



Dates for your diary	Saturday 08/03/2025: International Women's Day Tuesday 01/04/2025, 19:30 Group AGM, online meeting
----------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Dear writers

Local events

Tuesday 01/04/2025, 19:30 – 20:30 Group Annual General Meeting (online). Our Group Constitution proposes an AGM every year. The 2025 Group AGM will take place online via Zoom reports from the committee and details to follow in the March Newsletter, as well as a link to the Zoom meeting.

Other events

Amnesty Regional gatherings. Previously referred to as 'conferences', Regional Gatherings are designed to empower and unite local activists and communities, and are hoping to reinvigorate regional action. Group Chair Kath is currently working with Arianna Pisetti (the South East Activism rep) and other groups in the area to plan a South East regional event, hopefully in the spring. Watch this space!

Amnesty International: Priority 2025 campaigns

Amnesty UK will be focusing on the following campaigning areas in the coming 12 months: we will share these actions in the Group newsletter, alongside our on-going support for human rights defenders in Egypt and the wider Middle Eastern area, with particular focus on Alaa Abd El-Fattah and on-going actions for Individuals at Risk.

- [Economic, social and cultural rights](#) (ESCR) which affect all of us in our everyday lives. They influence our quality of life, including our education, our work, our health, our homes, the food on our tables and how the state will step in if things go wrong.
- Anti-racism and particularly the current campaign focus is the [Prevent campaign](#).
- Freedom of expression, which is central to people's ability to fight and challenge injustice and oppression. The first phase of this campaign is the [Protect the Protest campaign](#)
- Human rights framework, both in the UK across devolved and central government, and campaigning for UK foreign policy and practice to have human rights at its heart.
- Individuals and communities at risk. This is a key part of the work done by local groups and country co-ordinators
- Human rights crises, which will require quick action to raise awareness.

Carry on writing!

Bob Dewick, Amnesty

Amnesty action: campaigns & letter-writing

Egypt update from Margaret, our Campaign Co-ordinator

Alaa Abd el-Fattah

As you are already aware, the campaign in support of Alaa is reaching a critical and extremely worrying point. His family are clearly very concerned about the declining health of his 68-year-old mother, Laila, who has been on hunger strike for over three months. She has been joined in her hunger strike (for a limited time) by Peter Greste, an Australian former prisoner detained in Egypt alongside Alaa. They were desperately hoping that the Foreign Secretary, David Lammy's recent trip to Cairo might be an opportunity for him to press his case with President al-Sisi. However, although he spent time with his Egyptian counterpart, it does not seem as if he spoke with President al-Sisi himself nor that there has been any further progress on Alaa's case.

I'm sharing the following Update from the Amnesty UK Egypt Coordinator, Diana Hysenaj

This week, Laila, alongside Peter Greste, was outside Downing Street, delivering a powerful message to David Lammy as he visits Egypt. We would greatly appreciate it if you could help amplify Laila's message by sharing this video created by Amnesty and Alaa's family:

https://www.instagram.com/reel/DFI1gfON_Jt/?igsh=MXkxOWg3MmxnaDR5OQ%3D%3D



Message of support for Laila and family from Bognor & Chichester Amnesty Group

On behalf of the group, I have sent a message of support to Laila, via Egypt Coordinator, Diana Hysenaj, to convey our sympathy and solidarity with her and the family

Guardian article by Patrick Wintour (30 January 2025)

Further cause for concern is Alaa's own growing sense of despair, as revealed in intimate letters released by his family. In [an article by Patrick Wintour in The Guardian, 30 January 2025](#), Alaa is reported to be contemplating renouncing his Egyptian and UK citizenship, since neither country has offered protection of his human rights. His desperate anxiety about his mother's fragile health is also evident in his letters.

Alaa now appears to believe that only direct intervention by Keir Starmer himself might produce results. However, he comments that, although Starmer raised the case of Jimmy Lai, (the detained Hong Kong activist), with the Chinese Premier, he has not so far spoken out openly on his own case.

Action: Tunisia - Please take action on behalf of Human Rights Defender, Sihem Bensedrine

Human Rights Defender, **Sihem Bensedrine**, (aged 74), is currently on hunger strike in protest against the extension of her pre-trial detention on charges relating to her roles as President of the Truth and Dignity Commission. She is reportedly in very poor health.

- Want to know more? [Human rights defender on hunger strike: Sihem Bensedrine](#)



What you can do

Please use the template message below, or your own words, to appeal to **President Kais Saied** at contact@carthage.tn (President of the Republic Kais Saied, Route de la Goulette, Site archéologique de Carthage, Tunisie) urging him to order the immediate and unconditional release of **Sihem Bensedrine** and to drop all charges against and end the misuse of the criminal justice system to target her.

Your Excellency,

I write to you to express my grave concern over the ongoing arbitrary detention of prominent 74-year-old human rights defender **Sihem Bensedrine** since her arrest on 1 August. On 14 January, she announced an open-ended hunger strike to protest her arbitrary detention. Her lawyers shared this [message](#) in which she announced her hunger strike on her Facebook page: “I will no longer stand the injustice that strikes me. Justice cannot be based on lies and calamities, but on concrete, tangible evidence”. She is detained solely in relation to her work as President of the Truth and Dignity Commission (IVD) from 2014 to 2018 which investigated and referred to the prosecution its findings on crimes committed by Tunisian authorities from 1955 to 2013.

Sihem Bensedrine has been under investigation since February 2023 following a complaint by a former IVD board member alleging forgery because revisions had been made to the IVD final report after it was submitted to the then president in December 2018. On 7 March 2023, an investigative judge charged **Sihem Bensedrine** with “forgery”, “fraud” and “abuse of official capacity” and banned her from traveling. On 1 August 2024, the judge ordered **Sihem Bensedrine’s** pre-trial detention and she was taken into custody on the same day. On 28 January 2024, the investigative judge informed her lawyers that he extended her pre-trial detention for another four months. **Sihem Bensedrine’s** prosecution appears to be a form of reprisal against the work of the IVD exposing allegations of human rights abuses and corruption committed by past Tunisian authorities.

Since she started her hunger strike, **Sihem Bensedrine’s** health has rapidly deteriorated. She is experiencing weakness and low oxygen levels, leading to her being placed under respiratory assistance in the prison infirmary. On 26 January, she was transferred to a hospital outside prison because her health deteriorated further. **Sihem Bensedrine’s** pre-existing health conditions, including high blood pressure and cardiac issues, increase her vulnerability.

I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release **Sihem Bensedrine**, drop all the charges against her and end the misuse of the criminal justice system to target her. Pending her release, she must be granted adequate access to qualified health professionals providing health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent. Ensure she also has access to her family, lawyers and is held in conditions that comply with international standards.

Yours sincerely

Actions for International Women’s Day, 8 March

The world comes together for [International Women’s Day \(IWD\)](#) on 8 March, to celebrate women’s achievements and reinforce a commitment to women’s equality.

Women and girls experience violence and discrimination based on their sex. Here are some actions to support women’s human rights, in the run-up to IWD.



- **Want to know more?** [Amnesty UK: Women’s human rights](#)

Prominent human rights defender **Nimet Tanrikulu** has been held in pre-trial detention in Ankara’s Sincan women’s prison since 29/11/2024. She is a prominent human rights defender and founding member of Human Rights Association who has been active in Türkiye’s human rights community for several decades including campaigning with Saturday Mothers/People, the group of relatives of victims of enforced disappearances and their supporters for truth, justice and accountability.

- Take action here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/free-imprisoned-human-rights-defender>



The health of Egyptian human rights lawyer Hoda Abdelmoniem has been deteriorating throughout her arbitrary detention for more than six years. She volunteered as a consultant for the ECRF and had been active in documenting human rights violations including cases of enforced disappearances.



- **Take action here:** <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/unjustly-jailed-lawyers-health-risk>

Manahel al-Otaibi wrote tweets supporting women's rights. She also posted pictures of herself enjoying a day at a shopping mall. In the pictures, she is not wearing the abaya, a traditional robe, and these things alone were enough for the Saudi authorities to target her. She is currently serving an 11-year sentence for promoting women's rights and expressing herself on social media.



- **Take action here:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/demand-freedom-for-manahel/>

Good news!

Justice for Marielle: In 2018 we campaigned, as part of **Write for Rights**, for Marielle Franco's family. Marielle was a Brazilian activist who was fatally shot in a hit and run in 2018. For 6 years, the police investigation into Marielle's death was shrouded in secrecy. It was reported that the bullets that killed Marielle were from a batch bought by the federal police and, what's more, President Bolsonaro himself had been pictured with one of the murder suspects.



- You and thousands of others took action, and finally there has been a breakthrough in her case. In October 2024, 6 years after her death, **Marielle's killers were sentenced to 59 and 78 years in prison.**

Neth is free: We are delighted to share the news that Neth Nahara is finally free, after more than a year of arbitrary imprisonment. Neth was arrested on 13 August 2023 in her home in Luanda, Angola, simply for broadcasting a TikTok video criticising President Lourenço. During her time in custody, she was denied vital HIV medication, which caused her health to deteriorate significantly. Neth was later hospitalized due to the condition that worsened during her detention.



- Last year, you joined thousands of others in demanding her release through **Write for Rights 2024**, Amnesty International's biggest human rights campaign. Following this global campaign, [Neth Nahara and four other Angolan activists](#) were finally freed in the first week of January 2025.

Dorgelesse has been released: After more than four years of wrongful imprisonment for peacefully exercising her human rights, Dorgelesse Nguessan has finally been released. In September 2020, over 500 people, including Dorgelesse, were arrested for participating in protests in several cities across Cameroon. Having never been politically active before, Dorgelesse joined her first protest in Douala due to her growing concern about Cameroon's economy. Charged with "insurrection" and "public demonstrations" among other charges, she was then sentenced to five years in prison by a military court on December 7 2021.



- In 2022, you joined thousands of supporters in Amnesty's **Write for Rights** campaign, demanding her release. [On 16/01/2025, she was finally released.](#)

Want to do more? The Urgent Action Network

When you take action, you do it as part of a movement of tens of thousands of people across the world, working together to raise our voices, demand justice and make change happen. Please do take action, in solidarity with individuals at risk everywhere: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions>