

Newsletter: August 2021

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Saturday 21/08/2021, 10:00: PUMBLE
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Dear writers

In view of the on-going deterioration in the human rights situation in Egypt and the urgent need for action on behalf of one of our long-standing cases, we are sending a special mailing outlining specific actions to be taken in August. Please support the Case 173 appeal if you possibly can.

Local events

PUMBLE 21st August 2021, 10.00 am, Canal Basin, Chichester. In our July 2021 Newsletter, we gave provisional notification of the return of our annual Pumble ('Pub Ramble'). Our 2021 Pumble will take place on Saturday 21 August, weather permitting, with the walk beginning at the Canal Basin in Chichester, in front of the Canal shop, PO19 8DT, at 10.00 am.

- The proposed route will take us down to Hunston, then to North Mundham and Runcton. We hope to reach the Walnut Tree pub about 12 noon or 12.30, with a stop for coffee and/or lunch. The return to Chichester will take us past the Vinnetrow Lakes.
- If you would like to come, please email Breege on bridgallagher789@btinternet.com, or phone 01243 533745. Details about the Walnut Tree can be found here: [The Walnut Tree Pub](#).
- If the weather is not suitable, either because it is too wet, or (possibly!) too hot, a new date will be fixed in early September.
- The Pumble is a social event for Group members. Please consider your risk of contracting COVID-19 and advise other attendees if you have mitigating measures you would like all attendees to take.

Other events

Volunteering and fundraising safely. Sadly COVID-19 will remain a feature of our lives for the foreseeable future, so organisations and groups need to make judgments to manage the risk of coronavirus and particularly to limit transmission of the virus (as no situation is risk free).

- We are starting to think about how we might organise an in-person activity, for which we would be expected to manage risk. Online events can of course continue (although these do have some risks attached, which are also managed behind the scenes!).
- This would mean carrying out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risks relating to COVID-19, and taking reasonable steps to mitigate any risks identified. Fortunately Kath has had to write and constantly review the risk assessment at work so we hope this won't be too onerous! We would also seek the help of Amnesty UK in completing this.
- The Fundraising Regulator has also provided some very helpful guidance on fundraising safely: fundraising activities should only happen when you are satisfied that they can be done safely, in line with the current Fundraising Regulator guidance and following relevant Government guidance, and where the risks associated with the activities can be properly managed.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Update on Egypt

Margaret Robertson, our Egypt Campaign Co-ordinator, writes:

Release of Mahienour el-Masry

- I am very pleased to be able to report good news about the provisional release of Mahienour el-Masry, an international award winning human rights lawyer, on 18 July. She has been held by the Egyptian authorities for 22 months in pre-trial detention pending investigations into bogus accusations of publishing “false news” and involvement in terrorism-related offences. Her release comes after significant campaigns by Amnesty International members. Many thanks to all of you who supported action on her behalf.
- Other prisoners who have been released in the past 12 months include Egyptian Initiative for Human Rights Gasser Abdel-Razek, Mohamed Basheer, Karim Ennarah and journalists Solafa Magdy and Hossam el-Sayed.

Action: Close Case 173 Campaign

We hope that this may be a sign that the Egyptian authorities might be responding to increasing international pressure, including the joint UN Human Rights Council / Amnesty International statement in March 2021 and pressure from the Biden administration in the US, and the UK Foreign Office to improve the human rights situation in Egypt.

Amnesty is, therefore, appealing to us to make a concerted effort to renew our campaigning to call for the closure of Case 173 and the harsh restrictions and penalties imposed on Azza Soliman and many other Human Rights Defenders and NGOs in Egypt.

Debora Singer, the Egypt Coordinator writes: “Some of the individuals in case 173 have now been summonsed and a new investigative judge has been appointed. So a court hearing is anticipated very soon. We then expect a decision in a few weeks...”

So we do seem to be engaging with a case that could be resolved and your action now is particularly timely.

What you can do:

- Please respond using the model letter below or email message to President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and copies to Ambassador Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel.

To: President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (email m.office@ppo.gov.eg), Office of the President, Al Ittihadia Palace, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
Copied to: HE Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel (email egtamboff@gmail.com), 26 South Street, London, W1K 1DW

Dear President,

I am writing to express my concern over Case 173. I understand that this stems from action by the Egyptian authorities against civil society organisations in December 2011, nearly ten years ago. Case 173 is also known as the “foreign funding case.”

A number of Egyptian NGOs were charged with receiving funds from abroad “for the purpose of harming the country, operating through unlawful entities and using these funds for criminal purposes”. Yet they have simply been attempting to undertake their normal business in civil society and defending human rights.

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NGO staff have been placed under travel bans and had their assets and those of their organisations frozen. They are at risk of long prison sentences.

As just one example, Azza Soliman, a lawyer and long-standing defender of women's human rights, supports women traumatised by sexual violence. For years her work has suffered from a government clampdown restricting her funding and freedom of movement. Azza Soliman is among the NGO workers who have challenged their travel bans in court.

On 18 June 2020, the Cairo Criminal Court rejected an appeal against the travel ban and asset freezing.

I am respectfully calling for the Egyptian authorities to lift all travel bans and asset freezes against NGO staff and drop all intimidation and harassment tactics against human rights defenders. I believe it is time to close Case 173.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Your sincerely

Action: Egypt: women influencers jailed for indecency

Egyptian women social media influencers **Hanin Hossam** and **Mawada el-Adham** were convicted and sentenced to lengthy prison terms by Cairo's Criminal Court on 20 June for inciting "indecent" content, human trafficking and other offences. Amnesty International believes that the young women are being punished for the way they dance, talk, dress and attempt to "influence" the public on social media and calls for their immediate release.

- To find out more and to take action, go to the [Amnesty Urgent Action](#) pages

Action: Hong Kong: Barrister charged for social media posts

Chow Hang-tung, a human rights lawyer and an organizer of the annual Hong Kong vigil commemorating the Tiananmen crackdown, was charged for "advertising or publicising unauthorised assembly".

- The arrest came after Chow posted messages on social media asking people to individually commemorate China's Tiananmen crackdown in June 1989, as the public vigil was banned.
- This is yet another example of the chilling effect on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in Hong Kong as authorities increasingly use the Public Order Ordinance to target activists and human rights defenders.



What you can do

- Email the Hong Kong Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah, via the Urgent Action website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/barrister-charged-social-media-posts>

Action: UK Government - stop the assault on our freedoms

- The right to protest is fundamental to a free and fair society. It's a right we have fought long and hard for. Without the right to protest, accountability and freedom suffers. The Government's proposed 'Police Crackdown Bill' gets the balance dangerously wrong. Such an enormous and unprecedented extension of policing powers would put too much power in the hands of the state, to effectively ban peaceful protests should they see fit. The police already have powers to prevent public assemblies from causing serious harm. This Bill does something entirely different – it cracks down on explicitly nonviolent dissent.
- To find out more and to take action, go to the [Amnesty website](#)

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