

Newsletter: April 2024

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	11/05/2024: Amnesty UK Feminist Network event (TBC) 04/06/2024: 35th anniversary of Tiananmen crackdown - candlelit vigil/protest 17/06/2024 - 23/06/2024: Refugee Week 22/06/2024: Amnesty UK AGM
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Dear writers

Local events

Following the Group's AGM on 02/04/2024, I'm happy to advise that all existing Committee members were happy to continue in their roles for the following 12 months. However, if you are interested in joining us as a committee member without portfolio, or have a particular campaign you would like to support, please let me know and you are welcome to attend a committee meeting to find out what we do.

Other events

April: the Football Welcomes month <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/football-welcomes-refugees>

Saturday 11/05/2024, Amnesty UK Feminist Network event, Human Rights Action Centre, London 12:00 - 20:00: to find out more about the Network and the event: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/events/aiuk-feminist-network-event-2024>

Tuesday 04/06/2024: candlelit vigil/protest led by AIUK activists together with other groups to mark the 35th anniversary of the June Fourth Tiananmen crackdown in China.

Monday 17/06/2024 - Sunday 23/06/2024: Refugee Week. The theme for 2024 is "Our home". To keep an eye on local events in support of Refugee Week: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/>

Saturday 22/06/2024: Amnesty International UK Section Annual General Meeting:
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/annual-general-meeting>

Election of Activism Representative for the South East. The nomination process for the position of Activism Representative is now open.

- As per Amnesty UK's constitution, each local group has the chance to elect a volunteer Activism Representative for their region. If you believe you have the passion and commitment to represent our region (South East), you are encouraged to nominate yourself. The nomination application is open **01/04/2024 - 30/04/2024** and can be done here: <https://amnestyuk.wufoo.com/forms/activism-representative-nominations-2024>
- The election itself will take place from 06/05/2024 - 07/06/2024: each local group has one vote per group to elect our volunteer Activism Representative.

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Good news updates

An update from Dorgelesse: You may remember Dorgelesse Nguessan from Cameroon. Dorgelesse – a hairdresser and single mother – was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison for simply attending a peaceful protest demanding a better future for her family and her country. She featured in the 2022 Write for Rights campaign, and Amnesty International have continued to work with her since. Recently Dorgelesse sent a letter, addressed to Amnesty supporters who took action to demand her release

“To the supporters at Amnesty International,

Words fail me when I try to describe what the campaign has done for me. The good it did, for me and my family...it brought me such immense joy. I just want to say thank you and to ask God to continue to bless Amnesty and its supporters. Please don't be discouraged. Because it did us such good, I can't tell you. I don't have the words – except thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.”



Good news from Morocco: Rida Benotmane, a journalist and human rights activist jailed for his criticism of the Moroccan authorities, was released on 9 March. Thanks to all of you who wrote on his behalf appealing for his release which may have contributed to the reduction of his original sentence from 3 years to 18 months.



Messages from and about the people we work alongside are reminders of the real impact of campaigning and your support helps make that possible. Even when our goal has not yet been met, the difference you make by taking action or sending a donation is felt deeply. Thank you for your continued support and generosity: we will keep you updated with any further progress in the campaign to call for Dorgelesse's release.

Amnesty International UK 2024 campaigns

Amnesty UK will be focussing on the following campaigning areas in the coming 12 months: we will share these actions in the Group Newsletter, alongside our **on-going support** for human rights defenders in Egypt and the wider Middle East, with particular focus on Alaa Abdel Fattah (who also forms part of the 2024 **Bring Them Home** campaign) and on-going actions for Individuals at Risk.

- **Prevent** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/prevent>
- **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/economic-social-and-cultural-rights>
- **General Election** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/human-rights-manifesto> : the next general election must take place before 28/01/2025.
- **Bring Them Home:** British nationals detained abroad (Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mehran Raof)
- **End Israeli apartheid** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/israeliapartheid> (outputs on the current crisis are here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/crisis-gaza-israel>)
- **Crisis Rapid Response campaigning:** the AIUK Crisis & Tactical team has increased capacity to be able to respond to emerging human rights crises.
- **Protect the Protest** will continue as a priority campaign for Amnesty UK <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/protecttheprotest>
- **35th anniversary of June Fourth Tiananmen crackdown** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/tags/tiananmen-square>
- **Against repressive laws in Hong Kong & Transnational repression**
- **Write for Rights 2024** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-for-rights>

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

Action: Alaa Abd el-Fattah

Many thanks to all of you who wrote to David Cameron, requesting that appeal to President al-Sisi asking him to grant a Ramadan Presidential pardon to **Alaa Abd el-Fattah**. Those of you who wrote to the Foreign Office will have received a reply indicating that the Foreign Secretary had raised Alaa's case with the Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry on 22 February 2024 and Lord Ahmad raised it again with him again on 28 March 2024. As yet, we have not received news of whether or not a pardon has been granted.



However, it was encouraging to hear that Alaa's sister, **Sanaa Seif**, reported after her visit on 5 February that Alaa's prison conditions had improved. Prison authorities have finally allowed him regular access to books, television, and written correspondence. Yet authorities continue to deny him access to his lawyers and consular visits from the British authorities as well as phone calls to his family. Prison authorities have also denied him access to fresh air and sunlight since 2019. He is only allowed to exercise in an indoor hall. Like other convicted prisoners, Alaa is allowed family visits once a month for only twenty minutes because of the Covid-19 restrictions still in place in prisons despite being lifted elsewhere. Visits continue to be carried behind a glass barrier and through a headset. For over two years, Alaa has thus been denied opportunities to see and communicate with his son, who is autistic and non-verbal.

We are, therefore, asked to respond to a 15th (yes, 15th) urgent action on Alaa's behalf requesting that he be allowed the regular consular visits to which he is entitled as a joint British/Egyptian citizen.

What you can do:

Please support this further action on his behalf by writing or emailing President al-Sisi, either in your own words or using the template below:

*President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt
or email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg*

Your Excellency

*I write to express my grave concern over the prolonged unjust imprisonment of prominent Egyptian-British activist **Alaa Abdel Fattah**, who was arbitrarily arrested on 29 September 2019. He is serving an unjust five-year prison sentence imposed on 20 December 2021 by an Emergency State Security Court (ESSC), which convicted him on bogus charges including "spreading false news", following a grossly unfair trial. Verdicts by the ESSCs are not subject to appeal, and the president ratified the verdict against Alaa Abdel Fattah on 3 January 2022.*

I am pleased to hear that when his sister, Sanaa Seif, visited him on 5 February 2024, she found that conditions of detention in Wadi al-Natroun prison have improved in recent months. Prison authorities have finally allowed him regular access to books, television, and written correspondence. However, authorities continue to deny him access to his lawyers and consular visits from the British authorities as well as phone calls to his family. Prison authorities have also denied Alaa Abdel Fattah access to fresh air and sunlight since 2019. He

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I urge you to release Alaa Abdel Fattah immediately and unconditionally, as he is detained solely for exercising his human rights. Pending his release, he must have regular access to his lawyers, family and adequate healthcare and be held in conditions that meet international standards for the treatment of prisoners. As a British-Egyptian citizen he must be granted a consular visit without further delay.

Yours sincerely

Tunisia actions

Clearly the situation in Tunisia is very repressive and we have received a number of urgent action cases since the beginning of March, including the two, below. All appeals should be addressed to: **President Kais Saied**, Email: contact@carthage.tn; Post: President of the Republic Kais Saied, Route de la Goulette, Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie

What you can do:

Case 1: [Rached Tamboura, artist and activist](#)

Rached Tamboura has been sentenced to two years in prison on bogus charges for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. Rached Tamboura painted a series of graffiti denouncing President Kais Saied's racist comments against sub-Saharan migrants. He is currently imprisoned in the Zaghouan prison where he is actively protesting his arrest.



Please use the template message below to appeal to President Kais Saied to release him immediately and to quash his conviction.

Your Excellency,

I write to you to express my grave concern over the ongoing arbitrary detention of artist **Rached Tamboura** solely for peacefully voicing his critical opinion through art. His conviction is in contravention of international human rights treaties including article 19 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) and article 9 of the [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) to which Tunisia is a state party.

On 18 July 2023 security forces arrested Rached Tamboura after he painted a series of graffiti drawings of yourself, President Kais Saied, on the wall of the local authorities building. The series of graffiti meant to denounce [comments](#) made by yourself on 21 February during a National Security Council meeting, along with the [Memorandum of Understanding signed with the European Union](#) on migration, which triggered an upsurge in anti-Black racist violence in the country.

People have the right to express their dissent and should not be arbitrarily detained for exercising their rights.

On 31 January 2024, the Monastir Court of Appeals confirmed Rached Tamboura's two-year sentence after a preliminary sentencing in December 2023 for "committing an offensive act against the president" and "producing and promoting false news with the aim of infringing on the rights of others, harming public security or national defence, or spreading terror among the population" under article 67 of the penal code and article 24 of Decree law 54 respectively.

I therefore urge you to immediately release Rached Tamboura and to quash his conviction and sentence as it is based solely on the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and activism. Pending his release, ensure that he has access to adequate healthcare, in compliance with international standards and medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy, and

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informed consent. Moreover, I call on you to cease your targeted arrests of critics for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,

Case 2: Appeal on behalf of **Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi**

These [Tunisian opposition politicians](#) were arrested over a year ago on unfounded “conspiracy against state security” accusations. Their latest appeals against detention were rejected by a judge in January.

Please appeal to President Kais Saied for their release and the dropping of all charges against them, using the template message below.

Your Excellency,



*I write to you to express my grave concern over the prolonged arbitrary detention of opposition figures **Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi** on unfounded “conspiracy” accusations. Over a year after their arrests, authorities have failed to release them from arbitrary detention. Under international human rights law, everyone is entitled to their right to liberty. Also, the presumption of innocence is one of the requirements of the right to fair trial (Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights).*

Since their arrest in February 2023, none of the detainees has been questioned in relation to acts that would amount to recognizable crimes under international law, and the charges against them are therefore unfounded. They were questioned about their relationship with each other and with foreign diplomats as well as on meetings they undertook together and messages they exchanged about the political situation in Tunisia. Their prosecution violates articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and articles 9 and 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights which together guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Tunisia has ratified these human rights treaties.

Despite their release in July 2023, political activists Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi who spent nearly five months arbitrarily detained in the same case have been banned from travelling and from “appearing in public spaces”.

I therefore urge you to ensure that Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, Khayyam Turki, Issam Chebbi, Ghazi Chaouachi, Ridha Belhaj and Abdelhamid Jelassi, are immediately released from arbitrary detention. I also urge you to ensure that the restrictions against Chaima Issa and Lazhar Akremi immediately lifted, and all the charges against them dropped, as the charges stem solely from the peaceful exercise of their human rights. Pending the release of the detained individuals, ensure that 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 the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

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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