



# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Bromley & Orpington Group

### May 2013 Newsletter



Our thanks to Phoenix Debola for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

#### COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

**Tuesday 14 May**

**Tuesday 11 June**

**Tuesday 9 July**

**Speaker: Ros Topley, Amnesty Central Africa Co-ordinator**

**Activity to be confirmed**

**Speaker: Peter Eagle, Amnesty UK Business Group**

#### **Kate Allen comes to AI Bromley**

We were delighted to welcome the Director of Amnesty UK, Kate Allen, to the meeting to introduce the significant change programme underway to meet the Movement's commitment to move resources from London to the global south and east. Clearly these changes represent the most significant change in direction in recent years with the result that the UK Section has had to identify cost savings to meet a commitment to increase funding to the International Secretariat from 30% to 40% by 2021. Whilst £1.5m of non-staff savings have already been found, redundancies will sadly also result. Rather than cut posts in an unstructured way, AIUK will be completely restructuring the staff to protect campaigning, whilst losing resource elsewhere. All these changes have been traumatic for staff and members, and Kate admitted the Board had not handled the process well. Her candour and commitment to listen to the membership (there will be a very full debate at the AGM) helped convince many that, although painful, the ultimate vision of an Amnesty funded and resourced in the regions where human rights abuses are most acute is the correct one. We appreciated Kate coming along at such short notice to talk to us. Our thanks to Simon for arranging this.



#### **Arms Trade Treaty - We Did It!**

In New York this month the world came to an historic agreement to regulate the \$100bn arms trade with 155 nations voting in favour, with only three against. This has been a 20 year campaign with six years of UN deliberations to prevent the transfer of arms where they can be used to commit human rights abuses. As Kate Allen told us at our meeting, this is right up there with the greatest of Amnesty's achievements, not least as 60% of all human rights violations involves arms! Well done us!



#### **Monthly Letter – Belarus**



Youth activist **Zmistser Dashkevich** was sentenced to two years in a labour colony in March 2011 for alleged assault just before the presidential elections. He was due to be released in December 2012, but his sentence was extended by a further year for 'violating prison rules'. Zmistser was offered a pardon if he admitted fault, which he refused to do, maintaining his sentence is politically inspired. He is now in the notorious Hrodna prison where conditions are especially harsh. Amnesty views him to be a prisoner of Conscience. Please address, sign and post the attached letter which will cost 87p to post.

### **Bromley & Orpington Amnesty Day of Action**

**In support of Women's Human Rights in Zimbabwe, (WOZA!)**

**Churchill Theatre Forecourt, Bromley**

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

## *“Human Rights in Central Africa”*

Speaker Ros Topley

Amnesty Country Co-ordinator, Central Africa

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm

All Welcome!

### Group Finance

Balance brought forward	£472.20
Income	£50.00
Expenditure	£27.49
Balance at 9 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>£494.71</b>
CHANGE	£22.51

### Death Penalty 2012

Amnesty has just published the latest Death Penalty statistics for 2012, which make sobering reading. The USA now has the dubious record of executing more prisoners than Afghanistan and North Korea with 43 executions in 2012. Overall Amnesty recorded 682 executions last year, although the total is almost certainly much higher as China does not release figures. Here Amnesty estimates that executions run into ‘several thousands’. Latvia became the 97<sup>th</sup> country to abolish the death penalty, but in a depressing year, both India and Japan resumed executions. At least 23,386 people are known to be on death row across the world.

### Death Penalty 2012

#### The top10 Executioners!

**China – several thousands**

**Iran – 314**

**Iraq – 129**

**Saudi Arabia – 79**

**USA – 43**

**Yemen – 28**

**Sudan – 19**

**Afghanistan – 14**

**Gambia – 9**

**Japan – 7**

### The Humble Urgent Action Turns 40!



The first ever Amnesty Urgent Action was issued on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1973 on behalf of **Professor Luiz Basilio Rossi** a Brazilian trade unionist and Communist Party member who was held incommunicado by the then military dictatorship. This early Urgent Action asked for ‘urgent action to be taken’ as time was of the essence in locating the professor. Eventually he was released into exile following the volume of mail sent. The UA became a critical part of Amnesty’s response to torture, illegal detention and disappearance where there is imminent risk to life. 40 years on, the technology may have changed but these remain an effective campaign tool. 13,950 people are in the

AIUK Urgent Action Network and 165,000 take part across the world. In 2012, 348 Urgent Actions were issued including the case of Pussy Riot. To celebrate the remarkable achievement of Urgent Action, we enclose with this mailing a special anniversary flyer. Please do consider joining the Network at [www.amnesty.org.uk/ua](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/ua)

**Present on 9<sup>th</sup> April:** David Howkins, Neville White, Shirley Henderson, Joan Williams, Ted Burke, Patsy and John Paine, Wendy Simmons, Patrick McDonnell, Rene Eastwood, Peter Martin, Patricia Eastaugh, Pamela Smith, Gladys Edmonds, Chris Purnell, Vivien Glanz, Eve Fisher, Eleanor Ivens, Margaret Coppard and Claire Ellis. Apologies: Patrick Nield, Waltraut Gilchrist.

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)

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❖ *Owing to the short-notice attendance of Kate Allen this month, our programmed speaker on Burma has been postponed until later in the year; Stuart Sweeney’s talk on 8<sup>th</sup> October will be called “Doctors on the Dark Side”, and not as stated last month.*