

Action

April 2016



THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

Forthcoming Brighton & Hove Amnesty Group Meetings/Events

Group meetings take place on the first Thursday of each month from 8-10pm at Community Base, Queens Road, Brighton

7th April

Group Business Meeting/AGM and campaign update
All welcome

Monthly Collection

16th April

Contact Julian
julianwatmore@gmail.com
07469776295

Monthly Stall

9th April

Sydney Street
Contact Jill 01273 621697
11am to 1pm

23rd April

Jumble Sale

12pm to 3pm
Unitarian Church Hall
New Road

6th August 2016

Pride

Group will take part in the parade and have a campaigning stall

September 2016

Date to be confirmed
Annual Street Collection

17th December 2016

Write for Rights

10am to 4pm
Friends Meeting House
Ship Street

Amnesty jumble sale

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S
Brighton Group
Present:

MY BODY, MY TIGHTS!

JUMBLE & SALE & AMNESTEA

+cake!

Saturday April 23rd, 12pm-3pm



to raise awareness of our
MY BODY, MY RIGHTS campaign
and to raise money for
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Unitarian Church,
New Road, Brighton

To volunteer and/or donate jumble :
Email brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com

Newroz 2016

Catherine, Andrew, Valerie, Celia & Emma of Brighton Amnesty went to the Kurdish Newroz, (Kurdish New Year) celebrations which were held at the Main Hall, BHASVIC, Brighton, Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College, just north of the Seven Dials on Tuesday the 29th of March, the Tuesday after Easter. In fact it wasn't the actual date of the New Year which was a week or 2 before on the 21st of March. There was a very good attendance. There were many non Kurds there Including the Lord Mayor.

The Kurds are a nation without a country. They are predominantly a mountain people. They do have cities which are ground level. The Kurds occupy land in Turkey, Syria, Iraq & Iran. There is a Kurdish diaspora all over the World. There are many Kurdish people in London. There are more than 300 Kurds in the Brighton area.

The Kurds are a much persecuted nation. Iraqi Kurds suffered greatly under Saddam Hussein. They were the victims of chemical weapons. For the Iraqi Kurds, Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction certainly existed. Iranian Kurds are much persecuted. Syrian Kurds have been relatively well treated. In Syria before the civil war broke out there was no free press or independent judiciary. Secret police were everywhere. Political prisoners were routinely imprisoned & tortured but there were civil freedoms. People could belong to any or no religion, women didn't have cover themselves nor obey their husbands nor were they prevented from working, Turkish Kurds have been the subject of much persecution & terrorism. Their towns & villages have been much bombed, especially recently. A British academic, Chris Stevenson, a lecturer at Bilgi University in Istanbul was expelled from Turkey last month because he was found to possess invitations to Kurdish New Year celebrations.

The Kurds have been in the forefront in resisting & fighting the so-called Islamic State, the terror group which has brought which has brought death & slavery to their people in the area they have occupied. But the efforts of their fighters have been hampered by being bombed by the Turks.

The evening consisted of some wonderful Kurdish food, drink, music & dancing & speeches from prominent Kurds who talked about the seriousness of the situation the Kurds find themselves in because of the persecution by the Kurds, A BBC correspondent who showed us a film about Kurdish & Yazidi fighters training in the mountains to fight the so-called Islamic State, a prominent academic from Oxford University, Dr. Salima Tasdemir, the coordinator of the Sussex Kurdish community & the Mayor who praised the Sussex Kurds for their contribution to the Sussex community. The evening ended with the music & dancing. The music was truly exhilarating & the dancing was exuberant & life enhancing & completed a wonderful & uplifting evening.



Andrew

OUR MONTHLY ACTION

FREE PHYOE PHYOE AUNG PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Phyoe Phyoe Aung is a young activist and secretary general of the All Burma Federation Student Union. She and 50 other students and protesters have been in prison for over one year after being arrested during a student protest against the newly adopted National Education Law which students say curtails academic freedom. They face 9 years in prison.

The new president Htin Kyaw is the first democratically elected president of Myanmar for over 50 years and is a member of the National League for Democracy the same party as Aung SunSuu Kyi which now holds a majority in the national parliament.

We are being asked to show solidarity with a picture : post a photo to Twitter of you, your group or other activists with the hashtag ReleaseMyanmarPeacefulStudents. Use the symbol of a key to represent unlocking of students, rights and freedom. Be as creative as you like with the images. Send to the campaign team who are in direct contact with students in Myanmar and will directly share all the solidarity messages posted on the facebook page with them. IAR team are at iar@amnesty.org.uk.

Cosmic Flo. and Gaia Pennisi present

EVERY HUMAN



WELCOMED



Music for Amnesty International

A fundraising event full of music and art

12 April 2016

Doors open at 19.30

The Green Door Store

Brighton

- Body Talk

- Bronwyn Leonard

- Lady Luck and the Late Night

Players

- Astro Kat

Plus: Life in a Refugee Camp - Photo Exhibition

Works by Yiorgos Doukanaris and Maurizio Martorana

ADMISSION £4

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR ÁNGEL COLÓN

Ángel Colón's investigation must be speeded up and reparations provided.



Some of you may remember Ángel Amílcar Colón, former Amnesty prisoner of conscience. In March 2009, Ángel was arrested by Mexican police in Tijuana, a city in Northern Mexico. The Honduran migrant was waiting to be smuggled across the US border, in his desperate search for work to pay for his son's medical treatment.

Police blindfolded Ángel and took him to a military base where he reports hearing the screams of other detainees. He was struck in the ribs, forced to walk on his knees, kicked, punched in the stomach and racially abused. A plastic bag was put over his head to provoke near asphyxiation. He was stripped and forced to lick clean the shoes of other detainees and perform other humiliating acts.

According to local NGOs, Mexican authorities frame migrants in order to "fake an effective response to the cases of high social impact, such as organized crimes, drug smuggling or other crimes" (Telesur, 2014).

Ángel was forced to sign a false statement implicating him in criminal activity. A statement he then retracted when brought before a judge. He also reported his torture to the authorities who failed to take any action.

Ángel was held in prison for more than five years. In July 2014, Amnesty named him a prisoner of conscience, stating that "besides the migrant nature, he's also a victim of arbitrary apprehension, torture and wrongful criminal charges." Amnesty supporters responded in large numbers, with over 20,000 taking action to demand Ángel's release. Three months later, the Mexican Federal Attorney General agreed to drop the charges and Ángel was released unconditionally.

However, the quest for justice did not stop there. Since Ángel's release, he has undergone two independent forensic examinations. Although these comply with the Istanbul Protocol (international guidelines for the documentation of torture), they are yet to be accepted as valid by the Mexican authorities. Amnesty is now calling for a full investigation and reparations for Ángel and his family.

You can get involved by writing to the Mexican Attorney General, Arely Gómez González asking her to:

- Accept the validity of the independent forensic examinations.
- Speed up the investigation, identify the people who tortured Ángel and bring them to justice.
- Provide reparations to Ángel and his family.

More information about torture in Mexico is available on the Amnesty website <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2015/10/stop-torture-mexico/>.

By Freya Lyte

TAKE ACTION

Write to:
Señora Arely Gómez González
Procuradora General de la República,
Procuraduría General de la República (PGR),
Reforma 211-213, Col. Cuauhtémoc
C.P. 06500
México D.F., México
arely.gomez@pgr.gob.mx
Twitter: @ArelyGomezGlz

Send a copy to:
HE Mr Diego Gomez Pickering
Embassy of Mexico
16 St. George Street
London, W1S 1FD
Emgbretana@sre.gob.mx
Twitter: @Embamexru

Monthly stall update

HELP YOLANDE TO REGISTER HER CHILDREN FOR MOTHERS' DAY

Date Saturday 5th March

Time 11-1pm

Venue Outside Amnesty Bookshop, Sydney Street, Brighton

Weather Too cold !

Activists Andrew, Celia and Jill

Campaign Yolande Alcino in the Dominican Republic

Yolande Alcino is struggling to register the birth of her children because of her Haitian descent. Yolanda was only recently granted her own identity documents. Her new birth certificate is marked 'transcribed foreigner' even though she has never held any other nationality. Without birth certificates it will be difficult for her two children to continue their education or access health services.



In our petition we called on Danilo Medina, President of the Republic, to recognise fully the childrens' nationality, along with all other Dominicans of Haitian descent facing a similar situation. Also we called on the authorities to fight discrimination and prejudice against those of Haitian descent. We collected 64 signatures and posted the petition to the President of Dominican Republic.

Next Stall
Saturday 9th April

If you would like to help contact Jill on
01273 621697



Sunday 24th April

8pm

£3 a person

in aid of



The Black Horse Pub

Western Road



A "mini-break" at the Warehouse in Calais

After much deliberating I finally booked my train, ferry and accommodation to Calais, and registered with Auberge des Migrants/Help Refugees. I was a bit anxious going on my own, as it's all rather vague as to where the Warehouse is, other than it's on an industrial estate outside the town – as explained later, there are fascists in Calais who would think nothing of torching it.

The Calais Youth Hostel seemed to be source of all knowledge and lifts, but as it was fully booked, I would have to find my own way. Luckily I met a young woman on the ferry, also going to the Warehouse, who was staying at the hostel, so I stuck with her.

The next morning a group of us set out together to find the Warehouse, knowing only which bus to get from the town centre to the industrial estate. It didn't take long for a "GB" car to spot us looking lost in the middle of a roundabout, and they pointed us in the right direction – a group of women with woolie hats, rucksacks and wellingtons probably aren't on their summer hols.

The Warehouse is amazing, like a small aircraft hangar stuffed to the rafters with stacks of neatly labelled cardboard boxes, mountains of black bin liners, rows of tents, mounds of blankets and one enormous heap of clothes. There are generators, fork lift trucks and loads of factory trollies, and a constant movement of vans and lorries. It's an incredible operation, and mainly extremely well organised, seeing as it's only been in existence since November.

A small group of orange hi-viz jacket wearers are the long-term volunteers, who know everything, and the rest of us (about 60 – 70) are yellow hi-viz jacket wearers, and are short-term volunteers, who try to learn quickly. After some useful warm-up exercises (star jumps and stretches!) and a short induction, we were assigned tasks in small groups. Mine were as follows:

Day 1: Morning - Re-opening bags of soggy and sometimes mouldy clothes, shoes and boots, which had fallen victim to leaks in the warehouse roof and had to be re-packed or sadly chucked – a bit dispiriting. Afternoon: Joined the production-line team sorting clothes into size and gender from the ceiling-high mountain of donations.

Day 2: Morning – Hygiene team: the fragrant and lovely task of making up welcome bags of toiletries: toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, soap, shampoo etc and toilet paper. Afternoon – Rolling and taping up blankets from a huge pile, which never seemed to diminish as every hour vans and cars arrived with more donations.

Fantastic though people's generosity is, a lot of "stuff" is inappropriate, grubby, torn or just grotty, and as the ethos of affording the migrants some dignity is very strong, the "Rags" mountain is almost the biggest of all.

For the same reason, visits to "the Camp" are restricted to those with specific skills or tasks like construction, medical or distribution – "It's not a tourist attraction". Most of us were happy just to be of use in the Warehouse, where the atmosphere was heart-warming and very friendly – the long-term volunteers went out of their way to look after us.

At lunchtime we were fed fantastic vegan nosh from the miraculous "kitchen" - a makeshift area where hundreds of meals were prepared every day and taken to the Camp. As most of the community kitchens and restaurants have been bull-dozed, this is practically the only hot food available.

The evenings were really sociable, and groups of volunteers congregated in the local bars and restaurants to eat, drink and share experiences. People from all walks of life with interesting stories – mostly twenty-somethings, but there were a few "oldies" like me!

I wouldn't imagine that the need for the Warehouse is going to disappear anytime soon, and even as little as a couple of days seems to be appreciated and worthwhile. I'm pretty certain I'll be going back before long.

Sue Williams

<http://www.supportrefugees.org.uk/volunteering/volunteer-in-calais/>

Notice Board

#REFUGEESWELCOME CITIZENS UK

Join us for Refugees Welcome Training

The Training:

- aims at building power of local refugees welcome teams;
- uses the approach Citizens groups have used around the country to get their local councils to sign up to resettlement programmes;
- will connect local groups to other resettlement teams in the area;
- will be the primary means of connecting local campaigns to the national resettlement effort.

When: 6th April 2016 from 18:30-20:30

Where: Zu Studios 7 Phoenix Place Phoenix Industrial Estate Lewes BN7 2QJ

Do you want to join us? please email: bekele.woyecha@citizensuk.org

Citizens UK is an alliance of more than 300 schools, universities, faith communities, unions and voluntary sector organisations. Communities organising for Power, Social Justice and the Common Good

Refugee Tales 2016

A Walk In Solidarity with Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Detainees From Canterbury to Westminster

In June 2015 the Refugee Tales project walked in solidarity with Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigration Detainees, from Dover to Crawley along the North Downs Way. As the project walked it reclaimed the landscape of South East England for the language of welcome, and everywhere it stopped it was met with hospitality and enthusiasm. Working directly in collaboration with those who had experienced the UK asylum system, and taking Chaucer's great poem of journeying as a model, established writers told a series of tales en route. Through that sharing of other people's tales the project gathered and communicated experiences of migration, seeking to show, in particular, what indefinite detention means.

From July 3 to July 8 2016, Refugee Tales will walk again. Starting with a Day of Thought, Performance and Action on the issue of 'Being Detained Indefinitely' the project will leave Canterbury on July 4, moving north to Gravesend and then along the Thames into central London, calling once again for the practice of indefinite immigration detention to end. At every stop of the way leading writers will help tell the tales of asylum seekers, refugees and detainees, as well as the stories of those who work with them. As the project walks it will create a space in which the language of welcome is the prevailing discourse, a political carnival in which the act of listening is a common resource.

Since Refugee Tales walked first time the debate around human movement has fluctuated dramatically, as pressure for a change of policy on indefinite detention has continued to build. It is a cruel and debilitating practice that continues to do untold damage to tens of thousands of lives. From Canterbury to Westminster, Refugee Tales will call again for indefinite detention to end.

David Herd

University of Kent

For information and tickets see website

<http://refugeetales.org/>



Take Action

DETAINED OROMO PROTESTERS MUST BE RELEASED

The Oromos are the second largest indigenous people in Africa, and have a rich culture and turbulent history. In spite of making up 45% of the population in Ethiopia, they have been persecuted in their struggle for self determination for many years. The human rights abuses against the Oromo people have forced many of them to find refuge in many countries.

In November 2015 peaceful protests erupted in Ginchi a town located southwest of Addis Ababa in the Oromo region when the government transferred the ownership of a school playground and a stadium to private investors. They also cleared the Chilimo natural forest. The protesters comprising university and high school students, city residents and farmers, see this as a violation of the cultural and individual rights of the Oromo people, especially those living in the vicinity of the capital city Addis Ababa. Thousands of farmers have been evicted and lost their land and there have been mass arrests, injured people, enforced disappearance and hundreds dead. The Ethiopian government has labelled the protesters as "terrorists". Amnesty International considers that the labelling of mostly peaceful protesters has further escalated the response of the government and resulted in more casualties.

Please sign the attached letter. Thank you. Celia

BRIGHTON & HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS

Chair – Peter brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com Tel: 01273 607110

New Member Secretary: Sue Tel: 07790 755921 brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com

Group Secretary—Catherine brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com 07759 271399

Treasurer: Sue 07790 755921 sue@suewilliams44.fsnet.co.uk

Newsletter editor: - Emma: Tel: 01273 232397

Please email any contributions for the newsletter to brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com

Lanes collection organiser: - Julian julianwatmore@gmail.com 07469776295

Web Site co-ordinator: Michael - michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com

Amnesty Stalls co-ordinator—Jill —01273 621697

Campaign Co-ordinators:

Individuals at Risk – Celia Stubbs—01273 593833

Security and Human Rights—Michael—michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com

Stop Torture—Michael - michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com

My Body My Rights—Jess 07740 344832

Amnesty Websites: international - www.amnesty.org AI UK - www.amnesty.org.uk local group - www.amnesty.org.uk/brighton

Follow us on twitter @AmnestyBrighton

See our photos on Flickr—

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/amnestybrighton/pool>

Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre - Tel: 0207 0331500

