



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

Mar 2022

From The Human Rights Act to A Modern Bill of Rights Dr Claire Lougarre, University of Southampton

The current Human Rights Act (1998) has a clear link to The European Convention on Human Rights and The European Court of Human Rights.

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR):

- Protection of crucial human rights (e.g., right to life, prohibition of torture, right to a fair trial, prohibition of discrimination).
- Protection of other rights across various Protocols (e.g., right to education)
- Dynamic interpretation in the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.
- It is an international treaty
- States who wish to become members of the Council of Europe are obliged to ratify this treaty (Council of Europe is not the same as the European Union).
- UK is a Member State of the Council of Europe and ratified the ECHR in 1951.
- The creation of the ECHR led to the establishment of the **European Court of Human Rights**
- Judgements of the Court legally binds countries to stand by its rulings.

cont p 2

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 page 1

The UK Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA):

- The UK HRA incorporates the rights recognised in the ECHR, into domestic UK law.
- This UK HRA allows the rights guaranteed by ECHR to be enforced in UK courts, previously UK citizens had to go to Strasbourg to attend the ECHR.
- Increasing everyone's access to justice in this country.
- Individuals can seek justice before UK courts for violations of the rights recognised in the HRA.
- All UK public bodies must respect the rights recognised in the HRA.
- UK laws must be compatible with rights recognised in the HRA.

Modern Bill of Rights (MBR):

The Government is consulting on the replacement of the HRA by MBR. Their proposal which forms the basis of the consultation reflects: "the government's enduring commitment to liberty under the rule of the law. The government remains committed to the ECHR-and, indeed, the UK's tradition of human rights leadership abroad, as demonstrated by the introduction of our Magnitsky global human rights sanctions regime.

Equally, our system must strike the proper balance of rights and responsibilities, individual liberty and the public interest, rigorous judicial interpretation, and respect for the authority of elected law-makers. In this consultation, we assess how the HRA has operated in practice, and how it can be revised and improved".

Summary of the Governments key arguments for change:

- Make sure our common law traditions and Parliamentary sovereignty are respected and to strengthen the role of the UK Supreme Court.
- Provide a sharper focus on protecting fundamental rights.
- Prevent the incremental expansion of rights without proper democratic oversight.
- Emphasise the role of responsibilities within the human rights framework
- Facilitate dialogue with Strasbourg, while guaranteeing Parliament its proper role.

Main Concerns of the Proposed Changes:

- Reduced concerned for certain rights (e.g., to a fair trial)
- Primacy of the UK Supreme Court in interpreting human rights
- Appears to be politically motivated
- Public interest may be biased and will change with political change
- Removes the idea of a joint approach by all states in the Council of Europe
- Currently no country can deport people to countries which allow torture, the change could allow this.

TAKE ACTION ERTREA ON BEHALF OF CIHAM ALI

Ciham Ali is an Eritrean-American who was unlawfully detained in Eritrea when she was only 15. She has not been seen since, and the US government has yet to intervene in her case. AI is asking supporters to mark her 25th Birthday throughout the whole month of April (actual date 3rd April).

One action is to write to the US Embassy, asking that the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, works for the release of their citizen.

The address is Philip T Reeker, US Embassy, 33 Nine Elms Lane, Nine Elms, London SW11 7US

Business Meeting February

1. **ERITREA:** Posters were put in Avenue St Andrews. Action sent to 44 City Councillors; Hannah Coombs posted it on forum.
2. **GROUP MAILING:**
 - a. Awaiting response from Saints re Football and Refugees
 - b. Campaigns for 2022: We will explore the Palestine campaign
 - c. Mary to send info about Ukraine webinar.
3. **PALESTINE CAMPAIGN:** We have been contacted by local Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Before linking with them we need to check with Amnesty
4. **FUTURE:** Next meeting to explore Eritrea actions. John agreed to contact Parliamentary Group.

URGE THE PRIME MINISTER TO HELP PEOPLE FLEEING WAR IN UKRAINE

Go to "amnesty.org.uk" click on "Take action"

Call on the PM to:

- Strengthen international efforts to protect civilians, provide humanitarian relief, and help bring suspected perpetrators of crime under international law to justice.
- Fulfil the commitment to provide sanctuary to 200,000 Ukrainian refugees to the UK, provide safe routes and temporary visa waver
- Abandon measures in the Nationality and Borders Bill which will do serious damage to the UK's asylum system.
- Press for parties to the conflict to create & respect humanitarian corridors to safe havens; for all civilians to have access to transportation and time to leave; and for international observers to be granted access to monitor their safe passage.

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

APRIL

Monday 11th April

Plans for Press Freedom Day (3 May) featuring Dawit Isaak, imprisoned journalist, Eritrea.

Campaign: End Israeli Apartheid.

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

Include:

Lebanon: Support those impacted by the Beirut explosion and the severe economic crisis.

Syria: Justice for Syria.

Yemen: detained actress and model at risk of forced virginity test

Poland: Government's "deeply misogynistic" attitude condemned

USA: Gun violence is a human rights crisis

North Korea: UN report exposes North Korea human rights abuses.

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