

June 2020 Minutes



Glasgow West Amnesty International

Attendees: FL, MDS, CA, CC, GK, JG, KM, MR, CCa

Apologies: JGi

Amnesty Lockdown Videoconferences

We held our meeting via videoconference, following on from the weekly Amnesty videoconference organised by our regional rep and Glasgow West member, Malcolm. This week the speaker was Sunit Bagree. Sunit works for Action for Southern Africa but was talking to us in a personal capacity. He explained how

1. unjust external debt payments,
2. illegal financial outflows and
3. the denial of climate debt

deprives governments in Southern African countries of vital funds which they could use to help their people realise their economic and social rights.

To find out more about this important issue, check out their report:

[ACTSA: The Money Drain](#)

Amnesty also has a relevant action on the right to water in South Africa:

[AIUK: Turn on the Tap](#)

The programme for the upcoming weekly lockdown videoconferences is as follows:

- Thurs 18th June - Paul Bridges, Chair of AIUK's Anti-Death Penalty Project.
- Thurs 25th June - AIUK Country Co-ordinator for Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan).
- Thurs 2nd July – Women's Human Rights with Chiara Capraro, Women's Human Rights Programme Manager, AIUK
- Thurs 9th July – Ending Child Marriage with Zoe Birchall, Senior Policy & Advocacy Officer, Girls Not Brides

All run from 6.30pm to approx. 7.45pm. 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.

You may recall that this month we had planned to have a talk from Lynnda Wardle from Interfaith Glasgow. We have decided to postpone this until we resume face to face meetings.

In the meantime you can find out more about the organisation and their Weekend Club here: <https://interfaithglasgow.org/>

Secretary's Report (FL)

Local Group Briefing

Pride Inside Amnesty are creating an exciting online event - Pride Inside - with partners UK Black Pride, Brighton Trans Pride, and Stonewall, with more to come! There'll be a week of activities kicking off on the 28th June with a launch event showcasing all the incredible LGBTI+ activists, artists and allies contributing to this week of Pride celebration! We will come together and invite the public to be proud no matter what, proud no matter where. The launch date is the anniversary of the Stonewall riots in 1969, which as you may know, was the birthplace of Pride. More info here - [Pride Inside](#)

You can get started in your activism around Pride by taking action for Polish woman, Elżbieta Podleśna who could face two years in prison after being accused of owning a poster of the Virgin Mary with a rainbow halo - [AIUK info](#)

NO SIGN OF DISAPPEARED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

The whereabouts of Muhammad Idris Khattak, a Pakistani father, human rights defender and independent researcher, remain unknown since he was forcibly disappeared on 13 November 2019. A patient of diabetes requiring daily medication, the health of Khattak is at even greater risk during the COVID-19 outbreak as the conditions of his detention remain unknown. With

no information about his fate for six months, his daughters fear that Khattak is at real risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Take action [here](#)

Nazanin's release extended Thank you to everyone who lit candles for Nazanin, or sent their best wishes. Amnesty UK are grateful for all your care, and her husband Richard and the Free Nazanin campaign have sent their thanks for the solidarity. Nazanin's furlough was due to end on 20 May and we were relieved to hear that her release has been extended, though we are not sure for how long.

This 'conditional liberty' is far better than outright jail, but we're worried that the Iranian authorities are still playing games with Nazanin and her family. At the end of May we had reason to hope via reports from Richard that Nazanin could be on a list of prisoners' to be pardoned - however once again they have been left waiting for news. The position they have been left in is cruel. That's why your continued support is so crucial. In jail, Nazanin was a prisoner and whilst she's confined to her parents' house in Tehran, she is still a prisoner. Amnesty will continue to campaign alongside Richard until she is allowed to come home to the UK.

Amnesty's online shop open for business With a global focus on the impact of COVID-19, Amnesty wanted to share an update on what they are doing at the Amnesty Shop. The health and wellbeing of staff, customers and suppliers is Amnesty's main priority. They are taking all precautions and following advice from the government, but for now the shop is still operating as normal.

Shop online here - [Amnesty Shop](#)

Refugee Week 15 - 21 June Refugee Week is a time when we can all celebrate the contribution refugees make to the UK. The theme of this year's event is 'Imagine', and most activities will take place online this year. To find out how you can take part, have a look on the Refugee Week website. There are many Simple Acts, such as sharing a song, or watching a film and posting about it on social media. You can also join online events or take a virtual exhibition tour. Keep an eye on our social media around Refugee Week.

Amnesty will be posting ideas and updates every day! - [Refugee Week](#)

Black Lives Matter (FL)

Call on your MP to stand up for racial injustice. In particular ask them to write to:

- Dominic Raab MP and ask him to condemn the words and actions of the President of the USA, and call for him to suspend the attack on protesters;

- the Prime Minister and ask him to denounce Trump’s militarisation of the protests in the USA;
- the Home Secretary Priti Patel and ask her to make assurances that UK protesters will not be met with excessive use of force;

Also request that your MP calls on the government to immediately suspend licences for tear gas, riot shields and rubber bullets to the USA.

There’s a template letter available here: [BLM letter template](#)

One of our group also shared information about a Stand Up Against Racism Vigil, Glasgow, Weds 6th June.

Why not join the Black Lives Matter Glasgow Facebook page for ways to show solidarity as a black person or as an ally - [BLM Glasgow](#)

Group Picnic

MDS has suggested that we organise a group picnic social / letter writing meeting for when Scotland enters phase three (if practical following government guidelines). More details at our July meeting.

Urgent Actions (MR + CCa)

1. RUSSIA UA: SHAMAN IN PSYCHIATRIC DETENTION FOR CRITICIZING PUTIN

On 2 June, the Yakutsk City Court approved the indefinite forcible psychiatric hospitalisation of Aleksandr Gabyshev, a shaman who in 2019 announced he would march on foot from Yakutsk, in east Siberia, to Moscow “to purge” President Vladimir Putin from the Kremlin. Aleksandr Gabyshev is being targeted for his open criticism of the authorities and should not be arbitrarily deprived from his freedom or administered any medical treatment without his free and informed consent.

It says we have 39 days left but according to the country coordinator we have a very short time to influence the prosecution as his defence has only until 16 June to appeal the decision to detain Aleksandr Gabyshev indefinitely in a psychiatric hospital.

Email action - click the Take Action button on this page:

[Take Action](#)

2. EGYPT UA: LOSS OF CONTACT WITH DETAINED JOURNALIST

On 12 April 2020, Al-Qanater prison authorities started allowing most inmates to receive clothes, food, sanitizers, letters and a hot meal from their relatives weekly, after suspending prison visits in March.

However, arbitrarily detained journalist, Solafa Magdy, was not allowed to receive packages from her family until 29 April. Her family has still not received any calls or letters from her raising fears about her safety amid a potential outbreak of COVID-19 in prison.

Letter action - click the Take Action button on this page:

[Take Action](#)

Keep checking the Urgent Actions sites for actions you can take from your home - [Urgent Actions](#)

EGYPTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED AND TORTURED: PATRICK ZAKI GEORGE

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.

Take action here - [Amnesty website](#)

New long term case for the group! (CA)

The group has decided to take on the prisoner of conscience, Rubén González as our new long term case.

Rubén González is a Venezuelan trade unionist, who has been arbitrarily detained and subjected to unfair trials on several occasions. He has suffered from renal failure for more than 10 years, as well as hypertension. His lawyers have repeatedly requested medical attention from the courts, but he has only been transferred for medical treatment once. They do not allow his family to send medication unless he is already in severe pain.

Since his arbitrary arrest on 29 November 2018, Venezuelan labour rights activist Rubén González, 60, has suffered a series of health crises, but has not yet received adequate care. On 19 January 2020, Rubén González began experiencing hypertension, putting his life at risk, unless he receives urgent medical attention. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

More information on this case to follow.

AOB

MR recommended Death Row Bookclub, a podcast on the BBC World Service. An inmate recounts his experience of setting up a book club on death row

Death Row Bookclub

Next meeting

Thursday 9th July – this will also be via WebEx. Please contact Mal at malcolm.dingwall-smith@amnesty.org.uk for joining instructions.

The meeting will follow on from the weekly Amnesty videoconference which runs from 6.30 to 7.30pm.