



# Amnesty International Reading Group **NEWSLETTER**

August 2013

## 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.*

### RECENT EVENTS AND NEWS

- **WOMAD – 25-28<sup>TH</sup> JULY**, Charlton Park, Wiltshire Group's annual presence at the wonderful festival in Wiltshire. Our action was about Women's rights in Afghanistan.



The Reading team had a brilliant time at WOMAD this year, getting 1,000 signatures on the petition and raising £284. Take a look at our facebook page for more photos (Reading Amnesty International – Town Group).



- In our recent group meetings, we've had fascinating talks from
  - the Reading Refugee Support Group (<http://www.rmsg.org.uk/1.html> )
  - Jerry Allen, AI:UK's co-ordinator for Bangladesh. (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA13/005/2013/en/7aec10d7-097b-4047-9558-f0642ce366a3/asa130052013en.pdf> )
  - AI:UK's Zimbabwe volunteer, Lydia Parker, talking about the up-coming elections.

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- **READING PRIDE – SATURDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST, Kings Meadow, Reading. Come and find us on our stall between 12noon-5pm and join the fun.** <http://www.readingpride.co.uk/>
- **AN EVENING WITHOUT FILEP KARMA – FRIDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER AT 7.30PM, with guest Peter Tatchell. Please follow this links to find out about the current situation in Filep's country** <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/freedom-expression-suppressed-papua-third-peaceful-protester-dies-2013-05-09>  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA21/010/2013/en/9b5f1867-8d83-4130-b7dd-a9e624cb0442/asa210102013en.html>
- **CHANTRY HOUSE CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT – SUNDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER** Keep this date in your diary- more information to follow.
- **QUIZ NIGHT – Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March at The Warehouse, Reading – more info to follow.**

## ACTIONS

Please click the link/scroll to the end of this document/follow the links for actions you can take to support issues that the Reading Group follows closely.

- Free Pussy Riot – a huge number of celebrities wrote an open letter to Pussy Riot prior to their parole hearings. Whilst both women had their parole refused, the campaign for their freedom continues.



Amnesty International open letter of support to Pussy Riot:

Dear Masha and Nadia,

As the one-year anniversary of your trial approaches, we are writing to assure you that, around the world, people are both still thinking of you and working for your release. Although you were the most visible of the protesters, we know that there were many other young people who have suffered in the protests, about whom we are also very concerned. But, in many ways, through your imprisonment, you have come to represent them. Many artists voiced their concern when these charges were first brought against you, we had every hope that the authorities, in dealing with you, would show some understanding, a sense of proportion, even some of the wonderful Russian sense of humour, but none of the above were forthcoming. The impact of your shockingly unjust trial and imprisonment has spread far and wide. Especially among your fellow artists, musicians and citizens around the world, including the many parents who feel your anguish at being separated from your children. While understanding the sensitivities of protesting in a place of worship, we ask that the Russian authorities review these harsh sentences, so that you may return to your children, your families and your lives. The right to freedom of expression and dissent is a legitimate one and essential in any kind of democracy. You have been accused of what could be described as 'a victimless' crime, but in our opinion, in a just society, there can be no crime where there is no identifiable 'victim'.

Your strength, bravery and fearlessness are an inspiration to us all.

Yours in solidarity,

Bryan Adams, Adele, Alt-J, Laurie Anderson, Animal Collective, Anti-Flag, Arcade Fire, Arch Enemy, Archive, Joan Armatrading, Joan Baez, Beadyman, Jeff Beck, Yasiin Bey, björk, Rubén Blades, Billy Bragg, Jackson Browne, Peter Buck, Tracy Chapman, Chase & Status, Neneh Cherry, The Clash, Coldplay, Lily Rose Cooper, Dido, Django Django, Melissa Etheridge, Siobhan Fahey, Paloma Faith, First Aid Kit, Franz Ferdinand, Foster the People, fun., Peter Gabriel, Sir Bob Geldof, Kim Gordon, Debbie Harry, PJ Harvey, Don Henley, The Hidden Cameras, Niall Horan, Billy Joel, Sir Elton John, Ke\$ha, Angelique Kidjo, The Knife, Mark Knopfler, Tom Lehrer, Sean Lennon, Annie Lennox, Lykke Li, Sir Paul McCartney, Romy Madley-Croft, Madonna, Zayn Malik, Stephen Malkmus, Marina & the Diamonds, Johnny Marr, Massive Attack, Mike Mills, Moby, Thurston Moore, Tom Morello, Alanis

Morissette, James Morrison, Graham Nash, Kate Nash, Youssou N'Dour, Karen O, Yoko Ono, Clock Opera, Ozzy Osbourne, Liam Payne, Peaches, Joe Perry, Phoenix, Portishead, Portugal. The Man, Rain Phoenix, Cat Power, Radiohead, Bonnie Raitt, Rise Against, Patti Scialfa, Scissor Sisters, Paul Simon, Sleigh Bells, Patti Smith, Esperanza Spalding, Bruce Springsteen, Dave Stewart, Sting, Michael Stipe, Harry Styles, Neil Tennant, Louis Tomlinson, Pete Townshend, K T Tunstall, U2, Eddie Vedder.

- **Egyptian** activists held in high security prison
- Dr Tun Aung, chairman of the Islamic Religious Affairs Council, **Myanmar**
- **Viet Nam** - Planned resumption of executions
- **Cuban** critics of the Government Emilio Planas Robert and Rafael Matos Montes de Oca jailed for speaking out against the government.

**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>
- NEW facebook page –search for Reading Amnesty International – Town Group = <http://www.facebook.com/groups/187525074719402>
- twitter = @amnestyreading

#### **AI:UK Charity events – treks, runs and bike rides**

Register at <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=11942>

#### **Charity bike rides**

- London – Brighton bike ride for Amnesty – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
[http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=12331&utm\\_source=aiuk&utm\\_medium=Homepage&utm\\_campaign=CFR&utm\\_content=Brightoncycle\\_nib](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=12331&utm_source=aiuk&utm_medium=Homepage&utm_campaign=CFR&utm_content=Brightoncycle_nib)
- London nightrider for Amnesty – 7/8<sup>th</sup> June 2014  
<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=12412>

**MEETINGS:** second Thursday of each month at 8pm. All are welcome. **All at RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS**

**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@o2.co.uk](mailto:ammcf@o2.co.uk).

Amnesty Reading Newsletter editor Helen Ball- email: [helenball03@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenball03@yahoo.co.uk)

Minister of the Interior  
Mohamed Ibrahim Youssef Ahmed  
Ministry of the Interior  
25 El Sheikh Rihan Street  
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt

Dear Minister,

**Egyptian activists held in high security prison**

I am writing after hearing of the arrest and ill-treatment of Mohamed Mostafa Youssef, Mamdouh Hassan Mamdouh, and Abdelazeem Abdo. They were arrested by Central Security Forces on 29 March during a protest outside the house of Egypt's Minister of Interior in Nasr City, Cairo, and according to sources the three activists were beaten upon arrest. Since 6 April 2013, the activists have been held in solitary confinement in Alaqrab high security prison. There are fears that the three activists are being held in solitary confinement as a form of punishment for insulting the Minister of Interior and are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The men reported to their families that they are each held in a small cell, with no lights. They went on hunger strike for two days to protest against their solitary confinement in detention, and have asked the prison authorities to transfer them to an ordinary prison.

I urge the Egyptian authorities to end the solitary confinement of Mohamed Mostafa Youssef, Mamdouh Hassan Mamdouh , and Abdelazeem Abdo and move them to an ordinary prison without delay; and ensure they are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention. Furthermore, allegations that the men were beaten by police during arrest must be investigated, and anyone found responsible brought to justice. Finally, I call on you to clarify the legal basis for the detention of Mohamed Mostafa Youssef, Mamdouh Hassan Mamdouh , and Abdelazeem Abdo. If they are detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly, they must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Yours Sincerely,

U Aung Min

Ministry of President Office

Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

2013

Dear Minister

**Dr Tun Aung**

Dr Tun Aung, chairman of the Islamic Religious Affairs Council in Maungdaw, Rakhine state, has been held incommunicado since his arrest on 11 June 2012. He has been charged with 'inciting communal violence' between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. However, independent witnesses have stated he actively tried to calm the crowd on the day riots broke out, and it is feared Dr Aung was targeted as a Muslim community leader.

It is reported that his prison sentence was recently increased from 11 to 17 years.

Dr Aung suffers from a pituitary tumour and requires medication, but there are concerns he is not receiving this.

Can I urge you to please ensure that:

- Dr Aung is allowed to appoint a lawyer of his own choosing, and to have private meetings with the lawyer
- He receives a fair trial that meets international fair trial standards
- He receives the medication that he needs

Yours sincerely,

Lt Gen Tran Dai Quang  
Minister of Public Security  
Ministry of Public Security  
44 Yet Kieu Street  
Hoan Kiem District  
Ha Noi  
Viet Nam

Dear Minister of Public Security

**Planned resumption of executions**

I write to express my opposition to plans to resume executions, which I believe to be the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and a violation of the right to life.

I call on you not to proceed with these plans but instead to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to the abolition of the death penalty, in line with several resolutions passed by the UN General Assembly, the most recent one being resolution 67/176 which was adopted in December last year.

In the meantime, I ask you to commute all existing death sentences and to reduce the number of offences for which the convicted person may be executed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours respectfully

**cc**

His Excellency Mr Vu Quang Minh Hahn, Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,  
12/14 Victoria Road, London W8 5RD

TO:

FROM:

**Raúl Castro Ruz**

Head of State and Government

Presidente de la República de Cuba

La Habana

Cuba

Fax: +41 22 758 9431 (Cuba office in Geneva);

+1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: [cuba@un.int](mailto:cuba@un.int) (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)

Date:

Your Excellency,

**GOVERNMENT CRITICS JAILED FOR SPEAKING OUT**

I am very concerned to hear that **Emilio Planas Robert and Rafael Matos Montes de Oca**, both members of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (*Unión Patriótica de Cuba*, UNPACU), are serving prison sentences in Cuba on politically motivated charges - "dangerousness" (*peligrosidad*) - following summary trials.

The authorities accused them of putting up posters in Guantánamo city with "anti-government" slogans such as "down with Fidel" (*abajo Fidel*) and "down with hunger" (*abajo la hambre*), however according to their families, no incriminating material was found at their houses and none was presented at their trials.

I believe that Emilio Planas Robert and Rafael Matos Montes de Oca are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, and am therefore calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally.

I would also urge you to eliminate from the Criminal Code provisions regarding "dangerousness" and repeal all legislation which unduly limits freedom of expression and association.

Yours truly,

Copies to:

**General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra**

Interior Minister

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior,

Plaza de la Revolución,

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: [correominint@mn.mn.co.cu](mailto:correominint@mn.mn.co.cu)

**Her Excellency Esther Armenteros Cárdenas**

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