

**Amnesty International**

### **Blackheath and Greenwich**

### **Newsletter**

# May 2023

## Group Meeting Tuesday, 9.05.2023 in the crypt of St Margaret’s church

*Meeting chair: Brigitte. Newsletter writer: Graham.*

1. **Introductions and Apologies**

Present: Angela, Ann H, Brigitte, Graham, Illona, Ken, Roger.

Apologies: Anne F, David We, David Wi, David WW, Geoff, Jennifer, Olwen, Rachel and Tony

1. **Country/regional campaigns** – updates from Country Contacts.

MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA - Roger:

*Mexico.*  Centres to process applications for refugee resettlement and family reunification to open in Colombia and Guatemala to reduce numbers on the Mexico/USA border.

Worries intensified after growing role of armed forces following shooting of several unarmed civilians in Nuevo Laredo.

Prosecutors charged two men in disappearance of two environmental and community activists in Michoacan. The rights organisation, TDT network, said the disappearances probably to do with giant iron-ore mine that operates in the area.

*Guatemala.* In April, a Guatemalan judge ordered arrest of three lawyers defending jailed journalist José Rubén Zamora who is director of El Periódico, a newspaper that published critical articles about suspected corruption under President Giam- mattei. Zamora charged with blackmail and money laundering. Lawyers accused of participating in this purported crime.

*El Salvador*. A state of emergency has lasted over a year and is being extended. Aimed at street gangs and 66,000 suspects have been detained. El Salvador has highest rate of imprisonment in the world, more than 1.5%

*Honduras.* Also extended its state of emergency from 6 December until October, in bid to tackle gang crime. Some constitutional rights suspended and security forces without a warrant allowed to detain people.

*Nicaragua.* In new report, Amnesty documents repression of dissidents and civil society that has deepened since crackdown in 2018. The main tactics: excessive use of force, the criminalisation of dissidents and shutting down civic space, including hundreds of NGOs: <https://tinyurl.com/3yepdvex>

The National Assembly voted to shut down the Nicaraguan Red Cross, accusing it of “attacks on peace and stability” during anti-government demonstrations in 2018. The local Red Cross says it just helped treat injured protesters during the protests.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE – Brigitte No update received.

CHINA – Angela No urgent Action updates but in a recent press release, AIUK’s Chief Executive, Sacha Deshmukh, said that the Chinese vice-president, Han Zheng, needs to be held accountable for the brutal crackdown on peaceful dissent and protest in Hongkong when he attends the coronation.

4th June will be the 34 anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Action: Group visit to the commemorative tree in Marion Wilson Park and send photo to AIUK and a letter/petition to Chinese Embassy. Ann H to bring Roses, Brigitte will bring the banner, Illona will read poetry and Angela will provide table and cloth and circulate details to group before end of May.

IRAN – Graham U/A The rights to education, health and life of millions of schoolgirls are at risk amid ongoing chemical gas attacks deliberately targeting girls’ schools in Iran. Since November 2022, thousands of schoolgirls have been poisoned and hospitalized. The authorities have failed to adequately investigate and end the attacks and dismissed girls’ symptoms as “stress”, “excitement” and/or “mental contagion”.

Action a letter to the Iranian Prosecutor General will be sent at next letter writing.

1. **Social Media** Jennifer has received passwords from Simon.
2. **Letter Writing** Brigitte proposed that letter writing be integrated into meetings so that there is only one meeting per month. There was support for this but also concern that it could make meetings overly long, that it would be impossible at meetings that included a speaker and that some members regularly come to letter writing but not to meetings. A number of alternatives were suggested but it was thought that this important change needed wider consultation. Action: Graham will send an email setting out the choices and encouraging a response from all group members.

1. **AIUK matters** (standing item)

AIBG participation / representation at next AIUK AGM. AIUK have circulated details of this hybrid meeting to be based at the HRAC 10am-4pm Saturday 24 June. Details can be found in the latest magazine. If you are intending to attend in person you should register : [**www.amnesty.org.uk/annual-general-meeting-2023**](https://email.amnestyuk.org.uk/c/1aYaTBXLjzp4XdV39xfiqoLnCQq) **. Brigitte is to find out about the group vote.**

1. **Future fundraising initiatives:** Brigitte enjoyed going to the Bromley and Orpington Amnesty Jazz fundraising concert on May 5th and consequently suggested that we might look into running a similar event in Blackheath or Greenwich next year. Action: Brigitte and Illona will look into possible venues.
2. **Arrangements for future** **meetings**

David Wi to follow up with Andy Worthington on Guantanamo for the June meeting. Roger and Graham will be meeting with Rachel O’Brien to explore a possible meeting on the Anti-racism network.

1. **AOB** None

**UPCOMING EVENTS 2023**

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| Tuesday 23 May | Letter Writing 7.30pm |
| Tuesday 13 June | 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 | TBA |
| Membership & AIBG Website | David WW & David Wi |
| Letter writing co-ordinator | Brigitte |
| Newsletter | Rota: Brigitte Graham Roger Tony |

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