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| Dates for your diary | Tuesday 02/04/2024, 19:30 Group Annual General Meeting (online) |
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Dear writers

### Local events

**Tuesday 02/04/2024, 19:30 Group Annual General Meeting (online)** Our Group Constitution requires an AGM every year. The Group Committee would like to provide you with our annual reports, which are included with this Newsletter, and hope that you will be able to attend the Group AGM via Zoom: <https://port-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/89079973321?pwd=bUJwcTlydXZSWkpwZ1djZlR1STJlUT09>

- A reminder email, with the link included, will be sent out again, the week before the online meeting takes place.

### AGENDA FOR BOGNOR/CHICHESTER GROUP AGM, 19:30 ONLINE VIA ZOOM

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM, 25/03/2023 - I can send copies [dewickrobert9@gmail.com](mailto:dewickrobert9@gmail.com)
3. Matters arising
4. Reports
5. Election of officers
6. Future programme
7. Any other business

### Other events

**Exodus magazine: Reading Amnesty Group and Care4Calais.** Helen Ball, Secretary of the Reading Amnesty Group, has been working with a team of volunteers, linked to Care4Calais, who have begun a magazine called *Exodus*; she has contacted local groups to promote this. It's written by and for asylum seekers and refugees. The idea is to get the voice, the lived experience of asylum seekers and refugees out to everyone, first hand, so people can recognise what we share and how we can all benefit from living and working together.

- Three issues have been produced and can be accessed via the Facebook page, which anyone can join <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1021646772387087/>
- They are also available via the online publisher Issuu, here: <https://issuu.com/exodusfanzine>
- Please feel free to share. Asylum seekers, refugees or people who work or volunteer in some way, and would like to contribute to the next issue: any submissions or questions, please contact [exodusfanzine@gmail.com](mailto:exodusfanzine@gmail.com)

**Friday 01/03/2024: World Day of Prayer.** This year the World Day of Prayer Service is prepared by the Christian Women of Palestine. Local event is at St George's Whyke, Cleveland Road, Chichester, PO19 7AD: the service is at 2pm with a soup and roll lunch at 12.30pm. All are welcome and you can find more information about World Day of Prayer here: <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

Carry on writing!

*Bob Dewick, Amnesty*

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### Annual reports for 2023

Treasurer's Report for the year Jan 2023 - Dec 2023

#### Report to the AGM of the Bognor Regis, Chichester and District Amnesty International Group 2024

| Income                  | Expenditure             | Total (£) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Subscriptions           |                         | 560.00    |
| Donations               |                         | 71.50     |
| Arias for Amnesty       |                         | 00.00     |
| Street Collection       |                         | 00.00     |
| Amnescoffee morning     |                         | 00.00     |
| GreetingsCardsCathedral |                         | 20.47     |
|                         | Secretary               | -17.18    |
|                         | Membership Sec          | -6.00     |
|                         | Other postage           | -00.00    |
|                         | Rent                    | -24.00    |
|                         | Greetings Cards postage | -00.00    |
|                         | AIUK affiliation fee    | -72.00    |
|                         | AIUK Donation           | -400.00   |
|                         | Brought Forward         | 776.34    |
|                         | Balance                 | 909.13    |

#### 2024 Treasurer's Report contd

Once again, thank you for your support over the past year. We have recently sent **£500 donation to AIHQ**, in addition to the donation shown above, so we are continuing to maintain our track record of substantial donations over the years. After our Financial Report for last year was sent to AIHQ, we received the following note of thanks:

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# Newsletter: February 2024

## Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



'Thank you for filling out and returning your group's Financial Return Form. It's great to see your finances are in good shape and you were able to raise enough to make a generous donation to Amnesty UK last year. We appreciate your support.'

This would not be possible without your contributions, and we are grateful for all of them, however big or small.

*Breege Gallagher, Treasurer*

### Review of the year: Campaigns March 2023 - February 2024

The group continues to focus on the terrible human rights situation in Egypt. **Margaret Robertson's** dedicated work in co-ordinating the group's actions in 2023 have focused on the following cases:

On-going work to support **Alaa Abd El-Fattah** has dominated this year's actions. In March, four months after Rishi Sunak met with the Egyptian President Al-Sisi at Cop 27 to discuss human rights issues, we marked the date of the Sunak/al-Sisi meeting by sending messages to remind the British authorities of their failure to act effectively on Alaa's behalf. Cards were sent by the group sending good wishes to President al-Sisi who issues pardons at the end of Ramadan (April): cards appealed to the President to pardon Alaa. We also completed a Father's Day action (June) for Alaa, separated from his 11 year old son now living in the UK. Cards were sent c/o Rishi Sunak to remind the P.M. that Alaa holds joint UK Egyptian citizenship, so the UK Government has a responsibility to work for his release. We remembered Alaa's birthday in November: cards were sent to the Egyptian Embassy reminding them of Alaa's continued imprisonment and expressing the hope that he would soon be free.



### Other Egyptian individuals for whom we took action:

- In September, to mark the anniversary of mass protests against the authorities in 2013 in Raba, appeals were sent on behalf of a number of activists unlawfully detained including Alaa Abd El Fattah, Aisha el-Shaiter, Mohamed abo Horeira and Badre Mohamed.
- In January 2024, to mark the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder of Giulio Regeni, an Italian research student at Cambridge University, allegedly abducted and murdered by Egyptian security forces, a vigil was held in Cambridge. There has never been a thorough investigation into his death. Messages were sent to the Egyptian Ambassador in London calling for justice for Giulio Regeni, and for the release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah.
- We heard some good news in July, and celebrated news of the presidential pardon and release of Mohamed el-Baqer, Alaa's lawyer, and Patrick Zaki, human rights researcher. We had written for Mohamed and his wife, Naema Hisham, in May; Naema has also been released.

There was also a mass lobby of MPs to alert them to the debate in Westminster Hall on 5 September about the unjust imprisonment of joint UK/foreign nationals abroad. We called on MPs to speak in support of urgent UK government action to effect their release. This was followed in November / December with a further action for Alaa and **Mehran Raouf** (a labour rights activist held in Evin Prison in Tehran) as part of this ongoing campaign for the release of joint UK/foreign nationals.

Working with Amnesty's Middle Eastern regional network, Margaret has also been able to highlight actions in a number of other countries:

- Ihasne El Kadi, Algerian journalist who has been imprisoned because of his outspoken criticism of the repressive regime in Algeria.
- Abderrahmane Zitout, held in pre-trial detention in Algiers.
- Slimane Bouhafts, kidnapped in Tunis and brought to Algeria for detention.

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- Mohande Ziane, human rights lawyer, imprisoned on trumped up charges and experienced an unfair trial.
- Action in June for three vocal opposition critics of the Tunisian regime detained for peaceful exercise of their rights: Chaima Issa, Jaouhar Ben Marek and Khayem Turki. Further actions taken in October on behalf of Action on behalf of Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi, on hunger strike in protest against their unjust detention, and Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi, who were released in July 2023 but still banned from travelling or appearing in public places.

### Other campaigning actions

- We took actions for International Women's Day in March: for women and girls in Afghanistan; for Belarusian human rights defender Nasta Loika; for Andorran activist Vanessa Mendoza Cortes; for Burundian journalist Floriane Irangabiye and Palestinian sisters Wissam and Fatimah al-Tawali, returned to their father in the Gaza Strip.
- 2023 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ever Urgent Action, which helped free detained professor Luiz Basilio Rossi, who opposed the military dictatorship in Brazil. UA is a campaigning action which has become one of Amnesty's most effective campaigning tool: in the absence of sufficient time, this is a crisis action which can be life-changing. UAs we undertook included:
  - Salma al-Shehab, a Saudi activist and academic
  - Maryia Kalesnikava, opposition figure in Belarusia
  - Indonesian environmental activist Heri Budiawan

### Chair's report, March 2023 – February 2024

- The Committee members were delighted to have the opportunity to talk about the work of a local Amnesty group, with particular focus on campaigning for individuals at risk, at the Friends' Meeting House in April; this was also an opportunity to remember Quaker and Amnesty member Thelma Percy.
- My thanks to Group members who completed the Members' Survey, which sought feedback on what we are currently doing, and offering members an opportunity to suggest things we might do in the future. Members indicated that they were happy with the current level of membership fees; with the frequency and content of the newsletters; but that most completed some rather than all of the actions included in the newsletters. We're going to try to make sure that we make it as easy as possible for you to complete actions, by providing links to online actions and email addresses, and by providing email templates that are easy to copy. And we'll also try to include some 'good news' stories as well as actions, to continue to show that it is well worth completing actions!
- We are delighted to welcome four new members to the group.
- Our August Pumble (pub-ramble) this year was Singleton to Charlton and lunch at The Fox goes Free
- Our Write for Rights action this year took place at the Council House portico, to highlight two of the cases in the 2023 campaign, Chaima Issa (Tunisia) and Ahmed Mansoor (UAE). 10 December 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in December 1948.



My grateful thanks to the members of the Committee for their hard work, support and friendship over the last year – mainly online – and to group members who have been able to support the Group's work this year. Please do consider coming along to one of our Zoom meetings to find out what we do and if you can help support the Group: particularly if you are interested in steering a campaign on a topic that particularly interests you, or helping to run a social media account, or just supporting the planning of future events: you would be very welcome!

*Kath Shakespeare, Chair*

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### Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

#### Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

##### Action: Hoda Abdelmoniem

We have campaigned on behalf of human rights lawyer Hoda Abdelmoniem over the five year period of her unjust detention, so we were dismayed to learn this month that, just as she was about to be released, new tumped-up charges have been brought against her.

On 31 October 2023, State Security Prosecution (SSSP) ordered her pre-trial detention, pending investigations into similar bogus terrorism-related charges in a separate case No. 730 of 2020. During a rare visit to 10th of Ramadan prison on 4 January, her family learned that her health continues to deteriorate and that she developed an ear infection, affecting her balance and sight. She must be immediately and unconditionally released.



##### What you can do:

Please use the template message below, to appeal to President al-Sisi to release her (Email: [p.spokesman@op.gov.eg](mailto:p.spokesman@op.gov.eg) )

Your Excellency

Human rights lawyer **Hoda Abdelmoniem**, 64, has been arbitrarily detained for over five years, solely in relation to her human rights work. On 31 October 2023, **Hoda Abdelmoniem**, who was arrested on 1 November 2018, was due to be released after serving her five-year unjust prison sentence imposed by an Emergency State Security Court (ESSC), which convicted her of terrorism and other bogus charges following a grossly unfair trial in March 2023. Instead, on the same day, 31 October 2023, she was taken before a Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) prosecutor, who interrogated her in relation to a separate case No. 730 of 2020 and ordered her pretrial detention for 15 days pending investigations into bogus terrorism-related charges. On 9 January 2024, her pretrial detention was again renewed for 15 days.

On 4 January 2024, her family visited her in 10th of Ramadan prison and learned that she was diagnosed with an ear infection that impairs her balance and sight. This was the first time that authorities allowed her a family visit since 8 June 2023. **Hoda Abdelmoniem's** health has been deteriorating throughout her detention. She has developed inflammation of the nerves (peripheral neuropathy) which causes her sharp pain, numbness and the sensation of electric currents in different parts of her body. She has multiple other ailments including a heart condition, kidney disease, arterial thrombosis, and high blood pressure. While she told her family that her access to healthcare in prison improved since her transfer from Qanater prison to 10th of Ramadan prison in June 2023, prison authorities continue to deny her relatives access to her medical records which would have enabled them to consult with independent health professionals. They also continue to refuse transferring her to an outside hospital for specialized healthcare.

I urge you to ensure that Hoda Abdelmoniem is immediately and unconditionally released and that all charges against her dropped as they stem solely from the exercise of her human rights. Pending her release, I call on you to ensure that she is provided with access to the healthcare she needs, including outside prison if necessary, as well as regular access to her family and lawyer.

Yours sincerely

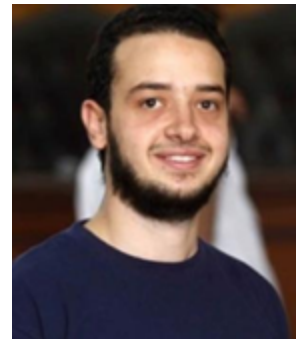
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### Action: Anas al-Beltagy

**Anas al-Beltagy**, the son of prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader and former parliamentarian Mohamed al-Beltagy. He has been arbitrarily detained for over nine years solely due to his family links, is being held incommunicado in the Badr Prison Complex, some 70 km east of Cairo, and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. He has been denied any visits and other contact with his family for over six years. Since his arrest in December 2013, Egyptian authorities have subjected Anas al-Beltagy to a series of violations including enforced disappearance and torture. Concerns for his wellbeing and physical and mental health have mounted in recent weeks amid alarming reports emerging from the Badr Prison Complex about prisoner suicides and hunger strikes in protest at their conditions



#### What you can do:

Please use the template message below, to appeal to President al-Sisi for his immediate release (Email: [p.spokesman@op.gov.eg](mailto:p.spokesman@op.gov.eg) )

Your Excellency,

**Anas al-Beltagy**, 30, has been arbitrarily detained for over 10 years solely because he is the son of prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader and former parliamentarian Mohamed al-Beltagy. Despite courts acquitting him of all charges in four separate cases and a judge's decision to provisionally release him in a fifth case, he continues to be held in pre-trial detention pending investigations into a separate sixth case on similar spurious terrorism-related accusations. Since his arrest in December 2013, Anas al-Beltagy has been subjected to a catalogue of human rights violations including enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment through beatings, prolonged solitary confinement and deliberate denial of healthcare.

As Anas al-Beltagy has been banned from any prison visits and other communication since 2017, his family and lawyers only have limited information about him, obtained during detention renewal hearings or through other prisoners. They have learned that since his transfer to the 10th of Ramadan prison, in Sharkiya governorate, on 8 June 2018, he has been held in solitary confinement and banned from exercising outdoors or interacting with other prisoners.

During his last pretrial detention renewal hearing held via video link in November 2023, the judge interrupted him and his audio was muted as he was complaining about his ongoing unjust detention, poor prison conditions, denial of visitations rights, and restrictions on obtaining books and other reading material. Since September 2023, some prisoners held for political reasons in the 10th of Ramadan Prison refused to attend online pretrial detention renewal hearings in protest at their inability to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention and violations of their fair trial rights including the right to adequate defence.

During online hearings, defence lawyers are present in the courtroom with the judges, while the defendant is connected from a room in the prison in the presence of security officials. Lawyers frequently complain of technical problems during online hearings, including poor connectivity and their inability to adequately hear defendants.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure that Anas al-Beltagy is immediately and unconditionally released and all charges against him are dropped as they are brought solely because of his family links and the exercise of his human rights. Pending his release, I call on you to ensure that he is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners and granted regular access to his family, lawyers and adequate healthcare.

Yours sincerely

#### Want to do more?

##### **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>

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