



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

5th February

Trainer Patrick Ballin
Lobbying for the General Election

5th March

Business meeting and rehearsal of
Even if we lose our lives

2nd April

Speaker from the Kurdish
Community
Dr Salima Tasdemir

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:

Thursday 19th February
At Emma's House
Tel: 01273 232397

Monthly Collection

21st February
Contact Julian
julianwatmore@gmail.com
07583334740

Monthly Stall's

21st February
Sydney Street
Contact Jill 01273 621697

Coach to Guantanamo Demo

14th February
See page 3 for details

Live reading of

Even if we lose our lives
7th March 2015
New Venture Theatre

Even If We Lose Our Lives

First hand accounts from Afghan Women
Human Rights defenders

Scripted by Christine Bacon for Ice & Fire Theatre Company, in collaboration with Amnesty International

“Parween” voiced by Madeline Peasgood

“Manizha” voiced by Alex Kenney

“Dr D” voiced by Sandra Mills

The Men's voices: David Benedictus

The Girls' voices: Catherine Forman

Produced by Gwyneth Jones

Christine Usher, Amnesty International UK Middle East Country Coordinator, will lead a discussion about the future for women in Afghanistan, after the performance.

New Venture Theatre
7th March 2015 7.30pm

Places to be reserved by email: donations to Amnesty International welcome at the event. New Venture Theatre Bedford Place, Brighton, BN1 2PT. Inquiries: boxoffice@newventure.org.uk brightonand-hoveai@googlemail.com

Even If We Lose Our Lives at the New Venture Theatre

Following our success, reading *Even If We Lose Our Lives* (interviews with Afghan Women Human Rights Defenders, scripted for Amnesty as part of the Afghan Women's Rights Campaign) with Radio Free Brighton last May, we decided to look for a venue for a live performance. On Saturday 17th of January we had a meeting at the New Venture Theatre, Bedford Place, with Mike Stubbs, a member of the NVT company. NVT, a not-for-profit theatre company with a great reputation, is donating a cabaret performance space with all facilities (including a bar for snacks and drinks) for a one night show in March. It's a great venue, exactly what we needed. We had the pleasure of Mike's keeping a professional eye on our first live run through, plus a tour of this very interesting old building afterwards. Everything went extremely well, and we're hoping to make the live show a memorable evening. Many thanks to all concerned, and especially to the NVT, our generous hosts.

Even If We Lose Our Lives, an account of what

three women have done and sacrificed for their country, through years of danger and war, is a powerful and moving experience, for the performers as well as audience. We hope we can do them justice, and make our show on 7th March (International Women's Day weekend) a celebration of their achievements and their amazing courage.

Gwyneth



New venture theatre, Bedford Place

SHAKER AAMER – update

The Parliamentary Meeting hosted on 24th November 2014 by John McDonnell MP foregrounded the continuing work of the Save Shaker Aamer Campaign – referred to as 'indomitable' by one of the speakers, Victoria Brittain. It also highlighted continuing campaigning by a range of individuals who have never stopped battling for Shaker's release, including Victoria Brittain; Kate Hudson, Chair of CND; Louise Christian; Dr David Nicholls, Andy Worthington, who launched the We Stand for Shaker initiative, and many others who spoke from the floor. The meeting also launched John McDonnell's new All Party Parliamentary group for Shaker Aamer.

This group is now up and running, with over 40 MPs signed up, and focusing upon parliamentary means to work consistently on Shaker's case. They are setting up meetings with David Cameron and the Foreign Secretary. They will organise a delegation to Washington. They are concerned at the fact that, while paying lip-service to a supposed commitment to justice and to the release of Shaker Aamer, deep within the heart of government there is a resistance to his release. In the opinion of many within Parliament, this is because Shaker Aamer can expose the collusion of our government with other governments in rendition and torture. This secrecy exists not to protect our state, but to protect those who keep the secrets of wrongdoing. Believing that the life of an innocent man is worth more than this fear on the part of those in power, and that our democracy is suffi-

ciently robust to admit to its own mistakes, John McDonnell is contacting all party candidates in each constituency to get a more systematic campaign going from inside the House.

The group has sent letters to the media and is also moderating media coverage of Shaker, which developed a wide reach in papers as diverse as the *Daily Mail*; *Times*; *Independent*; *Telegraph* and *Guardian*. Media coverage was also discussed at the January meeting of the Save Shaker Aamer Campaign, which was attended by members of a range of Amnesty groups as well as by Sara Birch, Chair of the Lewes group. While welcoming much good reporting, the meeting voiced concern at the content of some of the media reports, which, as well as referring to Guantanamo as 'the Cuban prison camp' also stated that Shaker is cleared for release to Saudi Arabia, where he would not be safe, despite having a home in Battersea with his British wife and children. The meeting also organised an action for 14th February 2015, the 13th anniversary of the incarceration of Shaker in Guantanamo Bay, with a solemn procession from Trafalgar Square to Downing Street.

During the intervening weeks, SSAC's weekly vigils on Wednesdays outside the House of Commons have continued, with indomitable campaigners humbly standing in often gruelling weather to remind our elected representatives of Shaker's plight. Shaker's wife Zineera has written a heart-rending letter to David Cameron, which was pub-

lished in *The Independent* [http://www.theindependenceconversation.com/2015/01/17/news-guantanamo-prison-wife-pleads-with-pm-to-secure-release-morning-star-online/and-their-daughter, Johina, talked exclusively to BBC News-beat about the effects of her father's incarceration on her family.](http://www.theindependenceconversation.com/2015/01/17/news-guantanamo-prison-wife-pleads-with-pm-to-secure-release-morning-star-online/and-their-daughter-Johina-talked-exclusively-to-BBC-News-beat-about-the-effects-of-her-father-s-incarceration-on-her-family) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/30816186>.

As well as linking arms with global leaders in Paris to defend human rights, David Cameron met with Barack Obama in Washington. According to Nicholas Watt in *The Guardian*, Mr Obama has given an undertaking to Mr Cameron that he will prioritise the case of Shaker Aamer, amid fears in the UK that he could be deported to Saudi Arabia. The president told the prime minister in talks at the White House that he understood that the Aamer case is a matter of great interest in Britain, though he said that he would act in a way that protects US national security. A British source was quoted as saying that they see Mr Obama's response as a step forward: <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jan/16/shaker-aamer-guantanamo-bay-prioritise-obama-case>

Caroline Lucas MP (Brighton pavilion) has shared with her constituents the response to her **Question:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to his counterpart in the US for Shaker Aamer to be among the prisoners expected to be released from Guantánamo Bay within the next two weeks. (220001) Tabled on: 07 January 2015

Answer: Mr Tobias Ellwood: Shaker Aamer's case remains a high priority for the UK Government, and Ministers and officials continue to make clear to the US that we want him released and returned to the UK as a matter of urgency. The answer was submitted on 12 Jan 2015 at 16:41.

Morris Davies, who resigned as Chief Prosecutor in the Guantanamo Military Commissions after having been chastised by Brigadier-General Tom Hartmann for refusing to use 'enhanced interrogation techniques' upon, among others, Mohamedou Ould Slahi, wrote in outrage in the *Guardian* at the continued denial of justice for Slahi and other innocent detainees long cleared for release. Mohamedou Ould Slahi's eloquent and detailed diary of his torture is now being published in the *Guardian*. This, and the film *Doctors from the Dark Side*, shown at the last meeting of the Brighton Amnesty group, continues to shame us. We continue to use our shame to raise our voices for Shaker, so that now both Cameron and Obama can be in no doubt that yes, indeed, Shaker's case is a matter of great interest in Britain.

For a full report of the protest on 11th January marking the 13th anniversary of Guantanamo see

<http://london Guantanamo campaign blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/is-this-who-we-are-london-marks-13.html>

Our shame and anger at the forthcoming 13th Anniversary of his continued incarceration can be voiced in the SSAC protest. Lewes, Brighton and Hove and Sussex University Amnesty Groups have organised a coach to go to the protest on 14th February. See below for details.

24th January 2015
Maude

Save Shaker Aamer Campaign March and DEMO at PARLIAMENT SQUARE and DOWNING STREET

14th February 2015

Speakers confirmed: Victoria Brittain author/journalist, Lindsey German STWC, Bruce Kent CND, Yvonne Ridley broadcaster, Joy Hurcombe Chair SSAC, and spokesperson from LGC, plus Members of Parliament and many others invited Re-prieve, Amnesty, We Stand With Shaker etc.

A coach has been organised to take Amnesty supporters from Brighton and Lewes. There will be pick up points in Brighton (Old Steine), Sussex University and Lewes. With the march due to begin at midday.

Pick up times 8am Brighton Old Steine, 8.30am Sussex University, 9am

Minimum suggested donations for tickets - £12 (waged) and £6 (unwaged/concessions). Tickets will be available from Skylark in the Needlemakers, Lewes (tel: 01273 479418 from Tuesday 27th January or please contact me should you wish to reserve a ticket/tickets by email brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com or calling me on 01273 232397.

Please join us on 14th February and show your support for Shaker Aamer.

A busy year! A look back at 2014

2014 has been a busy and important year for Brighton and Hove Amnesty, not least because the group celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. The group was formed in October 1964, only 3 years after Peter Benenson wrote the article "The forgotten prisoners" in the Observer newspaper which was the start of Amnesty International. To celebrate our active past, we held a stall at the Brighton Train Station in November displaying a wonderful collage of activities carried out over the years. Local MP Caroline Lucas and Kate Allen both attended.



Brighton and Hove Group celebrate our 50th Anniversary

The year began on 11th January with members of both the Lewes and Brighton and Hove Groups travelling up to London for the 12th Anniversary demonstration to call for the closure of Guantanamo. Unfortunately 2015 has started in much the same way, with Guantanamo remaining open and the last British Resident to be held in Guantanamo, Shaker Aamer, still incarcerated. He has now been behind bars for 13 years having received no charge or trial, having never seen his youngest child and having been cleared for release by both the US and UK Governments.



Another big campaign for our group this year has been the Afghan Women's Rights Campaign. Our group met local MP Caroline Lucas who pledged to be a parliamentary champion for Amnesty International's campaign. This means she has been lobbying ministers extensively to both raise awareness of the work Women Human Rights Defenders are undertaking to help rebuild Afghanistan, and also about the urgent need to ensure these incredibly inspiring women are given the support and protection they need.



Caroline Lucas mp supports Afghan women's rights campaign

'I don't really understand why we were targeted, because I was not doing anything controversial. I was simply helping women'

To raise further awareness of this campaign, group members recorded a script reading of 'Even if we lose our Lives' by Christine Bacon, in collaboration with Amnesty UK. The script is in support of Amnesty's ongoing campaign to end violence against women in Afghanistan and was aired on local Radio Free Brighton and made available to listen online. We are now working on a live performance followed by a Q & A with Amnesty's Afghanistan Country Coordinator at a local theatre over the weekend of International Women's Day, on 7th March.



Brighton and Hove's cast of 'Even if we lose our lives' outside Under the Bridge Studio after the radio recording



*Below and left
Jumble and cakes!*



Campaigning and lobbying for Human Rights is not always free, and so as well as our monthly Lanes Collection outside the Brighton Friends Meeting House, our group held a number of fundraising events throughout 2014 to support AIUK as well as our local work. Following the success of our Auction of Promises Event in 2013, we carried out a Silent Auction with prizes ranging from a meal for two at a local restaurant, tickets for the Brighton Wheel and Afternoon Tea at the Grand. We raised over £400 as well as helped to promote local businesses and raise awareness of Human Rights. Our first ever jumble sale was a great success with queues down the street waiting for us to open the doors as we struggled to get the jumble sorted in time! As ever we are always ready with the tea and cakes at all our events. We continue to hold a monthly collection, and once again, with a license from the council, held our annual street collection where numerous dedicated volunteers took to the streets of Brighton to collect funds from passers-by.

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

These are the words of Ihar Tsikhanyuk, a gay drag performer from Belarus who has been intimidated and ill-treated by police.

Noxolo Nogwaza, a 24 year old lesbian, 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.

Brighton and Hove Amnesty International campaigned for justice for both these cases at this year's PRIDE event, and all together collected 150 cards in solidarity and support of them. A group member who ran the stall this year said "it was good to be part of Pride, celebrating freedom for LGBTI people in Brighton and calling for the same throughout the world. Our group runs monthly stalls outside the Amnesty Bookshop, promoting different campaigns and talking with the public about all kinds of Human Rights issues.



Supporting LGBT rights at Pride 2014

Ending the year as always in December with our Annual Write for Rights Letter Writing Vigil, the group wrote hundreds of letters throughout one day in support of this year's Human Rights cases, heard music from local school pupils as well as a local choir, Naked Voices, ate delicious home baked cakes and decorated paper feathers to send to a Human Rights Defender in Nicaragua. The Mayor and Mayoress, Caroline Lucas and Kate Allen all came to show their support.



*Write for Rights 2014
Cards and
peace cranes*

Our monthly meetings continued to inspire and motivate us all to do more this year, with speakers from the Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group, Philippines Stop Torture Campaign, author and activist Luis Munoz, and Amnesty's country coordinator for Libya coming to talk with us and share their knowledge and experiences.

Catherine

Write for Rights 2014



A group tweet for Dr AI Roken

The day was held at the Friends Meeting House in Brighton on Saturday 6th of December. We started at 10am by greeting the Mayor and Mayoress of Brighton and Hove. We were also delighted that about 16 students from Brighton and Hove High School came along to help following Maude's talk at their assembly a few weeks ago. They were great at serving refreshments, entertained us by playing the violin and wrote lots of greeting cards. They also taught us how to make paper peace cranes which we are getting together with the Lewes group to send to Hakamado Iwao (the belief is that if you make 1,000 then your wish will come true). We have over 500 to send to Hakamado from the letter writing event and we hope that with Lewes group we will be able to send 1,000 cranes to AI in Japan to pass on to Hakamado. We also made some lovely quetzal feathers to send to Guatemala.

We were delighted that Caroline Lucas mp and Kate Allen were able to join us in the afternoon and that our photo of them with the 'wish you were here' placard for Dr AI Roken was retweeted to thousands via AI UK, AI UAE and Caroline Lucas. We were entertained in the afternoon by 'Naked Voices' a local singing group.

Altogether we wrote around 330 letters and cards, made feathers, tweeted 'wish you were here' to Dr AI Roken, made loads of peace cranes and were very pleased to welcome Sam and Nick from Amnesty head office who were filming for a piece that they are making to show at this year's national AGM.

Emma

To look at all the pictures of the letter writing day and our events throughout the year go to <https://www.flickr.com/groups/amnestybrighton/pool>



*Above—busy writing letters
Below—Naked voices provide entertainment
Bottom—Brighton and Hove Mayor takes Twitter action for Dr AI Roken with pupils from Brighton and Hove High School*





Brighton and Hove Mayor, Councillor Brian Fitch with pupils from Brighton and Hove High School



Caroline Lucas mp and Kate Allen



Below clockwise:

Questzel feathers for Yolanda Oqueli in Guatamala

Peace Cranes for Hakamado Iwao in Japan

Cards ready to post

Jade and George donate a box of 300 peace cranes



Take Action

RAIF BADAWI started a website called "Saudi Arabian Liberals". In 2008 he was arrested on a charge of apostasy. He had stated that he was Muslim but "everyone had a choice to believe or not believe". After a day of questioning he was released but his bank account was frozen and he was forbidden to leave the country. In 2012 he was arrested again for "ridiculing religious figures" and "going beyond the realm of obedience". He had suggested that the Imam Muhammad ibn Saud University had become "a den of terrorists." In 2013 he was found guilty of creating a website that "violates Islamic values and propagates liberal thought" and sentenced to 7 years in prison and 1,000 lashes. The same year his wife and 3 children escaped to asylum in Canada. His lawyer Waleed Abukhair was sentenced to 15 years for setting up an organisation called Monitor of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia. In 2014 Raif's sentence was increased to 10 years, a fine of \$267,000 and 1,000 lashes. He was imprisoned in Jeddah; after release he would be banned from leaving the country for ten years and permanently banned from using online media. He would be taken out to a public square every Friday and receive 50 of the thousand lashes. This began on Friday 9th January 2015.

Please write to the King of Saudi Arabia asking that he put a stop to this cruel and degrading treatment. You can write your own letter or use the one with this newsletter.

Thank you. Celia

BRIGHTON & HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS

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

Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre - Tel: 0207 0331500

