

Amnesty International



Reading Group NEWSLETTER

Summer 2016

PROTECT THE HUMAN

*We are ordinary people from across the world standing up for humanity and human rights.
Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness,
freedom and truth are denied.*

It's nearly time for WOMAD – come and join us!

Please come and help the Reading group to run the Amnesty stall at the wonderful WOMAD Festival - World of Music, Art & Dance - the UK's only world music festival! Friday 29th to Sun 31st July 2016, Charlton Park, Wiltshire. We will be doing a creative campaign action for Syria, and need volunteers to sign up for just a couple of hours each day. Its great fun to be in the Amnesty team, and you can use our little marquee as a base. We all have to buy our own tickets - please go to [Home - Womad UK](#) for all the details.



Weekend tickets including camping are £175, on sale now, and it's possible to buy day tickets for Sat or Sun (price will be announced when day tickets go on sale mid-June).

Last year's giant visual petition, calling for improvements for Roma children's education in the Czech Republic.

If you are able to join us for this fantastic event, please contact our WOMAD organiser Sue Bingham sue.bingham@amnesty.org.uk

Can you help stop child marriage and FGM in Burkino Faso and Sierra Leone?

We have a fantastic opportunity open to fundraisers – for a limited time only! Until July 18th, the UK government is matching all donations made to Amnesty. These matched funds will go towards tackling child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) in Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone.

**CHILD MARRIAGE.
SHE WON'T GET
A CHOICE.**



<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/donate/join-the-revolution-against-fgm-child-marriage-burkina-faso-sierra-leone>

In fact, one of our group members **Rachel Parker**, is running the **Windsor half-marathon**, just for this cause. So donating to her will be a super way to double your money.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/RACHEL-PARKER14>

Recent Events and Meetings



Four members of the Reading group attended this year's **National Conference and AGM** at Nottingham in April. Our secretary, Anne McFarlane, in on the Standing Orders Committee, so had a very busy weekend, keeping all the motions to conference correct. Sue Bingham, AI:UK's Cuba country co-ordinator, was on the countries stand, getting actions signed and new members to join her Cuba group.

An inspiring weekend of actions, debates, speakers and discussion. And... we won another award! Here we are receiving an activism award for our work at Reading Pride. Do come and along to this year's event – Saturday 3rd September. Please email me if you'd like to help on the rota.

<https://readingpride.co.uk/pride>





We've had some excellent **group meetings** recently, supported by Amnesty speakers. **Harpreet Paul** led a workshop session on **how to lobby our MPs to Save the Human Rights Act** in April.



In June, AI:UK's co-ordinator for Myanmar/Burma, **Nola Weerwag** gave us a talk about the current situation in that country.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS – always 2nd Thursday of the month at 8pm at RISC, Reading
All are welcome, upstairs at RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS

- Thursday 9th June – a speaker from Reprieve will be joining us
- Thursday 14th July – preparation for our group's action at WOMAD

Actions to Take – please scroll down to find letters ready for you to send

- Call for the death sentence against Abdul Basit to be commuted – Pakistan. **MUST BE SENT BY 7TH JUNE**
- take action to stop constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in Georgia

Don't forget to keep up to date with our group's news, frequently updated with photos and updates:

- Website = <http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/groups/reading>
- Facebook page –search for Reading Amnesty International – Town Group = <http://www.facebook.com/groups/187525074719402>
- twitter = @amnestyreading

ALSO: We raise funds for Amnesty International, and can provide speakers about Amnesty and human rights issues for local organisations: contact our secretary Anne McFarlane, ammcf@btinternet.com
 Amnesty Reading Newsletter editor Helen Ball- email: helenball03@yahoo.co.uk

May 2016

Shahbaz Sharif
Chief Minister of Punjab
Chief Minister Secretariat
7 Club Road
Lahore
Pakistan

Dear Chief Minister

Clemency for Abdul Basit

I write to press for the death sentence against Abdul Basit to be commuted. He was convicted of murder over 6 years ago and has been paralysed from the waist down since 2010, after contracting TB meningitis whilst being kept in very poor conditions in Central Jail Faisalabad and then failing to receive adequate healthcare for the disease. Despite the fact that he is confined to a wheelchair, he has come very close to being hanged three times already, with executions being stayed only at the last moment.

I am most disturbed to learn that the most recent stay of execution for Abdul Basit has not been renewed. The world will rightly feel revulsion at the spectacle of a man in a wheelchair being hanged; it is only too probable that an attempt to carry out the execution will lead to him being decapitated or dying from slow strangulation. I urge you to grant him clemency and to commute his death sentence.

I further call on Pakistan to re-establish the official moratorium on all executions, in line with the five UN General Assembly resolutions adopted since 2007.

I also urge you to ensure that any measures taken to combat crime do not violate Pakistan's obligations under international human rights law and that all safeguards guaranteeing the rights of those facing the death penalty are respected.

Yours respectfully

Cc

H.E. Mr Syed Ibne Abbas, High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 35-36 Lowndes Square, London SW1X 9JN poldiv@phclondon.org ; cwd@phclondon.org ; suggestions@pchlondon.org

Prime Minister
Giorgi Kvirikashvili
7 Ingorokva St
Tbilisi 0114, Georgia

Dear Prime Minister

We are concerned about the proposed amendments in the Constitution prohibiting same-sex marriage.

The bill which would amend the Constitution introducing a definition of marriage as a union exclusively between a man and a woman, received the endorsement of the Parliament's Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee on 5 May. Now the bill has to go through other committee hearings after which it will be voted by the parliament.

The First Vice Speaker of the parliament told Georgian media on 5 May that should the bill not receive enough support among parliamentarians, a referendum on the banning of same-sex marriage in the Constitution might be organised.

Article 36 of the Constitution of Georgia currently states that marriage is a voluntary union based on equality between the spouses. By limiting the constitutional definition of marriage to couples of the opposite sex, the amendment directly discriminates against LGBTI people who live or wish to live in a same-sex union, and denies them the enjoyment of their right to family life, the right to marry and all the economic and social rights associated with marriage.

According to the Civil Code of Georgia, same-sex partners do not currently have the right to marry or register and exercise their right to family life, but an explicit ban on marriage equality in the Constitution would aggravate the situation as it would prevent legislators from extending marriage to same-sex couples in the future and will run counter to the emerging global trend of recognition of marriage equality.

We call on the Georgian authorities to stop the bill aimed at restricting the constitutional definition of marriage as this would effectively discriminate against same-sex partners.

Finally we urge the Georgian authorities to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all people in Georgia regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Yours sincerely