



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2017

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

## Campaigning

### United Arab Emirates

Sadly, June 28<sup>th</sup> marked 100 days in detention for Ahmed Mansoor. He was arrested by UAE authorities on March 20, had been taken to an unknown location and was then transferred to al-Sadr prison. On April 3, he was taken from his place of detention to a prosecutor's office in Abu Dhabi for one short supervised family visit.

Ahmed Mansoor had called via twitter for the release of UAE human rights activists that are currently detained in the UAE. The public prosecutor states that Mansoor, an electrical engineer and poet, had used social media "to publish false information and rumours as well as promoting sectarian and hate-incited agenda" and that his posts "harm national unity and social harmony and damage the country's reputation".

To demonstrate against his arrest and to call for a peaceful release Amnesty members met and hold a peaceful vigil for Ahmed in front of the Town Hall.



These vigils will become a regular institution for the group and thus, feel free to come to all those vigils which will be held in future each fourth Monday before the official group meeting from 6.30-7.30pm. Meet at the back entrance in St Peter's Square (by the centotaph).

In addition, please contact your MP and councillor and call for Ahmed Mansoor's release. Feel free to contact Henrike (henrikegreuel@gmx.de) and she will send you a draft letter.

### 'I Welcome' Refugee Campaign

#### Give a Home for Human Rights

The Give A Home For Human Rights project is taking place on Wednesday 20 September. On this day, over 300 intimate, live gigs will take place in 200 cities in 60 countries across the world,

from India to Cuba to the USA. AIUK will be promoting the I Welcome Campaign – using the project to help us engage new people in our campaigning work, especially those in the 14 – 35 age range.

In the course of one day, music fans will be opening up their homes (locations of which will be secret until closer to the day of the gigs) to host the concerts. Each event will feature performances from two to three musicians, as well as talks from activists to highlight how ordinary people are addressing the refugee crisis. The audience for each event will be small - no more than 150 people - making it an intimate and very memorable experience.

Ultimately there will be over 1000 artists taking part globally. The support from artists has been phenomenal and the list is ever growing. There are over 50 artists confirmed in the UK to date with a few highlights being: *The National*, *Hot Chip*, *Billy Bragg*, *Jessie Ware*, *Daughter*, *Frightened Rabbit*, *Ghetts*, *Band of Skulls*, and *Kate Tempest*.

You can apply for free tickets by entering a very simple online lottery (similar to the Glastonbury ticketing process), at [www.sofarsounds.com/giveahome](http://www.sofarsounds.com/giveahome) where people are also being invited to donate to Amnesty International.

AIUK are also asking for our help in getting the Manchester gig together with Refugee organisations and speakers. If you want to help, email our Refugee campaign lead, Rebecca at [rebeccabarnes5@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccabarnes5@gmail.com).

#### Refugee Family Reunion Bill

Last week Afzal Khan, MP for Gorton, was selected in a ballot of backbench MPs to be able to put forward a Private Members' Bill for the coming Parliamentary session.

Amnesty International UK, together with the British Red Cross, Oxfam GB, the Refugee Council and UNHCR, wrote letters to all the 20 MPs who were selected, Afzal included, asking them to enter a Refugee Family Reunion Bill as their Private Member's Bill. In addition, several of our members wrote to Afzal on this issue – thanks to all who volunteered. We await to see if he takes up this suggestions.

### Crisis and Tactical

#### YEMEN

Recently the Associated Press has launched an investigation into alleged arbitrary detention and torture of detainees by the UAE and its allied Yemeni security forces. The US forces are also suspected of being involved in interrogations in a network of secret prisons across southern Yemen.

In June 17, Lynn Maalouf, director of research at Amnesty International in the Middle East, said that a UN led investigation should take place. Lynn highlighted that in 2012 the UAE became a state party of the UN convention against torture and is obliged to uphold it. He also added that, as a signatory of the global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the UAE must also refrain from defeating the treaty's purpose, which includes reducing human suffering.

Lynn also stated that the US and European countries must immediately halt the arms transfer, if they do not want to contribute towards the torture and enforced disappearances in Yemen and thereby committing serious violation of international laws.

In the meantime, on 10th July 17 the High Court ruled that the UK government does not have to suspend its arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Campaign Against Arms Trade stated that *'the (UK) government itself admits that UK-made combat aircraft, missiles and bombs are being used in the bombing (in Yemen). Instead of stopping arms sales to Saudi Arabia it licensed the sales of an astonishing £3.3 billion more weapons since the start of the attacks on Yemen'*. In response to the decision of the High Court, they have already begun the process of appealing the judgement.

**Please, write to your MP on this issue.**

## Individuals at Risk

### Human Rights Defenders Global Campaign

Amnesty are launching an international campaign in support of people who are persecuted for working to improve human rights in their own country – i.e. Human Rights Defenders.

Anne is going to the 'training for trainers' session on this in August and hopes to be in a position to deliver a workshop on this new campaign at our September meeting.

If you want to get very involved in this campaign, AIUK are holding a **Skillshare event on 7 October, 10.30 - 16.30 – in Manchester** which will focus on building the knowledge, skills and activism of the UK Amnesty movement. The aim of the day is for activists to have an enjoyable, engaging and informative day on this global campaign. If you are interested, please complete the online registration form at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/human-rights-defenders-campaign-brave-skillshare-2017-tickets-35726123798>.

### Letter Writing



We held our regular letter writing session at the Eighth Day Café on Saturday. 6 turned up and 19 letters were written covering all

the cases in the summer 17 Real Lives leaflet and an urgent action on abortion rights in the Dominican Republic. If you couldn't come along but would like to write some letters, you can download the case details from <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/real-lives-summer-2017>.

Our next session will be on 16<sup>th</sup> September – same time and place – see below.

## Next Letter Writing Session

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 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.**

### Tulip appeal

At our last meeting, we made paper tulips with family memories for British-Iranians Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Kamal Foroughi imprisoned in Iran. If you want to take action on their behalf, see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/Parliament2017>.



## East Asia (inc Burma)

During the last few months, persecution of ethnic minorities by the military has continued. This applies especially to the Rohingya- a group who several generations ago migrated to Burma from Bangladesh. They settled mainly in the North, Rohingya villages are raided, people driven from their homes, which are burnt down, some captured, others taken prisoner and tortured, many are killed - especially men and boys. As the military are not under the control of the President or the NLD led government, those suffering have no recourse to help or protection.

This situation was the subject of a petition to the UN, that the military in Myanmar should be accused of genocide and charged. Jean Mary, our Burma lead, doesn't know where in the process that has got to.

Meanwhile journalists and other media workers risk arrest, and trial under Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law. Another Editor remains on trial on charges of "online defamation" in connection with a satirical article mocking the Myanmar Army. Others involved in the media have been arrested on similar charges, all of which deny them the freedom of expression which is one of the freedoms in the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

There are currently three Urgent Actions requesting the immediate release of all those recently arrested and have been or are about to be charged under these laws which restrict the freedom of expression. The details should be available on the Amnesty website.

Some of this information has been in the national press, as some papers do research events and happenings in Asia and beyond. Jean ends with a quote from a member of the Burma Campaign UK, who visited one of the refugee camps and talked to one of the refugees: "Life here is like living like an animal. Our whole family in one room" ( she doesn't mention the size of the family leave that to your imagination !) There is no dignity for us. There is no education for our children". Manu and her children fled from their village, from violent attacks which forced more than 100,000 Rohingya out of their homes. That was in 2012 - they are still living in their one room space 5 years later. They need that UN action.

## Women's Network

You will probably have seen the article in the Guardian last week about the rape survivor in El Salvador who had not realised that she was pregnant, who lost her baby, and was subsequently sentenced to 30 years imprisonment because it was judged that not seeking antenatal care amounted to murder. She is not the first woman to suffer this outrageous treatment (it is commonly imposed on women who miscarry at any stage of the pregnancy when they have not already sought antenatal care) but it would be wonderful if she could be the last!

The Guardian article indicates that the proposal to end the complete ban on abortion (which is the law under which these women are convicted) is still with the Legislative Committee so we will be signing a letter to the authorities at our group meeting.

There is a Twitter action on the AIUK website: see Evelyn, a teen rape survivor, faces 30 years in jail for having a miscarriage. End the [#abortion](#) ban in El Salvador: <https://t.co/WzPk5vuP1I>

## Northern Africa, Children's network,

No updates received this month.

## Group News

### Group Meeting

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

### Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July

Members from the Syrian community organisation Rethink Rebuild will be coming along talk about the situation in Syria, why the revolution started and where they are now. They will also discuss the 'Save Me in Syria' campaign. Long term member, Sameena Matthiessen will tell us about her recent trek in Peru on behalf of Amnesty. This will probably be our last chance to say a fond farewell to Sameena as she is going back to Denmark.

### ☆ 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 6.00pm at Home Sweet Home on Edge street, for a bite to eat before the meeting.  
You are welcome to join us.*

**All welcome**

## Chair needed

At our AGM we failed to find a chairperson for the group. Heather did express interest but was unable to take it on until the autumn when her course finished. So, we agreed to have a rotating chair until Heather could step up.

Unfortunately for us (but great news for Heather), she has now secured a permanent job in Hertfordshire! Hence, we are again looking for someone to take on this role.

Apart from chairing meetings, being chair involves a bit of coordinating the various campaigns and providing some direction for the group. The actual amount of work is not great as most of the admin is done by the newsletter and membership secretaries.



You would always be supported by the coordinators group and we have occasional meetings to thrash out group policy and direction.

If you are interested, do have a word at the next meeting or drop an email to [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk).

## City Centre Street Collection

We will be holding our annual street collection on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September. We need as many people on the streets of Manchester as possible to make this an effect event. If you, or friends and family, can help email [Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com](mailto:Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com) to volunteer now!

## Pride Parade

We will be walking in the Manchester Pride parade again this year on Saturday August 26<sup>th</sup>. We will be carrying placards and

200 pink helium balloons, accompanied by a 30 strong choir. As usual, some of us will also be giving out stickers to the crowd.

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

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

## Pride material storage

We need a dry place to store our spare banners and costumes that we use for Pride Parades. If you could help, please email [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk).

## 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](mailto:Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com)) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

Thanks!

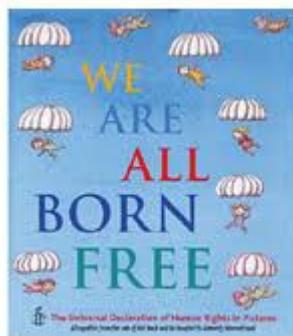
## Other events

### 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.



*Has anyone spotted the bench yet! It is at the Z Arts centre in Hulme. If you find it, please take a picture and put it on our Facebook group*

### Community Sponsorship for Refugees Roadshows

Tuesday 18 July, 16.30  
Audacious Church, Trinity Way, Salford M3 7BD

The UK government are hosting a series of roadshows this week (17-20 July) featuring a high profile Canadian delegation to promote Community Sponsorship of Refugees throughout the UK. The events have been organised in order to explore the opportunity to welcome refugees into your community through

the Community Sponsorship scheme, celebrate the first year of the programme and learn how sponsorship has transformed the lives of thousands of refugees and many communities in Canada.

### Celebrating Syria: A Festival of Arts and Culture.

**Curated by Rethink Rebuild Society, the community organisation of the Syrian people in Manchester. Various venues in Manchester between 10<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2017.**

A fortnight of exhibition, films, theatre, live music, talks by writers, panel discussions and interactive art workshops exploring Syrian arts and culture before and after 2011.

The details went out to the group last week but they are also attached with this newsletter and can also be found at:  
<https://celebratingsyria.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/syriafestival/>  
Twitter: @syriafestival

### Hidden figures: Syrian women in Assad's prisons

We have been approached by the Syrian community organisation, Rethink Rebuild, to co sponsor an exhibition entitled "Hidden figures: Syrian women in Assad's prisons". It will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> September at Cross St. Chapel - time tba. The exhibition will showcase posters of women who either were or still are detained in Syria, along with brief synopses of their stories.