

Amnesty Southend Group

Stop Torture Campaign Update February 2016

Running total of ST postcards circa. 400. Exhibitions at both SHSB and Deanes school .. 99 cards in total from the latter two events; to mail to AI when suitably separated in accordance with school !!!

General look at ST campaign activities globally; noted Australia to wrap up its ST campaign in 2016. Mike confirmed that the UK ST campaign is also to complete this year....

ST Victims

1. Moses Akatugba pardoned and now enjoying his freedom. **Released**
2. Claudia Medina Tamariz cleared of all charges and released 02/15 **Released**
3. **Ali Aarrass** - Tortured / electric shocks to testes, beaten on feet. No change - various exhortations on a number of websites about doing something about his failing health. Last update mid - Dec 2015. Lengthy letter from Ali about his plight reported on last month. **No change.**
4. **Alfreda Disbarro** - On 3 October 2013 police in the Philippines accused 32-year-old mother of two, Alfreda Disbarro, of being a drug dealer. No apparent change - investigation by Phillipino internal affairs office was still ongoing after more than a year. (anniversary 11th June 2015) no updates ex AI sources , there was however a further ST e - mail campaign in July 2015. Findings of IA review is reported on some websites found that two PO 's identified by Alfreda were found guilty of grave misconduct and demoted 1 rank ! though still she's incarcerated..... **No change**
5. **Mahdi Abu Dheeb** - a POC and postcard campaign victim of torture. Bahraini Teacher and Trade Unionist incarcerated in 2011 after the pearl roundabout demo's and tortured repeatedly by the Bahraini authorities. The disgraceful treatment of a trade union and Human Rights activist, Mahdi Abu Dheeb, by the Bahraini authorities is sadly an ongoing process. The only developments since his incarceration have been negative. Mahdi remains in a notorious Bahraini jail and his health continues to deteriorate. The prison's refusal to give Mahdi his medication coincided with riots in Jaw prison, where he is detained. During the riots, Mahdi said he was forced to stand for prolonged periods of time, which has worsened his back problems – he now can't walk without support and is said to be wheelchair bound. Amnesty are continuing to run a campaign to demand immediate medical treatment for Mahdi and for his release.

No change.

Raif Badawi case (POC undergoing torture)

Some reports suggest Raif was sentenced to 10 years others 15.....

'Activist Raif Badawi, sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10/15 years in prison for "insulting Islam" and founding an online forum for political debate.... Raif Badawi, the Saudi blogger and activist sentenced to 10/15 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for insulting Islam, has won the EU's Sakharov prize for human rights. According to Amnesty International, Saudi Arabia is the third most prolific state killer in the world. They report that the use of the death penalty has soared under the new king, Salman. In 2014, about 140 people were executed in the last year 102 were executed in just the first six months of 2015. Further, more than half of those executions were for non-lethal crimes including adultery, armed robbery, apostasy, drug-related offences, rape, witchcraft and notably sorcery. Also, people with mental disabilities are not spared if convicted of a crime that attracts a death sentence, and neither are children.

Served 1358 days so far. Swiss News and CBS CANADA outlets reported that his sentence is to be suspended by King Salman Abdul Aziz al- Saud; though this is not confirmed by AI. Wife Haidar and three kids are in Quebec Canada. If true this is fantastic !!

Samar Badawi, a prominent Saudi human rights advocate – and the sister of jailed blogger Raif Badawi – has been freed on bail after being arrested and held briefly in the same prison as her brother. **Nothing further.**

Local Group Activity Pack February 2016:

Saudi Arabia and the effect of UK arms dealers on the Yemeni civilian population

A devastating conflict has been ongoing in Yemen since 2014, with a coalition led by Saudi Arabia carrying out airstrikes against an armed rebel group, the Huthis, who took over the capital of Yemen, Sanaa, in September 2014. Hundreds of ordinary people have been killed or injured as a result.

During this time the UK Government has been supplying arms to the Saudi Government. Amnesty has been very concerned about this and have found that the UK Government have been breaking international and national laws.

What we would like you to do?

Petition

Attached is a petition calling on the UK Government to halt all arms exports to Saudi Arabia and its coalition of all weapons that risk being used in the Yemen conflict to commit violations of international law. Please get as many people to sign this and return them us.

Deadline: End of February for a hand in to the Prime Minister in March.

Letter to local media

This conflict is getting little press coverage and the government is not feeling enough pressure to stop arming the Saudi's. We want to make sure people across the country know about this conflict and the UK's role. We've attached a template letter. Please personalise the letter and send it to your local newspaper, drawing attention to the UK's role in arming Saudi Arabia and breaking international law.

??Food for thought :- well over 1 trillion dollars is annually spent on arms via the MIC in the USA. In addition as the CAAT found: UK arms sales to global despots amounts to > \$3 Billion.....

War is tragically very good for business. As Al Gore famously said: 'It's very difficult to get somebody to hear the truth when their income and wealth depends on them not hearing it'.....

Meanwhile over the causeway from Saudi in **Bahrain**: kids are still being arrested and tortured: The following excerpts from the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and Amnesty International report that:

"On 20 January 2016 Sayyid Mohammed Hashim Sharf (13), a student in the second year of preparatory school and a member of the Bahraini table tennis squad for his age category, received a notice demanding that he appear before the prosecutor general. On 21 January Sayyid Mohammed went with his father to the prosecutor general, where he was questioned without the presence of his lawyer. The prosecutor general did not allow Sayyid's father to enter the interrogation room with him. The prosecutor general accused Sayyid Mohammed of planting a foreign object in the street, and ruled to detain him for five days despite the fact that he denied the charges,

Based on the above, Bahrain Centre for Human Rights calls on the United Nations, the United States, the United Kingdom and all other close allies of the Bahraini government to:

- Immediately release all children arrested during the rest wave of protests in Bahrain
- Drop all charges levelled against these children
- Implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Bahrain is a signatory
- Properly investigate all allegations of torture and ill-treatment of children
- Hold to account those who are responsible for torturing children and bring them before a judge

The following is from an AI report in 2013. But RT News UK reported in February 2016 that the detention and torture of children is still going on.....

"Children are being routinely detained, ill-treated and tortured in Bahrain, said Amnesty International Scores of children arrested on suspicion of participating in anti-government protests – including some as young as 13 – were blindfolded, beaten and tortured in detention over the past two years the organization said. Others were threatened with rape in order to extract forced confessions." "By rounding up suspected under-age offenders and locking them up, Bahrain's authorities are displaying an appalling disregard for its international human rights obligations," said Said Boumedouha, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme. "Nearly three years after Bahrain's security forces used excessive force to crush anti-government protests, they now appear to be targeting children in an intensified crackdown. All children under the age of 18 who have not committed any recognizable offence must be released immediately. Any allegations of torture and ill-treatment must be thoroughly investigated." According to reports received by Amnesty International there are at least 110 children aged between 16 and 18 held at the Dry Dock Prison, an adult facility in al Muharraq Island, pending investigation or trial. Most children have been arrested on suspicion of participating in "illegal gatherings", rioting, burning tyres or throwing Molotov cocktails at police. Many were seized during raids while they were playing at home and even at a local swimming pool. Several were denied access to their families for extended periods and interrogated without their lawyers. Children under the age of 15 who have been sentenced are held at a Juvenile Centre in Manama".....

Both of the above are direct quotes from material already published online.