



AMNESTY

ELY CITY GROUP

Remembering those experiencing injustice,

A time for contemplation.....

May 2020

“Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners. And those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering.” Hebrews: 13:3

A special time is usually set aside in Bishop Alcock’s Chapel on the first Sunday of each month from 9.00 - 10.15am. Here we hold in mind or pray for the people whose cases are highlighted for the current month.

Though we cannot gather in person due to present circumstances, we invite you to remember the cases here and any others for whom you have a particular concern.

VENEZUELA: Journalist charged

Journalist Darvinson Rojas was detained on 21 March after having reported on the spread of Covid-19 in Venezuela. After 12 days' being held by the Special Action Forces (FAES), he was conditionally released on bail on 2nd April, unfairly charged with 'advocacy of hatred' and 'instigation to commit crimes'. Venezuelan authorities have implemented a systematic and widespread policy of repression, including carrying out politically motivated arbitrary detentions, targeted extrajudicial executions, and using military courts to charge non-military citizens with crimes such as treason or rebellion.

Please hold in mind or pray:

- For the Venezuelan authorities to drop all charges against Darvinson Rojas
- For the Venezuelan government to respect and promote the right to freedom of the press and the safety of press workers.
- For the Venezuelan government to stop subjecting human rights defenders to targeted attacks and smear campaigns.

EUROPE: Roma communities affected by Covid-19

Centuries of forced segregation and discrimination in access to citizenship, housing and employment in many Central and Eastern European countries have resulted in deep poverty in Roma settlements across Europe. Covid-19 poses additional threats: Many Roma settlements in Bulgaria, Italy, Slovakia and Hungary lack access to running water and sanitation. The lockdown has cut off all remaining employment and in Bulgaria and Slovakia Roma settlements have been closed off. In addition to fear of Covid-19, many Roma families, already living in poverty, are facing hunger. The far right and some far-right governments are looking for scapegoats for the virus crisis and blaming Roma communities. Several European Roma community leaders are warning of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Please hold in mind or pray:

- For European governments and organisations to make protective and preventative measures against Covid-19 equally accessible to all, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religious belief or residency status
- For European states to stop all discriminatory measures against people with Romani backgrounds
- For European states to publicly condemn attempts to make Romani people scapegoats for the pandemic.

AZERBAIJAN: Human rights lawyer arrested

On 19 March, President Ilham Aliyev alluded to political opposition in Azerbaijan as 'traitors.' He promised 'new rules' for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic and threatened to clear Azerbaijan of its 'enemies'. In the days following, several activists were arrested, including lawyer Elchin Maddad, who had just published a report criticising Azerbaijan's human rights record. On 31 March, the Sumgait Court remanded him in custody for three months as a criminal suspect. For years, Elchin has faced harassment from the authorities for his human rights work. In 2015 he was subjected to arbitrary detention, placed under travel restrictions and repeatedly summoned by police for questioning.

Please hold in mind or pray:

- For the Azerbaijani authorities to release Elchin Maddad immediately and unconditionally
- For the government to stop persecuting their critics through the criminal justice system.

Good news from Iran!

British former businessman Kamal Foroughi was arrested in Iran in 2011 while visiting the country. In 2013 he was sentenced to seven years in jail after being convicted of 'espionage' following an unfair trial. Although eligible for early release he continued to be held without official explanation. For many years he received no family or humanitarian visitors. In late 2018 he was released but not allowed to leave Iran. In March 2020 he was finally reunited with his family in the UK.

Sources for cases: Amnesty International UK

'I pray for all of us, oppressor and friend, that together we may succeed in building a better world, through human understanding and love, and that in doing so we may reduce the pain and suffering of all sentient beings.'

Dalai Lama XIV

"To clasp one's hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world."

Please take this sheet away with you and use it in prayer or meditation, and any action you feel and find possible.

Your local Amnesty group can be contacted at

www.amnestyelycity.org.uk

ELY AMNESTY NEWS

All of our forthcoming events and regular meetings have been postponed or cancelled until further notice due to the Coronavirus / COVID-19 outbreak.

If you are interested in what we normally do, or would like to find out ways that you can continue to support Amnesty from home, then please feel free to get in touch with us through the above website.