



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2019

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Events coming Up

Whalley Range Write for Rights, Saturday 7th December 2-5pm



The marvellous Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group are holding their annual Write for Rights event once again at St Margaret's Church on Rufford Road in Whalley Range, M16 8AE, 2-5pm.

This is a super busy event with tables full of people signing cards for this year's Amnesty Write for Rights cases, stalls, food and entertainment. See flyer attached.

We will have a stall featuring the CheckOut campaign aimed at tourism companies who promote settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as tourist destinations. We will also be selling our Christmas cards.

Come along for a really fun and inspirational afternoon.



Group Meetings

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

Cross Street Chapel

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

Monday 9th December

Human Rights Implications of the Climate Crisis

Anne will outline the current Amnesty International issues regarding climate change and the implications for human rights across the planet. This is a workshop presentation provided by the Human Rights Education team at AIUK and will give us a feel for the direction that Amnesty are taking on this

Meetings Next Year

Monday 13th January: A speaker from Micro Rainbow an organisation supporting homeless LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees with safe housing plus final planning for our People's History Museum Poetry Event.

Monday 10th February: Tom Morrison, Advocacy and Activism Officer at AIUK, will be coming up to meet us.

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

People's History Museum Events, Rescheduled for February!

Our evening of poetry and spoken word entitled **Screams, chants and tight-lipped silence: poetry and protest**, in solidarity with prisoner of conscience, Ahmed Mansoor, has been rescheduled – thanks to the General Election. We are still in discussion with the People's History Museum, but the new date is likely to be during the first weekend in February. 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.

We also hope to have a **Have Your Say** event on the UAE later in the spring.

Campaigning

The General Election

This General Election is being dominated by just one or two issues, but it is really important that candidates are reminded that there are other things of importance in the real world. You can help by raising human rights priorities with your parliamentary candidates, either at hustings, by letter, or on the doorstep!

AIUK has provided guidance for groups, see:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/general-election-guidance-local-groups>

You may also be interested in the guide from City of Sanctuary with advice for asking candidates how they will advocate for refugees and asylum seekers.

<https://cityofsanctuary.org/2017/05/17/guide-to-refugees-and-the-general-election/>

UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)



Mohammed al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor are human rights activists in the UAE who are serving prison sentences. Amnesty considers them to be prisoners of conscience. As a group, we take turns to send appeals to the UAE authorities asking for their release.

The more people we have writing, the better. If you have time to write appeals to the UAE authorities roughly a couple of letters every 2-3 months, let Anne Walker know and she will send you instructions and prompt you when it is your turn.

Email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Turkey

On November 26th Amnesty issued a press release regarding the continued trial of staff from within Amnesty International Turkey. The prosecution's summing up was expected after more than two years. They are accused of either being a member of, or assisting, a terrorist organisation.



See <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/turkey-amnestys-ex-director-and-honorary-chair-must-be-acquitted-absurd-terror-trial>

And

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/11/turkey-amnestys-exdirector-and-honorary-chair-must-be-acquitted-in-absurd-terror-trial/>

Write for Rights

We held our regular bi-monthly letter writing session last Saturday (30th Nov) where we concentrated on writing letters on behalf of this year's Write for Rights cases. 9 turned up and 29 letters were written: UA Turkey 3. China 3. Nigeria 2. Greece 2 tweets (no address for letters). Iran 3. South Sudan 1 + 1 tweet. Canada 4, Phillipines 4. Belarus 3. UK (3 cases) Migrant women 3 + 1 card. Trans rights 1. Citizenship rights 1.



A really good effort – thanks to all who dropped in!

Our next session will be 25th January,

If you want to send a message of solidarity or an appeal letter on behalf of any of the cases, all details can be found at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/write-rights-2019>



Urgent Actions

AIUK has updated the urgent action platform to make it more user-friendly and more efficient - this is why you may have experienced a pause in urgent action emails in recent weeks. Here is a summary of the changes.

A home for urgent actions

- **Navigation:** Urgent Actions will now sit under the Networks section of the website so they are easier to find.

- **Featured cases:** We'll pick out the most urgent actions that are most likely to be impacted by Amnesty supporters calling for change. When you click on a featured case, it will link to a new page with all the relevant information and opportunities to take action.
- **Filter options:** You will now have the ability to filter urgent actions when searching on the website by issue area and country.
- We will soon be adding a function so you can get an email notification every time a urgent action is uploaded to the website.

Action-taking

- **Digital actions:** You can now take action online more easily with an email option built into every case we feature.
- **Offline actions:** All offline options for action taking will be clearly listed next to the digital option. These will still include letter-writing and other activities where appropriate.
- **Mobile friendly:** The new platform is designed to be mobile friendly, allowing you to take action wherever you are.
- **Monitoring activity:** We will now be able to track how many appeals are being sent for each urgent action. This helps us better understand how our efforts impact the lives of rights holders.

Mailings

From December, we will be sending a monthly mailing to members of the urgent action network with an overview of new featured cases and case updates so you can choose from a range of high priority urgent actions.

We will no longer be sending emails regarding every urgent action we receive, but we will still send email actions and updates on cases we chose to upscale.

Joining the Network

If you're not currently signed up to the Urgent Action Network and you'd like to continue receiving urgent actions via this monthly mailing you can join at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/join-urgent-action-network>

If you don't want to receive monthly mailings, but still want to campaign on individual urgent actions you can find all urgent actions listed on the website and you can search by issue and country.

To receive country specific urgent actions, you can contact the relevant Country Coordinator -

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-country-coordinators>

Crisis and Tactical

PALESTINE

Deportation of Human Rights Watch's Director Confirmed

In Nov 2019 the Israeli Supreme Court upheld a deportation order against Human Rights Watch's Israel/Palestine Country Director, Omar Shakir, a US citizen.

In May 2018, Omar Shakir's work permit was revoked by Israeli Ministry of Interior on the basis that he had 'violated Israel's "anti-boycott" law', which refuses entry to Israel and the Occupied

Palestinian Territories to anyone who supports or calls for a boycott of Israel.

Despite Human Rights Watch's appeal against the decision, supported by Amnesty, Shakir will have 20 days to leave the country.

Amnesty's position on this issue: Amnesty considers that calls such as those made by Human Rights Watch - asking companies to respect international law - are protected by the right to freedom of expression. They are not and should not be interpreted as a call for a boycott.

Nevertheless, if the Israeli authorities do take the view that such activities amount to calls for a boycott, Amnesty believes that advocates of such calls must be allowed to express their views freely.



A picture of Omar Shakir

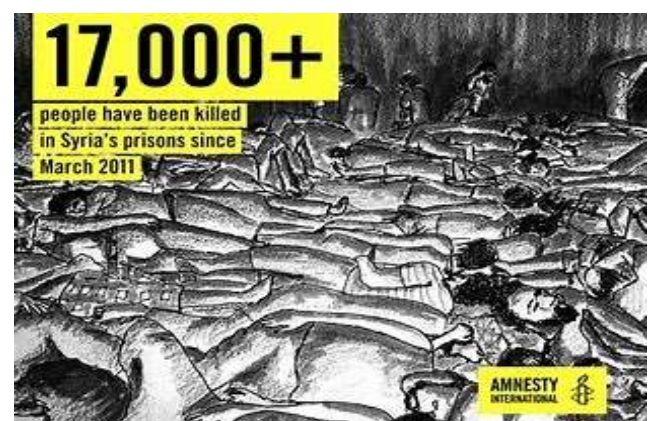
SYRIA

Hope of Justice for Syria

In Nov 2019 five Syrian refugees in Norway asked the Norwegian police to investigate atrocities committed during Syria's civil war. The refugees are torture survivors and provided a dossier of evidence linking seventeen high-ranking Syrian officials to ill-treatment.

Under the principle of universal jurisdiction, Norway's penal code allows authorities to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity even if they were committed outside the country by people who are not Norwegian. The investigation will hopefully lead to the issue of arrest warrants.

Universal jurisdiction also applies in Germany, Sweden and Austria. A few weeks ago, after initiatives from campaigners, German prosecutors charged two alleged former Syrian secret services officers with crimes against humanity. The trial over state-sponsored torture in Syria will be the first to be held since the start of the civil war in 2011.



So far, the Syrian government has not been made accountable for their crimes. Syria is not a party to the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC), and Russia and China have vetoed efforts to mandate the ICC to set up a special tribunal for Syria.

According to the five refugees in Norway, the moves in Germany and Norway will send a message of hope to the “hundreds of thousands of detainees still in the government’s centres” in Syria and a message to Syrian officials that “they are not all-powerful, it is not a wall of impunity”.

MYANMAR

The Gambia Files Case Against Myanmar

In Nov 2019 the Gambia filed a case against Myanmar with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), UN’s highest court.

[The Gambia](#), a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has accused Myanmar’s military of genocide through their “clearance operations” of the Rohingya, which involved systematic and atrocious murder, rape and destruction by fire of villages. According to the submission these operations “were intended to destroy the Rohingya as a group” and were preceded by a “pervasive campaign of dehumanisation” of the Rohingya.

Under the rules of the ICJ member states can bring actions against other member states over disputes alleging breaches of international law – in this case the [1948 convention](#) on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. The ICJ however has no means to enforce its rulings.

An initial hearing is expected at the ICJ in December.

In Nov 2019 the International Criminal Court also decided to authorise an investigation into alleged crimes committed against the Rohingya. While welcoming this decision, Amnesty stresses that the ICC will only be allowed to investigate into some of the crimes committed by Myanmar’s military against ethnic minorities. Amnesty states that it remains essential that the UN Security Council refers the situation in the whole of the country to the ICC.



Aung San Suu Kyi to Defend Myanmar’s Army at Hearing

Aung San Suu Kyi will lead a delegation to the International Court of Justice to defend Myanmar against the allegations of genocide.

Aung San Suu Kyi She has repeatedly refused to condemn Myanmar’s military actions, claiming there is not enough evidence to definitively say what has been happening in Rakhine and blaming “terrorists” for an “iceberg of misinformation” about the situation.

A [Myanmar](#) military spokesman stated that the decision to send Aung San Suu Kyi was made after the army consulted with the government. A spokesman for Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, the National League for Democracy, said she had decided to take on the case herself.

TAKE ACTION!

At our December meeting, we will take a photo action with a message for Aung San Suu Kyi

Women’s rights

PROTECT MIGRANT WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE

Migrant women in the UK who’ve suffered domestic abuse find it virtually impossible to get the help and protection they need.

They are often blocked from accessing public funds and turned away from refuges, many are too scared to report violence to the police or other services, for fear of being detained or deported.

They have good reason to be worried. Last year, 60% of UK police forces admitted they referred victims of crime to the Home Office for immigration purposes.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-for-rights/action/migrant-women-domestic-abuse?from=issue>

Season’s Greetings

We wish all our supporters the very best over the festive season.

We will have some Christmas cards left over from the Whalley Range event. Buy them at our December meeting.



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