



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL Bromley & Orpington Group November 2015 Newsletter



Our thanks to Frank Glanz for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

*Tuesday 10 November
Tuesday 8th December
Tuesday 12th January*

*Speaker Bryony Norman: Refugee Support Network
'send a Message of Hope' – Annual Greetings Card Campaign
Campaign Meeting*

'Working with Young Asylum Seekers'

**Speaker: Bryony Norman: Refugee Support Network
Tuesday 10th November at 7.30pm**

Can You Keep a Secret: GCHQ, Surveillance & Human Rights

We were delighted to welcome Stuart Sweeney back to the Group for a fascinating talk on surveillance and its impact on human rights. Stuart noted that the British State has a peculiar liking for secrecy, but noted that this has served us well in times of war – citing the intelligence code breaking work of Bletchley Park. GCHQ, now the centre for Government surveillance, emerged out of this work, and now working with the 'five eyes (the US, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the UK) intelligence gathering became more pervasive and invasive. The Freedom of Information Act has given the veneer of openness, but the restrictions makes it far from perfect, with Ministers having the power of veto in certain areas. The Snowden revelations showed how much we are under surveillance with extensive data mining undertaken by GCHQ including all e-mail traffic. Telecoms firms have been (reluctantly) complicit in this gathering of information. There continues to be major contradictions between extensive surveillance on citizens, data mining without permission, and the UK's obligations under the UDHR in which privacy is an absolute. A lively debate followed a very thought provoking talk.



Monthly Action

Matsumoto Kenji was arrested in 1993 for two separate robberies and murders committed between 1990 and 1991. There have been severe doubts over the police process with his interrogation leading to a forced confession. Kenji has a mental disability owing to mercury poisoning at birth. Kenji was sentenced to death in 1993 and has been on death row ever since. All appeals challenging the ruling have failed despite his doubtful mental competency to understand his situation. Now 64 he is in frail mental and physical health and his final appeal has expired suggesting execution could be imminent. We wrote to the Japanese authorities urging a retrial and clemency. This action is also an e-mail petition. Amnesty is hoping to collect 8,000 signatures: Please join the appeal by going to www.amnesty.org.uk/actions



Westminster Corner



We received a lengthy and detailed letter from the **Department of Business, innovation and Skills** responding to our letter on arms exports. The letter states that the UK government supports EU efforts to strengthen export controls which could be used in capital punishment, whilst "striking the right balance between controlling undesirable trade and not impeding legitimate exports". The UK supports controls on brokering (an AI goal) and a ban on advertising and promotion. A catch all provision does not find favour as it could cause confusion and the rules being implemented differently by EU states.

Monthly Letter: Mexico



As human rights in Mexico continue to deteriorate, our Monthly Letter concerns Angel Colon, a Honduran national travelling through Mexico to reach the US. He was detained by security forces in 2009, and held without trial until last year. During this time he was beaten and partially suffocated, and eventually confessed to being part of a criminal gang, for which there is no evidence. He has made a complaint about the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment he has endured for five years. The situation has not been investigated and no compensation offered. A speedy and impartial investigation is needed. Please sign, address and send the enclosed letter, which will cost £1.00 to post.

Group Finance

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Balance brought forward | £762.32 |
| Income | £90.00 |
| Expenditure | £306.48 |
| Balance at 6 th October | £545.84 |
| CHANGE | -£216.48 |

Private donations of £90.00 were received. We made a further donation to Amnesty of £250 taking our Group total for 2015 to £2,572.00.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Nick Beston Quartet

AMNESTY JAZZ RETURNS

Friday 12th February 2016

More Details to Follow

2016 Meeting Dates

We meet on the second Tuesday of every month – except August

12th January
9th February
8th March – 20th AGM
12th April
10th May
14th June
12th July
13th September
11th October
8th November
13th December

West Africa Regional Action Network: Cameroon

We wrote to the Cameroonian Minister of Justice regarding unlawful killings and disappearances in the north of the country. Cameroon has suffered from incursions by Boko Haram, however in responding to attacks, the security forces have been accused of targeting civilians that led to mass arrests, unlawful killings, detention without trial and disappearances. The whereabouts of 130 men from two villages is unknown save for 25 who died in custody. Children have been included in the mass arrests. We called on the Cameroon government to provide adequate protection for civilians and to release immediately all those detained unless criminal charges can be brought.



Present on 6th October 2015: Neville White, David Howkins, Waltraut Gilchrist, Patsy Paine, Ted Burke, Wendy Simmons, Peter Martin, Eleanor Ivens, Gladys Edmonds, Nicole McClure and Stuart Sweeney. **Apologies:** Vivien Glanz, Vivienne Andrews, Margaret Coppard.

Meetings are held in the Wesley Room, Orpington Methodist Church, Sevenoaks Road, Orpington commencing at 7.30pm. **E-mail** [website: www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley](mailto:www.amnesty.org.uk/bromley)

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