



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

## April 2020

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

### On-line Group Meeting 6.30pm Monday 6th April

Our regular Group meeting is due on April 6<sup>th</sup> (brought forward a week to avoid the Easter weekend). We are going to attempt to have a short meeting on-line using Zoom. Currently, the coordinators are having some practice with on-line meetings to see how it all works. Hopefully, we will feel confident to give it a go for the whole group by next week.

**We will send out a link over the weekend. Keep an eye out for it.**

## Campaigning

### Our work during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Obviously, all planned events have been cancelled for the foreseeable future. Human rights abuses do not stop, however, and the work of Amnesty International needs to continue through this time of emergency. Sadly, we are already seeing coronavirus specific HR violations (e.g. police heavy-handedness in some countries).

There are still ways of making a difference and we encourage you to get involved, both in your local community's response and by taking time to send appeals and take action. This is particularly important to help those who are most disadvantaged – refugees (both in the UK and in camps), those living in poverty with little access to health care, and those in prison around the world.

This newsletter is full of ways that you can make sure that our voice for compassion and justice is still heard in this difficult time.

### Refugee Rights

We are facing many challenges as a result of COVID 19, as a city, as a nation, and globally. Each of us are being asked to reduce our activities and minimise the way we live our lives. This is difficult for many of us for lots of reasons. Consider how much harder it is to self-isolate if you don't have your own accommodation that is safe and secure, a situation faced by many destitute asylum seekers. We are being asked to limit the amount of times we go shopping and buy enough for a week; again, this is really difficult for asylum seekers as they only receive £37.75 a week and can often only spend it in certain stores.

Many charities in the refugee sector in Manchester have had to close their drop ins, meaning those most vulnerable aren't getting the support they need or social interaction to reduce mental health issues.

There are a few ways people can get involved and support the more invisible people in our communities stay safe:

<https://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/covid-19-community-volunteering-0>

<https://covidmutualaid.org/local-groups/>

Manchester City of Sanctuary, a local group we have been working with, are signatories to an open letter sent to PM Boris Johnson, calling for all undocumented people, destitute and migrant people to be granted status. **In this way every human, irrespective of their nationality or citizenship, will be able to access healthcare, housing, food, and the same sources of income from the State as everyone else.**

The petition can be found below:

<https://www.change.org/p/prime-minister-boris-johnson-access-to-healthcare-housing-and-food-for-all>

On a wider scale, there is still a lot you can do to support our work welcoming refugees and asylum seekers and add your voice to those asking for families to be welcomed and people working with refugees not to be criminalised.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/sarah-sean-greece-sea-rescue-volunteers> - Please sign this petition. Séán spoke at the Secret Policeman's Ball we attended last year, and it was so moving to hear about the work he did in Greece and the punishment he could face if convicted.

If you're feeling creative, you could write a poem for Families Together <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-poem-families-together>

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

#### Using Twitter

20th March marked three years since Ahmed's arrest. Some of us took part in a Twitter storm for Ahmed organised by the

International Campaign for Freedom in the United Arab Emirates (ICFUAE). We would like to keep up the flow of Tweets. If you are on Twitter, please take a moment to send a Tweet. Here are some examples to get you going.

Human rights defender @Ahmed\_Mansoor has been detained in #UAE for over 3 years. He has committed no crime. We urge @HHShkMohd & @MohamedBinZayed to free him immediately & unconditionally. #FreeAhmed @amnestymanc

3 years after his arrest @Ahmed\_Mansoor remains in prison amid the #COVID19 outbreak. His health has significantly deteriorated following his hunger strikes in protest at his ill-treatment by guards & poor detention conditions. We fear for his life if this continues. We urge @MohamedBinZayed to #FreeAhmed now. @amnestymanc

As #COVID19 spreads in #UAE & globally we urge @MohamedBinZayed & @HHShkMohd to release HRD @Ahmed\_Mansoor. He is in very poor health & detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression. #FreeAhmed @amnestymanc

3 years ago @Ahmed\_Mansoor was arrested in #UAE for peacefully exercising his right to #FreedomOfSpeech. His health is deteriorating & he remains in solitary confinement. Join me and @AmnestyUK in urging @MohamedBinZayed to #FreeAhmed now @amnestymanc

#### Appeals Rota

Some of us take turns to write regular appeal letters on behalf of Mohammed and Ahmed. If you want to join the rota, drop Anne Walker an email and she'll send you details: [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com).

We are also encouraged to take a photo of our letters and Tweet them as this makes our campaigning more visible.

**The more people we have letter writing / emailing / Tweeting, the more effective we will be.**

#### Individuals at risk

We were due to have our regular letter writing session at the Eighth Day Café on Saturday but, obviously, that was cancelled. However, we created virtual meeting on Facebook instead and invited people to write the letters/emails and Tweets at home. At least 6 people took part (which is better than we often get at the Eighth Day) and well over 60 appeals were sent.

Thanks to those who let me know.

We usually do a mixture of long-term cases from the Real Lives leaflet and some Urgent Action appeals. You can do these any time - access details of Urgent Action cases at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions> and the Real Life leaflet at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/real-lives-spring-2020>.

If you look on the Amnesty UK website ([www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)) there are always lots of actions to do. You can take action on behalf of against Tujan al-Bukhaiti, a 17-year-old Yemini refugee living in Jordan. She is being tried over charges of "blasphemy"

and "insulting religious feelings" over her social media posts expressing her opinion on religious and intellectual topics and sharing her father's posts.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/tujan-jordan-prison-facebook-posts>

#### Crisis and Tactical

##### SYRIA

#### A HUGE THANK YOU!!

A huge thank you to everyone who has made a donation to Amnesty for their work in Syria. To date, we have collected the incredible amount of **£2,430!!!**

The news is even better, since donations made to Amnesty through local groups throughout March and April 2020 will be matched by major donors. This means that the amount collected will be doubled to **£4,860!!!** We are speechless.

You have all been incredibly generous and understanding given that, due to the current health emergency, we had to cancel our event, Syrian Kitchen. Our thanks go to Simona and Catherine for putting in a lot of work organising what was going to be a such great event. We will look into organising an event in some form when the current situation improves (watch this space). In the meantime, however, your money will go towards building justice for Syria.



**ACTION:** if you want to be part of this incredible wave of solidarity and donate to Amnesty's Syrian campaign, please contact us:

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

#### PALESTINE

##### ICC investigation

In December 19, the ICC (International Criminal Court) announced that they would open an investigation in order to establish whether action from Israeli forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories amounts to war crimes.

Amnesty International has called on governments to offer their full political and practical support to the ICC as it decides on its jurisdiction over the "situation in Palestine" and to urge those states who have sought to challenge that jurisdiction to reconsider their positions.

##### Covid-19 in Gaza

Being one of the most densely populated areas in the world, Gaza is struggling to cope with recent



Covid-19 crisis. Amnesty has found that in Gaza 'there are chronic shortages of drugs and other medical supplies. Hospitals and clinics are frequently forced to get by on just 4-6 hours of

electricity a day. Israeli forces have also routinely attacked medical staff and ambulances'.

[PT\\_AT&utm\\_content=11174&utm\\_source=amnestyuk&utm\\_medium=email](#)

Here is more information:

[https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/covid-19-intensifies-humanitarian-crisis-palestinians?utm\\_campaign=MEMA2356\\_UPT\\_GEN\\_COVID\\_10](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/covid-19-intensifies-humanitarian-crisis-palestinians?utm_campaign=MEMA2356_UPT_GEN_COVID_10)

**ACTION!** If you want to help become a member of Amnesty and get involved in campaigning for the rights of Palestinian people

## Group News

### Group Officers

We had our AGM last month (see minutes attached) elected new group officers.

Role	Officer
Chair	Hazel Errey
Vice-chair	Rebecca Shaw
Secretary	Anne Walker
Treasurer	Sean Dunne
Members sec	Lil Ratcliffe, Kathryn Fletcher
Social media and Press	Pascal Checkley, Steve Lindsay, Ola Bochenek
Website	Anne Walker, Sean Dunne

In addition, we reviewed this year's planning pack, and decided to participate as follows:

Campaigns	Comments	Lead
BRAVE campaign	To use material at appropriate events etc, to concentrate most of our HRD work on UAE prisoners of conscience	NA
Crisis and tactical	Important to respond to current world situations	Simona Mattanza, Catherine Garnet
I WELCOME Refugee Rights	Hope to participate in Refugee Week and build contacts in the community.	Liz Hibberd
UAE	To continue our PoC case work	Lil Ratcliffe, Kathryn Fletcher
Human rights in the UK	To react as a group when required	NA
Individuals at Risk	To continue our bimonthly letter writing	Mary McBride
World Region – Middle East	To opt in so as to support our UAE and Crisis work	Lil Ratcliffe
World Region - Europe (i.e. Turkey)	To continue work on Turkey and possibly expand to other countries within Europe	Fatih Segmen
Children's Rights	Watching brief only	Fatih Segmen
Women's rights	Watching brief only	Mary Gibbs
LGBTI	Watching brief and Pride	Liam Johnston

## Volunteers still needed!

### Please note:

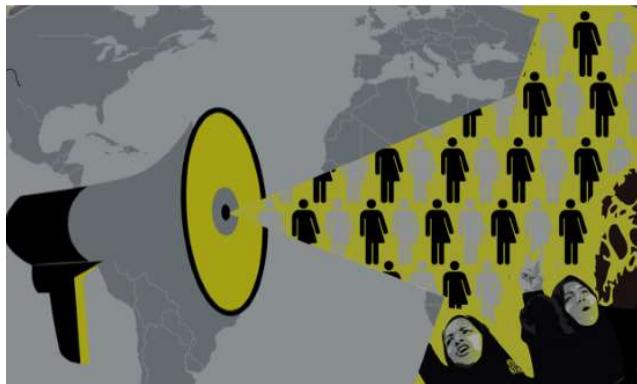
We need someone to organise our regular city centre street collection (currently scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> September). Sean has done this for quite a few years now and would like to step down. However, he will be around to show you the ropes.

We will also need someone to coordinate our Write for Rights campaigning in the run up to Christmas.

Get in touch with Hazel ([hazelerrey@gmail.com](mailto:hazelerrey@gmail.com)) or Anne ([anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com)) to discuss what is involved.

## Other News

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### Online courses

Want to develop your knowledge of human rights, and get the skills and confidence to defend?

Amnesty has a whole range of on-line learning

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/online-learning>

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)