



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

January 2020

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Events coming Up

Screams, Chants and Tight-Lipped Silence, Saturday 1st February 3-4.30 pm. People's History Museum

Ahmed Mansoor is a poet as well as a human rights activist and blogger. He is currently serving a ten-year sentence in the UAE and Amnesty considers him to be a Prisoner of Conscience. Ahmed has been on several hunger strikes to protest against his conditions of detention and is believed to be in poor health.

In conjunction with Young Identity, a local arts organisation who deliver poetry and spoken word workshops for young people, we are holding an afternoon of poetry and spoken word in solidarity with Ahmed.

Please support this event. Full details and tickets (the event is free but it would really help us if you registered for the event so that we can gauge interest) can be found at <https://phm.org.uk/events/screams-chants-and-tight-lipped-silence-poetry-and-protest-2/>

PLEASE SUPPORT!

We want to publicise this event as widely as possible. Please use the attached flyer to send to friends, family, other organisations, anyone you can think of!

Some of you have already agreed to send it to your local councillors and MPs and Hazel will be in contact shortly with a standard letter. If you can help in this way, contact hazel at hazelerrey@gmail.com.

SCREAMS, CHANTS AND TIGHT-LIPPED SILENCE: POETRY AND PROTEST

Join Young Identity and Manchester Amnesty International at an afternoon of poetry and spoken word in solidarity with **Ahmed Mansoor** - poet and human rights activist, currently imprisoned in United Arab Emirates.

**Sat. 1 February
3.00 - 4.30 pm**

#FREE AHMED

at People's History Museum

FREE ENTRY (pay what you feel)
ages 16+

find out more at:
facebook.com/amnestymanc
or phm.org.uk/whats-on/

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PEOPLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM

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.

Meetings coming up

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. We will also be sorting out the final details for the People's History Museum event and catching up on our other campaigning.

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.*

Campaigning

UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

On 7 September 2019, human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Ahmed Mansoor went on hunger strike to protest his detention conditions, and after prison guards beat him. He remained on strike at least until the end of October, with signs of deteriorating health. His conditions have not improved as he remains in solitary confinement, without a mattress or access to fresh air, since his arrest on 20 March 2017. Amnesty has recently issued yet another Urgent Action on his behalf.



PLEASE TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY.

The Urgent Action is attached with this newsletter or can be downloaded from: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/prisoner-conscience-held-dire-conditions>



We also work on behalf of Mohammed al-Roken, a human rights lawyer serving a ten year sentence in the UAE. Amnesty also considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

As a group, we take turns to send appeals to the UAE authorities asking for the release of both Ahmed and Mohammed. 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.

The more people we have writing, the better

Individuals at Risk



We took part in this year's Write for Rights campaign, signing cards and sending appeal letters. We also had a stall at the very busy Write for Rights event organised by Whalley Range for Peace and Justice and Hazel and Joanna both organised card signings at their local churches.

Many thanks to all who helped.

We hold a regular bi-monthly letter writing session at the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road. Our next session will be 25th January. Drop in any time between 2 to 4 pm to write appeal letters on

behalf of current Amnesty cases. Paper, pens, and guidance provided.

Next Letter Writing Drop-in

Saturday January 25th
2-4pm
The Eighth Day Café

Refugee Rights

Manchester City of Sanctuary is hosting the January Big Conversation at The People's History Museum on Sunday 26th January from, 1pm - 3pm. It would be great to have an amnesty stall - if people would like to attend or volunteer at our stall email Liz Hibberd at lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk.

Additionally, through her work at City of Sanctuary, she's invited Right to Remain, an advocacy and campaigning group, to facilitate a workshop around the asylum process. While it's primarily for City of Sanctuary volunteers, there are around half a dozen spaces that are available for MAI members that are interested in learning more - It's taking place at Cross St Chapel, 16th January. Again, if you are interested, drop Liz an email.

Crisis and Tactical

PALESTINE

The International Criminal Court confirms war crimes have been committed in the OPT

In Dec 2019 the ICC's prosecutor announced that a preliminary examination into Palestine has concluded that war crimes have been committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and that an investigation can be opened. However, before such investigation is opened, the prosecutor has sought confirmation from the ICC's judges that the territory over which the court may exercise its jurisdiction comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.



Although this is good news and represents a step towards justice for Palestinians, Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Middle East Research and Advocacy Director, said: "It has already been five years since the preliminary examination of the situation in Palestine was announced, and it is vital that the International Criminal Court's judges reach a conclusion swiftly and avoid further delays."

(The State of Palestine lodged a declaration accepting the jurisdiction of the ICC over alleged crimes committed in the

Occupied Palestinian Territories in Jan 2015. In the same month the ICC prosecutor announced the opening of a preliminary examination).

SYRIA

Amnesty's investigation through Digital Verification Corps wins Times Higher Education award for International Collaboration

Digital verification allows the gathering of digital evidence of potential war crimes as well as the verifications of human rights abuses in real-time. It is the latest cutting-edge tool that Amnesty is applying to their research.

Amnesty's Digital Verification Corps* together with the Digital Verification Unit at the University of Essex (DVU), have revealed evidence that the US-led

Coalition's four-month military offensive on Raqqa in June-October 2017 killed at least 1,600 civilians.

The University of Essex was one of the founding partner universities in Amnesty International's Digital Verification Corps, which now includes Hong Kong University, the University of Pretoria, Cambridge University, the University of Toronto and University of California-Berkeley.

*DVC is a network of volunteers from universities worldwide that are trained in open source investigation methods that will help them verify data from social media platforms.

To watch a short video on the Digital Verification Corps, please see:

<https://twitter.com/EssexHRC/status/1199672113755512833?s=20>

To view an interactive website with Amnesty International's final investigation into Raqqa, please see:

<https://raqqa.amnesty.org/>

YEMEN

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is asked to investigate private suppliers of arms for potential war crimes charges

The European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), supported by five NGOs (Amnesty International, Mwatana for Human Rights, Campaign Against Arms Trade, Centre Delàs and Rete Disarmo), has called on the ICC to investigate whether high-ranking officials, from both European companies and governments, could bear criminal responsibility for supplying arms used by members of the Saudi Arabia/UAE-led Coalition in potential war crimes in Yemen.

The ECCHR has provided documentation to the ICC concerning 26 specific airstrikes, which unlawfully killed or injured civilians, and destroyed or damaged schools, hospitals and other protected objects.

Patrick Wilcken, Arms Control Researcher at Amnesty International, stated:

"Company executives have had ample time and access to plenty of reliable information to reassess their decisions to supply the Coalition in the light of the horrific events in Yemen. Hiding behind flawed government decision-making is not good enough - now they could face criminal charges before an international criminal court."

The Communication focuses on the role of the following companies: Airbus Defence and Space S.A.(Spain), Airbus Defence and Space GmbH (Germany), BAE Systems Plc. (UK), Dassault Aviation S.A. (France), Leonardo S.p.A. (Italy), MBDA UK Ltd. (UK), MBDA France S.A.S. (France), Raytheon Systems Ltd. (UK), Rheinmetall AG (Germany) through its subsidiary RWM Italia S.p.A. (Italy), and Thales France.



An image from a stunt organised by Amnesty outside Downing St.

Oxfam Campaign Group Event

The Manchester Oxfam Campaigns Group is holding an event on Yemen this coming Saturday. Please support.

A promotional poster for an event. The main text reads "MANCHESTER OXFAM CAMPAIGNS GROUP INSPIRED BY YEMEN". Below this, it says "LIVE MUSIC, SPOKEN WORD & IMAGERY INSPIRED BY CULTURE, CONFLICT AND HUMANITARIAN AID". The event is scheduled for "SATURDAY JAN 11 2020 3-6PM". The location is "LOCK 91 9 CENTURY ST MANCHESTER M3 4QL". At the bottom, it says "FREE ENTRY - DONATIONS WELCOME". There are three small images: a destroyed building, a person in a damaged area, and a person in a white protective suit.

More details at : <https://facebook.com/events/s/oxfam-inspired-by-yemen/2559498790770874/?ti=icl>

Subscriptions please!

Annual donations from members are vital to keep the Group going. The suggested sum is £20 if you have a wage, £5 otherwise, or whatever you can afford to give. Please bring your cash or cheque to the next meeting or contact Treasurer Sean Dunne (Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

Thanks!

*Happy New Year
to All Our Activists*

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