



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

February 2017 Newsletter



Our thanks to Ann Elliott of Bromley for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 14th February

Tuesday 14th March

Tuesday 11th April

Speaker Amanda Barnes – *POSTPONED*

21st AGM

Amnesty China Co-ordinator – *to be confirmed*

Bromley & Orpington Amnesty International 21st AGM

Tuesday 14th March 2017 at 7.30pm

Please see enclosed AGM Notice for Resolutions

Please note our planned speaker event with Amanda Barnes has been postponed until later in the year.

CAAT: Arms Exports Fuelling Human Rights Violations

We welcomed Wendy Horler from **Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT)**. Wendy spelt out CAAT's mission to end the supply and export of UK manufactured weapons where these could be used to violate human rights abuses or to fuel wider conflict. She explained how arms sales can facilitate human rights violations directly by affecting civilians, as is being witnessed in Yemen and Syria. They can also increase the military authority of governments and their capacity to fuel abuses, whilst international arms sales to regimes with poor human rights records affords a degree of acceptability to those regimes. The UK is particularly culpable owing to its unique position of being the 6th largest global economy with a significant arms industry. Four of the largest arms producers in the world are all Permanent Members of the UN Security Council (US, UK, Russia and France). CAAT identified 28 countries of concern where arms are sold, and the UK has arms trade agreements with 18 of them, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan. There is compelling evidence that UK manufactured weapons have been used by the Saudis in Yemen to the point where the Government had to seek assurances this would not re-occur.



In a lively Q&A, Wendy confirmed her belief that arms sales were now seen as a business priority, with human rights concerns 'downgraded'. The previous consent required by three government departments, DFID, BIS and the FCO has been descaled, although the Government still stresses human rights factors are built in to arms export legislation. The International Arms Trade Treaty, though a massive 'win' has loopholes that companies and governments exploit. According to *The Guardian* over £3bn worth of arms exports was made in 2015 to 21 of the Government's 30 'human rights priority countries' including Saudi, Bahrain and Burundi. Finally Wendy contended that arms exports are of less strategic economic importance than is often stated: arms export jobs amount to just 0.2% of UK employment, and constitute 1.5% of total exports.

Monthly Action: Iran – Youth Sentenced to Death

We sent an urgent appeal for clemency to the Iranian Head of the Judiciary in respect of **Salar Shadizadi** who was sentenced to death again in November after a retrial. He has been on death row since 2007 for a crime committed when he was 15. The retrial was granted after his execution was halted due to public pressure in December 2015. The criminal court has re-sentenced Salar Shadizadi to death after concluding that he was "mentally mature" at the time of the crime despite this being illegal under international law. His execution may now go-ahead at any time.



Finance

Balance brought forward	£630.66
Income	£93.98
Expenditure	£59.25
Balance at 31 st December	£665.39
CHANGE	£34.73

We are delighted to report that in 2016 we donated **£2,222.00** to Amnesty, well ahead of our budgeted total of £1,370.00. Our 2016 accounts will be presented at the AGM on 14th March.

Breaking News:

As we were putting this Newsletter together, it was announced that President Barack Obama had commuted **Chelsea Manning's** 35 year sentence for whistleblowing. Pressure by Amnesty to show clemency has resulted in her being released in May after serving seven years. President Obama said she had not been pardoned, but that the original sentence was 'disproportionate'. Chelsea Manning a former serving US Army Intelligence Officer underwent gender re-assignment during her term in prison.



West & Central Africa Regional Action: Burkina Faso

In December 2015 the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity adopted a 3-year action plan to prevent and eliminate child marriage in Burkina Faso. As part of the 'My Body My Rights' global campaign, Amnesty International campaigned for the rights of women in **Burkina Faso** and in March 2016 the government made its first official statement planning to end child marriage and raise the age of marriage to 18. Whilst this is encouraging,

Amnesty wishes to maintain pressure; we wrote to the Burkina Faso authorities calling on them to:

- ♣ Ensure that the prohibition on forced and early marriages applies to all forms of marriage, including traditional and religious marriages;
- ♣ Set 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls in line with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other international and regional human rights instruments, and;
- ♣ Adopt a legal requirement for marriages to be mandatorily registered and to require state officials to check prior to registering any marriage that both parties are above the legal age of marriage and have given consent.

Westminster Corner



We received a reply from the Near East Department of the Foreign Office in response to our letter to the Prime Minister about Syria. A very comprehensive reply noted that *'the Government wholeheartedly shares [our] concern regarding the situation in Syria'*. The FCO expresses concerns that the ceasefire has not held, and stipulates that Russia and Iran must use their influence to ensure hostilities cease. The Government has urged full access for humanitarian aid and for a resumption of *'genuine and inclusive political negotiations'*. The letter concludes by pointing to the financial aid provided by the UK which has committed over £2.3bn for displaced people.

SAVE THE DATE

Bromley Little Theatre Charity Premiere: 'Nell Gwynn' by Jessica Swale
Thursday 6th July 2017 at 7.45pm

Present on 10th January: Neville White, Vivien Glanz, David Howkins, Ted Burke, Patsy Paine, Peter Martin, Vivienne Andrews, Waultraut Gilchrist. **Apologies:** Margaret Coppard, Wendy Simmons, Gladys Edmonds.

Meetings are held in the Wesley Room, Orpington Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington commencing at 7.30pm. **E-mail** amnestybromley@gmail.com **website:** www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley

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