

Action

August 2014



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 August

Group business meeting
And strategic planning workshop

4th September

Speaker from Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group

2nd October

Guest speaker
Lesley Burges
Philippines' country co ordinator

Letter Writing Evenings

An evening once a month to sit and write letters with fellow Amnesty members. These evenings are hosted at member's houses. All welcome, simply contact the host/hostess for details:

14th August
Jill 01273 621697

Monthly Collection

16th August
Contact Julian
julianwatmore@gmail.com

Monthly Stall's

Contact Jill 01273 621697
4th October
Action for Tawartha people

Annual Street Collection

13th September
Contact Emma 01273 232397

Or Catherine 07759271399

Write for Rights 2014

6th December
Friends Meeting House
Ship Street

'I don't want to hide ... I want to show people that I am a person like everybody.'

(Ihar Tsikhanyuk, Belarus)



Celia, Andrew, Jill and Alex at our stall in Sydney st, for Brighton Pride

This LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) rights activist has been intimidated and ill treated by police in Belarus. He is one of the human rights defenders that we featured in our campaign at Brighton Pride on Saturday 2nd August.

We held our stall outside the punk pink Amnesty Bookshop in Sydney Street. We were able to intercept people on their way to watch the parade leading to the Pride Festival. The public were in celebratory mood, some dressed in bizarre costumes including a man with real flowers in his beard.

Between 12 and 2pm we asked people to sign cards to send to the General Prosecutor in Belarus concerning Ihar Tsikhanyuk. He is an openly gay drag performer facing negative stereotyping and social prejudice. He was questioned by police about attempting to register an LGBTI organisation. The police repeatedly punched, verbally abused and threatened him. We have called for an end to harassment of human rights workers in Belarus.

Our second human rights defender is Noxolo Nogwaza, a 24 year old lesbian who was (continued on page 2)

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murdered in South Africa. She was raped, beaten and stabbed before being killed, because of her sexual orientation. She campaigned for LGBTI rights. Her murder is unsolved and her killers have not been brought to justice. We have called for her case to be investigated by the Police Commander in South Africa.

Altogether we collected 150 signed cards which we will be sending off to Belarus and South Africa as small parcels. (To send them individually would cost over £168 !) Many thanks to Celia who made posters of our two human rights defenders and obtained the postcards from Head Office. Also thanks to Emma, Alex and Andrew who helped at the stall.

It was good to be part of Pride, celebrating freedom for LGBTI people in Brighton. Part of that freedom is owed to human rights defenders who have suffered in the past and are continuing to suffer in other countries of the World where human rights are not respected.

Jill

JULY STALL - Start of the 'Stop Torture' Campaign

At the beginning of July for our monthly Amnesty Stall, we took on the case of Alfreda Disbarro from the Philippines. She is a 32 year old mother of two and has been imprisoned since October 2013. Her conviction was made on the basis of a 'confession' obtained by police through torture. She was attacked with a club while in custody at the Paranaque Police Headquarters.

We made a petition to send to the Inspector General asking that an investigation is opened into the torture allegations and that it should be thorough.

The day was quite hot so it was hard work getting people to stop and sign the petition. The volunteers were Celia, Julian, Sue and myself. We eventually collected 163 signatures in nearly 2 hours. I will be sending the petition off to the Philippines this week. Although we don't expect a reply, we know the Police officials will take note of the public reaction in other countries.

If you would like to help with the 'Stop Torture' campaign there are another 4 cases we will be featuring at our monthly stall the rest of this year. Other campaigns we will be taking up include a stall alongside 'Pride' for LGBT victims and also the Displaced Tawargha People of Libya, our Prisoners of Conscience.

If you are interested in coming along to talk to the general public about the campaigns, please contact Jill on 01273 621697.

Brighton and Hove Annual Street Collection Saturday 13th September 2pm to 5pm Volunteers needed



If you can volunteer an hour of your time on Saturday 13th September to take part in our biggest annual fundraising event then please contact: Emma on 01273 232397 or Catherine on 07759271399 or email brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com

Take Action:

Group member Andew, has a particular interest in Iran and is keen to bring the following case to the attention of the group:

Roya Saberinejad Nobakht is a British citizen who has been sentenced to 20 years in Iran for writing on her Facebook page that the régime in Iran was too Islamic.

She was picked up when she was on a family visit to Iran. On 14 April 2014, after being incarcerated in Evin prison for 6 months, she was sentenced to 20 years. During the trial her lawyer was present but not allowed to speak on her behalf.

Her "crime" was expressing views about Iran's Islamic régime on her Facebook page. She said that the Islamic Republic of Iran was "too Islamic". She was charged with "gathering and participation with intent to commit crimes against national security" and "insulting Islamic sanctities", a crime which is punishable by death. For that, she was, along with 6 men and 1 other woman, sentenced by the Tehran Revolutionary Court to a total of 123 years. In fact her real crime, probably, was changing her nationality from Iranian to British, something the Iranian authorities seem to consider particularly heinous. She had been living in Britain since 2007.

Conditions in Evin prison are hellish. Roya has been subjected to physical and psychological torture, insults and humiliation. She has been forced to stand outside in winter, in the cold, wearing wet clothes which has resulted in kidney problems and she has been refused essential medication. She has been held in solitary confinement and been subjected to interrogation lasting several hours. For a woman, torture includes sexual torture. She has said she would rather die than continue in Evin prison.

Andrew.

Amnesty International's Iran researcher Bahareh Davis said: "If Roya Saberi Nejad Nobakht has been held solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression she must be released immediately and unconditionally.

"Regrettably, vaguely-worded and broadly-defined crimes such as 'gathering and colluding against national security' and 'insulting the Islamic sanctities', for which she appears to have been held, are often used by the Iranian authorities to curb those who peacefully express their opinions, including criticising the government."

If you would like to take action on this case then the following actions are suggested by Shiva Mahbobi from the Free Roya now campaign:

Ways to help:

sign her petition: <http://chn.ge/1m9WZ7Y>

like: <https://www.facebook.com/freeroyanow>

tweet using: #FreeRoyaNow

write to: (sample letter is provided)

Philip Hammond, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs-
UK on hammondp@parliament.uk

Your MP (you can find your MP via the link below)

www.writetothem.com

sample letter:

TO: The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

We, the undersigned, express our concern for the plight of Roya Saberinejad Nobakht, 48, a British citizen who has been in prison in Iran since October 2013 and was sentenced to 20 years in prison for posting an anti-government comment on Facebook. She has been subjected to physical and psychological torture in prison.

Roya Saberinejad Nobakht is a British citizen and the British government has a duty of care for her. We request that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to put pressure on the regime in Iran to release Roya Saberinejad Nobakht immediately.

Name: _____ City/ Constituency _____

For more information on the Free Roya Now campaign please contact: Shiva Mahbobi
shiva.mahbobi@gmail.com / 07572356661

Brighton Amnesty meeting, 3 July 2014: minutes

Attendance: Emma, Caroline, Rosamond, Jill, Celia, Andrew, Madeline, Dennise, Susan, Freya, Mike, Luke, Alex, Gwyneth, Peter, Julian, Hugh

Apologies: Cat, Maude

The displaced people of Tawargha: Hugh Sandeman (North Africa Country Coordinator) talked to the group about the Tawargha people. They were displaced from their village during the Libyan civil war and Amnesty groups, including us, have been campaigning for them to be returned or resettled. We took a group photo holding Tawargha road signs. This symbolic action has been taken by many groups; the photos, along with appeal letters, will be sent to local authorities in Libya. Hugh feels that targeting local authorities rather than central government will probably be more fruitful, especially considering the unsettled nature of Libyan politics. Hugh will bring the signs down to Brighton again in October, allowing us to use them on our Sydney Street stall.

Projector use during future talks: Peter agreed (given sufficient notice) to cover future technical issues involving the projector at Community Base.

Next meeting: We will discuss our ideas for Amnesty's strategic planning consultation. Peter will facilitate the discussion and suggested that we all come to August's meeting with at least one idea.

Letter-writing evening: We decided to hold the next letter writing evening on 17 July.

Stall: The next Sydney Street stall was scheduled for 2 August.

Afghan Women's Rights: Members of our group met Caroline Lucas MP to further publicise and support Amnesty's campaign for improvements to the rights of women in Afghanistan. Caroline Lucas took part in Amnesty's latest photo action. We also discussed a potential live performance of Even If We Lose Our Lives. Gwyneth suggested sounding out the NVT.

BRIGHTON & HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS

Chair – Emma brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com Tel: 01273 232397

New Member Secretary: Sue Tel: 07790 755921

Group Secretary—Catherine brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com 07759 271399

Treasurer: Luke lukebeale@hotmail.com

Newsletter editor: - Emma Parker: Tel: 01273 232397

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

Lanes collection organiser: - Julian julianwatmore@gmail.com

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

Amnesty Stalls co-ordinator—Jill Francis—01273 621697

Campaign Co-Ordinators:

Afghanistan—Women's Rights—Gwyneth gwyneth.jones@ntlworld.com

Prisoner of Conscience – The Displaced People of Tawargha (Libya) Celia Stubbs—01273 593833

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

Arms Trade Treaty—Luke lukebeale@hotmail.com

Stop Torture—Michael Fisher - michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com

My Body My Rights—Catherine 07759 271399

Tactical Campaigns—Luke lukebeale@hotmail.com

Amnesty Websites: international - www.amnesty.org AI UK -

www.amnesty.org.uk local group – www.amnesty.org.uk/brighton

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