**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH GROUP**

**Group Monthly Meeting Agenda**

**Tuesday 11th January 2022, 7:30pm – 9:00pm**

**Location: online by Teams**

Present: Brigitte Rachel David We David Wi Anne F Ann H Angela Graham Marsha Roger Melanie Geoff

Apologies: Ken

1. Introductions, welcome to visitors / new members, apologies for absences, appointing newsletter writer
2. **Group AGM (please see separate agenda)**
3. Blueprint for All – update (Roger)

Blueprint for All has released two interesting podcasts.

The Connecting People and Places programme is designed to increase recognition of how migrant and ethnically diverse communities have influenced heritage across England. The project explores the diverse narratives of migrant communities and the built environment in England. During the first 2 podcast episodes, we catch up with:

• Olivia Bellas - Community and Engagement producer and Cultural Producer discusses the importance of communities in sharing history and culture, and methods of how to preserve both creatively.

• Ibiye Camp – Multidisciplinary artist and RCA tutor discusses the gentrification of the Elephant and Castle area, and the significance of using the areas we grow up in as inspiration for work

We will release an episode every two weeks. To check them out visit our dedicated website: https://anchor.fm/blueprint-for-all

1. Country/regional campaigns – updates from Country Contacts

Central America: Roger

Mexico. Most dangerous country for journalists in the Western hemisphere.

Numbered of ‘disappeared’ people continues to grow. UN fact finding mission https://bit.ly/32zpwGH or https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106762

Guatemala. Campaign continues for water rights defender Bernardo Caal. We have written letters on his behalf and there will be a new action soon.

Honduras. New president a left winger and the first woman ever to be elected president. She has condemned the criminalisation of environmental defenders including the 8 Guapinol river activists who have been in prison without trial for two years. Amnesty has declared them to be prisoners of conscience.

El Salvador. Freedom of expression limited. New law to remove judges and a proposal to limit actions of NGOs and funding they receive from abroad. Urgent letter will be circulated this week.

Nicaragua has withdrawn from the Charter of the Organisation of American States which can hear complaints about human rights violations. https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2021\_Nicaragua-EN.pdf

West and central Africa: Geoff

The Ugandan army announced on 30 November that it had, along with its 'Congolese allies', launched air and artillery strikes against Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Residents of Nobili, a small town on the DRC / Uganda border in North-Kivu, have witnessed columns of Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) soldiers with heavy weapons and armoured vehicles crossing the border. The situation remains volatile in the eastern DRC as both Congolese and Ugandan forces continue to fight armed groups. Past foreign military interventions in the DRC, including by Uganda, have resulted in the targeting or harming of civilians. Both the Congolese and the Ugandan armies have a track record of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in the area and they have rarely been held to account. AIUK states that military commanders in Uganda and the DRC must take all required steps under international humanitarian law to protect and avoid harm to civilians during this operation. They must also avoid locating military facilities and soldiers near civilian homes, and where they have to do so, they must give adequate warning and evacuate people if necessary. Letters will be prepared.

Myanmar: Brigitte

A BBC investigation found evidence that 40 villagers were killed by the military, some after torture, last July in the north western province of Kachin.

Film maker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi faces another 2 years in prison, after having been released in February. There is no urgent action about his case.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been sentenced for another 4 years in prison.

You can sign a petition asking Biden and Macron to sanction gas and oil revenues that finance the military Junta in Myanmar.

Hong Kong Update (Guardian 30/12/2021): Angela

About 200 officers raided the office of the online publication, Stand News, a pro-democracy media outlet, arrested 7 current and former senior editors and board members in the latest crackdown charging them with ‘conspiring to publish seditious materials’.

\*US Secretary of State stated: Journalism is not sedition

\*UN Human Rights Office in Geneva has expressed concern.

\*Lead EU spokesperson for external affairs, Peter Stano, tweeted that the raid marked a further deterioration of press freedoms in Hong Kong.

\*No statement from AI. No action at present.

Iran: Graham

Once again, we have not received an update from AIUK about Iran. The detention of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori remain unresolved. AIUK is still seeking to appoint a Country Coordinator for Iran.

1. Write for Rights – update (Brigitte, All) - although it was not possible to meet face-to-face due to covid, which had a negative impact on this campaign, several people did individually send postcards and emails including Brigitte Ken and Angela Graham and Rachel.
2. Arrangements for future meetings

* other speakers and guests

David will contact Shaimaa, the Braves speaker, to ensure she knows whether the meeting is online or face-to-face.

Marsha will contact Sotez Chowdhury who has been provisionally booked with no confirmed date yet: they can be booked in for the March April May or July meetings.

AOB Graham offered to chair the next meeting.

It was not yet decided whether the letter writing meeting will be in person or virtual. This will be decided nearer the time when the context of COVID-19 will be clearer.

Ken passed on thanks for the donations to Freedom from Torture.

**FUTURE EVENTS**

* **Tuesday 25th January 2022: Letter writing**

Location: The Greenwich Tavern, 1 King William Walk, London SE10 9JH (Tel: 020 8858 8791)

Time: 6.30pm. Note – letter writing meetings are now starting at 6.30pm

* **Tuesday 8th February 2022: monthly meeting**
  + External Speaker / Discussion – Shaimaa Hassan, AIUK trainer, BRAVE Campaign

*(BRAVE is Amnesty’s global campaign calling for the urgent protection of human rights defenders)*

* **Speakers / events tbc:**
  + Sotez Chowdhury, AIUK anti-racism network