



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL Bromley & Orpington Group October 2013 Newsletter



Our thanks to Dr V E Andrews of Bromley for sponsoring this month's Newsletter

COME TO OUR NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 8th October

Speaker: *Stuart Sweeney "Doctors on the Dark Side"*

Tuesday 12th November

Speaker: *Jenny Dickson, AI Syria country co-ordinator (tbc)*

Tuesday 10th December

Human Rights Day; annual 'Send a Message of Hope' campaign

Tuesday 8th October at 7.30pm
Speaker: Stuart Sweeney (former Group Secretary)
"Doctors on the Dark Side"

Burma: too soon to stop campaigning!

We were delighted to welcome **Mary Hla** from **Burma Campaign UK**. She presented a chilling account of continuing ethnic genocide against tribal peoples and the Muslim community in Burma. In spite of the outward veneer of reform and the lifting of sanctions, human rights abuses remain widespread and acute.

The EU lifted all remaining sanctions (other than arms exports) in April, thereby giving international approval to the regime which is responsible for torture, forced evictions and killings. We will be showing **Burma VJ** on 22nd November at 7.30pm (usual venue) as part of our support Burma campaign work.



Monthly Letter: Laos

Two former student activists are serving 20-year prison sentences in Laos for attempting to display posters they had made which called for political, social and economic change in the country. **Thongpaseuth Keuakoun** and **Seng-Aloun Phengphanh** were among 30 young people belonging to the Lao Students Movement for Democracy who were prevented from displaying the posters and then arrested in October 1999. They are being detained in conditions which are harsh, with poor medical care. Torture and other ill-treatment are common; prisoners are reportedly given tasks that are almost impossible to complete and severely punished when unable to do so. Please address, sign and post the attached letter calling for their release. This will cost 88p to post.



Rattle a Tin for Amnesty: London Street Collection

The annual London wide street collection is taking place on two successive Saturdays; on 12th October (the official date) and on the 19th October. Margaret still has a few slots to fill in the afternoon of both days. If you are able to spare an hour or two on EITHER Saturday, please let Margaret know on 01689 854094.

Cudham Fair

In spite of beautiful weather our book stall did not attract the crowds this year, and we took significantly less than in past years. Books raised £61.11 and our 'bucket game' £57.00 (representing 50% of the takings). The total for the day was therefore £118.11, compared to £255.43 a year ago.

An attractive range of Amnesty Christmas Cards will be on sale at our October-December meetings

Amnesty Goes to the Movies Presents

'BURMA VJ

A film by Anders Østergaard

Friday 22nd November at 7.30pm

Orpington Methodist Church

Suggested donation £3

Mexico: Day of the Disappeared



30th August was **International Day of Enforced Disappearances**. It was in Latin America that this word first took on a new and cruel meaning. The "disappeared" have not vanished into thin air: many have been killed. Others will almost certainly never see their family again, held by criminal gangs or the authorities. In Mexico's dirty war of the late 1960s and the 70s, the government carried out a systematic persecution against society. Sadly, even now disappearances are still a terrible fact of life in Mexico.

On 29 July, Jose de Jesus Martinez Chigo and 17-year-old Diana Laura Hernandez Acosta were stopped at a checkpoint. A witness saw them being driven to a military compound. When the families of both victims went to the compound, they were told that no civilians were detained there. The next day marines took 17-year-old Raul David Alvarez Gutierrez away in a lorry. No one knows where he is. The number of people who have disappeared, whether abducted by criminal gangs or by public officials, has grown substantially since December 2006 when the federal authorities launched a large-scale policing operation to combat organised crime. In February 2013, the new President, Enrique Pena Nieto, published a list of more than 26,000 people who had been reported missing since 2006. The government has failed to provide any further information on the whereabouts of these people. We took part in an e-mail petition calling on the Mexican authorities to look into the cases of all those who have disappeared, bringing the perpetrators to justice and protect against any further abductions. Go here to take part: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/uaa21913.pdf>

New Amnesty Prisoner Case File: China

We signed our first letter to the Chinese authorities on behalf of **Dr Liu Xiaobo** and his wife **Liu Xia**, who we are campaigning for as part of our new prisoner case file. We will aim to complete at least one action each month.

Azerbaijan: Human Rights Violations Escalate

Azerbaijan holds an election on 9th October, and Amnesty is using the occasion to focus on the escalating human rights crisis under President Aliyev's autocratic rule. Amnesty has recorded 14 new Prisoners of Conscience detained in recent weeks; these include opposition candidates, journalists, pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders. A catalogue of other human rights abuses carried out include criminalising peaceful anti-government protest, police using excessive force to break up peaceful demonstrations, threats and intimidation against human rights defenders, and the targeting of journalists who have been beaten, ill-treated, abducted, and imprisoned. We signed a Group letter calling for the release of all POCs and an end to intimidation and torture.



Present on 10th September: David Howkins, Neville White, Joan Williams, Waltraut Gilchrist (and friend Karen), Patsy Paine, Wendy Simmons, Ted Burke, Eleanor Ivens, Eve Fisher, Gladys Edmonds, Rene Eastwood, Patrick McDonnell, Vivien Glanz and Simon Nash. **Apologies:** Shirley Henderson, Margaret Coppard.

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

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