



## MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2019

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc



# Pride Parade

## Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August



*Please join us (again!) at Manchester Pride this year. We will be marching in solidarity with LGBTI people both here and abroad who face abuse, harassment, and discrimination because of who they are or who they love.*

The parade will begin at Liverpool Road and finish at Fairfield Street. Assuming that the timing is the same as last year, we will need to convene about 11.00am at the Roman Fort area off Liverpool road, Castlefield and the parade will start at midday.

It is free to participate in our walking float. All the people who march with us will be provided with a 'Love Is A Human Right' or 'Am Who I Say I Am' Amnesty t-shirt. We will have badges, flags, and stickers to give out to the crowds

If you would like to register, please email Sen Raj ([sen.raj@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sen.raj@amnesty.org.uk)) with your name (including the names of anyone joining you) and telephone number. We are limited to 50 participants, so please get in quick.

This year the theme is *Deep Space Pride: A Future World of Equality* and we are encouraged to fast forward 50, 100 or even 200 years and envisage what the world could be like at this time. We plan to use our giant flying candles (as Amnesty themed rockets!) and will be making banners at our August group meeting. If you have a creative bent and would like to help mastermind our banners and any other props, we would love to hear from you. Please email [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) to discuss ideas. Even if you don't feel arty, we need you at our August meeting to stencil and cut out letters to form our message.

This is a marvellous opportunity to get Amnesty International seen by many thousands of people. It's also great fun to do!

### Get signed up now!

## Campaigning

### UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

We are continuing to raise the plight of Mohammed al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor with local leaders within Manchester, in the belief that the UAE authorities might pay some attention to their appeals, given the UAE's involvement in Manchester. This month Kathryn raised their cases with her MP, Jeff Smith and Anne wrote to Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

We also continue writing to the UAE authorities. If you would like to be on our letter writing rota, please email [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com). This requires you to take some action every 2-3 months or so with anything from a quick Tweet to detailed letters, in the belief that a range of different approaches might help the message get through.

**Poetry Event at People's History Museum:** as part of our UAE work on behalf of Ahmed and Mohammed, we have received a grant of £500 to put on an event at People's History Museum with the Manchester based spoken word collective, Young Identity. The date for the event is Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December (timings TBC but it will be in the evening). Please keep this date free in your diaries so that we can get a big crowd along. If you would like to get involved in a planning sub-group for this event, please email Hazel [hazelerrey@gmail.com](mailto:hazelerrey@gmail.com)

### Refugee I Welcome

We were really pleased to support Manchester City of Sanctuary's quarterly Big Conversation again. Through this more frequent partnership, we get the chance to connect with a wider audience of both refugee and asylum seekers as well as those

living in the Manchester area. This is proving to be a great way to spread the message and importance of reuniting refugee families and as a result we received another 19 signatures for this petition. It is also a genuine way for people to engage with Sanctuary Seekers and learn more about their experiences and challenge the Hostile Environment narrative. As more and more people are drowning as they undertake the perilous journey across the sea, it's important to continue to put pressure on the government to take steps to help families reunite without them having to risk their lives.

'No one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land'  
'Home' by Warsan Shire



Margaret Hibberd after signing the petition Photo: S. Mattanza

## Crisis and Tactical

### MAYNMAR

#### Action for filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi

Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, a prominent filmmaker, has been formally charged after being detained for more than three months in connection with a series of Facebook posts criticizing the Myanmar's military's role in politics. His bail requests have been denied despite concerns for his health. If found guilty and convicted, he faces two years in prison. A second complaint against him – which carries a maximum of two years in prison – remains pending. He is a prisoner of conscience who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

### Take action!

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0779/2019/en/>

### PALESTINE

Q&A on Amnesty's campaigns targeting Airbnb and TripAdvisor



#### Why has Amnesty started these campaigns?

Online booking companies like TripAdvisor, AirBnB, Expedia and Booking.com promote numerous properties and attractions in the

Israeli settlements. Amnesty's [research](#) shows that in doing so they contribute to, and profit from, the maintenance, development and expansion of illegal settlements.

The Israeli government uses the growing tourism industry in the settlements as a way of normalizing and legitimizing their existence and expansion.

#### What are Israeli settlements?

Israeli settlements are areas where Israelis have settled, leading to the evictions of Palestinians already living there. Currently there are about 250 Israeli settlements, which range from tiny villages to large towns.

52 years ago, during the 1967 "Six-Day War" between Israel and its Arab neighbours, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. The West Bank and Gaza areas are known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), over which Israel exercises overall control. The 1967 war and its aftermath forced thousands of Palestinians to flee their land. Many were never allowed to return home and are still [living as refugees](#), mostly in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and other parts of the OPT. Israelis, on the other hand, have settled in these territories since then.

#### What's the problem with Israeli settlements?

Under international law, it is illegal for an occupying power to transfer its own civilians into a territory it occupies or to transfer all or parts of the population of the occupied territory within or outside this territory. In fact, these acts constitute war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as does the unnecessary destruction and appropriation of property in occupied territory.

From the start, Israel ignored these laws and began building settlements in the land it had captured. Successive Israeli governments also have made it their policy to expand settlements, providing subsidies and tax incentives to encourage Jewish Israelis to move there. Most states, as well as the European Union and the United Nations, consider settlements to be illegal.

#### What are the effects of Israeli settlements on Palestinians?



An image of the village Khirbet Susya

One example that summarises this, is the life of Palestinians in the village of Khirbet Susya, which was visited by Amnesty. Palestinian residents have lived in temporary shelters since they were forcibly evicted to make way for the creation of a settlement called Susya in 1983. Since then, the villagers have lost vast swathes of farmland and had to cut back the size of its herds, its

main source of income. The Israeli authorities have blocked water cisterns and wells in Khirbet Susya, and villagers spend about a third of their income paying for water. The Palestinians of Khirbet Susiya also live in fear that their homes or other property could be demolished at any time and face systematic violence and harassment at the hands of Israeli settlers.

In general, in all the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Palestinians are subjected to military law, instead of civil law.

Since 1967 hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been arrested under military orders, many of which during peaceful activities. Hundreds of Palestinians are currently held without charge or trial under what is called administrative detention.

Since 1987, more than 10,200 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army, including during protests against the confiscation of land, often in circumstances which may amount to war crimes. In the same period, more than 1,400 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians. Of these, hundreds have been civilians killed by Palestinian armed groups in attacks that constitute crimes under international law.

Israeli military forces have imposed strict restrictions on travel for Palestinians, determining where they can go to work or school, whether they can visit their relatives, travel abroad or access their farmland.

### Is Amnesty calling for a boycott on Israel?

Amnesty's focus is the growing economy of the illegal settlements, not the Israeli economy. As such, Amnesty is not calling on online travel agencies to stop booking holidays in Israel. Amnesty wants them to stop pumping money into an enterprise which causes terrible suffering to Palestinians and violates international law.

Amnesty believes that action should be taken by companies to avoid contributing to an illegal situation and to human rights violations, and by states in order to uphold their obligation not to recognise and assist an illegal situation.

### Are Amnesty's calls anti-Semitic?

Amnesty International opposes discrimination, racism and hate crime in all forms, whether against people of a specific religion, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, or other protected characteristics, including against Jews or people perceived as Jewish.

The focus of Amnesty's campaign is not motivated by discrimination and it does not focus on individuals. The focus is to stop businesses from operating in or with settlements, given the illegality of settlements under international law and the fact that they cause tremendous harm and suffering to the occupied Palestinian population.

**The above campaigns have now terminated, but there will be more campaigns targeting businesses profiting from the illegal settlements. Keep an eye out for Amnesty's new campaigns.**

### Israel continues policy of home demolitions

In July 19, Israeli forces have carried out the demolition of up to 16 residential buildings in the neighbourhood of Wadi al-Hummus in the village of Sur Baher in the occupied West Bank.

Saleh Higazi, Deputy Middle East and North Africa Director for Amnesty International stated "Israel has attempted to justify these demolitions under the guise of security by claiming the homes are too close to the wall/fence, but this does not stand up to scrutiny. The truth is that for decades Israel's authorities have taken arbitrary and disproportionate measures in the name of security to expand their control over Palestinian land and push Palestinians out of areas they consider strategic, forcibly displacing entire communities and unlawfully destroying tens of thousands of homes.

"Israel must immediately end its cruel and discriminatory policy of home demolitions and forced displacement. ... "Other states have a responsibility to pressure the Israeli authorities to adhere to their duties under international humanitarian law and ensure protection for the occupied Palestinian population."

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) over the past 10 years Israel has demolished more than 1,100 structures in occupied East Jerusalem, displacing more than 2,000 people and impacting the lives of more than 6,000 people.



## YEMEN

### Huthi-run court sentences 30 political opposition figures to death following sham trial

Since the start of the conflict in 2015, all parties, including Huthi forces, the Yemeni government, the Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-led coalition and UAE-backed Yemeni forces have engaged in arbitrary detention practices. In areas under their control, Huthi forces have arbitrarily arrested and detained critics and opponents as well as journalists, human rights defenders and members of the Baha'i community, subjecting scores to unfair trials, incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance.

In May 2018, Amnesty International published a report detailing the cases of 51 men held in a network of secret prisons by UAE and Yemeni forces operating outside the command of Yemen's government.

In July 19, the Sana'a-based Huthi-run Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) trialed thirty academics and political figures with trumped-up charges, including espionage for the Saudi Arabia-led Coalition and sentenced them to death.

According to Amnesty the trial was a flawed legal process and a mockery of justice, which confirms how the judiciary, and the SCC in particular, is turning into a tool of repression, evidently incapable of dispensing impartial justice.

Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Director of Research, stated "Today thirty individuals, and all of their loved

ones, are bracing for what is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and handed down following such flagrantly unfair trials”.

On the same day, [Asmaa al-Omeissy](#), a 23-year-old mother of two, was handed a 15-year prison sentence after being convicted of aiding an enemy state. Amnesty International further calls on the Huthi de facto authorities to quash her conviction and sentence and release her immediately.



An image of the Huthi's SCC

## Take action!

In June 19 the UK Court of Appeal has ruled that the UK arms trade with Saudi Arabia for their use in the war in Yemen is unlawful, on the grounds that the UK Government has not thoroughly ensured that such arms would not be used in a way that would breach International Humanitarian Law.

The UK government has already appealed against the Court's decision. Please, write to your MP asking them to bring a motion in Parliament calling for the withdrawal of this appeal.

You can use the sample letter sent with this newsletter, which you will have to address to your MP and complete with your name, address, date and signature or write a letter in your own words.



## Europe (inc Turkey)

### Urgent Action

Palestinian refugee from Syria, Mohamed Ajlani Younes has been held arbitrarily and in poor conditions since 26 May in the new Istanbul Airport.. The Turkish authorities are not processing his asylum application and he is at imminent risk of deportation to Lebanon, where he is in danger of further removal to Syria. The UA is attached with this newsletter – take action before 19<sup>th</sup> Aug!

### Country coordinator

Helen Clark, the new volunteer country coordinator for Europe, will be coming along to meet us at our September meeting (Monday Sept 9th) and to tell us about Amnesty's current campaigning.

## Individuals at Risk

### Letter Writing Drop-In

We held our regular bi-monthly letter writing session on 27<sup>th</sup> July. Although there was only three people, we managed to get a total of 11 letters written in support of cases in Iran, South Africa, North Korea, Cameroon, Russian Federation as well as 4 letters linked to the Urgent Action in Turkey that is attached with this newsletter.



Our next session will be on:

**Saturday 28th September**  
**2 – 4 pm**  
**Eighth Day Café**  
**Oxford road**

**Come along and make a difference!**

## Women's Rights

### Northern Ireland

There have been two massive wins in one day for the people of Northern Ireland. MPs voted to legalise same-sex marriage and extend access to abortion to Northern Ireland.

The Government will now have to extend marriage equality to Northern Ireland and legislate for abortion by 21 October, unless the devolved government at Stormont is restored – having collapsed in January 2017. This is the result of campaigning by many organisations and individuals.

We need to keep up the pressure to make sure that it happens.

### Iran

Three women have been jailed and charged with prostitution for not wearing a veil.

Shown speaking out against laws forcing women to wear the hijab, a video went viral of their campaign on International Women's Day. Days later, they were arrested.

Since then, Monireh, Yasaman and Mojgan have faced intense interrogation, solitary confinement and abuse.

If you go online, there is an email action:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/iran-women-jailed-viral-video-forced-veiling-hijab-law?from=issue>

and an Urgent Action:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/jailed-protesting-forced-veiling-laws>

# Group News

## Peter Banks 1921-2019

It was with great sadness that we have learnt of the recent death of one of our long-time members, Peter Banks, at the magnificent age of 99. Mary McBride and Anne Walker represented the group at his funeral and Anne said a few words about his involvement in the group as part of the eulogy.



Peter first joined the group in 1975 when he came to Manchester to take up the position of Vice Principal of Elizabeth Gaskell College at the University of Manchester and rapidly became a regular attendee at meetings, taking on the chair of the group from 1977 to 1985.

Over the years he had many other roles, in particular he led our work on behalf of a Yugoslavian prisoner of conscience in the late 80s, he was Myanmar campaign lead in the early 90s and his last efforts were on behalf of a prisoner in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China in the early 2000s. He would be horrified to see what is happening to the Uighurs now.

He was also vice chair for many years, membership secretary and masterminded our annual street collection (all essential roles to keep the group going).

He led our efforts to organise events around Manchester to mark both the 40th and 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1988 and 1998, with an exhibition in Central Library and a very well attended meeting in Manchester Town Hall.

The last event that he attended (with his wife Cynthia) was a human rights walk around Manchester City centre in 2011 to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of Amnesty in 1961, although he didn't manage all of the walk, he helped the Mayor of Manchester light a candle in the Town Hall and we have a picture to prove it.



Those of us who have been around the group for some years have many fond memories of Peter helping out at all sorts of stalls and events. He could always be relied upon to turn up and pull his weight. He was such a gentle polite person but with very definite views on how he wished the world to be and a dry sense of humour. He left a huge hole when he was no longer able to take an active role in the group.

## Group Records Gap

In going through our records to prepare for Peter's funeral. Anne realised that we have a gap in our records. Sean has been able to provide some, but we still have some gaps in the years from 2007 to 2011.

If you have any copies of our newsletters (paper or electronic) from these years, please could let Anne know (either at a group meeting or email [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com)).

## Street Collection

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September, Manchester City Centre**

We will be holding our annual street collection in Manchester in the middle of September. We will go out into the streets in the City Centre to ask the public to donate to Amnesty International. Every year we send any surplus funds, including money raised by the street collection, to Amnesty International UK. Every penny collected helps AIUK to campaign effectively for human rights. It is also a useful occasion to engage with the public and to seek their support.

We are seeking volunteers to come out with us for an hour and a half between the hours of 10 and 4 on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September. This is usually our biggest fundraising event and the more people that we get out on the street, the more money we will collect.

If you would like to volunteer, please email Sean Dunne at [sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com](mailto:sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com) with your preferred time slot (10 to 11.30, 11.30 to 1, 1 to 2.30 or 2.30 to 4), and he will send you full details.

**Volunteer Now!**

## Sparkle

Last month we had a stall at the Sparkle weekend in Sackville Gardens in the centre of Manchester. Described as the world's largest trans celebration, it is organised by the National Transgender Charity.

We collected signatures on petitions on behalf of Marielle Franco and Zac Kostopoulos. Many thanks to Sen and Liam for organising this and to all those who helped out on the stall.



# Next Group Meeting

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

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August**

**Cross Street Chapel**

**Cross Street M2 1NL - Look for the Amnesty Candle.**

## **Preparing for Pride**

Come along and help us get our banners and props ready for the Pride Parade.

We will also catch up with our current campaigns and event planning.

*A few of us will meet up at Sandinista on Old Bank Street for a bite to eat about 6pm before the meeting.  
**All welcome to join us.***

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)