



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

July 2012 Newsletter



COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 10 July

Tuesday 14 August

Tuesday 11 September

Guest Observer; Petros Hassanakos, London Regional Rep

Planning

Campaign Roundup

After last month's unavoidable interruption to service, we are back with a bumper edition including the best round up of news and actions from our meetings in May and June. Many thanks to David for producing an emergency 'austerity' newsletter in May!

*Bromley Little Theatre
In aid of Amnesty International Bromley & Orpington Group
Presents
"All My Sons"
Arthur Miller
Thursday 12th July 2012 at 7.45pm
Tickets £10 from
David Howkins 01689 823793*

Egypt in Turmoil

We were delighted to welcome Ann Marcus, Amnesty's Egypt country co-ordinator to the meeting. Ann took us through the recent extraordinary events that saw a spontaneous and unpredicted revolution break out on 18 January 2011, and which 18 days later saw President Mubarek leave office. This was a 'social media' revolt which saw women take a leading role in the protests. 800 were killed during the uprising. Since then a Transition Council has been in charge, overseen by a military general. Reforms were promised but have not been forthcoming. Elections saw the Muslim Brotherhood and ultra conservatives win 70% of the parliamentary seats, with liberals securing only 15%. The Presidential election has produced two unexpected candidates that bode ill for any meaningful future reform. Women have been largely ignored and continue to face repression and discrimination, whilst Christian Copts and NGOs have been subjected to persecution. Bloggers such as Mikael Nabil have been imprisoned for freely exercising their right to freedom of expression. Over 12,000 people have been incarcerated since the revolution, 10,000 are still in custody. Amnesty has published a 10 point manifesto for change including an end to the state of emergency, protect women's rights, end discrimination, and ensure freedom of association and assembly. Ann pointedly said that only part of one of the 10 points has been achieved. Egypt has a long way to go before human rights are truly enshrined and protected.



Amnesty London Region: *We will welcome to our July meeting Petros Hassanakos, London Regional Rep, who will observe the meeting and tell us about forthcoming activities within the London Amnesty area*

Advance Notice
Join us at the Amnesty stall
Cudham Village Fair
Monday 27th August 2012, from Noon

Day of Action

Fine weather, a splendid stall and free tea proved a winning combination for our annual day of Action in Bromley on 12th May. Concentrating on women's rights in three countries, over 400 letters were signed to the Egyptian, Afghan and Saudi authorities. A montage of photos were collected and sent to the Saudi Ambassador calling for the right of women to be allowed to drive. This was a magnificent achievement by all involved in putting the day together.



Group Finance

Balance brought forward	£502.10
Income	£307.83
Expenditure	£212.36
Balance at 12th June	£597.57
CHANGE	£95.47

Income included private donations (£50.50), BLT monies (£210) and income raised at the Day of Action £47.33.

Monthly Letters Kyrgyzstan & Vietnam

We have two appeals this month. **Azimjan Askarov** is a human rights defender serving a life sentence in a single underground cell solely for reporting and documenting ill treatment by the police authorities in **Kyrgyzstan**. He is said to be seriously ill and Amnesty is concerned for his health and well-being. The Supreme Court upheld the sentence in December 2011 and Amnesty considers him to be a prisoner of Conscience. In **Vietnam**, **Father Nguyen Van Ly**, a Catholic priest and pro-democracy campaigner is serving an eight year prison sentence for 'conducting propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam'. He is sentenced to a further five years house arrest on release – all for peacefully advocating human rights and criticising the government. Amnesty considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. He was first adopted by Amnesty as a POC in 1983 and has already spent 15 years in prison for his human rights work. Please sign, address and post the enclosed letters. These will cost 87p to post (up to 10g all countries).



We are delighted to announce the launch of our new Group website, which is now linked to the Amnesty UK family of websites. We thank Sue for looking after our old website for so many years and Claire for taking on the task of overseeing the new site. Go have a look at www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley.

Domestic Workers Have Rights!

Our monthly action in May looked at the depressing issue of domestic worker abuse where violence and sexual exploitation are commonplace, and where new rules may make the situation worse for many women working in the UK. Surveys carried out pointed to 54% saying they had suffered psychological abuse, 67% said they had no time off, 18% had suffered actual physical abuse and 12% sexual violence. In 2010 56% reported they earned only £50 per week and were on call 24 hours a day. New visa conditions make it impossible for a domestic worker to change employers to escape abuse, and will 'institutionalise' human rights violations. We wrote to Ministers calling on them to think again about these draconian changes which represent a 'covenant for abuse' by employers.

Fascinating Facts

Despite hard economic times, our movement appears to be in reasonably good health: Amnesty UK income in 2010 was £23.6m and expenditure £22.8m, with income up 2.2% on 2009. The ambitious target to grow income by 35% between 2011 and 2016 may be as challenge however. Supporters now stand at 225,605 in the UK. The section's contribution to the international movement has grown to £7.1m, whilst campaign spending has also grown to £8.6m. There are 241 local groups, 640 youth and 100 student groups. All in all AI has met most of its targets and has managed to create an £800,000 surplus. We also reviewed the resolutions put to the AGM and National Conference in April noting that there appeared to be very few obviously contentious issues this year – it was also a relatively quiet one with only 12 resolutions tabled. Although (technically) incorrect we were delighted to see that **Bromley & Orpington Group** is listed in the Section Annual Report as the second highest fund raising Amnesty Group in the UK in 2010/11 with **£7,202** donated (this figure straddles two accounting years and so is not the figure we use for assessing our contributions to HQ, but is nevertheless a terrific result!).

Tunisia – Sign Online Petition

If you have online access, please sign the e-petition to guarantee human rights in Tunisia's new constitution. The petition calls on the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly to include human rights protection and other rights in the drawing up of a new State Constitution. Go to www.amnesty.org.uk and click on 'our work' then 'across the globe', followed by 'world regions' and north Africa'. This is also a useful resource for all sorts of other human rights actions Amnesty is supporting.

Dow Chemicals: Olympic Pariah

We wrote as a Group to Lord Coe calling on the Olympic authorities to rescind Dow Chemicals sponsorship of the 2012 Olympics. Dow was proclaimed an official Olympic partner in 2010 and has been contracted to provide the fabric 'wrap' around the Olympic Stadium. Dow Chemicals is the successor owner of Union Carbide, responsible for the Bhopal chemical disaster in 1984 which killed 25,000. Dow has failed to accept responsibility for Union Carbide's negligence and its failure to clean up the site.



Present on 8th May: Neville White, David Howkins, Shirley Henderson, Joan Williams, Rene Eastwood, Eve Fisher, Waltraut Gilchrist, Margaret Coppard, Chris Purnell, Patsy Paine, Wendy Simmons, Pat Eastaugh, Pamela Smith and Patrick McDonnell. **Apologies:** Patrick Nield, Gladys Edmonds, Eleanor Ivens, Ted Burke, Vivien Glanz, Claire Ellis. **Present on 12th June:** Neville White, David Howkins, Shirley Henderson, Joan Williams, Rene Eastwood, Eve Fisher, Waltraut Gilchrist, Patsy Paine, Wendy Simmons, Pat Eastaugh, Pamela Smith, Claire Ellis, Ted Burke, Eleanor Ivens, Gladys Edmonds and Simon Nash. **Apologies:** Patrick Nield, Margaret Coppard and Vivien Glanz. We welcomed Nino Sologashvili and Ann Marcus to the meeting.

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

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