



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

February 2020

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

February Group Meeting

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 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)

Event at the People's History Museum



Our poetry event in the cafe at the People's History Museum was very well supported with over 70 people turning up to hear poems by UAE prisoner of conscience, Ahmed Mansoor, (beautifully read in Arabic by Mustafa from the Syrian Rethink Rebuild society) and contributions from members of Young Identity who had written poems inspired by Ahmed's life and writings.

It was pleasing that several members of the Manchester City Council attended the event and we hope that we will be able to work with them to raise the issue of human rights in the UAE at council level. Here they are at the front with members of Young Identity behind.



Letter Writing

Over the last month we have been asking you to respond to an Urgent Action issued by Amnesty in response to reports that Ahmed Mansoor had again gone on hunger strike. This action is now timed out. We haven't heard any news on Ahmed's condition and whether he is still on hunger strike. Even if he has terminated his hunger strike, the likelihood is that he is in poor health exacerbated by his draconian prison conditions.

As a group, we take turns to send appeals to the UAE authorities asking for the release of both Ahmed and Mohammed. We haven't been reminding people over the Christmas period as we all had the Urgent Action to do. However, Anne will be starting to send out the regular reminders and guidance again.

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 hold a regular bi-monthly letter writing session at the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road, usually on the last Saturday in the month. At our last session on 25th January only 3 people turned up but they managed to write 9 letters and did some on-line actions as well.



Our next session is scheduled for March 28th. 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 March 28th
2-4pm
The Eighth Day Café

Refugee Rights

City of Sanctuary

We were happy to be part of Manchester City of Sanctuary's January Big Conversation. It's always great to support the work they do with refugees and asylum seekers, as well as engaging with the general public to challenge the government's hostile environment. It was particularly relevant this month as it was hosted in the People's History Museum; the only museum in the UK to focus on democracy!

Their theme for 2020 explores migration, co-created by a Community Programme Team made up of people whose lives have been shaped by migration so expect many activities and events that highlight the experiences and challenges of those seeking safety.

Reuniting families report and petition

There is a brand-new report 'Without my Family', produced by Amnesty International with the Refugee Council and Save the Children, which highlights the impact of family separation on child refugees in the UK. The UK is one of the only countries in Europe to prevent child refugees from sponsoring their family members to join them. Family reunion is a vital policy in helping new refugees to move forward with their lives. See <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/resources/without-my-family-january-2020/>. A short version is attached with this newsletter.

The Reuniting Families petition is still active on the AIUK website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/home-secretary-reunite-refugee-families>

If you haven't already signed this – Do it NOW!

Turkey

Syrians Still Risk Deportation from Turkey

Syrian refugees are still at risk of deportation from Turkey, and the Turkish authorities may implement plans to force large numbers of them to a so-called "safe zone" in northern Syria. This is an active conflict zone, as evidenced by Turkey's own recent military action in the north-eastern part of the country in October 2019.



Amnesty has extended an Urgent Action which is attached with this newsletter - PLEASE TAKE ACTION.

You can reach the target via post, email or on Twitter @suleymansoylu

Free author Ahmet Altan

On 12 November, renowned Turkish author and former newspaper editor Ahmet Altan was detained after a court overturned the decision taken on 4 November to release him from over three years in detention. Ahmet Altan is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

AI have issued an Urgent Action calling for his release. This is attached with this newsletter – PLEASE TAKE ACTION.

You can reach the target via post, email or on Twitter @abdulhamitgul.

Please also tag the Europe country Coordinators in any actions you take on both these UAs on Twitter @amnestyukeurope or Facebook @AmnestyUKEurope

Crisis and Tactical

PALESTINE TRIPADVISOR CAMPAIGN –HELP US REACH 35,000 SIGNATURES!

Tripadvisor is one of the businesses identified by Amnesty as profiting from doing business in the Occupied



Palestinian Territories (OPT), which are illegal under international law. Amnesty International is calling on Tripadvisor to stop advertising on their website 70 amenities that are located in the OPT and therefore stop profiting from an illegal situation. Tell Tripadvisor to check out of Palestinian territories!

TAKE ACTION! Please, sign the petition:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/checkout>

Good news!

Thanks to campaigns organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign and War on Want, Liverpool F.C. and Chester F.C. have decided not to have Puma as their sponsor. Puma is the main sponsor of Israel Football Association, which includes clubs based in the OPT.



ISRAELI-PALESTINE PEACE DEAL

In Jan 2020 D. Trump, together with Israeli President B. Netanyahu, has presented a proposal of a peace deal for Israel and Palestine.

Amnesty has stated that this deal does not address the violation of international law and further strips

Palestinians of their rights. The proposed deal includes:

1-a formal extension of Israel's sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the vast majority of the Israeli settlements in the rest of the occupied West Bank, in exchange for land currently inside Israel.

2-the potential transfer of areas of Israel with a high proportion of Palestinian residents to a future State of Palestine.

3-that Palestinian authorities take "no action against any Israeli or United States citizen before Interpol or any non-Israeli or United States legal system".

4-a "compensation mechanism" for Palestinian refugees.

Why are these points problematic?

Point 1-Amnesty states that this reiterates the illegality of Israeli settlements in occupied territory, which violate international law.

Point 2-According to Amnesty this raises concerns that Palestinian citizens of Israel in these areas might be disenfranchised.

Point 3- Amnesty stated that this is a blatant attempt to stop Palestinians seeking justice in national courts of third countries using universal jurisdiction, an essential tool of international justice.

Point 4- Amnesty highlights that under international law Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes in 1948, and their descendants, have a right to return.

Amnesty has urged the international community to reject measures contravening international law and annexation proposals.

SYRIA RUSSIA AND CHINA VETO DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN AID TO CIVILIANS IN IDLIB

In Jan 2020 a UN resolution that allowed the delivery of humanitarian assistance to millions of people living in opposition-controlled areas in Syria expired (resolution 2165 of 2014).

Russia, supported by China, has blocked the renewal of this resolution causing the already catastrophic humanitarian conditions for millions of civilians in Idlib to further deteriorate. Russia and China's vetoes have coincided with one of the most violent months for people in Idlib, as the Syrian government intensified its attacks forcing around 300,000 people to flee their homes in search for safety.

Over the years Russia and China's successive vetoes have blocked any attempts to move towards a path of accountability and justice for the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria. However, this veto will bring the civilian population to its knees.

With the expiry, the UN will no longer be authorized to cross from Turkey to Idlib to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to 2.7 million people, including internally displaced people who have fled hostilities in Aleppo, Homs, Daraa, and elsewhere in the country since the start of the crisis in 2011.

TAKE ACTION!

► **Donate to Amnesty to carry on campaigning on behalf of Syrian civilians**

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/campaign/help-save-lives-idlib-syria>

► **Come to our fund-raising event
(see leaflet attached)**



YEMEN

GRASSROOT ACTION AGAINST ARMS TRANSFER TO YEMEN

A Saudi Arabian state-owned cargo ship named Bahri Yanbu, scheduled to arrive at European ports in early February, is going to be met with protests and lawsuits.

Although the content of the ship is surrounded by secrecy, Amnesty International suspects that the cargo consists of arms destined to Saudi Arabia for their use in the Yemen war. This allegation is based on the circumstances of the current voyage, and the

fact that ship has been used for the transfer of arms from the USA to Saudi Arabia in the past.

As Amnesty and other organizations have given evidence that the Saudi Arabian and Emirati-led coalition attacks in Yemen have caused the death and harm of thousands of civilians. This is against international humanitarian law and can amount to war crime.

The actions planned at European Ports include:

→A court case filed by 3 NGOs in **Belgium**, seeking an injunction against the government authorizing arms transfers to Saudi Arabia.

→A protest in Cherbourg port by Amnesty International **France** volunteers

→ A dockworkers' strike at Genoa Port, where trade unions have repeatedly voiced their opposition to loading "hot cargo" that is destined for use in the war in Yemen and a protest from Amnesty International **Italy** volunteers.



MYANMAR

Good news!

In Jan 2020 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has ordered Myanmar to take "provisional measures" to prevent genocidal acts against the Rohingya community. Although this is great news (!), Amnesty International is insisting that the UN must urgently refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International's South Asia Regional Director, said: "*Today's decision sends a message to Myanmar's senior officials: the world will not tolerate their atrocities, and will not blindly accept their empty rhetoric on the reality in Rakhine State today.*"

Until all those responsible for serious violations – including those with command responsibility – are held to account, these atrocity crimes will remain rampant. The UN Security Council must urgently refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court."



Other News

Feeding the Darkness

Freedom from Torture in partnership with Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture are holding a performance by journeymentheatre.com on **Friday 21st February** at the Stockport Meeting House, Cooper St, SK1 3DW. This 65 minute performance is a result of extensive research into the dark world of state sanctioned torture and its stark impact on victims, perpetrators, families and those who 'collude' in the process.

To reserve a place contact Fran Devine at frandevine@yahoo.co.uk. A flyer is attached with this newsletter



North West Regional Conference

Human rights for the Planet

Saturday March 21st
Quaker Meeting House
Liverpool

The programme is still being finalised but will include a panel of young activists, workshops on climate change, Football Welcomes, Transgender Rights and South America.

Details will be sent out next week – keep an eye out!

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!

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