



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

January 2018

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

## Forthcoming meetings

### January Group Meeting

January 22<sup>nd</sup> - 7.30pm

#### **Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International UK**



Kate Allen has been the Director of the UK section of Amnesty International since 2000. She will be making a special trip up north to meet our group at our January meeting.

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.

It would be helpful to have questions in advance – if you have something specific that you want to ask Kate, email it to [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk) before the meeting.

Usual venue : 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.

### Documentary 'The White Helmets'

(see attached flyer)

Saturday 17th February 2018 at 2pm

Longsight Library, 519 Stockport Rd, Manchester M12 4NE

Come to our free screening of the Oscar winning documentary 'The White Helmets', a 2016 British short documentary film. The film follows the daily operations of a group of volunteer rescue workers of the Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets.

It won the Best Documentary (Short Subject) at the 89th Academy Awards.

This will be followed a Q&A session via Skype with the Director, Orland von Einsiedel, and the founder of the Syrian Civil Defence (the White Helmets), Raed Saleh.

We will also have a petition in support of Syria for members of the audience to sign.

See Facebook event:

<https://www.facebook.com/amnestymanc/photos/gm.354141268387265/1918162888512933/?type=3>

#### **Limited places available !**

Please, book your place with Simona ([smattanza8@gmail.com](mailto:smattanza8@gmail.com))



# Campaigns

## Individuals at Risk

### Write for Rights

We held numerous stalls this year in the run up to Christmas and achieved a grand total of 251 greetings cards with solidarity messages and 40 appeal letters/cards.

Thanks to everyone who helped out on stalls and to Mary Gibbs, Jo Hill, Mary McBride & Lianne for organising stalls. We have also made a few new contacts this year that should be useful in the future.

### Letter Writing

We held our regular bi-monthly letter writing session on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> concentrating on appeals for the Write for Rights cases. Five people turned up and 18 letters were written.



We usually hold these every two months, on the second Saturday in the month – the next one will be in March.

### Next Letter Writing Session

**Saturday March 10th 2-4pm**

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

Come along to our regular letter writing session and make a difference

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

**All Welcome.**

### Brave

We had a BRAVE campaign stall at the Whalley Range Peace and Justice Write for Rights and got over 200 appeal cards signed.



We also have another BRAVE stall at the Darwin Day event on February 12<sup>th</sup> at Manchester Conference Centre. We could do with an extra volunteer to help man the stall – if you are available from 5. to 7.30pm, please drop Anne an email at

[manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk). You will get free entry to the following talk on evolution.

In the most recent mailing from AIUK, we are asked to call on the UK government to strengthen their commitment and support to Human Rights Defenders around the world and be more vocal about the issue of increased attack and harassment of those

standing up for Human Rights around the world. Please take action by writing to your MP and call on UK Government to increase its support to Human Rights Defenders.

See

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/human-rights-defenders-brave-campaign-0> for full details (also attached to in the email with this newsletter).



If you take action could you let us know as we are trying to keep track of which MPs we are in contact with as a group – email [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk).

The BRAVE subgroup have also discussed 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

The Rohingya people in Myanmar are currently trapped in a dehumanising system of state-sponsored discrimination and racial segregation. This is apartheid – a crime against humanity as defined by international law. Since August 2017, reports of killings, rape and massacres have flooded in, as satellite images show entire villages have been burned to the ground by the security forces. Demand the authorities end the shocking violence now

Take Action – sign the on line petition now:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/refugees-migrants-and-asylum>

**In aid of**

**Collection for Calais**  
The Kings Arms, Salford. February 4th, 3pm-6pm

There are still over 1,000 refugees living in Calais without shelter, warmth and sometimes even basic clothing.  
**'Help Refugees'** need your donations to help these people through the harsh winter.

**We are collecting:**

- Sleeping bags, tents and blankets
- Men's warm clothing (hoodies, jumpers, coats)
- Waterproof coats
- Boots and good shoes (ideally UK size 7-10)
- Men's boxers and socks
- Gloves, hats and scarves

All your donations will be sorted and delivered to Calais.

If you have any questions or would like to donate a different day contact [manchester@helprefugees.org.uk](mailto:manchester@helprefugees.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/groups/manchestertocalais](https://www.facebook.com/groups/manchestertocalais)  
Instagram: [mcr\\_to\\_calais](https://www.instagram.com/mcr_to_calais) [www.helprefugees.org](http://www.helprefugees.org)  
Twitter: [MCR\\_to\\_CALAIS](https://twitter.com/MCR_to_CALAIS)

## United Arab Emirates

We are not aware of any change in the situation of human rights activists, Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken; they 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 – check our Facebook page for last minute updates.

Please come and support the vigil  
for Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken on  
22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 at 6.30pm  
in St Peter's Square.

Henrike has led this work since we took up the case of Mohammed al-Roken. Very sadly, her job has moved to Liverpool and she will struggle to get to meetings regularly. 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

In Dec 17 Donald Trump stated that he recognises Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This action has been condemned by the UN. Sherine Tadros, head of Amnesty International's UN office in New York, stated: "The global community has sent a strong message that it will not be swayed by bullying threats into supporting President Trump's reckless disregard for international cooperation."

This is a much larger question than where the United States chooses to place its embassy. The international community has repeatedly condemned the US recognition of the illegal annexation of Jerusalem. By rejecting this consensus, the United States is completely disregarding the rights of the Palestinian people and damaging efforts to maintain peace in the region. The United States should consider why this policy is so widely opposed by the global community. Rather than acting as a partner in the peace process, the US is fanning the flames of tension."

**A petition for the ban of Israeli settlement goods will be available to sign at our January meeting.** If you won't make it visit <http://50yearstoomany.uk/> to take action.

### SYRIA

#### Political update

There is still not substantial progress into the resolution of the Syrian conflict. Here is an update of the most recent steps taken or to be taken aiming to its resolution:

- Dec 17 – the guarantor states Russia, Turkey and Iran have agreed to form two working groups on the release of detainees and humanitarian de-mining;
- End Jan 18 - another round of UN-sponsored Geneva talk is scheduled to take place. Constitutional reform and elections are the aim. The Syrian regime has so far obstructed the talks and has refused to enter into direct negotiations with the opposition.
- End Jan 18 - 'Syria National Congress' organised by Russia. Around 2,000 Syrian figures among politicians, armed groups, local council members, tribal figures and others will

discuss reforms to the current Syrian constitution, which was adopted in 2012. The UN envoy Steffan De Mistura has been invited with the aim of giving the conference international legitimacy.

More than 130 civil societies, including Manchester based Rethink Rebuild, issued a statement warning that the participation of Mr De Mistura might jeopardise the UN's role in resolving the conflict and legitimise Russia's patronage role over Syria.

*Information provided by Rethink Rebuild.*

#### Update on Eastern Ghouta

In Dec 17 we held a vigil in support of Eastern Ghouta and collected signatures to ask UK MPs to help end the violent siege of this rebel-held city in the outskirts of Damascus. Regrettably the situation has deteriorated.



Civilians are trapped in the area and can receive little humanitarian support. Even smuggling tunnels have been sealed up by the government. A regime-selected businessman is said to monopolise the limited trade in the area and manipulate prices for basic goods.

In Dec 17 the Syrian regime agreed to evacuate 29 critically ill patients, but only in exchange for the release of 29 regime soldiers, who were held by the rebel group Jaish al-Islam. On 9<sup>th</sup> Jan Amnesty International has issued a press release and an **URGENT ACTION** calling for the release of 529 sick and injured civilians, who require urgent treatment. The decision to evacuate more than 500 people has been pending approval from the Syrian government since July 17; since then 14 have died waiting for this approval.

***The urgent action will be available to sign at our coming meeting. Alternatively, please find it in the attachment with this newsletter.***



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>

**Northern Africa, East Asia (inc Myanmar), Women's Network, Children's network:** No updates received this month.

## Group News

### Forthcoming group meetings

We hold our meetings on the fourth Monday of each month at MadLab in the Northern Quarter. Our January meeting will feature Kate Allen, AIUK director (see above). Following that we have the following planned:

February 26<sup>th</sup> – We had hoped that Jonathan Cornejo, AIUK Palestine lead, would be coming up to talk to the group but that doesn't seem likely as he now tells us that he will be in Palestine then. Instead, we plan a session looking at the 2018 Local Groups planning pack and deciding which of the campaign options we want to get involved in.

March 26<sup>th</sup> – Group AGM and discussion on the resolutions for the National Conference. This will be an opportunity for a bit of a shake up of our group officers and campaign leads. If you fancy getting a bit more involved, give some thought to how you would like to get involved and have a word with one of the group officers beforehand.

In particular, 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.

### 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!**

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AGM 2018



This year the National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the UK section of Amnesty International will be held over the weekend of 7-8 April, at Swansea University – It is 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. Anne and Simona plan to attend but it would be great if others can join us. We will try and arrange a car share so please let us know if you plan to attend.

N.B. Booking closes 1<sup>st</sup> March.

*Happy New Year  
to All Our Members*

## Other News

### New Regional Representative

Julie Bullough has been elected as the new Regional Representative for the North West. The role of the RR is two fold: to provide a link between local groups and the AIUK office staff and to promote communication between the groups in the region.

Julie is a member of the Fylde Amnesty Group. She is currently trying to get her head around what is involved. She will be visiting our group later in the year to get to know us.



### Political Campaigning Training for Amnesty Members

Amnesty International UK's political campaigning training is still open for applications. The extended deadline is next **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January**.

The political campaigning training will provide participants with knowledge of the parliamentary system, understanding of how AIUK shapes its campaign to work with Parliament, and skills to campaign for human rights change with MPs, councillors and other politicians. This training would benefit all members, but especially those who are newer to Amnesty.

The training in the North West will happen in Manchester on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 10am – 5pm**. Travel will be reimbursed and refreshments and lunch provided. A second training will be held on a Saturday in May in either Manchester or Leeds.

Those who are interested should fill out this online application: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/T9NY7JM>

### Film Screening

There will be a screening of the film '9 Giorni al Cairo' about the torture and death of Giulio Regeni. We hope to have an Amnesty table with appeal cards. Volunteers to help man the stall are needed. Email [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk) if you can help.



**GIOVANE ITALIA**  
PRESENTS THE DOCUFILM

**"9 GIORNI AL CAIRO"**  
TORTURE AND MURDER  
OF GIULIO REGENI

by Carlo Bonini and Giuliano Foschini

Coproduction

**la Repubblica**

42° PARALLELO

THURSDAY, 8 FEBRUARY  
18:00 - 21:30

University of Manchester  
Hall 16 SG - Samuel Alexander Building  
Lime Grove - M13 9PP

**TRUTH FOR GIULIO**  
VERITÀ PER GIULIO REGENI

Amnesty International