

Newsletter: November 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	01/11/2022 - 31/12/2022: Annual Write for Rights Campaign Friday 18/11/2022: Alaa's birthday Saturday 10/12/2022: Human Rights Day Saturday 10/12/2022: Write for Rights Action, Chichester
----------------------	--

Dear writers

Local events

Saturday 10/12/2022: Write for Rights event at Chichester Cathedral 10 am-noon. If you would like to help collect cards, please come along from 09:45 when we will set up the table and Christmas tree for pinning and displaying signed cards for two of the cases in this year's Write for Rights campaign (we will provide cards, Amnesty hi-vis and pens). Alternatively, do pop along and sign a card with us!

Other events

- **10 December: Human Rights Day** is observed by the international community every year on 10 December. It commemorates the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
- **November-December** The AI Charitable Trust is asking for donations earmarked to help human rights in UKRAINE. Please contact Bob Dewick (01243 823016) for more details on how to contribute.

Write for Rights 2022

It's the end of the year, which means that it's time for our annual letter writing campaign, Write for Rights! The 2022 campaign focuses on the right to protest, highlighting the launch of [the global campaign to Protect the Protest](#).

Throughout history, people coming together to demonstrate against injustice have changed the world for the better, from stopping wars to acting against racism. Protest is powerful, but this precious right is under attack globally from politicians, governments and regimes who fear change and accountability.

The people featured in Write for Rights 2022 know this only too well: they were all punished for using their right to protest.

- This year, please take action for **Shahnewaz, Dorgelesse, Luis Manuel, Zineb, Chow, Vahid, Nasser, Yren and Mariana, Aleksandra, and Joanah, Cecillia and Netsai.**

- Send them your messages of solidarity and write to the authorities to demand justice.

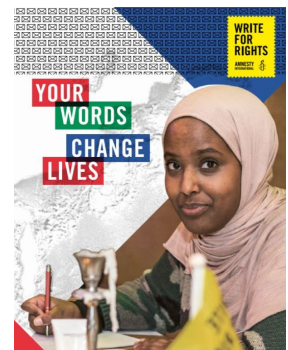
To learn more about these individuals, and how you take action, please use these resources:

- [Download the booklet here](#) (details will be sent to those members who still take a print newsletter).
- [Take action online here \(available from 4 November\)](#) on a small number of the cases highlighted in this year's campaign.

Amnesty UK will be organising an **online event for Write for Rights** this year: we will share updates on these events and information on how to register with you soon.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty



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

Please let us know if there have been any changes in your personal information

For more information about this Group, go to: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/bognor-chichester-and-district>

Newsletter: November 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

I am sure that many of you will have been following closely the very high profile campaign focusing attention on the desperate situation of Alaa Abd El-Fattah during the COP27 summit in Egypt. Sadly, you will also have read with dismay the latest chapter in his hunger strike and the failure, so far, of the Egyptian government to respond to appeals for his release.

Actions in UK

- His sister Sanaa staged a sit in camping outside the Foreign Office
- Letter signed by 64 MPs urging Foreign Secretary to exert influence on Egypt to release him
- Messages sent to Foreign Secretary including quotations from Alaa's own writings
- Appeals to Prime Minister to intercede with President Al-Sisi while in Egypt



Cop 27

As Cop 27 began, Alaa, already 200 + days into his hunger strike, announced his decision to refuse to take water. His action was intended to put pressure on the Egyptian government not only to highlight his own case but also those of other prisoners of conscience and activists prevented from voicing their opposition to the Egyptian authorities. His case received widespread international media coverage, which led to *The New York Times* commenting: The most eloquent Speaker at the Climate Summit is Alaa Abd El Fattah.

Hunger Strike Latest

As I write, on 18 October, his 41st birthday, his family reported after visiting him yesterday, after over a week of conflicting reports about his situation, that they were very shocked to see how his physical and mental health had deteriorated. He had apparently collapsed in prison and, while unconscious, had been intravenously fed against his will. His family reported him to be 'exhausted, weak and vulnerable.' However, he is still alive, so it is vital that campaigning goes on so that the momentum is not lost after Egypt disappears from the spotlight as Cop 27 ends.



Birthday Actions

If you would like to express your support for Alaa, you could use the occasion of his birthday to send cards with the message:

- Thinking of you on your birthday and hoping you will soon be released

to the addresses below:

1. Alaa Abdelfattah, c/o Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA
2. Alaa Abdelfattah, (please forward to President Al-Sisi) c/o Egyptian Embassy, 26 South Street, London W1K 1DW

You could also send a card to Alaa himself at:

Alaa Abdelfattah, Wadi el-Natrun Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre, Mansheya El-Masry, Tura, Cairo Governate 4062414, Egypt

PLEASE WRITE AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND DO NOT MENTION AMNESTY

My thanks to all of you who have supported this campaign over many months.

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

Please let us know if there have been any changes in your personal information

For more information about this Group, go to: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/bognor-chichester-and-district>

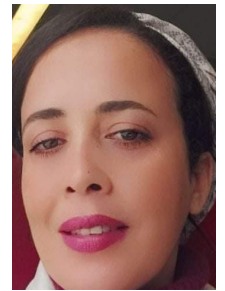
Newsletter: November 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Action: Morocco: Release blogger jailed for offending Islam: Fatima Karim

On 15 August 2022, Moroccan blogger and activist **Fatima Karim** was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine for Facebook posts in which she made satirical comments about a Qur'anic verse, that the authorities deemed insulting to Islam. She has been held in solitary confinement since her arrest on 26 July 2022 and is not permitted contact with fellow prisoners. Posting a photo or text on social media, even something others might see as insulting religion, is protected under the right to freedom of expression. She is currently in a grave health condition as she started a hunger strike on 18 October.



What you can do: letter action

Please write to
Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco,
Mr. Aziz Akhannouch
Palais Royale – Touarga Rabat,
Morocco

Your Excellency,

*I am writing to express my grave concern about the sentencing of blogger and activist **Fatima Karim** to two years in prison and a fine for expressing her opinions in Facebook posts. Posting a photo or text on social media, even something others might see as insulting religion, should not be a crime.*

On 15 July 2022, police summoned Fatima Karim for interrogation at her workplace at a sewing company in Oued Zem, a city in central Morocco about 150km from Casablanca. On 26 July 2022, Fatima Karim went to the Oued Zem judicial police station for interrogation about her Facebook posts, according to her lawyer. She was placed that same day in Khouribga prison, where she remains. On 15 August 2022, a judge in the First Instance Court of Oued Zem sentenced her to two years in prison and a 50,000MAD fine (around 4570 USD) on charges of offending Islam through electronic means, under Article 267-5 of the Penal Code, which states that anyone who undermines Islam is punishable by six months to two years in prison plus fines. On 18 August 2022, she appealed the judgement, invoking her right to freedom of expression and apologizing to anyone offended by her posts. On 13 September 2022, the Khouribga Court of Appeal upheld the verdict.

Fatima Karim's prosecution was initially triggered by a Facebook post she published on 19 June 2022, in which she shared a picture of a woman in Niqab (full face cover), with words from a Surate of Quran about virgins in paradise. The publication was accompanied by a commentary, in which she says that the author of these words must be "from the desert and specifically from Saudi Arabia." The prosecution later added 9 other satirical posts she had made mocking Islamic practices and beliefs, all from between May and July 2022. Without endorsing the language and including harmful stereotypes, Amnesty International considers the statement to have been covered by the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to shock, alarm and offend. The ten Facebook posts used as evidence against Fatima Karim contained no calls to hate or discrimination and were merely expressions of her opinions.

Since her arrest, Fatima Karim has been held in solitary confinement in Khouribga prison, around 40km from where her family live in Oued Zem. She is not allowed out of her cell, except to call her family- which she's allowed to do every three days- and is forbidden from speaking to fellow prisoners.

In light of the above, I urge you to release Fatima Karim and to drop all charges against her. I urge you to lift or amend articles which criminalize freedom of expression from the Penal Code, including Article 267-5 which prohibits "causing harm" to Islam, the monarchy, or Morocco's "territorial integrity".

Yours sincerely

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

Please let us know if there have been any changes in your personal information

For more information about this Group, go to: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/bognor-chichester-and-district>

Newsletter: November 2022

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Action: Algeria: Whistleblower activist's conviction upheld: Mohamed Benhlima

Mohamed Benhlima is a former military officer and anti-corruption activist who exposed the corruption of high-ranking Algerian military officials. He fled Algeria to Spain in September 2019 out of fear of being targeted by the authorities for his participation in a peaceful mass anti-government protest movement. He was sentenced to death in absentia in 2021. On 4 September 2022, an Algiers appeal court upheld his conviction in relation to charges of “participation in a terrorist group” and “publishing fake news undermining national unity”, in three separate cases and sentenced him to a total of twelve years in prison.



What you can do: letter or email action

Please write, calling for 'the immediate release of Mohamed Benhlima, to quash his death sentence in absentia, and to drop all the charges against him as they are based solely on the exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly'.

Mohamed remains held in solitary confinement, granted 10-minute breaks per day with no contact with the other prisoners. We've also learnt that prison guards have recently banned him from receiving meals, clothes and even books provided by his family.

*President of the Republic of Algeria Abdelmajid Tebboune
Presidence de la republique
Place Mohammed Seddik Benyahya, El Mouradia,
Alger 16000
Algerie*

Email: President@el-mouradia.dz

Your Excellency

*I am writing to raise concerns about the ongoing detention of whistle-blower and anti-corruption activist **Mohamed Benhlima**, a 33-year-former military official, who has been detained in El-Blida military prison since 28 April 2022. He was charged with participation in a terrorist group and publishing fake news after being tortured by security agents. He remains held in solitary confinement, granted 10-minute breaks per day and continuously denied any contact with other prisoners. Officers at El Blida military prison have also banned him from receiving meals, clothes and even books provided by his family.*

I urge you to ensure the immediate release of Mohamed Benhlima, to quash his death sentence in absentia, and to drop all the charges against him as they are based solely on the exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he is removed from solitary confinement and 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, meanwhile, the right to regularly communicate with his family and lawyers and to refrain from any act of intimidation against them.

Yours sincerely

Want to do more?

- There are plenty of actions available (both letters and email) on Amnesty's Urgent Action pages <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions>

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

Please let us know if there have been any changes in your personal information

For more information about this Group, go to: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/bognor-chichester-and-district>