



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

**March 2020**

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

## Events This Month!

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### March Group Meeting - Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March

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

**7.30pm Cross Street Chapel**

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

### Group Annual General Meeting and Campaign Planning

We will take a look at our activities over the past year, review options from this year's planning pack and allocate group officers and campaign leads. This will be an excellent opportunity to find out what the group is about and, if you feel inclined, volunteer to get involved.

See article under group news for more info.

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

***All welcome to join us.***

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### North West Regional Conference - Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March

10am-4pm, Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool, L1 3BT

#### Human Rights for the Planet

Programme will include Venezuelan activist Geraldine Chacón, a Young Activists Panel Discussion - with young people who are taking a lead on Climate Change, Children's Rights and Social Change, an action on Climate Change in the centre of Liverpool, a report from AIUK Board members, workshops on Human Rights and Climate Change, Football Welcomes, Trans Identities and Inclusion, and Defending Environmental and Land Rights in South America and keynote speakers on Climate Change and Human Rights.

Price: £8. Free for unwaged and students - Book your place at Eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/human-rights-for-the-planet-amnesty-nw-regional-conference-2020-tickets-93083951605>

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### Syrian Kitchen - Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March

From 1.30pm at St Clement's Church Edge Lane, Chorlton-Cum-Hardy, M21 9AE

### A Fundraising Meal with Delicious Syrian Food and Art Exhibition

Manchester Amnesty and Syrian community organisation Rethink Rebuild are holding a fundraising event in Chorlton. Come along to sample delicious authentic Syrian vegetarian recipes and visit the exhibition by Syrian artist Amani Al Ali. Money collected will go towards Amnesty International's work in Syria (research and campaigning) and to Rethink Rebuild's education project for children living in northern Syria.

More details in the leaflet attached. Buy your ticket through [rrsoc.org/node/1258](https://rrsoc.org/node/1258) (no booking fee!)

***We hope to see you there!***

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### Letter Writing Drop-in - Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March

Our regular letter writing session, 2-4pm, the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road.

# Campaigning

## UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

### Update on cases

Both Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken are serving 10 year prison sentences in the UAE. Amnesty considers them prisoners of conscience. We have received no further news about either man since the Urgent Action was issued on 12<sup>th</sup> February for Ahmed who has been on a liquid only hunger strike since last September. His health has deteriorated and he is no longer able to walk unaided.

### Please Take Action

Write your own letter or take action on line. Full instructions at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/prisoner-conscience-critical-condition>

### Contacting Our City's Leaders

We have been actively contacting city leaders (e.g. Sir Richard Leese and Andy Burnham) asking them to send appeals on behalf of Ahmed and to raise his case with any contacts that they have in the UAE. If you have any suggestions, please contact Lil - [drelizabethratcliffe@gmail.com](mailto:drelizabethratcliffe@gmail.com).

### Regular Letter Writing

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](mailto: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. Our next session is scheduled for March 28<sup>th</sup>. 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

### Supporting

Welcoming and supporting refugees and asylum seekers is a key focus for our Manchester group, in particular the refugee subgroup.

This month and next there are plenty of ways to do this; one great way is to get involved with 'Journey's into Film', a series of community film screenings across Manchester. Throughout February and March, Journey's Festival International, along with other refugee charities are showing a range of films which feature stories of refugees, their journeys and their experiences.

See flyer for more details.

### Event at the People's History Museum

In 2020 People's History Museum (PHM) has a year long programme exploring migration, co-created by a Community Programme Team made up of people whose lives have been shaped by migration.

On Thursday 9 April 2020 they will be hosting a Q&A with Comma Press and Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group, 6.30 – 7.30pm (more details on event below). Followed by a 'Meet the Activist' marketplace 5.00 – 8.00pm.

We will have a stall at this event, if you are able to help, please contact Liz Hibberd – [lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk).

### Campaigning

Ongoing campaigns to support refugees and migrants include the 'Lift the ban' campaign, encouraging the government to allow Asylum Seekers the right to work whilst waiting for the result of their asylum claim:

<https://act.refugee-action.org.uk/page/47763/petition/1>.

Other important campaigns include an urgent action for migrant children and asylum seekers still being denied healthcare in Greece. The Greek government issued a new decision on 31 January granting a 'temporary number for insurance and healthcare' to asylum seekers, providing access to free public health care and the labour market while they wait for a decision on their claim. While implementation remains to be seen, this welcome decision fails to address the situation of children of irregular migrants and asylum-seekers that have not managed to complete a formal application.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/1801/2020/en/>

## Crisis and Tactical

### PALESTINE

#### UN's new database of businesses linked to Israeli Settlements

In Feb 2020, the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report on companies with specific links to Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The digital tourism companies Airbnb, TripAdvisor, Expedia and Booking.com are included in this database. In 2019 Amnesty International's research found that by driving tourism to Israeli settlements these companies contribute to their existence and expansion.



Under international law, when an occupying power builds settlements in occupied territory and allows its civilians to live in these settlements, it is committing war crimes. Settlements in the Palestinian Territories are built on unlawfully-appropriated land and have been the cause of a range of gross and systematic human rights violations against Palestinians.

Under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, companies are required to “avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities and address such impacts when they occur”.

Amnesty is calling on the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council to ensure that the database is regularly updated, to allow for continued scrutiny of businesses linked to human rights violations in the Palestinian Territories.

## TAKE ACTION!

Sign Amnesty’s petition and ask TripAdvisor to stop profiting from an illegal situation:

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

## SYRIA

### Fundraising event -22nd March from 1.30pm

Help rebuild Syria by celebrating its food, music and art!

Simona and Catherine have been working with the Syrian community organisation Rethink Rebuild to put on an afternoon in aid of Syria pm at St. Clement’s Church in Chorlton.

Bring your family and friends to enjoy delicious Syrian vegetarian food prepared by members of Rethink Rebuild and visit the exhibition of work by Syrian artist Amani Al Ali who is based in Idlib in Northern Syria.

**Buy your ticket through [rrsoc.org/node/1258](https://rrsoc.org/node/1258)  
(no booking fee!)**

Money collected will go towards Amnesty International work in Syria (research and campaigning) and to Rethink Rebuild’s education project for children living in northern Syria. Come and talk to us on the day to find out more about both organisations and what they do in Syria.



(see details in the leaflet attached)

## WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

## Turkey



## TURKEY: ACQUIT RIGHTS DEFENDERS

### Human Rights Defenders on Trial

11 human rights defenders could be given jail terms in Turkey of up to 15 years, including Taner Kiliç, then chair of Amnesty Turkey and İdil Esser, the then director of Amnesty Turkey. They were in court on 19 February to hear the verdict, but the hearing was postponed until 3 April. See more details at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/update-istanbul-10>

## Group News

### Local Groups Planning Pack

Every year we receive a planning pack from AIUK with details of campaigns and casework that we can get involved in. This year’s pack has arrived (attached with newsletter) and we will be discussing it at our March group meeting.

It would be really helpful if you could have a look at it in advance and come along with ideas of what we should do.

### Group AGM

Our March group meeting will also include our annual general meeting when we will confirm group officers and campaign leads. Most of the current officers are willing to remain in post for another year but we are always looking for new people to share the running of the group.

In particular, this year we are looking for someone to organise the city centre street collection in September (Sean wants to bow out having done it for 11 years – a huge thank you to Sean – but

is willing to give help and guidance). This is one of our most important regular fundraisers and is essential to ensure that we can make our donation to AIUK.

*Please consider if you can help.*

## Meeting Time



We currently hold meetings 7.30 to 9.30pm on the second Monday of each month. It has been suggested that we start earlier. This would help those who work in the city centre but might be more difficult for those from farther afield – so we have decided to ask you all.

If you regularly come to meetings, or would like to if the time was changed, please take the survey **before the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March** at:

**March** at:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GVXG2Y3>

## April Meeting – Change of date!!!

As the second Monday in April falls on Easter Monday we are changing the date. The April meeting will be on **Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April**.

**Please note!**

## 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](mailto:Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com)) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

**Thanks!**

## Other News

### International Women's Day Walk: Manchester Peace Trail

Celebrate International Women's Day on Sunday 8 March with a walking tour of Manchester's hotspots of radical political activity! And it's all in aid of the Pankhurst Centre!

Join volunteer walk leader Steve Roman (and member of Manchester Amnesty) on the Manchester Peace Trail, and find out just how deeply our city is rooted in the fight for justice, peace and freedom. Starting at Emmeline Pankhurst's statue, you'll explore sites around the city-centre that have played a part in making Manchester a centre for peace, industry and radicalism. The walk will last approx 1.5 hours (from 2pm to 3.30pm), finishing near Manchester Cathedral.

Please meet by the Emmeline Pankhurst Statue in St Peter's Square at 1.45pm for a 2pm start. Booking essential. TICKETS BY DONATION. All proceeds go to The Pankhurst Centre.

<https://pankhursttrust.org/get-involved/events/international-womens-day-walk-manchester-peace-trail>

### HCRI Research Seminar - Putin's Human Rights

**4 – 6 pm Tuesday 10th March**

**HCRI Research Seminar with Sergey Nikitin, former Head of Amnesty International office in Russia.**

If you missed Sergei's fascinating talk to the Manchester Group a couple of years ago you can catch it again at this Manchester University seminar which is open to the public.

See <https://events.manchester.ac.uk/event/event:q91-k5fesea4-pzple>

Sergei's talk is about Russia's human rights violations record and Amnesty International's existence in a country where the term 'human rights' is often changed by the media and the authorities to the term, 'so-called human rights', where the authorities deny the universality of human rights and insist it is 'traditional values' that matter whereas 'human rights' are a western invention.

Sergei will cover the difficulties faced by human rights defenders in Russia (police harassment, the threat of the Amnesty International Russia office closure, the foreign agents list, the undesirable organisations list, etc) with examples from his personal experiences. Sergei will talk about how the political climate changed during his years as Director and how Amnesty International, a foreign organisation, was able to continue to operate in an increasingly unfriendly political climate. Sergei's talk will look at different areas of Amnesty International activity (lobbying, peaceful demonstrations, campaigning, HR education in schools, HR education amongst law enforcement officers, HR research, including monitoring of the situation in the North Caucasus, and Georgia), and discuss the possibilities and the limitation of HR work in Russia over the past 15 years and at the present time.

This event is open to members of the public and no booking is required, so please simply turn up. There will be a networking session from 6-7pm, with free snacks and refreshments. Located in room C5.1 in the Ellen Wilkinson Building.  
Price: Free

### The Impact of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In partnership with FutureLearn AIUK have developed this awesome online course "Defending Dignity: The Universal

## Declaration of Human Rights\*

On the course you will learn:

- Dignity and Human Rights
- Promoting Equality and Non-Discrimination in your community
- Shaping a Society based on Human Rights principles

The course starts on 13 April 2020 and is completely free.

**Find out more** and sign up at:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/the-universal-declaration-of-human-rights/2>

## National Conference & AGM 20-21 June

The next Annual General Meeting takes place 20-21 June 2020 at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham. You can **book your place at:** <https://www.eventsforce.net/blueprint/frontend/reg/thome.cs?p?pageID=45953&eventID=114&traceRedir=2> or find more information on the AIUK website.

Entry is free for all Amnesty members!

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](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk)