**** **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

 **Bromley & Orpington Group**

 ***Flying the Flag May 2021 Newsletter***

**Dear Supporter,**

**In the merry month of May I hope that you find some reason for gladness in the clamour of the world. Our Amnesty Group continues to meet online by Zoom and grapple with human rights abuses around the world. Our last meeting in April dealt with cases from Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco and our own government’s attempt to stifle peaceful demonstrations in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill before Parliament. You can add your support by taking the actions set out in this newsletter. You are invited to our next online meeting on Tuesday 11 May at 7.30pm which will be a talk, given by Debora Singer, country coordinator, on the bad human rights situation in Egypt. The link for the talk is** [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8986966205](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8986966205&sa=D&source=calendar&usd=2&usg=AOvVaw1ipcEunjy3-30MkBSXvVIz) Meeting ID: 898 696 6205 just click on the blue link or copy and paste into your browser, at the time of the meeting.

**With all good wishes,**

**Patrick Nield, Chairperson, Bromley & Orpington Amnesty Group** Email: pdnield@gmail.com Address: 16 Brookmead Avenue, BROMLEY, BR1 2LA Tel: 020 8467 4169

****

**Kate Allen, UK Amnesty Director for 21 years is to retire in September.**

Among her many achievements: she created a home for human rights in London, strengthened the participation of children and young people, and increased the scale and reach of the human rights movement in the UK. She has played a key role as part of Amnesty’s research missions in Raqqa, Kabul, and Israel and the Occupied Territories. She is known across the global movement for her integrity, strength and courage. We will bring news of her replacement at a later date.

****

**Amnesty UK submits evidence to the Independent Human Rights Act Review**.

The submission in March 2021 concludes that the Human Rights Act has served its function remarkably well in the 20 years since it came into force, despite opposition from government and media critics. The Act has provided a significant level of legalised rights protection, while maintaining the principle of parliamentary sovereignty: it has protected the rights of minority and otherwise marginalised groups unrepresented in mainstream politics. Amnesty does not consider that the Act is in need of amendment and should be retained.

**Here are four campaign actions from our last meeting you can take.**

**Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel – At risk of execution in Pakistan for blasphemy.**

This couple, who have four children, come from an area in the Punjab troubled by communal violence against Christians. They were sentenced to death in 2014 for allegedly sending blasphemous Muslim text messages. The couple deny this, though Shafqat was tortured in prison into giving a false confession, which he later denied. They are kept isolated in separate prisons and are both in a poor mental and physical condition.***Send the attached appeal letter to the Chief Minister of the Punjab calling for their release – postage £1.70p or 2x1 Class stamps****.*

**Detained Bogazici University students – Turkey**

Nine people, the majority university students, are in pre-trial detention and 27 others under house arrest in February for taking part in peaceful protests following the government appointment of a new rector known to be hostile to the campus support for LGBT+ rights. Amnesty is calling for the release of those in detention and under house arrest. ***Send email appeals to Istanbul and Anadolu Public Prosecutors as attached.***

**Omar Radi detained journalist Morocco .**

Omar Radi is an investigative journalist and activist. He is a founder of and journalist for a news website, critical of the authorities. He has been involved in investigating corruption by the authorities. He is a winner of investigative journalism awards. In July 2020 he was charged with “harming internal and external security, rape and indecent assault”, both of which have been denied. Amnesty has noted a pattern in charges against individuals critical of the government of including sex-related charges to muddy the human rights water.

Amnesty has also charged the Moroccan authorities of using unlawful spyware to target human rights defenders which undermines freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Amnesty is calling for the release from pre-trial detention of Omar Radi and for a fair trial.

***Please send the attached appeal letter to Head of Government, Morocco – postage £1.70p or 2x1 Class stamps.***

**UK Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill attacks peaceful public protest and assembly.**

This bill, amongst other measures, introduces unnecessary new powers for the police, which will restrict the right to peaceful protest. Amnesty regards this as infringing the right laid down in Article 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights and has asked supporters to write to the Prime Minister calling for the bill to be halted. The Group agreed to send a letter to the PM and to each of the four Bromley MPs because of the importance of the issue. Individual members can sign a letter to the PM via the link on the Group Facebook page below. A full briefing listing concerns about this bill can be found on the Good Law Project website <https://goodlawproject.org/news/pcsc-bill-briefing-for-mps/> an extract from the Group letter follows -the full text is attached. You can also email your MP about this.

*“The PCSC Bill proposes a considerable and unnecessary extension of policing powers which, if passed, will have far-reaching implications for the right to peaceful protest, which is laid down in Article 11 of the ECHR. The provisions threaten to neuter protests so as to make them ineffective, taking away an important expression of dissatisfaction in a democratic society. The bill lays down that a demonstration is not permitted to be noisy so as to disrupt organisations or have “significant” impact on persons in the vicinity. The police are left to try and interpret these broad clauses, which will give rise to misuse and misinterpretation. The wording of the clauses as they stand would affect nearly all demonstrations and justify police restrictions. In effect, it is an attack on the right to peaceful protest and a serious expansion of the Public Order Act. Expanding this act to cover even peaceful and non-violent protests gives rise to the risk of criminalising such protests and imposing custodial sentences.*

*Amnesty International considers this is the wrong bill at the wrong time and is being rushed through Parliament in the middle of the pandemic, without proper parliamentary consideration. We urge you to reconsider this bill, which undermines our democratic freedoms, and help to put a stop to its progress. Please let us know what you can do.”*

Advance date for your diary - Tuesday 11 May 7.30pm online

**Debora Singer**, country coordinator for Egypt, will be giving a talk on the human rights situation in Egypt at our May meeting. Our Group will be hosting the meeting, which will be open to other Groups. If you would like to attend then please use the following link at the time of the meeting:

 [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8986966205](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8986966205&sa=D&source=calendar&usd=2&usg=AOvVaw1ipcEunjy3-30MkBSXvVIz) Meeting ID: 898 696

**For more actions concerning the controversial police bill before parliament, as well as defence of environmental defenders in Colombia and the closure of Guantanamo Bay camp, look at our Group Facebook page.** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/187817656506>

**Group Finance Balance at 9 March £2930.10**

**Payments in**  £

Cheque donations 65.00

Total 65.00

**Payments out**

Agreed Group contribution to AI HQ 2,350.00

Group registration fee 72.00

Total 2422.00

**Group Finance Balance at 9 April 573.10**

**Thank you for all your support for Amnesty**

**Contacts: Patrick Nield (Chair)**

 **Vivien Glanz(Secretary)**

**pdnield@gmail.com****vivienglanz@hotmail.com**

**The date of our next meeting is 11 May at 7.30pm on Zoom - see link above**



 g

Chief Minister, Punjab Usman Buzdar

Chief Minister’s Office

7 Club Road, GOR 1

Lahore, Pakistan

May 2021

Dear Chief Minister Buzdar,

I write to you to draw your attention to the case of Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar, a Christian couple who were convicted of “blasphemy” and sentenced to death in 2014 for allegedly sending blasphemous text messages to a mosque cleric. They have been in prison for the better part of eight years waiting for their appeal hearing, even though they should not be in jail in the first place.

Shafqat and Shagufta have denied all allegations and are waiting to appeal their sentences in the Lahore High Court.

Pakistan’s blasphemy laws violate the country’s human rights obligations, both in their substance and their application, to respect and protect the rights to life; freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief; freedom of opinion and expression; equality before the law; and the prohibition of discrimination, and the right to life. The laws do not meet human rights law and standards and lack essential safeguards to minimise the risk of additional violations and abuses and are emblematic of the dangers faced by the country’s religious minorities.

I find it very distressing that the death penalty is the mandatory punishment for those convicted of blasphemy under Pakistani law. As I am sure you are aware, the UN Human Rights Committee has stated that the automatic and mandatory imposition of the death penalty, constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of life in violation of Article 6th of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Chief Minister Buzdar, I strongly urge you to ensure that Shafqat and Shagufta are immediately and unconditionally released and that they and their lawyers are provided with adequate security upon their release. In the meantime, please ensure that they have adequate access to medical care. Pakistan’s blasphemy laws will continue to endanger religious minorities and put lives at risk if they are not repealed.

Yours sincerely,

***Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor*** */ Şişli,* ***Mr Şaban Yılmaz***

*Fax: +90 212 375 71 48 - +90 212 375 75 85*

*Email: istanbulcbs@adalet.gov.tr*

***Anadolu Chief Public Prosecutor /*** *Kartal,* ***Mr İsmail Uçar***

*Fax: +90 216 303 38 27*

*Email:* *istanbulanadolucbs@adalet.gov.tr*

Dear Mr Yılmaz and Mr Uçar,

I am writing regarding the orders of pre-trial detention issued by a court in Cağlayan Courthouse, (in Istanbul’s Sisli district), of two peaceful protestors, both students at Boğaziçi University, and the orders to hold 14 others in house arrest. The two students were detained pending trial on 30 January 2021 for allegedly ‘inciting the public to enmity and hatred’ over an artwork on display in an art exhibition held at the Boğaziçi University Campus.

Seven others, the majority of them students, were remanded in pre-trial detention by courts in the Anadolu Courthouse (in Istanbul’s Kartal district) between 5 and 8 February for their participation in peaceful protests in the Kadıköy district of Istanbul in support of the Boğaziçi University protestors. 13 others are under house arrest.

The decisions to deprive these people of their liberty were made because of their participation in overwhelmingly peaceful protests following the appointment of Professor Melih Bulu as rector of Boğaziçi University on 1 January 2021. According to the Minister of Interior, more than 800 protestors have been taken into police custody throughout Turkey for exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression since the start of the protests on 4 January. Hundreds have been subjected to judicial controls. Law enforcement officers used unnecessary and excessive force against protestors and several detainees were allegedly subjected to ill-treatment.

Amnesty International believes the unfair pre-trial detention and house arrest decisions are in violation of the Boğaziçi University protestors’ right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

In the light of the above, I urge you both to:

* **Drop all criminal investigations against all protestors for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;**
* **Request the immediate and unconditional release of all those deprived of their liberty solely for peacefully exercising their human rights, either in pre-trial detention or house arrest;**
* **Launch prompt, thorough independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of use of unlawful force and ill-treatment and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials.**

Yours sincerely,

Turkish on reverse

Sayın Yılmaz ve Sayın Uçar ,

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi öğrencisi iki barışçıl protestocunun Çağlayan Adliyesi'nde (İstanbul'un Şişli ilçesinde) bir mahkeme tarafından verilen tutuklama emirleri ve 14 kişinin ev hapsinde tutulması kararını yazıyorum. İki öğrenci, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Kampüsü'nde düzenlenen bir sanat sergisinde sergilenen bir sanat eseri nedeniyle 'halkı düşmanlığa ve nefrete tahrik' iddiasıyla 30 Ocak 2021'de tutuklandı .

Çoğunluğu öğrenci olmak üzere yedi kişi, Boğaziçi'ne destek amacıyla İstanbul'un Kadıköy semtinde barışçıl gösterilere katıldıkları için 5-8 Şubat tarihleri ​​arasında Anadolu Adliyesi'nde (İstanbul'un Kartal ilçesinde) mahkemeler tarafından tutuklandı. Üniversite protestocuları. 13 kişi ev hapsinde.

Bu kişilerin özgürlüklerinden mahrum bırakılma kararları, Profesör Melih Bulu'nun 1 Ocak 2021'de Boğaziçi Üniversitesi'ne rektör olarak atanmasının ardından ezici çoğunlukla barışçıl protestolara katılmaları nedeniyle alındı. İçişleri Bakanı'na göre 800'den fazla protestocu alındı. 4 Ocak'taki protestoların başlamasından bu yana barışçıl toplanma ve ifade özgürlüğü haklarını kullandıkları için Türkiye genelinde gözaltına alındı. Yüzlerce kişi adli kontrollere tabi tutuldu. Kolluk kuvvetleri protestoculara karşı gereksiz ve aşırı güç kullandı ve bazı tutukluların kötü muameleye maruz kaldığı iddia edildi.

Uluslararası Af Örgütü, yargılama öncesi haksız gözaltı ve ev hapsi kararlarının Boğaziçi Üniversitesi protestocularının ifade özgürlüğü ve barışçıl toplanma haklarını ihlal ettiğine inanıyor .

Yukarıdakilerin ışığında, ikinize de şunları yapmanızı tavsiye ediyorum:

- **İfade özgürlüğü ve barışçıl toplanma haklarını barışçıl bir şekilde kullandıkları için tüm protestocular aleyhindeki tüm cezai soruşturmaları bırakın;**

- **Mahkeme öncesi gözaltında veya ev hapsinde, yalnızca insan haklarını barışçıl bir şekilde kullandıkları için özgürlüklerinden yoksun bırakılanların derhal ve koşulsuz serbest bırakılmasını talep etmek;**

- **Yasadışı güç kullanımı ve kötü muamele ile ilgili tüm iddialar için derhal, kapsamlı bağımsız ve tarafsız soruşturmalar başlatmak ve sorumluları adil yargılamalarda adalet önüne çıkarmak.**

Saygılarımla,

**Bromley & Orpington Group**

**16 Brookmead Avenue**

**BROMLEY BR1 2LA, United Kingdom**

**Email: bromleyamnesty@gmail.com**

Bob Stuart MP Sir Robert Neil MP Ellie Reeves MP Gareth Bacon MP

House of Commons

SW1A 0AA

13 April 2021

Dear

As members of the Bromley & Orpington Amnesty International Group supporting human rights, we wish to express our concern about the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC Bill). This bill, if passed in its current form, would, in the words of Amnesty UK, “severely damage freedom and liberty in the UK”. The UK has always been an upholder of the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent covenants, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and they have become regarded as a fundamental part of British values.

The PCSC Bill proposes a considerable and unnecessary extension of policing powers which, if passed, will have far-reaching implications for the right to peaceful protest, which is laid down in Article 11 of the ECHR. The provisions threaten to neuter protests so as to make them ineffective, taking away an important expression of dissatisfaction in a democratic society. The bill lays down that a demonstration is not permitted to be noisy so as to disrupt organisations or have “significant” impact on persons in the vicinity. The police are left to try and interpret these broad clauses, which will give rise to misuse and misinterpretation. The wording of the clauses as they stand would affect nearly all demonstrations and justify police restrictions. In effect, it is an attack on the right to peaceful protest and a serious expansion of the Public Order Act. Expanding this act to cover even peaceful and non-violent protests gives rise to the risk of criminalising such protests and imposing custodial sentences.

As well as threatening the important right to peaceful protest , sections of the bill will likely increase racism and discrimination that is experienced by sections of the community, through the measures enhancing stop and search and the criminalisation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller encampments.

Amnesty International considers this is the wrong bill at the wrong time and is being rushed through Parliament in the middle of the pandemic, without proper parliamentary consideration. We urge you to reconsider this bill, which undermines our democratic freedoms, and help to put a stop to its progress. Please let us know what you can do.

Yours sincerely,

Signed

Patrick Nield

Group Chair and ten members