



# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Bromley & Orpington Group

### August 2014 Newsletter



Our thanks to Roger Knight of Bexleyheath for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

#### COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

**Tuesday 12 August**  
**Tuesday 9 September**  
**Tuesday 14 October**

**Campaign meeting**  
**Stop Torture campaign**  
**Speaker: Croydon Campaign against Trafficking (CCAT)**



Scenes from the Day of Action. Left: Gladys gets ready to meet the public. Right: joined by Beckenham MP, Bob Stewart



**We are changing: from 1 August our Group e-mail will be [amnestybromley@gmail.com](mailto:amnestybromley@gmail.com) . If you receive this Newsletter by post and can receive it by e-mail please let us know. We hope to convert much of our mailing list to e-mail by the autumn. Details enclosed with this Newsletter. Thank you**

#### **China Prisoner Case**

We were delighted to welcome **Andy Moody, Amnesty China Coordinator** to the meeting to talk about our prisoner action file: **Liu Xiaobo**. Andy gave us some human background to fill in the gaps. Liu was born in 1955 and grew up during the Cultural Revolution under Mao. Increasingly drawn to the pro-democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s, he helped create Charter 8 in 2008 calling for a series of fundamental human rights. For this he was abducted and 'disappeared' for six months, eventually being sentenced to 11 years imprisonment for his peacefully held views. In 2010 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At this point his wife, a poet and writer, was put under house arrest. A global petition calling for his release attracted 450,000 signatures. They both continue to suffer for their pro-democracy beliefs. We are enormously proud to be working on behalf of Liu and his wife – we continue to write letters every month on his behalf to a range of authorities.



#### **Monthly Letter: Morocco**

**Beaten, burnt and given electric shocks.** On 14 December 2010, **Ali Aarrass**, a Belgian-Moroccan national, was forcibly returned to Morocco from Spain despite warnings from the UN and Amnesty that doing so would put him at risk of detention, torture and other ill-treatment. Ali has been detained ever since. For the first 12 days he was held incommunicado and tortured, beaten on the soles of his feet, given electric shocks to his testicles, suspended from his wrists, and burnt with cigarettes. On 19 November 2011, he was convicted of illegal use of weapons and participation in a group intending to commit acts of terrorism. He was convicted solely on the basis of a 'confession' extracted under torture. In September 2012 the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, and an independent forensic doctor visited Ali in detention and confirmed his torture claims. Amnesty views him to be a Prisoner of Conscience. Please sign, address and post the attached letter. **This will cost 88p to post.**



## Bromley Little Theatre Charity Premiere in aid of Amnesty

### “My Boy Jack” by David Haig

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at 7.45pm

Tickets £10 from David Howkins 01689 823793

**There is no Finance Report this month.**

#### Monthly Action - Syria

On 2 October 2012, Syrian human rights lawyer **Khalil Ma'touq** set off on his drive to work. He never arrived and his family has not seen him since. Khalil Ma'touq's home is in Sahnaya, a suburb roughly 20km south of Damascus. His normal route to his office in the city takes him through a number of government-controlled checkpoints. Given Khalil's work as a human rights lawyer, there were immediate concerns that he had been arrested by government forces. Various unconfirmed reports state that he is being held by the security forces. The Syrian government has not responded to the family's requests for information on the whereabouts of Khalil Ma'touq. Following an official inquiry by a group of lawyers the government denied that they are holding Khalil Ma'touq. Khalil has been a human rights lawyer for many years. He has defended hundreds of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, including at Syria's Supreme State Security Court. He is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful and important human rights work.



30 August is **International Day of the Disappeared**, and this year we marked it by having a Group photo taken holding up signs in Arabic calling for Khalil to be released. Amnesty is collecting hundreds of such appeals to pressure the Syrian authorities urging his unconditional release.

#### **Film Night is coming!**

**Amnesty's well established film night is back on 11 November. We will have a short business meeting followed by a movie on an Amnesty theme. Curtain up at 7.30pm. Save the date!**



#### Good News



We have just learned that **Thao Moua** and **Pa Fue Khang** have apparently been released. During an EU-Lao discussion on human rights, the Lao delegation said that Pa Fue Khang was "pardoned" in May 2014 and that Thao Moua was released in March 2013. Amnesty is trying to confirm this information. We have campaigned for both men so this is good news indeed, if confirmed. The two Hmong men were serving 12 and 15-year sentences after an unfair trial in 2003. They were arrested for helping two European journalists research an article.

**Present on 8<sup>th</sup> July:** Neville White, Vivien Glanz, Shirley Henderson, Gladys Edmonds, Ted Burke, Patsy Paine, Waltraut Gilchrist, Wendy Simmons, Simon Nash, Peter Martin, Vivienne Andrews and Margaret Coppard.  
**Apologies:** David Howkins, Joan Williams, Rene Eastwood, Eleanor Ivens, Patrick McDonnell, Chris Purnell.

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



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