



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

3rd October

Speakers Caroline O'Reilly and John Tyson to talk about the recent BDS (Boycott Divestment and Sanctions) tour of Southern France
Touring Palestinian Campaign

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 October

Host Emma
01273 232397

Monthly Collection

Contact Catherine : 07828 584430 to volunteer

Monthly Stall

For October and November we have been invited to have a stall at different events as follows:

Saturday 5th October
1pm to 3pm
Brighthelm Centre

(at Stop the March for England Training Day) - Campaigning on Guantanamo

Saturday 10th November
Hove Town Hall
(at Table top sale)
Contact Jill 01273 621697

Write for Rights

Day of Action
7th December
Friends Meeting House

Clothes Swap



On a sunny Saturday morning in August members of the Brighton and Hove Amnesty International group began gathering at the steps of the Unitarian Church on New Road. Piles of clothes grew as more and more people came to donate their wears to our clothes swap.

Ten minutes turned in to half an hour with no one from the Church appearing to let us in to the hall. Rather than wasting valuable clothes swapping time we set to it displaying floor stalls and a rail on the outdoor steps and talking to passers by about the Afghan Women's campaign. Although at the time frustrating, this tactic turned out to be very successful with the outside sales and campaigners attracting attention and ensuring a steady stream of pass-

ers by in to the venue (once it did eventually open) throughout the afternoon.

I don't think any of us anticipated the amount of donations we were going to receive - it really brought home to us how much there is out there that people no longer need. Enthusiasm for both the clothes and the cause was great and the event raised £470 towards human rights work around the world.

It was a fabulous afternoon (if a bit hectic!) with - as always - delicious cakes, music, a raffle and LOTS of clothes. Thank you to everyone who donated and all the helpers on the day - I can't wait for the next one.

Catherine

Ellsberg, Manning, Snowden: the varying fates of whistleblowers.



"It wasn't what he said exactly that changed my worldview. It was the example he was setting with his life. How his words in general showed that he was a stellar American. There was no question in my mind that my government was involved in an unjust war that was going to continue and get larger. I left the auditorium and found a deserted men's room. I sat on the floor and cried for over an hour, just sobbing. The only time in my life I've reacted to something like that."

A response to the fighting in Iraq? Or Afghanistan? In fact, this was Daniel Ellsberg's reaction to a War Resisters League meeting he attended in 1969. At the time, he worked for RAND, the US Armed Forces think tank. As Ellsberg listened to a young man explain his refusal to fight in Vietnam, he had an epiphany. It triggered one of the twentieth century's most famous acts of whistleblowing. Ellsberg decided to leak Pentagon papers that revealed the futility of the Vietnam war effort – the US government had known, at an early stage, that the war was unwinnable. He faced trial and the prospect of up to 115 years in jail, but revelations of FBI skulduggery – including illegal wire-tapping – led to all charges being dis-

missed. Instead of a life in prison, Ellsberg has received several awards over the years, including the Right Livelihood Award – seen as an alternative Nobel Prize – in 2006. Time has defined his whistleblowing as a brave and important act.

Ellsberg's fate contrasts with those of Edward Snowden and Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning. Snowden's exposure of illegal surveillance programmes has forced him to abandon his family and seek asylum in Russia. Manning's exposure of potential human rights violations and the flouting of international humanitarian law by the US army has landed her a 35-year jail term.

In the medieval fantasy *Game of Thrones*, the House of Lannister's retaliations are brutal and heavy, ensuring that their name remains feared. The disproportionate punishment of Manning resembles Lannister justice in its medieval severity. As Widney Brown, Senior Director of International Law and Policy at Amnesty International, says, "it's hard not to draw the conclusion that Manning's trial was about sending a message: the US government will come after you."

Last week Manning apologised for harming the US, but the

damage she has caused remains uncertain. 'National security' is often invoked as a reason for US actions. Yet, despite talk of information sources being endangered, there is scant evidence of the leaks causing any repercussions – other than embarrassment, of course.

The persecution of those exposing unlawful activity appears even more extraordinary given the lack of accountability for crimes committed by US forces. No charges have been issued in relation to the US secret detention programme. Eleven low-ranking soldiers were convicted for the human rights abuses committed at Abu Ghraib. They served a combined total of less than thirty years in prison. Manning's sentence will comfortably surpass their cumulative jail time.

Ellsberg, Manning and Snowden all bore secrets they found unconscionable, but their actions have carved different futures. Ellsberg's courage has been praised over the past four decades. Amnesty is calling for the US to commute Chelsea Manning's sentence; her decisions, born from good intentions, deserve better than four decades of cell walls.

Michael

BHASVIC Charities Fair

This month we visited BHASVIC (Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth form college) to take action on Shaker Aamar's case as well as to try and gain votes in this year's funding competition. The orange prisoner jumpsuits caught the eye of the students and many were interested in the organisation itself. A lot of the students wanted to personally get involved in Amnesty's work and were keen to join BHASVIC's Amnesty group. Others were curious about the concept of human rights and took away Amnesty's human rights passports amongst other information. Some simply wanted stickers and badges. All of which helped to raise awareness of Amnesty amongst the younger generation. The interest was to the extent that Brighton and Hove Amnesty has been invited

to give a talk on their work at BHASVIC later in the year.

Shaker Aamar's campaign was also successful. Students got involved by either writing a letter to William Hague, the secretary of state, calling for Shaker to be brought home. Alternatively, students wrote postcards to Shaker Aamar to show solidarity and provide hope for him in his struggle. We received 16 notes to William Hague and 11 to Shaker Aamar himself. We hope that these letters will put pressure of the UK government to prioritise Shaker's release from Guantanamo Bay Detention Centre. Either of these actions can easily be taken by anyone who wants to help the campaign.



Maddie talking to the students at BHASVIC Charities fair

William Hagues email: william.hague.mp@parliament.uk

Shaker Aamar's address: Detainee Number 239, Camp Delta, US Naval Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, Washington DC 20355, USA

Maddie

Street collection 2013



A big thank you to all of those who helped with this years street collection. Whether you were one of our collectors on 14th September or one of our supporters who sent a donation by cheque, we would like to say well done for helping us raise a grand total of £387.66.

Fundraising is such an important part of what we do as it enables us to campaign and awareness raise locally and also to send money to AIUK to fund their research and campaigning into human rights work around the world.

Emma

Write for Rights Campaign 2013 Volunteers Needed

A simple card or letter brings hope and comfort to those suffering human rights abuses. On 7th December we will once again be inviting you to join us at the Friends Meeting House to send a personal message to one or more of the individuals and communities that feature in our Write for Rights campaign.

These people are just like you. With mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, and friends who miss them. We want you to

send them a message and let them know they haven't been forgotten. Details of all the cases will be available on amnesty.org.uk/write from early November.

To make this event a success a lot of work goes into the planning and organising and we are looking for volunteers to start work on this as soon as possible.

Volunteer opportunities include the following roles:

- Designing flyers and poster
- Inviting local mps, mayor and councillors
- Publicity in local media and radio
- Inviting and organising musicians
- Organising rota
- Organising catering
- Ordering stationery and materials

If you want to help then please contact Emma on 01273 232397

TAKE ACTION



BANGLADESH; RESTORE INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

The Pahari Indigenous Peoples have lived in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of southeastern Bangladesh for generations, their culture and way of life intrinsically linked to their traditional lands. When Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 Pahari demands for autonomy were ignored. Decades of armed conflict followed, until a peace accord in 1997 brought a promise of recognition for Pahari land rights. The government agreed to establish a Land Commission to settle claims with a view to restoring the land to them. 15 years after the accord, tens of thousands of Pahari remain homeless and not a single case has been resolved. Under international human rights law, indigenous Peoples have a right to their traditional lands.

Please sign and send the attached letter to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister asking him to protect the Pahari right to their traditional lands and to take immediate steps to make the Land Commission effective. Thank you.

Celia

BRIGHTON & HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS

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Prisoner of Conscience—MOHAMED SAYED IBRAHIM ABDEL LATIF—Celia Stubbs—01273 593833

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Amnesty Websites: international - www.amnesty.org AI UK -

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Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre - Tel: 0207 0331500

