



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

February 2018

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigns

BRAVE Campaign

Brave is a two year international campaign launched by Amnesty in 2017 to highlight human rights defenders across the world who often work under conditions of intimidation, harassment and persecution.



Suffragette Spirit

As we celebrate 100 years since women (well some women) got the vote and the valiant work done by the suffragettes, AIUK have launched a new initiative to celebrate Britain's women human rights defenders of today.



This campaign has featured strongly in the local media, including the Manchester Evening News. In response to their article our secretary wrote a letter welcoming the initiative and thanking the MEN for giving in prominence – and the letter was published at the top of the Viewpoints page.

If you know someone in Greater Manchester who has carried out amazing human rights work, Amnesty want to hear from you. They might have helped the homeless, aided refugees, or campaigned for better access to healthcare. They could have challenged bad business practices, supported the rights of refugees, or prevented forced evictions – any way they've made a difference.



Amnesty plan to take your nominations and use them to make an interactive map of women human rights defenders across the country. Not only will this show the sheer scale of human rights work by women in the UK, it will help people discover causes in their local area and help people link up to work together.

Nominate a local women's human rights defender at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/suffragettespirit>.

Letters to MPs

In the December 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. If you haven't already done this, 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 and a briefing document that you can send to your MP.

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.

'I Welcome' Refugee Campaign

Families Together campaign

Refugee families, separated by war and persecution, are being kept apart by restrictive UK rules on family reunion. On **Friday 16 March**, MPs will debate an important bill to improve these rules and reunite refugee families. At least 100 MPs need to turn up and vote on 16 March to change these unfair rules that keep refugees in UK apart from those they love.

To win this vote you need to tell your MP that you support refugee family reunion and urge them to attend the vote (it is a Friday when many MPs head to their constituency, it is important that they realise that their constituents want them to stay and take part in this debate). See briefing attached with this newsletter.



Write to your MP to tell them to attend on 16th March

Individuals at Risk

We will hold our regular bi-monthly letter writing session on Saturday 10th March at the Eighth Day Café. This is open to all and is a great way to get involved in core Amnesty work. Case sheets, guidance on what to put, paper and pens are provided. Just drop in and get writing.

Next Letter Writing Drop In

Saturday March 10th 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

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

Just turn up!

All Welcome.

United Arab Emirates

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 26th February 2018 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, 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?

Screening of 'The Workers Cup'

There will be a special screening of "The Workers Cup" on the 27th February at 6.30pm at the Salford University, B4 Orange Tower, Salford Quays. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion about the film. The film gives an insight into the labour camps of Qatar, African and Asian migrant workers building the facilities of the 2022 World Cup compete in a football tournament of their own: The Workers Cup. With unprecedented access, this film unfolds largely inside a Qatari labor camp that the migrant workers compare to a prison.

The event is for free. Please sign up here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/special-film-screening-the-workers-cup-followed-by-a-panel-qa-tickets-42199497834?invite=&err=29&referrer=&discount=&affiliate=&eventpassword>

Crisis and Tactical

CHEMICAL WEAPONS ATTACK ON SARAQEB

In a press release issued on 6th February, Amnesty highlights that testimony gathered strongly points to the use of chlorine gas by the Syrian government in an attack on the town of Saraqeb

on 4th February. The attack resulted in 11 people needing emergency treatment.

According to eyewitnesses from Syria Civil Defence (the White Helmets), barrel bombs with chlorine gas were dropped by a helicopter. The attack caused casualties, who included 3 members of the White Helmets, to gasp for air, suffer severe irritation to their skin and eyes, vomit and collapse.

Lynn Malouf, Amnesty International's Middle East research director stated: 'Once again, Syria's government has shown its utter contempt for international law by developing chemical weapons. Direct attacks on civilians are absolutely prohibited and are war crimes. The fact that the government feels free to flagrantly carry out such attacks using internationally-banned chemical weapons reflects the complete impunity enjoyed by those who order war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria'.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/syria-witness-testimony-reveals-details-chemical-weapons-attack-saraqeb>

'Showtime from the Frontline'

Mark Thomas' new show: "Showtime from the Frontline", is touring the UK from February to April and will be at the Lowry on the 13th and 14th of March.. Alongside Palestinian actors from the Freedom Theatre, Faisal Shehada and Alaa Abuelhaja, Mark will tell the story of how he set up the Jenin Comedy Club in Palestine.

Tickets can be purchased here:

<https://www.thelowry.com/events/mark-thomas>

Silenced Voices Exhibition

The Stockport group are working with Stockport for Peace and Rebuild Rethink to hold the Silenced Voices exhibition at Stockport Quaker Meeting House on Friday 16th March. They plan to have the exhibition during the day and a speaker with discussion lead by Dr Haytham Alhamwi.

We have already been involved in putting on this hard hitting exhibition in conjunction with Rethink Rebuild in Manchester. However, if you missed it then, it is definitely worthwhile making the effort to catch it this time round

Women's Rights

There is an ongoing anti-harrassment protest organised by The Abortion Rights Campaign Manchester going on in response to an anti-choice group staging a 40 day 'vigil for life' outside the Fallowfield Marie Stopes Abortion Clinic from the 14th of February to the 25th of March

Mary Gibbs has already attended this peaceful show of solidarity with those entering the clinic and reports that it appears to be being helpful. If you are interested in going along contact Mary for more details (gibbs.mary@gmail.com)

Children's network

Palestine

On 15 December, Ahed Tamimi and her family were protesting Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In a horrifying turn of events, Ahed's 14-year-old cousin, Mohammed, was shot in the head at close range by an Israeli soldier.



On the same day, Ahdad also came face to face with Israeli soldiers, when they entered the yard of her family's house. A video, which has since gone viral, shows the unarmed teenage girl slapping, shoving and kicking two armed Israeli soldiers who are wearing protective gear. It was clear she posed no actual threat to them – as they lightly swatted her advances away.

Ahdad and her mother, Nariman, were arrested by Israeli soldiers and she faces up to 10 years in prison, if convicted of any of her

alleged crimes. This punishment is blatantly disproportionate to her actions. Ahdad, who has just turned 17, already spent a birthday in prison.

Her trial is imminent – we must act quickly.
If you haven't already taken action sign the on-line petition NOW

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/urgent-release-palestinian-teen-activist-ahed-tamimi?utm_campaign=MEMA1595_CHRN_FEB2018_Newsletter&utm_source=Email&utm_medium=Networks

Northern Africa, East Asia (inc Myanmar) No updates received this month.

Group News

Past meetings/events

January Group Meeting

We were delighted to welcome Kate Allen, Director of the UK section of Amnesty International to our January meeting. It was great to see good turn out and both new and old faces in the audience.

She started off by telling us about her recent trip to the Bangladesh/Myanmar border where Amnesty is talking to Rohingya refugees to find out what they really want. The upshot appears to be that most would like to go back to their homes but only with full citizenship rights.

She also talked about the plight of the AI staff in Turkey and how she would be at the court hearing the following week (which saw Taner Kılıç freed and then immediately rearrested). AIUK has been in contact with the UK government on this issue at the highest level and has received considerable support.

She gave us a resumé of the current priority campaigns, including the need to mobilise MPs for a private members bill (see Refugee campaign) and the forthcoming Suffragette Spirit initiative (see BRAVE campaign).

She reported back on 'the impact of the movement' initiative which is an ongoing consultation of how to improve our impact – an initial report is imminent. It is estimated that some 673,000 people are currently involved in Amnesty's work in the UK in some way and she emphasised the role of local groups in being Amnesty's public presence and told us that a survey has shown that people trust the local media more than the national media.

After a lively Q&A session Kate left as she was heading further north to the Isle of Lewis group (via Glasgow).

Darwin Day Event Stall

We ran a stall featuring the BRAVE campaign at the Darwin Day event on February 12th at Manchester Conference Centre. The exhibition seemed busier than last year and we managed to get 206 appeal cards signed for the 4 key human rights defenders featured in this campaign. Thanks to Steve and Anne for their efforts.



Film Screening - 'The White Helmets'



We held a free screening of the Oscar winning documentary 'The White Helmets', a 2016 British short documentary film which follows the daily operations of a group of volunteer rescue workers of the Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets. Some 30 people came along to watch the very moving film and to join in a discussion over Skype with Orlando von Einsiedel, the film Director and Khaled Khatib, a member of the White Helmets.

Everyone at the event was really engaged in the



discussion after the screening. Both Orlando and Khaled highlighted the importance of carrying on speaking about Syria and giving people access to information about Syria. We will carry doing our bit to allow this to happen.

Many thanks to Simona and our friends in Rethink Rebuild for getting this together.

Party for Palestine

On 11th February we took part to the event 'Party for Palestine' organised by Jane from City of Sanctuary. We celebrated Palestinian culture with great food, music and dance. A woman who recently completed her programme with EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) gave her testimony of the daily abuse of human rights Palestinian people are subjected to. These abuses make their every-day tasks, like going to school or work or access to clean water, a struggle.

We are planning a few events connected to Amnesty's campaign on Palestine. Keep an eye on our newsletter, Facebook page and website.

Local Groups Planning Pack

We have received this year's planning pack with details of all the ways that we can get involved in Amnesty campaigning – you should find it attached with this newsletter.



The menu includes the following:

- BRAVE campaign for human rights defenders,
- I WELCOME Refugee campaign
- Human Rights in the UK, including the possible effect of BREXIT on our rights
- Individuals at Risk, including Write for Rights in the run up to Christmas.
- Crisis and Tactical covering such countries as Syria, Myanmar and Israel/Palestine.
- World Regional Campaigning – we currently work on North Africa, the Middle East (mainly UAE) and SouthEast Asia.
- Thematic networks e.g. LGBTI, Children's and Women's

We cannot possibly do everything and it could be said that we have spread ourselves rather too thinly in recent years. We need to decide which campaigns really fire the imagination of our members and which they want to be actively involved in.

To help with sorting our priorities, Mary McBride will be leading a workshop at our next group meeting. Come along and tell us what you really want to do!

Group Officers

We will have our group AGM in March and one of the tasks will be to elect new officers and campaign leads for the group. The discussion at the February meeting should inform which areas of campaigning we will need leads for. However, we are definitely in need of a group chair person and a media lead.

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.

The media role would be to take a lead in promoting our activities via contact with the local media, e.g. via press releases, and use of social media. You would get support from our Regional Media Officer and training is available, there being a training day in Manchester scheduled for April 24th. It would be possible to job share this role if we had more than 1 volunteer.

It would be great if you could give some thought to stepping up and getting more involved. If you are interested and want more info do have a chat with the current group officers at the February meeting or contact Anne on manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk.

Volunteers Needed

The first weekend of March will see the 3rd annual Women in Media Conference, held once again at the People's History Museum in the heart of Manchester and the first YouthPolitics Conference at the Manchester Grammar School.

The women in the Media Conference was initially founded by a group of students at Manchester University and has grown enormously in the past couple of years, seeing nationally acclaimed and influential women in the industry share their wisdom and experience.

The YouthPolitics conference is aimed at 6th formers with an interest in politics and current affairs and has attracted some high profile speakers including Andy Burnham, Alistair Campbell and local MPs Kate Green and Afzal Khan.

We have been asked to run stalls promoting our work at both events! Both of these are a marvellous opportunity to talk to up and coming people in the media and public life.

If you can help out for a couple of hours during the day either on 3 or 4th March please email manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk NOW!

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!

February Group Meeting

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

Monday 26th February What Should the Group Do in 2018?

Mary McBride will lead us in a workshop exploring the Local Groups Planning Pack with the aim of finding out what campaigning you all really want to get involved in.

☆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 News

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!

The national conference is a fantastic opportunity 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 have booked 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 1st March!

Radical Readings – Suffer the Little Children

Some of the group might be interested in this event at the Working Class Movement Library, in The Peel Hall at Salford University. This year's show consists of accounts, stories and poems by and about the children who worked in our mines and factories in the 19th century. – Mary tells us that last one was a sell out so get your tickets in advance!

<https://www.wcml.org.uk/whats-on/events/radical-readings-childrens-voices/>