**Our respo**

**Amnesty International**

### **Blackheath and Greenwich**

### **Newsletter**

#  March 2023

## Group Meeting Tuesday, 14.03.2023 in the crypt of St Margaret’s church

*Meeting chair: Anne F.**Newsletter writer: Tony*

1. **Introductions and Apologies**

Present: Graham, Ken, David We, Brigitte, Jenifer, Geoff, Anne F, David Wi, Tony.

Apologies: Ilona, Ann H, Roger, Angela, Rachel, Bethan, Olwen, Shelagh, Amanda.

1. **Discussion with Thea Ioannou, AIUK Community Organiser, Local Activism.**

Thea was unable to attend and will be invited to address the next meeting in April. In the meantime, she has responded to a number of topics and questions submitted by the group:

In summary:

\* HQ generated campaign resources and materials are still available for local groups but there has been a reduction to reduce waste.

\*The team responsible for AGM coordination will respond to concerns about local group representation.

\*Issues of ‘mission creep’ and whether or not Amnesty has strayed from its original purpose will be discussed in person.

\*Campaigns for 2023 – there are six priority campaigns although these can change due to prevailing issues. Local groups are sent information about new actions and can request support for specific campaigns.

\*There’s no new information on plans for an Amnesty bookshop in the Blackheath, Greenwich or Lewisham area. Although Thea says it would be great if a bookshop could be used for local group meetings etc.

\*An announcement is expected soon on who will lead Amnesty’s Anti-Racism Network. A committee is being set up to plan campaigns and actions.

1. **Country Regional Contacts**

West & Central Africa*–* Geoff***:*** The AIUK March report covered, Nigeria, Senegal, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and, in Burundi, the case of journalist Floriane Irangabiye. She was sentenced in January to ten years in prison and a fine of one million Francs on trumped-up charges. She has been living in Rwanda for more than a decade due to government repression of civil society and the media. Despite promises by President Ndayishimiye to normalise relations with the media in 2021, the government still views the press with suspicion and places severe restrictions on human rights and freedom of expression. A letter will be drafted.

Central and Eastern Europe – Brigitte

 Turkey: Eren Keskin, the Turkish human rights campaigner was the focus of International Women’s Day on March 8th. She has been repeatedly prosecuted – once for mentioning the name Kurdistan. A report on Human Rights in Turkey and Syria following the earthquake has been produced by Chris Ramsay. Aid in Northwest Syria has been obstructed by political considerations. The convictions of Tener Kilic, Chair of AI Turkey, and Idil Eser, President of AI Turkey, have been overturned by the Court of Cassation.

 UK: Joint action regarding the refugee Boats Bill is being discussed with Global AI leadership. A ‘Stand up to Racism’ rally in London organised by Care for Calais and trade unions was also supported by Amnesty.

 Iceland: People are still being held in solitary confinement for 22 hours a day in pre-trial detention.

 Brigitte also mentioned the Burma Campaign highlighting the two million people who have been forced to flee their homes. The military attack villages and then lay mines. There’s a call for sanctions against British companies involved with the regime.

Iran -- Graham:  ‘The Iranian authorities are carrying out executions on a frightening scale’. In a press release dated 02 March 2023, AIUK stated that at least 94 people were put to death during January and February of this year and there is escalating use of the death penalty against persecuted ethnic minorities. Horrific sexual violence and other torture are allegedly used to extract false confessions. The press release can be found at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/iran-nearly-100-people-executed-first-two-months-year>

At the last letter writing we contacted our MPs to request that action is taken in support of protesters who are at grave risk of execution in Iran. There is also a petition each of us can support at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/woman-life-freedom>

1. **Social Media.** Bethan and Jenifer have agreed to be AIBG’s Social Media coordinators.
2. **Letter writing.**Brigitte suggested that letter writing could be amalgamated into one monthly meeting. Following a discussion on the merits of one or two monthly meetings, it was decided to discuss this further at a future date.
3. **AIUK AGM.**The February date for submitting resolutions to the AGM has now passed and the AIGB working group looking at participation is now dissolved.
4. **Nov 2022 Booksale.** Brigitte said Happy Fish had made a donation after the last Autumn book sale. No more contributions could be expected. Attempts to sell some remaining special books had not been successful and Geoff has given them to the Oxfam bookshop in Greenwich.
5. **AIBG Financial return for 2022.**David We submitted the return to AIUK at the end of the year.
6. **Future fund-raising.** Suggestions to be considered in due course.
7. **Arrangements for future meetings.** Andy Worthington who runs the Guantanamo Campaign will be invited to talk. Anne F will investigate the possibility of screening the film ‘The Mauritanian’ at Catford Mews Cinema. David Wi will contact Georgie Needham-Bennett about Woolwich school students’ possible involvement in letter writing.
8. **AOB.** Members of the group signed a card for Anoosheh Ashoori to mark the first anniversary of his release from jail in Iran.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

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| Tuesday 28 March  | Letter Writing 7.30pm at the Greenwich Tavern |
| Tuesday 11 April  | Group Meeting in the Crypt of St Margaret’s Church |

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| **AIBG CONTACTS** |
| **Position**  | **Name**  |
| Chair  | Anne F |
| Secretary (enquiries contact) | David Wi |
| Treasurer | David We |
| Publicity & Social Media | Bethan & Jenifer |
| Membership & AIBG Website | David WW & David Wi |
| Letter writing co-ordinator | Brigitte |
| Newsletter | Rota: Brigitte Graham Roger Tony |

**AIBGenquiries**: enquiries.aibg@gmail.com

**Website**: [www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/blackheath-and-greenwich](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/blackheath#_blank)