



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

October 2021

Alex Jackson, Country Coordinator for Eritrea spoke to the September Meeting, below is a summary of his presentation.

“Eritrea has long been a country of silence and secrecy. Hundreds have “disappeared” and more “disappear” and then are suddenly reappeared years later. However, within Eritrea there is a conspiracy of silence largely led by fear.

The silence and secrecy also applies to the most highly publicised events like the *Peace Agreement* signed in April 2018 between Ethiopian Prime Minister and Eritrean President. As a result, the border between the two countries was opened, but too many Eritreans took the opportunity to leave the country with no intention of returning. Consequently, the border was closed. It must be remembered that Eritrea is one of the world’s biggest producers of refugees per head of population. It has been widely speculated that a key part of the real peace agreement was that there would be close cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries. Silence and secrecy continues into the present situation in Tigray. It is known that when the Ethiopian Government launched the present war in November 2020, Eritrean troops were already in Ethiopia and have effectively been in charge of the northern and western fronts for most of the past ten months. But no news of this was given to the Eritrean people and the Eritrean Government has never confirmed its role in the war.

In some countries, silence and secrecy are combatted by the Press; but 20yrs ago, the press disappeared from Eritrea..... cont on page 2.

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

Cont from page 1...

It has long been common for the Press to accompany armies to the front line, but not in this war and so it has been very difficult to be certain about exactly what has been happening. Other groups like aid workers and UN agencies have not been allowed access. We do know that there are 6 million Tigray people surrounded by enemy troops and there are clearly huge food supply issues and a lack of medical and other support systems.

Recently, it has been announced that the UK Government has provided £48 million to help address the humanitarian disaster but how that can be spent to help the people in Tigray is unclear. The same Government statement confirmed that there is no access to Tigray and that there is the prospect of the world's worst famine since Somalia in 2011. The issue has been raised and talked about at the UN Security Council, the Human Rights Council (of which Eritrea is a member) and the G7. The numerous calls for Eritrean troops to withdraw from Ethiopia have been ignored. Dr Abiy, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, has rejected peace talks with the African Union on the grounds that the conflict is a limited issue of "law and order".

There is a clear danger of the war spreading, Dr Abiy has made a high-profile call for Ethiopians to volunteer to join the army. Although the Tigray army defeated Ethiopian forces earlier this year, expelling the Ethiopians from the majority of Tigray, it is recognised that only the Ethiopian forces have an air force and access to drones."

BUSINESS MEETING

1. Week of Action:

- a. Valerie has been in touch with AI and will attend the next training event.
- b. Discussed contacting a local MP
- c. AI has produced a model letter regards Afghanistan to be sent to the press. John agreed to send it to the Echo.

2. National Conference:

- a. To be held online on November 13th. Individuals may attend.

3. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe:

- a. To mark her 200 days of detention there will be a vigil in London, whilst no one was available to attend. Valerie agreed to write to Alan Whitehead MP with a request that he raises the issue with the Foreign Secretary.

4. Vigil for Disappeared Mexican Students:

- a. No one available to attend.

5. Southampton against racism:

- a. Peter to attend

6. Future events:

- a. Fundraising walk: Saturday 23rd October 11.00, Fritham meet at Eyeworth pond car park (drive past The Royal Oak down steep hill).

GAMBIA

Family of ‘disappeared’ journalist still awaiting justice.

Almost 15 years after the enforced disappearance of journalist *Ebrima B Manneh*, his family are still seeking justice. He was arrested on 11th July 2006, at the offices of the pro-government newspaper Daily Observer, by plainclothes police officers thought to have been from the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). No official reason was provided by the government for his arrest and the NIA denied involvement.

In 2008, the Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice ordered the Gambian government to release *Ebrima* from unlawful detention and pay him \$100,000 compensation. The government never complied with the judgement. In 2017, his family was finally officially informed by the police of his death, yet they still have no information about what happened and who was responsible. And because they do not know where his body is, they cannot perform burial rights.

Amnesty International considered *Ebrima* a prisoner of conscience, and supporters across the world have spent years campaigning on behalf of his family.

APPEAL: Urge the authorities to release the remains of *Ebrima B Manneh* to his family so they can bury him. Call for a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into his death, and for the family to be kept informed of the investigation’s progress. Urge the authorities to ensure anyone suspected of responsibility for *Ebrima B Manneh’s* death is brought to justice in fair trials that meet international standards.

WRITE TO: President of The Gambia Adama Barrow,
President State House
Banjul
The Gambia

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Francis R Blain
The Gambian High Commission
57 Kensington Court
London W8 5DG

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

October 2021:

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

Saturday 23rd: Fundraising walk, meet at Fritham, Eyeworth Pond Car Park. Drive to Fritham drive past the Royal Oak, down steep hill turn right along side of pond. After the walk we will meet in the Royal Oak for lunch.
£5 per person.

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, Eritea

Issues on the Web

amnesty.org.uk

Include:

UK Govt: Stop the assault on our freedoms.

Afghanistan: Call on the Prime Minister to act urgently to help Afghan civilians at risk.

Iran: Help stop the imminent execution of two young men.

Saudi Arabia: Help quash Loujain's sentence.

Ukraine: Prominent anti-government protester Dmitrii Bulatov

Pocket Protest: see details on web site.

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