



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

October 2017

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

## Campaigning

### BRAVE campaign

In May this year, Amnesty International launched a Global Campaign: BRAVE, to combat measures by the powerful to threaten and attack Human Rights Defenders (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/>

#### Brave subgroup

At our last meeting, Anne Walker, one of the NW trainers, led a workshop to introduce the group to this campaign and explore some ways we could get involved. The group came up with some great ideas (e.g. 24h letter writing marathon, photo exhibition in Piccadilly Gardens, vigil for HRDs). A BRAVE campaign subgroup has been set up and it had its first meeting last week. They are following up a few options for Write for Rights event venues. And are also thinking of planning a write-a-thon next year which could be combined with the photo exhibition idea – if you want to get involved email her: [hazelerrey@gmail.com](mailto:hazelerrey@gmail.com).

#### Letter Writing

Our next session of our regular letter writing get togethers will be on 18<sup>th</sup> November – at the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road – see below. This will concentrate on writing appeal letters for the cases featured in this year's Write for Rights Campaign. These will all be HRDs as part of the BRAVE global campaign.



### United Arab Emirates

This month sadly marks the 7th month that Ahmed Mansoor has been in jail and also means that he will very likely spend his birthday in prison on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

To mark this, our group will once again hold a vigil at the St Peter's Square entrance to the Town Hall (by the cenotaph) before our regular group meeting. We will meet at 6.30pm, hold the vigil for about 30mins and then walk to the meeting at MadLab.



Please come and support the vigil for Ahmed Mansoor on 23rd October 2017 at 6.30pm in St Peter's Square.

In addition, this month, a meeting of groups and individuals that work on behalf of Ahmed Mansoor and Dr. Mohammed Al-Roken was held at the Garden Court North Chambers, Manchester. At this meeting, future events were discussed and planned.

The subgroup meeting for the UAE group will be held on Thursday the 19th October at 7.30pm in Fig and Sparrow (Northern Quarter). **Please come along if you are interested.**

Furthermore, another protest for Ahmed Mansoor will be held at UAE embassy in London - 26 October 2017. Please come along if you are in London and spread the word.

### 'I Welcome' Refugee Campaign

#### Journeys Festival

Over the weekend of Sat 14 - Sun 15th October, Journeys Festival took over Cathedral Gardens for JOURNEYS Weekender with a line-up of live music, workshops and food. We were delighted to be part of this with a stall featuring our Refugee campaign.



### Next Letter Writing Session

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2-4pm**

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

Write letters on behalf of human rights defenders as part of this year's Write for Rights campaign and the global BRAVE campaign.

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

**All Welcome.**

We collected 82 signatures for the 'keep refugees families together' petition and 75 for the 'stop violence against the Rohingya' petition.

**Well done and thank you to all who helped.**

The Refugee Campaign subgroup is holding a meeting this week. Come along to the group meeting to find out their plans and how you can get involved.

## Crisis and Tactical

### Palestine - 50 Years of Unlawful Occupation

The occupation of Palestine by Israel started in 1967 during the 'Six-Day War'. This occupation has been declared unlawful by international organizations, including the UN.

According to Amnesty International this occupation has resulted in grave human rights violations, including the destruction of homes, forced evictions, unlawful killings, arbitrary detentions, movement restrictions, exploitation of resources and collective punishment.

The Israeli settlements into Palestinian occupied territories (OPT) use unlawfully appropriated Palestinian resources, including land, water and minerals. These resources are transformed to produce goods, which are sold for private profit and to sustain the settlements' economy. In 2015, the Israeli Ministry of Economy estimated the worth of settlement exports to the EU each year to be around 154-230m GBP.

To mark 50 years of the occupation of Palestinian territory Amnesty International has launched a new campaign calling for the ban of Israeli settlement goods. At the October meeting we will have the opportunity to sign this petition.



### Syria - Action against War Crimes

At the October meeting we will have the opportunity to send letters to our MPs asking them to take a stand against the horrific crimes against humanity that have been taking place in Syria since the start of the conflict in 2011. The sample letter has been prepared by our friends at the Rethink Rebuild Society.

**Exhibition 'Silenced Voices: Syrian Women in Assad's Prisons'**. At the beginning of October a reduced version of this exhibition was displayed at the Manchester Museum, as part of Journeys Festival International. We were again pleased to be able to offer support to Rethink Rebuild and have an Amnesty International stall.

### Yemen - Breakthroughs and Setbacks

• At the end of September 2017 the UN Human Rights Council has passed a resolution mandating a group of international experts to investigate abuses by all parties to the conflict in Yemen. This resolution is the result of years of campaigning and lobbying by Yemeni human rights organizations, Amnesty International and other international organizations.

"This resolution is a victory for Yemenis whose suffering at the hands of all parties to the conflict has been overlooked by the international community." said Anna Neistat, Amnesty International's Senior Director for Research. Ms Neistat also added "Given the long delay, it is imperative that the group of experts is established as soon as possible and given adequate resources to get to work without delay, and that it receives full cooperation from all parties to the conflict."

For the past two and a half years all parties to the conflict in Yemen have flagrantly flouted international law. In 2015 Saudi Arabia effectively blocked efforts to set up an inquiry by tabling its own draft resolution.

• In early October 2017 the UN included the Saudi Arabia-led coalition into its annual Children and armed conflict report (CAAC) which covers the year 2016. According to this report, 683 children were killed or injured by the Saudi-Arabia led coalition in 2016.

However, as a result of diplomatic pressure from Saudi Arabia, the report contains a new category that acknowledges the efforts of the coalition to "put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children".

Amnesty International has seen no evidence of such measures. In recent weeks, Amnesty International confirmed the use of a US-manufactured bomb by the Saudi-Arabia led coalition in an August attack that killed seven children.

According to UNICEF's latest Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) figures, between 26 March 2015 and 31 March 2017, at least 1,595 children were killed and 2,542 others injured in Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition is responsible for the majority of these child casualties.

In 2015, Saudi Arabia was included in the CAAC report but was later removed by then secretary general Ban Ki-moon following intense diplomatic pressure.

Amnesty International has stated that "the international community has caved in to political pressure again, underplaying the suffering of hundreds of Yemeni children".

**At the October meeting we will do an action on Yemen.**



## 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 still 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.

## Children's network

### International Day of the Girl and the fight for girls' rights across the world

The following article by Gladys Burini was posted on the Children's Human Rights Network blog to mark the International Day of the Girl on 11th October.

*'Today we celebrate International Day of the Girl. There are 1.1 billion girls in the world, and every one of them deserves equal opportunities for a better future. However, there are still many issues holding back girls' progress today across the globe.*

#### **We need an end to child marriage**

*Shockingly, every day 41,000 girls are married before they turn 18 years old. That's 15 million girls every year. Additionally, one in three girls in developing countries (with the exception of China) is married before they turn 18.*

*Girls forced to marry early often fail to complete, or even begin, their secondary education, and so cannot progress to higher education. The result is girls who are less skilled and unable to exploit their full potential. The World Bank has calculated that ending child marriage could increase earnings and national productivity by an average of 1%.*

#### **Child pregnancy: a global crisis**

*Every day 20,000 girls under the age of 18 years old give birth. This amounts to 7.3 million births a year. Due to the tender age at which these girls fall pregnant, complications during pregnancy*

*and childbirth are the second cause of death for 15 – 19 year-old girls. This is truly a global crisis.*

*For most, these pregnancies aren't out of choice, but result from early forced marriages or brutal sexual abuse, as well as lack of proper sexual and reproductive education and healthcare.*

*Even worse, some countries have banned pregnant girls from attending school. This sudden end to their education curtails their opportunities to later compete for well-paying jobs, and thereby contribute to the economic growth of their countries.*

#### **Fighting for the leaders of tomorrow**

*There is a lot that can be done to tackle these challenges facing girls. To begin with, governments should call upon their state intuitions to urgently collect data on issues affecting girls in their country. This would mean every country has a clear picture of the problems affecting girls that they need to address.*

*Governments also need to uphold their duty to protect girls from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and uphold the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

*The media has a duty to report on these issues. A lot can be achieved from having an open dialogue about the problems that face girls. We need to constantly remind ourselves that every girl has the right to education, and we all stand to gain by ensuring they remain in school and complete their education.*

*Today, let girls be girls. Give them the opportunity to become the entrepreneurs, innovators, household heads, political leaders and mothers of tomorrow.'*

## Northern Africa, Women's Network,

No updates received this month.

## Group News

### Street Collection

We held our annual street collection on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September. We were a bit thin on the ground and didn't find the people of Manchester in a very generous mood. Nevertheless, we managed to collect £159 – so well done and a big thank you to those who turned out.



### Christmas Cards

Anne ran a stall at her local Charity Christmas Card Sale last Saturday selling Amnesty Cards and managed to take £193, of which approximately £56 is profit for the group.

The cards will be on sale at our October and November meetings. We will also be selling them at the Whalley Range Peace and Justice Write for rights event on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. If you know of any other similar events that we could set up a stall, email [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk).

### FaceBook Page

Please like and follow our FaceBook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/amnestyman/>

### Chair STILL 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](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!**



# Group Meeting

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

## Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October Campaigning Round Up

Our campaign leads will give us an update on current concerns and activity associated with our various campaigning areas.

### ☆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.

*Don't forget the vigil for Ahmed Mansoor in St Peter's Square at 6.30pm before the meeting!*

## Other events

### NW Regional Conference

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

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](mailto:zara.ahmed@amnesty.org.uk).

### Manchester SLEEPOUT

Each year The Booth Centre invites people to take on the challenge of sleeping out to highlight some of the hardships that homeless people have to face every single night. This year the Sleepout will be on 4th November.

See: <http://www.boothcentre.org.uk/manchester-sleepout.html> for details.

### 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. Keep an eye on <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm2018> for updates as they become available.

### Acoustic Amnesty

Steve is planning another Acoustic amnesty event for Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December at Sacred Trinity Church. It won't be in aid of Manchester Amnesty this time but community radio (Salford City Radio and All FM). Nevertheless, it will still be a great event and worth getting out for.

Performers confirmed are:

Tom Hingley

Gareth Price (Hawker Reunion) and Ellaney Hayden

The Holy Dead (Scott Peter Heaton)

Robin Mukherjee of the Café

More will be added so buy your tickets now before it sells out from. <https://www.wegotickets.com/event/418439>

Prompt 7.30pm start and finish by 10.30pm. Free parking and excellent bar in a beautiful church venue that is a stone's throw from Deansgate/Market Street in Manchester city centre.