



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL Bromley & Orpington Group May 2016 Newsletter



Our thanks to Eleanor Ivens of Orpington for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 10th May **Campaign Meeting**
Tuesday 14th June **tbc**
Tuesday 12th July **Speaker: Andy Moody, Amnesty China Co-ordinator**

Monthly Action: Burma – Free Pyhoe Pyhoe Aung

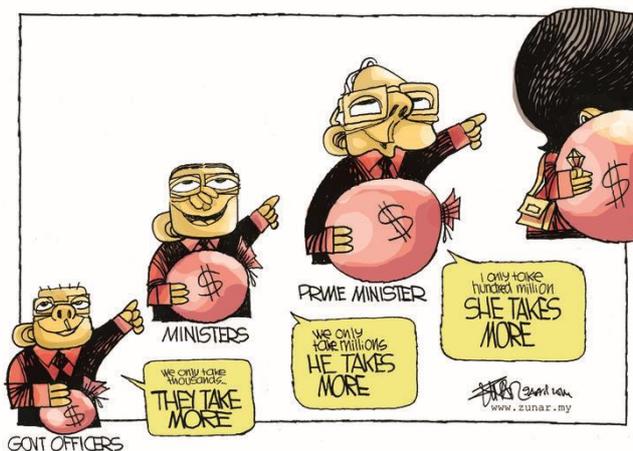
Pyhoe Pyhoe Aung is a young activist and Secretary General of the All Burma Federation Student Union (ABFSU) – one of the largest students unions in Burma. She has been in prison along with 50 other students and protesters since 10th March 2015 after being arrested during a student protest against the newly adopted National Education Law, which students say curtails academic freedom. Pyhoe was arrested purely for expressing her opinion; Amnesty views her to be a prisoner of conscience.



On April 1st, Htin Kyaw took office as the first democratically elected president of Burma for more than 50 years. He is a member of the same party as Aung Sun Suu Kyi - The National League for Democracy. Their party has publicly stated that they want to release all political prisoners as soon as possible. April 1st and the following weeks is an important opportunity to put pressure on the new government to deliver real human rights change and ensure that any prisoner release includes Pyhoe Pyhoe Aung and the other peaceful students. We sent a strong message to the new Government to release all prisoners of conscience as soon as possible.

Monthly Letter: Malaysia

This month's letter, addressed to the Prime Minister of Malaysia draws attention to the fate of the well-known cartoonist, ZUNAR. We have asked for your help before, drawing attention to his imprisonment for exercising his right to freedom of expression. Zunar featured in the Greetings Card Campaign last December, and his thanks for all the thousands of cards he received from Amnesty members has kept his case alive. The letter calls for the spurious charges against him to be revoked, and for him to be released at once. Please sign, address and send the enclosed letter, which will cost £1.05 to post.



One of Zunar's satirical cartoons for which he was imprisoned!



Westminster Corner

We received a lengthy and detailed letter from the **Foreign & Commonwealth Office** regarding the war in Syria. The UK remains focused on supporting the cessation of hostilities, but maintains a 'transition' away from the Assad regime is the only long-term solution. The Government confirms that Syrian women are taking part in the peace process, and a Civil

Society Advisory Committee has been established. The letter places responsibility on Russia to lift sieges to allow humanitarian aid to flow, and confirms that no UK weapons have been sent to support any faction in the civil war.

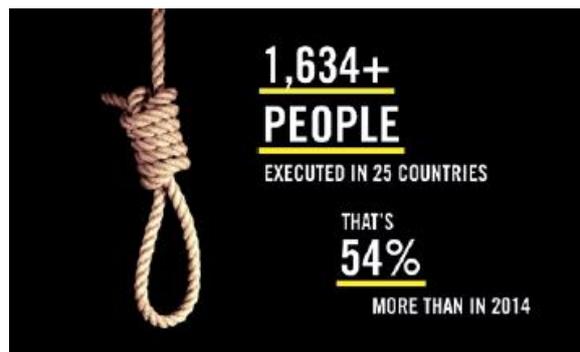
Group Finance

Balance brought forward	£2,042.51
Income	£20.00
Expenditure	£1,587.26
Balance at 12 th April	£475.25
CHANGE	-£1,567.26

Private donations of £20.00 were received. We made a donation to Amnesty of £1,572.00.

Death Penalty Update: 2015 a Shocking Year!

Kenneth Fults was executed by lethal injection on 12th April – the day of our meeting - in the US state of Georgia. He was sentenced to death in 1997 for the murder of Cathy Bounds in 1996 and had spent nearly 20 years on death row. His execution brings to 12 the number of executions in the USA in 2016, including four in Georgia. These bring to 1,434 the total number of executions across the USA since the US Supreme Court approved new capital statutes on 2 July 1976. Georgia accounts for 64 of these executions. The US continues to be among the few



countries that executes in significant numbers but 2015 was a terrible year for executions generally. Amnesty's latest figures suggest state killings are at their highest in 25 years with 2015 marking a 54% rise in recorded executions. Over 1,634 people were executed in 2015 but a minority of countries continue to carry out the majority of State killings: 89% by just three countries – Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Sadly the number of countries carrying out executions has increased from 22 in 2014 to 25 in 2015: six nations resumed executions including Oman, Bangladesh and India. Other countries routinely 'flout' aspects of international law by executing minors, the disabled, the mentally ill and for non-lethal crimes such as adultery and blasphemy. This is a dispiriting picture of State judicial action. Whilst 1,634 is the recorded number, Amnesty has not published figures for China and North Korea where executions are carried out in secret – the people and the numbers are unknown, but almost certainly many times higher than the official number.

However, there is some positive news: Four countries abolished the death penalty for all crimes – the highest number to do so in the space of one year for almost a decade. Madagascar, Fiji, Suriname and Congo all did away with the death penalty in the national laws once and for all. Mongolia adopted a new Criminal Code outlawing the death penalty for all crimes in December which will enter fully into law in September 2016.

In the USA, where we started, Pennsylvania abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 2015, bringing the total number of US states that have abolished the death penalty to 18. In 2015 there were 26 executions in six states with Texas remaining the highest user of capital punishment.

Present on 12th April: David Howkins, Vivien Glanz, Waltraut Gilchrist, Ted Burke, Peter Martin, Margaret Coppard, Rindi Bakker, Claire Ellis, Vivienne Andrews, Gladys Edmonds, Shirley Henderson and Patrick McDonnell. **Apologies:** Neville White, Wendy Simmons, Joan Williams, Rene Eastwood, Patsy Paine.

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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