

Newsletter: October 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Wednesday 26/10/2022, 1200 - 1400: Action at FCDO, London in support of Alaa Saturday 05/11/2022: Amnesty National Conference (in person and online) 01/11/2022 - 31/12/2022: Annual <i>Write for Rights</i> Campaign Friday 18/11/2022: Alaa's birthday Saturday 10/12/2022: Human Rights Day Saturday 10/12/2022: <i>Write for Rights</i> Action, Chichester
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Dear writers

We were very sorry to hear that **Maggie Courtnadge**, a long-standing member and supporter of this Group, passed away this week, following a long illness. Maggie originally joined the Group in 1987/8: she and Gary were so hospitable and generous in their support not just of Amnesty but a wide range of local and other worthy causes. Most recently, Maggie and husband Gary supported us by providing a venue in their house and garden in Barnham for our fund-raising themed meals (Russian food and Chinese food springs to mind, when we were undertaking actions in support of HR activists in the former Soviet Union and in the PRC) and for our AmnesTeas. Maggie was always so welcoming and willing to help others and we will miss her greatly: our sincere condolences to her family.



- Please contact Kath Shakespeare (shakespeare.kath@gmail.com) for further information on Maggie's funeral/collection etc.

Local events

Saturday 10/12/2022: Human Rights Day action at Chichester, on the Cathedral Green

Other events

People, Power, Politics

- Some of the biggest decisions in the UK are made by our political decision makers. From the UK Government to your MP, Mayors to Local Councillors, the Northern Ireland Assembly to the Welsh and Scottish Parliaments – there are lots of different structures and players, each with their own varying levels of responsibility and influence.
- As an individual, you have the power to influence these political decision makers and bring about positive human rights change.
- Amnesty's new free online course '[People, Power, and Politics](#)' gives you the tools you need to influence these key decision makers, and set you on your journey to becoming an effective political advocate for human rights.

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- This online course is currently free until 23/10/2022.

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.

Programme details are available here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/national-conference-2022>

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.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

Good news

Sahrawi woman activist **Sultana Khaya** managed to leave her house in Boujdour, Western Sahara, and travel to Spain for medical care.

- Under arbitrary house arrest since November 2020, the restrictions placed on her have yet to be officially removed and it remains unclear whether she would be able to return to the country. To date, there has been no investigation into the security forces' incidents of torture and ill-treatment against her and her family.
- It is believed that global mobilisation helped raise awareness of Sultana Khaya's situation and the grave human rights violations committed by the Moroccan authorities against her and her family. The visibility that the Urgent Action has brought to Sultana Khaya's case contributed in mounting pressure to ease the house arrest. We highlighted her case and asked you to write in the December 2021 Newsletter, with a follow-up action in the April 2022 Newsletter.
- Sultana Khaya and her family are grateful to everyone who sent letters to the Moroccan Head of Government.



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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

This month has seen an urgent attempt to highlight human rights abuses in general in Egypt and **Alaa Abd El-Fattah's** case in particular, while the international spotlight is on Egypt as host of the imminent Cop 27 summit.

Egyptian Human Rights Context and Cop 27

At an online meeting on 3 October 2022, Debora Singer, Amnesty Egypt Coordinator, outlined the updated campaign planned on Alaa's behalf in the context of **Egypt's Human Rights Strategy** document published last year. Al's response to the document is summed up in its title: ***Disconnected From Reality***. Whilst the Egyptian strategy includes a few promising reforms such as

- reduction in the number of crimes carrying the death penalty
- suggested alternatives to pre trial detention

it largely disregards past and present human rights violations; ignores the role of the security forces and judiciary in abuses and does not mention new laws further restricting freedom of expression and assembly, the right to a fair trial and the abuse of counter terrorism laws.

The Amnesty briefing can be found at :

Disconnected from reality: Egypt's National Human Rights Strategy

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6014/2022/e

Some of you may also have seen Naomi Klein's scathing attack on the Egyptian regime's attempt, not only to cover up the repressive tactics used to silence critics, but also their 'green washing' of Egypt's environmental policies in *The Guardian*, Tuesday, 18 October 2022 [***Greenwashing a police state: the truth behind Egypt's Cop 27 masquerade***](#). While the eyes of the world are focused on Egypt in the coming weeks, it is an ideal opportunity to put pressure on the regime to improve their human rights record and to allow unrestricted discussion of controversial issues.

Action for Alaa

Alaa's hunger strike reached the 200 days mark on 18 October, so there is increasing urgency to take action to secure his release before it is too late. Alaa's family and supporters have been campaigning tirelessly on his behalf and his sisters, **Sanaa (pictured) and Mona** are currently involved in numerous actions to publicise his plight and engage political support for the call for his release. On Monday, 17 October 2022 a double page article in *The Guardian*, featured an interview with Sanaa giving graphic details of her own experience of human rights violations in Egypt and explaining the dire situation which Alaa now faces. [***'From my cell I could see people being tortured...'***](#)



Here's what we have done already as Bognor & Chichester Group

We have already responded to calls

- to write to the Egyptian Embassy

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- to write to Foreign Secretary
- to write to MPs (letter to James Cleverly)
- I am particularly grateful to Chichester constituents who have written to **Gillian Keegan** in her new role as Minister for Africa. Rebecca Grove has generously acted as intermediary between Gillian Keegan and Alaa's sisters, providing a contact link so that the sisters might interact directly with her. Other constituents have also written to her and we have received news that she is in Egypt this week and will raise Alaa's case while she is there.

- At our committee meeting on **18 October (the 200th day of his hunger strike)** we sent a message of solidarity and support to Alaa.



What next?

- If you have not already signed the petition below in support of Egypt's Human rights Group please sign now:
Petition from Egypt's Human Rights NGOs: COP Civic Space
 - <https://copcivicspace.net/petition/> (sign as individuals)
- Sanaa Seif is taking part in a sit-in at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to support her brother Alaa Abd El-Fattah on **Wednesday, 26 October 12-2pm**. Please join us to support her and to listen to readings from his recently published book. I hope to be there and would be happy to have your company: please contact me if you are interested at mn_robertson@hotmail.com
- It is **Alaa's birthday on 18 November**: actions to highlight this may be sent by email to members if they arrive before the November Newsletter.



My sincere thanks to all of you who have already responded in different ways to support Alaa and his family.

Want to do more?

- Online action for former military officer and anti-corruption activist [Mohamed Benhlima](#), who exposed corruption in Algeria.
- There are plenty of other online actions to take in the [Urgent Action Network](#) webpages

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