the Public Prosecutor, Madinat al-Rehab, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
- Copy to: His Excellency Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel, Embassy of Egypt, 26 South Street, London W1K 1DW.

*Dear Counsellor,*

*On the night of 11 June 2019, plainclothes Egyptian security forces arrested **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din**, a housing rights researcher at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedom. He was taken from the street in the area where he lives in Moqattam, Cairo, and has been forcibly disappeared since then. Following his arrest, his family and lawyers have enquired about him at the Moqattam police station, but the authorities denied that he is in their custody. The family and lawyers also sent a telegram (a postal message) to the Public Prosecutor, and filed a complaint regarding his disappearance.*

*Enforced disappearance occurs when there is a deprivation of liberty, when that deprivation of liberty is carried out by state officials and when the deprivation of liberty is followed by the authorities' refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or the fate or whereabouts of the individual in question.*

*I urge you to reveal the whereabouts of Ibrahim Ezz El-Din immediately and ensure that he has access to his lawyers and family and that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment. I also urge you to bring all those responsible for his disappearance to justice, and to ensure that he is released, unless charged with an internationally recognizable crime.*

*Yours sincerely,*

### Action 2: EGYPT: political activist arbitrarily detained

We received this Urgent Action on 18/09/2019 asking us to write letters about the arrest in July of an Egyptian politician and activist **Ramy Shaath**. He is accused of helping a terrorist group, the fate of so many people in Egypt who seek to continue active participation in politics and civil society, in the face of a regime that tries to crush all civic initiative and freedom.

In the current world context, there is far too little pushback by governments like our own, against the injustice and sheer stupidity of the Al-Sisi regime. For the moment, it's down to us to back people like Ramy Shaath.

On 5 July 2019, Egyptian security forces arrested Ramy Shaath, transferred him to an undisclosed location and concealed his whereabouts for about 36 hours. He then appeared before a prosecutor at the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) in New Cairo and was accused of "aiding a terrorist group in achieving its goals". His detention was renewed on 15 September 2019 for another 15 days. Amnesty International considers Ramy Shaath to be a prisoner of conscience, as his

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detention stems solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and his right to participate in public affairs.

### What you can do

There's a sample letter below - as always, please feel free to edit it to reflect your own style and please send before the end of October. Write to:

- Public Prosecutor Nabil Sadek, Office of the Public Prosecutor, Madinat al-Rehab, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
- Copy to: His Excellency Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel, Embassy of Egypt, 26 South Street, London W1K 1DW.

*Dear Counsellor,*

*On 5 July 2019 at approximately 12:45 am, at least a dozen heavily armed police officers stormed the house of political activist **Ramy Shaath** in Cairo, without identifying themselves or presenting an arrest warrant. Police officers searched his house and seized computers, hard drives and mobile phones. They arrested both Ramy Shaath and his wife Céline Lebrun Shaath, a history teacher and community organizer, who was subsequently unlawfully deported to France on the same day, despite legally residing in Egypt since March 2012.*

*Security forces transferred Ramy Shaath to an undisclosed location and concealed his whereabouts for about 36 hours. Police officers in the Qasr el-Nil police station, in Downtown Cairo, denied to Ramy's family and lawyer that he was in their custody. The family was later informed by a lawyer that Ramy Shaath appeared before a prosecutor at the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) in New Cairo. Ramy Shaath was not allowed to call his family or legal counsel and was represented during the interrogation session by a lawyer who happened to be present in the court building at the time.*

*According to the family, the prosecutor informed Ramy that he is accused of "aiding a terrorist group in achieving its goals". However, he only questioned Ramy about the nature of his political activities in Egypt and did not provide any evidence against him. The prosecutor based his accusation on a secret file gathered by the National Security Agency (NSA), despite a 2015 decision by one of Egypt's top courts, the Court of Cassation, which ruled that NSA investigations do not constitute evidence on their own. Further, the prosecutor has not allowed Ramy or his lawyers to examine the NSA investigation file.*

*I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Ramy Shaath as he is a prisoner of conscience, and his detention stems solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and his right to participate in public affairs. I call on you to also ensure that - pending his release – he must be granted access to his lawyers and his detention must be in line with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Finally, I call on the Egyptian authorities to investigate the denial of consular assistance to Ramy Shaath's wife, Céline Lebrun Shaath, a French national, and her subsequent unlawful expulsion from Egypt, and to provide effective remedies.*

*Yours sincerely,*

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