



Southampton Group

AMNESTY NEWS

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

If you would like more information about the Group or would like to take part in any activities please get in touch by e-mailing:

AmnestySouthampton@yahoo.co.uk

September 2021

WELCOME TO 2021/22

Since the last News Letter there has been a change to our Group. Giampaolo D'Alessandro has decided to stand down from the role of chair. Giampaolo has been our chair for many years and has done a splendid job steering our Group. He will be sorely missed, but the good news is that he is staying on as a Group member. The Group decided at its AGM in July that it would not fill the role of Chair at this stage, instead the current "regulars" will share the tasks of Chair.

The struggle for human rights goes on, the task seems to grow bigger each year. There is absolutely no doubt that we will continue to need as much support as possible in carrying out our various tasks such as letter writing, campaigning and generally supporting the cause.

Unfortunately, we continue to be affected by Covid-19 and will continue to meet virtually for the time being. We very much hope that by the end of the year we will be able to meet face to face. We will keep you informed of progress.

We have been busy planning a programme of speakers over the summer and will keep you up to date in the "Diary" section on the back page of the News Letter. You will also find the list of our specific campaigning issues and the people who we are continuing to work for, on the back page.

Please get in touch if you would like to join us for our first meeting.

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 and 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

Annual General Meeting July 2021

Summary of GROUP ACTIVITIES 2020-2021:

Despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic the Group has held meetings every month online and has endeavoured to keep all members and supporters involved through the Newsletter and campaign actions.

In September we met up with members of the Romsey Group and enjoyed a historic walk round Eling and a picnic lunch.

Guest speakers at our virtual meetings have included: the AI Country Coordinators for Russia and Eritrea, the Project Manager of Clear, who spoke about the difficulties faced by people seeking refuge in the UK. Simon John who spoke about modern slavery. In March we joined the Romsey Group for a joint session, the speaker was Caroline Nokes MP, who presented a critique of the Governments approach to immigration.

There have been several projects to “spread the word”. Two of the Write for Rights cases featured in the Phoenix Film Society’s Christmas Newsletter, and the photo mosaic of Marielle Franco has now been deposited in the Sea City Museum, the Hampshire Archives and the Wessex Film and Sound Archives as one of their Covid-19 stories.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of Amnesty, the group produced a short video on YouTube. The link was sent to local MPs and councillors. It triggered a radio interview and an article in the free magazine “Discover”.

In addition to work on our regular cases, we also took action for Idris Khattack (Pakistan), women from Saudi Arabia, Uyghur children separated from their parents, and Nazanin Zagari-Ratcliffe.

Gareth attended the virtual AIUK AGM. He outlined interesting arguments from proposers of 2 motions, which we had discussed within our Group (one on China, and one on the relationship between the International Secretariate and National Sections of Amnesty).

However, he felt the AGM needs improvement for future years, whether it is online-only or simply online-accessible. Discussion appeared to be dominated by campaigners on narrow, and often internally focused issues. Quite possibly the online nature made it less appealing to people who have a more expansive approach to human rights. A particular difficulty arose from the way the AGM was organised. There were no amendments (which often “soften” motions) allowed, and no arguments against motions being provided in advance (except for one motion which the Board opposed). Around three-quarters of votes (including our Group’s votes) were cast in advance of the meeting, without hearing any of the contrary arguments. Potentially as a consequence, all 14 motions were passed!

THE “DISAPPEARED of ERITREA 20yrs on

In 2001 the Eritrean Government closed all independent media and carried out mass arrests of journalists and politicians including **DAWIT ISAAK** and **ASTER FISSEHATASION**. It is not known whether any have survived 20 years in the horrific prisons of Eritrea

Please write to: President Isaias Afwerki, PO Box 257, Asmara, Eritrea.

Either use the letter below or use your own words.

Your Excellency,

September 18th will mark the twentieth anniversary of the closure of all non-Government media in Eritrea following which the most distinguished of the journalists were arrested. On that same day, the politicians who had been seeking more democracy were arrested and “disappeared”. During these twenty years, no information has been given to any court or been released to any family members of the “disappeared”.

Eritrea was a proud signatory of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and I wish to emphasise the importance of the following Articles from that Declaration:

“Article 9 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10 Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11 1 Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all guarantees necessary for his defence.”

Yours sincerely,

CORONA VIRUS

For the foreseeable future the Southampton Group will not be holding face-to-face meetings. However, we will be arranging virtual meetings see DIARY box. And if possible some external fundraising events

We plan to continue to produce a monthly News Letter.

Each month we will include at least one letter or action, which you will either be able to copy or email. Any information we may receive about cases we are working on and news from the web.

DIARY

For details of how to join any of the events/meetings outlined below please contact our secretary, Valerie at our email address:
AmnestySouthampton@yahoo.co.uk

September 2021:

Monday 13th: 7.30 Virtual Group Meeting: Speaker: Alex JACKSON, Country Co-ordinator, Eritrea, will speak on the topic: "Eritrea & the war in the Horn of Africa".

October 2021:

Monday 11th: 7.30 Virtual Group Meeting: Nigina Istanakzai-Zarifi, will speak on topic: "Women's Rights in Afghanistan".

SOUTHAMPTON GROUP WHO'S WHO

Group Officers:

Chair: Duties shared

Secretary: Valerie Oswald

Treasurer: Gareth Davies

Outreach and Parliamentary Officer:
Veronica Tippetts

Newsletter: John Williams

Campaigning Activity:

People on the move
Protecting the space for human rights defenders
Death Penalty
HR Act
Snoopers Charter
South Asia
China

Case file: Marielle Franco, Brazil

Individual at Risk: Aster Fissehatsion and Dawit Isaak, Eritrea

Issues on the Web

amnesty.org.uk

Include:

Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men-new investigation.

Tigray: Demand justice for sexual violence survivors in Tigray.

Belarus: Free Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega.

Mexico: Stop repressing women protesters.

Denmark: Don't send refugees back to Syria.

Peru: Protect people fleeing Venezuela.

NB the views expressed in this News Letter may not necessarily be those of Amnesty International. John Williams editor