



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

June 2017

<http://manchester.amnesty.org.uk/>

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigning

United Arab Emirates

June 28th marks 100 days since prominent Emirati human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor was detained in the UAE.

Ahmed Mansoor was arrested at his home in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 20 March this year. Security officials entered his home and searched it. They confiscated his phones and other electronic devices, and after three hours of searching the property, they took Ahmed away. On 3 April, he was taken, with his hands and feet shackled and head shaved, to a prosecutor's office for one short supervised family visit. Since then, he has not been allowed calls with his family. He is currently being held in solitary confinement without access to a lawyer.



To mark the 100 days, we will hold a short vigil in Albert Square, in front of Manchester Town Hall, with candles and posters. This will take place immediately before our regular group meeting on June 26th.

Please gather at 6.30pm in Albert Square. Following the short vigil, we will walk all together to our scheduled group meeting.

Please can as many people as possible attend!
Please wear an Amnesty T-shirt if possible

If you haven't signed the online petition on behalf of Ahmed Mansoor, do it now. There are plans to close it soon and deliver it to the authorities.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/free-ahmed-mansoor/>

'I Welcome' Refugee Campaign

Write to your MP

This week, 19th to 25th June, is Refugee Week. Refugee Week is a UK-wide programme of arts, cultural, sport and educational activities and events that celebrates the contribution of refugees to the UK and to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration enabling refugees to live in safety and to continue making a valuable contribution to the UK

To mark Refugee Week, we would like to ask all our supporters to write to your MP to congratulate them on their election and to ask them to work to uphold and improve the rights of refugees. A sample letter is attached with this newsletter. Pass on any replies to manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk



The Great Get Together

We had a stall at the Great Get together in Crowcroft Park, Longsight on Saturday 17th. This was a relatively low key affair organised by the local community. We featured the 'egg game' and made a small £20.97 profit. Thanks to those who helped!

Individuals at Risk

Letter writing

We hold a regular informal letter writing session at the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road every 2 months. Put the date for our July session in your diary now.

July Letter Writing Session

Saturday 15th July 2-4pm
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

A letter from you could help free a prisoner, stop an execution or help a bereaved family receive justice.

Case sheets, paper and pens are provided.
Just turn up!

All Welcome.

East Asia (inc Burma)

Amnesty has issued a new 51-page report 'All the Civilians Suffer: Conflict, Displacement and Abuse in Northern Myanmar' which details how soldiers from the Tatmadaw, as Burma's armed forces are known, mete out torture and extrajudicial executions, shell civilian villages indiscriminately and place punitive restrictions on movement and humanitarian access.

Meanwhile, some ethnic armed groups have been known to abduct civilians seen to support an opposing party, forcibly recruit men, women and children into their fighting forces, and impose "taxes" on impoverished villagers trapped in the conflict.

Amnesty this year conducted more than 140 interviews between March and May, following renewed fighting since August in Kachin and northern Shan states, which border China. Amnesty

visited towns and villages in areas affected by fighting as well as 10 camps for internally displaced persons, and spoke to civilian victims and eyewitnesses, community leaders and humanitarian officials.

Read more at

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/myanmar-ethnic-minorities-face-violations-in-northern-conflict/>

Crisis (inc Syria), Northern Africa, Children's network, Women's Network

No updates received this month.

Group News

Group Meetings

N.B. Usually on the 4th Monday of the month - 7.30pm.

Monday 26th June – Human Rights in Kyrgyzstan

One of our newer members, Meerim Asanbaeva, will be talking to us about human rights in Kyrgyzstan and her experiences of working for Human Rights Watch in that country (especially wrt women's rights).

We will also catch up on our campaigning and events.

☆ MadLab ☆

36-40 Edge Street, Manchester, M4 1HN (in the Northern Quarter)

N.B This is within easy reach of bus and tram stops at Piccadilly Gardens, Exchange Square and Shude Hill. There is a nearby NCP car park.

See <https://madlab.org.uk/find-us/> for how to find it.

Some of us will meet at about 5.30pm before the vigil, in Tampoco in Albert Square, for a bite to eat. You are welcome to join us.

All welcome

Past Events

Group Hustings

At our last meeting, we held a mini Human Rights hustings to which we invited all the main parties to send representatives to answer human rights linked questions. Only two parties were able to send delegates: David Semple, Chair of the Manchester Conservatives and Dan Jerome a PPC for the Green Party.

Nevertheless, we had an interesting discussion ranging over a range of human rights issues. Lil has kindly summarised the main points – see the resumé attached with this newsletter.

Special thanks go to Lil for her tenacity in contacting the parties and getting the evening together.

Following the election, we sent out the following Press Release:

'AMNESTY MANCHESTER SAYS NEW GOVERNMENT MUST KEEP HUMAN RIGHTS TOP OF THE AGENDA

As a Conservative / DUP alliance looks more and more likely, the members of the Manchester group of Amnesty International are

urging the newly formed government to ensure human rights are protected.

Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International United Kingdom, said: "The misguided threats to tamper with our human rights in the name of security just days before the election clearly did not resonate with the public.

"Human rights are a vital cornerstone of our society, and must be protected and promoted both at home and abroad by the next government. As the new government is being formed, human rights must remain top of their agenda, and they must carefully protect our values and our freedoms."

Anne Walker, Group Secretary of the Manchester group of Amnesty International, said: "Theresa May's previous comments about ripping up human rights laws are reckless and misinformed. Human rights are there to protect all in society - that is just pure common sense. As a group actively campaigning to keep human rights at the top of the agenda, we urge anyone in Manchester to continue to put pressure on their local candidates to ensure this is the case."

Acoustic Amnesty

Steve organised another Acoustic Amnesty event last month, raising money for the Help Musicians UK charity as well as Manchester Amnesty. The audience signed a letter appealing on behalf of Iranian musician Yousef Emadi who is currently imprisoned in Iran for distributing music.



Steve donated £50 to the group from the takings at this event. Thanks Steve!

Pride Parade

We will be walking in the Manchester Pride parade again this year on Saturday August 26th. We will be carrying placards and banners as usual as well as helium balloons. Some of us will be giving out stickers to the crowd.



We will be joined by some singers who will add some melody to our group.

Steve Lindsay is taking the lead on this this year. Please let him know at stevenjameslindsay@gmail.com if you can join us.

Friends and family welcome too. The day lasts from 11am to 3pm for us.

Subscriptions please!

Annual donations from members are vital to keep the Group going. The suggested sum is £20 if you have a wage, £5 otherwise, or whatever you can afford to give. Please bring your cash or cheque to the next meeting or contact Treasurer Sean Dunne (Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

Thanks!

Other events

Refugee Cultural Festival

You are invited to a Refugee Cultural Festival on Friday 23 June 2017, 17:00-20:30 at Z-arts, 335 Stretford Rd, Hulme, Manchester M15 5ZA. The event is part of the Refugee Week celebration and will be a fun filled evening of live performances, food, music and dancing for all ages.

The Refugee Cultural Festival will be celebrating the positive contribution refugees make to the city. All refugee communities and people from across Greater Manchester are welcome to attend free of charge. You are invited to bring along your friends, family and neighbours to celebrate the diversity of our city, the coming together of communities and the sharing of cultures.

There will be plenty of activities and entertainment including:

- Food and drinks
- Children's Workshop
- Face painting
- Henna
- Exploring culture through objects

There will be a performances from local refugee artists, poet Fereshteh Mozaffari Vanani, Sufi singer Kashif Ali and singer Neda Naser and a 'jam session' where everyone can join in playing music, feel free to bring your instrument along with you or borrow one of ours and be part of the music making.

This is the Facebook event for the Refugee Cultural Festival: <https://tinyurl.com/y82uo7tr>

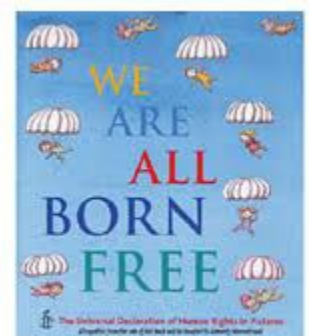
The Refugee Cultural Festival has been organised by Manchester Refugee Support Network in partnership with students from The University of Manchester. The event forms part of the Our City, Our Home Refugee Week events programme. If you want to know more about the entire programme please visit the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OurCityOurHome>

The Read Manchester BookBench Project

Manchester schools and community groups are currently decorating BookBenches with designs inspired by reading and these will be displayed around Manchester from 10th July.

One of the benches will feature 'We Are All Born Free', published by Frances Lincoln children's Books, which illustrates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

All royalties from this book are donated to Amnesty International.



Look out for the bench!