

Newsletter: February 2023

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Saturday 25/02/2023 South East England Conference, London (programme, speakers TBC) Thursday 02/03/2023 Online Meeting hosted by Brighton Group (TBC) Tuesday 25/04/2023 19:30 Group AGM,; in person, Friends Meeting House, Chichester Saturday 24/06/2023 Amnesty UK AGM: London and online (hybrid meeting) TBC
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Dear writers

Local events

- **Thursday 02/03/2023 Online Meeting:** hosted by Brighton Group. Details TBC - please contact me if you would like to attend (Bob Dewick: 01243 823016)
- **Tuesday 25/04/2023 19:30 Group Annual General Meeting (in person).** This will take place at the Friends Meeting House, Chichester. Reports from the committee and details to follow in the March Newsletter

Other events

- **Saturday 25/02/2023: South East England Conference (PROVISIONAL).**
 - Taking place at the Human Rights Action Centre, London: please ask if you would like further details (which we are waiting to hear from Amnesty UK!).
 - Kath Shakespeare plans to attend on behalf of the Group and is in contact with the organisers, but other members are welcome to attend. We do not know yet if there is an option to attend online.
- **Saturday 24/06/2023, 10:00 - 17:00: Amnesty UK Annual General Meeting.**
 - This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held as a hybrid meeting at the Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC) in London at 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA. You will also be able to participate remotely.
 - Amnesty's AGM offers all members - groups, individuals and networks – their say in Amnesty International UK.
- **2023 Priority campaigns.** Groups have been advised that priority campaigning for Amnesty UK will be:
 - Protect the Protest/Freedom of Expression <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/protecttheprotest> This will be a priority campaign for Amnesty UK and sections across the Amnesty movement to protect the right to protest.
 - End Israeli apartheid <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/israeliapartheid>
 - General Election organising. In anticipation of the 2024 General Election.
 - British Nationals detained abroad - further details TBC
 - Racial Justice - Prevent - further details TBC
 - Racial Justice - Predictive Policing - further details TBC
 - We will share campaigning actions in addition to our on-going group campaigns for Egypt and the Middle East.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

Whilst it is disappointing not to be able to report further progress in the campaign to secure the release of **Alaa Abd El-Fattah**, his family and friends have been continuing to publicise his case reminding the Egyptian authorities that human rights violations are not going unnoticed.

Online talk by his sister, Mona Seif

There was a very moving online talk given by his sister, Mona, organised by the Sutton group, on 9 January.

Vigil at Egyptian Embassy 25 January

Alaa's supporters also joined forces with campaigners holding a vigil at the Egyptian Embassy on 25 January in memory of the Italian researcher, **Guilio Regeni**, murdered in 2016 by Egyptian security forces. We sent a letter in support of the vigil to the Egyptian Ambassador on behalf of the Chichester & Bognor Group calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. It was disturbing to learn from Beverley Foulkes Jones's report of the event in the latest issue of the **North Africa emagazine** that a counter demonstration held by supporters of President al-Sisi hurled violent abuse at Alaa's family and supporters.

In spite of this depressing development, it should be stressed that the family are very appreciative of all the efforts made by Amnesty and are determined to carry on the campaign for his freedom. A new strategy is being drawn up so we will look forward to renewed campaigning in 2023.

It is also important to remind ourselves of the many successes we have achieved in the last couple of years cases such as: the lifting of the travel ban on lawyer, **Azza Soliman**; the release of politician **Ramy Shaath**, journalist **Mohamed Salah** and housing researcher **Ibrahim Ezz el-Din**, whose words of gratitude for the support he received are a powerful reminder of why we need to carry on campaigning for as long as it takes.



I would like to thank everyone who contributed to campaigning and defending me from inside and outside Egypt. I especially thank Amnesty International, and all its employees and members: you were the rays of sun in pitch dark. Words of thanks cannot express my gratitude to all of you. We need to keep talking about the detainees, as it will give them hope of escaping the injustice inflicted upon them. Thank you all.

Action: Morocco

Urgent action on behalf of Mohamed Ziane, a human rights lawyer, arrested on trumped up charges and sentenced to three years in prison in absentia and without legal representation.

- If you want to know more about the case:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/human-rights-lawyer-sentenced-absentia>



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What you can do:

Please send letter to

• Head of Government, Aziz Akhannouch, Palais Royal Touarga, Rabat 10070, Morocco
or email c/o Moroccan Embassy ambalondores@maec.gov.ma

Your Excellency

I am writing to express concern over the detention of lawyer **Mohamed Ziane** following an unfair trial on a host of unrelated charges, many of which violate his right to freedom of expression.

On 21 November 2022, 20 security agents arrested Mohamed Ziane's in his lawyer's office. They took him straight to prison without trial. One hour earlier, the Rabat court of appeal sentenced him to three years in prison – with immediate effect - and a fine of 5000MAD (around 492 USD). The sentencing took place without the presence nor knowledge of Mohamed Ziane or his lawyers, for 11 unrelated charges dating back to 2021.

The arrest came two days after a video was posted on YouTube in which Mohamed Ziane appears insulting the director of the Moroccan national security forces in reaction to a video that defamed Mohamed Ziane for sexual misconduct against a former police officer who Mohamed Ziane had represented in a sexual harassment case against her then boss. The former police officer publicly denies such allegations of sexual misconduct by Mohamed Ziane.

At least six of the 11 charges against Mohamed Ziane violate his freedom of expression, including those under Penal Code Articles 263 (insulting the judiciary and public officials) and 265 (insulting organized bodies). The charge of sexual harassment is the only charge considered a legitimate offence under international law and should be investigated in a fair, independent, impartial and transparent process.

Since his arrest and imprisonment on 21 November 2022, Mohamed Ziane has been held in a cell alone in Arjate 1 prison in Salé, a city next to the capital Rabat. He is forbidden from communicating with any other prisoners and is only permitted visits from his lawyer. He is allowed out into the prison courtyard alone and prison guards also deny him writing and reading materials.

I urge you to immediately drop all bogus charges held against Mohamed Ziane, to investigate the allegation of sexual assault in an independent, impartial and transparent process, and to ensure he is immediately provided an opportunity for his ongoing detention to be reviewed by a court, with a presumption that he will be released pending the end of his trial.

Yours sincerely

Want to do more?

Please take actions as part of Amnesty's [Urgent Action network](#): when you take action here, you do it as part of a movement of tens of thousands of people across the world, working together to raise our voices, demand justice, and make change happen, acting in solidarity with individuals at risk everywhere.

Cases include:

- Alaa Abdel Fattah in Egypt (Urgent Action participation as well as the actions being done to support Alaa by groups such as ours)
- Many actions for people sentenced to death in Iran in the current crackdown

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