



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

April 2019

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigning

UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

New Coordinator

Lil Ratcliffe is taking over as our coordinator for this work for human rights defenders Mohammed al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor, both of whom are currently in prison in the UAE and are considered prisoners of conscience. We feel that this work is of particular importance in Manchester given Manchester City's and the City council's close links with the country.

We will be discussing this work regularly in our group meetings, but it would be great if we could get a group together to support Lil. If you are interested in giving Lil a hand, please email her at lilratcliffe@yahoo.com.

Letter Writing Rota

We are continuing our letter-writing rota with at least 50 appeals being sent to the UAE authorities since we started. If you would like to take part in this action please email Anne (anne.walker9@yahoo.co.uk) and she will add your name to the rota.

People's History Museum event

Ahmed Mansoor is a well known poet and blogger in the UAE so we have been looking at ways that we could link this is with our campaigning. We plan a spoken word/poetry event as part of the PHM's commemoration of the Peterloo Massacre, 'The Past, Present & Future of Protest'. We will be liaising with Young Identity (a spoken word collective for young people in Manchester)

We are delighted to announce that we have been successful in our application for a Marsh Award and will be receiving a grant for £500 to go towards funding our planned event at the People's History Museum. If you want to get involved in planning this event, email hazelerrey@yahoo.com.



Crisis and Tactical

PALESTINE

Think Twice!

In March, Amnesty sent a new report called 'Think Twice' to all companies in the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250 Index, as well as to leading corporate law firms, the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors and the Association of British Insurers.

The report warns companies that they will be involved in human rights violations - including war crimes - if they do business in or with the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, all companies have a responsibility to respect international humanitarian and human rights law, wherever they operate in the world. Israel's settlements breach the Geneva Conventions and amount to war crimes.

Peter Frankental, Amnesty International UK's Economic Affairs Programme Director, stated:

"... if you're a company operating in or doing business with the settlements, then you're involved in systematic injustice, discrimination and other human rights violations perpetrated by the state of Israel against Palestinians."

The Think Twice report comes ahead of the long-awaited publication of a UN database listing companies known to be operating in the settlements.

You can download the report at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/thinktwice>





Check Out!

Earlier this year Amnesty launched a campaign asking **TRIPADVISOR** to check out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Along with Airbnb, Expedia and Booking.com, TripAdvisor is profiting from tourist amenities.

Please, sign the petition:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/checkout>

(P.S. TripAdvisor is currently under pressure, since it has been accused of not dealing properly with an alleged case of rape. The victim states that when she reported to TripAdvisor having been abused by a tour guide whose business is promoted on their website, TripAdvisor dismissed her. She started a petition through Change.org, which has gained a lot of media attention.)

SYRIA

Syrian Government Attacks Civilians

Throughout March 19 the Syrian government, abetted by Russia, has carried out several attacks on civilian facilities.

According to witnesses interviewed by Amnesty, attacks have escalated in the past few weeks, causing the death of civilians, the destruction of civilian buildings and the displacement of the population from towns to farming fields and close to the border with Turkey.

In the areas of Saraqeb, Khan Sheikhoun, Talmans and Sheikh Idriss in Idlib, aerial and artillery attacks struck hospitals, a blood bank, an ambulance response unit, a Syrian Civil Defense (or White Helmets) unit, bakeries, medical clinics and a school.

Amnesty's Digital Verification Corps was able to corroborate many of the witness accounts by video analysis, verified open source information, social media photos and videos.



Map of areas under attack

Lynn Maalouf, Middle East Research Director at Amnesty International, said:

“Eight years into the crisis, the Syrian government continues to show utter disregard for the laws of war and the lives of civilians. Deliberate attacks on civilians and on civilian objects, including

hospitals and other medical facilities, and indiscriminate attacks that kill or injure civilians are war crimes.”

Russia and Turkey, as the key backers of the parties to the conflict, should heed the warning of the UN and ensure that the imminent offensive on Idlib prioritises the protection of civilians and does not exacerbate the humanitarian crisis. Turkey should open its borders to civilians wishing to flee and to humanitarian organisations providing impartial relief to civilians in need of assistance in parts of Syria under Turkey's control.”

Talk on Syria

During our monthly meeting on 13th May at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester M2 1NL

SYRIA: 8 YEARS ON

Come to our May meeting and find out what the current situation in Syria is and what can the future be for this war-torn country. We will also hear about what Amnesty has been doing to defend human rights in Syria.

We are planning to have a speaker from Rethink Rebuild, an organisation for Syrian refugees in Manchester, and from Amnesty International, London.

YEMEN

UK: Stop Arming Saudi Arabia

The conflict in Yemen started in 2015, following on from the ‘Arab Spring’, when rebel Houthis tried to topple the Yemeni Government. Since the beginning of this conflict, Saudi Arabia has led a coalition in support of the Yemeni Government to try and restore its power.

As explained by Ahmed and Ameen at our group meeting in February, Saudi Arabia has a political interest in maintaining the Yemeni Government in power and its indirect control over the country.

Since the beginning of the conflict the UK has sold 600M GBP worth of military equipment and 5M GBP of arms to the Saudi-led coalition. This has contributed to:

- Bombardment of hospitals, schools and civilian buildings causing a high number of civilian deaths;
- Starvation at unprecedented levels due to the inability of civilians to procure food safely (the UN estimates 14 million people have been affected) ;
- Arms ending up in the hands of militias, which are not accountable to any government;
- Rape as weapon of war. Amnesty has reported allegation of rape of children at the hands of militias and called for investigation into the matter.

Amnesty is calling for the UK to stop arming Saudi Arabia.

Please, sign the petition:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/uk-must-stop-arming-saudi-arabia>



Five Opposition Parties Call for an End of Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia

On 25th March the Guardian published an article stating that the leaders of 5 opposition parties have written a joint letter to the UK's foreign secretary, Jeremy Hunt, calling on the UK to end arms sales to [Saudi Arabia](#).



The letter signed by the Labour party, Scottish National party, Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and the Green party states that "it is morally reprehensible that the UK government is not only not considering changing its policy, but is actively lobbying other foreign governments, as it did with Germany, to resume arms sales to Saudi".

The authors also call for an independent investigation into Saudi conduct in the war.

See link to article:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/25/five-opposition-parties-call-on-uk-to-end-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia>

Two of our members have received a response from their MPs to the letter we sent to them calling on the UK government to stop arming Saudi Arabia. Let us keep the pressure up!

Send your MP a letter (see sample attached)

Refugee I Welcome

City of Sanctuary

Manchester City of Sanctuary's Quarterly event takes place on April 28th at Manchester Museum 1pm-3pm. It's an event where British Supporters and refugees and asylum seekers come together for a meal and to socialise. All welcome. We would like to have an Amnesty stall there – volunteers to man it to our new Refugee Campaign coordinator Liz at lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk. She can't be on the stall herself as she will actually be working at the event.

Refugee Week 17 - 23 June 2019

Refugee Week is on 17-23 June! Each year Amnesty Groups come together to celebrate the continued contribution that refugees make to the UK. The theme for 2019 is 'You, Me And Those Who Came Before', focusing on the story of generations. We need to give some thought to how we will take part this year. If you have any contacts with events happening around Manchester that we can be involved in, please email lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk.

Human Rights in the UK

CELEBRATING OUR HUMAN RIGHTS

Tuesday April 30th

7-10pm at St.Margaret's Church, Rufford Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8AE.

For the bicentenary of Peterloo, Whalley Range for Peace and Justice present a public meeting to mark the twentieth year of the Human Rights Act. There will be incredible speakers, including some of the ordinary people who have used the Act in their fight for justice.



The Human Rights Act is the unsung hero of UK life, holding powerful people and institutions to account when ordinary people are let down. Come along to learn more about how the Human Rights Act has positively impacted all of our lives and to celebrate our human rights together now.

This event is supported by Amnesty International, British Institute of Human Rights, Equality and Diversity Forum, Liberty, RightsInfo and Stonewall and the Manchester Amnesty Group will have a stall. If you can help, please email anne.walker9@yahoo.co.uk

For tickets (FREE!) see:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/celebrate-our-human-rights-manchester-tickets-56317456027?aff=eac2>

Individuals at risk

Letter Writing Drop-In

We had our regular bi-monthly letter writing drop in session on **Saturday 30th March**. We wrote 27 letters to 8 cases featured in the Real Lives leaflet

**Next session Saturday 25th May
Come along and make a difference!**

If you didn't make it this month but would still like to write a letter or two, you can download the Real Lives case details at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/real-lives-spring-2019>

Women's Rights, Turkey

No update this month.

Group News

Group Officers

We had our AGM last month (see minutes attached) when we agreed a constitution for the group and elected new group officers.

Role	Officer
Chair	Hazel Errey
Vice-chair	Mary McBride
Secretary	Anne Walker
Treasurer	Sean Dunne
Members sec	Lil Ratcliffe
MP coordinator	Mary McBride
Press releases	Pascal Checkley
Twitter	Steve Lindsay
Facebook	Pascal Checkley
Newsletter	Anne Walker
Website	Anne Walker
	Sean Dunne

In addition, we reviewed this year's planning pack and decided to participate as follows:

Campaigns	Comments	Lead
BRAVE campaign	To use material at appropriate events etc, to concentrate most of our HRD work on UAE prisoners of conscience	NA
Crisis and tactical	Important to respond to current world situations	Simona Mattanza
I WELCOME Refugee Rights	Hope to participate in Refugee Week and build contacts in the community.	Liz Hibberd
UAE	To continue our PoC case work	Lil Ratcliffe
Human rights in the UK	To react as a group when required	NA
Individuals at Risk	To continue our bimonthly letter writing plus participate in WfRs	Mary McBride
World Region – Middle East	To opt in so as to support our UAE and Crisis work	Lil Ratcliffe
World Region - Europe (i.e. Turkey)	To continue work on Turkey	Fatih Segman
Children's Rights	Watching brief only	Fatih Segmen
Women's rights	Watching brief only	Mary Gibbs
LGBTI	Watching brief + Pride	Liam Johnston

Thanks to all who volunteered!

The new constitution refers to the AIUK Activism code of conduct – please see attached. Or on the AIUK website at:

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2017-07/AIUK%20activist%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202017%20WEB.pdf?Od1TNXVAju7J_KAZtNYzNQUg_Aq2MSPq=

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!

Next Group Meeting

N.B. Now on 2nd Monday of the month: 7.30 – 9.30pm.

Monday 8th April

Cross Street Chapel

Cross Street M2 1NL - Look for the Amnesty Candle

Talk and discussion on the issue of child soldiers.

Charlotte Cooper is a Peacemaker for Quakers in Britain. In her placement at Child Soldiers International she campaigns against the military recruitment of under 18s in the UK. Charlotte will talk about children, armed conflict and human rights globally, and why the UK's minimum recruitment age of 16 is a problem

We will also be discussing some of the national AGM resolutions so that our delegates vote how we want them to and we will be doing some planning for our UAE campaigning, our Didsbury Festival stall (June 8th) and Refugee week (June 17-23rd).

Some of us will meet at Sandinista on Old Bank Street off St Ann's Square about 6pm to get a bite to eat before the meeting – all welcome!

Other News

AIUK Annual General Meeting and National Conference

Weekend of 13-14th April

Several of us are booked to go down to Nottingham for what promises to be an exciting weekend. We are particularly looking forward to hearing from our new Secretary-General, Kuma Naidoo.

There are fewer resolutions this year, but several could lead to intense discussion – in particular there are resolutions asking for an increased focus on prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders and on the right of peoples to self-determination. We will briefly discuss these at our April meeting so that our delegates have guidance as to how to cast the group votes.

Email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com if you are going down and want to car share.

Radical Readings fundraiser: Those who were there - the people at Peterloo have their say

Event location: Maxwell Hall, University of Salford

Date: 14th Apr 2019

Event time: 14:00 to 16:00

The Working Class Movement Library is proud to present another in its series of Radical Readings fundraising events. Actors Christopher Eccleston, Carla Henry, Mike Joyce, Nico Mirallegro, Maxine Peake and James Quinn are booked to appear in an afternoon of prose, poetry and song. This event aims to give context, and pause for reflection, in the run-up to the commemorations this summer of the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre, when armed cavalymen and soldiers attacked a large peaceful crowd in Manchester.

<https://wcml.org.uk/whats-on/events/radical-readings-fundraiser-those-who-were-there-the-people-at-peterloo-have-their-say/>

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