

Newsletter: November 2019

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Sat 07/12/2019 Card signing at the Cathedral Green, Chichester: Write for Rights campaign Wednesday 11/12/2019 Letter-writing, Barnham: Write for Rights campaign
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Dear writers

Many thanks to all who came to the ARIAS AND SONGS FOR AMNESTY at Bognor School of Music. Generous donations are still coming in, but I would like to thank the School and the performers (Rebecca Grove, Stephanie Peat, and the pianist Chris Coote) for a varied programme of songs.

Local events

This is the time of year for our WRITE FOR RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, the only time we should send cards directly to prisoners and individuals at risk (see overleaf). Please read the guidance provided by Amnesty carefully, and remember that not everyone shares the climate or festivals of Northern Europe. We are having two events either side of Human Rights Day itself (10/12):-

- Chichester Cathedral has kindly allowed us to have our CATHEDRAL GREEN TABLE to sign cards on, on the green nearest to the Cross, from 10am till noon on **SATURDAY 07/12**. Let's hope the weather is kind to us, the cards, and our Christmas tree where we pin the cards onto. Ring me on (01243) 823016 for details.
- Margaret Robertson has kindly offered to host a LETTERWRITING EVENING at her Barnham home on **WEDNESDAY 11/12** at 7.30 pm. Please contact her on (01243) 552113 or mn_robertson@hotmail.com if you wish to come.

Other events

- **Saturday 09/11/2019, 18:00 (refreshments from 17:15)** The Annual Quaker Peace Lecture, at the Chichester Quaker Meeting House, 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.
- **Sunday 10/11/2019, 12:30 approx.** Vigil for Peace, Chichester War Memorial organised by the Chichester Quakers.
- UK Amnesty have emailed me to prepare for the snap **General Election**, when we should campaign while preserving Amnesty's neutrality. Our focus must be protecting the Human Rights Act and preserving our right to appeal to the European Court in Strasbourg, Brexit or no Brexit. We can expect Amnesty to finalise their plans for the upcoming election and they will be in touch with more information in the next couple of weeks. Ring me on (01243) 823016.
- Would anyone like to be the organiser for a possible CHICHESTER STREET COLLECTION next March? If so, contact me (01243) 823016.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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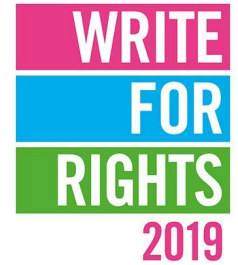
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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing



Write for Rights 2019

- This campaign runs for November and December 2019. For those of you who receive a posted newsletter, guidance on the campaign and cases is included with your newsletter.
- For those of you who receive an emailed newsletter, information about the 2019 Write for Rights cases can be found here:
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/write-rights-2019>
- This is the link to the PDF version of the leaflet for the cases:
https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2019-10/W4R%20booklet%202019.pdf?oe1LIDWUEuvt2Fnlej_o0UZF75MCibCX=
 - Young people are a leading force for change in our communities, from confronting climate injustice to calling for women's rights. This year all our **Write for Rights** cases are children and young people standing up for human rights who need our support. This booklet has information on 12 children, young people or groups whose human rights are being abused right now.
 - The focus on children and young people chimes with the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Many people featured in previous Write for Rights campaigns have told us that the most powerful letters they received were personalised, handwritten cards – so do send them if you have time.

Update: Egypt

Our Campaign co-ordinator, Margaret Robertson, writes:

“Unfortunately, the human rights situation in Egypt is still very depressing. In spite of our best efforts on behalf of Aser Mohamed, the 16 year old boy tortured into making a false confession, we heard last week the shocking news that, after awaiting trial for two years, he has finally been sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

However, in spite of this blow we remain hopeful that the imminent United Nations Universal Periodic Review scrutinising human rights in Egypt may bring about positive change if inspectors call for immediate reforms as a result of their investigation. To increase pressure and highlight international concern, we have posted a petition to the Egyptian embassy this week from our group members and supporters. The petition specifically mentions the cases of Aser Mohamed and Azza Soliman and calls upon the Egyptian Government to accept and implement any recommendations made by the UPR as a matter of urgency. We sincerely hope that UN inspectors' report will result in drastic improvement but in the meantime I would strongly urge you to write on behalf of human rights lawyer, Mahienour el-Masry whose case is outlined below.”

Action: EGYPT: prominent human rights lawyer detained: Mahienour el-Masry

On 22 September, security officers in plainclothes arrested a prominent human rights lawyer and activist, Mahienour el-Masry and bundled her into a minivan, as she left the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) building in Alexandria. An SSSP prosecutor later questioned Mahienour el-Masry on unfounded charges including “aiding a terrorist group in achieving its goals” and “spreading false news” in a case related to the March 2019 anti-government protests. The prosecutor then ordered her detention in Al Qanater women's prison for 15 days, pending investigations.



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Additional information

- On 20 and 21 September 2019, scattered protests broke out in different Egyptian cities calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. Human rights lawyers working with organizations including the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) and Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF) have documented at least [2,300 arrests](#) so far. The wave of arrests rounded up journalists, human rights lawyers, activists, protesters and political figures in a bid to silence critics and deter further protests from taking place.
- Mahienour el-Masry is a prominent human rights lawyer in Alexandria, where she plays a leading role in defending the rights of workers, women and refugees. While in detention in 2014 for exercising her right to freedom of assembly, she was awarded the Ludovic Trarieux Human Rights Prize, given each year to a lawyer working in defence of human rights.

What you can do:

Write an appeal in your own words or using this template (below), **before 20/11/2019**, to:

- Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi, Office of the Public Prosecutor, Madinat al-Rehab, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt [Fax: +202 2577 4716, no email address available]
- HE Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel, Ambassador, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street, London, W1K 1DW

Dear Counsellor,

*On 22 September 2019 at around 7 pm, men in plain clothes arrested human rights lawyer **Mahienour el-Masry** at the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) building in Alexandria and bundled her into a minivan to an undisclosed location. She was at the SSSP to follow up on the investigations of those who have been arrested over protests that broke out on 20 and 21 September 2019, calling on President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to resign. On 23 September 2019, an SSSP prosecutor questioned Mahienour el-Masry, and decided to hold her for 15 days in Al Qanater women's prison pending investigation on case 488 of 2019 which relates to the March 2019 anti-government protests. She faces charges of "collaborating with a terrorist organization to achieve its goals", "spreading false news" and "using social media to publish false rumours."*

Mahienour el-Masry's detention comes amidst the biggest crackdown under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's rule. More than 2,300 people were arrested in connection with the 20-21 September 2019 protests calling on President al-Sisi to resign.

Amnesty International considers that Mahienour el-Masry is a human rights defender and prisoner of conscience who is detained solely for her peaceful work defending victims of human rights violations. I therefore ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Mahienour el-Masry. I call on you to also ensure that - pending her release – she is granted access to her lawyers and family and that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment. I finally urge the Egyptian authorities to immediately release all those detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Yours sincerely,

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