

AMNESTY NEWS

www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/southampton-city

July 2007



Refugees at Haslar

Laura del Nevo, Deputy Coordinator of Haslar Visitors Group described the work of Haslar Visitors Group and spoke generally about the refugee situation at the June Group meeting.

What is Haslar?: It's an Immigration Removal Centre which used to be a prison and is still owned and operated by the Prison Service. It is a closed institution with high walls topped with razor wire.

What is a Removal Centre?: A place where failed asylum seekers and other immigrants are kept if they don't have passports. Many do not, some escaped without them; some used to have passports but they are out of date; some have lost them and some have had them stolen; in some cases the Home Office itself has lost them. Whatever the reason they can't be sent back to their own countries till a passport or travel document has been obtained.

Are there women and children in Haslar?: No, there are other centres where women and children or families are kept, all prisoners in Haslar are men. Some of the prisoners are married and their wives and children are free but may be living many miles away.

How long do they stay?: Some as little as a night others as long as a year. In 2007 the average time in detention of men being visited was 7 months.

Some men may have been moved

**Group Meeting
Monday July 9th 2007**

**Southampton Group
AGM**

**Avenue St Andrew's
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
7.30pm
ALL WELCOME**

around 4 or 5 times, sometimes without any obvious reason.

What are conditions like?: Not good. The dormitories are Victorian, divided into little doorless cubicles which are shared by 3 men who may not speak the same language. There is no table or chair and storage is an old cardboard box under the bed. They are noisy with telephones, tannoy and television to say nothing about the noise made by 30 or so energetic young men. Everybody, including the Prison Service, agrees that the dormitories need re-building. At one end of the room is the "dayroom", a bit of a passage with a few battered old chairs a TV and 2 phone boxes. The men spend 12 hours a day locked in the dormitories. Cont at page 3

AI's VISION

is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

AI's MISSION

is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

AI's CORE VALUES

remain those of : international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

Worldwide Appeal: USA: More than 15 years on death row

Troy Anthony Davis has spent more than 15 years on death row in Georgia, USA. In August 1991 he was convicted of the 1989 murder of Mark Allen McPhail, a police officer, in the car park of a fast food restaurant. Although he admits being at the scene, Troy Davis has always maintained that he did not commit the murder.

All but three of the non-police witnesses who testified against Troy Davis at his trial have since recanted or contradicted their testimony amid allegations that some of it was obtained under police duress. The case against him consisted entirely of witness testimony which contained inconsistencies even at the time of the trial.

AI believes that there are serious and unanswered questions surrounding the reliability of the conviction in Troy Davis' case and the State of Georgia's conduct in obtaining it. As the case stands, the government's pursuit of the death penalty contravenes UN safeguards which prohibit the execution of anyone whose guilt is



not based on "clear and convincing evidence leaving no room for an alternative explanation of the facts".

Procedural complexities and obstacles have meant that Troy Davis has not had a hearing in a federal court on the reliability of the witness testimony used against him. The rejection in December 2006 of his appeal

for a rehearing in front of the full 11th Circuit Court of Appeals means that his judicial avenues are all but exhausted.

Please write, calling on the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles to grant clemency in the case of Troy Davis, noting that almost all of the witnesses at his trial have since recanted or contradicted their testimony.

Send appeals to: Board Members,
State Board of Pardons and Paroles,
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE,
Suite 458,
Balcony Level,
East Tower,
Atlanta,
Georgia 30334-4909,
USA.
Fax: +1 404 651 8502.
Email: webmaster@pap.state.ga.us

Salutation: Dear Board Members

Letter writing guide

- *Always be polite. This rule is essential and invariable. Your aim is to help, not to relieve your own feelings. Governments don't respond to abusive or condemnatory letters (however well **deserved!**)
- *Always write your letters on the basis that the Government concerned is open to reason and discussion.
- *It is important where possible to stress a country's reputation for moderation and justice, to show respect for its constitution and judicial procedures, and to demonstrate an understanding of current difficulties. This will give you more scope to point out ways in which the human rights situation can be improved.
- *Follow strictly the instructions given by AI.
- *Never use political jargon. Don't give the impression that you are writing because you are ideologically or politically opposed to the government in question. It is far more effective to stress that your concern for human rights is not politically based in any way, but in keeping with basic principles of international law.
- *If appropriate, explain who you are and what you do. It shows your letter is genuine, and that people from varying walks of life are following events in the country concerned.

June Group Meeting

Jenny welcomed all to the meeting.

1) Group Action:

A photo message for Delara Darabi, who is at risk of execution in Iran.

2) Secretary's report (Mary Brown): AI is collecting unwanted mobile phones. Mary has an update of our public liability insurance. A request from Valerie Aggar Snr Lecturer from Solent University-they will be using AI as a case study for their business studies next Easter. We have a new trainer for our Region, Ros Topley.

3) Tin Rattle: Frank announced the next tin rattle to take place on Saturday 13th October outside Simsbury's Shirley.

4) Concert: Paul reported that it will be in October in November, no venue as yet.

5) Refugee week (Jilly): 18th to 24th June. The theme is destitution. Encourage people to write to the News with a focus on the "Credit to

the Nation" ie the positive effect refugees have had on our society.

6) Barbara Lupton: She spoke of our recently departed colleague Eileen Sharp. A number of her lady friends will be holding a celebration of her life on September 8th from 5.00pm ie late afternoon to early evening. Donations will be collected for the labour party. This will be held in "The Common Room, Biddlegate Court, Upper Bugle Street, SO14 2AF".

7) Next meeting: This will be the Groups annual AGM. Anyone wishing to stand as officer in the Group is very welcome. Ideas about next years programme will be welcomed. Fund raising ideas particularly welcome.

REFUGEE WEEK

"Refugee Week is important because it reminds us that refugees are not just statistics to be used and abused, they are living breathing people. I am British, I was born here and I have no intention of leaving here so I want to create a society here where compassion is built into our culture, in this society we will be so aware of the world around us that we will not need a Refugee Week. Until then this is how we do it"

Benjamin Zephaniah, Poet

Refugees at Haslar cont from page 1: There are some good things, a well equipped gym, a sports field, a chapel, a small branch of a library and good education facilities run by Highbury College. There is also a pleasant visits room.

So the men get visitors?: Every day between 2 and 4pm and some mornings and evenings. About a quarter get visits from the Visitors Group. Some have family or friends, and some do not want visitors.

What is Haslar visitors group?: A charity with an office and 2 paid coordinators, who put visitors in touch with men and support both men and visitors with advice and training. The men in Haslar have difficulties with their past, some have lost homes and families, some have had difficult journeys, some have lived in poverty on the margins of society. They are facing major life change as they are sent back, often empty handed, to start a new life. The Group also runs a "drop-in" centre in Portsmouth, and a destitution fund.

How can I help?: Volunteer as a visitor, make a donation. Phone 023 9283 9222

E-mail: coordinator@haslarvisitors.org.uk

Southampton Group Who's Who:

Group Officers:

Chair & Membership Secretary:

Jenny McConnell

Vice-Chair :

Becky John

Secretary & Press:

Mary Brown

Treasurer:

Giampaolo D'Alessandro

Outreach:

Veronica Tippets

Parliamentary Officer:

Frank Capocci

News Letter Editor:

John Williams

Subgroups:

Stop Violence Against Women:

Jo Dixon

Terrorism, Security and Human Rights

John Williams

Long-term Action File

Mary Brown

Death Penalty:

Giampaolo D'Alessandro

Control Arms Campaign:

Barbara Lupton

Refugees:

Jilly Cooke

Central America:

Paul Humphrey

China & East Asia:

Judy Horton

- Diary:
- ◆ Monday 9th July: 7.30 pm Group Meeting: Southampton Group AGM. Avenue St Andrew's. All welcome.
 - ◆ Monday 10th September: 7.30 pm Group Meeting: Avenue St Andrew's All welcome.
 - ◆ Saturday 29th September: Conference on SVAW and China at HRAC, London.
 - ◆ Monday 8th October: 7.30 pm Group Meeting: Avenue St Andrew's. All welcome.

Issues from AI Web Page
Check "www.amnesty.org.uk" for more details

- ◆ John Lennon, re-imagined, Some of the biggest names in music have come together for Amnesty International to highlight the deepening crisis in the Sudanese region of Darfur.
- ◆ Pride 2007: 30th June.
- ◆ Honduras: Journalists at risk.
- ◆ Crisis in Sudan: find out more.
- ◆ Poland and Romania renditions: AI call for investigation.
- ◆ Iran: The only country still executing child offenders.
- ◆ Control arms: Government shows overwhelming support for arms treaty.
- ◆ Central African Republic: Collapse of law and order in the region.
- ◆ China: Jailed blind activist beaten by other prisoners on order of the guards.
- ◆ Guantanamo: Fresh calls for camp to close, following reports that "closure" meeting shelved.
- ◆ Sierra Leone: Guilty verdicts not the end of the story for victims of war crimes.

**Southampton Group
AGM**

Any one wishing to stand for office or shadow one of the current office holders is very welcome. Ideas for fundraising particularly welcome.

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