

Newsletter: October 2023

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	Saturday 04/11/2023: AIUK National Conference Human Rights Action Centre, London Saturday 09/12/2023: Write for Rights action , Chichester Sunday 10/12/2023: Human Rights Day , 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
-----------------------------	---

Dear writers

Local events

Group Survey: Our thanks to those that responded to the survey: here are some of the headlines, shared by Kath (to whom the results were sent). Only a small return (about a quarter of Group members) but those members indicated:

- That the current membership fee was about right (92%), so we'll maintain the current rates of £10.00 per individual, £15.00 family and £4.00 unwaged
- The frequency of 10 newsletters a year was about right (83%), so we'll maintain the current frequency of newsletters
- The content of the newsletters - the balance of topic, information and actions - was supported by 100% of respondents - so that's good to hear!
- Only 25% of respondents try to complete every action included in the newsletter: the majority of respondents occasionally complete all the actions or pick out the actions that interest them. We will continue to try to make it as easy as possible to complete actions as quickly as possible, by providing links to online actions and email addresses, and by creating letter templates you can copy. However many actions you are able to do, we really appreciate your completing them.
- We also note that we get a number of urgent actions coming through at the "wrong" time to catch the Newsletter, so we'll continue to send these out by email to those members who have indicated that they want to get updates in addition to the monthly newsletter; and we'll also try to make sure that we include some 'good news' stories as well as actions, to show you that it is well worth continuing to take actions.
- A number of you have not been able to attend either in person or online action: we will continue to offer a mixture of both types of event for those of you that do. However, we really appreciate those of you continuing to support the group, even if you are not able to (because of ill-health), or wish to, attend events.

Saturday 09/12/2023: Write for Rights Action, Chichester. We will highlight a couple of the cases in this year's Write for Rights campaign to the Christmas shoppers of Chichester, and pin the signed cards to a Christmas tree. Please consider popping by to sign a card or sparing 30 minutes to help encourage others to sign. Our venue this year will be the Chichester City Council House portico, in North Street, in the morning (final times to be confirmed around volunteer availability, so please let me know if you are interested in coming along - update to follow in the November newsletter).

New Amnesty Bookshop in Chichester: there are plans to open an Amnesty bookshop in Eastgate Square: the post of Bookshop Team Leader has been advertised and we understand that the shop will also be seeking volunteers. The Amnesty fund-raising team has now advised us that they are keen to discuss with someone from the local Group to learn more about the area and to seek advice on recruiting volunteers, so please do let me know if you would like to either be involved in these discussions as the representative of the Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group, or if - down the line - you might be interested in volunteering. We know that there are already a number of excellent secondhand bookshops in Chichester, including the Oxfam one where a number of our members already volunteer and/or donate stock.

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: October 2023

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Other events

Anti-racism and human rights: online course now available Amnesty's new free online course '[Anti-racism and Human Rights](#)' has been created as a first step for anyone who wants to learn about racism and its relation to and impact on human rights in the UK and around the world.

The course will focus on:

- Expanding your knowledge of the history of racism deeply rooted in Britain's colonial past.
- The forms that racism and racial discrimination can take in people's lives.
- Anti-racist approaches you can take to create human rights change.

Make sure to click the limited access option when [joining the course](#), to access the materials for free.

Good news: Morad is free

We have some great news to share! You may recall taking action in support of Morad Tahbaz - a British father who was unjustly imprisoned in Iran. In September, Morad was finally freed from his prison sentence and has been flown out of Iran.

- Morad was unjustly imprisoned while doing conservation work in the country. He has cancer and his family have been worried he wasn't getting the care that he needed. Amnesty joined his loved ones in campaigning for the UK government to do everything in their power to secure his release. And now, Morad is free and has been reunited with members of his family.
"I...learned that even in the darkest places and worst conditions, there are still good people in this world and that gave me hope." - Morad Tahbaz
- Sadly, Morad is not the only British National imprisoned abroad...
Mehran and Alaa (on whose behalf we have been campaigning for a long time) are also British Nationals who are wrongly behind bars and held in awful conditions. Their loved ones are desperate for them to be freed: we should expect increased campaigning on this issue.



Thank you for taking action: 32,300 people called on the UK government to support women in Afghanistan.

On 12 September, Chiara Capraro, AIUK Programme Director for Women's Human Rights was joined by AIUK country co-ordinator, Nigina Istanakzai-Zarifi, and Afghan human rights defenders, Maryam Rahmani and Horia Mosadiq, in handing the AIUK petition, signed by 32,000 people, to the UK government. AIUK is calling on the UK government to take action by:

- Consulting and listening to women-led organisations in Afghanistan
- Supporting Afghan activists who are protecting the rights of women & girls
- Ensuring that respecting women's rights is non-negotiable with the Taliban
- Providing safe passage for Afghan women & girls seeking asylum

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>

Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Update from Margaret, our Egypt campaign co-ordinator

In view of the current crisis in the Middle East, it is perhaps understandable that there has been nothing further to report on the situation of Alaa Abd E-Fattah. Our September action appealing for local MPs to support calls for his release during the Westminster Hall Debate on 5 September generated a reply from Nick Gibb, which included the feedback that "Since his sentencing in December 2021, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office officials have consistently called on the Egyptian Government to urgently grant consular access to Alaa Abd El Fattah."

Action: Mahmoud Hussein - detained anti-torture T-shirt protester

Mahmoud Hussein, a protester who had already spent two years in arbitrary pretrial detention for wearing an anti-torture T-shirt, was re-arrested on 30 August. After his release on bail in 2016, he was convicted of bogus charges and sentenced to life imprisonment in his absence in a grossly unfair trial by an emergency court marred by allegations of torture.

He is detained at Badr 1 prison pending his retrial, amid concerns over his health. He must be immediately and unconditionally released as his detention is solely linked to the exercise of his human rights, including by wearing an anti-torture T-shirt.



What you can do:

Please email Public Prosecutor, Shawky Ayyad (m.office@ppo.gov.eg), appealing for the release of Mahmoud Hussein using the template message below.

Your Excellency

I appeal to you to order the immediate release of Mahmoud Hussein, a protester who had spent two years in pre trial detention for wearing an anti-torture T-shirt. After his release on bail in 2016, he was convicted of bogus charges and sentenced to life imprisonment in his absence in a grossly unfair trial by an emergency court marred by allegations of torture. He is currently detained in Badre 1 prison in very poor conditions which give rise to grave concerns about his health.

I urge you to ensure Mahmoud Hussein's immediate and unconditional release. His conviction and sentence must be quashed and all charges against him dropped as they stem from the exercise of his right to freedom of expression. Pending his release, he must be granted regular access to his family, lawyers and adequate medical care, including in outside hospitals if necessary, and held in conditions that comply with international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Yours sincerely

Action: TUNISIA : Action on behalf of Jaouhar Ben Mbarek and seven other activists

On 26 September, prominent opposition figure **Jaouhar Ben Mbarek** announced a hunger strike to protest his unjust detention in a trumped-up conspiracy case. On 2 October, five other detained defendants in the same case also announced a hunger strike. They include **Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj** and **Abdelhamid Jelassi**. Despite their releases in July 2023, political activists **Chaima Issa** and **Lazhar Akremi** – who spent nearly five



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: October 2023

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



months arbitrarily detained in the same case - have been arbitrarily banned from travelling and from “appearing in public spaces”. Tunisia’s anti-terrorism court is investigating all eight of them for trying to “change the nature of the state” under Article 72 of the Penal Code which carries the death penalty.

What you can do:

Please use the template message below to call on the Tunisian authorities to immediately release those detained, drop the charges against them, and lift the arbitrary restrictions on Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi.

- Postal address, if preferred: President of the Republic Kais Saied, Route de la Goulette, Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie

To: President of the Republic, Kais Saied (contact@carthage.tn)

Your Excellency,

*I write to you to express my grave concern over the continued detention of opposition figures **Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi**. Despite their release from detention in July, Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi remain under investigation and face unjust restrictions as a punishment for their political activism. The ongoing investigation against the eight individuals stems from the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, all of which are protected under international human rights law binding on Tunisia.*

On 26 September, Jaouhar Ben Mbarek’s defence lawyers shared a statement on social media to inform the public of his hunger strike. The defendant began a hunger strike on the same day to protest his unjust detention and prosecution. Jaouhar Ben Mbarek announced that he won’t cease his hunger strike unless he and the other defendants in the case are released. On 2 October, five other co-defendants in the same case, including Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi, joined the hunger strike for the same reason.

On 13 July, political figures Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi who are also being investigated in the same case were provisionally released from detention after nearly five months of arbitrary detention. On 14 July, both politicians were banned from travelling abroad and from “appearing in public spaces”. On 14 November, Chaima Issa will appear before a military court as she is also being prosecuted under Article 24 of the draconian Cybercrimes Decree-Law 2022-54 for remarks she made during a radio interview on 22 December 2022 in which she criticised the authorities. If tried and convicted, she could face up to 10 years in prison under the decree-law.

I urge you to release Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi immediately, to lift the restrictions against Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi and to drop all charges against them as they stem solely from the exercise of their human rights or peaceful dissent. Pending the release of the detained individuals, I urge you to ensure they have access to adequate healthcare, in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and informed consent. Moreover, I call on you to cease your targeted arrests of critics for their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, and association.

Yours sincerely

Write for Rights 2023

The November Newsletter will focus on the annual Write for Rights campaign, which runs from 1 November to 31 December: actions from this campaign will also feature in our event on 9 December in Chichester.

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. Please do take action in solidarity with individuals at risk everywhere: <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>