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| Amnesty @ 60  2021 marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of Amnesty International.  Here is a short history of the local Group. Beginnings The first minuted meeting of the (as yet unnamed) Chichester & District Amnesty Group took place on **26 January 1977** in Selsey. Present were Mr & Mrs Paine, Mr Wislet and Mr Graham Carol, with apologies received from Mr & Mrs Box, with the stated aim to serve as an "Action Group".  This was followed on **2 March 1977** by a meeting in Bognor which resolved to form "the Chichester & District AI Action Group", with Eric Paine elected as Secretary and Chairman and Judy Box as Treasurer. The Group was constituted to concern itself with *"…special campaigns, publicity, fund raising and anything else concerned with helping prisoners of conscience (regardless of their political, religious or other views) throughout the world (who have not advocated violence)."*  A separate Bognor Regis & District group was set up by Dave & Judy Box in January 1978. Early activities These two groups were Action Groups (later called Support Groups): concerned with writing to Heads of State regarding Prisoners of Conscience and fund-raising. In 1978, Groups were only able to 'adopt' a prisoner when they were able to raise over £250 p.a.!  Both Groups were involved from the start in these two activities. Events organized by the Chichester & District Group in 1979, for example, include a Folk concert, a Poetry competition, a lecture entitled "Fossils: a tale" and a Rock gig "The Prisoners' Ball", with college bands *The Dambusters* and *Rev Counter & Speedoze* (where are they now?!!) Getting together In September 1980, the Bognor Regis and Littlehampton Groups of Amnesty International invited the Chichester & District Group to join them in a Rally on the Cathedral Green in 1981 (the 20th anniversary of the foundation of AI). An Ad Hoc Committee of members from each Group was formed to organise what was to be a very successful and well-attended event.  The **Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group** was formed in 1981 by amalgamating the Groups so that together we would be strong enough to **adopt a Prisoner of Conscience**. The new Group had its first AGM in June 1982, with the first Chair being May Berry from Bognor. Our first Prisoner of Conscience was Ryszard Nogajewski from Poland. Prisoners of conscience/Individuals at Risk Work for **prisoners of conscience** became **working for Individuals at Risk**  The Group has worked on behalf of the following individuals:   * **Ryszard Nogajewski** (Poland - Solidarity)   + *Adopted 1982, freed 1983* * **Wang Chi-Tse** (Taiwan - Green Island Military Detention Centre, 29 years)   + *Adopted 1983, released almost immediately* * **Reuben Jones** (Namibian freedom fighter detained by SADF in Angola)   + *Detained 1977, investigation case taken up 1983, freed 1984* * **Vladimir Zinchenko** (Russia - Baptist minister)   + *Adopted July 1984, freed July 1987* * **Ali Dargam Al Murqabi** (Syrian member of Communist Party)   + *Adopted 1987, handed to another group 1991, freed 1992* * **Georgios Evangelinos** (Greek Jehovah's Witness - conscientious objector)   + *Adopted 1991, freed 1993* * **Dr Omar del Pozo** (Cuban medical doctor - tried to form opposition party)   + *Adopted 1993, freed 1998 and deported to Canada* * Lobbying for improving the human rights situation in **Orissa state, India** *(2002)* * **Kamal al-Labwani** *(Syrian medical doctor and human rights activist)*   + *Adopted 2007, freed and moved to Sweden 2011)* * **Chen Guangcheng** (China – lawyer and human rights defender)   + *Adopted 2010, freed 2010 but remained under house arrest. His dramatic escape from house arrest with his family and his move to the US was welcome news in May 2012.* * **Azza Soliman (**Egypt – lawyer and women’s rights defender)   + *Work supporting Azza began in 2013 and continues with the work the Group does for Case 173 and wider campaigning for Egypt (including for Aser Mohamed)* * **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din (**Egypt – housing activist)   + *Work supporting Ibrahim began in 2020 and continues with the work the Group does campaigning for Egypt*  Campaigning actions Amnesty plaque in Bognor Regis, decorated with forget-me-nots, May 2021Over the years, the Group has been involved in all sorts of different campaigning actions, always with an eye on getting ourselves noticed by the public and the local press!   * The Arts: classical concerts, folk concerts, rock gigs, poetry readings, poetry competitions, plays and art displays * Rallies, meetings and demos, such as the Rally on the Green, the unveiling of commemorative plaques and at least two funeral processions! * Fundraisers: Garden parties, May Berry's "Tea in the Garden", Plant & Book Sales galore, sponsored cycle rides * Celebrations: Eric Paine's cycle ride for the 30th anniversary of AI; the Chichester Cathedral service for the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Amnesty candle for the 60th anniversary. * Letter-writing events too numerous to mention |

Amnesty plaque in Bognor Regis,

decorated with forget-me-nots, May 2021

**28th May 2021 is ‘Forget-me-not’ Day, marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of Amnesty International.**