



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

December 2021



**HAPPY CHRISTMAS
&
A GOOD NEW YEAR**

A REVIEW OF OUR CAMPAIGNING STRATEGY

The six core members of the Southampton Group met recently to consider ways to improve our impact and visibility locally in the hope of recruiting new (and younger!) members. We are proposing to do this by reviewing and reducing the number of areas we work on within Amnesty, and to focus specifically on a few where we feel we might make progress.

We will continue to invite speakers to our monthly meetings from a wide range of areas as before, so that we remain a Group that is well informed and concerned about Human Rights abuses.

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

ERITREA

One of the key areas we have decided to focus on is Eritrea. We will endeavour to highlight a specific area of human rights concern each month. As a way of introducing the Eritrean human rights concerns, the first paragraph of Amnesty International 2019 report is quoted below:

“The use of indefinite military conscription, amounting to forced labour, has continued despite an agreement to end the protracted border dispute with Ethiopia, a dispute the government had used to justify prolonged national military service. Thousands were prevented from travelling abroad without government permission, or due to repeated border closures. Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances continued. Security forces restricted the right to freedom of expression inside the country, and government supporters attacked and threatened human rights defenders in the diaspora.”

The report goes on to highlight several key human rights areas:

- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Freedom of movement
- Forced labour and slavery
- Arbitrary arrests and forced disappearances
- Freedom from expression

Each of these areas will be discussed in more detail in future Newsletters.

One of the six core members, Mary Brown, who has worked on Eritrean cases in the past has identified a number of ways we may campaign on Eritrean issues.

These include:

- Lobbying local MPs
- Approaching the All-Party Group on Eritrea
- Building on the support of local Councillors
- Our Group also has an excellent relationship with Alex Jackson, Amnesty UK Country Coordinator for Eritrea.

There are currently three specific cases of concern in Eritrea as well as the broad Human Rights issues.

- Aster Fissehatsion, a “disappeared” politician. Aster Fissehatsion has been held incommunicado without charge or trial since 18th September 2001. She is a Prisoner of Conscience.
- Dawat Isaak, a “disappeared” writer and journalist.
- Ciham Ali Ahmed, US Eritrean national. Details of how to campaign on Ciham’s case are on next page.

(The following information is taken from Amnesty International "WRITE for RIGHTS 2021)

CIHAM ALI AHMED

US-Eritrean national held for nine years

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Eritrea, a fan of Lady Gaga and Green Day, Ciham Ali Ahmed wanted to become a fashion designer. But at the age of 15 her hopes were shattered. On 8 December 2012, Ciham was arrested at the Sudanese border as she tried to flee Eritrea. Nine years on, her family do not know where she is being held. Ciham has not been charged or brought to trial. It is as if she has vanished.

Prior to her arrest, Ciham's father Ali Abdu, then minister of information under President Isaias Afwerki, went into exile just as the military attempted a coup against the government. It was rumoured Ali Abdu had supported the coup and Ciham may have been arrested in retaliation.

Eritrea is notorious for imprisoning people in underground containers. Many detainees have died from torture, starvation, infection and other appalling treatment.

Although she's a US citizen.. Ciham has been ignored by the US government. It has stayed silent on her plight, even though it has the power to influence Eritrea.

"You have just taken a child who has child-like dreams. You are basically saying I will punish you and detain you, and you'll spend half of your life in prison."

Saleh, Ciham's uncle

Send a message of support and solidarity (however, do not use religious Christmas cards, or mention Amnesty or include your name and address)

C/O Eritrea Team,

Amnesty International, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW

Language: English or Tigrinya

Creative action: Her family would really appreciate it if you could include the colour purple, Ciham's favourite colour, in your message of support.

Send an appeal letter:

Call on the US Secretary of State to urgently intervene in the case by calling for Ciham Ali Ahmed's immediate and unconditional release.

Write to:

US Secretary of State

Antony Blinken, 2201 C St. NW, Washington, DC 20520, USA.

Salutation: The Honorable

In your letter ask him

- To urgently intervene in the case by calling for Ciham Ali Ahmed's immediate and unconditional release.

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

January:

Monday 10th: On zoom

Nigina Istanakzai-Zarifi, Amnesty UK, Country Coordinator for Afghanistan, will update us on the situation Afghanistan with a particular focus on women's rights.

See joining instructions above.

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

Include:

Myanmar: Military puts chokehold on people's basic needs.

Ethiopia: New wave of atrocities in western Tigray.

Afghanistan: Government collapse marked by "repeated war crimes and relentless blood shed: see new report.

Haiti: The US must stop deportations and abuse against Haitians.

Covid-19: vaccination programmes across the world must adapt to reach the most marginalised.

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