

Action

THE LEWES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER APRIL 2020

WORLD WATER DAY

On 22 March volunteers were all set to hand out leaflets to raise awareness of this important issue.

As usual we were hoping to target commuters on their way to work. However due to concerns about COVID-19 we decided to cancel the action and will postpone further action until 2021 when we hope we will be out and about! This is the leaflet we would have distributed.

THIRST FOR JUSTICE?

March 22nd is UN World Water Day

Lewes amnesty want to highlight the continued injustices for Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories.

"Water is essential for all life on earth and access to affordable, clean water is a basic human right"

Governments have a duty to ensure water is available to all its citizens, but this is not happening in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Israeli authorities deprive Palestinians of water by

- Destroying water cisterns
- Cutting off water supplies to villages and farms
- Diverting water to the illegal settlements
- Contaminating water supplies
- Refusing permission for construction of wells

"We have not enough water and no control of it. The Israeli authorities' tactic is to slowly decrease the water, so we have to leave the land"

Mustafa Al-Farawi Al-Jibk

Empty irrigation channel before and after. In the early 1990s there was year-round water, supporting a prosperous farming community.

Palestinians on average have access to 20 - 73 litres per day per person

Israelis consume on average 100 litres per day per person.
(WHO recommends a daily minimum of 100 litres per day per person).

Israel even controls the collection of rainwater throughout most of the West Bank, and rainwater harvesting cisterns owned by Palestinian communities are often destroyed by the Israeli army. As a result, some 100 Palestinian communities in rural areas in the occupied West Bank have no access to running water.

While restricting Palestinians access to water, the Israeli authorities divert water to illegal settlements for their own citizens in the illegal settlements.

Israeli settlers living alongside Palestinians, in some case just a few hundred meters away – face no restrictions and enjoy well irrigated farmlands and swimming pools.

Source Amnesty International www.amnesty.org.uk
"The occupation of water" 29 November 2017

SOCIALLY DISTANT BUT TOGETHER IN SOLIDARITY DURING THIS PANDEMIC.

COVID -19 CRISIS is affecting everyone in the world but particularly the disadvantaged such as refugees, prisoners and migrant workers. They are most vulnerable and most likely to be "forgotten".

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that human rights will be eroded "under cover" of the global pandemic.

On the whole governments are trying to help their citizens but needless to say there are exceptions. For instance, at the end of March, Israeli forces demolished and seized structures meant for a field clinic and emergency housing in the occupied West Bank. The number of confirmed cases of COVID -19 has risen to almost 2,700 in Israel. About 80 cases are in the West Bank and 9 in Gaza. There are though only forty intensive care beds in Gaza which has a population of two million.

Domestic violence survey [Amnesty 28/4/20] - A recent Amnesty poll reveals strong support for the government to do more to tackle the domestic abuse emergency that has featured in the press recently during this pandemic.

67% of those polled agreed the Government should do more to protect the most vulnerable victims, regardless of their immigration status. 70% believe the Government should fund stays for any victims of domestic abuse in hotels, once Women's Aid refuges are full. These findings come ahead of a debate this week on a second reading of the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International UK said: "The fact that the UK public wants the government to provide more support to domestic abuse victims isn't surprising. We've seen shocking reports

on the number of domestic abuse related deaths and a huge surge in calls to helplines".

Amnesty is also campaigning for an extension of support to migrant workers during the COVID - 19 pandemic, and a petition urging the Government to support migrant workers has now reached 20,000 signatures. Amnesty is warning that many migrant workers are on the front line of the coronavirus response in the UK, but without access to financial support many are being forced to work 'at great personal and societal cost' . Others have lost work due to the pandemic and need support for themselves and their families.

Amnesty, as well as MPs from across parties and other campaigners, is urging the Government to suspend the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' rule which bars many migrants from accessing Universal credit during the coronavirus crisis. [01/05/20]

Steve Valdez-Symonds, Amnesty UK Refugee and Migrant Rights Director said: "It beggars belief that during the most dangerous and devastating public health crises the UK has seen, migrants subject to the 'no recourse to public funds' rule still cannot access the crucial support they need to stay safe and healthy"

Press release Re BAME workers: Amnesty is welcoming the news that the UK Government is planning a review into why people from black, Asian and ethnic minority [BAME] backgrounds appear to have been disproportionately affected by the COVID -19 virus.

Rachel Logan, Amnesty UK Law and HR Programme Director says this review needs to be "independent, transparent, thorough and most importantly, needs to engage with the communities and individuals directly affected"

Lesley Burgess and Rosemary Wadsworth: editors

Close Guantanamo - take Action/support our vigils.

On Saturday 11th January I took part in a demonstration calling for the closure of Guantanamo along with other Lewes Amnesty members and other local group Amnesty members. We joined members of the Guantanamo Justice Campaign in Trafalgar Square to protest about the continued operation of Guantanamo. Like many local Amnesty groups throughout the UK the Lewes Group of Amnesty International has campaigned over many years for the closure of Guantanamo and for those who have been illegally detained in the detention camp to be released.



On 11th January 2020 Guantanamo had been open for 18 years which means that we are now heading to a time when we may have to face the reality of Guantanamo being open for 20 years. It is outrageous that Guantanamo can continue to exist holding people for year after year with no charge or trial, and it is essential that we do all that we can to campaign on behalf of those whose human rights are being so brutally abused. Today fifty men remain in Guantanamo.

The Lewes Amnesty group campaigned, alongside many other Amnesty groups, for the release and return of the last British resident in Guantanamo - Shaker Aamer in October 2015. Our work included engaging with local secondary school students, and in May 2013 we arranged for students (along with Lewes MP Norman Baker) to meet with Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt to call for the release of Shaker Aamer. You can see a video of the students' campaigning action here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA48t7YLtxk>

One of the most important aspects of the campaign to release Shaker Aamer were the monthly vigils held outside Parliament organised by the Shaker Aamer Campaign (now the Guantanamo Justice Campaign). These vigils remind those in Government of the atrocity of what was still occurring. During this time MPs regularly spoke with campaigners, an All-Party Parliamentary Group was formed and eventually, due to continual campaigning pressure, Shaker Aamer was released and returned to the UK.

Since Shaker Aamer's release and return to the UK, the Guantanamo Justice Campaign has continued to hold monthly vigils outside Parliament to call for the closure of Guantanamo and raise awareness with members of Parliament. However, our help is desperately needed to increase the impact of these vigils and other campaigning actions. As well as committing as a group to protest about the continuing operation of Guantanamo, we in the Lewes Amnesty Group are asking other local Amnesty Activists to join

forces with us to make our presence known.

Amnesty members made a real difference in the campaign for Shaker Aamer to be released and returned to the UK from Guantanamo in 2015. I am convinced that together as local Amnesty Group activists we can also really make a difference over 2020 in making sure that Guantanamo is not forgotten by together continuing to shine a light on the atrocities that persist there on a daily basis. If you would like to join the Lewes Amnesty Group Counter Terror with Justice Campaign sub-group working on this issue please contact me on my email address below.

Sara Birch

Lewes Amnesty Group Counter Terror with Justice Campaign

Email: sarabirch50@hotmail.com Mobile: 07710 789616

American Summer

We are preparing a series of events to highlight human rights abuses in the United States. It may be live events with music and speakers, or it may be all online. But either way we will need helpers. If you are interested in issues such as the separation of families, Guantanamo Bay or the death penalty, send an email to **info@amnestylewes.org**.

Next Event

Between COVID and Trump: The Horrors of Guantanamo
Guest speaker Andy Worthington (journalist, activist and co-founder of the Close Guantanamo campaign)
8pm Thursday the 11th of June 2020