



# 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:

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

January 2022

## UPDATE on AFGHANISTAN WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**NIGINA ISTANAKZAI-ZARIFI**  
**AI UK Country Coordinator for Afghanistan**

In August 2021, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), known as Taliban took control of Afghanistan. This shift in power followed a major escalation in conflict between the Taliban and government of Afghanistan over the course of 2021 and a US Taliban deal resulting in the rapid departure of American troops. The Taliban's control of the country led international donors to immediately suspend most non-humanitarian funding and freeze billions of dollars' worth of assets. Without this funding, most health clinics have closed, and the country is facing total economic meltdown.

The humanitarian crisis is escalating daily. Hunger has reached truly unprecedented levels. Nearly 23 million people i.e., 55% of the population are facing extreme levels of hunger, and 9 million at risk of famine.

"Afghanistan is now among the world's worst humanitarian crises, and food security has all but collapsed. This winter, millions of Afghans will be forced to choose between migration and starvation. We are on a countdown to catastrophe" said the World Food Programme's executive director David Beasley.

There are many ways in which women's rights are being violated: (cont p2)

### 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

### **(Cont from p1)**

- Taliban deprive women of their livelihood and identity. Afghan women and girls are facing both the collapse of their rights and dreams and risks to their basic survival.
- Taliban have imposed rights-violating policies that have created huge barriers to women and girl's health and education; curtailed freedom of movement, expression and association; and deprived many of earned income.
- According to AI, women have been informed that they cannot go to work or travel without a male guardian. Girls over the age of 12 have been prohibited from attending school, and the segregation of women and men in universities is negatively impacting woman's opportunities in post-secondary institutions. Women have been expelled from many areas of the labour force, including the media and entertainment fields.

There is a petition available on the AI web site.

**Afghan Women: They are the revolution, stand with them:**

**<https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/afghan-women-they-are-the-revolution-stand-with-them/>**

A key issue of the campaign is to ensure that the UK government keeps its promise of admitting 20,000 Afghan refugees within five years. This is not sufficient and currently the UK is falling way behind other countries such as Germany and Canada in its rehousing of refugees.

### **Funding our Group's work**

As Covid continues to affect our activities, we will again not request annual subscriptions. But as most of our fundraising events have not been possible, do please donate!

We funded our work in 2021 from your kind donations. The Group kept up work on our case files, hosted online talks, met (virtually) with a local MP, produced a video for Amnesty's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, and had our photo mosaic of Marielle Franco exhibited in Southampton SeaCity Museum. We also featured as AIUK's first case study on 60 years of successful Groups.

Any size donation is welcome. We understand that some may not be able to contribute financially at the moment.

You can donate:

By Bank Transfer to "Amnesty International Southampton", Sort code 08 92 99  
Account Number 65125823

By cheque payable to "Amnesty International Southampton City Group", send to  
Amnesty Treasurer, 3 Firwood Close, Eastleigh, SO53 1HN

Thank you for your continued support.

## ERITREA PRISONER of CONSCIENCE

### ASTER FISSEHATSION, "DISAPPEARED" POLITICIAN

Aster Fissehatsion has been held incommunicado without charge or trial since September 2001. She was arrested together with ten other senior party officials, including her former husband, the then Vice-President of Eritrea, Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo. They had all been military or political leaders during the liberation struggle.

Aster and Mahmoud were both members of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, the only political party in Eritrea, but had become increasingly disillusioned with the autocratic rule of President Isaias Afwerki.

After they, together with 13 other senior party officials (the G-15), published an open letter calling for democracy, unity and the rule of law and justice. They were arrested in the middle of the night and have not been heard of since.

Aster's son lives in The Netherlands and has written about witnessing the arrest of his parents.

Aster is a Prisoner of Conscience.

**ACTION:** Write to the President of Eritrea with a copy to the Eritrean Ambassador in London, asking for the liberation of Aster.

**WRITE to:** H.E. Isaias Afewerki, Office of the President, PO Box 257, Asmara, Eritrea.

**COPY to:** Ambassador Estifanos, Habtemariam Ghebreyesus, Embassy of the State of Eritrea, 96 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF

## MORE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE WORLDWIDE ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY

- Papua New Guinea votes to abolish
- Utah may be the next US state to abolish the death penalty
- Oklahoma-Tentative steps towards abolition?

### HOWEVER

- Iran continuing to execute for crimes committed by children

## 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)

### February:

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 on zoom:  
Planning Eritrea Campaign. All welcome

### March:

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 On zoom:  
The importance of the Human Rights Act  
Speaker: Claire Lougarre Lecturer in Law  
Dept  
All welcome.

Please note joining instructions for both meetings 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](http://amnesty.org.uk)

Include:

**Israel:** End Israel's apartheid, millions of Palestinians live under Israeli's system of apartheid.

**UK:** Nationality & Borders Bill: the truth behind claims. Download the fact checker.

**Death Penalty:** we firmly believe that no one-including any government-has the right to take away someone else's life.

**Climate Crisis:** Five young women of colour fighting climate change worldwide.

**Afghanistan:** Human Rights emergency/please help now.

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