

Newsletter: February 2021

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Wednesday 17/03/2021, 19:30 - 20:30 Human Rights in Egypt. Talk and Q&A, online Saturday 19 - Sunday 20/06/2021: National Conference & AGM (provisional)
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Dear Amnesty members,

When did you join Amnesty or our Group? It's now 40 years since I did, and 39 since I was roped in to be secretary! We're planning a celebration of the memorable events in the life of our Group. What are your top memories of our Group activities – the first Cathedral event (planting wooden "candles" for POCs on the green)? Colin Crouch's cathedral celebration of the fiftieth anniversary (1998) of the UN Declaration of Human Rights? The Pinochet coffin? The Guantanamo procession in chains? Chichester's great and good in cages opposite the cathedral? Let me know and perhaps suggest how we can use such memories (01243 823016). 2021 also marks the 60th anniversary of Amnesty International, which means we are also celebrating 60 years of activism!

Local events

Wednesday, 17/03/2021, 19:30 - 20:30 Online talk by Debora Singer, Egypt Country Co-ordinator

- This is an excellent chance to hear about the current human rights situation in Egypt and the launch of the new action, **The Keys to Freedom**, in support of **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din**, a housing rights activist in detention in Egypt. The latest action will focus on the symbol of keys to represent his interest in housing rights and to appeal for his release. **Debora has asked us all to bring key/keys to use at the meeting.**
- How to join the Zoom meeting: The session will take the form of a Zoom meeting, but don't worry if you are not familiar with Zoom: joining will be very straightforward. All you have to do is to email Margaret, our Group campaign co-ordinator, at mn_robertson@hotmail.com to let her know if you want to attend. Margaret will then email you a link to click on to join the meeting on 17 March and the host will let you in. One click and you're in. It couldn't be simpler.

Group Annual General Meeting - postponed. Our Group Constitution orders an AGM every year, and we had to postpone last year's one indefinitely. We would be due to have our next Group AGM in March 2021 and we propose postponing the AGM and election of committee until a physical meeting is possible for Group members, in the hope that by the end of the summer we have a clearer idea of the possibility of resuming 'normal' activities. We would however like to provide you with our annual reports as a committee, which are included with this Newsletter.

Other events

Test your human rights knowledge

- The UK has a proud history of pushing human rights forward and calling for others to do the same. But what happens when our government starts to chip away at the laws that were created to protect us? From racial discrimination to forced deportations - take Amnesty's [human rights quiz](#) and see if you can uncover the UK's hidden hypocrisy.

Get involved in Amnesty's urgent campaigns

- Throughout the pandemic, Amnesty's vital work to protect human rights across the world and the rights of those most vulnerable continues. Please continue to take action to help individuals at risk and defend human rights. [Find our latest actions here.](#)

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Annual Reports for 2020

Treasurer's Report

Bognor Regis, Chichester and District Amnesty International Group

Treasurer's Report to AGM

Income	Expenditure	Total (£)
Subscriptions		555.00
Donations		00.00
Arias for Amnesty		00.00
Street Collection		00.00
Amnescoffee morning		00.00
GreetingsCardsCathedral		00.00
	Secretary	-123.85
	Membership Sec	-00.00
	Other postage	-00.00
	Rent	-00.00
	Greetings Cards postage	-5.80
	AIUK affiliation fee	-72.00
	AIUK Donation	-600.00
	Brought Forward	656.41
	Balance	409.76

This represents the report for the year 2020 which would normally be submitted for inclusion with the AGM papers. As you will know from the news, the pandemic has either highlighted or exacerbated already problematic issues like domestic violence. Amnesty has also kept up its work in other areas of concern, including producing a recent report called 'Negligence and denial of health care in Egyptian prisons', a particular interest to us as we have chosen as a local group to focus on Egypt. Egypt is a country with a large number of human rights abuses, including a propensity on the part of the authorities to imprison anyone who opposes them. The committee decided to support AIHQ as much as possible financially, and we can be pleased with the fact that we have sent a sizable amount to AIHQ, whilst retaining a decent balance in our own account. As we have not been able to hold fundraising events, this has been made possible entirely by members paying their regular subscription. We are very grateful to you for this. Obviously we hope that later in 2021, we will be able to resume at least some of our usual activities. In the meantime, please be assured that the work of Amnesty goes on.

Breege Gallagher, Treasurer.

Review of the Year: Campaigns

Action for individuals.

The group continues to focus on human rights in Egypt. Margaret Robertson's enthusiastic work in co-ordinating the Group's actions concentrated on on-going support for **Azza Soliman** via the **Case 173** actions: we publicised this case at our first online campaign meeting in October. **Case 173** aims to end



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measures that stop NGOs operating, and to lift travel bans and asset freezes on Azza and 30 other individuals and organisations. We have also taken on the case of housing rights researcher **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din**. The pandemic has meant additional stresses upon the prison situation in Egypt, with an alarming spread of Covid-19 reported in jails causing concern for the health of prisoners, particularly those with underlying health conditions. Ibrahim is especially vulnerable as he suffers from extreme depression as a result of the torture which he has suffered and the insanitary conditions in which he is held. We understand that sadly he has twice attempted to commit suicide.



Other Egyptian human rights defenders we have taken action for include:

- **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, HR activist
- **Mohamed al-Baqer**, HR lawyer
- **Aser Mohamed**, a teenager with chronic respiratory problems
- **Patrick Zaki George**, a HR researcher and an asthma sufferer
- **Ramy Shaath**, political activist and prisoner of conscience
- **Hoda Abdelmoniem**, HR lawyer who has suffered a heart attack

We did receive some good news: **Karim Emarah**, **Mohamed Bashir** and **Gasser Abdel Razek**, all workers for the same human rights NGO (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights) were released in December following international pressure and action from people like you.

Other campaigning actions

We have had limited opportunities to take actions this year, other than those highlighted in the Group Newsletters, so actions were taken on:

- Indian activists **Gautam Navlakha** and **Anand Teltumbde**, arrested following a crackdown on human rights defenders.
- **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**
- **Emna Chargui**, Tunisian blogger prosecuted for a humorous post.
- **Karim Tabbou**, leader of the Algerian opposition party, and Algerian political activist **Abdallah Benaoum**, arrested following the peaceful protests known as the 'Hirak'
- Iranian human rights lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, sentenced to 38 years and 148 lashes for saying women should be able to wear what they want.
- Moroccan journalist **Omar Radi**, a vocal critic of the HR situation and corruption
- Belarus: against the death sentence passed on young brothers **Stanislau and Illia Kostseu**; and in support of detained opposition leader **Maryia Kalesnikava**
- Against the death sentence passed on Nigerian singer **Yahaya Sharif-Aminu**
- In support of Zimbabwean opposition activists **Joana Mamombe, Netsai Marova and Cecilia Chimбири**
- In support of up to 400 **Rohingya refugees** stranded at sea
- **Write for Rights 2020**: Home-based, with no Cathedral event or Group letter-writing event possible this year.
- **Urgent Actions** have continued to be available online and members encouraged to complete this regularly.
- We were pleased to report on the release of Moroccan-Belgian **Ali Aarraas** after many years of actions taken on his behalf.

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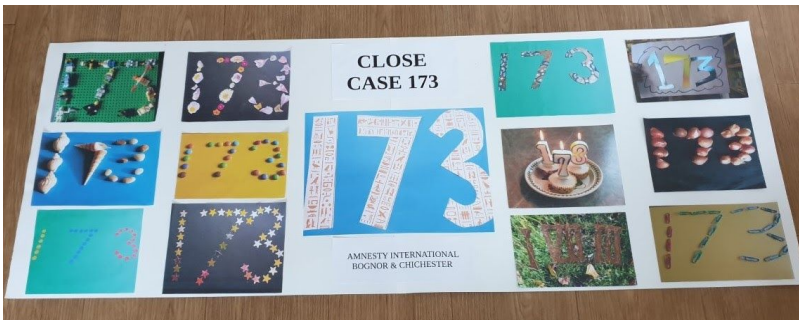


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- Amnesty launched an online action, highlighted in May's Newsletter, calling on the Government to protect the rights of individuals who we believe to be at particular risk as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A year in the life of a lockdown Amnesty Group: Chair's report, March 2020 - February 2021

- Our Pumble this year would have followed the then current (October) 'rule of six' with a route from Arundel station to Burpham and back, but sadly had to be cancelled due to inclement weather. Our thanks to Peter James for organising this.
- We welcomed Elaine van der Schaft from Amnesty UK to a virtual committee meeting in June, to discuss our future options for online meetings and actions. We have continued to send our Group Newsletters through the year, and we have explored the possibilities of online meetings and events for the Group and encouraged members to attend online meetings arranged nationally, such as the informative Write for Rights webinar in December 2020.



- Margaret organised a joint **Case 173/Egypt** meeting with the Horsham Group in October: breaking new ground for us as a means of finding new and imaginative ways of joining together during the pandemic. There were some splendid images to share as members used flowers, Lego, shells, candles, Egyptian hieroglyphics and even tulip bulbs to illustrate the number 173 in their messages. We hope to carry on this imaginative approach to our campaigning into 2021.

- We have taken part in an online meeting in February with Debora Singer, Amnesty's Egypt Campaign Co-ordinator, together with five other local Groups from across the country. We were able to take an online action to support Ibrahim Ezz El-Din: and you can do the same, either individually (see the next page) or by joining the next online Egypt meeting on 17 March (NB if you want to come along but don't want to appear on screen, don't worry: you can either switch off your video or cover your face with your action!)



My grateful thanks to the members of the Committee for their hard work, support and friendship over the last year, both in person and online; and to the group members, their friends and families who have been able to support us when they can in very difficult times. I hope we will soon be able to see you in person some time in 2021, and a resumption of events such as the Write for Rights Christmas tree, concerts and other fund-raising events

Kath Shakespeare, Chair

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Update on Egypt: Debora Singer's Presentation on 9 February

Margaret writes: Thank you to all those members who attended Debora's first presentation on the human rights situation in Egypt. Debora gave a comprehensive overview of the current situation and offered useful advice on future campaign tactics. Those present took part in an online action appealing for the release of housing rights activist, Ibrahim Ezz El-Din (see below for further details) and we heard moving reminiscences from several members of the York group, who spoke of their memories of other Egyptian human rights defenders, Azza Soliman and Mohamed el-Baqer while they were in exile in York. Sadly, Azza Soliman had hoped to join us online but was unwell.

If you didn't manage to get to the presentation on 9 February, there will be a second opportunity on **Wednesday, 17 March 2021 at 7.30 -8.30pm**. Please email me to let me know if you are interested in attending at mn_robertson@hotmail.com

- You can also take part in the online action on behalf of Ibrahim Ezz El-Din – see below.

Action: The Keys to Freedom: Ibrahim Ezz El-Din

The Keys to Freedom is the latest online action in support of Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, a housing rights activist in detention in Egypt. It will focus on the symbol of keys to represent his interest in housing rights and as an appeal for his release. Ibrahim EzzEl-Din has been detained since June 2019. He was tortured while in detention and is currently in very poor physical and mental health.



What you can do:

If you would like to take part in the campaign, please email the message below to President al-Sisi and the Egyptian Ambassador in London using the message and image below.

- To: President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (Your Excellency); email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
- Copied to: His Excellency Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel; email: egtamboff@gmail.com

Keys to Freedom



Egypt! Free Ibrahim Ezz El-Din

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