

Newsletter: Summer 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Saturday 03/09/2022, 10:30 Pumble (in person!) Monday 05/09/2022, 19:00 No One Left behind campaign forum (online) Tuesday 06/09/2022, 17:30 Homelessness and the Right to Housing webinar (online) Tuesday 20/09/2022, 18:00 Resist the Right Removal Bill (online) Saturday 24/09/2022, 10:00 - 16:00: Amnesty's anti-racism network launch event (in person, London) Saturday 05/11/2022: Amnesty National Conference (in person and online)
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Dear writers

Local events

Saturday 03/09/2022, 10:30 Pumble Assuming good weather, we have a choice of two routes:

- **PUMBLE 1:** Nutbourne station - Hambrook-sea wall - Travellers Joy. About 90 minutes walk, ending at the "Travellers Joy" (01243 374966 travellersjoysouthbourne@gmail.com). No hills, some overgrown paths, and two steep stiles over the railway. Can be reached by the 700 bus (Pottery Lane stop) or by train.
- **PUMBLE 2:** Chidham Circular. 700 to Newells Lane bus stop, then a straight flat walk to the foothills of the A27, back through Chidham Lane to the "Old House at Home", then along the sea wall back to Newells Lane. 2h or so. This is mainly a country lanes walk, but the only trafficked bit (Chidham Lane) has a footpath/wide verge along almost all thereof. Good views of Bosham on the last stretch. "Old House At Home" (01243 572477 theoldhouseathome.co.uk)

Please confirm with me (01243 823016) by Friday 26/08/2022 if you are planning to come along and which pub you would prefer, so that we can book sufficient seats.

- Attendees who would like to travel by the 700 bus, please meet at Chichester Bus Station for 10:00.
- Those attendees travelling by train or car will need to confirm the meeting point and time of meeting (estimated 10:30) once we have confirmed the preferred route.

Other events

No One Left Behind campaign. This is a campaign focussing on [Morad Tahbaz](#) and to ensure that no British nationals are left behind in Iran, following the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori. Morad is currently on temporary furlough from prison. There is an online campaign forum on **Monday 05/09/2022 at 19:00:** you can [sign up to attend on Eventbrite](#)

An obstacle course: homelessness and the right to housing. This is a campaign following the Amnesty report on homelessness (see the May 2022 and June 2022 Group Newsletters for further background on this). This webinar gives some background on how you can get involved in the new campaign and takes place on **Tuesday 06/09/2022 at 17:30:** you can [sign up to attend on Eventbrite](#).

Resist the Rights Removal Bill. Join Amnesty online to hear about the government's latest bill to replace the Human Rights Act contains and how we can resist it. The webinar takes place on **Tuesday 20/09/2022 at 18:00:** you can [sign up to attend on Eventbrite](#).

Saturday 24/09/2022 10:00 - 16:00 Anti-Racism Network launch event Amnesty's new [Anti-Racism Network](#) will be launched with an event at the Human Rights Action Centre in London; the event is open to everyone and free to attend. If you can't attend the event, or want to hear more about the Anti-racism Network when it launches, you can also sign up to be a part of the network via the website.

If you no longer wish to receive information about this Group, please reply to this newsletter with a request to **Unsubscribe**.

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- The session will spend some time learning about Britain's history of racism as well as what exactly structural and institutional racism means and looks like. A large part of the day will be spent on deciding the campaigns that Amnesty want to run for the year to come and thinking about AIUK's place in anti-racism campaigning!
- [Link](#) if you want to find out more about the event and book a place.

NEW Online course: Protect the Protest: using our rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

- This new online course launched on 25/07/2022. It is a three-week course created by Amnesty UK, which examines the power of protest and its part in protecting human rights, identify challenges and restrictions on the right to protest and provides practical tips and ideas on defending the right to protest.
- Protesting is a powerful tool for promoting and defending human rights, used throughout history to change mindsets and agendas. With changes being made to our human rights in the UK, with the scrapping of the Human Rights Act, learn why it is so important to think about protesting, through the lens of human rights.
- This is a self-guided online course where you can learn at your own pace. On every step of the course you can meet other learners, share your ideas and join in with active discussions in the comments. The course is designed for everyone who wants to understand their right to protest and learn more about key human rights within the UK and around the world.
- Learn more about the course and cost here:
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/protect-the-protest-using-our-rights-to-freedom-of-assembly-and-expression>

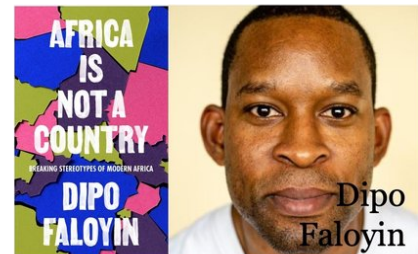
Amnesty AGM 2022

- You can find an update on the resolutions passed on the [AGM website](#): please contact me if you do not have web access and would like to see a print copy (01243 823016)

Tuesday 11/10/2022, 19:00 Amnesty International event, Guildford Book Festival

"Africa is Not a Country: Breaking Stereotypes of Modern Africa" by Dipo Faloyin

- Africa is often depicted as an arid red landscape of famines and safaris, uniquely plagued by poverty and strife. In this funny and insightful book, Dipo Faloyin offers a much-needed corrective. He examines the colonial heritage, and chronicles urban life in Lagos and the lively West African rivalry over who makes the best Jollof rice. He examines the loss of democracy in seven dictatorships and the dangers of stereotypes in popular culture.
- Tickets £12.00 (£10.80 for students and unemployed) from Electric Theatre on 01483 501200 or online: <http://www.guildfordbookfestival.co.uk/dipo-faloyin>



Sunday 16/10/2022, 15:00, St Peter's Church, Petersfield: Aria and Song - Concert in aid of St Wilfrid's Hospice

- Friends of Amnesty Rebecca Grove and Steph Peat, accompanied by Merryl Spong, perform music from Opera, French and English song, lieder and musicals. Free admission with a retiring collection.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt Update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator:

Desperate Situation of Alaa Abdel Fattah

Those of you who have been following and supporting the ongoing campaign to secure the release of Alaa Abdel Fattah will be dismayed to hear the latest news about his situation. When his mother went to visit him on Saturday 23 July, she was told that he was refusing a visit. Unusually, there was no letter or laundry from him and prison staff refused to give any information about his condition.



- This is a desperately worrying situation for his family, friends and all the supporters who have been campaigning on his behalf. Since he has now been on hunger strike since 2 April, fears for his safety have been intensified.
- Although Liz Truss, Foreign Secretary, promised to intercede with the Egyptian Foreign Minister on his behalf, it is not clear that this has happened. Please write to your MP as a matter of the utmost urgency to urge the UK Government to raise grave concerns for his safety and well being.

I received an update from the [Free Alaa Campaign](#) yesterday, the 122nd day of his hunger strike. The update advised: *“Alaa’s mother Laila finally managed to see him on Sunday after a terrifying week of being denied visitation. Alaa is more fragile than he’s ever been and things at Wadi el-Natrun Prison complex are getting uglier.”* However, the pressure is working: *“Last week, Alaa’s name was listed in a [bill](#) put forward by the Senate’s State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs subcommittee as one of the cases the Biden administration should consider before certifying human rights conditions placed on military aid to Egypt.*

This came as fourteen Democratic lawmakers sent a [letter](#) to their British counterparts offering their support in any ongoing efforts to secure Alaa’s release. They write: “The Egyptian government’s tepid response to several UK overtures on Alaa’s behalf make it clear that the current quiet diplomacy will not secure his freedom.” Sadly, however, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss’s attention appears to have been diverted by her leadership campaign, so we need to keep the pressure up.

What you can do: Please use the template below to contact your MP to appeal for immediate action on behalf of a UK/Egyptian national. Please include details of your address when writing to your M.P

- Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) andrewgriffith.mp@parliament.uk
- Gillian Keegan (Chichester) gillian.keegan.mp@parliament.uk
- Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis & Littlehampton) gibbn.mp@parliament.uk

Dear

I am writing to you about **Alaa Abdelfattah** as I am extremely concerned for his welfare.

Alaa is a British/Egyptian national who has been detained for the best part of eight years in Egypt simply for expressing his political views. As an intellectual, an activist, a digital expert and a blogger, he is one of the best known voices of the 2011 revolution. He is also father to a 10 year old son.

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Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



When his mother Leila Soueif went to visit Alaa on Saturday 23rd July, she was told Alaa was refusing to come to the visit. Also there were no letters from Alaa or laundry as there usually are. There was no clear explanation for this. Alaa has been on hunger strike since 2nd April as a protest over not receiving consular visits. In these circumstances these letters and visits are not only important emotionally but also provide proof of life. As you can imagine, his sisters, who are also UK citizens, are extremely worried.

As Alaa is a British citizen (through his mother having been born in London) our government has a responsibility for his welfare. Indeed I was pleased to see the Foreign Secretary state in the House of Commons on 21st June that she was doing everything possible to get Alaa freed.

However, that was over a month ago. Since then, the Foreign Secretary met with Egypt's Foreign Minister in early July with no obvious result. Alaa's circumstances have become even more serious now.

I am really hoping that the Foreign Secretary will use all the leverage available to her to get Alaa freed immediately.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Action: Tunisia

Amnesty International has recently published a very worrying report about the state of human rights in Tunisia following President Saied's 'power grab' on 25 July 2021.

Amnesty is anxious to highlight the widespread abuse of human rights in Tunisia and invites you to sign the petition below calling on the Tunisian government to:

- Stop the prosecution of civilians before military courts.
- Reinstatement of the recently dissolved High Judicial Council and protect judges from dismissal by the President.
- Refrain from adopting new legislation that would threaten freedom of association.

Please sign the petition at the link here <https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/end-human-rights-backsliding-in-tunisia/> and share widely.

Action: Algeria: Investigate torture of whistleblower: Mohamed Benhlime

Activist and whistle blower **Mohamed Benhlime** – who is currently in arbitrarily detention, facing the death penalty - following grave concerns that he has once again been tortured and that his right to privacy and a fair trial continue to be violated following the release of defamatory videos of Mohamed released on national television. We continue to call on President Tebboune to grant Mohamed's immediate release and quash his death sentence.



Mohamed Benhlime is an activist, former military official and whistleblower who exposed alleged corruption by high-ranking Algerian military officials online. He sought asylum in Spain but the Spanish authorities refouled him to Algeria in March 2022. The Algerian authorities subjected him to torture and ill-treatment and imprisoned him in El Harrash prison in Algiers before moving him to El-Blida military prison. He is undergoing trials on several cases before the military and civil courts. He was sentenced to death in absentia, while still an asylum seeker in Spain, on charges of espionage and desertion.

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What you can do:

Write an appeal in your own words, or use this template letter:

President of the Republic of Algeria
Abdelmagid Tebboune
Présidence de la république
Place Mohammed Seddik Benyahia, El Mouradia,
Alger, 16000 Algérie
Email: President@el-mouradia.dz

Your Excellency,

I am writing to raise concern about torture allegations made by whistleblower **Mohamed Benhlima**, who has been in solitary confinement in El-Blida military prison since 28 April 2022. He is being held in a small cell with only 10-minute breaks daily without any contact with other prisoners. On 19 June, he testified in front of the judge in Kolea court that military security agents in S'hawla intelligence center in Algiers subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment for many days after his refoulement to Algeria on 24 March 2022. The allegations include him being stripped naked and freezing water poured on his body.

During their bi-weekly visits, his family reported visible weight loss, pale face and dark circles under his eyes. During the 19 June visit, his family noticed his moustache was plucked, not shaved, and both his hands and arms had many little holes as if his skin had been pierced by what could have been a nail clipper or a hot instrument. His family requested an investigation into the torture allegations in a letter that they addressed to the Algerian authorities including the Military Attorney General, the President of the Republic, and the Minister of Justice on 25 June. In the same letter, the family complained about the conditions of the biweekly visits they are allowed to pay him in El Blida military prison. The prison administration leaves the family waiting until the official visit time is almost over and that all other families have finished their visits before allowing Mohamed Benhlima's family to see him for less than 10 minutes and in the presence of guards.

On 19 and 22 June, Algerian national television aired new videos of Mohamed Benhlima entitled "new confession from terrorist Benhlima". These videos, deemed defamatory by his lawyers, gravely violate his rights to privacy and a fair trial, and jeopardise the investigation process.

I urge you to ensure the immediate release of Mohamed Benhlima, end his prosecution under charges stemming from the exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and quash the death sentence against him. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he is held in conditions meeting international standards and protected from torture and other ill-treatment. Finally, I urge you to continue to grant him the right to regularly communicate with his family and lawyers and refrain from any form of intimidation against his defence team.

Yours sincerely

Want to do more?

Take the **Urgent Actions** highlighted on the Amnesty website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions>

- These actions are a mixture of online and letters to be printed and posted, as you prefer.

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