



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

May 2015 Newsletter



Our thanks to Joan Williams of Orpington for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 12 May

Tuesday 9 June

Tuesday 14 July

Campaign Meeting

Speaker: AI North Korea Country Co-ordinator

Campaign Meeting

Human Rights Crisis in Iraq

We were delighted to welcome an old friend of the Group, **Tahir Swift** to talk about the situation in Iraq. Tahir rehearsed the recent tragic history of human rights violations in Iraq, remarking that the situation has been plunged into even greater chaos since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Abuses committed by the occupying forces since 2003 coupled with the absence of a functioning civil society had seen complete impunity for the perpetrators of human rights violations. Poor law enforcement, corruption and the prevalence of private militias had all taken their toll on the possibility of improving the outlook for human rights. Other areas of concern include the pressure on freedom of expression and the plight of women's rights. Both Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have catalogued mounting concern at the disintegration of the rule of law and the protection of fundamental human rights. Tahir also asked us as a Group to support appeals to release Tariq Aziz, familiar in the West as Saddam's spokesperson, but widely accepted as not being responsible for the worst crimes of the former regime. Aziz, now frail and in poor health is shackled and held on death row in Baghdad. We thanked Tahir for her comprehensive oversight of the bleak situation in Iraq.



Monthly Action: Protecting the Human Rights Act

In light of the forthcoming General Election on 7th May, our Group Action was once again to write to our (ex)MPs to gain their views on protecting the Human Rights Act in English Law. The Human Rights Act 'incorporates' into English law most of the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights. The Convention was created from the ashes of the Second World War and it was inspired by the desire to protect individuals against those abuses happening again. It drew on a lot of British ideas; in fact, British experts drafted most of it and the UK was the first state to sign up to it in 1951. Amnesty is campaigning to send a clear message that the Human Rights Act serves to protect us all – it has been used to keep families together and to enshrine the right of elderly couples seeking care, for instance, to stay together as a human right.



Cudham Fair: Amnesty's Return

We are delighted to be returning to Cudham Fair with our new

Cake and Preserves Stall

Bank Holiday Monday 31st August from 1pm

Come and join us and buy a cake!

. Group Finance

Balance brought forward	£501.60
Income	£60.00
Expenditure	£56.25
Balance at 14 th April	£505.35
CHANGE	£3.75

Income comprised private donations.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the planned Day of Action on 9th May has had to be cancelled.

Monthly Letter: Bangladesh: 18 years without Justice

Kalpna Chakma was the organising secretary of the Hill Women's Federation which campaigns for the rights of indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. As a Group, we have long supported the campaign for justice in the Chittagong, and we again signed a letter calling for an inquiry into the arrest and disappearance of Kalpna who was abducted as long ago as June 1996. 23 at the time, she has never been seen since following police failure to investigate her abduction. The Indigenous tribes of the eastern Chittagong are still waiting for their traditional lands to be restored to them following an historic agreement 15 years ago. Tens of thousands are still landless and subject to persecution and violence by settlers. In January 2013 a court demanded a new investigation into the case, but this is still to happen. We wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs calling for an urgent, thorough and independent investigation into her disappearance. Please sign, address and post the attached letter. **This will cost £1.00 to post**



China Prisoner of Conscience: Liu Xiaobo

Our Nobel laureate Prisoner of Conscience, Liu Xiaobo has been the subject of monthly Group campaigning actions for the past 18 months. At every meeting Gladys, who leads this case for us, brings letters for all of us to sign to a range of Chinese local, regional and national authorities. We received an update that suggests Liu Xia, his poet wife, is now allowed to leave her house occasionally to visit family and friends. It is thought this slight relaxing of her punitive house arrest might be due to the force of international pressure led by Amnesty. In December a prominent Chinese writer living in Germany received an apparent message from Liu Xiaobo saying "I am OK. Here in prison I have continually been able to read and think. In my studies I have become even more convinced I have no personal enemies. The nimbus around me is shiny enough by now. I hope the world could pay more attention to other victims who are not well known" The message is believed to be genuine. We will continue to exert pressure every month to achieve justice for them both.



Find us on Facebook and on the web.

Present on 14th April 2015: Neville White, Vivien Glanz, Waltraut Gilchrist, Patsy Paine, Ted Burke, Wendy Simmons, Gladys Edmonds (for part of the meeting), Joan Williams, Margaret Coppard, Eleanor Ivens, Patrick McDonnell, Vivienne Andrews, Peter Martin, Rindy Bakker and Claire Ellis. We welcomed Eve Stamate to the meeting and old friends of the Group, Tahir and David Swift. **Apologies:** David Howkins and Shirley Henderson.

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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