

# Action

October 2015



## 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

1st October  
Group meeting

12 November  
(please note change of date due to bonfire night)  
Guest speaker re Roma People

### Letter Writing Evenings

An evening on the 3rd Tuesday of the month to sit and write letters with fellow Amnesty members. These take place at The Emporium on London Road

20th October

### Monthly Collection

Contact Julian  
julianwatmore@gmail.com  
07469776295

There will be no collection in September

17th October  
21st November  
19th December

### Monthly Stalls

10th October  
Topic: Death penalty  
Sydney Street  
Contact Jill 01273 621697

### Street Collection

Saturday 26th September

### Write for Rights

Letter writing vigil  
5th December  
Friends Meeting House

### SEPTEMBER AMNESTY STALL



Date Saturday 5th September

Time 11am - 1pm

Venue Outside Amnesty Bookshop, Sydney Street, Brighton

Weather Warm for the time of year

Volunteers Peter, Gwyneth, Madeline, Celia and Jill

Special Guest Joy Hurcombe (Leader of Shaker Amer Campaign)

Campaign FREE SHAKER AAMER FROM GUANTANAMO

Shaker Amer was born in Saudi Arabia but became a British resident living with his wife and children in London. He was visiting Pakistan when he was picked up by the Americans in exchange for a bounty.

Shaker was then transferred to Guantanamo Bay where he has been for the last fourteen years. He has twice been told that he could be released during that time but it has not happened. Shaker's health has deteriorated dramatically and he is in need of proper medical treatment. He has never been charged with anything.

We sent 180 letters and cards to the American authorities. There was good support from the general public.

The next stall is on 10th October and is on the Death Penalty. Contact Jill on 01273 621697 to volunteer.

## STOP THE ARMS FAIR : DSEI



DSEI (Defence & Security Equipment International) is the world's largest arms fair. It allows arms buyers and sellers to network and make deals. It happens once every two years, in the second week in September, at ExCeL – the huge exhibition centre in London Docklands.

The arms trade is dominated by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: China, France, Russia, UK and the US, along with Germany and, increasingly, Israel. The permanent members alone account for around three quarters of exported arms.

While relatively few countries sell large volumes of weaponry, the buyers are spread across the world. Some of the largest purchasers are in the Middle East and South and East Asia. The sales range from fighter aircraft, helicopters and warships with guided missiles, tanks and armoured vehicles to machine guns and rifles. They also include components and surveillance equipment.

There is often confusion about the legality of the arms trade, with the impression given that it is the illegal trade that is damaging while the legal trade is tightly controlled and acceptable. However, the vast majority of arms sold around the world, including those to human rights abusing governments or into conflict areas, are legal and actively supported by governments. With this as a background and after an inspiring presentation from a member of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September found Sue, Cat and Peter at Brighton station catching a train to the ExCeL Centre in London to join the protests against this event to which 30,000 attendees were due to visit in the following week. The protests had been going on for the whole of the previous week. Visit the CAAT and the Stop The Arms Fair sites to get a view of it all. The main impact is that it is in the week before that the tanks, Armoured Personnel carriers etc come in and can be stopped.

We got to the East gate at 11.30 (Critical Mass were covering the West Gate. There are only 2 road entrances.)



Overall during the rest of the day there were about 300 people and about 80 police



We started with a recap of the previous week which was inspiring. There followed a Quaker meeting, a great choir singing anti war songs, a mass meditation and then a lorry arrived so we all occupied the road. 3 people lay down joined at the wrist inside piping to make it hard to move them. In truth neither the police nor the lorry driver seemed very motivated to do so.

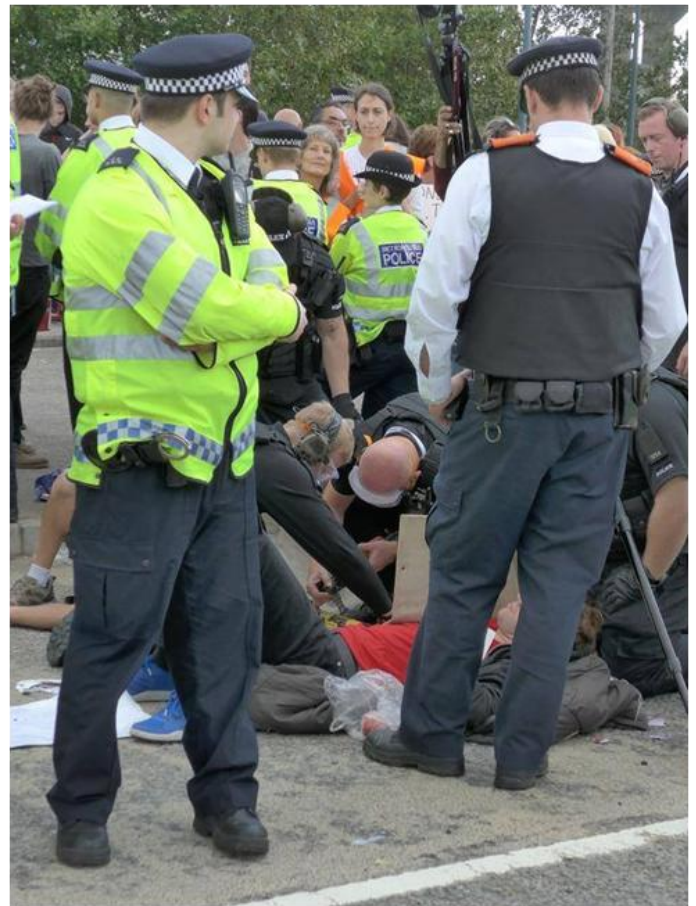


Songs were sung, pictures were taken, speeches were made. For me the most telling was from 2 Somali women who had come to London to take part in the bigger protests against our country's stance on refugees. They realised that the Arms Trade and Fair are at the root cause of the refugee crisis and so they came here. Take away the arms – no more fighting – no need to flee. Who is supplying arms to Al Shabaab? And to ISIS and to "name your despot/ rebel group/ murderers."

At one point the police moved up in a line behind us and then the less threatening of them (women and smaller men) merged into the crowd chatting to us as they came in. Soon they were scattered amongst us, seemingly at random. But gradually they surrounded (kettled) those who had joined on the ground the 3 who had started it. Interesting to watch their tactics.

Word came that this gentle approach was not being replicated at the other gate so a group went there in support.

When we left at 3ish there were still a fair number in the road. The two lorries trying to get in had not moved. It was only 2 hours later when the police numbers increased and "specialists" came in to remove them that the road was cleared and the lorries with "exhibits" got through.



UK Research & Development spending on arms was £1,460 million in 2012/13 (MoD, [Finance Bulletin 1.03, 2014](#), Table 1.03.05) while R&D for renewable energy was £58.61 million in 2013 (International Energy Agency, R&D statistics). Peter

### **Update on the groups individuals at risk**

*Recently Celia, our Individuals at Risk campaign co ordinator contacted Jamie from the North Africa Team with the following question:*

We are campaigning for the 3 Mansoura women jailed for peaceful protest (Egypt). They appealed and were told there would be a court date but so far I have not been given a date though that was some months ago. It is difficult because we cannot write to them. Perhaps you have an update? Celia

*Here is Jamie's reply which gives an update on the case and our campaign work:*

Our team met with the North Africa researchers at the IS on Monday and we did discuss the issue many activist are having with the Mansoura women case, i.e. lack of updates and no direct way to contact them. However, the researchers assured us that the letters sent by local groups can make a big difference in these cases, especially if they are coming by the hundreds or thousands in some instances. Currently, there is little information coming in about the case which, as we understand, is essentially at a standstill. However, the researchers are trying to seek more information from the girls families so perhaps I will be able to share an update with you in the near future. With regards to campaigning, I discussed with Ann the possibility of having a social media photo action on behalf of the girls or something along those lines to give groups a fresher way to campaign for the time being. I will definitely note down your concerns and if we hear anything new on the women I will of course pass it along to you. If there's anything else you need don't hesitate to ask!

Best,  
Jamie W.R.

## Monthly Letter Writing



*Photo—Peter, David and Hannah writing letters at the Emporium at September letter writing meeting.*

One a month Amnesty members come together to get back to basics and sit and write some letters

together. Having tried various venues, including each others houses and a couple of pubs we have settled for the welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the Emporium bar/cafe on London Road.

As we know at Amnesty, letter writing changes lives. A letter from you could help free a prisoner, stop an execution or help a bereaved family receive justice. So we all know how it works but the problem for most of us is simply getting round to doing it! This is why the letter writing evenings are so great. A chance to meet and chat to other Amnesty members in an informal setting and get those letters written at the same time.

We are going to be meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of each month so do come along and join us. If you can't make it then you can get hold of the 'real lives supplement' with lots of letter writing actions at [http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/jnl\\_186\\_real\\_lives\\_supplement\\_spreads.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/jnl_186_real_lives_supplement_spreads.pdf)  
*Emma*

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**Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre** - Tel: 0207 0331500.

