

Amnesty International Southend Group

amnestysouthend.googlemail.com
www.amnesty.org.uk/southend



April 2016 Newsletter

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is
Thursday 12th May
at 7:30pm

at

The Balmoral Centre,
Salisbury Avenue,
Westcliff-on-Sea
SS0 7AU

“JAMNESTY”

We're hoping to hold a fundraising concert in September, possibly 17th or 24th. Any style of music welcome – we're aiming for as wide a range as we can get!

Do you play or sing, do you know somebody who can? Or a band willing to support Amnesty? **Get in touch with Mike on 07798948236**

Actions

STOP TORTURE CAMPAIGN

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb

Mahdi Abu Dheeb, former President of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA), has been in prison since his arrest on 6 April 2011. His family did not know where he was for 24 days. He spent 64 days in solitary confinement during which he says he was tortured. His family and lawyer were only allowed to see him during the first session of his trial before a military court on 7 June 2011 where he was sentenced to 10 years in prison for a variety of “crimes” including inciting hatred of the regime. Amnesty International considers Mahdi Abu Dheeb to be a Prisoner of Conscience. Please write to the Bahrain Ambassador on his behalf – the address, more details and a sample letter can be found on [the Group website](#).

Mahmoud Abu Zeid, popularly known as Shawkan

The Egyptian authorities have postponed until 23 April the trial of photojournalist Shawkan. He is facing trumped-up charges as a result of his journalistic work. Amnesty International considers him to be a Prisoner of Conscience and at risk of the death penalty if convicted. Please write to the Egyptian authorities on his behalf – there are more details and addresses on [the Group website](#). **You should not write after 19th May 2016.**

Amnesty International Southend Group

Notes of meeting on 14th April, 2016

Present: Andrew, Steve, Doug-0, David, Muriel and Mike (Chair).

Apologies: Tricia, Heidrun and Maureen.

Anything from the last meeting: Nothing

Letters and Petitions:-

Stop Torture Campaign – Nothing new. Andrew had found out a bit more about one of the cases that is still current – **Alfreda Disbarro** was apparently a police informer (!?) and the request for an investigation into the police referred to on her case sheet was completed a year ago – 2 members of the police were found guilty of “irregularities” and demoted one rank. If you want to see updates on the Stop Torture Campaign go to www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/stop-torture

We wrote letters on behalf of Mahdi Abu Dheeb, Bahrain

Burma - Nothing to report.

Prageeth Eknaligoda, Sri-Lanka - Nothing to report despite the indication that April might contain a “significant anniversary” when we would actually take some action. As we have had this case around a year now with no sign of any activity and nothing from AI UK it does not seem to be active; **Doug** will write to the Derby Group, which has also adopted Prageeth to see what their experience is, and **Mike** will write to AI UK querying the lack of activity and also the lack of response to the 2016 Option Form.

AI UK Monthly Action – AI UK wanted us to write to the Burmese authorities on behalf of Phyo Phyo Aung but she was released before we met. A successful campaign!

Shawkan, Egyptian journalist who is a Prisoner of Conscience and who faces the death penalty and whose trial had been postponed till 23rd April. More details on front page.

Secretary

- The change of signatories on the Group’s bank account is nearly there and we now have on-line access to the account (*subsequently informed that change of signatories has gone through*).
- We’ve had a “thank you” letter from the teacher at Cornelius Vermuyden School for who we did a week’s assemblies
- CAST is holding its AGM Tuesday 26th April 7:00pm at the Trinity Family Centre, London Road, Westcliff
- Urgent Actions are now on line – we could use one at each meeting
- We’ve been invited to a workshop in connection with the One Campaign www.one.org at the University of Essex Business Society on 27th April. If you’re interested contact Jassiem at jassiem.moore@one.org
- Also, we’ve been asked to contribute to Amnesty’s work in Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone by holding a fundraising event; AI UK has negotiated match funding with the Department for International Development to support work relating to FGM and Early Forced Marriages. **ANYBODY ABLE TO ORGANISE SOMETHING LIKE A MEAL OR SPONSORED WALK BEFORE 18th JULY?**

Treasurer - Group funds currently stand at £572.20. Steve has completed a satisfactory audit of last year’s accounts.

Fundraising – Following a visit to the Preview Club we are going to go ahead with a “Jamnesty” – a concert of varied music – either on 17th or 24th September. The upper hall at the Balmoral Centre is a possible venue. - £8 per hour; there’s a stage and apparently a pa system – **Mike** will contact the Centre to arrange a visit to look at things like the pa system, tables and chairs, etc. E15 (the former Clifftown URC is another possibility. **WHO DO YOU KNOW WHO MIGHT PERFORM - PLEASE ASK THEM BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING!** If we have this event we won’t have a September meeting but one will be necessary in August to help prepare for it.

Any Other Business

- Mu has received a letter from the F&CO about the UK’s arms trade with Saudi Arabia and you’ll be pleased to know that everything is fine!

Next Meeting: - at the Balmoral Centre on the 12th May at 7:30pm.

Mike Pregnall

Group Secretary
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