



## 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 June

Group meeting and film showing  
They are Human Beings  
A moving documentary about  
Asylum seekers in Calais

#### 3rd July

Group Business meeting

#### 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 June

Emma  
01273 232397

#### Monthly Collection

21st June  
19th July  
16th August  
Contact Julian  
julianwatmore@gmail.com

#### Monthly Stall's

Contact Jill 01273 621697  
Next stall  
7th June  
Sydney St

#### Write for Rights 2014

6th December  
Friends Meeting House  
Ship Street  
Brighton

## Even if we lose our lives Scripted by Chistine Bacon



Catherine, Sandra, Madeline, Alex, David and Gwyneth outside Under the Bridge Studio following the recording

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

Afghan women are too often portrayed as faceless, passive victims who are powerless to change the grave human rights abuses they are regularly affected by. But this ignores the countless Afghan women who are fearlessly working to promote women's rights and support their communities.

Members of Brighton and Hove Amnesty Group have made a recording of the script, 'Even if we lose our Lives' by Christine Bacon, in collaboration with Amnesty UK. The script is in sup-

port of Amnesty's ongoing campaign to end violence against women in Afghanistan.

The script is drawn from in-depth interviews with three Afghan women fighting for peace and protection for women's rights in their conflict-affected country.

Many thanks to Under the Bridge studio in Brighton for recording the reading for us. It will be aired on Radio free Brighton and is available to listen to via their website via this

## Even if we lose our lives Scripted by Chistine Bacon (continued from page 1)

link:<http://radiofreebrighton.org.uk/blog/2014/05/14/listen-here-even-if-we-lose-our-lives-scripted-by-chistine-bacon/>

We shall have a link on our web site soon.

Brighton based actress Sandra Mills joined us for the reading:

"I am very much aware of Amnesty and the great work they do within very difficult circumstances so I was pleased to be asked to be part of the recording of "Even if we lose our lives". The first hand accounts of the Afghan women made a particularly difficult read. Speaking these stories out loud made me aware how much I take my own freedom for granted. I didn't even give a second thought about going into a studio and recording myself but this would have been a major step for any woman living in an oppressive society. I hope people really listen to the words and in between the words.

There is a lot that is not spoken."

*Sandra*

Local group member, Madeline says a few words about her experience of doing the reading:

"With considerable difficulty, Gwyneth managed to find a time when nearly all of us could get together to rehearse the reading, a few days before the recording. We had looked hard at the script, and decided it was too long; there had been an "edit" by Jill which we decided was rather too drastic, so we edited as we went along. Somehow we all managed to end up with the same version at the end, no mean feat!

Came Sunday morning 11 May at 10.00, and six of us met at Under the Bridge recording studio. Just entering the building was an adventure in itself and I can only recommend that given the slightest opportunity, you go to see the studio! Gwyneth produced an identical edited text for each of us, to make life

easier as there were no scored out bits to find our way around. We read through most of the text while the technicians set up the recording equipment, then when they were ready, off we went.

The reading went well, with only a couple of small pauses and repetitions of paragraphs. We finished in good time.

The texts themselves are very moving, and as you study them you begin to get an impression of the personalities of the three women. It is quite difficult however to understand their strength and commitment, in spite of terrible sufferings, from the perspective of our relatively cushioned and safe environment.

This was a new venture for me, and I found it very interesting. I am glad to have had the experience, and to have had a tiny insight into the lives of some women in Afghanistan.

*Madeline*

### JAIL SENTENCE FOR IRANIAN STUDENT

For our May Stall we took up the case of Maryam Shafi Pour. Student and Activist Maryam was sentenced to seven years in prison on 2nd March by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran. It found her guilty of spreading propaganda against the system on the internet. She is also banned from pursuing higher education because of her student activism. Maryam has been receiving medication in prison for an irregular heartbeat. After 2 months of solitary confinement she is suffering from skin rashes which have not been treated.

We made a petition calling on the Iranian authorities to release Maryam immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience held for peaceful activism. We asked

that she is granted any medical attention she requires and also to overturn the ban on pursuing university studies.

Many people walking down Sydney Street when asked were sympathetic with the petition and 104 signatures were collected. Some had heard a news story that morning about a Sudanese girl who was being tried for converting from Islam to Christianity which has a death penalty. This case against human rights seemed to open them up to Maryam's plight in Iran.

Iran is a member of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and is required to guarantee and not unduly restrict individuals' right to freedom of expression,

association and assembly. Since the presidential election in 2009, scores of students have been arrested and summoned to serve prison sentences after being convicted in unfair trials.

Our next stall will be on Saturday 7th June outside the Amnesty bookshop in Sydney Street.

If you are interested in volunteering to help on the stall please contact me on 01273 621697

*Jill*

## **UK & BAHRAIN: STABILITY VS. HUMAN RIGHTS**



*The King of Bahrain meets The Queen at Buckingham Palace, 2004. He was also invited to her Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012.*

Amnesty reported in April this year that a number of Bahraini citizens, who had their nationalities revoked in 2012, are now subject to forced exile from the country. One, Shaikh Hussain al-Najati, was forced to leave on 23<sup>rd</sup> April this year with 48 hours' notice, and most of them have been rendered stateless. He was reportedly warned that his family may be harmed if he failed to comply.

According to Human Rights Watch: *"Bahrain's human rights record regressed further in key areas in 2013 and the government made little real progress regarding reforms it claimed to pursue. Security forces continued to arrest scores of individuals arbitrarily in towns where anti-government protests regularly take place. Continuing reports of torture and ill-treatment in detention were consistent with the findings of the 2011 Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). The government's failure to implement key recommendations of the BICI stand in contrast to its claims it is making progress on human rights. The judicial system, headed by ruling family members, has yet to hold any senior official responsible for serious human rights violations that have occurred since 2011, including torture-related deaths in detention."*

This contrasts with the UK Home Office's view: *"2013 saw some positive developments for human rights in Bahrain, but a number of concerns still remain. The government of Bahrain's work to implement its reform programme, particularly in the judicial and security sectors, continue to suggest that the overall trajectory on human rights will be positive, even if a number of the mechanisms and legal frameworks being put in place will take time to have an impact on the ground. The government of Bahrain continues to implement the recommendations set out in the BICI in 2011..."*

In Oct 2012 the UK signed a defence cooperation agreement with Bahrain, and work recently started on the expansion of the UK Maritime Component Command (UKMCC) complex, costing £9.9 million. The UKMCC complex is the British maritime forces' biggest investment on foreign soil. This is in addition to the Coalition government reportedly authorising the sale of £2.25 million of arms to the regime in July 2011, a few months after 35 deaths linked to the uprising, the majority of which were attributable to the government (according to the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry). This week (12<sup>th</sup> May 2014) the Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa is attending the Royal Windsor Horse Show. Ahead of his visit Prince Andrew had this to say: *"I believe that what's happening in Bahrain is a source of hope for many people in the world and a source of pride for Bahrainis."*

The UK Home Office website clearly states its mission in Bahrain: *"In line with the Gulf Initiative, our aim is to help Bahrain to return to a stable and reformist state with a good human rights record, while protecting our significant defence and security interests and enhancing our bilateral relationship."* This statement seems designed to appease all parties – the mention of human rights and reform is welcome, and indicates that the UK is at least paying lip-service to human rights in Bahrain. The focus on 'stability' and 'defence & security interests' however are there to appease UK multinational companies and the Bahraini state, and stand in direct contrast to notions of 'reform'. If a state is cracking down on protest, forcibly evicting opposition, and committing torture, 'stability' seems like the last thing the people of Bahrain need.

Luke

*Crisis & Tactical Campaigns Coordinator*

# Jumble Success

After much hard work and planning by group members we were delighted that the Amnesty jumble sale on Saturday 3rd May was not only great fun but a great success raising over 300 for the group's funds.

Having never had our own jumble sale before we were definitely amateurs. When we turned up an hour before the start of the jumble sale we were amazed to see a queue already forming. These were professional jumble salers and they were rather surprised to see us start to unload jumble from car boots and carry it in while they were waiting. Apparently this is all normally done way in advance. By the time we opened the doors the queue was out of the door and making it's way down the street so the first half hour was mayhem as the jumble sale pros rummaged

through for the bargains and haggled over the prices.

After the initial rush the afternoon became more civilized and much needed refreshments were provided by Jill, Alex and Rachel. Many thanks to Sainsburys who gave Jill a voucher to spend on tea, coffee and milk.

Peter did a good trade on selling raffle tickets thanks to the great prizes donated by Bom banes restaurant, Duke of York, Bowlplex and wine and cider donated by Peter and Gwyneth.

Leftover jumble was gratefully received by SIWA charity shop in Lewes road. Kadija who runs the shop has funds a school and is now saving to buy sewing machines to form a sewing co operative in her home town in Sierra Leone. She wanted to thank everyone very much for



Two young supporters eating delicious home made cakes at the Amnesty jumble sale

the donations that we gave her.

Emma

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

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**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)** 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)

**Stop Torture—Campaign co ordinator needed**

**My Body My Rights**—Catherine 07759 271399

**Tactical Campaigns**—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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