



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL Bromley & Orpington Group Summer 2015 Newsletter



Our thanks to Shirley Henderson of Orpington for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 8 September
Tuesday 6 October

Speaker from 'Unseen' supporting the victims of trafficking (tbc)
Campaign Meeting – please note date!

We are taking a short summer break – there will be no meeting in August and our next Newsletter will be out in late September.

Cudham Fair

Come and visit the Amnesty Cake and Preserves Stall
Bank Holiday Monday 31st August from 1pm
Cudham Recreation Ground, Cudham Lane

Monthly Letter – Ethnic Cleansing in the Dominican Republic

Our appeal this month is on behalf of more than 100,000 Dominicans of Haitian origin who have been denied access to identity papers. Without these papers, citizens cannot access basic services such as schooling and health care and are in effect 'stateless'. They are also at habitual risk of summary detention and deportation. Please sign, address and post the attached letter. This will cost £1 to send.



Open Garden



Despite mildly inclement weather, many went along to enjoy Margaret's beautiful Mediterranean style garden on Sunday 12th July to enjoy the peace and colour of the summer garden as well as enjoying a splendid afternoon tea. In the process Margaret raised an amazing £450 for Amnesty. Thank you Margaret!

Group Finance

There is no Finance Report this month.

Westminster Corner

A couple of months ago we wrote to our MPs about Government plans to abolish the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British Bill of Rights, which Amnesty is rigorously opposing. An MP writes... "The Bill [of Rights] will protect existing rights, which are an essential part of a modern, democratic society, and better protect against abuse of the system and misuse of human rights laws. The Government view is that the Bill of Rights will restore common sense to the application of human rights laws which has been undermined by the damaging effects of the Human Rights Act. There is a case...to address the credibility and public ownership gaps that exist with the Human Rights Act" Jo Johnson, MP, Orpington (if anyone has a clue what this means...answers on a postcard please!).



Solidarity for Yevgeniy Vitishko

Yevgeniy Vitishko is a prominent Russian environmental campaigner, who in June 2012 was sentenced to three years in a prison colony for allegedly 'damaging a fence' that has been erected illegally in a protected forest. He and his fellow campaigners were monitoring and documenting the effects of illegal logging in a protected area. Local authorities took no action despite violations being logged and reported. He is currently being held in a prison colony, and has had his parole rejected by a District Court. This was denied because the Court heard he had received several reprimands including 'giving personal clothing to another prisoner, sitting on his bed at an unauthorised time, sleeping at an unauthorised time, storing food in an unauthorised place and having a negligent attitude towards weeding tomatoes'. His health is suffering and Amnesty has adopted him as a Prisoner of Conscience. Yevgeniy's birthday was on July 3rd and we sent him good-wishes from all of us at Amnesty. He has amassed over 4,000 cards from well-wishers across the world – a testament to the strength of feeling his case has aroused. If you would like to take action and send a greeting please contact jar@amnesty.org.uk



Bromley & Orpington Amnesty Taking Action



We wrote to the *Indonesian* authorities about the case of **Mary Jane Veloso**, a Filipino national sentenced to death for being a drug courier. Mary Jane was scheduled for execution in April along with eight others for drug offences, but was granted a temporary stay. It is understood that legal technicalities have prevented the execution from proceeding, but there are fears it will go ahead soon. We also wrote to the *Angolan* authorities about a group of youth activists who were **arbitrarily arrested** following a peaceful protest. 15 activists were arrested after a meeting to discuss politics and governance concerns. The meeting was peaceful, but the Interior Minister issued a statement saying they were preparing to disrupt public order and security. There is no evidence for this claim. Whilst some of the 15 have been released the whereabouts of two remain unknown and we wrote to put pressure on the Interior Ministry to release the remaining detainees. Finally we wrote once again to the *Chinese* authorities regarding our Nobel Peace Prize prisoner of Conscience, **Liu Xiaobo** urging his unconditional release.



Monthly Action - Gaza Crisis: Palestine has a right to seek justice



The past six years have seen three major conflicts between Israel and armed groups in the Gaza Strip driven by long-standing impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. This year marks the first anniversary of the 2014 conflict. Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction from 13 June 2014 means that there is an opportunity to challenge the culture of impunity. However, the UK continues to oppose the ICC Prosecutor's decision to open a preliminary examination into crimes committed. To date, no perpetrators have been held accountable for war crimes and other human rights abuses and victims of the conflict have had no justice. We wrote to the Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary calling on the UK Government to cease its opposition to the ICC inquiry and to urge both Israeli and Palestinian authorities to conduct genuine investigations and prosecutions into crimes committed during the 2014 conflict.

Present on 14th July 2015: Neville White, David Howkins, Vivien Glanz, Waltraut Gilchrist, Patsy Paine, Ted Burke, Wendy Simmons, Gladys Edmonds, Margaret Coppard, Peter Martin, Vivienne Andrews and Eleanor Ivens. **Apologies:** Shirley Henderson, Joan Williams, Claire Ellis and Chris Purnell.

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

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