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**Amnesty International**

### **Blackheath and Greenwich**

### **Newsletter**

# July 2021

## Group Meeting 13.07.2021

**Present:**

Amanda K

Ann H

Marsha K

David Wi

Geoff T

Graham D

Angela D

Melanie S

Rachel E

Roger H
Brigitte H

Anne F

**Apologies**

Ken R

Olwen P

Simon W

1. Rachel was in the chair and Melanie volunteered to write the Newsletter. There was no speaker tonight.

**2 AIUK 2021 AGM**

Angela represented the group at the AGM. She gave a detailed debrief at the monthly, meeting. There were 14 resolutions in all and our group-vote was registered on all of them. All 14 resolutions were supported and carried by the AGM attendees. Not all resolutions were supported unconditionally.

Resolution S4: Change Board Ballot to Multiple Non-Transferable Voting

We abstained owing to lack of any convincing statement. Others opposed.

Resolution O2: Forced Organ-Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China

Low percentage support (67.9%) owing to AIUK’s lack of data.

After Oxford City Central’s strong evidence, we supported.

Resolution O5: Removal of Membership Age Requirements

We abstained. No reference to child safety/Risk Assessment schemes. There must be further discussion. Resolution was carried: 82%

The actual meeting was chaired effectively and efficiently by Alexander Rhys who is now stepping down after 6 years.

Individual speakers from the board reflected diversity in age and ethnicity and were all focused and well prepared. We left with a feeling of positive energy and a definite changing of the guard.

**New Theory of Change for Amnesty International (Graham)**

This new strategy document is impressive in its aims and breadth of coverage. Reading it certainly helped me (Graham) to understand some of the thinking behind the resolutions at the 2021 AGM. Common themes were activism and decentralisation.

That said, I do have some criticisms of it as a document. Despite being offered as a download alongside other AIUK AGM 2021 documents such as Standing Orders, authors are not cited and there is a lack of references to back up the many assertions. It would have been helpful if terms such as ‘rightsholders’ were explained in this context.

Nevertheless, I think it is worth a look at this document to help us understand where AI is heading during this decade. It can be downloaded from: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm-2021>

**3 BME Network meeting at Blueprint for All (the new name for The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust) – feedback (Melanie)**

BME Network works with over 120 stakeholders in Lewisham and beyond, bringing together community groups, statutory organisations and local businesses to build a stronger community.

The meeting was exceptionally well organised. Instead of a small group of people discussing issues, as expected, a series of people gave varied presentations and the emphasis seemed primarily on information sharing about local services. For example, access to vaccinations without having to give your personal details, free computer training, food banks and there was a presentation about the police complaints procedure. Melanie attended throughout and managed to share some information about our group extremely briefly in ‘Any other business,’ mentioning our aim for a more diverse membership, the book sale and campaigns of local relevance such as that for Anoosheh Ashoori. She also had agreement for us to return and perhaps make a presentation in the future. It was agreed that Roger and Melanie would make contact with Helena Corcoran to explore how and whether we ‘fit’ with that meeting and perhaps to invite them to have a stall at the booksale.

**4 London Online Activism Conference - Saturday 17th July, 2-5PM**

Some people may be attending the conference.

**5 Book Sale**

We discussed who might come to open it/give speeches and ideas were Sheri Ashoori and BME authors with local links such as Bernadine Evaristo or Malorie Blackman. There was a discussion about Marcia’s suggestion that in future we could have a section of books by black authors which might be more likely to attract black people to the sale. This was thought to be worth exploring but not possible for the forthcoming book sale given its scale and the pressure on sorting and pricing.

It was agreed that from the second week of August we would start sorting books 7 days a week at the garage. At the moment it is every Thursday from seven till nine and every Sunday from four till six. We are very behind. Often the people attending are not able to open the door and lift boxes. More boxes are needed. **Please come if you can.**

One suggestion was to leave unsorted stock for a future book sale. We debated whether to make a collection in Abingdon. The flyer needs to be prepared and circulated.

Anne announced that she will no longer be able to do the sterling work she’s done for many years organising the refreshments. The group acknowledged what a huge contribution she has made over a long period. She suggested we do not offer any refreshments this year due to the hygiene requirements arising from the COVID-19 situation.

**6 Country campaigns – updates**

Campaigns information was sent in writing as there wasn’t enough time in the meeting for discussion.

**China**

UA: 64 Persons Charged Related to National Security Law

According to Hong Kong Police 118 people have been arrested since the enactment of the NSL on 30 June 2020 and 64 have been formally charged. These arrests have curtailed the freedoms of peaceful assembly.

Action: A model letter will be prepared for printing and posting to the Secretary for Justice in Hong Kong. Please post before August 30.

Death of ROBIN MUNRO

Robin Munro, born in London, educated in Scotland, was the very last foreigner to leave Tiananmen Square in the early hours of 4 June 1989. He was an eyewitness to the ‘Tiananmen Massacre’ and pointed out that most victims were ordinary Beijing residents NOT heroic students who confronted the Chinese troops and were slaughtered. After a 40-year career as an advocate for the human rights of Chinese people, serving in 1979 as AI’s China researcher, Robin Munro has recently died from a blood infection at the age of 69. I wish we’d have known him sooner.

More details thanks to Roger: https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jul/12/robin-munro-obituary

**Mexico & Central America**

Mexico Amnesty’s recent report, Pushed into Harm’s Way says that the US and Mexican governments are deporting tens of thousands of unaccompanied children

Only minor improvements since Biden became president. Guardian report https://bit.ly/3h3Rzm0 Some of those deported under Trump’s family separation policy will be allowed to rejoin family. https://nyti.ms/3xWqjLZ

Wendy Galarza, a protestor against femicides, has been chosen as one of this year’s Write for Rights cases.

Guatemala Only 2 weeks to sign petition for Bernardo Caal’s release https://bit.ly/2SEYMzA Bernardo is a protector of water rights who has been falsely convicted of acts of violence against the construction of a hydroelectric dam.

Honduras Some good news. David Castillo one of the instigators of the murder of Berta Caceres has been found guilty. No doubt he will appeal. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/honduras-conviction-of-david-castillo-is-a-step-towards-justice-but-full-truth-must-be-uncovered/

Other defenders of environmental rights from the Garifuna people are still missing a year after their abduction. Please sign the letter which will be circulated soon.

El Salvador seems to be becoming more dictatorial. President Bukele won a sweeping election victory and has used his power to remove from office five supreme court judges and the Attorney General. https://bit.ly/3vWjlFr

Nicaragua More than a dozen opposition politicians, business executives and civil society leaders in the country have been detained in recent weeks ahead of general elections on Nov. 7, in which Mr. Ortega is seeking his fourth presidential term. Recently the government added 13 Nicaraguan news outlets, including the country’s largest publications, to a criminal investigation targeting opposition leaders for alleged money laundering, treason and ‘seditious conspiracy. https://nyti.ms/35ZWBcS

**West and Central Africa**

Two pieces of news from the AIUK newsletter for the region.

Firstly, Burundian human rights activist Germain Rukuki, on behalf of whom we wrote letters recently, has been freed after spending more than four years in jail. “It is terrific news that Germain is finally free. He should never have been jailed in the first place - as he was arrested, prosecuted and convicted simply for his human rights work. This is a great moment for Germain, his family and friends and the hundreds of thousands of people around the world who tirelessly campaigned for his release. It is also a victory for human rights”, Deprose Muchena, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for East and Southern Africa said.

Secondly, Amnesty is taking up to cases of missing prisoners in Equatorial Guinea. The newsletter explains that “In Equatorial Guinea, hundreds of prisoners end up locked away for years on end, with no way of receiving visits from their lawyers and families. These forgotten people, many of whom were jailed following trials full of irregularities, are incarcerated in some of the world’s most infamous prisons, including Black Beach, Bata and Bioko. Since entering prison, they have neither been seen nor heard from, and their relatives do not know whether they are alive or dead.”

Amnesty has documented several cases of missing prisoners, including Francisco Micha, a 68-year-old Equatoguinean who had been living in Spain since the end of the 1990s, and his friend Fulgencio Obiang Esono, an engineer and Italian of Equatoguinean origin. They were apparently abducted while travelling from Rome to Togo on business and tried with more than 100 men accused of having taken part in the 2017 alleged coup plot to unseat President Teodoro Obiang. According to observers, the trial was marred by a host of violations of the right to a fair trial. Most defendants had been arbitrarily detained for about a year, without being informed of the charges against them. Fulgencio and Francisco received almost 60 years each.

A letter will be prepared for the session on 27th July.

**7: Letter-writing meetings** – potentially Tues 27th July (see “Future Events”)

The letter writing evening David Wi will contact the Greenwich Tavern

**8: Item postponed**

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|  |  **EVENTS 2021** |
| Tuesday 10th August 2021 | Group meeting 7.30 on zoom |
| Saturday 17th July, 2-5PM | London Online Activism Conference  |
| Tuesday 27th July 2021:  | In-person letter writing, Letter writingLocation: The Greenwich Tavern, 1 King William Walk, London SE10 9JH (Tel: 020 8858 8791)Time: 7.30pm] [to be confirmed, subject to easing of lockdown restrictions] |
| Monday 30th August  | Summer social, Rose Garden, Greenwich Park at 1 pm |
| Saturday 11th September: late Summer Book Sale (date rescheduled from June, due to COVID) | Bo0k Sale |
| Saturday 20th November: Autumn Book Sale | Book Sale |
| Date tbc:  | The plight of refugees from Iraq – talk by Karam Iessa |
| Date tbc:  | Overview of current issues for refugees – talk by Georgie Proctor, Country Co-ordinator AIUK, Iran, Iraq |

 **AIBG Contacts**

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| **Position**  | **Name**  |
| Chair  | Rachel E |
| Deputy Chair | Roger H |
| Secretary (enquiries contact) | David Wi |
| Treasurer | David We |
| Membership & AIBG Website | David WW |
| Publicity & Social Media | Simon W |
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