



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

November 2017

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Write for Rights

Every year, Amnesty International runs 'Write for Rights', a campaign over November and December where we are encouraged to write messages of support to people around the world who have suffered injustice.

In 2016, 152,000 people across the UK took part in Write for Right. Amnesty does this because they know it works – see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/writing-rights-works>.

"I wish I had the time and ability to thank each and every one of you for giving me a little bit of joy with each letter and card."

Chelsea Manning, USA

This year's campaign features the cases of 10 human rights defenders (with a further 4 cases on line) as part of the global BRAVE campaign.

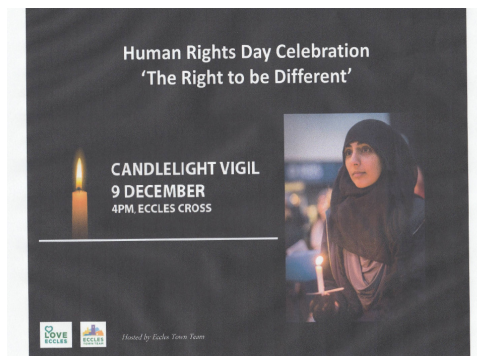


We are busy planning our involvement this year, with the BRAVE campaign subgroup lead by Hazel taking the lead.

Sat 9th Dec – A Write for Rights stall at the Eccles Human Rights Day vigil.

Things aren't fully finalised yet, but this is what we currently have in the pipeline:

Sat 18th Nov. We have already held our first Write for Rights event at the Eighth Day Café writing appeal letters on behalf of the 10 cases. 9 turned up and 21 letters were written.



Mon 27th Nov – We will be writing messages of solidarity in greetings cards at our November group meeting

Sunday Dec 10th – We hope to run a Write for rights event at the Manchester Sunday Assembly at the Wonder Inn, shudehill 11am-12pm – **volunteers needed**.

Sat 2nd Dec - We have a Write for Rights stall at the Birch Community Christmas Fair – **an extra volunteer would be useful**.

Sun 3rd or Sun 17th Dec – St Clements in Chorlton - we plan yet another stall! – **one more volunteer needed!**

Sat 2nd Dec – Whalley Range Peace and Justice group are running their regular Write for Rights event at St Margaret's church. They have food and singing as well as lots of tables for card writing – a fantastic event and well worth getting along to. We will have a stall to publicise the Manchester Group and will feature the BRAVE campaign and sell Christmas cards – **an extra helper would be useful**.

Tues 12th Dec, 7-9pm: Friends of the Earth event (including Write for Rights stall) – **an extra volunteer would be useful**

Thurs 7th Dec – Another stall at the Acoustic Amnesty concert – **two volunteer needed**.

Thursday 14th December – Leanne is looking at running a Write for Rights event in Stretford at Sip Club – see <https://www.facebook.com/thesipclub/photos/gm.1361573457298066/1451816498227626/?type=3> – **she would appreciate help man the stall**.

If you can help at any of these contact Hazel (hazelerrey@gmail.com) or email manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk.

Other Campaigns

BRAVE campaign

In addition to all of this, we are involved with the Stockport group in a Pub Quiz at the Town Hall Tavern in the city centre. We will have a stall featuring the BRAVE appeal cards and hope to have a few teams entered into the quiz. If you want to reserve a place in one of our teams, email manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk.

Uncle Paddy's pumpin' party-time pub quiz Amnesty Special!

Thursday November 30th
7.30 – 10.30 pm

Town Hall Tavern
Tib Lane, M2 4AJ

See <https://www.facebook.com/events/542556612761660/>

The BRAVE subgroup are also discussing holding a letter-writing marathon, probably in March 2018. They are currently looking for a venue where we could also involve the public and that we could use for a 24 hour period....**any ideas welcome!**

'I Welcome' Refugee Campaign

Help us change the law for refugees



Restrictive rules mean that many refugees in the UK have no hope of being reunited with their family. Together we can change the rules which keep refugee families apart. Angus MacNeil MP has introduced a **private members bill**, which will receive its second reading on **Friday 16th March 2018**.

Please use the campaign update attached with this newsletter (or see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/help-us-change-law-refugees>) and write to your MP asking them to support the bill.

We need 100 MPs voting in favour of the bill to ensure it progresses to the next stage.

United Arab Emirates

Human rights activists, Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken are still in jail in the UAE.

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
27th November 2017 at 6.30pm
in St Peter's Square.

Henrike has lead this work since we took up the case of Mohammed al-Roken. Very sadly, she is moving to Liverpool and will struggle to get to meetings in the New Year. Given the links that Manchester city council and football teams have with the UAE, it is important that we continue this campaigning. Does anyone fancy taking a lead on this?

Crisis and Tactical

PALESTINE – Amnesty's campaign has gone viral !

Through a recently launched new campaign for Palestine, which marks the 50th anniversary of the Israeli occupation, Amnesty is asking governments to ban Israeli's settlement goods. These goods contribute to Israel's economy, while penalising Palestine's. In 2015, the Israeli Ministry of Economy estimated the worth of settlement exports to the EU each year to be between 154M and 230M GBP.

Amnesty's campaign has already made some noise. On October 17th, Israeli media reported that Israeli Finance Ministry planned to take action against Amnesty by changing the status of Amnesty International's Israeli section so that donations to the organisation are no longer tax-deductible.

On November 17th, Raed Jarrar, Amnesty USA 's Middle East and North Africa advocacy director was refused entry into the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territories) on the grounds of 'public security'. Raed's was on a personal trip, visiting his family, following the death of his father. During the questioning at the border the Israeli official asked Raed: '*Why does Amnesty International have a problem with Israel?*'. Raed was also asked to give the names of Amnesty's staff at the Israeli section in Tel Aviv and the International Secretariat branch in Jerusalem.

In the coming monthly meetings, we will sign petition sheets and cards addressed to the UK Foreign Secretary to support Amnesty's message.



SYRIA - Another veto from Russia

At the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on October 17th, Russia used their veto power to block a one-year term extension for the joint investigative mechanism (JIM) mandated with investigating chemical attacks in Syria.

Sherine Tadros, Head of Amnesty International's UN office in New York stated: "For the ninth time, Russia has used its veto power to shield its ally, the Syrian government, from any punitive consequences it could face for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed since the start of the conflict over six years ago ... This routine abuse of the veto has become the equivalent of a green light for war crimes, allowing all parties involved in the conflict in Syria to act with complete impunity and disregard for international law, with civilians paying the ultimate price ... The UN Secretary General as well as Security Council members can no longer idly stand by as the UNSC is transformed into an instrument for political posturing between permanent members, and which has consistently failed to enforce resolutions adopted to end war crimes and crimes against humanity."

September 17th marked the second anniversary of the Russian military intervention in Syria with 5,233 estimated civilian casualties (information provided by Rethink Rebuild).

New report from Amnesty

Amnesty has just released a new report stating that the tactic of using starvation as a method of warfare is a crime against humanity. The report reads: 'Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Syria, the Syrian government has imposed sieges on populated civilian areas, using starvation as a method of warfare, and blocking or arbitrarily restricting access to basic necessities-including food, water, medicine, electricity, fuel and communications. It has also blocked aid organisations from entering besieged areas. The effects have been devastating, pushing populations to the brink of starvation and causing people to die from otherwise treatable conditions.'

In an interview with Amnesty, a lawyer from Damascus stated that 'the government made its objective to destroy everything and leave us with nothing to stay behind for.' See link <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/syrian-forces-surrender-or-starve-tactics-are-crimes-against-humanity-new-report>



Vigil in support of Syria!

(picture supplied by Rethink Rebuild)

We will hold a vigil alongside our friends at Rethink Rebuild on Sunday 10th December from 11 am to 1pm in St. Ann's Square, Manchester. The vigil will focus on the siege of Eastern Ghouta, which faces the same impending catastrophe that East Aleppo suffered last year.

Please come and support the Syrian people!

YEMEN – no recent update from Amnesty

East Asia (inc Burma)

The plight of the Rohingya people remains critical with little international effort being made to improve their situation. Lil has found this excellent article on the Guardian website:

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/nov/14/when-they-began-slaughtering-us-we-ran-for-our-lives-rohingya-trapped-inside-myanmar?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

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.

Individuals at Risk

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday January 13th 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

Make a resolution to write more Amnesty appeals in 2018 and kick start the new year by attending our regular letter writing session

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

All Welcome.

Northern Africa, Women's Network, Children's network

No updates received this month.

Group News

Forthcoming group meetings

We will not have a group meeting in December as the fourth Monday falls on Christmas Day! However, we already have our group meetings planned for the beginning of the 2018.



January 22nd – **Kate Allen**, Director of Amnesty International UK will be making a special trip up north to meet our group.

Come along to hear her talk about the challenges of leading a large membership organisation dedicated to forwarding the cause of human rights and hear her hopes for the future, ask her questions and air your views.

February 26th – **Jonathan Cornejo**, country coordinator for Palestine, will be speaking on AI's current concerns and campaigning in this sensitive area of the Middle East supported by Helen Close, who has recently spent 3 months volunteering as an Ecumenical Accompanier (EA) for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) - www.eappi.org.

March 26th – Group AGM and discussion on the resolutions for the National Conference.

Christmas Cards

Anne has a large box of Amnesty Christmas Cards which she will be selling at many of our events in the run up to Christmas. Buy yours at our November group meeting!

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.

November Group Meeting

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

Monday 27th November Write for Rights

We will catch up with past and forthcoming events and then settle down to send messages of solidarity to this year's Write for Rights cases with mulled wine and mince pies.

☆ **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!

FaceBook Page

Please like and follow our FaceBook page:

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

Other Events

7 Days in Syria

An Evening with Janine di Giovanni

A Film Screening, Q&A, and Book Sale organised by Rethink Rebuild society

RR Multi-facility room
Unit 7, Longsight Business Park, Manchester, M13 0PD
Sunday 26th November, 7 pm

Please book your free seat through Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/7-days-in-syria-an-evening-with-janine-di-giovanni-tickets-39571976848?aff=es2>

When fighting broke out in Aleppo in 2012, war journalist Janine di Giovanni applied to Newsweek to cover the war there. The editor rejected her proposal deeming the situation too dangerous. She went anyway.

For more details of the event see the Rethink Rebuild website:
<http://rrsoc.org/node/960>

Make a Will Month (March 2018)

AIUK are looking for will-writing solicitors!

Are you a solicitor or do you know any solicitors that work in a firm with a will-writing team? If so, Amnesty needs your help! AIUK have started recruiting solicitors to provide a free will-writing service for supporters like you during March 2018. If you are a solicitor or know any solicitors that work in a firm with a will-writing team – please do encourage them to **sign up** to the scheme- see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/make-will-month-2018>.

Acoustic Amnesty

There is another Acoustic Amnesty event on Thursday 7th 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.

Booking now open! - 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.

Booking is now open, see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm2018> to reserve your place. Hopefully a few of us will be going down and a car share can be arranged. N.B. Booking closes 1st March.