

Newsletter: September 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	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) Thursday 06/10/2022: online meeting with Sacha Deshmukh (hosted by Brighton & Hove Amnesty) Saturday 05/11/2022: Amnesty National Conference (in person and online) Saturday 10/12/2022: Human Rights Day Saturday 10/12/2022: Write for Rights Action, Chichester
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Dear writers

Group Chair Kath writes: *'The 2022 Pumble (Pub-Ramble) around Chidham and the 'Old House at Home' started with a shower but the rest of the ramble was in good weather, with a fine lunch at the pub. Here are the attendees on the sea wall overlooking Bosham Harbour, led by Bob - who we thank for his extensive research into the route and hostelryes! Thanks to Rebecca for the photo, when we'd just about walked off the lunch...'*



Local events

We are working on early plans for the Write for Rights campaign which runs in November and December. In the meantime, we encourage you to take part online in the many events highlighted below.

Other events

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.

- 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.

Thursday 06/10/2022, 19:30 The new Chief Executive of Amnesty UK Sacha Deshmukh has agreed to speak at a **virtual Amnesty Brighton meeting via Zoom**.

- The Brighton Group would like to extend the invitation to any Amnesty supporters in Sussex who would be interested in attending. He is happy to take questions about his role, how Amnesty UK operates, current issues and the future for AI more generally.
- If anyone would like to attend, can they register via our Amnesty Brighton email copied brightonandhoveai@gmail.com and you will be sent the Zoom link in the week before the meeting.

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The outcomes of **Amnesty's Global Assembly** (the highest decision-making body in the global Amnesty International movement), which took place in August have been shared with the Chair and Group Secretary: please do ask me if you would like to read more.

NEW: Amnesty Youth Activists. Amnesty UK are seeking volunteers to take up a new pilot role of Youth Activist Coach.

- Working in partnership with a fellow activist and supported by Human Rights Education staff, you will be assigned an Amnesty Youth Group at a participating school. Your task will be to build the group's activism skills and confidence by leading an eight-module training programme over the course of the school year.
- Amnesty HR Education is looking for enthusiastic and dedicated activists located in, or who can easily travel to one of the following areas: Bradford BD5, Falkirk FK5, Mablethorpe LN12, Southam CV47 or **Southampton S045**
- The programme will run for 10 months, eight months of which you will be delivering workshops in schools. We are asking Youth Coaches to commit approximately four hours per week, which covers the initial training followed by the planning, delivery and evaluation of a monthly workshop.
- The **face-to-face induction** training will be held on **Thursday 27 October at our London offices.**
- **Please note the [closing date for application](#) is 10:00 am on Monday 3 October 2022.**

Saturday 05/11/2022: National Conference (in person or online)

Join Amnesty for a day of speakers, workshops, panels and more, bringing all parts of the Amnesty movement in the UK together to build campaigns and plans for the years ahead.

This is your opportunity to learn more about the role you can play as part of the movement, join interactive training sessions and workshops to develop your campaigning skills, and connect with fellow AIUK supporters.

- Ticket booking is now [open](#) - Please book now to secure your place.
- Further information about the conference will be available soon.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator:

Actions on behalf of Alaa Abdel Fattah

Alaa's sister and cousin have been extremely active in campaigning to keep his case very high profile in this country. However, the political situation over the summer has not been conducive to engaging the attention of the Foreign Secretary / Prime Minister. In spite of his sister's eloquent plea there has been little progress.

The latest petition launched on behalf of Alaa Abdel Fattah, by his sister, explains:

Alaa's been called the 'voice of a generation' for his writings about democracy and his vision for a democratic future in the Middle East. He has been in prison for eight years now - his most recent sentence was for five years for sharing a Facebook post about prison conditions in Egypt - and we are terrified that he will die in there unless we get him out soon.

Alaa is imprisoned in Egypt - but he is a British citizen. Our mother was born in London in 1956, while her parents, our grandparents, were doing their PhDs.

I've started this petition because I believe that if enough people demand it, the UK can bring Alaa home."



The petition is here <https://t.co/8DUZMSzQ8u>

- There is also an urgent action appeal on the Amnesty UK website for anyone who has not yet signed: [Life of jailed and beaten activist at risk](#)
- Tuesday's *Guardian* included an article about his deteriorating health and concern that he may die in prison ([link to online edition](#)).

Debora Singer (Country Co-ordinator, Egypt for Amnesty UK) reports that in August: "The Prime Minister and President al Sisi discussed resolving the consular case of Alaa Abdel Fattah, and the Prime Minister expressed his hope for swift and positive progress on the issue." This is encouraging as it is the first time such a discussion has been made public.

I contacted Debora to clarify the situation on Alaa's hunger strike and also to enquire about **Mohamed el-Baqer**, his lawyer who was imprisoned with him. She replied: "*Alaa is still on hunger strike just taking tiny amounts of liquids, salts and sugar. Mohamed el-Baqer is still in prison. Our focus is on Alaa as he is a British citizen.*"

I also asked about the case of **Aser Mohamed**, whom we have supported over a few years, since we had heard nothing recently. Apparently his family and lawyer have requested that Amnesty is no longer involved in his case, so I have no further news of his situation.

Action

Please write to your MP. Your MP will automatically forward your letter to James Cleverly, the new Foreign Minister. We are interested to know how he will respond. Please continue to send any replies you receive from your MP to Debora Singer (to me, for forwarding mn_robertson@hotmail.com)

- James Cleverly had a post in the Foreign Office while Liz Truss was Foreign Secretary so he knows about Alaa's case. Indeed he answered a written question about Alaa on 4th July 2022. <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2022-06-27.25778.h>

In your letter to your MP,

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- Please ask for the British government to negotiate Alaa's immediate release as he is a British citizen.
- Please do not mention that you are a member of Amnesty as we do not want to conflict with the liaison between Amnesty UK office and the Foreign Secretary.

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) Andrew@griffithmp.com
- Gillian Keegan (Chichester) gillian.keegan.mp@parliament.uk
- Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis & Littlehampton) gibbn.mp@parliament.uk

Dear

*I am writing as a constituent to express my concern over the situation of **Alaa Abdelfattah**.*

Alaa is a British/Egyptian citizen imprisoned in Egypt for voicing his political opinions.

As a prominent spokesperson for the 2011 revolution, Alaa has been repeatedly arrested in recent years for being a political activist and government critic. He has been imprisoned continuously since 2019 and in December 2021 received a sentence of 5 years for "spreading fake news" having shared a single tweet about prison brutality.

As Alaa became a British citizen in December 2021 (his mother was born in London), I believe the British government has a responsibility to use its leverage with Egypt to negotiate the release of Alaa, with a view to his finding safety in this country.

With the coming focus on Egypt as we approach COP27, this is a particularly sensitive time for the Egyptian government but also for ours.

I am shocked that consular visits from the British authorities are being denied to Alaa. I am particularly worried as I understand that Alaa has been on hunger strike over this issue for nearly six months now. According to media reports, he now expects to die in prison.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, I believe that Alaa should be freed as soon as possible.

I would be very interested to know your and the government's views on this important matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Future plans

In the next few weeks, Amnesty UK will be developing our strategy on Alaa's case, linking it to two upcoming initiatives from the Egypt team at the International Secretariat:

- an analysis of Egypt's Human Rights Strategy
- a campaign focusing on Egypt hosting COP27, the climate change conference, in November.

Debra will be in touch with more detail when the report and campaign are published later in September.

Thank you for your commitment to Alaa and his family, who are extremely grateful for all your work.

Want to do more?

- Online action for [Abdelmoniem Aboufotoh](#), former presidential candidate, whose health is deteriorating in arbitrary detention in Egypt

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Action: Saudi Arabia - release activist jailed for 34 years for tweets

On 9 August, the Specialized Criminal Court in the Saudi capital, Riyadh sentenced, after a grossly unfair trial, **Salma al-Shehab**, a Saudi activist and academic from Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority to 34 years in prison followed by a 34-year travel ban.

She was accused, among other things, to "disturbing public order" for using Twitter and retweeting activists who support women's rights. According to court documents reviewed by Amnesty International, she was detained in solitary confinement for 285 days before she was brought to trial. She was also denied access to legal representation throughout her pre-trial detention, including during interrogations. The Saudi authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Salma al-Shehab and quash her conviction.



Salma is a Leeds University PhD student and mother of two from Saudi Arabia's Shi'a minority.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/08/saudi-arabia-quash-34-year-prison-sentence-for-student-salma-al-shehab/>

What you can do

Using the template letter:

To: King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Office of His Majesty the King, Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Twitter: @KingSalman

Copied to: HRH Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Sultan Al-Saud, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 30 Charles Street, Mayfair, London, W1J 5DZ.

Your Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,

*I am alarmed to learn that **Salma al-Shehab**, an academic and activist, was sentenced to 34 years in prison followed by a 34-year travel ban, by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, on 9 August.*

On 14 January 2021, she was arrested at the General Directorate of Investigations after she was called in for interrogation a few days before she was due to go back to the United Kingdom to continue her PhD studies at the University of Leeds.

Salma al-Shehab's trial began on 25 October 2021, and according to court documents reviewed by Amnesty International, she was detained in solitary confinement for 285 days before she was brought to trial, in violation of international standards and Saudi Arabia's own Law on Criminal Procedures. She had no access to legal representation throughout her pre-trial detention, including during interrogations.

In mid-2022, Salma al-Shehab was initially sentenced to six years in prison under the counter-terrorism law. At her appeal trial, the prosecution demanded a harsher punishment. Her sentence was increased to 34 years based on the discretion of the judge, after her initial sentence was overturned and she was convicted of "supporting those who seek to disrupt public order, destabilize security and the stability of the state" and publishing tweets that "disturb public order, destabilize the security of society and the stability of the state" under the counter-terrorism and anti-cybercrime laws.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Salma al-Shehab and quash her conviction as she is being held solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression. I also call on you to stop equating free speech with "terrorism", and repeal or substantially amend the counter-terrorism and anti-cybercrime laws that criminalize dissent, and enact new laws that are fully compatible with international human rights law and standards.

Yours sincerely,

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