

Action

July 2015



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

2nd July

Group Business Meeting

Letter Writing Evenings

An evening once a month to sit and write letters with fellow Amnesty members. We are trying out a new venue for these meetings: Al-campo Lounge, London Road, Brighton.. All welcome.

Tuesday 14th July
Tuesday 14th August

Monthly Collection

18th July
15th August
Contact Julian
julianwatmore@gmail.com
07583334740

Monthly Stalls

18th July
Sydney Street
Contact Jill 01273 621697

To see a copy of the video featuring the Brighton and Hove Group at our letter writing vigil in December please see

<https://vimeo.com/124404699>

Silent Auction

Auction sheets inside this Newsletter and on our website
Lots include meals, local attractions, art work, massage, chocolates

Place your bids by **30th July**

Be part of Brighton Pride's 25th Anniversary



Our group is officially taking part in the *Pride Parade* on **Saturday 1st August.**

It's a fantastic opportunity to spread the word about our campaign against LGBT persecution to tens of thousands of people.

It's fun and exciting and we always get a huge cheer from the crowd.

We'll have t-shirts, placards, balloons, stickers to hand out, as well as our own fabulous "*Amnesty International LGBT Rights*" banner.

LETS MAKE A SPLASH!!

For more information contact:

Sue on 01273 321648 / 07790 755921 or

sue@suewilliams44.fsnet.co.uk

N.B. If you want to join in you **MUST** let us know in advance – I'm afraid you can't just turn up on the day.

**A Review of the film -The Look Of Silence (2014)
Dir. Joshua Oppenheimer, Featuring Adi Rukun
Dukes At Komedia Sun 14th June 2015.**

I start by saying that I have never before felt like writing a film review let alone even doing so. This film makes me do it. This is especially so since I had the good fortune to travel extensively in Indonesia, where it is set, during the late 1970s.

In 1965 in Indonesia there was an attempted coup centred on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). It failed and there followed a brutal bloodletting led by the military. In excess of 500,000 people were killed in 1965 – 1966. The winners still rule Indonesia. Many of them are still alive.

The Look of Silence with its earlier companion piece, The Act Of Killing, take testimony from the perpetrators who, in most cases, feel they did no wrong. They won after all. There were to be no Nuremberg Trials – no genocide to own up to.

I have not seen The Act Of Killing but will as soon as I can. They don't follow sequentially. The Look of Silence has a protagonist Adi Rukun, born after the killings whose much older brother was killed in the bloodbath. He visits and talks to the people who actually did the crime – while incongruously giving them eye tests (hence the publicity still). They are filmed describing rather gleefully and in considerable detail what they did to the brother and how hard he was to kill. Others who were part of it reflect on what took place. Little if any remorse is shown.

The mass killers remain living in their local communities. Many of them got rich out of what they did. They are impregnable because of the fear they instilled then and the threat of it returning. It's the same people in power at the top still. So Adi and his mother and father know that their neighbours killed the son but can do nothing to bring justice, peace or closure. The lives they live are what enforced silence looks like.

As a piece of movie making it is of the first order. Camera work, direction and editing are unobtrusive against the narrative but are uniformly excellent. Adi is shown interacting with his family as a frame for the rest of what goes on. This is deeply moving especially the portrayal of his father's late descent into dementia.

There is much more I could say. The timing coincides with early involvement of the US government in the anti-communist war in Vietnam. Good Year on its rubber plantations in Java and Sumatra used slave labour from the concentration camps.

But rather than read my take any more, go out of your way to see it. Get it on DVD when it is released. Tell your friends.

Peter Gwilliam

Refugee Tales

The UK is the only country in Europe which holds people in detention indefinitely, without time limit, sometimes for years on end. It's the only country in Europe which holds people in prisons, without charge, without trial: a practice which is unlawful in the rest of Europe. At the moment of writing, there are approx. 4,000 people held in the 'immigration detention estate' at a cost of £40-70,000 per person per year. (Hansard 2010) This is taxpayers' money paid by the Home Office directly to those private companies under contract to administer some of the 'estate' for them, including G4S, Mitie, Serco, Tascor and GEO. Each year, over 30,000 people pass through these places, which the Home Office calls Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs). Since 2010, 160 children have been held at adult IRCs because Home Office blunders decided they were adults <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2015/06/22/asylum-seeking-children-locked-up-adult-immigration-detention-centre-due-to-home-office-blunders/>. In March 2015, just before the election, a Parliamentary Inquiry resulted in cross-party MPs calling for a time-limit of 28 days. Progress on this has stalled.

For years, several members of Brighton & Hove Amnesty group have worked as volunteer visitors for the charity Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group. We visit people held at the nearest detention centres: Brook House and Tinsley House, where men are detained. We visit one man a week each until he is removed or released.

Every week we sit opposite a person and hear them quietly tell their stories. Over time, we witness the corrosive effects of indefinite detention on the human psyche, body, spirit. In 2014, 353 people were self harming requiring medical attention and 25335 were on the formal 'at risk' register <http://www.no-deportations.org.uk/Media-2014/Self-Harm2014.html>

Not knowing why they are there, or for how long, or how to get out, with the abolition of Legal Aid, creates a state of mind which the UN has defined as torture. The people we visit call each day in this condition 'the longest day'.

This is why GDWG has organised an event each year on 21st June, The Longest Day itself, at the end of Refugee Week. This year, the event took on epic proportions: a long walk in solidarity with the 59.1 million displaced people now walking the globe (UNHCR Global Trends 2014) seeking a place of safety. A walk which some have called an expiation, or a pilgrimage, or a mapping, or a journey. A walk which, in its route from Dover to Crawley via Canterbury, echoes the Canterbury Tales, ending each day with tales. Each of these tales was told by a writer of some renown, from Ali Smith to Chris Cleve, who had spent months listening to the tales of

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The people of Tawargha update

Here is an update to the situation of the displaced people of Tawargha, our groups adopted prisoners' of conscience until recently when the political situation made it impossible for us to continue work on their case.

At the end of May there was a meeting in Tunis, supported by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, between representatives of the Tawargha people and of the city of Misrata. This took place in Tunis because the United Nations is not able to operate in Libya as a result of the continuing breakdown in law and order in Libya, which of

course limits the ability of the Tawargha and Misrata representatives to make progress on the agreement they made in Tunis to work together on ensuring a safe return home for the Tawarghans. There were attempts to start talks early last year that followed the same pattern, of third parties helping to bring the two sides together, to make tentative resolutions about reaching a settlement. As mentioned last October, we will start campaigning again in support of a permanent settlement for the displaced people of Tawargha, as soon as the political authority to deliver on such an objective is re-established in Libya.

UNSMIL Welcomes Misrata-Tawergha Agreement at Tunis Meeting 27-28 May 2015

28 May 2015 – The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) welcomes the agreement reached by the delegations of Misrata and Tawergha at a meeting in Tunis on 28 May 2015 as another important step in achieving justice and ensuring the right of return in safety and dignity of the Tawerghans to their town.

UNSMIL is pleased to have facilitated the meeting of the two delegations and will continue to support this process. Specifically, UNSMIL will support the joint follow-up committee agreed by the two parties, working on the basis of international law and standards in order to achieve accountability, safe and voluntary return to Tawergha and reconciliation. UNSMIL also continues to call for the release of all those detained without legal basis.



UNSMIL believes that this agreement is a significant confidence building step that contributes to the overall efforts to bring peace and security to Libya and ensure the unity of the country. In this regard, UNSMIL stresses the importance and urgency of establishing a Government of National Accord that can shoulder its responsibilities in addressing this and other pressing national issues.

Refugee Tales

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people released from detention temporarily on bail.

It was an unforgettable journey. All who were part of it are changed and profoundly humbled. Setting off, on the first day of Refugee Week, from the Kent mining village of Shepherdswell, we moved through Kent and Sussex, staying each night in a village hall, cooking and eating stupendous vegan food. Everywhere we went, we were welcomed by the people through whose lives we moved: in every town and village, pathway, high street and ring road, with curiosity, hospitality, welcome and solidarity. The finale at the Hawth in Crawley was profoundly moving. Time and again, people in the audience while the tales were recounted, gasped and said: We did not know that these things are happening in Britain, of all countries, and in the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta.

The event was a celebration of the lives of the incredible people who have fled and survived the wars

caused by Western military intervention: hiding in lorries for months drinking their own urine; escaping from wild animals and militias; seeing the burning corpses of their friends and relatives piled in the streets, and of a child who recognized the corpse of her brother in the black waters of the Mediterranean and dived in to hold him for the very last time. Refugees, migrants, asylum seekers: why not simply call them people.

It was also an impetus to action: as people, if we put our heads together, we could create a space ship, or a bridge, or an end to indefinite detention. Please write to your MP and follow the tales on refugeetales.org. We have vowed to continue walking until there is an end to detention. Please write to your MP – you can find out who they are at www.theyworkforyou.com. As a first step, ask them to support an end to indefinite detention and to take action on this issue in Parliament. You can find a sample letter to your MP at: refugeetales.org/getinvolved/act-now-on-indefinite-detention

Maude

Take action

T-SHIRT WEARER’S PRISON SENTENCE EXTENDED.

Belarusian prisoner of conscience Yury Rubtsou has had his prison sentence extended to two years for “refusing to work” in a penal colony. He was originally sentenced for wearing a t-shirt that called on the President of Belarus to resign. His sentence was extended from 18 months to 2 years in May this year. Witnesses at his trial said he was not refusing to work in principle, but instead was protesting against the low wages inside the prison system.

In Belarus civil society activists who try to organize to make their concerns public must operate within the framework of highly restrictive laws, which are applied in ways that violate their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression. Civil society organisations face closure, and individu-

als face prosecution if they criticize the authorities. Any form of public protest, even a one-person picket, requires an express permission from the authorities which is rarely granted. The lack of freedom of peaceful assembly came to the world’s attention in December 2010 when mostly peaceful demonstrators following the presidential elections, were brutally suppressed by law enforcement officers. Hundreds of protesters were beaten, arbitrarily arrested and summarily sentenced. All the main opposition presidential candidates and many prominent opposition activists were imprisoned.

Please sign the attached letter to the President!

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