

Newsletter: February 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	<p>Tue 15 March 2022: The country co-ordinator role (online talk)</p> <p>Tue 22 March 2022, 17:30: Introduction to Equity and Inclusion course (online)</p> <p>Thu 24 March 2022: Group AGM, Regis School of Music, Bognor (in-person)</p> <p>Sun 19 June 2022 UK: Amnesty AGM (hybrid: online and in-person)</p>
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Dear Amnesty members,

We were delighted to host our first in-person concert for a number of years at Christ Church on 19 February. Our grateful thanks to talented artists Rebecca Grove (soprano), Stephanie Peat (Mezzo soprano), Charlie Wood (Tenor) and Peter Allwood (accompanist) for the lovely evening of **Aria and Song for Amnesty**, and to the very generous attendees for their donations to support the human rights work of Amnesty.



Local events

Tuesday 15/03/2021, 19:30 - 20:30 Online talk the country co-ordinator role (joint event with Sussex Amnesty Groups)

Hear about the work of the North Africa country coordinators for Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Western Sahara. Bev Foulkes Jones (who has been a country coordinator for nearly 30 years) and Joe Dunford (who became a country coordinator last year) will speak to us about this role and how it supports Amnesty's work.

- This is a joint meeting with attendees from five Amnesty Groups around East and West Sussex. It will be run on Zoom.
- How to join the Zoom meeting: The session will take the form of a Zoom meeting, but don't worry if you are not familiar with Zoom: joining will be very straightforward. All you have to do is to email Kath at shakespeare.kath@gmail.com to let her know if you want to attend. Kath will then email you a link to click on to join the meeting on 15 March and the host will let you in. One click and you're in. It couldn't be simpler.

Thu 24/03/2022, 19:30 Group Annual General Meeting (in-person) Our Group Constitution orders an AGM every year, and we had to postpone the 2020 and 2021 events. We would like to provide you with our annual reports as a committee, which are included with this Newsletter and hope that you will be able to attend the Group AGM in Bognor

AGENDA FOR BOGNOR/CHICHESTER GROUP AGM, 7.30 PM SCHOOL OF MUSIC SUDLEY ROAD BOGNOR

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1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of last AGM 19/3/19 - I can send e-copies (bobandmarg@bdewickderby48.com)
3. Matter Arising
4. Reports
5. Election of officers
6. Future programme
7. Any other business

Other events

URGENT: Take part in the Human Rights Act consultation: until 08/03/2022. In December, the Government announced a consultation on the future of the *Human Rights Act (HRA)*. Their proposals go far beyond the recommendations from their own panel of experts and threaten to undermine human rights protections in the UK for everyone. This is a power grab by the Government. The proposals would dramatically weaken people's ability to hold the executive to account and defend themselves from rights violations by the state. They would place huge power in the Executive, at the head of a large parliamentary majority, and would put the less powerful or influential in society in a vulnerable position.

- Amnesty is busy preparing a defence of the HRA but as the Government is asking through their consultation what people think about these proposal, we should tell them! Amnesty will be asking groups and members to fill in the government consultation – this should be live on Amnesty's website **until 08/03/2022** so please do look at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/hra-consultation>

Tue 22/03/2022, 17:30 - 19:30 Introduction to Equity and Inclusion course (online). This two-hour introductory learning session will look at the core principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. Facilitated by Amnesty's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead Danny Nasr, participants will explore the contemporary language of inclusion, gain a greater understanding of individual privilege and the impact it has on their roles, as well take part in constructive conversations on what anti-racism means for AIUK.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introduction-to-equity-and-inclusion-tickets-257863164667>

Amnesty's new campaign launched: End Israel's apartheid system. Following intensive research and expert legal analysis, Amnesty has concluded that Israel is committing the crime against humanity of apartheid in its treatment of Palestinians. In a report published today, we detail how Israel enforces a system of apartheid against Palestinians wherever it has control over their rights. This includes Palestinians living in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as Palestinian refugees currently in other countries.

- [Find out more about the campaign](#)
- Amnesty has created a free 90-minute course where you can learn more about the crime of apartheid and how it affects Palestinians' lives. [Sign up here](#) to Amnesty's online Human Rights Academy

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Annual Reports for 2021

Treasurer's Report

Bognor Regis, Chichester and District Amnesty International Group: Treasurer's Report for 2021 to AGM 24/03/2022

Income	Expenditure	Total (£)
Subscriptions		516.00
	Secretary	-27.27
	Flowers Egyptian Embassy	-23.98
	AIUK affiliation fee	-72.00
	AIUK Donation	-300.00
	Brought Forward	409.76
	Balance	502.51

It goes without saying that the restrictions of the past two years have had an effect on the amount of fundraising the group has been able to carry out. Nevertheless, I am pleased to say that we were able to pay the affiliation fee of £72 both years, and additionally send £600 to AIUK in 2020 and £300 in 2021. This was possible in 2020 using monies in part raised through subscription, and in part through fundraising efforts the previous year. In 2021, the £300 we sent came exclusively from subscriptions. The number of members has declined over the past two years, and consequently the amount of money raised through subscriptions, and it would be good if this trend could be reversed over the coming years. Despite the restrictions, groups overall were able to send some £60,000 to AIUK, which is down on the £90,000 sent in 2019, but nonetheless a notable achievement in the circumstances. I hope you feel pleased that, thanks to our members, we were able to make a contribution too. If you can, please support our events this year.

Breege Gallagher, Treasurer.

Review of the Year: Campaigns

Action for individuals.

The group continues to focus on human rights in Egypt.

- Margaret Robertson's dedicated work in co-ordinating the Group's actions concentrated on on-going support for **Azza Soliman** via the **Case 173** actions: we were delighted to have the opportunity to attend **an online meeting with Azza** in May 2021, where she spoke about her work but also very movingly about the thousands of messages of support and solidarity she had received from Amnesty members. We heard some good news in September that the case against her had been dropped, as have a number of the other cases under Case 173, but we continue to write to have all travel bans lifted and frozen assets returned.
- We have also continued to work on the case of housing rights researcher **Ibrahim Ezz El-Din**. Ibrahim is especially vulnerable as he suffers from extreme depression as a result of the torture which he has suffered and the insanitary conditions in which he is held. We understand that sadly he has twice attempted to commit suicide.



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- We also undertook some extra work in 2021 to support **Aser Mohamed**, a teenager with chronic respiratory problems arrested when he was 14 and sentenced to 10 years. This included sending a **bouquet of flowers** to the Egyptian Embassy in June to mark *UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture*; messages on a **flock of doves** for his September hearing and **postcards** and a **New Year card** for his November and January hearings. We were delighted to hear that he was acquitted at his court hearing on 2 January 2022.
- We did receive some additional good news: human rights lawyer **Mahienour el-Masry**, journalist **Solafa Magdy** and her husband **Hassam el-Sayed** were released, following international pressure and action from people like you.

Other Egyptian human rights defenders we have taken action for include:

- **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, HR activist and friend of Azza Soliman and his sister **Sanaa Seif**
- **Mohamed al-Baqer**, HR lawyer and friend of Azza Soliman.
- On behalf of twelve Egyptian men facing imminent execution following a deeply unfair mass trial.
- Women influencers **Hanin Hossam** and **Mawada el-Adham** who were jailed for 'indecentcy'
- Human rights lawyer **Zyad el-Elaimy**, journalist **Hossam Moanis** and trade unionist **Hisham Fouad**, prisoners of conscience.
- **Ramy Shaath**, political activist and prisoner of conscience
- Researcher and academic **Amhed Samir Santawy**
- **Wael Tawadros** (aka Father Isiah), Christian monk
- Two Eritreans, **Alem Tesfay Abraham** and **Kibrom Adhanom Okbazghi**, threatened with deportation from Egypt.

Other campaigning actions

We have had limited opportunities to take in-person actions this year, so actions taken are those highlighted in the Group Newsletters, as follows:

- Celebration of the **60th anniversary** of the founding of Amnesty International and our local actions and events, with photos and publications from the Group's archives; and a potted history of the Group and our work for prisoners of conscience/individuals at risk.
- Discussions and events with **Sussex Amnesty Groups**. This enabled discussions on shared concerns and enabled participants to organise shared events with Haywards Heath, Bognor & Chichester, Shoreham & Worthing, Brighton & Hove and Horsham Groups. We anticipate this continuing, as a good way of ensuring public meetings online are attended by a range of members, at least in the short term. Online meetings included training and organisational meetings (meeting with Kate Allen) as well as presentations on current HR issues (Egypt, Modern Slavery, International Human Rights Law and Amnesty)
- Amnesty UK continued to offer plenty of **online opportunities** including the Festival of Social Justice (April/May 2021), Human Rights in the UK (July 2021); plus updates about on-going organisational change at Amnesty UK.
- We have worked on a number of proposed Government legislation changes around the Human Rights Act, around the Immigration and Asylum Bill, the Nationality and Borders Bill and the Policing Bill
- On-going actions for Moroccan journalist **Omar Radi**, a vocal critic of the HR situation and corruption
- Sahrawi activist **Mohamed Lamine Haddi**, imprisoned in Morocco and in very poor health following hunger strike.
- Sahrawi activist **Sultana Khaya**, raped by Moroccan forces.

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- Algerian journalist **Raban Kareche**, following his reporting of a Tuareg protest.
- Tunisian whistleblower and parliamentarian **Yassine Ayari**; former Justice Minister **Noureddine Bhiri** and **Fathi Beldi**, a former Interior Ministry employee.
- In support of **Uyghur communities** in China
- In support of human rights lawyer **Chow Hang-tung** who helps organise the annual Hong Kong vigil commemorating the Tiananmen crackdown.
- COVID-19: To supply Covid-19 vaccines to at risk populations in **Nepal**
- Urgent actions for **Afghanistan** following the withdrawal of Western forces.
- **Write for Rights 2021**: Home-based, with no Cathedral event possible this year; we worked with the Sussex Amnesty Groups to create an online Write for Rights event in December.
- **Urgent Actions** have continued to be available online and members encouraged to complete this regularly.

A year in the life of a lockdown Amnesty Group: Chair's report, March 2021 - February 2022

- Our Pumble this year took place in August and was a gentle walk from the Canal Basin to Hunston then to Runcton, returning to Chichester past the Vinnetrow Lakes. Our thanks to Peter and Breege for co-ordinating this very welcome social event.
- We were delighted to host our first in-person concert for a number of years at Christ Church in February 2022. Our grateful thanks to talented artists Rebecca Grove (soprano), Stephanie Peat (Mezzo soprano), Charlie Wood (Tenor) and Peter Allwood (accompanist) for the lovely evening of **Aria and Song for Amnesty**.



We have taken part in our first shared *Write for Rights* meeting together with five other local Groups from across the country. We were able to take an online action to support cases from the 2021 Write for Rights campaign ►

◀ Margaret organised an eye-catching flock of doves to highlight **Aser Mohamed's** case.



My grateful thanks to the members of the Committee for their hard work, support and friendship over the last year, both in person and online; and to the group members, their friends and families who have been able to support us when they can in very difficult times. I hope we will soon be able to see more of you in person some time in 2022, with a resumption of events

such as the Write for Rights, concerts and other fund-raising events

Kath Shakespeare, Chair

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

Mixed news to report this month. First, the good news received from Beverley Foulkes-Jones on 16 February that, following his appearance in court, **Aser Mohamed** has been moved to his local police station as preparation for his release, which is expected very soon.

However, **Azza Soliman**'s court appearance appealing for the implementation of the travel ban and asset freeze, agreed by another judge earlier, did not have a successful outcome. A message from Debora Singer on 15 February thanked everyone for their support but reported the following frustrating and incomprehensible ruling from the judge as reported below:

Verdict

Travel ban: *The judge said that the court has no jurisdiction over lifting Azza's name from the travel ban list. However the judge from a previous court said that he sent his decision to lift Azza's name from the travel ban list to the passport authorities. It is not clear whether that has in fact happened or been implemented.*

Asset freeze: *The judge decided that Azza needs to provide evidence proving that the assets that she admitted owning and are under freeze are actually hers! Yet the original decision to freeze Azza's assets included proof of her ownership of her movable and landed properties which are a flat, a car, and a bank account. So the asset freeze decision already admits Azza's ownership of Azza of the bank account. She is being asked to prove what has already been proved.*

So you can see that the results are very contradictory and have a clear sense of going round in circles. We have been retweeting our support for Azza and are looking into what we can do next to help progress her case.

Meanwhile, thanks to the publicity generated by Rebecca's concert on 19 February, we have sent a letter, signed at the concert on behalf of the group (members and supporters), appealing to President al-Sisi to order the quashing of verdicts on 7 jailed activists. The 7 prisoners of conscience are:

Ahmed Samir Santawy, a researcher and anthropology student; **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, writer and activist; **Hisham Fouad**, trade unionist and politician; **Hossam Moanes**, journalist; **Mohamed Baker**, human rights lawyer; **Mohamed Ibrahim 'Oxygen'**; **Zyad el-Elaimy**, human rights lawyer.

Action: Release Opinion detainees in Algeria

On the 3rd anniversary of the Hirak protest movement in Algeria, Amnesty is calling on people to take action for those who are still detained for supporting, or even covering, these peaceful protests.

- 22nd February 2022 marks the third anniversary of Hirak protest movement in Algeria amid unprecedented oppression; authorities arrested and detained hundreds of political and civil society activists, human rights defenders as well as journalists for expressing their views or for speaking about the Hirak, prosecuting them under vaguely worded Penal Code provisions. The number of Hirak detainees remaining in Algerian prisons for prolonged detentions is estimated between 250 and 300 detainees.
- Over 40 detainees have started an open hunger strike since 28 January 2022 in an attempt to bring attention to their continuous ordeal inside Algerian prisons. Some are continuing their strike; others have suspended it. Our ongoing campaign will capitalise on this moment to continue to push for the immediate release of activists detained solely for exercising their freedom of expression and assembly. Within Algeria, Amnesty International is highly regarded as an impartial voice and our petition has gained traction as a tool to pressure the authorities to release the detainees.
- Find out more here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde28/3707/2021/en/>



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What you can do:

1. Contact the Algerian Diplomatic Missions in Britain

- Write to the Algerian embassy asking them to immediately release all detainees imprisoned solely for expressing their opinion, or participating in peaceful protests.
 - Email: info@algerianembassy.org.uk
 - Address: 1 – 3 Riding House Street, London, W1W 7DR [Salutation: Your Excellency]

2. Sign the Digital Petition

- www.amnesty.org/en/petition/defend-the-right-to-protest-in-algeria
- And - if you use it - share it on your social media (Tweet at Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune (@ALG_Presidency) asking for the release of detainees, and send President Tebboune messages on Facebook. #LiberezLesDétenusDopinion #FREE_Hirak_Detainees)

Actions for International Women's Day, 8 March

The world comes together for International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8 to celebrate women's achievements and reinforce a commitment to women's equality. Here are some actions to support women's human rights this month.



Afghan women - fighting for their future

The rights of many women and girls in Afghanistan disappeared almost overnight when the Taliban seized power. Stand with them by urging the UK government to act.

- Afghan girls used to attend school and dream of future careers such as teaching, owning a business or being elected as an MP. But almost overnight, they were told they should stay at home.
- When the Taliban seized control of the country last year, women and girls were immediately stripped of their rights. Now, girls over 11 are unable to go to school and young women at university are forced into rigid gender segregation, depriving them of meaningful education. Even more worryingly, women and girls in Afghanistan now face increased threats of gender-based violence and further restrictions on their rights - including their ability to move freely and to choose what they wear.
- Afghan women achieved significant progress over the last 20 years in the face of instability and conflict. Without support from Governments including the UK, they risk losing this progress under the Taliban.
- Sign the petition to urge the UK government to act on their promises to Afghan women and girls.
- <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/AfghanistanWomen>

Iran - Free human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh

Nasrin is facing 38 years in prison and 148 lashes for her peaceful human rights work. She is a human rights lawyer who has dedicated her life to defending women's rights.

- Nasrin was given the harshest sentence possible after two grossly unfair trials, and was separated from her husband and two children - just for saying women should be able to wear what they want.
- Sign the petition to urge the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Nasrin
- <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/free-human-rights-lawyer-nasrin-sotoudeh-LG>

Russia - activist trial under false charges resumes

The criminal court hearing against Yulia Tsvetkova, an artist and activist from Komsomolsk-on-Amur in the Russian Far East, resumes on 14 March. She is facing up to six years in prison if convicted under the charges of "production and dissemination of pornography" for posting online her body-positive drawings of the female body.

- Email or write to the authorities to drop the criminal case against Yulia for exercising her right to freedom of expression.
- <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/activists-trial-under-false-charges-resumes>

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