



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL Bromley & Orpington Group May 2012 Newsletter



Our thanks to Charles Jacob MBE of Chislehurst for sponsoring this month's newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 8th May
Tuesday 12th June
Tuesday 10th July

Amnesty National Conference Roundup
Speaker: Ann Marcus; AI Egypt Country Co-ordinator
Death Penalty (tbc)

Article 19 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers

Our whole meeting was devoted to this fundamental human right set out in Article 19 of the UDHR and we were delighted to welcome to the meeting Heather Blake, UK Co-ordinator from **Reporters without Borders**. Heather reminded us that in many

**REPORTERS
WITHOUT BORDERS**
FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

countries reporting the news or revealing the truth can result in a prison sentence or death. 'Reporters without Borders' founded in France in 1985, campaigns tirelessly for press freedom and the right to freedom of expression. It defends journalists and media assistants imprisoned or persecuted for reporting the truth and exposes ill treatment in many countries. Reporters without borders fights censorship and laws that work against press freedom. She reminded us that in 2011, 67 journalists were killed on duty, and so far in 2012, 16 have died on assignment and a further 162 imprisoned. Creeping censorship and clampdown of Internet use has seen 121 people imprisoned for disseminating news reportage on the net. Heather informed us that the early promise of change arising from the Arab revolutions is turning sour, with only Tunisia making headway towards pluralist institutions and freedom of the press. In Egypt, journalists and bloggers face military trial, whilst in Bahrain the media faces harassment and intimidation. In Syria many journalists have been killed as part of a systematic attack on news reporting from centres such as Homs. Freelancers are at particular risk of disappearance and persecution. Finally, as part of her absorbing talk, Heather reminded us that the countries of the Arab spring rank among the worst for 'freedom' with Syria, Bahrain and Yemen receiving their worst ever rankings: 176, 173 and 171 respectively out of 179 countries surveyed. The UK achieves a ranking of 28 – a fall of nine places owing to the phone hacking scandal. Heather reminded us that journalism is a noble pursuit and one relentlessly in the eye of the storm of human rights violations.

Monthly Letter; Iran

Continuing our theme, our monthly letter concerns an Iranian journalist and human rights defender – **Ahmad Zeidabadi** – who is serving a six year prison sentence for writing articles and news reports critical of the Iranian authorities. He has also been sentenced to five years internal exile and banned from taking part in any further political or social activities for life. Ahmad Zeidabadi is a prisoner of conscience for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. There is also evidence that during his imprisonment he was subjected to torture and beatings. Please sign, address and post the enclosed letter. This will cost 76p to post. (please see note on postage below)



Amnesty International Day of Action for Women's Human Rights

Churchill Theatre Forecourt, Bromley

Saturday 12th May 2012 from 9.00am – come and support us!

Zimbabwe Activists at Risk

We all signed a letter to the Zimbabwe authorities on behalf of six activists who were convicted in March on charges of 'conspiracy to commit public violence'. They were each sentenced to prison and given a fine of \$500 each. Each spent 27 days in prison before the sentences were handed down – all for exercising right to freedom of expression. Originally charged with treason the more severe charge was dropped for lack of evidence. The cases continue a theme of persecution against activists in Zimbabwe.

Syrian Poet Imprisoned



Tal-al-Mallouhi is a student poet, who was sentenced to five years in prison on 14 February 2011. She was charged with 'divulging information to a foreign state' but no evidence of guilt has ever been produced. Charges followed the online publication of her poetry which talks about local and

Palestinian political affairs. At just 20 she is among the youngest student writers to be persecuted by the Syrian authorities as she was just 18 when first arrested outside her school in 2009. This case has been featured by International and English PEN in an attempt to raise the profile of persecuted women writers in particular. More on this case, how to send an appeal and to read some of Tal al-Mallouhi's poetry can be obtained from the English Pen website <http://www.englishpen.org>

Advance Notice

**Bromley Little Theatre
Charity Premiere in aid of
Amnesty International**

**"All My Sons"
By
Arthur Miller**

**Thursday 12th July 7.45pm
Tickets £10.00
From David Howkins
01689 823793
(Tickets available May)**

Where to Now? Egypt and the Arab Spring

**Ann Marcus, Amnesty Country Co-ordinator for Egypt
Tuesday 12th June 7.30pm
All Welcome**

A note on postage increases; as widely reported postage prices are being increased from 30th April. Any item weighing up to 10g will cost 87p from this date (Europe and World Zones 1-2). Items weighing up to 20g will cost 87p to Europe (includes Russia and the former countries of the USSR), and £1.28 for the rest of the world. The increases are hefty, and may be difficult for some friends to bear. We have always aimed to send one postal appeal each month for those with no Internet access; other appeals are accessible electronically. We hope, in spite of the increases you will still be able to 'send a letter to save a life'. Thank you.

Present on 10th April: Neville White, Shirley Henderson, Patrick Nield, Joan Williams, Eleanor Ivans, Ted Burke, Gladys Edmonds, Waltraut Gilchrist, Patrick McDonnell, Patsy Paine, Margaret Coppard, Chris Purnell, Pamela Smith, Ann Garrett. Mr Mrs Ray Watson, and Laura and Caroline Blott were welcomed to the meeting.
Apologies: David Howkins, Simon Nash, Claire Ellis, Rene Eastwood, Eve Fisher, Vivien Glanz, Mark Gill, Wendy Simmons and Pat Eastaugh.

Meetings are held in the Wesley Room, Orpington Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington commencing at 7.30pm. **E-mail** aibromley@btinternet.com **website:** www.aibromley.freeuk.com/

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