

Newsletter: June 2024

Bognor Regis, Chichester & District Group



Dates for your diary	15/06/2024 - 21/07/2024: Festival of Chichester 17/06/2024 - 23/06/2024: Refugee Week 22/06/2024: Amnesty UK AGM
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Dear writers

Local events

Summer Pumble (pub/ramble): planning has begun for the annual Pumble, exploring a 'Downs' route and a 'Coastal' route for 2024. We are aiming for late Summer (end of August/beginning September) and will update you soon.

Other events

Saturday 15/06/2024 - Sunday 21/07/2024 Festival of Chichester: a month-long celebration of the arts with a wide and varied programme, and including the following events of interest to those concerned with human rights:

- Tuesday 25/06/2024, 19:00 Underground history: Maggie Andrew, Political women - 15 campaigns fought by women over the last 150 years
- Saturday 06/07/2024, 17:00 The reality of living in Jerusalem in 2024: organised by the Society of Friends, the experiences of Nick Papadopoulos as an ecumenical accompanier in Palestine and Israel
- Friday 19/07/2024, 18:00 *A childhood journey to Belsen*: Peter Lantos, deported from Hungary with his family in 1944.

Monday 17/06/2024 - Sunday 23/06/2024: Refugee Week. The theme for 2024 is "Our home". To keep an eye on local events in support of Refugee Week: <https://refugeeweek.org.uk/events/>

Saturday 22/06/2024: Amnesty International UK Section Annual General Meeting: for members who are unable to attend the AGM in person <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/annual-general-meeting>

General Election July 2024: Amnesty International UK's proposals for the next UK government

[A Human Rights Manifesto](#) for the next UK government covers a broad range of human rights issues across home and foreign affairs and can be downloaded from the Amnesty UK website.

General Election July 2024: advice on Lobbying Act

Amnesty UK is calling for all parties to put human rights at the centre of the agenda. You may be interested in understanding what Amnesty UK can and cannot do during a General Election campaign, and what you can or cannot do as an Amnesty activist. This is a link to advice on campaigning during a General Election period: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/comply-lobbying-act-guide-local-groups>

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

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Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

Thank you for engaging in an earlier urgent action calling for the immediate and unconditional release of **Mahmoud Hussein**, the protester who was arrested on 30 August 2023, simply for wearing a T-shirt with an anti-torture slogan. In January 2014, he was arrested in the aftermath of peaceful protests marking the third anniversary of the 25 January 2011 Revolution for wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "A Nation without Torture" and a scarf with the "25 January Revolution" logo. He then spent two years in arbitrary pretrial detention before being released on bail in 2016, following global campaigning for his release. In 2018, however, he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in his absence and was [rearrested at a checkpoint in August 2023](#). The most recent update is that Mahmoud is **now due to be released on bail**. He still faces charges and his next trial hearing will be held on 26 June, 2024.



Action: Oqba Hashad

We have received this urgent action appeal on behalf of a disabled Egyptian prisoner, **Oqba Hashad**. He has been unjustly detained for almost five years because of his brother's activism. Furthermore, he is being cruelly denied use of the prosthetic leg he needs to walk unassisted, as his right leg has been amputated above the knee since childhood. Despite a court order for his release in February, he is still in detention.



What you can do:

Please send your appeal to the Public Prosecutor, Mohamed Shawky Ayyad at m.office@ppo.gov.eg using the template letter below:

Dear Counsellor

*I write to you to express my concern about the continued arbitrary detention without trial since 20 May 2019 of 26-year-old student **Oqba Hashad** solely for his brother's activism. After a judge ordered his release on 20 February 2024 on the grounds that his pretrial detention in Case No. 7769/2019 of the Supreme Security State Prosecution (SSSP) had exceeded the two-year limit under Egyptian law, prosecutors ordered his detention in a new Case No. 3391/2023 of the SSSP on similar bogus charges of joining and financing a terrorist group. The practice, commonly referred to as "rotation," will indefinitely extend his pre-trial detention way beyond the two-year limit stipulated by Egyptian law. After his transfer from Wadi al-Natroun prison to Ashmoun Police station on 22 February in preparation for his release, authorities subjected him to enforced disappearance until 2 March 2024 when he appeared at the SSSP, without a lawyer of his choosing. During this period, Oqba Hashad was denied any contact with his family and lawyer.*

Oqba Hashad's right leg is amputated above the knee and he requires a prosthetic leg to move unassisted. When his relatives visited him in 10th of Ramadan prison on 14 March, he told them that he was not allowed to bring his prosthetic leg with him after his transfer from Wadi al-Natroun prison. He said he had been held in the State Security headquarters of Shebin Al-Kom, in Monufia Governorate, and questioned by the National Security Agency (NSA). He said he had formally complained to the prosecutor about his enforced disappearance and unjust detention for five years for his brother's human rights activism adding that the prosecutor did not order investigations into his claims, and instead verbally insulted him. Prison authorities continue to deny Oqba Hashad a prosthetic leg.

I urge you to ensure that Oqba Hashad is immediately and unconditionally released and all charges against him dropped as he is detained solely as a punishment for his brother's activism. Pending his release, he must be granted a suitable prosthetic leg as well as regular access to his family, lawyers and adequate healthcare, including in outside hospitals if necessary, and held in conditions that comply with international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Yours sincerely

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Update on taking action on long-term Individual at Risk (IAR) cases

Amnesty UK no longer publishes the *Real Lives* section in their magazine, following a review of its effectiveness. Their analysis showed that featuring individual cases in a print magazine meant that cases had to be selected many weeks in advance: a lead time that came with risk for some individuals (e.g. a person's circumstances changing before publication, and potentially putting them at further risk) Mitigation for this comes with online actions, that can be quickly updated.

We can however continue to support individuals at risk by:

- Completing online actions via the Urgent Actions area of the website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions> which will be updated when an individual's situation changes
- Country Coordinator campaigns: these individual cases are long-term. We campaign as a group for Alaa Abdel Fattah through this type of campaign, and also pick up a number of cases relating to the region, like the two actions listed below.

Action: Tunisia - Lawyer arrested over public remarks

Tunisian lawyer **Sonia Dahmani** was forcibly arrested on 11 May when the Bar Association office in Tunis was stormed by security forces. She is detained because of critical remarks about the government made on a television programme.



Beverley, the Country Coordinator, reports that: "Having previously stated that 'her next hearing with judicial authorities is scheduled for 20 May,' we have learnt that this hearing took place and the investigative judge in the Tunis court of first instance decided to keep Sonia Dahmani in detention. Her lawyers had made a request for her release, but it was rejected."

In a separate case, also related to her freedom of expression, an investigative judge summoned her on 28 May without informing her lawyers. The judge decided to move the case to the Tunis accusation chamber. This case relates to a complaint raised by the General Directorate of Prisons. Sonia Dahmani had publicly criticised the unhygienic conditions of detention in prisons.

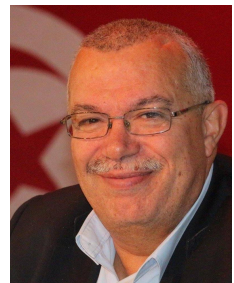
What you can do:

To find out more and to email the President to appeal for her immediate release:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/lawyer-arrested-over-public-remarks>

Action: Tunisia - Nouredine Bhiri

On 16 April 2024, the Criminal Chamber of the Tunis Court of Cassation confirmed the indictment of ex-justice minister and senior Ennahdha leader **Nouredine Bhiri**, who will now face trial on charges of "trying to change the form of the government." He will be tried under Article 72 of the penal code, which is punishable by the death penalty.



- **Want to know more?** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde30/8033/2024/en/>

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What you can do:

Please use the template letter below to email President Kais Saied at contact@carthage.tn, calling for the immediate release of Nouredine Bhiri and the dropping of all politically motivated charges against him.

Your Excellency,

*I write to you to express my grave concern about the prolonged arbitrary detention of ex-justice minister and senior Ennahdha official **Nouredine Bhiri**, now held on politically motivated charges over a social media post he did not write. On 13 February 2023, security forces violently arrested Nouredine Bhiri while he was at his home in Tunis without providing an official warrant. According to his wife, who witnessed the incident, security forces subjected Nouredine Bhiri to beatings which led to grave injuries.*

On 15 February, he had to be transported to Charles Nicolle hospital in Tunis to undergo a surgical operation for over four hours on his shoulder according to a medical report consulted by Amnesty International. Following his arrest, Nouredine Bhiri also experienced respiratory issues and had to be transported to the Rabta hospital where was hospitalized for four days in the resuscitation service from 25 February 2023 to 1 March. Doctors discovered that he had four fractured ribs on his left side also according to a medical report shared with Amnesty International.

On 14 February, Nouredine Bhiri appeared before a Tunis court investigating judge who charged him with trying to "change the form of the government; or inciting people to take up arms against one another; or provoking disorder, murder, or pillage on Tunisian soil," punishable by death under Article 72 of the Penal Code. The charges are related to public remarks made on Facebook. Nouredine Bhiri repeatedly denied that he had written the social media post. Additionally, the technical expert requested by the accusation chamber concluded that the post was not written by the defendant.

The Court of Cassation rejected his appeals and now he will now stand trial for the social media post that he did not write. This trial is an abuse of his right to freedom of expression, which is protected under international human rights law, including Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and political rights (ICCPR) to which Tunisia is a state party.

I urge you to immediately release Nouredine Bhiri and drop all charges against him. I also urge you to ensure that he receives any medical treatment he may require and to allow him regular visits from his family and lawyers. Moreover, I call on you to cease your targeted arrests of critics for the peaceful exercise of their human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly.

Yours sincerely

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