



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Bromley & Orpington Group

November 2016 Newsletter



Our thanks to Joan Norris of Shortlands for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 8th November *Speaker – Stop the Traffik*
 Tuesday 13th December *'Send a Message of Hope' – Greetings Card Campaign*
 Tuesday 10th January *Speaker Campaign Against Arms Trade*

Speaker: Ann-Marie Barry, Lead Researcher
Stop the Traffik: Modern Slavery
 Tuesday 8th November at 7.30pm. All Welcome!

Burma: Country in Transition; Human Rights in Peril

We were delighted to welcome Wai Hnin of Burma Campaign UK to the meeting. Whilst the perception might be that Burma is now 'free', the situation is more troubling and complex. Wai emphasised that whilst there were free elections and a civilian government elected, the army retains a stranglehold on the balance of power. The army retains control of key government departments, and 25% of parliamentary seats are reserved for them. Over 200 political prisoners remain in prison and there has been no truth and reconciliation process



after more than 60 years of military oppression. Wai pointed to two teachers from the ethnic Kachin minority as a case in point. The two teachers aged 20 and 21 were brutally raped and murdered by army personnel, bringing to over 100 the number of violations against women perpetrated by the military. Burma Campaign UK is calling on the British Government to do more to investigate such violations and to cease 'normalised' relations with Burma until human rights violations have ceased. Wai also told us how widespread persecution of Burma's ethnic

minorities continues, with large parts of the country off-limits to investigators because of continuing conflict. In particular the plight of the 'stateless' Rohingya Muslims is particularly desperate and unquantified in its magnitude. Wai gave a moving testament of her own story that brought her to the UK a decade ago after her father was imprisoned for political activities. More information is available at www.burmacampaign.org.uk

Group Finance

Balance brought forward	£1,004.66
Income	£2.50
Expenditure	£538.50
Balance at 11 th October	£468.66
CHANGE	-£536.00

With this letter we are once again asking if you can sponsor a monthly Newsletter. It costs us around £20 a month to run the Group with room hire and postage. If you can kindly help us by sponsoring a monthly Newsletter, more of the money we raise from events can go direct to Amnesty for vital human rights work. Please, if you can, return the letter to the address provided. Thank you!

Monthly Action: Child Refugees at Risk

The conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia among others have caused unprecedented displacement with the UN estimating the global refugee population to have reached 65 million. The UK can and should do more to share responsibility for the global refugee crisis. Amnesty is calling on the UK government urgently to provide safe and legal routes refugees fleeing violence and persecution desperately need. In particular the plight of unaccompanied child refugees is pressing and urgent. We wrote to our MPs calling for restitution for those child refugees with a legal right to join their families in the UK.



Monthly Letter: Syria



The ongoing situation in Syria appears hopeless, and Amnesty continues to campaign for those responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice. Our case this month addresses the all too common reality of enforced disappearance. **Rania Alabbasi**, a dentist from Damascus, her husband and six children were apprehended at home in March 2013 – they have not been seen since. There appears to be no reason for the arrests and their disappearance suggests a politically motivated state act. We are asking you to send the enclosed letter c/o the Syrian Permanent Representative to the UN, to urge an investigation and an end to enforced disappearance. Please sign, address and send the enclosed letter, which will cost £1.05 to post.

Burundi: Human Rights Breakdown

President Nkurunziza's decision to seek a third presidential term in flagrant breach of the constitution has led to an increase in public demonstrations with hundreds killed and thousands more fleeing abroad. Civil society and a free media have been heavily censored and disrupted and human rights violations have become endemic. The journalist **Jean Bigirimana** went missing in July when he was seized by personnel believed to have been part of the national intelligence service. All attempts to seek his whereabouts have failed and his family and employers believe he has been disappeared because of his work looking into other disappearances. We wrote to the President calling for an urgent investigation into the disappearance of Mr Bigirimana and for those responsible to be brought to justice.



China: Prisoner Case-File

For over five years we have been campaigning regularly on behalf of our assigned prisoner case file, Liu Xiaobo. Famed as a writer, critic, academic professor and human rights defender, Liu now aged 60, was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in 2009 for inciting subversion of state power. During his fourth prison term in 2010, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for "his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China." He was the first Chinese citizen to be awarded a Nobel Prize of any kind while residing in China. Lu Xia, an acclaimed painter and poet has been under house arrest more or less since his imprisonment in 2009. On his receiving the Nobel Prize, Liu said "For all these years, Liu Xiaobo has persevered in telling the truth about China and because of this, for the fourth time, he has lost his personal freedom". We are very proud to have such a distinguished case to work on, but it has been far from easy given the lack of information on his status or state of health. We have sent a gift of tea to Liu, but have no idea if it arrived; we continue to send a letter every month to a relevant authority in China seeking his release.



Present on 11th October: Neville White, Vivien Glanz, Peter Martin, Waltraut Gilchrist, Gladys Edmonds, Ted Burke, Margaret Coppard, Patrick McDonnell, Wendy Simmons, Vivienne Andrews. **Apologies:** David Howkins, Patsy Paine, Shirley Henderson, Rene Eastwood.

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

Neville White (Chairman) 01689 896368
Neville.white@waitrose.com

Vivien Glanz (Secretary) 020 8777 1240
vivienglanz@hotmail.com