

# Newsletter: November 2021

## Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	<b>13-14 November: UK Amnesty AGM and student conference</b> <b>Sat 20 November: World Children's Day / Aser Mohamed action day</b> <b>Thu 9 December: Sussex Amnesty Human Rights Day action</b> <b>Fri 10 December: Human Rights Day</b> <b>Thu 27 January 2022: Holocaust Memorial Day</b> <b>Thu 24 March 2022: Group AGM, Regis School of Music, Bognor</b>
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Dear writers,

All who have dealings with Greater Spotted Teenagers have long been used to their using words like “wicked” and “sick” to mean the opposite of their everyday meaning. That’s harmless enough, but the danger is lurking in the trendy use of the word “entitled”. Once a straightforward statement (“You are [not] entitled to this because you have[not] paid your subs”) it’s now often used as a euphemism for “privileged” or for arrogantly assuming you have a right to something where you in fact haven’t. The constant plots against the Human Rights Act involve trying to twist our legal rights under the Act into “entitled” privileges, to be removed whenever a government thinks fit. If you’re buttonholed by someone arguing like this, just refer it to me (823016) and I can tell the quibbler which section of our European Convention of Human Rights sets forth the right.

### Local events

**09/12/2021, 19:30 - 20:30: Virtual Write for Rights event, Sussex Amnesty.** This is a joint meeting with attendees from five Amnesty Groups around East and West Sussex, to work together on the Write for Rights 2021 cases.

- **What is the event?** This is a joint Zoom meeting with members of five Sussex Amnesty Groups. The format is based on a letter-writing event, but online! You will come along to the Zoom meeting and join a session on three of the 2021 Write for Rights cases: you will hear about the case, write a message of solidarity or support in your card and hopefully get an opportunity to chat with other Amnesty Group members as you do so. This will be using a Zoom ‘breakout’ room (don’t worry about the tech, this will be done for you!). At the end of the event, we are hoping to take a photo of all attendees holding up their signed cards. Feel free to bring along a cup of tea or glass of wine and some mince pies!
- **How to join:** if you would like to come along, you should email [shakespeare.kath@gmail.com](mailto:shakespeare.kath@gmail.com) preferably by Saturday 4 December.
- **What happens next?** Prior to the meeting on 9 December, you will be sent an email with the link to the Zoom meeting, some more detailed guidance about what will happen at the event, and a reminder of what you need to bring with you on the day (e.g. the type of cards to bring along with you)

### Other events

**UK National and Student Conference 13/11/2021.** Taking place live at two venues in London; Sessions include an opening from Amnesty UK CEO Sacha Deshmuck, a great panel session on Football Welcomes – one of Amnesty’s great community campaigns to support refugees in their local communities, and a brilliant discussion with Amnesty Ambassador Deborah Frances-White, Author and Activist Amika George and Amnesty’s own Olly Feely-Sprague and Tom Davies to discuss the right to protest.

For more information if you would like to join in person and purchase a ticket <https://amnestyconf2021.eventbrite.co.uk>

For those unable to attend the conference, Amnesty will be livestreaming a selection of the programme at the Human Rights Action Centre <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/national-and-student-conference-2021>

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**Amnesty UK and anti-racism.** Amnesty been listening and reflecting in order to develop a plan to not just be a more diverse and inclusive organisation, but an effectively anti-racist one. Amnesty's statement can be found here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/amnesty-uk-and-anti-racism>

**Amnesty's strategy 2022 - 2030** is now published on the website: please contact me if you would prefer a print copy

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/amnesty-international-uk-strategy-2022-2030>

### Afghanistan

- Amnesty has released a new report, which highlights how the Taliban are steadily dismantling the human rights gains of the last twenty years in Afghanistan. [Read the report here.](#)
- Amnesty's Afghanistan country coordinator has also written a deeply personal account of what the Taliban takeover means for her and her family – [read her piece here](#)

Carry on writing!

*Bob Dewick, Amnesty*



If you are not able to come along to the online Write for Rights meeting on 9 December, remember that you can complete the Write for Rights cases at any time between 1 November and 31 December 2021.

Every year, we ask people all over the world to demand justice for those who find themselves at risk of human rights violations or under threat for speaking out for freedom, justice and equality. Last year, despite the many challenges posed by the pandemic, more than 4.4 million appeal letters and messages of support were sent, making a huge difference. Here are some updates on the cases you helped with in 2020: you can read about more in this year's booklet.

- **Khaled Drareni:** Amnesty supporters took more than 360,00 actions in support of this Algerian journalist, imprisoned for his reporting on the Hirak protest movement. He was provisionally released in February 2021.
- **Paing Phyo Min:** over 300,000 messages were sent to and on behalf of the satirical poet and student leader, jailed for criticising the military in Myanmar. He was freed early in April 2021.

### What you can do:

- There are 10 cases in all highlighted in this year's Write for Rights booklet.
- You can access the booklet online here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2021-get-started>. This booklet introduces you to each case and sets out how you can write to them, and how to write to the authorities on their behalf. A print version will be sent to those Group members who have the newsletter posted to them; and are available on request for other members who could use them.
- If you only have limited time and would prefer to take a few actions online, have a look here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-for-rights> where four cases are highlighted: this includes an action for **Mohamed Baker** from Egypt (see below).
- If you would prefer not to queue up at the Post Office and if you have a printer at home, you might want to try using the Post Office's [Send an Item service](#). Alternatively, you might want to focus on those cases that allow you to take an online action, or provide an email address.

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### Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

#### Egypt update: from Margaret, our Egypt Campaign Co-ordinator

##### Case 173

First the good news. We have heard that a further 4 cases under Case 173 have been dropped and we have written to urge the authorities to drop all remaining charges and to lift all remaining asset freezes and travel bans. I'll keep you updated regarding any further developments.

Mohamed el-Baqer (aka Baker) and Alaa Adel Fattah

Sadly, the news about the human rights lawyer, **Mohamed Baker (aka el-Baqer)** and activist **Alaa Adel Fattah**, is very grim. They have now been detained without charge or trial for 2 years, nearing the limit of time allowed under Egyptian law.

There is grave concern about both men who are being held in appalling conditions deprived of beds, blankets, books, newspapers, radios, watches and personal belongings and any contact with the outside world. **Alaa Adel Fattah's** family are particularly worried about reports of his suicidal state of mind.

We have been urged to write immediately to the President, Public Prosecutor and Ambassador to appeal for their release and Mohamed Baker is one of the featured **Write for Rights 2021** cases which we will be highlighting at our online Write for Rights event on **9 December**.

##### What you can do:

Please send the email message below to

- Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi [m.office@ppo.gov.eg](mailto:m.office@ppo.gov.eg)
- President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi [p.spokesman@op.gov.eg](mailto:p.spokesman@op.gov.eg)
- cc: [egtamboff@gmail.com](mailto:egtamboff@gmail.com)

*Dear Counsellor*

*I am writing to raise my concerns about the ongoing arbitrary detention of activist **Alaa Abdel Fattah** and lawyer **Mohamed Baker**, who have been in pre-trial detention over unfounded terrorist-related accusations since 29 September 2019, solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. They are held in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions, that violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, at the Tora Maximum Security 2 Prison, in Cairo, the Egyptian capital.*

*On 13 September, **Alaa Abdel Fattah's** lawyer and family publicly raised the alarm about him being in "imminent danger" and expressed concerns that he may be suicidal. In a statement published on 14 September, his family denounced the authorities' barring him from reading books and newspapers and accessing sunlight and clean water, noting that these degrading conditions are having a detrimental impact on his mental health. Prison authorities are holding **Mohamed Baker***

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*(Baqer) in similarly cruel conditions. He is confined around the clock in a small and poorly ventilated cell and deprived of a bed, books and newspapers.*

*Both men remain in pre-trial detention pending investigations into bogus terrorism accusations in violation of the Egyptian Code of Criminal Procedures, which sets the maximum duration for pre-trial detention at two years for crimes punishable by the death penalty or life imprisonment. They have not been charged, presented with evidence linking them to any crime, or allowed to challenge the lawfulness of their detention.*

*I urge you to release **Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed Baker** immediately and unconditionally and drop all charges against them as they are detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. Pending their release, I urge you to ensure that they are held in conditions meeting international standards, including being granted access to adequate medical care, including in specialized facilities outside prison when required, protected from torture and other ill-treatment and allowed to regularly communicate with their families.*

*Yours sincerely*

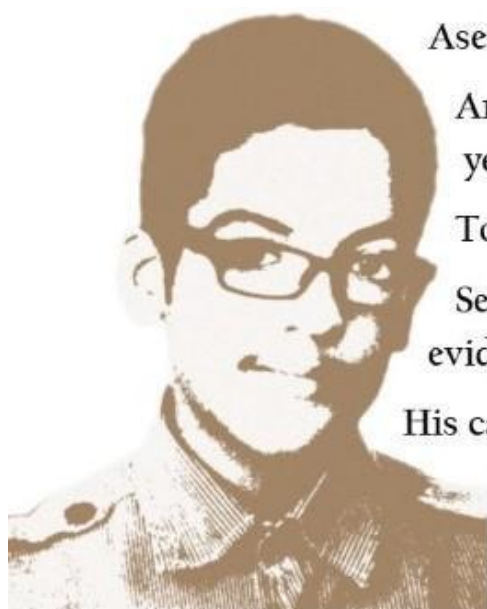
Aser Mohamed

**Aser Mohamed's** appeal hearing at the Court of Cassation is due on **21 November** (the day after **World Children's Day on 20 November**), so Amnesty is asking us to highlight his case in the context of universal children's rights. Wharfedale Group have designed cards (see below) to send to President al-Sisi and the Ambassador (following the recent deluge of flowers and doves) to highlight Aser's plight and to call for his immediate release. He has now been held for 5 years. Let's have one more big push to call for his release!

What you can do:

Please copy and send this message to President al-Sisi and the Egyptian Ambassador, **to arrive by 20 November at the latest:**

- President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi [p.spokesman@op.gov.eg](mailto:p.spokesman@op.gov.eg)
- HE Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel [egtamboff@gmail.com](mailto:egtamboff@gmail.com)



**Aser Mohamed**

**Arrested and held in secret when he was a child of fourteen years**

**Tortured by secret police**

**Sentenced to ten years after an unfair trial based on torture evidence**

**His case comes up at the Court of Cassation on 21st November**

**Release him and all imprisoned children**

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### Deportation of Eritrean Refugees from Egypt

Finally, we have been sent an urgent action appeal relating to two Eritreans, **Alem Tesfay Abraham** and **Kibrom Adhanom Okbazghi**, who fled Eritrea and have been arbitrarily detained in Egypt since 2012 and 2013 respectively. They are currently threatened with deportation to Eritrea where they would face further arbitrary detention and probable torture.

#### What you can do:

- Please send this appeal (below) on their behalf to Ministry of the Interior [center@iscmi.gov.eg](mailto:center@iscmi.gov.eg)

*Dear Minister,*

*I am writing to express concern about plans to forcibly return **Alem Tesfay Abraham** and **Kibrom Adhanom Okbazghi**, two Eritrean nationals arbitrarily detained at al-Qanater Prison for men, north of Cairo, to Eritrea where they would be at risk of arbitrary detention and torture. Security forces arrested 42-year-old Alem Tesfay Abraham at the Salloum border crossing with Libya on 10 March 2012, while 37-year-old Kibrom Adhanom Okbazghi was arrested on 30 December 2013 in North Sinai Governorate*

*On 23 July 2020, three UN independent experts wrote to the Egyptian government raising concerns about the two men's prolonged arbitrary detention and denial of the right to seek asylum. According to a refugee rights activist, shortly after this communication, prison officials verbally and physically assaulted the two men, and threatened to deport them. Going ahead with plans to deport them would violate the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning anyone to a place where they would be at real risk of torture and other serious human rights violations.*

*I therefore ask you to immediately halt any plans to forcibly return **Alem Tesfay Abraham** and **Kibrom Adhanom Okbazghi** to Eritrea, release them as they are detained arbitrarily without any legal basis and grant them access to asylum procedures. Pending their release, I urge you to protect them from torture and other ill-treatment and ensure that they are held in conditions in line with international standards for the treatment of prisoners.*

*Yours sincerely*

**Thanks again to all of you who support our ongoing campaigns and also respond to new urgent cases. We are seeing progress in some areas, so please keep up the pressure on the Egyptian authorities to improve human rights as a matter of urgency.**

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