



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2018

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Recent events

Secret Gig

With Sofar Sounds and Help Refugees

At the end of Refugee Week 2018, we teamed up with Help Refugees and Sofar Sounds – a global movement which brings the magic back to live music by hosting gigs in intimate spaces around the world – to host a very special, secret gig.

Our gig took place at Niamos in the Hulme district of Manchester and featured a range of artists including Munta Valdo – Sawa Blues, Rihab Azar and My Name is B. £55 worth of donations were received for Amnesty and a clothes collection was held.

Many thanks to Rebecca and Leanne for getting this together.



Sparkle in the Park

We had a stall at Sparkle in the Park over the weekend of 7/8th, an event to celebrate the trans community.



We got 94 cards signed on behalf of Kupila Sakris in Finland and 101 signatures on a petition for Alejandra in Brazil and we raised the profile of Amnesty's work.

Many thanks to all who helped.



Trump Visit

A group of us, along with a couple from the Fylde Coast group, took part in the Manchester Against Trump demo on Friday 13th. Our three Statues of Liberty stood together against hate.

We took part because Amnesty has many human rights concerns regarding the current presidency. Among other things in the past 18 months, Amnesty has strongly criticised President Trump's administration over separating child migrants from their parents; the withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council and the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change; the appointment of Gina Haspel as director of the CIA; plans to consider using nuclear weapons in response to a cyber-attack in the USA and to allow the imposition of death sentences in drugs cases; a failure to introduce wide-ranging new gun-control laws; the ending of "Temporary Protected Status" for over 250,000 people from El Salvador; the decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; its insistence on pushing ahead with a revised multi-country travel ban; an executive order affecting the Mexico-USA border which allows for the forcible return of people to life-threatening situations; the reinstatement and expansion of a "global gag rule" affecting funding for international women's health programmes; its continued sale of military equipment to countries with poor human rights records; and the decision to continue the construction of the Dakota pipeline despite environmental and cultural concerns.



Coming events

Group Meeting

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

Monday 23rd July

**Exploring how to make best use of your MP
Updates on our current campaigns**

MadLab/Plant Noma

Dantzig Street, M60 0AE

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW VENUE – JUST BEHIND THE PRINTWORKS

Some of us will meet at Trof about 6pm to get a bite to eat before the meeting – you are welcome to join us

THE MANCHESTER PRIDE PARADE 25 August 2018

We will again have a walking float in the Pride Parade through Manchester City Centre. This is such a brilliant opportunity to be seen by many thousands and get our message across. It is also great fun for all involved.

The theme this year is 'A circus of acceptance' which gives us lots of room to be creative. If you have any circus skills or costumes – we want to hear from you! If you want to get involved in planning – we have an evening meeting on 24th July, get in touch and I'll send you details (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com).

We will need to congregate in Castlefield towards the end of Saturday morning with the parade starting about 1 pm. It usually takes about 1 – 1 1/2 hours to walk to route finishing near Piccadilly. The crowd lines the whole of the route several deep all the way along and are always very supportive. Please consider taking part and bringing along your friends and family as well!

We need as many people in the parade as possible!
Email sen.raj@amnesty.co.uk to volunteer.

Street Collection

We have our annual collection in Manchester City centre on Saturday September 29th. This is a major fundraiser for us and the more people we get out on the street with our tins the more money we will make.

We will be asking our supporters to do 2 hour shifts throughout the day – using our base in St Ann's church as the meeting point.



Please put the date in your diary
Sign up at the group meeting or email Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com.

Campaigns

United Arab Emirates

MEETING WITH THE UAE COUNTRY COORDINATOR

Oscar Jenz, the Country Coordinator for the UAE, is coming up to meet us. We hope to hear his plans for campaigning on the UAE throughout the UK and to discuss with him how we can be effective in Manchester and make use of the links that the city has with this country. Unfortunately, Oscar can't get up to Manchester for our group meetings due to his work commitments (he volunteers for Amnesty in his spare time) so we have arranged a special meeting at the weekend.

We will be meeting Oscar in the café in Central Library in the city centre **on Saturday 28th July from 2pm**. If you want to get involved in helping us plan please come along.

LETTER WRITING

Last month, members of the group were asked to take action on behalf of human rights activist and blogger, Ahmed Mansoor, recently sentenced to 10 years in prison in the UAE. If you took action, please can you email our secretary at anne.walker9@ntlworld.com so we can assess how many appeals were sent.

We are setting up a letter writing rota to ensure that letters are regularly sent from Manchester to the UAE authorities, both on behalf of Ahmed Mansoor and the human rights lawyer Mohamed al-Roken.

If you want to be on the rota, please email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com indicating how often you would like to write. This is likely to be a long-term endeavour so please be realistic in what you offer to do. Anne will then send you a reminder with letter writing details when your turn comes up.

*Please volunteer
to write regular letter to the UAE authorities.*

Crisis and Tactical

MYANMAR

APARTHEID against the Rohingya

On 4th July Amnesty delivered an oral statement during a dialogue with the High Commissioner of Human Rights on the situation of Rohingya people.

In their statement Amnesty stated that research shows that all crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya (killings, rapes, burning of villages) were part of a 'tightly controlled operation, involving members of the military and Border Guard Police at all levels'.

Amnesty has also declared that the 'systematic denial of (the Rohingya's) rights to equality, to a nationality, to freedom of movement, and access to adequate healthcare, education and work opportunities' is a 'dehumanising regime of discrimination and segregation which legally constitutes apartheid, a crime against humanity under international law'.



Donation from Japanese brewer Kirin must be investigated

In late 2017 the Myanmar subsidiary of the multinational brewing giant Kirin made payments to Myanmar's military and authorities. Kirin Holdings Company Inc., with headquarters in Japan, confirmed that three donations were made between Sep and Oct 2017, totalling USD\$ 30,000. Kirin stated that the money was intended to help the Rohingyas, victims of violence.

However, during a televised ceremony, Min Aung Hlaing, Senior General of the Myanmar army, stated that the money would go towards "security personnel and state service personnel".

Seema Joshi, Amnesty's head of Business and Human Rights, said "It beggars belief that any international investor would make donations to Myanmar's military at a time when those very forces were carrying out ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya population in northern Rakhine State". She also added: "Japan has a responsibility to ensure that its companies do not contribute to human right abuses, regardless of where they operate. The Japanese authorities should urgently investigate these questionable gifts".

KIRIN

Along with its own brand, Kirin owns the Lion beverage company in Australia and New Zealand and has a 48.6% stake in San Miguel, of the Philippines.

PALESTINE - FREE AHED TAMIMI

17-year old Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi was arrested in Dec 17 for protesting, along with her family, against Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel capital. During the protest her 14-year old cousin was seriously injured on his head by a rubber bullet. Ahed was upset by this and slapped and kicked two armed soldiers. Despite being unarmed and only a child, she was accused of aggravated assault and 11 other charges and condemned to 8 months in prison. Amnesty International states that these charges are excessive.



Currently there are about 350 Palestinian children held in prison in Israel.

*We have previously taken action for Ahed.
Amnesty is asking us to take action again.
Please, do so:*

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/urgent-release-palestinian-teen-activist-ahed-tamimi>

SYRIA

DARAA -Attacks on hospitals carry on undisturbed

Throughout June 18 the Syrian government, supported by Russia, have escalated attacks on densely-populated villages in the southern area of Daraa, to oust rebel groups. Indiscriminate shelling and air strikes have targeted hospitals, in particular. Amnesty International has urged the Jordanian government to open its borders to people seeking refuge, giving priority to the sick and injured.

On Sat 30th June and Sun 1st July Daraa's residents pleaded with the international community for protection, after the attacks escalated following failed negotiation attempts between the Syrian government and the armed groups.

Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International Middle East Research Director, stated that people fleeing the area are "living in makeshift tents in the searing heat with insufficient food, water or medical care, and with the constant fear of being exposed to attacks at any given point. Jordan's border is their only gateway to safety.....It is not too late to save lives".

RAQQA: 'War of annihilation'

In June 18 Amnesty issued a report called ['War of annihilation': Devastating Toll on Civilians, Raqqa – Syria](#), concerning the US-led coalition operation to oust IS from Raqqa, carried between June and October 2017. The report states that the operation killed and injured thousands of civilians. Homes, public buildings and infrastructure were destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

US, British and French coalition forces carried out tens of thousands of air strikes during this operation. US forces were responsible for more than 90% of these. A senior US military official said that more artillery shells were launched into Raqqa than anywhere since the Viet Nam war. Artillery shells have a margin of error of over 100 metres. The result was therefore mass civilian casualties. The coalition's claims that its precision air campaign caused very few civilian casualties do not stand up to scrutiny. These disproportionate or indiscriminate attacks are potentially violation of international humanitarian law and war crimes.

Residents were trapped as fighting raged between IS militants and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters, supported by the coalition's relentless air and artillery strikes. IS mined the escape routes and shot at civilians trying to flee. Hundreds of civilians were killed: some in their homes; some in the very places where they had sought refuge; and others as they tried to flee.

For their research Amnesty International visited 42 Coalition air strike sites across Raqqa and interviewed 112 civilian survivors. This was followed by a written request to defence officials in the USA, UK and France for additional information about these attacks, including coalition tactics, specific means and methods of attack, choice of targets, and precautions taken in planning and execution of attacks.

Amnesty International is urging coalition members to investigate impartially civilian casualties and to publicly acknowledge the

scale and gravity of the loss of civilian lives and destruction of civilian property in Raqqa.

Please, take action! Send a message to the UK Defence Secretary and demand justice for Syrians affected:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/demand-justice-syrians-killed-us-led-coalition>



Unexploded MK 82 bomb, dropped by the Coalition, in a street in the centre of Raqqa. Months after the recapture of Raqqa unexploded munitions still littered Raqqa, in places where they posed a threat to civilians and where they could have easily been removed



Hussein injured by mines laid by IS as his family was trying to flee Raqqa in August 2017. Hussein's parents and five relatives were killed in the explosion and Hussein lost his left foot.

Individuals at Risk

Letter Writing

We held our regular bi-monthly letter writing session at The Eighth Day Café on Oxford Rd on Saturday July 14th. There were only 3 of us there this time but we managed to write 11 letters – including the Urgent Action for Ahmed Mansoor and cases in Egypt, India, Iran, Israel & the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Next Letter Writing Drop In

Saturday 8th September 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

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

Just turn up!

Children's network, Refugee Rights, Women's Rights, Europe/Turkey No updates this month

Other News

The Great Amnesty Quiz Night

Here is a message from the Regional Reps - does anyone fancy getting this off the ground?

'Announcing the Great Amnesty Quiz Night 2019! A new initiative from your Regional Reps team, we are inviting all groups to organise a quiz night in a community centre, cafe, pub or other venue in the first week of February 2019 (2nd - 10th Feb). Save the date for now and we will send out more details and a guide to organising a quiz night in the coming months. All groups who register their event will receive a set of questions to use at your quiz. We hope as many local and student groups as possible will get involved to create a real sense of Amnesty solidarity and fun around the country.'

Street Fundraisers and Local Groups

Street fundraisers are a vital part of Amnesty International UK's fundraising plans but can sometimes be of concern to local groups. Here is an article from the monthly group mailing addressing some of the issues that local groups have raised.

'All the fundraisers we use are recruited and trained in-house and they're some of the most passionate and knowledgeable Amnesty International UK staff we have. Thanks to them, we're able to grow the number of financial supporters we have each year and secure the financial future of Amnesty International UK.'

Some local groups have expressed concerns that street fundraisers are often operating areas where they are based

without being aware of the local group. This creates confusion and misses an opportunity to promote the work local groups do in their communities. We are exploring ways in which we could do this.

We have also had groups ask us to contact them in advance to tell them when street fundraisers are going to be working in the areas they cover. This is difficult because we often don't know where our teams will be operating until 10am of the morning they're working. We have up to twenty teams operating every day, so it's not practical to keep groups updated. Also, it's likely the notice we give to groups would be short and in many cases the information wouldn't be disseminated to group members until after the street fundraisers have moved on.

Some groups have asked for street fundraisers to distribute group materials or info. on group activities. This, too, is hard to do because of the strict rules governing exactly who can work as a street fundraiser and what they can do.

*We think the best solution is to brief our street fundraising teams on the work of local groups generally and have them direct them interested people to Amnesty International UK website where we will post contact info. on groups and how to get in touch with them. This could be accessed using the local groups finder on the groups section of the Amnesty website:
www.amnesty.org.uk/groups.*

If any groups have other suggestions on ways we can best equip street fundraisers to inform the public of the work of local groups, please let us know.'

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