

# Amnesty International UK

# BRIEFING



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## General Election 2019

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### Key dates

- 6<sup>th</sup> November – Parliament is [dissolved](#)
- 14<sup>th</sup> November – Candidates' deadline
- 16<sup>th</sup> November – Candidate lists published
- 26<sup>th</sup> November – Voter registration deadline
- 4<sup>th</sup> December – Proxy voting deadline
- 12<sup>th</sup> December – Polling day
- 13<sup>th</sup> December – Results

### How do we find out who our Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) are?

Unsure who your PPCs are? Check out [The Electoral Commission's](#) website for more information.

For further information about your candidates, we also recommend visiting the independently run website, [Who Can I Vote For?](#) Here you can find out a bit more about who they are, how best to contact them and also see what they've said on Twitter (if they use it!).

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET INVOLVED?

Over the coming weeks, we are asking Amnesty student groups to try and engage with as many PPCs as possible. As constituents, PPCs will want your support and votes – so make sure your voices and the priorities of Amnesty are heard! Not only is this key to raising the profile of Amnesty and the work of your student group, it will help to put human rights to the top of **their** agendas.

Below are the two main actions we are asking groups to take.

#### 1. Write to your PPCs and invite them to take part in your Write for Rights event

There is no better introduction to Amnesty's work than through our annual Write for Rights campaign. That's why we are asking student groups to write to their PPCs and invite them to come along to your Write for Rights event, so they can take action and hear more about the incredibly work we do as a movement.

Don't worry if you aren't holding a Write for Rights event this year, you can still write to your PPCs to ask if they'll support human rights if elected.

**NB:** From 22<sup>nd</sup> November onwards, Amnesty UK's Twitter will have a pinned tweet (tweets that stay static at the top of a profile) that we will be asking PPCs to retweet. If you write to them following this date, it would be great if you could also ask them to do this.

Below is a suggested structure for what your email or letter might look like.

### ***A quick note on press***

Press activity is good for both your group and the PPCs! If they're joining you at your Write for Rights event, we recommend tweaking [this](#) press release to reflect that.

#### ***Suggested structure of your email/letter***

- 1. Introduce the group.** Keep this short, friendly and personable. PPCs will be receiving a lot of emails and letters of the election so you want to stand out and increase your chances of a response.
- 2. Invite them to your Write for Rights event.** Along with event details, briefly explain Write for Rights and include an example from this year's cases (We strongly recommend using [Yiliyasijiang Rehemans](#) case)
- 3. Ask them whether, if elected, they'll support human rights in Parliament?** They could also go a step further by retweeting the tweet we will sharing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November!
- 4. Close the letter.** A short 'thank you for reading this' will do. We also recommend offering a meeting or a phone call if they need more information.

**Written to your PPC and heard back? Make sure you let us know by getting in touch with [mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk)**

### **2. Attend your local hustings and ask a question**

A hustings is an event held during an election campaign – often in the form of a panel discussion - when members of the public can ask questions of the candidates standing in their constituency. Questions can include anything from issues specific to that local area, to those that are nationwide such as NHS funding and foreign policy.

We are asking our activists to go along to their local hustings and ask PPCs what they will do to champion human rights in Parliament, if elected. We suggest asking the below, but you are of course welcome to come up with your own question.

**“If elected, will you actively support human rights in Parliament?”** If your hustings format allows, make sure to briefly introduce yourself and explain what your student group does as part of the wider movement. It may also be useful to reaffirm that Amnesty is a politically neutral organisation.

Should you be able to follow-up on their response – whether through another question at the hustings, in conversation after the event, or with an email or letter afterwards - we recommend asking your PPCs to go further by showing their support for human rights on social media and/or taking action in this year's Write for Rights.

### **Thinking of going to your local hustings? Let us know!**

It is important you let us know if you are planning to attend a hustings as an Amnesty activist so we can ensure you have the right support and follow-up afterwards to hear how it went. Not only will this ensure you feel confident when going along, hearing what your PPCs said in response may help us to form relationships with the newly elected MPs.

Please contact [mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk) when you know what date your local hustings is and whether you're planning to attend.

### **Planning a hustings?**

For those who have planned a hustings before, you'll know they can be time-consuming and often require quite a bit of forward planning. We also know organising an event to this scale can be stressful and quite daunting, especially if you've never done something like this before. That's why we are suggesting activists go to their main local one to ask a human rights-related question instead.

Of course, we know some of you will still want to do one. If this is the case, let us know and we can provide some support and guidance.

### **A NOTE ON BEING NON-PARTISAN**

Amnesty International is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion. This means, among other things, that we campaign for political change on human rights issues, but we do not side with one party over another. We also attempt to work with whoever is in government, along with parliamentarians from across both Houses who are willing to engage – both of which are vital in achieving human rights change.

**When representing Amnesty during this election, and beyond, please ensure you maintain political neutrality.** This includes trying to engage with as many PPCs standing for election in your constituency as possible, exercising caution when using social media (if your profile is affiliated to Amnesty) and if you choose to go out canvassing. If you have any uncertainties, please get in touch and we can offer some guidance.

### ***Brexit***

In-line with our political neutrality, Amnesty takes no position on Brexit. This includes the UK's decision to hold the referendum, along with the outcome of that vote. Given the General Election will likely be dominated by this issue, it is incredibly important we reflect this neutrality whenever representing Amnesty, both online and offline. However, you can say that Amnesty is committed to ensuring people's rights are protected and promoted during and after the Brexit process.

### ***Scottish Independence***

Much like our position on the Brexit referendum, Amnesty is also neutral on the issue of Scottish independence. In the run up to the 2014 referendum, we were clear the Scottish Government must continue to support and defend human rights – regardless of the outcome.

Calls for a second referendum are ongoing and are set to become louder in-light of Brexit. Because of this, it is vital we continue to maintain our neutral position.

### ***Northern Ireland***

Discussions around Brexit and the possible incoming of direct rule from Westminster if the devolved Executive is not restored will set the scene of this election in Northern Ireland. As expected, it's vital we maintain neutrality on both these issues.

There may also be some focus on abortion, especially following the recent decriminalisation of it in Northern Ireland. Given our involvement, please contact [mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk) if you are aware of your PPCs speaking about this or you are approached for comment.

### **What is the Lobbying Act and how may it affect your campaigning around the election?**

In January 2014, the Lobbying Act completed its passage through Parliament and became law. Officially known as the [\*Transparency of Lobbying, non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014\*](#), this piece of legislation restricts what companies and non-government organisations (including us!) can say and do in the 12 months leading up to an election. This window of time also counts for snap general elections – so it is important we always check our campaigning activity is in-line with the current legal framework.

As we are politically neutral and don't attempt to influence voter intentions, this shouldn't impact your work. However, we do recommend you [read our guidance on the Lobbying Act](#) and ask that you let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

### **A note on toxic and divisive language**

This election follows a period of longstanding political uncertainty, where emotions and frustrations from all sides are running high. As we've seen from the last few years, we need to be vigilant to the risk that PPCs – or parties - might intentionally use language that is discriminatory, abusive and toxic, to further divisions in our society and increase their chances of being elected.

Hate has no place in our society and the physical and mental wellbeing of Amnesty's activists will always be our priority. If you experience abuse or witness it, we urge you to [report it](#) and call it out– but only if it is safe to do so.

For more guidance and information about hate crimes and incidents, or to report through a third-party centre, we recommend contacting organisations such as [Tell MAMA](#), [CST](#) and [Galop](#).