



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

**April 2018**

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

## Group News

### April Group Meeting

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

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> April**

**Human Rights in Turkey – Necmettin Bor  
Feedback from National conference**

★**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!*

### Group AGM

#### Group Officers

During our March meeting, we held our AGM. Over the last year we have not had a formal chairperson for the group but three of us have taken turns to chair the meetings. This has not been ideal, and we are delighted that Hazel Errey has stepped forward. Hazel is a long-term member of Amnesty, having joined Lambeth Amnesty group in the 80s before moving to Manchester in 1990. For the past few years she has led our Individuals at Risk work whilst also acting as our vice chair.



The following were confirmed as group officers:

Officers	
Chair	Hazel Errey
Vice-chair	Mary McBride
Secretary	Anne Walker
Treasurer	Sean Dunne
Members secretary	Jo Hill
	Laura Barsby

In addition, Pascal Checkley will take on the task of raising our media presence and Henrike Greuel will coordinate our contacts with MPs.

#### Campaigning leads

Following on from our decisions earlier this year on which campaigns to actively support, the following have stepped forward (or agreed to continue):

Campaigns	
I WELCOME Refugee Rights	Rebecca Barnes
Crisis and tactical	Simona Mattanza (Syria+)
	Jean Mary (Myanmar)
United Arab Emirates	Henrike Greuel
Europe (primarily Turkey)	Necmettin Bor
Individuals at risk	<b>Volunteer needed!</b>

As Hazel is now chair, we need a volunteer to take on leading our individuals at risk work. This will primarily involve organising the bi-monthly letter writing session and our contribution to Write for Rights in the run up to Christmas. It could also involve keeping an eye on the BRAVE campaign, but we intend that our main work for human rights defenders will be targeted at the UAE.

In addition, we also intend to follow the work of the Women's Rights network (Mary Gibbs), Children's network (Chris Clode) and LGBTI network (Sen Raj) although we don't expect to have the capacity to get heavily involved.

### Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation comes into force in May and we are currently reviewing the way we protect the personal data that we hold as a group. If you receive this newsletter via our email list, we hold your email in a yahoo group which we only use for the group mailings. We do not share the data outside the

group and only those group officers with moderator rights can access it.

If you wish to unsubscribe from group mailings there is a yahoo group function to allow this. If this doesn't work, email [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk).

## National Conference and AGM

The National Conference took place in Swansea over the weekend of the 7/8<sup>th</sup> April. Several of us went down to hear inspirational talks and to discuss the resolutions which will influence AIUK policy over the coming year or so. Here are a few highlights:



Talk by **Salil Shetty**, the retiring AI Secretary General, before he lit the candle to open the conference. He described his 8 years with AI as a roller coaster as so much has happened, both worldwide and within Amnesty. He was particularly proud of the increased engagement with Amnesty in countries outside Europe/North America.

**Ruth Breddal**, chair of AIUK board, and **Kate Allen**, AIUK Director, both gave strong speeches. AIUK aim to grow engagement to 2% of the population of the UK by 2022 which is roughly twice the current level of 776,000.

The **BRAVE panel session** featuring women human rights defenders from Poland, Northern Ireland, UK and AIUK emphasised the importance having the freedom to campaign for better rights, be it on sexual and reproductive rights in Poland and Ireland or freedom to participate in campaigning on social media without being the victim of systematic trolling.

## Pride

We have applied to be in this year's Pride Parade; so put it in your diary now – **Saturday August 25<sup>th</sup>**. We also hope to have a stall at Sparkle in the Park in Sackville Gardens on the **weekend of 6/8<sup>th</sup> July**.

## May Group Meeting

Please note that we have changed the date of our May meeting to **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May** to avoid the May Bank Holiday. Same place and time. Jonathan Cornejo will be coming to speak to us – he is the AIUK staff member who coordinates the Palestine campaign. **Please alter your diaries 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](mailto:Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com)) and he will tell you how to get the money to him. **Thanks!**

# Campaigns

## United Arab Emirates

### AHMED MANSOOR ON TRIAL

On 11 April 2018, prominent human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor appeared before a court in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for his second trial session. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

According to information received by Amnesty international, the trial of prominent human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor began in March and his second trial session took place on 11 April in a court in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. Amnesty International has no information about which court is hearing his case, the exact charges he is facing nor whether he has a defence lawyer.

In response to this, Amnesty have issued an Urgent Action

- Calling on the UAE authorities to release Ahmed Mansoor immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, including through his human rights work;
- Urging them to disclose, pending his release, his exact whereabouts and information about the stage of his trial, and ensure that he is held in an official place of detention and he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment;

- Urging them to ensure he is granted immediate and regular access to a lawyer, his family, and any medical care he may require.

If you are on our mailing list, you should have received the UA with this newsletter – PLEASE TAKE ACTION.

### STOP PRESS

See article in the Guardian on the initiative to name a street in Ahmed's name:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/16/manchester-residents-lobby-to-name-street-after-emirati-activist-ahmed-mansoor>

### Vigil

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** on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018  
at 6.30pm in St Peter's Square.

## 'I Welcome' Refugee Campaign

Refugee Week – event at HOME



For Refugee Week 2018, Manchester Amnesty International has partnered with Ice&Fire to present *This Is Who I Am* at HOME on **Wednesday 20 June 2018** during

Using the verbal testimonies of refugees, *This Is Who I Am* is a reading that focuses on the challenges faced by LGBT people going through the UK asylum process. The performance will be followed by a Q&A.

We'll reveal more details soon, but if you'd like to attend or get involved, please email [rebeccabarnes5@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccabarnes5@gmail.com)

To find out more about Amnesty's work with refugees and join the 'I Welcome' movement visit: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/join-the-movement-to-welcome-refugees/>

## Crisis and Tactical

### PALESTINE

#### Update from the AGM

Simona attended the workshop on Palestine at the AGM and reports that Amnesty feels positive about the current campaign on the call to ban Israeli settlement goods, believing that it has gained momentum.

*More details will be provided by Jonathan Comejo, AIUK's co-ordinator on this campaign at our group meeting in May.*

For this campaign Amnesty is working closely with 'War on Want' (<https://www.waronwant.org/>) and LPHR (Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights - <https://lphr.org.uk/>).

A speaker from War on Want told the workshop that **HSBC** is one of the companies involved in financing the militarization of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Please, find more information through this link and use it to contact HSBC on the issue, even if you are not their customer.

[https://secure.waronwant.org/page/11112/action/1?\\_ga=2.260764554.683579719.1523353438-1614999892.1523353438](https://secure.waronwant.org/page/11112/action/1?_ga=2.260764554.683579719.1523353438-1614999892.1523353438)

15,000 people have already e-mailed HSBC, and, as a result of this action, HSBC asked to meet with War on Want. War on Want did not find the answers provided by HSBC satisfactory and the campaign carries on.



### Action for activist Munther Amira

Last month we reported the news that activist Munther Amira had been arrested for peacefully demonstrating for the release of 16-year old activist Ahd Tamimi. Amnesty has issued an urgent action (see attachment). We will have letters ready to sign at our monthly meeting but please find it attached with this newsletter if you want to take action yourself.

### Silent vigil with Quakers

We are pleased to confirm that a silent vigil will be held alongside the Manchester City Centre Quakers, in connection with the latest Amnesty's campaign 'Ban Israeli Settlement Goods'. The idea is to have some engagement with the public, to explain what the vigil is about and to allow them to sign the petition if they want. However, there will be no slogan chanting.

The vigil will take place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June around lunch time outside the Quakers' building on Mount Street, Manchester.

More details to follow.

Here is the picture taken at our last meeting:



### SYRIA

#### Update from the AGM

At the AGM, the current co-ordinator of the crisis campaign on Syria told Simona that Amnesty are finding the work on Syria very challenging, since there are not many communication channels open. Amnesty is currently focusing on training Syrian human rights defenders hoping that they will succeed in reaching Syrians within Syria.

In her opening speech Kate Allen stated that it is important not to give up. She cited the recent arrest of a Syrian man in Sweden charged with crimes against international law, as an example that justice can prevail. See link below.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/syrian-asylum-seeker-linked-to-mass-execution-is-arrested-in-sweden.html>

## Action-Help Amnesty find Syria's disappeared

If you have not already done so, please sign Amnesty's petition calling on Russia and the United States to push the Syrian government and armed groups to disclose the whereabouts and fate of their loved ones. This would mean the world for their families!



<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/help-us-find-the-disappeared-in-syria/>

Amnesty estimates that since the beginning of the conflict 75,000 people have vanished. More than 15,000 of these have died in custody due to torture and ill treatment. The Syrian government uses enforced disappearances to spread fear and as punishment for the civil revolution.

## Burma

Here is a message that Jean Mary has received from Burma Campaign UK. It isn't an Amnesty action but maybe it is something that you would like to do next weekend.

*'There are more than 100 political prisoners in Burma's jails.*

*Burma is still a country where you can go to jail just for saying something the government or military don't like.*

*But unlike in the past, in Burma, and internationally, very few people are doing anything to get political prisoners released. We have to change that and we need your help.*

*U Win Tin was one of Burma's longest serving political prisoners, describing his time in jail from 1989 until 2008 as living in hell. On his release he refused to hand over his blue prison shirt, and pledged to wear a blue shirt every day until all political prisoners were released. He carried on wearing a blue shirt until his death on 21st April 2014.*

**Saturday 21st April** is the fourth anniversary of the death of U Win Tin, and Burma Campaign UK is joining forces with human rights campaigners in Burma and internationally to raise awareness of political prisoners still in Burma's jails, and to put pressure on the Burmese government to release them.

We are asking people to wear blue, as U Win Tin did, on the anniversary of his death. Put this in your diary now: **"wear blue for Burma's political prisoners"**.

On the day, help spread the word by posting a picture of yourself on Facebook, Twitter etc using the hashtag **#blueshirt4burma**. Or on Instagram: **@blueshirt4burma**.

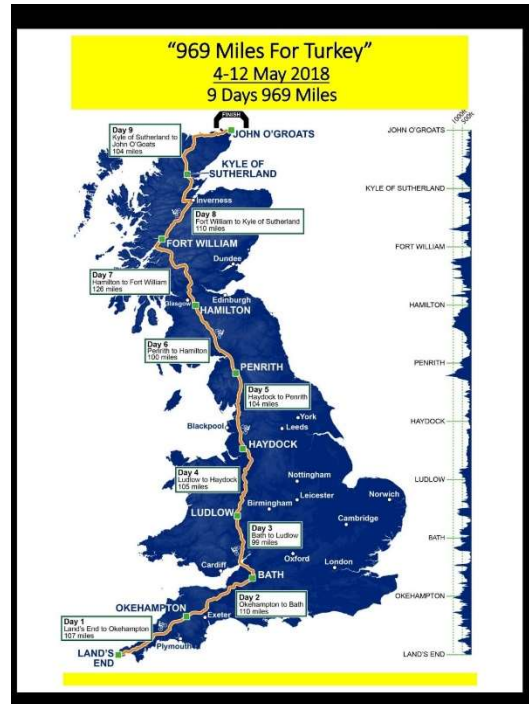
One political prisoner is one too many. With your help, we can free them.'

## Turkey

Ziya Kocabiyik, a member of the Chelmsford Amnesty Group, is cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats between 4th and 12th May 2018 (969 miles-1560km) to increase awareness for human rights violations in Turkey and raise funds for Amnesty.

Ziya came to the UK in 2003 and hasn't been able to return home since 2016 due to his human rights activism and being an ex-director of the UK branch of a newspaper closed by the current regime. He is very concerned by the current human rights situation in Turkey and, with inspiration from Mark Beaumont's Round the World cycle trip, he dreamt up his own long-distance cycle trip. On the way he will be meeting up with local people and Amnesty group members to share his story and what is happening in Turkey.

If you would like to contribute to Ziya's fund, go to <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Cycling969MilesforTurkey>



## Individuals at Risk

### Coordinator needed

With Hazel taking on the role of group chair, we need a new lead for our Individuals at Risk work. This mainly involves sorting out the bi-monthly letter writing session and leading a subgroup to plan our involvement in Write for Rights (November/December).

If you are interested, please email

[manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk).

## Next Letter Writing Drop In

**Saturday May 12th 2-4pm**  
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

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

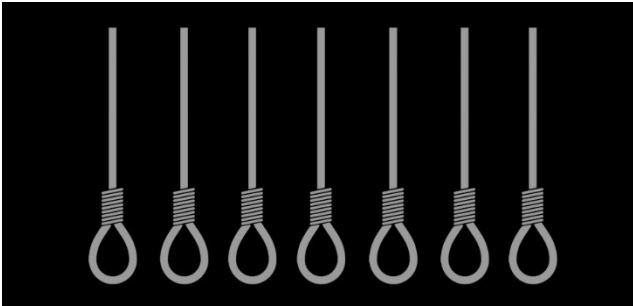
**All Welcome.**

**Women's Rights, Children's network** No updates this month

## Other News

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### Death Penalty Report



In a time when hope can seem thin on the ground, Amnesty welcomes the latest findings that there has been an overall worldwide drop in the use of the death penalty

The new report, *Death Sentences and Executions 2017*, reveals that the number of executions declined by 4% compared to 2016 and the number of death sentences fell by 17%. However, more than 21,000 people remain on death row around the world and several countries resumed executions.

It's all covered in the report, find out more now:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/new-report-global-executions-and-death-sentences-drop>

### Story telling group organised by Amnesty Liverpool

This year the Liverpool group won the "Marsh award" from Amnesty UK for their organized story telling groups.

Do you want to listen? Or do you have a story to tell, poem to recite, or song to sing? Then feel free to go along.

If you have any questions, or if you would like to book a slot then send an email to [amnestyuk.liverpool@gmail.com](mailto:amnestyuk.liverpool@gmail.com).

*There is no set fee however a donation of £2 or more to Amnesty on the night would be appreciated.*

N.B. If you wish to subscribe to or unsubscribe from this newsletter and other general group emails from the Manchester Group of Amnesty International, please email [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk)