

# Q and A – Amnesty International and UK elections

## What is Amnesty International's work at the time of the UK elections aiming for?

This year we expect more than 3000 people to commit themselves to trying to become members of parliament. Elections are a time when those standing to be elected listen intently to their constituents and voters, and it is important that they hear that people care about human rights.

By engaging, speaking up and commenting during a general election we are building relationships with current and future MPs, and supporting their engagement with human rights issues.

We are also aware of the possibility of the election campaign being a time when divisive or even inciting language might be used by candidates. We support the Equality and Human Rights Commission's '[Voluntary principles on standards for political discourse](#)' and urge all candidates to respect these.

## What is Amnesty encouraging people to do?

The General Election occurs during Write for Rights, where we support people to write messages of support to people around the world who have suffered injustice, and to show support in their campaigns for justice.

Amnesty is encouraging supporters to:

- Invite their candidates to their local [Write for Rights events](#)
- Attend hustings and ask questions about human rights
- Send e-action to their candidates asking them about their views on human rights (this action will be live in a few weeks)

## What is Amnesty International's policy on taking a stance in elections?

Amnesty has always been, and remains, politically impartial, this means that while we do try to influence policy in regard to human rights abuses. We want any politician or leader, regardless of the system of governance in their country, and regardless of the party they belong to, to uphold our human rights.

## Does Amnesty encourage people to vote and register to vote?

Amnesty encourages people in the UK to participate in the political process by raising their voices; to encourage politicians to commit to a world where human rights are enjoyed by everyone.

Candidates in elections care about what voters think. By raising our voices we can challenge them to commit to policies that protect everyone's rights and, if elected, we can make sure that those in power stick to their promises.

We will not tell people who to vote for or even infer this (See above).

## **What is Amnesty's position on the European Union?**

Amnesty does not take a position on the European Union as an organisation. We monitor and document the human rights impact, positive or negative, of EU policies, expose and campaign against policies that lead to human rights violations and put pressure on the EU institutions and member states to exercise leadership and step up their promotion and defence of human rights at home and abroad. Amnesty International has long campaigned for the EU to improve its policies and make them compliant with human rights – and with the founding values of the European Union; respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

## **What is Amnesty's position on Brexit/Leave/Remain/Revoke/Johnson's Deal/No Deal?**

Amnesty does not take any position on Brexit – leave or remain, deal or no-deal. We have campaigned to try to protect human rights across the board in the Brexit process, seeking positive changes to the Brexit implementation bills seen so far and calling for the retention of existing rights laws.

We have raised some concerns over the future of EU citizens in the UK, the right to immigration and asylum, and the future of the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland.

We are calling on politicians of all parties to do everything they can to ensure that the human rights are protected and respected, not degraded or undermined.

## **Does Amnesty support universal suffrage/votes at 16/votes for refugees/votes for people from the EU?**

Amnesty's mission is for all people to enjoy the rights laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 21 of which reads:

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Amnesty does not at present engage in election monitoring or right to vote issues, as we believe other organisations are better placed to do so. The children's network is currently considering its position on Votes at 16.

## **Additional section for activists**

### **Am I allowed to voice my own political opinions while campaigning for Amnesty?**

We expect that Amnesty activists will have your own political opinions, including with relation to parties. However if you are planning to ask a question 'as Amnesty' (e.g. introducing yourself as Amnesty, wearing an Amnesty t-shirt, to a candidate that principally knows you as a representative of Amnesty) we would ask that you keep to the principles of non-partisanship above.

Obviously some Amnesty members will be active in campaigning in the election for one party or another. If you choose to do this we ask that you take care to minimise the possibility of

any confusion taking place over which capacity you are acting in.

### **My seat is a “safe seat” –what’s the point?**

Lots of MPs seats are considered “safe seats” (this means they are thought very unlikely to change from one political party to another because they have a large majority, though it can and does happen). If you live in a “safe seat”, it is still important to engage with all your Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs). Candidates report back to their political party head offices on the main issues that are coming up in the constituency and by engaging and responding to you, they will have to ask the head office for the official response. This will show that these issues are important to people all across the country.

### **I can’t find all my Prospective Parliamentary Candidates what do I do?**

If you haven’t been able to find out who your PPCs are on <https://yournextmp.com> try looking at all the websites for the political parties that have a candidate standing in your area – they will have the candidates listed. If you still can’t find all your PPCs, then contact the advocacy team on [mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:mypolitician@amnesty.org.uk). There will also be coverage in your local newspaper and on local news websites of all the candidates, so you should be able to find out more from those websites.

### **Not all my Prospective Parliamentary Candidates agree to meet/come to my event/respond.**

It is important to try to meet all your PPCs. If not all of them agree to meet, then make sure you write to the rest setting out the important points you will raise in the meeting and ask them for a response.

### **How will the lobbying act affect my group?**

If you have campaigned with us during elections since January 2014, you’ll know that a new piece of legislation has impacted our work around elections. Officially it's known as the Transparency of Lobbying, non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014, and usually called the Lobbying Act.

Importantly, it shouldn't stop you campaigning on any issues, including those related to an election. You don't need to change your planned campaigning over this period, but it's important you read [our guidelines](#), and let us know if you have any concerns about activities you're planning. When campaigning during the General Election, we ask you to please maintain a record of all your expenditure on public activities and keep all receipts that are more than £200 in value. Please provide us with your receipts and records, starting end of 3rd May. You can scan or photograph them and email them to [james.farndon@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:james.farndon@amnesty.org.uk) or you can post them to: James Farndon, Amnesty International UK, Human Rights Action Centre, 25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA. If you receive donations – including goods or services of £500 or more in value—and these are specifically for regulated campaign activity, then you will need to record the donor.

If you are planning on printing your own materials to use publicly on the General Election/work with PCCs, please talk to us first. This is because they may need to carry what is known as an 'imprint', stating the publisher and promoter. If you have any questions, please get in touch with Tom in the Community Organising team on [james.farndon@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:james.farndon@amnesty.org.uk).

**Can I raise any issue with my PPCs?**

If you have human rights issues and/or cases that you or your group is working closely on, feel free to mention them to. Just keep it civil and nonpartisan.