



# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Bromley & Orpington Group

### June 2014 Newsletter



Our thanks to Joan Norris of Shortlands for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

#### COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

*Tuesday 10 June*

*Speaker: Release International*

*Tuesday 8 July*

*Speaker: Amnesty China Co-ordinator*

*Tuesday 12 August*

*Campaign meeting*

Release International  
Speaker: Andrew Wilson  
Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm  
All Welcome!

#### Asylum Aid

We were delighted to welcome **Patrick Jones of Asylum Aid** to the meeting. The human rights organization was set up in 1990 with two main purposes: to provide legal advice and representation to asylum seekers coming to the UK and to undertake policy and advocacy work to improve the rights of asylum seekers. Asylum Aid has about 120 cases at any one time, 50% of them women, which the organization focuses on as they face particular challenges under UK asylum processes. The main countries of origin are the war torn countries of Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan. 86% of cases taken on end successfully; 700 people may be seeking advice at any one time. Asylum Aid works closely with government and receives funding from it for advocacy work. They have had many successes based on first-hand experience of improving the system. To find out more or to support Asylum Aid go to [www.asylumaid.org.uk](http://www.asylumaid.org.uk)



#### Monthly Action: Free Mahdi Abu Dheeb

Mahdi Abu Dheeb, former president of the Bahrain Teacher's Association, is serving a five-year sentence in Jaw prison, Bahrain for freely exercising his human rights. He was arrested in April 2011, thrown from a second storey flat, and 'disappeared' for 24 days. For 64 days he was held in solitary confinement, during which time he has said he was tortured by security officials who beat him for long periods. He was forced to confess to inciting strikes and demonstrations and 'hatred towards the regime'. Amnesty believes he is a prisoner of conscience and is campaigning for his unconditional release. We signed postcards to the Bahraini Ambassador calling for him to be released and the allegations of torture to be investigated. See [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) for more on this case.



Stop Press:  
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

## Group Finance

Balance brought forward	£555.80
Income	£20.00
Expenditure	£77.94
Balance at 13 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>£497.86</b>
<b>CHANGE</b>	<b>- £57.94</b>

### Stop the Execution of Meriam Yehya Ibrahim

Meriam Yehya Ibrahim is eight months pregnant and has been sentenced to be executed in Sudan for renouncing her Islamic faith in order to become a Christian like her husband. The sentence will, Amnesty understands, be carried out when she has given birth. She has allegedly been shackled to the wall of her cell. Amnesty needs your support to send 80,000 messages of protest to the Sudanese authorities. Please go to [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) to take part in this urgent action. Thank you!

### Amnesty AGM & National Conference

Simon represented us at the AGM & National Conference held this year in Edinburgh. Many of the resolutions were uncontroversial; however the global Amnesty movement has been holding a major consultation on prostitution and whether the mandate should campaign for decriminalisation. We discussed this as a Group in May so as to give Simon a steer on how to employ the Group's 'block vote'. Naturally, this is a challenging topic where many differing views are held. At the AGM, delegates had to decide between three options: i) to go for full decriminalisation ii) to legalise sex workers only or iii) that Amnesty adopt no position. After a very full and energised debate, the AGM voted to support full decriminalisation; however, the third option was also supported by a very narrow majority, presenting something of a problem! The AGM also voted to fix future venues for holding the AGM so as to reduce costs. The AGM will still rotate around the four countries of the UK, but will now be in the same venue. We thanked Simon for attending and debating on our behalf.



### Zimbabwe: No Movement to End Restriction of Freedom of Expression

Since the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe, the government has not taken any steps to repeal or amend laws that restrict freedom of expression. The Constitution provides for the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Despite these provisions violations continue to occur particularly under laws that are incompatible with the constitution. AI continues to call for the repeal of security legislation that suppresses freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. On World Press Freedom Day, the police banned a march to commemorate the day in the capital, Harare. Journalists were arrested and demonstrators harassed. The enclosed letter to the Minister of Justice calls for the process of reform to be expedited without delay by repealing existing laws to bring them into line with the 2013 Constitution. **Please address, sign and post the enclosed letter: this will cost 97p to post (under 10g).**



**Please note** postage costs increased in April. International letters up to 10g are now **97p**, up to 20g will cost **97p** in Europe and **£1.28** for the rest of the world



Find us on Facebook and on the web.

**Present on 13<sup>th</sup> May:** David Howkins, Neville White, Vivien Glanz, Shirley Henderson, Joan Williams, Patsy Paine, Waltraut Gilchrist, Wendy Simmons, Simon Nash, Rene Eastwood, Peter Martin, Patrick McDonnell, Mariela Quaranta. Apologies: Eleanor Ivens, Vivienne Andrews, Gladys Edmonds, Chris Purnell.

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

**Neville White (Chairman) 01689 896368**  
[Neville.white@waitrose.com](mailto:Neville.white@waitrose.com)

**Vivien Glanz (Secretary)**  
[vivienglanz@hotmail.com](mailto:vivienglanz@hotmail.com)