



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

October 2019

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigning

UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

Ahmed Mansoor on Hunger Strike Again!

There are reports that Ahmed has started a second hunger strike following a severe beating he received as a result of his protests at the conditions of his detention. See

<https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/2215>

Amnesty does not appear to have issued another Urgent Action as yet. However, please can everyone send a strong message of concern to the UAE ambassador in London.

HIS EXCELLENCY MR SULAIMAN HAMID ALMAZROUI,
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates,
30 Prince's Gate,
London SW7 1PT,
020 7581 1281,
email pressuk@mofa.gov.ae

Salutation: Your Excellency

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 – See <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/free-ahmed-protest-for-freedom-tickets-72864428467>

We will sort out details of our involvement at the group meeting – if you are interested and can't make the meeting, email Liz at drelizabethratcliffe@gmail.com

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 have started planning these events – find out more at our Group meeting in October and save the date!.

Refugee I Welcome

We are still working hard on the #families-together campaign; **thank you** to everyone who has signed, but we need to keep the pressure up! Here's the link to sign the petition – DO IT NOW:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-secretary-reunite-refugee-families>

Political and media attention is dominated by Brexit and we are now onto our third Home Secretary – the individual who has the power to make this change with the stroke of a pen – in less than two years. Children need their parents, and unlike adult refugees in the UK, child refugees have no right to be with their loved ones. This campaign would change that - and more.

The FamiliesTogether campaign is calling for:

1. Child refugees in the UK to have the **right to sponsor their close family** so they can rebuild their lives together and help them integrate in their new community
2. The **definition of who qualifies as family to be expanded** so that young people who have turned 18 and elderly parents can live in safety with their families in the UK
3. The **reintroduction of legal aid** so refugees who have lost everything have the support they need to afford and navigate the complicated process of being reunited with their families

Events:

We would like to invite you to attend or to volunteer at the following events.

Saturday 12th October – 12-6pm, Journeys Festival Live: Cathedral Gardens. We have a stall at this event and desperately need volunteers – if you can do an hour or two on Saturday afternoon, PLEASE volunteer.

Check the website for more information and other events: https://www.journeysfestival.com/?fbclid=IwAR1GTtHsLMVKKRePzQK_pRctsTOBM2HEsiELOqm2mdeSNPKpftN8xm8QeR4

Sunday 27th October – 1-3pm, The Big Conversation @ The Whitworth Gallery with City of Sanctuary

Volunteer Now!

Email Liz at lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk



Crisis and Tactical

MYANMAR

Amnesty's statement at UN Human Rights Council -Sep 19

At the September's UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty highlighted that despite the evidence of violations of international law and war crimes committed by Myanmar's military, accountability is still not achieved.

Such evidence was provided by experts of the UN's FFM (Fact Finding Mission) and Amnesty itself. Proof of attacks against civilians, including torture and other ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, abductions, and forced labour that occurred in Rakhine State, northern Shan and Kachin States were provided to the UN one year ago.

Amnesty stated: ***'Let us make no mistake, one year after the FFM delivered its damning report to this Council, and despite international attention and pressure, the Myanmar military remains unrepentant, unreformed, and unaccountable.'***

Amnesty added that it is disappointing that the UN Security Council continues to abdicate its responsibility to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has invited the Security Council to the situation in Myanmar on its agenda until this is done.



An image of Amnesty's campaign in New York calling for accountability of Myanmar's military

PALESTINE

UN database of companies operating in Israeli settlements could help prevent human rights abuses

A few years ago, the UN Human Rights Council [charged](#) the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with creating a database, to be updated annually, of business enterprises involved in activity that, "directly and indirectly, enabled, facilitated and profited from the construction and growth of the Israeli settlements" and "raise particular human rights violations concerns."

Amnesty welcomed this decision, since the database would provide transparency around these activities and prompt companies to rethink their operations in the context of the Israeli military occupation and ongoing dispossession of Palestinians. Such activities include the supply of construction and surveillance equipment, the supply of surveillance, security,

banking and financial services, the exploitation of natural resources and, more generally, the supply of services and utilities supporting the maintenance and existence of settlements.

Despite being initially due to be finalized by March 2017, the publication of the database has been delayed repeatedly by the OHCHR. The exact timing of the database's release has yet to be announced.

It has become increasingly clear that the delay is in part because certain states are bringing extensive political pressure to put off the database's release and to stop it being made public at all.

The current Israeli government is more emboldened than ever to pursue expansion of settlements. In April 2019, for the first time ever, Israel's Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu openly called for official annexation](#) of parts of the West Bank. He [repeated](#) this call in September 2019.

In August 2019, Amnesty and 100 other organizations wrote a letter to the current High Commissioner Michele Bachelet, expressing the hope that the OHCHR will fulfil the mandate to compiling, publishing and regularly updating a database of businesses operating in illegal Israeli settlements.

Amnesty's report on the effects of doing business in the OPT, published in Jan 2019

Another NGO under attack

Last month we reported that humanitarian organisations operating in Israel and the OPT are increasingly under pressure. Recently threats were sent to Amnesty's and ASSAF, an organization helping refugees.

This month the offices in Ramallah of an organisation called Addameer (Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association) was ransacked in the early hours by Israeli forces. Computers, hard drives, files and equipment were seized.

Ayman Nasser, the NGO's legal unit co-ordinator, has been detained without charge or trial since 17 September 2018. Last week, his administrative detention was renewed for a further four months.

Saleh Higazi, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International, said: *"Israeli authorities have been sending a clear message to Palestinian civil society: anyone who dares to speak out about Israeli human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories risks coming under attack."*

"Arbitrary restrictions on movement, attacks on human rights and civil society organizations and human rights defenders can never be justified. They must end now, and those responsible must be held accountable" said Saleh Higazi.



SYRIA

Help Amnesty find the truth



'Everywhere you look in Raqqa there's rubble. Homes have been reduced to piles of brick and dust. Children are hungry. Mothers scavenge in the ruins, hoping to avoid unexploded mines. If you saw my recent letter, you'll know that this devastation was caused by a US-led Coalition. Their military campaign was supposed to oust Islamic State. It wasn't supposed to destroy or damage 80% of Raqqa's buildings and kill over 1,600 civilians. But it did. And after all that, the Coalition left the survivors to fend for themselves. Could you help expose the truth for civilians caught in the crossfire? The first £25,000 donated will be matched, pound for pound. Please give now to double your impact.'*

Donatella Rovera

Senior Crisis Response Adviser, Amnesty International

**this amount will be matched by other organisations.*

Help Amnesty's Crisis Response team find evidence, please make a donation:

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/giving/donate/raqqa-6?utm_campaign=MCA3783_CAS_CRSS_Raqqa_DMReminder_SVD&utm_content=6679&utm_source=amnestyuk&utm_medium=email

Lebanon: Authorities must immediately halt deportation of Syrian refugees

Responding to an official communication obtained by Amnesty International that the Lebanese authorities forcibly deported almost 2,500 Syrian refugees back to Syria since June 2019, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director, Lynn Maalouf, said:

"We urge the Lebanese authorities to stop these deportations as a matter of urgency, and the Higher Defense Council to cancel its related decision.

"As long as independent monitoring bodies are not allowed access to Syria - including the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria - in order to assess the security situation for the safe return of refugees, there is no way of determining whether returnees would be at real risk of serious human rights violations once back in Syria.

"Such access and monitoring mechanism inside Syria would be a first step in setting the process for returns. In the meantime, while risks upon return cannot be determined, any attempts to forcibly return refugees is a clear violation of Lebanon's non-refoulement obligations.

"We reiterate our call to the international community to share the responsibility for refugees with host countries, including Lebanon, mainly by re-activating their resettlement programs and by using their leverage to call for access to independent monitors in Syria."

YEMEN

Entire family killed by US-supplied bomb

A US-manufactured bomb was used in a Saudi and Emirati-led airstrike on a residential home in Yemen which killed six civilians - three of them children. The attack, which took place in June 19, wiped out the entire al-Kindi family.

Amnesty spoke to the family's relatives and local residents, and also analysed satellite imagery, photo and video to corroborate eyewitness reports.

By analysing photos of weapon remnants, dug from the site by relatives, Amnesty's arms expert identified the weapon as laser-guided GBU-12 Paveway II, manufactured by US arms company Raytheon. This is the latest evidence that the USA is supplying weapons being used by the Saudi and Emirati-led coalition in Yemeni attacks amounting to serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Witnesses told Amnesty there were no fighters or military targets in the vicinity of the house at the time of the attack. The closest possible military target to the airstrike was a Huthi operations room almost a mile away, but this had stopped operating more than two years previously after being hit by coalition airstrikes.

A second airstrike occurred at the al-Kindi house approximately 15 minutes after the first, indicating that the pilot wanted to completely destroy the property. The house was struck again five days later while relatives of the family were inspecting it - no-one was injured in this attack.

Since March 2015, Amnesty's researchers have investigated dozens of airstrikes in Yemen and repeatedly found and identified remnants of US-manufactured munitions.

Rasha Mohamed, Amnesty International's Yemen Researcher, said: "By knowingly supplying the means by which the Saudi and Emirati-led Coalition repeatedly violates international human rights and international humanitarian law, the USA - along with the UK and France - share responsibility for these violations."

A recent [report](#) by the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen, established by the UN Human Rights Council, concluded that the repeated patterns of coalition airstrikes in the country raise "a serious doubt about whether the targeting process adopted by the coalition complied with [the] fundamental principles of international humanitarian law".

Take action!

Please, write to your MP asking them to bring a motion in Parliament for the UK to stop arming Saudi Arabia. A sample letter is attached.



Some of our members and Manchester's Quakers protesting against arming Saudi Arabia in Sep 19

Individuals at Risk

Write for Rights

We had an excellent Write for Rights session this month - 10 of us in all, including three students new to Manchester, so particular thanks to Anna, Morgan and Gilda for joining us.



We wrote letters on behalf of cases in Iran (7), Mozambique (5) Togo (5), Russia (5), Greece (3), USA (3), China (3), Argentina (2) and Vietnam (2), a total of 35 letters, our highest this year.

Our next session will be Saturday, 30th November, when we'll be writing directly to prisoners, human rights defenders, their families and supporters.

Please join us for the last session of the year.

Women's rights

Consultation on Preventing Demonstrations Outside Abortion Clinic

Some of you may be aware of this consultation, which is to consider preventing demonstrations outside the local abortion clinic. The demonstrations are essentially anti-abortion and can cause considerable distress to clients of the Marie Stopes clinic, as well as a lot of stress to those working there. The consultation asks about one's views on various behaviours, including whether one has experienced or witnessed them. It also asks about one's views on whether an authorised person (usually a police officer) should have the right to instruct such demonstrators to leave and not come back (for 24 hours). Any responses to this have to be completed by 15th November.

Some of you have helped with providing a presence of pro-choice support outside the clinic, in an effort to moderate the activities of the anti-abortion demonstrators. In any case, you may well have a view on the matter.

See:

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/directory_record/374266/wynnst-ay-grove-proposed-public-space-protection-order-consultation/category/1461/live-consultations

Mary Gibbs has completed the whole thing, including reporting on having witnessed the behaviours which are proposed to be limited. Do contact her if you want further info – gibbs.mary@gmail.com.

Group News

Street Collection

We collected £220.59 in Manchester City Centre on 14th September. This amount is significantly up on the last two years. We had 13 collectors out (Jo and Quentin did 2 shifts), top collector was Hazel with £32.97. So not a bad result at all!

Thanks to all who helped!

Christmas Cards



We know that it is rather too early to start planning for Christmas, but Anne has acquired a large box full of seasonal cards and other bits and pieces. She is taking them to a Card Sale at St Paul's

Church in Heaton Moor this coming Saturday.

If you know of any other Christmas Fairs etc that we could have a table to sell Amnesty products, please let Anne know -anne.walker9@ntlworld.com

Climate Strike

We had an excellent turn out at the Climate Strike demonstration on 20th September. The impact of climate change on human rights is likely to be a major campaigning push in the coming years for Amnesty.



Next Group Meeting

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

Monday 14th October

Cross Street Chapel

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

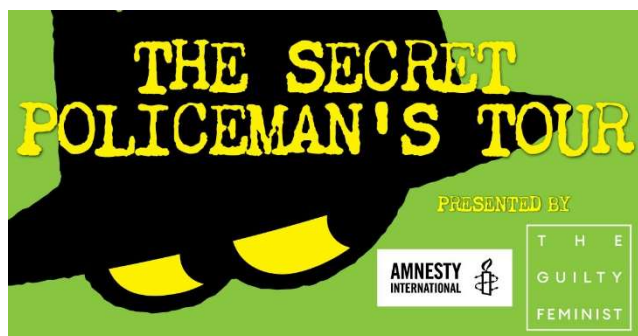
Campaigning Round-Up and Planning

Find out about our current campaigns and get involved in planning our next steps.

*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.*

Other News

Secret Policeman's Ball



In cahoots with one of the Amnesty Ambassadors, the sizzling Deborah Frances-White, the revered Secret Policeman's Tour is landing for its final stop of the year in Manchester on Tuesday 3 December.

Following a sell-out show at the Hackney Empire in June and a raucous evening at the iconic Edinburgh Playhouse in August, they are back with the final show of the year on 3 December at Palace Theatre in Manchester.

A feast of super-talent will boast an exciting line-up in an electrifying night of comedy, music and discussion. Come and share an anarchistic riotous night of comedy for human rights.

Tickets available at: <https://www.atgtickets.com/shows/the-secret-policemans-tour/palace-theatre-manchester/>

We hope to have a stall and a bucket collection – volunteers will be needed so whether you are going or not, please save the date.

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