

# Newsletter: April 2021

## Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	<b>16/04/2021 - 31/05/2021: Festival of Social Justice online</b> <b>15/06/2021 - 21/06/2021: Refugee Week</b> <b>Saturday 19/06/2021: National Conference &amp; AGM</b>
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Dear writers

I am sorry to have to tell you that a very long-standing member of our Group, Catherine MORRISH of Pagham, has died. She was a generous supporter of Amnesty to the last.

### Local Events

Amnesty will be sixty years old at the end of May. Full details will follow in the May newsletter. We used to have a Forget-Me-Not day each year on 29/5, but climate change means that the flowers will be gone by then. Would anyone like to join me in decorating our Amnesty plaque in the Steyne, Bognor, with forget-me-nots while they are still in flower? If so, please ring me on (01243) 823016. I can provide the forget-me-nots.

### Other events

**16/04/2021 - 31/05/2021: Festival of Social Justice.** The festival sees 40 local Amnesty International groups in Central England creating an exciting **online programme** of speakers, music, poetry evenings, photography exhibitions, theatre and panel discussions, open to all. Plus there's the chance for local activists to 'stand' on a virtual soapbox and share what social justice means to you.

- All events for the Festival of Social Justice are free but advance booking is recommended.
- Find a full programme and booking information [here](#).



**15/06/2021 - 21/06/2021: Refugee Week.** The theme of this year's Refugee Week is "We cannot walk alone": <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/about/>. Further updates to follow in the May Newsletter.

**Saturday 19/06/2021:** The AGM (Annual General Meeting). The pandemic and its attendant restrictions have presented real challenges in deciding how to approach Amnesty's National Conference and Annual General Meeting and, based on feedback from the Board's Activism Sub Committee, Amnesty has decided to hold our AGM on 19 June as an online meeting, as we remain uncertain of the legal and health and safety restrictions that may continue to apply at that time. This year Amnesty plans to deliver all the AGM business elements across a single day: this will include presentations from the Chair, Treasurer and Director, as well as debates and voting on resolutions. Amnesty will be updating the web page <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/national-conference-and-agm> with dates, forms and further information. Please look out for your AGM notice, containing your personal code number for voting and joining the online AGM (which are sent out by post or by email) in early May.

**Kate Allen** has confirmed her intention to retire after 21 years as head of the UK section of Amnesty. Her initial intention to leave by March 2021 has been delayed by the pandemic, but she has now confirmed that she will be leaving by the end of this year. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

Carry on writing!

*Bob Dewick, Amnesty*

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### Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

#### Action: Immigration and Asylum Bill : Home Office Consultation – **deadline 6 May**

Many members will already have read with alarm reports of the government's proposed legislation regarding Immigration and Asylum, which seeks to introduce a two tier asylum system. In effect, it will mean that only those people who arrived via formal routes such as approved resettlement programmes (a relatively small proportion of those seeking sanctuary) will be allowed to stay in the U.K.. Those who arrive through informal routes, the only routes available to the majority of desperate people fleeing war, violent conflict and persecution, will be denied admission and sent back. The proposed legislation will undermine existing family reunion schemes and will make it easier for refugees to be removed and deported even if they have lived in the UK for years, or even since childhood, if they are not UK citizens.

Amnesty believes it is essential to oppose these changes and **encourages as many members as possible to express their disapproval** via the Home Office Consultation **by the 6 May deadline**.

Amnesty has prepared detailed guidelines and advice on how to approach respond to the consultation which is available at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/guide-governments-immigration-and-asylum-consultation> Although the survey may seem daunting, the guidance is very helpful and explains Amnesty's rationale for opposing the changes. Advice may be summarised as follows:

- there is no need to answer all questions
- prioritise those questions which can be answered clearly and emphatically (some are ambiguously worded)
- try to answer at least one of the 'open' questions to express personal views in your own words
- ignore confusing Home Office PDFs, which do not follow the same wording or numbering of questions in the survey

It is essential to oppose changes but to respond in a constructive way. **Amnesty emphasise that it is crucial that as many people as possible respond to the consultation to indicate the extent of opposition to the bill.**

#### Update: Egypt

We have not received any further actions on behalf of prisoners in Egypt this month, though the situation there is extremely worrying. Indeed, at the prompting of 31 countries, including the UK, the UN Human Rights Council issued a statement in March expressing grave concern about the restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly; the harassment of human rights defenders and the use of terrorism charges against human rights activists.

#### Action: Morocco

There are, however, urgent action appeals on behalf of two Moroccan detainees. In view of increasing postal charges and some members' preference for sending email responses during the current Covid situation, we have been advised to send these appeals to the Moroccan Embassy in London, requesting that they be forwarded to the Moroccan government as outlined below.

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## Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



What you can do:

### Appeal on behalf of Omar Radi

To: His Excellency Mr Abdesselam Aboudra

[ambalondres@maec.gov.ma](mailto:ambalondres@maec.gov.ma)

Please forward to Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco  
Saad Eddine el Othmani



Your Excellency

I am writing to renew my call for the release from pre-trial detention and fair trial for journalist Omar Radi who has been detained in pre-trial detention since 29 July 2020 and who is facing his first trial session on 6 April 2021.

On 23 March 2021, an investigative judge indicted him for “harming the internal and external security of Morocco” based on an accusation that he had received funds from sources “linked to foreign intelligence agencies”. Amnesty International has found that Omar Radi has received funds transferred from abroad for research grants in the context of a journalism fellowship and freelance consultancies, both related to his exercise of freedom of expression. Amnesty International therefore has serious concerns that the charge is spurious and indicates a similar pattern used by the Moroccan authorities to intimidate critics. Similar charges were brought against academic Maati Monjib for legitimately receiving funding from a foreign non-governmental organization in 2015.

Omar Radi is also charged with “rape” and “indecent assault against a female” based on an accusation by a woman who alleges he assaulted her on 12 July 2020. He denies this, affirming that he had a “consensual sexual relationship” with her. We note that there has been a recent pattern of sexual assault charges being brought against critics of the government in the context of detention or prosecutions related to their freedom of expression. In one case of a detained newspaper publisher, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that his detention in relation to rape accusations amounted to “judicial harassment attributable to nothing other than his investigative journalism”.

I urge the Moroccan authorities to release Omar Radi while he awaits and undergoes trial. Under international law, pretrial detention should only be used as an exceptional measure and only when the authorities can demonstrate a specific risk of, for example, absconding. Omar Radi is already under a travel ban and has pledged to participate fully in the judicial process. I also call on you to drop the “national security” charge against Omar Radi as it is related to his legitimate exercise of journalistic work. Finally, I call on the authorities to grant Omar Radi a fair trial in accordance with international due process standards.

Yours sincerely

### Appeal on behalf of Mohamed Lamine Haddi

To: His Excellency Mr Abdesselam Aboudra

[ambalondres@maec.gov.ma](mailto:ambalondres@maec.gov.ma)

Please forward to Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco  
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### Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Your Excellency

I am writing to express my grave concern about the prolonged solitary confinement and medical neglect of Sahrawi activist Mohamed Lamine Haddi in Tiflet II prison in Rabat, Morocco, as well as the solitary confinement of other Gdeim Izik prisoners in Tiflet II. Since 13 January, Mohamed Lamine Haddi, has been on hunger strike in protest against his solitary confinement and the denial of visits from his family and lawyer. I am extremely concerned about his claims that he has been force fed and injected with unknown substances. This treatment constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under international law.

I appeal to you to end his solitary confinement and allow him immediate access to appropriate medical treatment and also visits from his family and lawyer. Please ensure that his detention conditions conform to U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules), especially Rule 59, which states that prisoners should be detained in prisons close to their homes and families.

Yours sincerely

You can also complete an Urgent Action online for Mohamed Lamine Haddi, here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/sahrawi-prisoners-health-danger>

### Update: Justice for Syria

In recent weeks, Amnesty has marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Syrian uprising and published a series of blogs and videos featuring brave Syrian human rights defenders who work with Amnesty and are continuing to fight for justice.

Please watch and widely share this testimony by one of our main partners, Ahmad Helmi, reflecting on the past 10 years and talking about his plans which focus on justice & accountability. Our [latest blog post on Syria](#) looks at the progress made by the Syrian human rights community towards accountability – despite so many activists being disappeared, tortured, or executed, they continue to [hunt down](#) torturers and war criminals, and have started securing guilty verdicts. Please read and share their story.



Here is [a panel discussion featuring AIUKs Crisis & Tactical Campaigns Manager](#) speaking about Syria 10 years on and efforts to fight for justice and accountability at the Syria-Brussels conference on 25 March.

### Want to do more?

Please take a look at the current Urgent Actions <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions>: cases can be sent by email or by post.

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