

Newsletter: April 2020

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dear writers

In these extraordinary times, I would first like to thank all of you who contacted me to sympathise with my wife after she went down with suspected Corona. She is slowly recovering, and we should be out of total lockdown soon. While trudging up and down my garden path (13 metres each way, I've realised) I sympathise both with those who have no garden and with our prisoners, many of whom get no fresh air at all and certainly can't keep 2m from others.

Many thanks to all of you who came to THELMA PERCY's cremation – just before the lockdown, as it turned out. We hope to have a celebration of her life in October.

Dates for your diary	I'm afraid that not only the AGM last month but all future events, including the Street Collection , the Plant and Book Sale , and even the Pumble have had to be cancelled or (we hope) postponed. We shall, of course, let you know as soon as the government and Amnesty HQ allow us to organise events later this year.
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Local events

None (see above).

Other events

A piece of good news for those of us who wrote for ALI AARRASS of Morocco – he was released at 9am on 2 April, though he is still under travel restrictions. Further information is overleaf in the **Campaigns** section

We are sending £300 to UK Amnesty, for Amnesty is suffering like so many charities as income plummets.

Although the post offices are still open and we can write and send letters, this current crisis increases the importance of the phone and all electronics, both in letting us keep in touch with neighbours and family, especially those home alone, and in Amnesty work. Urgent Actions have been few, but if you can contact www.amnesty.org.uk you can still find means of forwarding our work.

Meanwhile stay safe and CARRY ON WRITING (and e-mailing etc..)

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Some good news



Thursday 2 April: After 12 long years in prison, Moroccan-Belgian citizen **Ali Arraas** is finally released. We thank everyone who has campaigned on his behalf and took the time to demand justice in his case, which has been raised a number of times since his extradition on 14 December 2010, when Ali was forcibly returned to Morocco from Spain, where he had been caring for his ageing father. The extradition took place despite warnings from both Amnesty and the UN Human Rights Committee that doing so would put the father-of-one at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Torture is central to Morocco's 'justice' system.

Ali cannot leave Morocco at the moment because of travel restrictions and is not talking to the press.

Action: Egypt update

Campaign Co-ordinator Margaret Robertson writes: Thanks to all members who have been using their 'enforced detention' to support campaigns. Amnesty is increasingly worried about Egyptian prisoners, in view of the alarming spread of coronavirus in Egyptian jails. Amnesty is calling for the immediate release of all prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, non violent offenders and those subjected to enforced disappearance, including our new adopted prisoner, Ibrahim Ezz El-Din (see below).

If you can possibly take urgent action on the two cases on behalf of Azza Soliman and Ibrahim Ezz El-Din as soon as possible I'd be very grateful.

Action: Egypt - appeal against the travel ban

This is a general action for human rights defenders in Egypt. We have been asked to write to the Egyptian embassy in the UK concerning this. The reason for writing now is that the appeal against the travel ban (case 173) is coming up on 23 April. This has been imposed on individuals, many of whom work for human rights NGOs. **Azza Soliman** is one of them. The request is also more general in asking for all Human Rights Defenders to be unconditionally released.

Azza's birthday is on 9 April, so I will send her a card from us all wishing her well and include any individual messages you wish to send me: mn_robertson@hotmail.com.

What you can do:

Please send to: President al-Sisi p.spokesman@op.gov.eg and send a copy to Egyptian Ambassador Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel at egtamboff@gmail.com, **before 23 April**. You can use this model letter, although you are welcome to make changes or write your own.

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To : His Excellency Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel

Your Excellency

I am writing to express my grave concern about the human rights situation in Egypt. I am particularly disturbed by the plight of many NGO workers and human rights defenders who have endured intimidation, harassment and even detention as a result of their work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable members of Egyptian society.

I am aware that a court hearing of Closed case 173 relating to travel bans on some NGO workers is due to take place on 23 April. I urge you to support a call for these bans to be lifted immediately and unconditionally. I am particularly concerned about **Azza Soliman**, a lawyer who has worked bravely and selflessly on behalf of disadvantaged women in Cairo.

May I respectfully call upon you to urge the government to release all human rights defenders and those detained because of their peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression. I also call for the repeal of the NGO law and welcome President al-Sisi's comments in support of the work of civil society in advancing social aspirations.

I look forward to hearing your response to my appeal.

Yours sincerely

Action on behalf of housing rights researcher Ibrahim Ezz El-Din

Below is the template for an appeal on behalf of Ibrahim Ezz Ee-Din, to be sent to:

- Public Prosecutor, Hamada al-Sawy: m.office@ppo.gov.eg
- Copy to the Egyptian Ambassador to the UK, Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel at egtamboff@gmail.com

Dear Counsellor

I am extremely concerned about the case of **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din**, a 26 year old housing rights researcher for the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, who was subject to enforced disappearance in June 2019.

He alleges that, whilst in detention, he was kept in inhumane conditions and tortured into making false confessions. He reappeared in November 2019 at a trial in which no additional evidence was brought against him; he was not allowed to consult his lawyer in private; his lawyer was not allowed access to his case file.

In view of the unsatisfactory nature of court proceedings and the increasingly dangerous conditions in Egyptian prisons because of the spread of the coronavirus, I urge you to order his immediate and unconditional release. I also call upon you to release all other human rights defenders, non violent offenders and those subjected to enforced detention.

Please order an investigation into Ibrahim Ezz El-Din's allegations of torture and ill treatment and end the use of enforced disappearance and pre-trial detention.

Yours faithfully

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