



AMNESTY SCOTLAND NEWS

SPRING 2011

CONCERN OVER TASER PILOT HUMAN RIGHTS AT LITERARY FESTIVALS NEW GOVERNMENT URGED TO ACT FOR SCOTTISH GYPSY TRAVELLERS THOUSANDS SUPPORT BINAYAK SEN

Biannual newsletter for Amnesty
supporters in Scotland

ELECTION CANDIDATES SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS

DURING THE 2011 Scottish Parliament election campaign Amnesty International asked candidates to show their support for human rights by having their photo taken with an Amnesty placard or poster stating 'Scotland Stands for Human Rights'.

This relatively modest request reflects Amnesty concerns that while most people in Scotland will readily agree that respect for human rights is an urgent demand in Libya, China and Guatemala, talk of human rights in Scotland is often skewed by populist outrage suggesting a cushy life for rapists and murderers in jail.

Amnesty Scotland campaigner, Julie Hepburn, said 'Rather than publish an ambitious manifesto of political demands we decided to ask candidates simply to affirm their support for human rights. The response has been fantastic and we are looking forward to engaging the new body of MSPs on the basis that we all support human rights and the focus now must be on implementing that vision here in Scotland.'

As we go to press 180 candidates have taken the pledge and, barring any major surprises, we can be fairly certain that a clear majority of the 129 MSPs elected in May will have signed up in support of human rights.

TAKE ACTION

Visit www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland or call the office to see which of your new MSPs took the human rights pledge.

Photos top to bottom:
Annabel Goldie, Conservative.
Iain Gray, Labour.
Patrick Harvie, Green.
Alex Salmond, SNP.
Tavish Scott, LibDem.



LOOKING AHEAD

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL has some specific human rights issues which it wants the next session of the Scottish Parliament to address. These are some of the issues we will be pursuing with the new intake of MSPs:

- The Scottish Government must take a leading role on Scottish Gypsy Travellers (page 2).
- Scotland must promote a dialogue on human rights issues in all international relations. The Scottish Government's engagement strategy already contains an explicit commitment to raising human rights with China, but rather than single out one country human rights should extend throughout all engagement, with India, the USA and others. Of course these countries may well have issues to raise with us too.
- The Equal Opportunities Committee of the Parliament should have its remit extended to allow investigation of human rights issues in Scotland. Currently consideration of human rights is limited to a very occasional mention by the Justice Committee.
- The opportunity for children to learn about their human rights is a right in itself. Appropriate support for human rights education will ensure that more Scottish children can learn respect for themselves and for others.

TAKE ACTION

A briefing document on these issues is available on the website at www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland or from the office. You can send a copy to your newly elected MSPs with the message that you look forward to working with them on human rights issues during the next session of Parliament.

NEWS REVIEW

CALL FOR GOVERNMENT LEAD ON SCOTTISH GYPSY TRAVELLERS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is calling on the new Scottish Government to take a leading role in addressing prejudice against Scottish Gypsy Travellers and reducing tensions between settled and Traveller communities.

Studies have repeatedly raised fundamental human rights concerns over the situation of Scottish Gypsy Travellers – particularly the rights to health, education, housing, family life and cultural life, and the requirement to be free from discrimination in the realisation of these rights.

The Traveller way of life is under increasing pressure, with the number of suitable stopping places in Scotland continually diminishing. The resulting growth in illegal camping, combined with hostile reporting in local media, is fuelling resentment against Travellers and increasing tension between settled and Traveller communities, from which nobody benefits.

Amnesty Scottish programme director, John Watson, commented 'All of the necessary principles, statements and duties on race equality and discrimination already exist. What we need now is for the government to take a leading role in implementation, exerting political pressure to make sure that all the fine words translate into real action.'

Amnesty International has started the discussion with a list of suggestions for what this political role might entail, which is available on our website.

TAKE ACTION

Contact your new MSPs and ask them to support Amnesty's call. See www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland or call 0131 718 6076 for a sample letter.

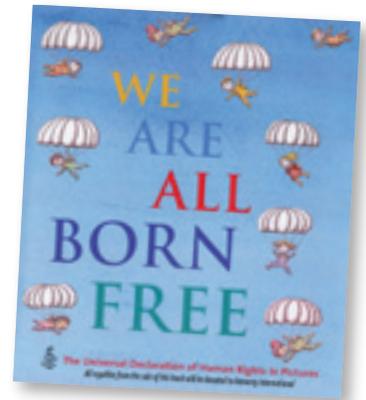
EDUCATION WEST END FESTIVAL



INTRODUCING SCHOOLCHILDREN TO HUMAN RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL will be running two education sessions as part of the West End Festival in Glasgow this June. On 8 and 15 June, in Hillhead Library, primary school children will be able to take part in the workshop entitled 'We are all born free'. This will give children an introduction to the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) using images from the book *We are all born free*. Through creative writing and storytelling, children can familiarise themselves with some fundamental human rights and their meanings. For more information, visit: www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland



GYPSY TRAVELLERS UPDATE

DELEGATION HIGHLIGHTS DISCRIMINATION ACROSS EUROPE

IN FEBRUARY Amnesty International led a delegation of concerned organisations, including church, trade union and Traveller groups, around various European consulates in Edinburgh. To highlight the widespread nature of discrimination across Europe the delegation delivered letters of concern specific to the situation in each individual country, ending with the presentation of a letter of concern about Scottish Gypsy Travellers to Bute House, official residence of the First Minister.

The event generated some positive media coverage and some consulate representatives were willing to talk to us. We are waiting for official responses from the others but in the meantime the letters can be viewed on our website.

www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland



Scottish Gypsy Traveller Jess Smith singing outside Bute House

CONCERNS OVER TASER PILOT MUST BE ADDRESSED

FOLLOWING THE end of the Strathclyde Police pilot issuing Taser electro-shock weapons to ordinary officers on the beat, Amnesty International has produced a summary of outstanding concerns over the pilot. We have called for assurances that there will be no further distribution of Tasers until these concerns have been properly addressed.

Amnesty International believes

that Tasers are inherently dangerous weapons that should be limited to specially trained firearms officers. Yet much of the recent campaign centred on the fundamental question of whether the Scottish police use of firearms is subject to any democratic scrutiny and control.

Our summary sets out clearly that police should be politically accountable for their deployment of

Tasers and explains how they do this elsewhere in the UK. Given all the problems associated with the pilot there should be no more attempts to normalise these dangerous weapons on Scottish streets.

TAKE ACTION

Read the Taser campaign summary at www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland or call the office on 0131 718 6706 to ask for a copy.

AMNESTY GOES TO THE BOOK FESTIVALS

AFTER MANY successful years of Imprisoned Writers events at the Edinburgh Book Festival, we are extending our efforts to other literary events around Scotland. This year we have already appeared at the Aye Write! festival in Glasgow in March and will be at the Aberdeen Word festival in May as well as Edinburgh in August. There will be special extra events in Glasgow during Refugee Week and the West End Festival, at the Nairn Book Festival in September and at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh in September. In each case we will be engaging authors appearing at the festivals to stand in solidarity with persecuted writers by reading excerpts from their work.

TAKE ACTION

Sign up at www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland to receive email updates on forthcoming events.



Persecuted writers. Clockwise from top left: Anna Politkovskaya, Russia. Chris Abani, Nigeria. Anushka A Solomon, Malaysia. Pablo Pacheco Avila, Cuba. Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma. Wangari Maathai, Kenya

NEW FUNDING GIVES BOOST TO ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT

WHITE RIBBON Scotland, of which Amnesty International is a supporting organisation, has been awarded ongoing funding from the Scottish Government. White Ribbon Scotland engages men in Scotland in tackling violence against women. Our support for this new campaign

is a central part of our follow-up to the Stop Violence Against Women work. Over 1,000 people have now signed the White Ribbon pledge 'not to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women' and the new funding announcement represents

a huge step towards White Ribbon Scotland becoming a sustainable part of Scottish public life.

TAKE ACTION

Find out more about the campaign www.whiteribbonscotland.org.uk.



EDINBURGH FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERING

Are you available in Edinburgh during August? We are currently recruiting volunteers for outreach and campaigning work during the Edinburgh Festival. Whether you can give a lot of time or a little, all contributions are welcome. Please contact the Edinburgh office if you can help.

SCHOOL SPEAKERS

Amnesty International can arrange for an Amnesty member to come to your school to speak about our work or to lead a workshop on one of our campaigns such as Demand Dignity, the Death Penalty or Refugees. To invite a speaker, email scotland@amnesty.org.uk

If you would like to join our network of volunteer school speakers, sign up for one of our free training days. It will help you develop the skills you need, gain confidence in speaking to school groups, discover a wide range of human rights resources and share good practice. For more information on the next training day, contact scotland@amnesty.org.uk

LOCAL GROUPS

For information on Amnesty local groups, student groups and youth groups around Scotland, contact the Supporter Care Team on 020 7033 1500 or at sct@amnesty.org.uk

SCOTTISH REFUGEE WEEK

Readings

Tuesday 21 June, 2.30pm-3.30pm, Mitchell Library, 15 Berkeley Street, Glasgow.

Amnesty International and the Glasgow Women's Library will once again feature in the Refugee Week programme, with readings exploring how refugees use writing to help recover from trauma and reconstruct their lives in a new place.

For full details call the Amnesty office in Edinburgh or see www.refugeeweek.org.uk/scotland

REACHING OUT

His case was highlighted during the 2009 Edinburgh Festival with thousands of Scots pledging their support for the Indian doctor and demanding all charges against him be dropped. A mosaic of his image constructed from their signatures was handed over to the Indian Consul General, Mr Anil Kumar Anan.

Amnesty Scotland campaigner, Siobhan Reardon, said: 'The support which Binayak Sen has received from the people of Scotland is a recognition of his human rights work and his courage to speak out against the atrocities committed against his people. The thousands of signatures which Amnesty has received in support of Dr Sen are testament to the deep-rooted sense of justice which exists amongst Scots.'

TAKE ACTION

Visit www.amnesty.org.uk/binayaksen to send an appeal to the Indian authorities.

PRESSURE ON INDIA CONTINUES FOR RELEASE OF BINAYAK SEN

ON 19 JANUARY, Amnesty International handed over thousands of signatures demanding justice for jailed Indian doctor Binayak Sen.

Dr Sen was handed a life sentence on Christmas Eve last year after being charged with sedition and conspiracy, charges which Amnesty believes are politically motivated and aimed at stopping his human rights work.



NEW OFFICE

AMNESTY'S SCOTTISH office has moved to smaller but more central premises in Edinburgh. The new office provides a more appropriate space for the work of our staff and volunteer team – while freeing up resources to be spent on other priorities.

The Scottish office exists to engage with the distinct political, education and media structures in Scotland and to take part in wider political and cultural life here. This newsletter reports on the activities of the Scottish office, rather than on the range of Amnesty activity carried out by Scottish groups and supporters.

You can contact the Scottish

office to discuss any aspects of our Scottish campaigns, as set out in this newsletter. For enquiries about any other Amnesty matters, such as local groups, membership, fundraising or international campaigning, please contact the Supporter Care Team in London on 020 7033 1500 or at sct@amnesty.org.uk.

Please note our new office details:

Amnesty International UK
MWB Business Exchange
9-10 St Andrew's Square
Edinburgh
EH2 2AF
Tel: 0131 718 6076

KEEP IN TOUCH



Amnesty Scotland News is produced every spring and autumn and is distributed at events as well as to Amnesty members, local groups and contacts in Scotland. Its aim is to build understanding of the Scottish perspective to Amnesty's campaigning, and how the Amnesty Scotland office adapts its work to fit the Scottish context. In between editions, you can keep in touch with the latest developments and actions in Amnesty's Scottish campaigning through our web page, e-newsletter and Facebook.

www.amnesty.org.uk/scotland

The Scotland pages on the Amnesty website are constantly updated. By creating your own 'My Amnesty' profile on the site you can register to receive information tailored to the issues that interest you.

E-NEWSLETTER

Amnesty International produces a free, monthly electronic newsletter highlighting seven or eight stories, actions or announcements hot off the press. You can sign up to the Scotland version of this by registering your email address on the website.

NEW MEDIA

You can link to Amnesty International's Scotland office on Facebook – search for 'Amnesty International Scotland' – or follow @AmnestyScotland on Twitter.

Amnesty International is a movement of ordinary people standing up for human rights and humanity. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

Amnesty's Scotland Office focuses on human rights campaigning, media and education work in the nation, including lobbying, working with schools, and bringing a human rights focus to events such as the Edinburgh Festival.

Contact Us:

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