



THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER

Forthcoming Brighton and 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 February 2013
Group Meeting

7th March
Guest speaker from
Survivors Speak Out Network
Freedom from Torture
and
Business meeting
7.30pm to 10pm

4th April
Guest speaker
Medicin Sans Frontier

2nd May
Business meeting and Group AGM

6th June
Speaker from Syrian Non Violence
Movement

Letter writing evenings

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

28th February
Host Jill 01273 621697

—please contact Emma on 01273
232397 if you would like to host a letter
writing evening

Monthly Collection

23rd February
Contact Catherine : 07828
584430 to volunteer

Monthly Stall

12th February
@Duke of York Cinema
Contact Jill 01273 621697

NO starring Gael Garcia Bernal



Amnesty have joined forces with a new, Oscar nominated Chilean film "No". The film is based on the real-life events surrounding the 1988 referendum for democracy in Chile, with acclaimed actor Gael Garcia Bernal in the lead role. The film goes on UK national release on 8th February. However, special Amnesty screenings will be taking place at Picturehouse Cinemas across the country on 12th February.

So Please join us at the Duke of York Cinema in Brighton at 6.30pm on 12th February where members of the group will have a stall with information about Amnesty's work in Chile.

We are also delighted that we will be welcoming Luis Munoz who will give a short talk before the film about his personal experience under Pinochet and why the fight for human rights still matters in Chile today.

Luis is a Chilean exile who spent two years in concentration camps in Chile before coming to the UK in 1977. He is the author of book

"Being Luis" a Chilean life, Impress Books 2005.

Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International UK, said:

"Augusto Pinochet was the mastermind of horrific human rights abuses in Chile during his military junta. Sanctioned by him, thousands of people were subjected to torture, unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, illegal detentions and forcible transfers."

"Men, women and children were rounded up in their droves by the military and taken from their homes, most were never seen alive by their families again. Amnesty International is still supporting families and Chilean local organisations that are assiduously pursuing justice for the victims."

To see a trailer of the film see :
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=u_h57rUnsSc

Emma

More Reasons for a Bullet-Proof Arms Treaty

In the Spring of 2012 there was a coup d'etat in Mali by the military, who overthrew the elected government just before planned elections could go ahead. Amnesty International has documented human rights abuses by the Malian military, including extra-judicial killings. It is this government that France, the US and Britain are supporting to fight Islamic militants and Tuareg nationalists in the north of the country.

These rebels and militants in the north are increasingly heavily armed, as a direct result of arms flowing from Libya after the 2011 war and intervention by Western forces. For many years Britain had been arming Gaddafi's government in Libya, switching their support to the rebels/militants in 2011. It is these same weapons that are now being used by Malian military groups opposed to the military rule in Mali, and opposed to French intervention.

A direct result of the French intervention is the hostage crisis in neighbouring Algeria, in which 23 hostages and 32 militants have been killed (at the time of writing). The militants involved are from Mali, and cited the French intervention as the reason for their actions.

All this underscores again the need for an internationally binding set of rules governing the sale of arms, to try and prevent them being used for such human rights abuses. Thankfully, this March, the world's governments are to agree the terms of an international Arms Trade Treaty – the first global treaty regulating the international trade and transfer of weapons.

Oliver Sprague, Amnesty UK's Arms Programme Director, said recently:

"To be effective, this Treaty must have strong and binding rules at its heart that stop anyone supplying or brokering weapons where it is likely that they could facilitate serious human rights violations. In short, it must be bulletproof."

Luke
Control Arms Co-ordinator

Report back from EGM

On 12th January, several members of the Brighton and Hove Amnesty group attended an Extraordinary General Meeting, held in London. This had been called by members in response to the increase in contributions by Amnesty International UK to the International movement and the restructuring and redundancies that had resulted from this.

Four of the special resolutions considered were passed. For full details of all the resolutions and response from Ciarnan Helferty, Chair of the AIUK board, please go to www.amnesty.org.uk/egm. Here are a few thoughts from myself and group member, Gwyneth:

There was a great turnout of about 650 people. Due to the proxy votes and block votes for groups (10 per group) the number of votes cast for each resolution was between 2100 and 2400. Mostly the proceedings were good natured, although there were some very emotional and heartfelt arguments on both sides.

For each resolution to be carried it needed a vote in favour of 75% or

more. So although 3 resolutions were not carried, all of them got votes of over two thirds in favour. In fact one resolution only failed by 0.3%. This clearly goes to show the strength of feeling involved and I am sure, must serve as a call to the board to take it's membership seriously.

The attendance of Kate Allen, director of AIUK and Salil Shetty, Secretary General of AI, left no doubt about how seriously the EGM was taken both nationally and on an international level.

Importantly the resolutions that were carried mean that International Secretariat will have to be a lot more accountable about how the money that is sent from the UK section is spent. Also that the UK section will not be able to make any major reorganisation without approval at the AGM.

Gwyneth felt that she came away from the EGM with more questions than answers! " maybe the format of an EGM defined what could be said and what could be discussed,

but I was disappointed (before I even got there) that everything was so focused on a poorly managed redundancy operation, whereas I wanted to know what had gone wrong with the whole implementation of Moving Closer to the Ground: what was behind all these high-level resignations and protests, and why so many people, members, sections and stakeholders were so extremely uneasy."

There will be a discussion on "improving AIUK following the EGM" at the SE Conference on 23rd February in Canterbury. This will take the format of a discussion on where AIUK goes after the difficulties surrounding the cut backs and the EGM. A panel of four will give their own views with plenty of time for discussion from the floor.

Please come and hear more and add your views. See page 3 of this newsletter for full details of the Regional conference.

*Emma
Brighton and Hove Amnesty Group Chair*

Amnesty International South East Regional Conference Canterbury, Saturday 23rd February 2013



St.Peter's Methodist Hall, 12 St.Peter's St, Canterbury CT1 2BE

Details have now been confirmed for the South East Regional Conference and here is the agenda for the day.

It will be a full day, starting at 10am and finishing at 4pm. Guest speaker Kim Joo-il was in the North Korean military but managed to leave the country and now campaigns for greater democracy in the country. Also speaking is Ian Cobain who will talk about persistent British government involvement in torture. You will have the chance to take part in one of the four workshops and the day will end with feedback on the recent EGM.

If you have not already booked your place and you wish to attend then contact Philip on philynda@btinternet.com. The cost for the day is £4.00 which covers a vegetarian buffet lunch, tea and coffee.

10.00 am	Welcome	Huw Kyffin (Chair of Canterbury Group)
10.05 am	Kim Joo-il	A North Korean military defector. NB. Not Kim Jong-il (previous premier)
10.50 am	Tea/Coffee	
11.10 am	Four Workshops running concurrently. If possible indicate beforehand which you intend to attend.	Lisa Incedon: "Adequate Housing"
		Marilyn Jarrett: "Afghan Women"
		Angus Watson: "Defending Human Rights in UK"
		Philip Strudwick: "Campaigning for Individuals"
12.40 pm	Lunch	
1.40 pm	Isobel Mitchell	"The Education Department at AIUK. Youth Groups and Student Groups"
2.20 pm	Ian Cobain	Author of "Cruel Britannia: A Secret History of Torture"
3.00 pm	Tea/Coffee	Book signing by Ian Cobain
3.20 pm	From EGM to AGM. Discussion on the future structure and role of AIUK.	Panel: Cris Burson-Thomas (Board), Ruth Breddal (Standing Orders Committee), Huw Kyffin (Chair of Canterbury Group), Philip Strudwick (SE Regional Representative)
4.00 pm	Close	Huw Kyffin

WRITE FOR RIGHTS



Our Greetings card Camping event last December went very well. Thank you everyone who joined, volunteered, helped and brought a smile during the day.

It was a very chilly day and lots of people came for a cup a warm tea and homemade cake. Kate Allen and the Mayor joined us for hours and wrote quite a few letters. By the end of the day we collected around 250 cards and letters.

We would like to share some of the pictures we took during the day. Looking forward to see all at the next event.

Big thank you to DellaLupa, Danny and Jim for the extraordinary music; Jill, Celia, Freya, Angus, Emma - even if she had a terrible cold she baked delicious cakes.

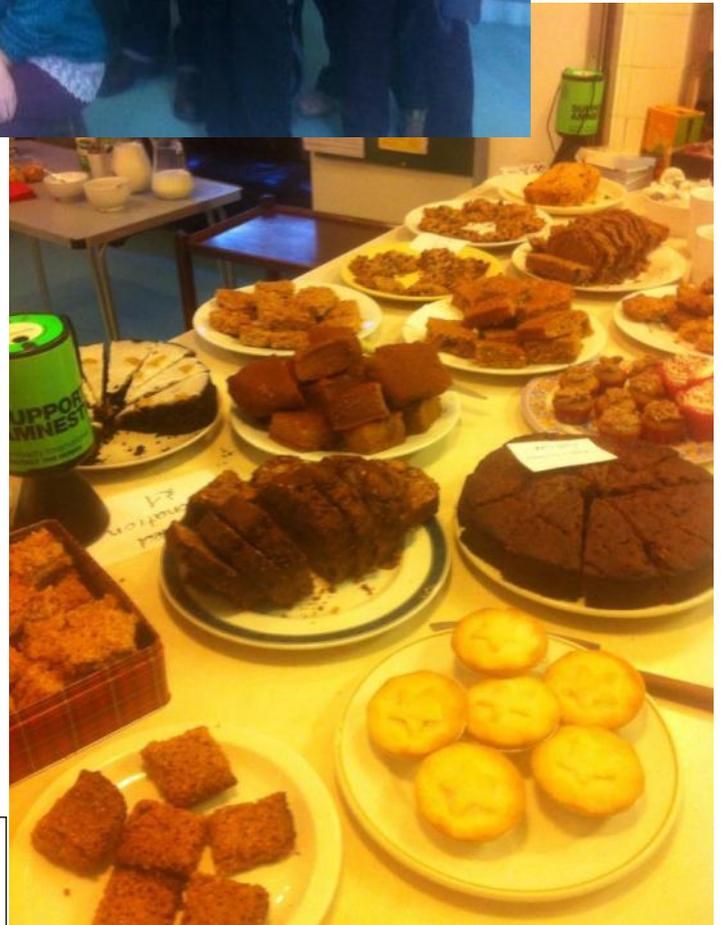
Ester



Left—thank you to the talented local musicians who entertained us during the day

Busy making '239 badges' in support of Shaker Aamer (right)

Below —Brighton and Hove City Mayor, Councillor Bill Randall, his wife The Mayoress Mrs Heather Randall and Kate Allen, director of Amnesty UK join local Amnesty supporters to campaign for solidarity with young Afghani women. (Look out for more on this campaign in the coming months)



A selection of the delicious home made cakes on offer



Take Action

INCREASE SUPPORT LEVELS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Those fleeing conflict and persecution should not be left impoverished in the UK.

The great majority of asylum seekers who arrive in the UK are required to live on just over £5 a day. Income Support is set at what is considered to be the minimum amount people need to meet their basic living needs. But many asylum seekers have to survive on the equivalent of just 52% of Income Support while waiting for the Home Office to make a decision on their asylum application. Since most asylum seekers are not allowed work, they have just £5 a day to cover essentials such as food, toiletries clothing and travel (housing and utility bills are paid for separately for those with nowhere to live). While individuals can survive on this amount for a few days, they cannot do so in the long term without any serious consequences to their health.

We are asking MPs to support our call to review the current policy and increase asylum support levels to at least 70% of Income Support – the equivalent of £7 day for a single adult over 25. This would allow asylum seekers to meet their most basic essential living needs while waiting for a decision on their application.

This is how you can help:

Write to your local MP

Write to your MP to ask them to support this policy and write to their Party Leader or Home Secretary. A sample letter is included in the newsletter. If you have time to write a personal letter this would be more effective.

Organise a meeting with your local MP to discuss this issue

Many members of the public, including MPs, have negative attitudes towards asylum seekers which are based on misconceptions. It is vital that all MPs consider the policy issues in a balanced way based on factual information. Further information including a Q and A sheet is available on the Amnesty web site <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10046> It is particularly important to engage with MPs from Labour and the other opposition parties as they are beginning to review their policy positions in the lead up to the next general election.

January Stall

'January brings the snow' but luckily it had melted in Sydney Street for our monthly stall on Sat. 19th. It was still perishingly cold and despite this we decided to hold it for one hour. Peter and Gwyneth bravely volunteered along with Celia and myself as usual.

We had two themes for the stall. Firstly our 'Prisoners of Conscience', the displaced people of Tawargha in Libya. Thirty thousand were pushed out of their town by the military, who were punishing them for allegedly supporting Gadaafi. Their homes were plundered and burnt. These people are now scattered throughout Libya. Some have been detained and some have been tortured. Our petition calls for the interim government to reinstate these people and compensate them for their treatment.

The second subject was Shaker Aamer, who has been at Guantanamo for 11 years now. He was ordered to be released by Obama in 2007 but this has not been done. He continues to remain imprisoned while his wife and children wait for his return in London. He is now the only British resident left in Guantanamo. We collected 60 signatures for his petition from Amnesty. (Please note there is also an on-line petition to make parliament discuss his case. We need 100,000 signatures so check that you have done it !)

Jill

Brighton and Hove Amnesty International Monthly Meeting Thursday 3rd January 2013

1. Welcome and apologies

Attendees

Freya, Angela, Caroline, Vital, Mike, Angus, Luke B, Emma, Liz, Catherine

2. Film showing: You don't like the truth: 4 days inside Guantanamo

- <http://www.youtdontlikethetruth.com/>

Following this thought provoking and revealing film the group held a discussion on issues brought up such as Islamic discrimination, child soldiers and evidence obtained under torture. This went on for slightly longer than planned so not all items on the agenda were covered. The items are numbered as on the agenda.

5. Lanes Collection

Rota for the Lanes collection on Saturday 26th January was passed around.

There are still three 1 hour slots to fill so if anyone is able to give up an hour of their time to fundraise for Amnesty on the above day please ring Catherine on 07828584430.

10. EGM discussion and vote

Emma passed around confidential voting forms for group members to fill in – the group's vote will be worth 10 single votes at the EGM on Saturday 12th January.

11. Regional conference – 23rd February, Canterbury

All who wish to attend the regional conference are to let Philip at philynda@btinternet.com know so they can judge numbers.

12. Any other business

The letter writing group will be meeting at Emma's house Thursday 24th January from 7.30pm. Phone Emma (01273 232397) for more information.

Next meeting: Thursday 7th February 2013 8pm. All welcome.

13. 10pm Meeting Closed

Guantánamo: 11 Years of Tortures

The eleventh anniversary of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre fell on 11 January. Here is a summary-by-numbers of those eleven years:

779 detainees have been held in Guantánamo, the vast majority without charge or criminal trial.

166 detainees remain imprisoned as of 19 January 2013.

9 detainees have died in Guantánamo.

12 detainees were under 18 years old when taken into custody.

1 detainee has been given a trial in US federal court.

7 detainees have been convicted by military commission.

6 detainees currently face the possibility of death sentences after unfair trial by military commission.

One of the remaining 166 detainees is Shaker Aamer, a British resident. He was cleared for release in 2007 but is yet to be returned to his family in the UK. The US National Defense Authorisation Act has effectively prevented transfers out of Guantánamo Bay for the past two years. In specific cases, however, the US Secretary of Defense can issue a waiver. There is no evident reason for Shaker Aamer remaining in Guantánamo.

Please add your voice to the campaign to release Shaker Aamer from Guantánamo:

Amnesty petition to the US government:

tinyurl.com/bee4u46

Official UK government petition:

epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/33133

Local Events Notice Board

Brighton and Hove Palestine Solidarity Campaign Public Meeting

Thursday 21 February, 7.30 pm

Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1 1AF

Palestinian Prisoners in Israeli Jails: Brutality, Complicit Firms (e.g. G4S) and Palestinian Resistance

SAEED AMIREH is a young experienced Palestinian speaker from the Palestinian West Bank village of Ni'lin, which is in the frontline of non-violent resistance to the Israeli Occupation. Using previously unshown video material from inside prison that he managed to take himself, he will speak from his own and his family's experience of Israeli arrest, detainment and jail conditions, including torture - realities which almost all Palestinian families have to face. He will also speak about Palestinian prisoners resistance, through non-compliance and hunger strikes, and about the role of complicit firms such as G4S in the operation of the prisons in Israel where Palestinians from the West Bank are held.

There will be time for questions and discussion.

Volunteering Opportunity

Have you ever wanted to run your own radio show? Well here is your opportunity to do just that! :

We would love someone to take over the Amnesty Show on Radio Free Brighton. Just 30mins per month would be great and we have volunteers keen to support someone who would come in and read some Amnesty stories, talk about some particular campaigns they know about in a little more depth and tell people how they can get involved. If you are interested please call the station on 01273 601804 or my mobile 07799564620 and I'll look after them myself.

Jackie

BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS

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Newsletter editor: - Emma Parker: Tel: 01273 232397

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

Lanes collection organiser: - Catherine 07828 584430

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

Amnesty Stalls co-ordinator—Jill Francis—01273 621697

Campaign Co-ordinators:

Prisoner of Conscience – The Displaced People of Tawargha Jill Francis—jrfrancis@hotmail.co.uk

Prisoner of Conscience—MOHAMED SAYED IBRAHIM ABDEL LATIF—Celia Stubbs—01273 593833

Death Penalty— Ester Zanetti —esterfederica@gmail.com

Control Arms; securing the Arms Trade Treaty —Luke Beale—lukebeale@hotmail.com

End Forced Evictions: Poverty and Human Rights—Freya - freya_lyte@hotmail.co.uk

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) - Caroline—carolineoreilly@scola.ac.uk

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

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