



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 May
Business meeting and Group AGM

6th June
Speaker from Syrian Non Violence Movement

4th July
Training/workshop
Afghan Women's Rights

1st August
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:

16th May
Host Maude
maude.casey@ntlworld.com
This month we will be writing letters for Shaker Aamer

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

Monthly Collection

25th May
Contact Catherine : 07828 584430 to volunteer

Monthly Stall

4th May
Action for our Prisoner of Conscience:
MOHAMED SAYED IBRAHIM ABDEL LATIF
Sydney Street
Contact Jill 01273 621697

ARMS TRADE TREATY - WE WON!



For those of you who haven't heard, on 2nd April 2013 an overwhelming majority of UN member states agreed the world's first Arms Trade Treaty! This is an historic agreement, the first time that there will be an internationally agreed upon set of rules regulating the trade of arms between states. It cannot be overstated how important Amnesty's campaigning has been in achieving this, so thank you to everyone who participated - be it writing to their MP, signing and circulating petitions, or participating in our 'die-in' demonstration.

The vote was won 154-to-3, with 23 abstentions. In the first round of voting, where complete consensus was required to pass the Treaty, Iran, Syria and North Korea voted against it. This meant that the Treaty didn't pass the consensus vote, meaning it was pushed to a second vote at the UN General Assembly (UNGA). At the UNGA only a majority rather than consensus was needed to pass the Treaty, which was comfortably achieved.

While it's fantastic that such a large majority stuck with the Treaty, the same three countries voted against it, and the 23 abstentions are disappointing. Among the notable abstentions were China, Cuba, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia. The UK, which has been a strong supporter of the Treaty through-

out, and the US both voted for the Treaty.

For the Treaty to take full effect it now needs to be ratified into law, for which we need 50 out of 193 states to agree. While this is almost certain to take place, Amnesty will not rest on their laurels and will be back on the campaign trail shortly. After this, what remains is for participating countries to sign this into their national laws.

As for the content of the Treaty, at the time the draft version was published a few months ago Amnesty were concerned it still contained many loopholes. Thanks to your campaigning many of these were closed. Human rights now takes it's place, and ammunition is included (although not as strongly as we fought for). While some loopholes remain, we see the Treaty's adoption as a major step forward.

While this is undoubtedly a massive step in the right direction, we mustn't forget the destination - a weapons free world. While some will argue this may never be achievable in practice, it is a goal we will continue to strive towards, one step at a time!

Luke
Control Arms Co-ordinator

Amnesty International UK National Conference and AGM 2013

It was an honour to represent the Brighton & Hove Group, with Mike and Emma, at this year's AIUK National Conference and AGM. As this was my first Amnesty conference, I didn't know what to expect and — much like at a music festival — I attempted to do and see everything.

From Zimbabwe lighting the peace candle, through two packed days of workshops and debate, to campaigning for women's rights in Afghanistan — I even survived the interminable discussions of a working group meeting.

It was a well-organised and impressive event and gave a timely reminder of how the important work we do in local groups contributes to Amnesty's broader objectives. It was great to meet so many committed and like-minded people, both working directly for Amnesty and from local groups, and to gain an insight into Amnesty's inner-workings.

On Saturday evening I attended the Activism Awards ceremony, whilst the Trade Union and Country Coordinators meetings ran on until late. The event was squashed into two days, instead of the previous three, which meant there was much less time to mingle.

I spoke with delegates who were veterans of past AGMs and the consensus was that they much preferred a three-day structure. They also felt there was too much emphasis on Am-

nesty's internal business, and not enough on campaign work, so it was less inspirational for them this time around.

Such introspection is perhaps understandable given a difficult period of transition for the organisation, as marked by the Extraordinary General Meeting in January — Amnesty's first EGM for over 20 years.

Whilst I support Amnesty's restructure and moving closer to the ground, I voted in favour of increasing the organisation's transparency, openness and accountability to its members. No membership organisation should ever lose touch with its members, and Amnesty's work is too important for anyone to let that happen.

It's very telling that the Campaigning working group and activism workshops were packed out, and that all resolutions to increase campaign work passed with unanimous support. I took courage from this, as Amnesty's members are clearly committed to the organisation and passionate about campaigning for human rights around the world.

I'd looked forward to the keynote speech of Fawzia Koofi, Afghan politician and women's rights activist, so it's a shame she was unable to attend. But the replacement speaker gave a stirring talk on women's rights in Afghanistan and fielded some thought-provoking questions from the audience.

The highlight of the weekend for me was the Afghan



Jim Garside, Media Officer for Amnesty International Brighton & Hove Group, standing in solidarity with women in Afghanistan

Women's Rights workshop. This is our priority campaign for the Brighton & Hove Group, and I came away enthused, with a real sense of the importance of the work being done to tackle violence against women in Afghanistan and to fight for women's rights.

I look forward to working with our campaign coordinators on this campaign. I spoke with the workshop leader and voted for Afghan women's rights in the Action Centre. I dipped my finger in purple ink — in Afghanistan voters' index fingers are dipped in indelible ink to prevent double voting — and signed up for the campaign.

So, that was my first AIUK National Conference and AGM: I went with an open mind — and I left with a purple finger.

Jim

FORCED EVICTIONS

Campaign Update May 2013

ROMA RIGHTS NOW!

It's time for Europe to end discrimination against Roma

On the 4th April, Amnesty International launched a new global campaign to stop discrimination against Romani people in Europe. Everyday Roma are being denied their basic human rights as a result of discrimination. The European Commission has the responsibility to ensure compliance with EU anti-discrimination law and fight against the discrimination and violence that Roma face. Yet many EU member states go unchallenged in their failure to comply with their legal obligations.

Amnesty International is calling on the President of the European Commission to show leadership and enforce compliance of member states within the EU to its own discrimination law and human rights standards. Amnesty activists will be collecting signatures for a petition which Amnesty will be handing over in June 2013. To download this petition and find out more visit <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10046>

Background

With over 10 million living across Europe, Roma are one of the largest and most disadvantaged minorities in the region. Centuries of discrimination have pushed Roma to the margins of society. The current situation for Roma is no more encouraging. Across the continent, Roma are the victims of violent attacks, stigmatising rhetoric by public figures, forced evictions, segregation in schooling and extreme poverty. So far European policies and initiatives have failed to tackle this cycle of discrimination and marginalisation.



Adrian, Alina and their two sons in front of their home in a Roma camp in the woods in Villeneuve-le-Roi, Paris. (right)

URGENT ACTION: Angolan families evicted and left homeless

On Tuesday 9 April, scores of families were forcibly evicted and had their homes demolished by city authorities in Menongue city, Angola. Thousands more risk further eviction.

Earlier the same day, Menongue City Administrator told the community they had to leave the area as the land they lived on was reserved for use by the State. He gave no further information. Later that day he returned, reportedly with police officers, agents from the State Intelligence and Security Service and a demolition vehicle. They demolished 40 houses. Police reportedly used armed force, including shots, against those who protested. During the demolitions eight individuals were arrested for taking photos of the demolitions and for breaking the windows of the vehicle. Six of the protestors were released within two days and two remained in detention until 15 April.

The families were not offered any form of compensation or alternative land or housing and remain homeless and destitute. The Administrator reportedly threatened the families with greater damages if they were still in the area when the authorities returned. No official notice or opportunities for genuine consultation were provided to the affected families. **To take action on this case, please write in Portuguese or English, before 27 May:**

1. Expressing concern that scores of families were forcibly evicted and rendered homeless in the Aeroporto Comandante Kwenha neighbourhood;
2. Urging the authorities to ensure that all those forcibly evicted are provided with effective remedies including adequate alternative accommodation and compensation for their losses where applicable;
3. Requesting that the authorities halt all further forced evictions in Menongue and to adopt a moratorium on all mass evictions until all necessary safeguards are put in place, to ensure that evictions are carried out in accordance with international and regional human rights standards, including the development of a resettlement plan to provide adequate alternative housing where applicable.

Appeals can be directed to any of the following individuals:

<p>Minister of Urban Development and Construction Fernando Fonseca Ministro de Urbanismo e Construção Ministério de Urbanismo e Construção Avenida 4 de Fevereiro Luanda República de Angola Email: geral@minua.gov.ao Salutation: <i>Sua Excelência/ Excellency</i></p>	<p>Kuando Kubango Provincial Governor Francisco Higinio Lopes Carneiro Governador Provincial Menongue Kuando-Kubango República de Angola Salutation: <i>Sua Excelência/ Excellency</i> Posts can also be made on the website: http://www.kuandokubango.gov.ao/CentroContactos.aspx</p>	<p>Menongue city Administrator Antunes Fernando Huambo Administrador do Menongue Menongue Kuando-Kubango República de Angola</p>
<p>You can also send copies of your appeal to: His Excellency Mr Miguel Gaspar Fernandes Neto, Embassy of the Republic of Angola, 22 Dorset Street, London W1U 6QY, embassy@angola.org.uk</p>		

Forty Four Years on Death Row.

On Saturday 13th we had our April Stall outside the Amnesty Bookshop in Sydney Street. Our campaign was for Hakamada Iwao who has been on Death Row in Japan for 44 years. He was convicted of murder and made a confession after being tortured by police. He retracted his confession during the court trial but was still found guilty. He is now 77 years old and is suffering from mental illness as a result of being on Death Row in solitary confinement. However new forensic tests have brought hope. Clothing he was said to have worn during the murder shows no trace of his DNA. This undermines the evidence linking him to the murder. We sent 30 postcards to the Justice Minister Sadakai Tanigaki in Japan urging a stay of execution for Hakamada and a moratorium on executions in Japan

Jill

Take Action

ZMITSER DASHKEVICH – BELARUS – PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Youth activist Zmitser Dashkevich was sentenced to two years in a labour colony in March 2011. Convicted on a trumped up assault charge, he was due to be released in December 2012 but was sentenced to another year in prison for allegedly violating prison rules. Amnesty believes the charges against him and others were fabricated to stop them participating in demonstrations against vote rigging in the December 2010 presidential election. Since his conviction Zmitser Dashkevich has been placed in a 'punishment cell' at least 8 times.

TAKE ACTION ; SIGN THE LETTER

Celia

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