

AMNESTY SOUTHAMPTON

18th December will mark the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the Declaration states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Much of the Southampton Group's work this year will focus on cases where individuals are being harassed, jailed or killed for legitimate criticism of their government.

In Eritrea, politicians and journalists have been held incommunicado since 2001. It is not known whether most of them are alive or dead. Critics of the government in Cuba are arrested and sentenced for expressing their views through articles and blogs. China holds vast numbers of detainees in prison, under house arrest, or enduring "education through labour" for simply calling for increased democracy and individual freedom.

Across the world, press freedom is under attack. We urge all who value the privilege of being able to speak out without fear, to support Amnesty's campaigns on behalf of the silenced.

'I WELCOME' CAMPAIGN

A global campaign which will run until 2018 was launched with the Refugees Welcome Here march in September 2016. There are four strands: 1) Political Change, which aims to get the UK Government to improve asylum rights and increase its share of responsibility for hosting refugees. 2) Welcome, which aims to engender a positive experience of, and towards, refugees nationally and in communities. 3) Movement Building, which aims to ensure there is a stronger and more sustainable movement of people and organisations working together for refugees'

rights. 4) International, which aims to ensure refugee rights are respected internationally.

DEATH PENALTY

We campaign for an end to all executions around the world - no matter what the circumstances. Depending where you live, you can be beheaded for charges of sorcery, stoned for adultery, or hanged for drug smuggling! The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights.

SAVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

We will be campaigning to ensure that politicians do not take away the rights we enjoy under this Act, which many people around the world are still fighting for. It is not yet known what steps the government might take to repeal the Act and replace it with alternatives of their own choosing. Action is likely to include lobbying local and national politicians and using the media to dispel myths, highlight how the Act has been used to protect people's rights, and make sure that attempts to repeal the HRA are not submerged in the Brexit negotiations.

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

This campaign, begun in May 2017, will aim to reinforce and implement protection mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders against any type of violence, threat, reprisal, discrimination or pressure, in the face of the global trend towards repression in the name of national security. We will campaign to support the crucial work of Human Rights Defenders from across the world, such as Azza Soliman, an Egyptian women's rights defender, and Rodrigo Mundaca, a Chilean water rights campaigner.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

In July 2018 news was received that Liu Xia, widow of Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, had been allowed to leave China for Germany after 8 years under house arrest. This should not, however, be regarded as a sign of improving human rights in China. Family members left behind are likely to be targeted if Liu Xia speaks out. President Xi Jinping's crackdown on activists continues. Dissident artist Ai Weiwei has been arrested and harassed for highlighting social issues through his work. Activist Liu Ping is still being kept in harsh conditions after her six and a half-year jail sentence for demanding an end to government corruption. Liu Ping's health is poor, and she has been denied treatment for a range of medical problems. We are planning joint action on her behalf with an Amnesty group in New Zealand which has also adopted her case.

SOUTH ASIA

This region includes Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. Action is likely to include work on the treatment of women in Afghanistan; the lack of religious freedom in Pakistan; attacks on minorities in Bangladesh; discrimination against Muslim residents in Assam in India; and work for human rights defenders and people who are affected by the coal mining activities in Adivasi (tribal people) areas of India.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

This is a global action to send messages of goodwill and solidarity to victims of human rights abuse and their families. Members of the public can join us at an event, or full campaign details can be downloaded at www.amnesty.org.uk/write from 1st November.

WORKING FOR INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

1. Dr Eduardo Cardet, Cuba

Human Rights Defender **Dr Eduardo Cardet** was arrested in Holguin, eastern Cuba, on 30 November 2016, and charged with attacking a state official after he publicly criticised Fidel Castro a few days after the former leader's death. Eduardo has been held in prison in Holguin province since his arrest, and was sentenced to remain in prison until 20 March 2020. He is a medical doctor who has been the leader of the pro-democracy Christian Liberation Movement since 2014.

2. Aster Fissehatsion and Dawit Isaak, Eritrea

Aster Fissehatsion has been held incommunicado without charge or trial since September 2001. She was arrested during a round-up of 15 political dissidents, which included her former husband, then Vice-President of Eritrea. She is said to suffer from stomach ulcers.

Dawit Isaak, journalist and newspaper owner, was arrested in September 2001, during a crackdown on independent media. He is being held incommunicado by the Eritrean authorities who refuse to disclose his exact location or details of his health and well-being. He is believed to be seriously ill. Sources have said that the government accuses Dawit of being a "traitor", though he has never been charged or brought to trial.

Both are regarded as Prisoners of Conscience by Amnesty International.

PROGRAMME

September 2018

M. 10th 7.30 pm Meeting: India & Pakistan. *Peter Murray*

F. 21st: *International Peace Day*

Su. 23rd 1.00 pm: Guided heritage walk of the site of the Royal Victoria military hospital, Netley. £5/head. E-mail to book a place.

October 2018

M. 8th: Meeting postponed to 15th

M. 15th 7.45 pm: Joint meeting with Romsey Group in Romsey URC Church Hall. Brazil. *Graham Minter*

Date and details tbc: Annual Human Rights Lecture. Southampton University, Avenue Campus.

November 2018

M. 12th 7.30pm Meeting: Campaigning for Individuals at Risk

W. 14th 2.00 pm: Write for Rights with U3A, Totton

Su. 18th: Write for Rights with the Quakers

December 2018

M. 10th: *Human Rights Day*

M. 10th 7.30 pm Meeting: Write for Rights action

W. 12th 7.30 pm: Write for Rights event at Phoenix Film Society's screening of *The Breadwinner*.

January 2019

M. 14th 7.30 pm Meeting: Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Economic Migrants. *Southampton & Winchester Visitors Group*

February 2019

M. 11th 7.30 pm Meeting: Cuba. *Sue Bingham*

Date tba: Pub Quiz, King Rufus, Eling

March 2019

F. 8th: *International Women's Day*

M. 11th 7.30 pm Meeting: Topic tba

April 2019

M. 8th 7.30 pm Meeting: Topic tba

13th & 14th: Amnesty UK AGM & National Conference, Nottingham

May 2019

Sat. 11th: Fundraising Walk in aid of Amnesty

M. 13th 7.30 pm Meeting: Topic tba

June 2019

M. 10th 7.30 pm Meeting: Topic tba

17th-23rd: *Refugee Week*

Th. 20th Music for Refugees, Christ Church Freemantle

July 2019

Mon. 8th 7.30 pm Meeting: Group AGM & social

For up-to-date information on all group activities, please see our website.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Southampton Group

**Meetings take place
on the second Monday of each month
(except August)
at 7.30 pm
in St Andrew's United Reformed
Church, The Avenue, Southampton
SO17 1XQ**

*Annual Membership £12.00. Please come along or get
in touch!*

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