



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

September 2017

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigning

BRAVE campaign

What is this campaign?

Today, people across the world are taking enormous risks to stand up for our rights. They could be teachers, students, political opponents, factory workers, journalists, lawyers or so many others. They are Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and they are under threat as never before.

Earlier this year, Amnesty International launched a Global Campaign: BRAVE, to combat measures by the powerful to threaten and attack HRDs and shrink the space in which civil society operates.

The threat that HRDs face is clearly documented in Amnesty's new report, entitled '**HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS UNDER THREAT: A shrinking space for civil society**'.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/6011/2017/en/>

It provides an overview of the dangers HRDs face and calls on those in power to take immediate measures to ensure that human rights defenders are recognized, protected and equipped to conduct their work without fear of attack in a safe environment.

AIUK have adopted this campaign as one of their priority campaigns over the next couple of years. Anne Walker, one of the volunteer NW trainers, will outline the campaign at our September meeting and facilitate a discussion on how we can get involved.

BRAVE Campaign Skillshare

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 want to go, please complete the online registration form at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/human-rights-defenders-campaign-brave-skillshare-2017-tickets-35726123798>.

As this event is in Manchester, AIUK would be really grateful for some help from the Manchester group – e.g. set up, being on reception, helping to direct people etc. If you plan to go and are willing to help, please drop an email to manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk NOW.



United Arab Emirates

Thanks to those who showed up in July for our mini vigil in support of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken mini, currently languishing in prison in the UAE for daring to speak out on human rights. See picture.



We will hold another before the September group meeting on Monday 25th September. Meet at the back entrance of the Town Hall in St Peter's Square (by the centotaph), 6.30-7.00pm. We will then walk to the group meeting in MadLab.

'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. One of them is in Manchester and members of our Refugee sub-group will be there to promote the I Welcome Campaign and the Manchester group.

Campaign sub group meeting

At the beginning of September, we held a Refugee campaign sub-group meeting to plan our involvement in the I WELCOME campaign over the next few months. As well as sorting out the arrangements for the 'Give A Home For Human Rights' event, they are also planning a performance of the Asylum Monologues in conjunction with Ice and Fire and are looking for locations to put up the Refugee Photo exhibition. If you want to get involved, email our campaign lead Rebecca at rebeccabarnes5@gmail.com.

Journey's End Festival

We have been invited to have a stall at a cultural festival which celebrates the extraordinary journeys & creative talents of refugee and asylum seeker artists and experiences. The Festival began in 2013 in Leicester and has recently expanded to Portsmouth and Manchester. They work with partners like Rethink Rebuild. Manchester City Council, Royal Exchange Theatre, HOME, City of Sanctuary.



They will be taking over Cathedral Gardens over the weekend of Sat 14 - Sun 15th October for JOURNEYS Weekender with a line-up of live music, workshops and food. We are invited to have an information stall. If you can help out over that weekend, please drop Rebecca an email, rebeccabarnes5@gmail.com as she is organising a rota.



Crisis and Tactical

SYRIA

Exhibition - Silenced voices: women in Assad's prisons



On 8th Sep we supported this moving exhibition organised by the Syrian community organisation, Rethink Rebuild.

It featured stories of several civilian Syrian women, who have been detained in Syrian prisons. Most of them have

undergone torture and most of them have not been heard of since 2014. People were really moved by the information presented.

The exhibition attracted a good number of people and 33 letters were signed to MPs across Manchester to call for an intervention against this serious breach of human rights. The exhibition was visited by Jeff



Smith, Labour MP for Withington (see picture above) and councillors John Leech, Lib-Dem Manchester City Council, Grace Fletcher-Hackwood, Labour Fallowfield and Luthfur Rahman, Labour Longsight.

Amnesty online platform for the disappeared

According to the Syrian network for Human Rights (SNHR), 75,000 people have been subjected to enforced disappearance since 2011, either by the hand of the Syrian government, armed opposition groups or the so called Islamic State. Since the start of the crisis, Amnesty International has been monitoring and campaigning against enforced disappearances and abductions, as well as other serious violations and abuses of human rights committed in Syria.

On 30th Aug, International Day of the Disappeared, Amnesty International called for the disclosure of the fate and whereabouts of those disappeared or abducted. It called, in particular, on Russia and the United States to use their influence to pressure the Syrian government and armed opposition groups to grant independent monitors access to places of detention, disclose the names and whereabouts of those deprived of their liberty, and allow all detainees to communicate with their families.

Amnesty highlights that so far there has been total impunity for those responsible for these disappearances and invites the international community to discuss the issue at every opportunity, including peace talks in Geneva and Astana.

Amnesty International will launch an online campaigning platform to shine a light on those who have faced enforced disappearance and abduction in Syria and help families in their efforts to find their loved ones.

YEMEN

Amnesty calls on UN

On 25th Aug in the early hours of the morning an air strike was carried out on Faj Attan, a residential area of Yemen's capital Sana'a.



Lynn Maalouf, Middle East Research Director at Amnesty International, stated: "Last night the Saudi

Arabia-led coalition rained down bombs on civilians while they slept, killing five children and leaving three others seriously injured. Locals say that a four-year-old girl was the sole survivor in her family, after the air strike killed the other seven members. Many people were trapped beneath the rubble of their homes until the early hours of this morning. In the aftermath of this night of horror there are serious questions for UN leaders, who last year (June 2016) made the shameful decision to remove the coalition from the list of violators of children's rights in conflict. We are calling on the UN to look at the evidence and review this decision for the upcoming Children in Armed Conflict report. There is an urgent need to put Saudi Arabia under scrutiny for the raft of crimes under international law and other human rights violations its forces have committed in Yemen."

Amnesty and other NGOs have also issued a letter to the UN to call for an independent international enquiry. (see letter attached with this newsletter)

East Asia (inc Burma)

The plight of the Rohingya people remains critical with little international effort being made to improve their situation.

Read more on the Amnesty International IS website:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/09/myanmar-restrictions-on-international-aid-putting-thousands-at-risk/>

There is a petition on the AIUK website:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/stop-violence-against-rohingya-myanmar?from=issue>

Please take a few minutes to sign it.

Individuals at Risk

Letter Writing

We held our September letter writing session at the Eighth Day Café last Saturday. Only three people turned up this time but they still managed to write 16 letters covering cases in the autumn 17 Real Lives leaflet including the Chair of Amnesty Turkey, currently imprisoned on what appear to be trumped up charges.

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-autumn-2017>.

Our next session will be on 18th November – same time and place – see below. This will concentrate on writing appeal letters for the cases featured in this year's Greetings Card Campaign.

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 18th November 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.

Women's Network

Meerim and Mary attended a meeting called by Choice for Ireland Manchester (@Choice4IrelandMCR) at the Partisan Collective (a new community space at 19 Cheetham Hill Road) on 23rd August.

The purpose of the meeting was to publicise their campaign for a Woman's Right to Choose in Ireland, along with the reasons why. They aim to spread information about current law and proposals to change it, to make people more aware of the problems caused by the law at present, and to campaign for free legal abortion.

As most of you will know, it is almost impossible to get an abortion for any reason in Ireland, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland. However, opinion polls in both the Republic and in Northern Ireland strongly suggest that a large majority of Irish people believe that the option of abortion should be available in cases of incest, rape or when the foetus cannot survive the pregnancy. Nearly two thirds support the option of abortion where a woman's health is at risk. It is legal in both parts of Ireland to travel (usually to Britain) for an abortion, and to provide information on how and where to access abortions.

For women in Northern Ireland, the government has said that they will be able to get abortions on the NHS (but they have not published an official plan yet, and travel costs are not likely to be covered). In the meantime, according to Abortion Support Network, which provides assistance for women in Ireland

needing abortions, BPAS, NUPAS and MSI are providing abortion care free of charge to women registered with a GP in Northern Ireland.) However, Arlene Foster, the present First Minister in Northern Ireland, has promised that she will block any attempt to bring the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland.

In Eire, the new Taoiseach has promised a referendum on the 8th Amendment, which states that the right to life of the unborn is equal to the right to life of the mother. There is a lot of disagreement about whether this should recommend repealing and replacing the constitutional amendment, or whether it should propose legislation rather than a different constitutional amendment (which is what Choice for Ireland believe should happen.)

Choice for Ireland propose matching any anti-choice demonstrations outside abortion clinics to support women attending them. They want help with fund raising and social media campaigns. This would certainly include promoting the referendum among those Irish living abroad who are entitled to vote. However, even if Irish living here are not able to vote themselves, it is hoped that they will be able to make their families and friends back in Ireland more aware of the need to repeal the 8th amendment.



They are organising a Manchester version of **The Global March for Choice, on Saturday 30th September, 13:00 - 14:00, St.Peter's Square** gathering to stand in solidarity with the many people in Dublin, London, Berlin, Sydney, New York and many more cities to demand that the Irish Government set the date for the Referendum on the 8th Amendment and for the Northern Ireland Executive to extend the Abortion Act to NI.

If you want to find out more, contact details for this group are:

Twitter: @Choice4IreManc

Facebook: @Choice4IrelandMCR

Email: manchesterirish@gmail.com

Northern Africa, Children's network,

No updates received this month.

Group News

City Centre Street Collection this coming Saturday!



We will hold our annual street collection on **Saturday 30th September**. We need as many people on the streets of Manchester as possible to make this an effect event and we are currently very short of volunteers!



If you, or friends and family, can help email Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com to volunteer NOW!

Chair needed

We are still looking for someone to take on being the group chair person. 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.

Christmas Cards

Anne has ordered Christmas cards for us to buy and to sell at events in the run up to Christmas. These will be on sale at meetings from October onwards. N.B. 20% of card price will go to the group.

In addition, we have a stall at a card sale event on Saturday October 14th at St Paul's church in Heaton Moor. Anne would

appreciate help manning the stall – if you can lend a hand email 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) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

Thanks!

Fond Farewell

At our July meeting we said farewell to two of our active members, Sameena and Heather.

Sameena Mattheisson is relocating back to Denmark have both chaired the Manchester Group and most recently, having taken on the role of Regional Representative, providing a link between AIUK staff and NW activists.

Heather Card has moved down to Hertfordshire to take up a new job. She hasn't been with the group as long as Sameena but has made a big impression, a special thankyou goes to her for her work on the Human Rights Act and Refugees.



You will both be missed but we wish you all the best for the future.

Group Meeting

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

Monday 25th September Workshop on the BRAVE campaign

Anne Walker will lead a workshop about this new global AI campaign in support of Human Rights Defenders.

★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.

Prides

Manchester Pride

We had great fun as part of the Manchester Pride parade, although unfortunately the promised large choir failed to materialise. Nevertheless we were supported by 4 members of the Greater Manchester Humanist Choir. We had placards, flags and 200 pink helium balloons and gave out stickers to the crowds. Lil provided a super focal point at the front in her original 'Love is a Human Right' set of wings.

Levenshulme Pride

We had a stall at the Levenshulme Pride event early in August and collected 246 signed cards calling for an investigation into the killing of gay men in Chechnya.

Pride material storage

We still 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.

Thanks to everybody who took part!



Other events

Chorlton Oxfam Cake Challenge

The Chorlton fundraising group invites Manchester Amnesty group members to the Chorlton Cake Challenge, on Saturday 23 September, 2:30 - 5:30 pm, at St Clement's Church, Edge Lane, Manchester M21 9AE. To enter the Challenge, all you need to do is bake a cake, bring it along on the day with your entry fee, and submit it to the appraisal of our judges. Prizes will be awarded for the best cake in each of the following categories:

- Small cakes - cup cakes and fairy cakes
- Fair Trade cakes - made with Fair Trade ingredients
- Manchester-themed cake
- Cakes made by children (up to 16)
- Freestyle - let your imagination be your guide

Entry fee is £5 per cake, or £3 for children's cakes, with voluntary donations from all the non-bakers who want to attend. There will be a raffle, entertainment, refreshments, and of course the chance to buy a slice of bakery bliss from the contestants.

Please register a place here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/chorlton-cake-challenge-tickets-37619232136?aff=es2> and request an entry form from chorltonoxfamcommon@gmail.com.

Aakash Odedra Company

Winner of the Amnesty International Freedom Of Expression Award 2017

Contact Theatre October 10 -12th.

The Aakash Odedra Company is building an international ensemble incorporating talented young Turkish contemporary dancers. Using a fusion of styles #JeSuis (In Progress) explores personal stories of conflict, media manipulation, displacement and identity.

What makes home when millions are on the move? Each performance of #JeSuis (In Progress) will be followed by: JOURNEYS – The Art of Displacement Aakash Odedra Company and Journeys Festival International share the inspiration for their work, including artistic contributions from European partners, and invite an audience response and debate to issues of displacement and the meaning of "home".

Britain and Palestine 1917-2017

There is a free event in Liverpool on Sat 21 October. This is a rare chance to hear speakers of a high standard, and the event promises to be very informative – see attached flyer for details.

Places can be booked by sending an email directly to Liverpool Friends of Palestine: at liverpoolfopal@gmail.com.

NW Regional Conference

When: Saturday 4th November 2017, 9.30/10.00am – 4.30pm.

Where: George Fox Building, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YF

This year's North-West regional conference is based around Amnesty UK's Not Powerless campaign. We are guaranteed to leave full of inspiration and ideas for creating positive changes in our local community.

Highlights include a keynote address by Tina Rothery, a prominent grassroots activist and member of the anti-fracking Nanas, as well as a panel discussion on human rights in the UK, with Cat Smith MP.

Registration: This event is free and open to all. Please see the link below to access more information and book your place.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/amnesty-internationals-north-west-conference-tickets-37650717309>

If you have any questions, please contact zara.ahmed@amnesty.org.uk.

SAVE THE DATE! - National Conference & AGM 2018

7-8 April, Swansea University - Free to attend!

In uncertain times, it is more important than ever for Amnesty to grow and strengthen as a movement. The national conference is a fantastic opportunity for members to come together to share knowledge and skills, hear from amazing speakers and feel energised to campaign in the months ahead. The event is also an opportunity to get involved in debate and decision-making and to engage in the democracy of Amnesty UK by voting on the resolutions that will shape our work in the coming year.

Key dates:

1 November: booking opens

7 January: resolution submission deadline

1 March: booking closes

Further information on how to book will be available later in the year.

Request to take part in a research project

Lisa Duddington runs a research agency in Manchester. She has contacted us as she is conducting research for the Humanitarian Leadership Academy and would like to invite us to take part (60-90 minutes, £80 payment).

All details about the research and how to apply can be found here: <http://www.surveymoz.com/s/humanitarians/>