

May 2020 Minutes



Glasgow West Amnesty International

Attendees: FL, MDS, CL, MR, JGe, KM, JG

Apologies: CA, CCa, CC

Amnesty Lockdown Videoconferences

As with the last couple of months, we held our meeting via videoconference, following on from the weekly Amnesty videoconference organised by our regional rep and Glasgow West member, Malcolm.

Mal will continue to organise weekly videoconferences with Amnesty speakers for as long as the strict lockdown measures continue in Scotland. For information on how to attend please email Mal at malcolm.dingwall-smith@amnesty.org.uk. You can connect using your laptop, tablet, smart phone or call in using a mobile or landline.

Past Events

Virtual Quiz Night

The Glasgow West Amnesty group organised a virtual pub quiz on Sunday 26th April which was open to other Amnesty groups in the UK. The quiz went well and it was an enjoyable evening. The Glasgow West team were the victors but

there was no cheating, we promise! Depending on how long lockdown continues, we will consider organising more social events for Amnesty groups later on.

Secretary's Report (FL)

Local Group Briefing

Protecting the most vulnerable during COVID19

Amnesty is calling on local groups to write to their local papers encouraging readers to sign a petition calling on better government support for at risk groups during the COVID19 crisis. In particular, key workers, migrants and refugees and women facing domestic violence. We decided to send a letter to the Herald, the Glasgow Evening Times, the National and the Scotsman. More info on the campaign and to sign the petition follow this link: [on the AIUK website](#).

Nazanin solidarity action

FL lit a candle on behalf of the Glasgow West Amnesty group for Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe as part of a social media solidarity action organised by AIUK. Nazanin is currently due to be sent back to prison on the 20th May. She was released on a temporary basis after fears that coronavirus could infect large numbers of detainees in Iran's overcrowded jails and we're afraid that her furlough won't be extended.

Update: Nazanin's release has now been extended but we do not know for how long. Sign the petition to help get Nazanin home once and for all: [on the AIUK website](#)

Urgent Actions (MR and FL)

Man claiming innocence faces execution

Walter Barton's execution is scheduled for 19 May 2020. He is on death row in Missouri, USA, since 2006 in connection with the 1991 murder of a woman, for which he maintains his innocence. He faced five trials over 15 years before being convicted and sentenced to death. Expert opinion and evidence, never heard by a trial jury, counter key elements of the prosecution's theory which led to Barton's conviction. The 19 May execution would be the first in the USA since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Governor Parson can grant Barton's request for clemency, halting the execution.

Further details: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/man-claiming-innocence-faces-execution>

Contact the governor: <https://governor.mo.gov/contact-us>

Update: Very sadly, Walter was executed as planned on the 19th May. See this further article here - <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/usa-cruel-execution-missouri-set-go-ahead-despite-innocence-claims>

Whistleblower doctor facing reprisals

Tatyana Revva, doctor from Volgograd region, in southern Russia, is facing disciplinary proceedings that may result in dismissal, following her complaints of the shortage of personal protective equipment and other problems in her hospital in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. She should be able to perform her professional duties, and exercise her right to freedom of expression, without fear of reprisals by the administration.

Further details: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/whistleblower-doctor-facing-reprisals>

Human rights defender detained and tortured

Human rights defender Patrick Zaki George, who suffers from asthma, is at particular risk if exposed to COVID-19 in Tora Investigation Prison. On 5 May 2020, Supreme State Security prosecutors (SSSP) renewed his detention for 15 days pending investigations without Patrick or his lawyer present. The prison authorities failed to transfer him to the SSSP for seven weeks to attend his detention renewal session.

Further details: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/human-rights-defender-detained-and-tortured-0>

Journalist at risk after receiving death threat

On 13 April, Chechnya's Head Ramzan Kadyrov posted a video on Instagram in which he issued a death threat aimed at Russian journalist Elena Milashina. The threat followed the publication of her article about the spread of COVID-19 in Chechnya. She is in grave danger and Russian authorities must take urgent steps to ensure her safety. More details: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/journalist-risk-after-receiving-death-threat>

Crackdown on dissent continues during COVID - 19

Activists Gautam Navlakha and Anand Teltumbde were arrested by the National Investigative Agency (NIA) on 14 April 2020, and charged under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code along with the Unlawful

Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for their involvement in the 2018 Bhima Koregaon riots. These arrests appear to be politically motivated and relate to the massive crackdown on human rights defenders in 2018, when nine other prominent activists were arrested in the same case. Further details:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/crackdown-dissent-continues-during-covid-19>

Upcoming Events

Virtual Letter Writing Meeting

We are planning a virtual letter writing meeting for Monday 25th May at 7pm. For joining instructions please email Freya at freya_lyte@hotmail.co.uk. In more ordinary times we have letter writing meetings at each others homes. It is a chance to focus on writing actions that we may not ordinarily have time to do in our monthly meetings or at other times in the month. All you need is a pen and pencil and a device which connects to the internet. If you can, please come along with an action to share with the group. Hope to see you there.

Next meeting

Thursday 11th June – this will also most likely be via WebEx. Please contact Mal at malcolm.dingwall-smith@amnesty.org.uk for joining instructions. Earlier in the year we had arranged for Lynnda from the Weekend Club to come and speak at our June meeting. As a group we have decided to save her talk for when we can resume our face to face meetings.