

Death Penalty: 2018 - a Mixed year!

Amnesty has recently published its annual report of the 'state of the death penalty' world-wide for 2018. It is a mixed picture. Amnesty recorded at least 690 executions in 2018 – a significant decrease of 31% compared to 2017. This is the lowest figure recorded for a decade. Most executions continue to take place in a small number of countries: China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Iraq. The true extent of China's executions is unknown but is believed to be 'in the thousands'. Vietnam officially executed 85 people in 2018 placing it in the top five for the first time.

Positively, Burkina Faso abolished the death penalty, whilst Gambia and Malaysia imposed a moratorium, as did the State of Washington in the US. Compared to 2017, no executions were recorded in Bahrain, Bangladesh, Jordan, Kuwait or the UAE however, executions resumed in Botswana, Sudan, Taiwan and Thailand. At the end of 2018, 106 countries had abolished the death penalty in law for all crimes and 142 in law or practice. The trend towards abolition continues, however 2,531 death sentences were handed down in 54 countries; nearly 20,000 people were imprisoned under sentence of death at the close of 2018. Is there such a scheme in Bromley – we wondered?

Zimbabwe Action

We write to the President of Zimbabwe regarding the arrest of seven human rights defenders. The seven human rights activists have been arrested for "subverting a constitutional government" and could receive prison sentences of up to 20 years. Their crime alleges that in May they attended training in the Maldives on civic engagement, advocacy and communications. The seven named human rights defenders are: George Makoni, Tatenda Mombeyarara, Gamuchirai Mukura, Nyasha Mpahlo, Farirai Gumbonzvanda, Sitabile Dewa and Rita Nyamupinga and were arrested for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and association. We wrote calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Journalists At Risk

Being a journalist remains a dangerous profession in many parts the world, resulting in intimidation and death. The Bromley & Orpington Group has, over its long history, featured the persecution of journalists as among our major priorities. The release of **Ivan Golunov** is a rare victory for civil society in **Russia** where the routine harassment of independent journalists continues. Golunov was arrested on evidence that was brazenly fabricated causing unusually vocal public outrage. Three days later he was released and the police officers who had conspired to frame him were themselves arrested. Intimidation and assaults are routine in Russia where four reporters are currently in prison and a further 28 have been murdered since 2000 when President Putin came to power. Meanwhile **Turkey** imprisons more journalists and writers than any other country. Ahmet Altan, an advocate for Turkey's Kurdish community is serving a life sentence without parole for advocating human rights. Kurdish politician and lawyer, Selahattin Demirtaş faces a possible 142 year sentence on charges that are baseless. Ayşe Düzkan, a prominent writer, journalist and feminist activist, was arrested and convicted on terrorism charges linked to her writing for a pro-Kurdish newspaper – her challenge to the authorities in freely exercising her right to peaceful freedom of expression resulted in her being sentenced to 18 months last November. Please sign, address and post the enclosed letter calling for her conviction to be overturned. This will cost £1.35.

Present on 11th June: Neville White; Vivien Glanz; Ted Burke; Gladys Edmonds; Margaret Coppard; Waltraut Gilchrist. **Apologies:** Patrick and Carolyn Nield; Vivienne Andrews; Wendy Simmons; David Howkins and Peter Martin.

Meetings are held in the Wesley Room, Orpington Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington commencing at 7.30pm. **E-mail** amnestybromley@gmail.com **Website:** www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley

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