



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

May 2019 Newsletter



COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

*Tuesday 14 May
Tuesday 9 June
Tuesday 9 July*

*Speaker – Humphrey Pring - Sevenoaks Refugee Group
Speaker – to be confirmed (Central America)
Campaign Meeting*

Our thanks to Waltraut Gilchrist of Orpington, for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

Speaker: Humphrey Pring

“Working with Refugees”

We are delighted to welcome Humphrey from Sevenoaks Refugee Group to talk about the experience of helping refugees locally.

Tuesday 14th May at 7.30pm

Mission With A Vision – Saving Girls from FGM

We were delighted to welcome **Gill Martin** to the meeting who spoke about an inspirational charity based in Kenya that works to 'save' young girls from female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. The House of Hope started small, providing shelter and sanctuary for 12 girls; this then grew in 2014 to providing safety for 60 girls. The charity can now look after 80 girls, with ambitious plans to open a second sanctuary that can protect up to 250 girls per year. In all, Mission with a Vision has helped 1,000 young girls escape the misery of FGM and forced marriage. The House is based at Narok close to the Masai Mara, a part of Kenya that is culturally affected by traditional beliefs that lead to FGM being carried out. Gill explained that in that part of Kenya 26% of girls marry before the age of 18 because most marriages are 'arranged', often with much older men. FGM, as well as a humiliating, rights-denying procedure, can lead to significant bleeding, infection and even death. It often leads to severe problems in childbirth. In 2014, it was found that 21% of all women aged 15-49 in Kenya had been cut, but this can rise to 98% in countries such as Somalia. Although illegal, tradition and culture often make this an invisible crime – one particularly horrifying statistic is that 28% of women said it happened to them between the ages of 5 and 9. The safe house ultimately seeks to reconcile the young women with the families they have escaped; the charity funds education and we watched an inspirational video of one such woman who had gone on to achieve a law degree and had returned to her patriarchal village to educate them against FGM! The charity, which relies exclusively on donations, is doing amazing work, and we were also privileged to be able to purchase examples of the exquisite crafts the girls make for sale. More information can be found at www.missionwithavision.net as well as details on how to donate.

Knit for Naz

The British/Iranian prisoner, **Nazarin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**, has been detained since 3rd April 2016. She was returning to the UK after a holiday when she and her daughter were detained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. She was sentenced to five years imprisonment for 'plotting against the State' on what are widely viewed as politically motivated charges. She has, unusually, been granted diplomatic protection by the UK Government. Cardiff Amnesty have asked activists to 'knit for Naz' as among her only activities is being able to knit small items for her daughter. On 7th July she will have been held for 1,190 days, and Cardiff Amnesty Group has asked for small items consisting of 1,190 stitches. These will be woven together on July 7th at an

event in Cardiff when attention will be drawn to her continuing plight. Viv, Carolyn and Wendy will knit something that can be sent off in solidarity with the Cardiff action.

SAVE THE DATE:
BROMLEY LITTLE THEATRE CHARITY PREVIEW
"We Happy Few"
by Imogen Stubbs
On the 75th anniversary of D-Day a big hearted celebration of life on the Home Front!
Thursday 6th June 2019 at 7.45pm
Tickets £12
Tickets available now from David Howkins on 01689 823793
*****SEE ENCLOSED FLYER *****

Nasrin Sotoudeh

Last month the prominent Iranian human rights lawyer, **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, was sentenced to 33 years in prison and 148 lashes. Her crime: a series of politically motivated charges in connection with her peaceful legal work on behalf of women and other victims of injustice. For decades she has been harassed and intimidated; sentenced to 38 years imprisonment back in 2016 for similar 'offences'. Nasrin has specialised in defending the rights of Iranian women and children since 1991, since which time she has been persecuted by the authorities on numerous occasions. The latest charges – tried in absentia – include 'propaganda against the State' and 'collusion to act against national security'. Nasrin has always practiced law peacefully in keeping with her right to freedom of expression. The latest crackdown appears to suggest a hardening of the repression against civil activists in Iran as her most recent sentence is the harshest to be handed down so far. We wrote to the authorities urging her unconditional release, an end to her being intimidated, and an unqualified quashing of the sentence of 148 lashes.

Repression in Azerbaijan

We wrote to the Azerbaijan authorities about **Bayram Mammadov** a young man who has been held in detention on fabricated charges of 'resisting a policeman' and 'using inappropriate language'. He became separated from his father on 30th March on what appears to be a co-ordinated plan to bring him into custody. He claims he has been mistreated and doctors concurred he had visible bruising. He has been denied a lawyer and has been sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. Repression in Azerbaijan appears to be worsening – not least as NGOs such as Amnesty cannot monitor human rights violations in the country. Whilst the President recently gave an amnesty to 400 political prisoners, the overall situation remains brutal and hostile to civil society activists and ordinary people. It is believed Bayram may have been targeted for freely exercising his right to freedom of expression by posting criticisms of the regime on social media, publishing a Blog and writing political slogans on a public statue of the former President.

Present on 9th April: Neville White; Vivien Glanz; David Howkins; Rindy Baaker; Patrick and Carolyn Nield; Vivienne Andrews; Wendy Simmons; Margaret Coppard. **Apologies:** Gladys Edmonds; Ted Burke; Peter Martin; Waltraut Gilchrist.

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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