



Sept 2022

# Southampton Group AMNESTY NEWS

[www.amnesty-volunteer.org/uk/southampton-city](http://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:

## WELCOME TO A NEW YEAR OF CAMPAIGNING

As always when we start a new year it becomes clear that there are a wide range of Human Rights issues to be covered. The autumn issue of Amnesty features "Time to fight for our rights" on its front cover. To summarise the key points:

*"The government's Rights Removal Bill is going to hurt us all, give those in power more power and seriously damage human rights. A range of groups talk about the dire consequences of losing the Human Rights Act, Amnesty is working hard to defend it"*

Amnesty is not the only organisation fighting the removal of the Human Rights Act. Stephanie Boyce, president of the Law Society of England and Wales, makes the point that people in the UK have been able to uphold and protect their rights for many years through the Human Rights Act.

The Law Society represents more than 200,000 solicitors. Many of them use the Human Rights Act to protect their clients' rights, from people seeking proper care for vulnerable relatives or parents upholding the rights of their children to have education, to victims of injustice at the hands of the police.

### 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

## BUSINESS DISCUSSION

The Core members of the Group have had several discussions over the summer about the best way to take the Group forward. We decided that it was time to change our model and freshen our approach.

Following Covid regular attenders wanted a more sociable/personal experience than before, so we are trying to meet in person more informally and may be less frequently. This gives us a good opportunity to consider what are the key Human Rights issues and how best to campaign against them.

Covid also taught us how speakers are much more available if they can deliver their talks by Zoom. It also means that they can talk to more than one group at a time. Over the years we have shared speakers with the Romsey Group, this has been ad hoc. What we are in the process of exploring is how we might regularly share a speaker with local groups. We are in discussion with the Romsey Group and the Salisbury Group. This should mean that we can attract more high-profile speakers who may be attracted to speaking to a bigger audience.

In addition, we are in contact with Mark Stimson who is the Group rep for the south. This will give us the opportunity to get involved with other Groups.

We hope that the plans that are outlined above will give us the opportunity on the one hand to continue social contacts with local amnesty sympathisers and on the other hand keep in touch with key issues.

## CRASS, CRUEL, CALLOUS

The most extreme aspect of the UK government's plan to avoid its asylum responsibilities-its scheme to banish people fleeing war and persecution to Rwanda-has been delayed pending a judicial review hearing in September. Sadly the tenor of the Conservative leadership contest shows that the issue is not going away. A shameful abandonment of the UK's responsibilities under the Refugee Convention , the policy is inhumane and ineffective.

## **Campaign Real Lives**

### **EGYPT**

#### **ALAA ABDEL FATTAH & MOHAMED BAKER ACTIVISTS AND LAWYER AT RISK IN PRISON**

British national and human rights activist Alaa Abdel Fattah and his lawyer Mohamed Baker are being arbitrarily held in inhuman conditions that put their lives at risk. Alaa has been on hunger-strike since 2 April in protest.

Initially detained in September 2019, he and Mohamed were convicted of spurious “spreading false news” charges over their social media posts. In a grossly unfair trial in October 2021, they were sentenced to five and four years, respectively. Amnesty considers them to be prisoners of conscience.

For the last two-and-a-half years, Alaa and Mohamed have been held in cruel prison conditions. The authorities confine them to cramped fetid cells, deprive them of beds, mattresses, hot water, outdoor exercise, and family photos, and excluded them from the Covid vaccine rollout.

Alaa obtained his British citizenship in December 2021 but is being denied access to UK consular visits. The authorities even refused to let Mohamed see his dying father.

### **APPEAL**

State that Alaa Abdel Fattah and Mohamed Baker are prisoners of conscience and urge the president to immediately and unconditionally to release them.

### **WRITE TO**

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Office of the President, Al Ittihadia Palace, Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

**Salutation:** Dear President

His Excellency Sherif Ahmed, Mahmoud Kamel, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street, London, W1K 1DW

**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](mailto:AmnestySouthampton@yahoo.co.uk)

### **September:**

The Israeli APARTHEID, TOM GUHA, Anestys Crisis and Campaign Manager

The meeting will be via Zoom, and will be shared with Romsey and Salisbury and the University of Southampton groups plus local members of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

.All welcome.

## **SOUTHAMPTON GROUP WHO'S WHO**

### **Group Officers:**

**Secretary: Valerie Oswald**

**Treasurer: Gareth Davies**

### **Additional Roles Include:**

**Chair: Rotating:**

**Outreach and Parliamentary Officer:  
Veronica Tippetts**

**Newsletter: John Williams**

### **Campaigning Activity:**

**Eritrea; Individuals at Risk:** Aster Fissehatsion, Dawit Isaak and Ciham Ali Ahmed

**People on the move  
Protecting the space for human rights  
defenders  
Death Penalty  
HR Act**

**Case file: Marielle Franco, Brazil**

## **Issues on the Web [amnesty.org.uk](http://amnesty.org.uk) Include:**

**The Human Rights Act:** Sign the Petition

**UK:** Protect the Protest:

**Sri Lanka:** "Chilling: emergency regulations must not lead to further human rights violations.

**Syria:** Justice for Syria

**USA: Gun violence is a human rights crisis.**

**North Korea;** is in a category of its own when it comes to human rights violations. Tens of thousands of people are enslaved or tortured.

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