



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

September 2019

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Events coming up this month!

Next Group Meeting

Monday 9th September, 7.30 -9.30 pm, Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street M2 1NL (Look for the Amnesty Candle.)

Helen Clarke, AIUK Europe country coordinator will be talking about the changes we've seen in Human Rights from the inception of Amnesty International to the present day in Western Europe. It will cover some of our recent cases such as immigrants stranded at sea. We will also catch up with our current campaigns and do some event planning, especially for the poetry event at the People's History Museum in December.

N.B. 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.

Street Collection

Saturday 14th September, Manchester City Centre

Volunteer Now!

We will be holding our annual street collection in Manchester on Saturday 14th 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 need your help as the more people we get out on the streets, the more noticeable we become and the more we collect. If you can help for an hour and a half between the hours of 10 and 4 on Saturday 14th PLEASE contact email Sean Dunne at 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.

Protest for Yemen

Sunday 15th September 2019, 12.30-13.30pm, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St., Manchester M2 5NS

There will be a silent protest, together with the Quakers of Manchester, against the UK's Government decision to challenge the UK Court and carry on selling arms to Saudi Arabia, causing a tragic loss of civilian lives in Yemen (see below for more details).

Please support!

Global Climate Strike

Friday 20th September

Climate change affects the right to life, right to health, right to housing and rights to water and sanitation. The process also makes inequality worse. On Friday 20 September there will be a global strike calling for action on climate change, called by Greta Thunberg and other youth climate leaders and supported by Amnesty. This will include mass demonstrations across the UK, for people of all ages. There will be an event in Manchester (venue tbc) and some of us plan to be there with Amnesty placards. If you want to join us, keep an eye on our Facebook Page arrangements.

Letter Writing Drop-In

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

We will be holding our regular bi-monthly letter writing session on the last Saturday in September. Just turn up whenever you can make it and write a letter or two on behalf of some current Amnesty cases. Pens, paper, envelopes and advice all provided.

Come along and make a difference!

Campaigning

UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

Letter Writing

We are continuing to raise the plight of Mohammed al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor with local leaders within Manchester asking them to raise the cases with their contacts in the UAE. Over the last month, Kathryn raised their cases with Joanne Roney (Chief Executive) and Eddie Smith (Strategic director) on the City Council Executive and Anne wrote to Paul Denett who holds the housing portfolio at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

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. 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.

Peterloo memorial event

We were expecting a mention for Ahmed during the event on 16th August to mark the 200th anniversary of Peterloo. Unfortunately, it seems to have been censored. See <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/town-hall-censors-peterloo-massacre-memorial-dnzp9g2s5>

Ahmed Mansoor Artwork

Supporters of Ahmed have created a piece of art in Stephenson Square in the Northern Quarter.



Protest at the UAE embassy in London

An international day of action for Ahmed Mansoor is planned for 19th Oct, this is a coordinated international event with linked events in the US and Canada. including a demonstration outside the UAE embassy in London followed by a Q&A event at the at the Human Rights Action Centre – more details to follow but it is hoped that a few of us will be able to attend.

People's History Museum Events, December 12th

On December 12th we will be joining with Young Identity to present an evening of poetry and spoken word in solidarity with Ahmed Mansoor. Ahmed is himself a poet and the evening will include readings of his poems alongside new work created by Young Identity and young Amnesty members. This event is part of the PHM Thursday Lates programme and will be called ***Screams, chants and tight-lipped silence: poetry and protest.***

We will also be involved in ***Have Your Say*** which precedes this and will highlight the moral dilemma that Manchester faces in the extensive links that the city has with the UAE.

We will start planning these events in earnest at our September meeting. Come along and get involved.

Refugee I Welcome

While our events and activities might have been somewhat reduced over the summer, the Welcome Refugee campaign is still extremely active and important. As we come closer to the Brexit deadline, we continually need to refocus our attention on providing a welcome to those who come to seek sanctuary here, fleeing from war and persecution. Please see the AIUK webpage for more info: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/refugees-migrants-and-asylum>

The Reuniting Families petition is still open – please sign if you haven't already - <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-secretary-reunite-refugee-families>

Upcoming dates for your diary:

October 12th - Journeys Festival International

October 27th - The Big Conversation

Want to know more the Refugee experience consider reading 'The Lightless Sky' by Gulwali Passerly.

<https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/26156481-the-lightless-sky> pictured below with Liz, our group's coordinator for this campaign.



Crisis and Tactical

MYANMAR

On the second anniversary of attacks on Rohingyas no justice has been done

Sunday 25th August marked the second anniversary of Myanmar's military campaign against the Rohingyas, which saw at least 10,000 Rohingya women, men and children killed, and forced more than 740,000 Rohingya to flee their homes and seek refuge in Bangladesh. after being subjected to brutal assaults.

Amnesty International has warned that Rakhine State remains unsafe while those responsible for the violence continue to evade justice.



Rohingyas fleeing their homes two years ago.

In September 2018, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to create an accountability mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of crimes under international law in Myanmar. Other accountability efforts have included targeted sanctions against military officials by several states and by the European Union, as well as a request from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into crimes under the Court's jurisdiction committed against the Rohingya population since October 2016.

In June 2018 an Amnesty report named 13 officials in the security forces – all the way up the chain of command to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing – who should be investigated and prosecuted for crimes against humanity. The European Union has imposed targeted sanctions on 11 of the 13 singled out in that report.

Amnesty has welcomed these steps towards accountability, but continues to call for the situation in Myanmar to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Amnesty also calls on the international community to not facilitate ongoing crimes, by means of donations to Myanmar, and instead press Myanmar to restore the Rohingya's rights, including citizenship rights. The international community should also work with Bangladesh to support Rohingya refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity. No decisions about the future of the Rohingya should be taken without proper consultation with the Rohingya themselves."

PALESTINE

Work of humanitarian organisations increasingly difficult in Israel:

According to Amnesty, in recent years, the climate for human rights defenders in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has rapidly deteriorated. Israeli authorities have taken steps to unduly restrict the rights to freedom of expression and association inside Israel, with officials intimidating human rights defenders critical of the government and introducing legislation to silence dissent.

Amnesty International and others

In July, anonymous death threats were sprayed outside the offices of Amnesty International Israel in Tel Aviv and ASSAF, an organization working to assist refugees and asylum-seekers in Israel. At the same time, a box containing death threats and a

dead mouse was left at the entrance to the Elifelet Children's Activity Center for refugees.

Amnesty's International Secretariat has called on the Israeli authorities to urgently investigate these death threats.



Human Rights Watch

Amnesty International has joined a legal case brought by Human Rights Watch to challenge the Israeli government's decision to revoke the work permit of Human Rights Watch's Israel and Palestine Director, Omar Shakir.

In May 2018, the Israeli Ministry of Interior revoked Shakir's work permit, citing a 2017 amendment to the Entry to Israel Law which refuses entry to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to anyone who supports or calls for a boycott of Israel as defined under the country's "anti-boycott" law. *

The outcome of the legal case has not been confirmed.

**The "anti-boycott law" of 2011, formally known as the Law for Prevention of Damage to State of Israel through Boycott, makes it a civil wrong in Israel to call for a boycott of any entity because of its affiliation to Israel or to a territory under its control, including entities operating in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A 2017 amendment to the Entry to Israel Law prohibits granting an entry visa to Israel (and therefore to the Occupied Palestinian Territories which are under Israeli control) to anyone who knowingly published, or operates within an organisation who knowingly published, a call for a boycott as defined under the 2011 law.*

SYRIA

UN to investigate into Syrian government attacks in Idlib



Image of a civilian facility being bombed in Idlib

In August the UN Secretary General António Guterres stated that he will establish a "board of inquiry" to investigate attacks that have taken place during the Syrian government's offensive on the province of Idlib.

Sherine Tadros, Head of Amnesty International's UN Office in New York, said:

"The plans for a UN investigation into attacks targeting hospitals in Idlib - and other buildings clearly identified as civilian objects by the UN - offer hope that perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity, can be identified and held accountable."

Amnesty International has documented at least eight attacks targeting hospitals, a blood bank, an ambulance response unit and rescue workers in Idlib in recent months. Our research shows that the bombing of medical facilities - which is itself a war crime - has become part of a pattern by the Syrian authorities to systematically attack the civilian population, which is also a crime against humanity."

It is crucial that this investigation identifies the perpetrators responsible for these ghastly attacks and establishes whether coordinates supplied by the UN to ensure the protection of medical facilities are being exploited. The investigation's findings must be made public."

Amnesty is independently looking for proof of crimes against humanity in Syria, by visiting sites of bombings, interviewing people inside and outside Syria and by analysing satellite images. If you want to help Amnesty reaching this important goal, please donate to Amnesty:
www.amnesty.org.uk/donate

YEMEN



PROTEST FOR YEMEN -Sunday 15th September 12.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS

Join us and the Quakers of Manchester in a protest against the UK Government's decision to appeal against the UK Court's ruling that in June 2019 declared the sales of arms to Saudi Arabia illegal. Since the start of the war in 2015 the UK has sold many millions worth of arms to Saudi Arabia, which have been transferred to Yemen and used by the Yemeni Government and unregulated militias against the Huthi rebels. Thousands of civilians have been killed as a direct consequence of the use of these weapons.

Our protest will be silent, but some of us will ask passers-by to sign letters addressed to their MPs, asking them to raise the issue in Parliament for the appeal to be withdrawn.

Europe (inc Turkey)

Another Urgent Action

Gökhan Türkmen and Mustafa Yılmaz have been missing since 7 and 19 February 2019 respectively and are suspected to have been abducted and forcibly disappeared. The authorities have so far been denying that they are being held in official custody. On 29 July four men who had been missing since around the same time have resurfaced in detention at the Anti-Terrorism Branch of the Ankara Police Headquarters. The authorities must promptly investigate to determine the whereabouts of Gökhan Türkmen and Mustafa Yılmaz and urgently inform their families.

Urgent action is attached with this newsletter
Take action before 24th September!

Country coordinator

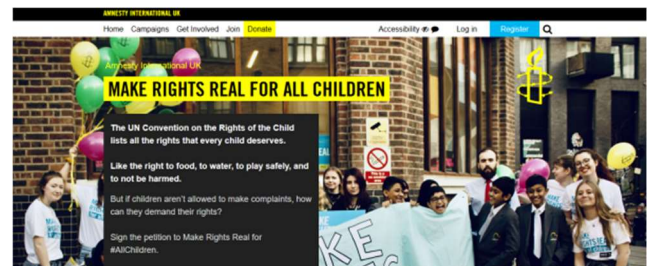
Helen Clark, the new volunteer country coordinator for Europe, will be coming along to meet us at our September meeting (Monday Sept 9th) to tell us about Amnesty's current campaigning.

Individuals at Risk

Write for Rights

We will be starting to plan our involvement in this year's Write for Rights soon as it starts in November. If you know of any suitable venue's where we can run a stall, do let Mary McBride know (mary.mcbride@blueyonder.co.uk).

Children's rights



The petition calling on the UK Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN convention on the Rights of the Child and make rights real for #AllChildren is now live. We haven't got long.

In September Amnesty will be handing in the petition and cards in advance of the UN General Assembly Treaty Events taking place in the Autumn.

The ratification of OP3 would allow complaints about violations of children's rights in the UK to be taken to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, making children's rights real and enforceable.

Find out more and sign the petition using the link below. Please also share it as widely as you can on social media and with your friends and family.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/make-rights-real-all-children-optional-protocol-3>

Pride Parade 2019

Members and friends of Manchester Amnesty International took part in the Manchester Pride Parade. It was a great day and our message that LGBTI+ rights are human rights was seen by many thousands of people lining the streets. The Parade compere gave a specific personal thank you to Amnesty for our work on gay rights in Northern Ireland, in particular our support for equal marriage rights for all.

Thanks to all who took part!

Here are a few pics – see our Facebook page for more!



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