



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

March 2015 Newsletter



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

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 10th March

Tuesday 14th April

Tuesday 12th May

19th Annual General Meeting

Speaker: Tahir Swift 'Human Rights in Iraq'

Campaign Meeting

Bromley & Orpington Amnesty International

19th AGM

Tuesday 10th March 2015 at 7.30pm

Please see enclosed AGM Notice for Resolutions

Amnesty Jazz

Now in its fifth year, our annual Amnesty Jazz concert is becoming a 'must see' event for all those interested in local live music. This year's concert was our most successful yet, with over 200 seats sold, and around £1,400 made for Amnesty (after costs). We owe Nic Beston, his wonderful quartet and singer Sue Rivers enormous thanks for their continued support and also to Wendy and her team for hosting the refreshments which saw 200 people served in 20 minutes. We already have a firm booking for next year: Friday 5th February 2016 – save the date now!



Speaker: Shane Enright – 'Worker's Rights are Human Rights'

We welcomed Shane Enright from Amnesty to the meeting to talk about one of the core parts of Amnesty's work: labour rights. Shane reminded us that the very first Urgent Action was in support of a Brazilian trades unionist and Peter Benenson had highlighted the plight of worker representatives in some of Amnesty's earliest cases. Freedom of Association is a core right set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it is unavailable and punished in many countries. In the UK he pointed out that union membership is declining



at a time when fundamental rights e.g. zero contract hours, are becoming the 'norm'. Amnesty works with its affiliated unions on specific cases. UK teaching unions had risen to support the case of Mahdi Abu the imprisoned Bahraini teacher's union leader by sending out over 600,000 appeals. As a result of this support the Bahrain Ambassador agreed to meet Amnesty together with UK teaching union representatives. In Fiji, AI casework had led to an easing of oppression against trade unionists, and Amnesty is also

supporting worker rights in Iran, Zimbabwe and Mexico. Amnesty has also lobbied the UK government over changes to migrant worker rights in the UK which increase the vulnerability of migrant workers to abuse. There was a lively discussion and we thanked Shane for providing such a comprehensive overview of Amnesty working on behalf of labour and worker rights.

Health Fears for Imprisoned Chinese Activist

Chen Xi is a Chinese activist and Prisoner of Conscience who is suffering from a number of serious medical conditions, with his health deteriorating alarmingly. Chen was first imprisoned in 1989 for three years for supporting the student protests. He served a second jail term between 1995 and 2006 for setting up a branch of China Democratic Party, and was a signatory of Charter 08 which urges peaceful political reform. In 2011, he was again detained and sentenced to 10 years, deprived of his few rights and charged with inciting subversion. We signed a letter to the prison authorities and to the Minister of Justice calling for urgent medical treatment to be arranged and for the charges against him to be dropped.



Campaigning Day of Action

We agreed there would be a day of Action this year, continuing our annual presence in Bromley with a day of human rights awareness. We will be asking the Council for permission to hold the day on the Churchill Theatre forecourt on Saturday May 9th on a theme of women's rights.

Group Finance

There was no Finance Report this month owing to the Group's accounts being audited. David however noted that the Group could comfortably send £1,500 + £72 membership fee to Amnesty, which was agreed. A full report will be presented at the AGM. The 'Sponsor a Newsletter' Appeal has raised £400.

Monthly Letter

This month's appeal concerns **Daniel Quintero** one of many students who took part in countrywide demonstrations last year in Venezuela. Daniel, who is 21, was apprehended by National Guard officers, and has reported being tortured. Daniel was punched, kicked, hit with rifle butts and forced to spend nine hours in a cramped and painful position, being beaten if he moved. He was also threatened with gasoline and matches. Amnesty is calling for the allegations to be thoroughly investigated, and the perpetrators brought to justice. Please sign, address and post the attached letter. **This will cost 97p to post.**



Greetings Card Campaign



Neville has received a reply from **Chelsea Manning** who was featured in the 2014 'Send a Message of Hope' campaign. Chelsea, who is being held at the Fort Leavenworth facility in Kansas, is serving a 35 year sentence for leaking classified documents relating to the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts when she was a serving US soldier. The documents sought to 'remove the fog of war [by] revealing the true nature of 21st century asymmetric warfare' which it was alleged the US Government had been hiding from public view. Chelsea, who has just won her right to receive hormone treatment for long-awaited gender reassignment, wrote to us: 'I greatly appreciate all of the strong words of support and comfort. I am so glad that Amnesty International and its many members have been reaching out to help me.' She is appealing the sentence and is in good health.

Present on 10th February 2015: Neville White, David Howkins, Ted Burke, Wendy Simmons, Gladys Edmonds, Waltraut Gilchrist, Peter Martin, Margaret Coppard, Vivienne Andrews, Patsy Paine, Simon Nash, Rindy Bakker, Mariela Quaranta, Patrick McDonnell. **Apologies:** Shirley Henderson, Joan Williams, Rene Eastwood, Chris Purnell, Vivien Glanz. Simon announced he would be leaving the Group to join the Lambeth Group in Brixton where he now lives. The Group thanked Simon for all his support over the years and wished him well.

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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