



## THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

### Forthcoming Brighton & Hove Amnesty Group Meetings/Events

#### Write for Rights

Greeting card and letter writing campaign 2013

Join us to write to prisoners of conscience and human rights supporters worldwide

**7th December**

Friends Meeting House  
10am to 4pm

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

#### 5th December

Guest speaker Caroline and Kate to talk about their recent visit to Zatari Refugee Camp in Jordan and Christmas social (please bring nibbles and drinks to share)

#### 2nd January

Group meeting and film showing

#### 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:

#### 18th December

Host Emma  
01273 232397

#### Monthly Collection

Contact Catherine : 07759271399 to volunteer

#### Monthly Stall's will resume in the New Year

Contact Jill 01273 621697

## Brighton and Hove Amnesty members attend rally for Shaker Aamer



On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013, seven members from Brighton and Hove Amnesty travelled to Battersea in order to attend the march and rally called by the Save Shaker Coalition (SSAC) to mark the twelfth anniversary of Shaker Aamer's abduction by United States forces. Captured during a family visit to Afghanistan in November 2001, this is the last time Shaker has seen his children or his then pregnant wife. In January 2002, the USA opened Guantanamo Bay as a detention centre; by an eerie irony, the date that Shaker was incarcerated there, having been rendered and tortured around the world, was 14<sup>th</sup> February 2002, the day that his wife gave birth to their youngest son.

The march made its noisy way from Northcote Road, Battersea, through the busy shopping

centre of Clapham Junction to join the rally at Battersea Arts Centre. Thanks to the loud chanting and to the clear messages of hand-made placards and banners, none of the shoppers would have been in any doubt of Shaker's innocence, or of the injustice and disgrace of his lengthy detention, without charge, for twelve years.

Joy Hurcombe, Chair of SSAC, was met at the Arts Centre by Jane Ellison (Con) MP for Battersea, whose constituents include Shaker and his wife and family. Jane Ellison has worked tirelessly on Shaker's behalf, lobbying William Hague and David Cameron. Her recent appointment to the Cabinet as Minister for Public Health means that she cannot now work outside this portfolio; however her decision to send John Hall, her parliamentary representative, to

## Brighton and Hove Amnesty members attend rally for Shaker Aamer (continued from page 1)

she spoke at the rally, confirms her unwavering commitment to the cause of Shaker's freedom.

The speakers at the rally spoke powerfully of Shaker's personal qualities and of the shameful stain upon the UK government and all of us, which his continued incarceration represents. Many had heard Shaker's voice in the week before, during the recent CBS news broadcast in which he calls out loud and strong as the cameras move past his cage. John Hall affirmed that Shaker's innocence is universally known and acknowledged. John McDonnell (Lab) MP emphasised this further and spoke of the growing number of cross-party MPs whose unease with the UK's inability to return him home is resulting in a growing movement within Parliament to bring this about. Jean Lambert (Green) MEP spoke of her weariness and disbelief at the willingness of both the US and UK to put the dictates of their security forces above their commitment to doing the right thing.

Victoria Brittain, former foreign editor of the Guardian, spoke of the relentless strain upon the wives and children of men who are held in detention, and of the corrosive effects upon the ethical standards of this country of our government's increasing refusal to adhere to the UN Declaration of Human Rights. She spoke of the impact upon generations of very young US servicemen, whose mental health has been compromised by years of obeying orders to torture and abuse the detained men. She also noted the fact that on 19<sup>th</sup> November forty retired US generals and admirals signed a letter to US Senator John McCain denouncing Guantanamo and urging its closure and the release of the cleared detainees.

Dr David Nicholl, the neurosurgeon from Birmingham who went on hunger strike in solidarity with Shaker, and who had joined the march with his two children, spoke movingly of his sense of shame at Shaker's continued incarceration, and of the responsibility he felt to his own children in campaigning for the return of Shaker to his wife and children, the youngest of whom has never seen his father.

Aisha Maniar, of the London Guantanamo Campaign, spoke passionately of the responsibility borne by the media in this country, who have consistently ignored the disgraceful incarceration of Shaker, choosing to cover it only during the hunger strike undertaken by the 84 men cleared for release years ago, and then only focusing upon the issue of force feeding, rather than upon the daily torture they have endured for up to twelve years, including daily beatings by the armoured euphemistically named Emergency Response Group.

Steve Bell from the Stop the War Campaign, spoke of the relentless damage done to global communities and human and civil rights by the USA's current position of permanent war and ended by reading out Bobby Sands' last poem, in which he writes of the impossibility of killing the human spirit. Daniel Blaney, vice chair of CND affirmed the ways in which a commitment to war rather than to peace makes the world a more dangerous and unjust place for everyone.

Hamja Assan paid tribute to the women who keep family life together for years and years while their fathers, sons or brothers are indefinitely detained without charge, and spoke of his beloved brother Talha, detained in this country without charge for

six years before being extradited to the US Supermax prison system, where he is held for 23 hours of each day in solitary confinement.

Finally, Andy Worthington, author of *The Guantanamo Files*, (2007) in which he singlehandedly detailed the names and circumstances of each of the 774 men inside Guantanamo at a time when even the USA had no record of this information, thereby bringing their plight to the attention of the world, spoke of his exasperation at having tried every method he can think of to bring about the release of Shaker, and of all the other men declared innocent by the USA, with no success whatsoever. He spoke of the astonishing spirit of Shaker, who, even after twelve years inside, far from being institutionalised, still has the energy and spirit to speak out powerfully for those even less fortunate than himself in that dreadful place. Andy urged us to keep up the pressure on William Hague and David Cameron, as he remains convinced that a phone call to President Obama from our Prime Minister, could bring about Shaker's release instantly. The message of all the speakers was: President Obama has declared his intention of closing Guantanamo Bay; urge our government to support him by welcoming Shaker back to the UK immediately.

*Maude*

### **Write to:**

**Prime Minister David Cameron,  
10 Downing St, London SW1A  
2AA**

**Foreign Secretary William  
Hague, King Charles Street,  
London SW1A 2AH**

**Shaker Aamer 239; Camp Delta,  
PO Box 160, Washington DC  
20053, USA**

**Matthew Barzun, Ambassador,  
Embassy of the United  
States, 24 Grosvenor  
Square, London, W1K 6AH**

## Afghan Women's Rights Campaign



Samira Hamidi with two young activists from Kent University, Annabelle Spooner and Caitlin Webb

I went to the Parliamentary Event on 6th November, organised by AIUK to promote the

Afghan Women's Rights Campaign, and hosted in the Speaker's House. Unfortunately Caroline Lucas, my MP, was kept away by Parliamentary business, but was good to meet fellow activists, and I was very pleased to meet again Horia Mosadiq, the AI researcher for Afghanistan; and Samira Hamidi, director of the Afghan Women's Network who both took part in the skillshare day in March. The novelist and activist Natasha Walter spoke to us about her visit to Afghanistan in 2002, and the need to keep up the pressure on the UK government. Samira spoke to us, very

incisively and positively, about Inclusive Security, and the difficulties of policing the rise of violence against women in Afghanistan. The slide show exhibition of creative actions was impressive, and I think we were all inspired to go on trying: to help Afghan women to achieve the restoration they are fighting for; and to get the UK government to support their work, in material and sustainable ways.

Gwyneth

WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS

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GREETINGS CARD  
AND LETTER-WRITING  
CAMPAIGN 2013



Write for Rights  
Greeting card and letter writing  
campaign 2013

Join us at the Friends Meeting  
House, Ship Street, Brighton.  
From 10am to 4pm  
Saturday 7th December.

Join us to write to the 13 cases outlined in this years campaign <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2013>.

We will also be getting creative and decorating Doves, as a symbol of peace, for COFADEH - The committee of relatives of the detained and disappeared in Honduras.

You will, of course, be able to eat our delicious home made cakes and have a warming cup of tea or coffee while you write.



### Feedback from Write for Rights 2012

"Amnesty members have spoken for us when we could not speak. They have helped send a clear message to the individuals and institutions that oppress us to respect human rights and those human rights are women's rights"

Jenni Williams of WOZA  
(Women of Zimbabwe Arrise)

"Most of all I was touched by the messages and letters I received from children, which

gave me even more strength. It is impossible to imagine children in this country being encouraged by parents to write in support of activists abroad"

Mehman Huseynov, Azerbaijan

"Dear Amnesty International freinds , we have received beautiful cards and letters through the post with messages for COFADEH's 30th anniversary on 30 November. Thank you so much, we feel truly

accompanied by wonderful people like you."

COFADEH (The committee of relatives of the detained and disappeared in Honduras)



## **Local Events Notice Board**

### **Benefit Concert for Amnesty**

Carols, Readings, Mince Pies and mulled wine  
22nd December, 6.30pm  
St John's Sub Castro, Lewes  
Tickets £10 from Lewes Tourist information

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### **Carol Singing at Brighton Station at 6pm. Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December**

All welcome to join this fundraising initiative organised by Lewes resident Roger Fenn to raise money for Amnesty International. No need to contact Roger in advance – just turn up on the evening! (For more information contact Roger Fenn: [roger.fenn@gmail.com](mailto:roger.fenn@gmail.com))

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Brighton Anti Fascists Host a DIY Christmas Fair  
Cowley Club, London Road, Brighton  
Saturday 14th December  
12noon to 6pm

Local groups will gather to raise awareness of their campaigns

### **BRIGHTON & HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS**

**Chair** – Emma [brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com](mailto:brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com) Tel: 01273 232397

**New Member Secretary:** Sue Tel: 07790 755921

**Mail Secretary:** Volunteer needed

**Email Secretary:** Emma Tel: 01273 232397 **Group Email:** [brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com](mailto:brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com)

**Minutes Secretary:** Catherine 07759 271399

**Treasurer:** Catherine 07759 271399

**Newsletter editor:** - Emma Parker: Tel: 01273 232397

Please email any contributions for the newsletter to [brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com](mailto:brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com)

**Lanes collection organiser:** - Catherine 07759271399

**Web Site co-ordinator:** Michael Fisher - [michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com](mailto:michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com)

**Amnesty Stalls co-ordinator**—Jill Francis—01273 621697

### **Campaign Co-ordinators:**

**Afghanistan—Women's Rights**—Gwyneth [gwyneth.jones@ntlworld.com](mailto:gwyneth.jones@ntlworld.com)

**Prisoner of Conscience – The Displaced People of Tawargha (Libya)** Jill Francis—[jrfrancis@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jrfrancis@hotmail.co.uk)

**Prisoner of Conscience—MOHAMED SAYED IBRAHIM ABDEL LATIF (Egypt)**—Celia Stubbs—01273 593833

**Security and Human Rights**—Michael—[michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com](mailto:michaelowenfisher@hotmail.com)

**Arms Trade Treaty**—Luke [lukebeale@hotmail.com](mailto:lukebeale@hotmail.com)

**Amnesty Websites:** international - [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) AI UK - [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) local group - [www.amnesty.org.uk/brighton](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/brighton)

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

**Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre** - Tel: 0207 0331500

