



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2020

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigning

Turkey

There has been very disturbing news from Turkey regarding Taner Kilic, Chair of Amnesty International Turkey and other Amnesty members. See the press release from Amnesty International at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/turkey-court-deals-crushing-blow-for-human-rights-and-for-justice-as-four-activists-convicted/>. Some of you will have received this letter from the AIUK Director Kate Allen, but for those who haven't, here it is in full:



Dear Friends

I wanted to write to you all this evening after a very difficult day hearing the news from Istanbul that our colleague Taner Kilic, the honorary Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, was today convicted of being a member of a terrorist organisation and sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in jail. Idil Esler the former Director of Amnesty Turkey and two other members of the Istanbul 10 were also given prison sentences for assisting.

This is an outrageous miscarriage of justice and it is heartbreaking to think of the impact on our colleagues and their families. It is also frightening to think of the signal that it sends to human rights defenders in Turkey. If even members of Amnesty International, with all of our strength as a global movement, aren't safe, then who is?

I have personally attended 9 of the 12 hearings for this group of people. The charges have been proved to be completely groundless from the start. It is outrageous that any of these people have spent any time behind bars, let alone now being subjected to a further sentence. They now have a right to appeal, and at the time of writing there have been no detention orders and so they are not being taken to prison from the courthouse.

The purpose of my writing to you today is to bring you up to date with what is happening and to thank you for all the work that you have done so far to fight for justice for our colleagues in Turkey. AIUK could not have done more to exert pressure on the Turkish Authorities and to provide solidarity and support to our colleagues. Having spent so much time with them over the past 3 years I know how much they have valued that and the impact it has had.

There will be more for us to do now as they appeal their convictions. We will take our lead from Amnesty Turkey and the IS and no doubt we will be taking action again to try to quash these outrageous convictions. I will be writing to the staff at Amnesty Turkey tonight to share our solidarity and love and I know we will all want to do all we can, and this is one of those times where being part of a global movement feels more important than ever.

I wish we could all be together at this time to provide support, solidarity and inspiration, but I know we are all together in spirit.

We will share any news and future action when we have it.

In the meantime, I wish you all a restful weekend. We will be thinking of Taner, Idil and all of the brave human rights defenders in Turkey, and it is good to know that we are doing that together, ready to continue our support for them when they need us.

Thank you and stay safe

Kate

UAE (Mohammed al-Roken & Ahmed Mansoor)

July group meeting

Oscar Jenz, the AIUK UAE Country Coordinator, will be talking at the next meeting about human rights in the UAE and we will discuss how to maximise our campaigning.

Twitter storm Sunday 19th at 11am - 12 noon

We will be contacting Amnesty groups and other organisations campaigning for Ahmed Mansoor and Mohamed al-Roken and asking them to join in. We plan to focus on the concern due to reported cases of Covid 19 in UAE prisons.

We will discuss the best approach at the meeting with Oscar on 13th July. Any ideas for pithy tweets welcome!

**PLEASE JOIN THE TWITTER STORM.
MORE DETAILS NEARER THE TIME.**

UAE campaign subgroup

Our subgroup, which leads and plans our UAE campaigning, has been busy over the last couple of weeks.

Sir Richard's Statement

Following the Black Lives Matter protests in Manchester, Sir Richard Leese, Leader of the City Council, released a statement which included the following statement that we totally endorse: *"Manchester has always and will always support the right to peaceful protest as the foundation of a fair and just society. We must stand in solidarity beside those who face discrimination and victimisation, be vocal and create a platform for their voice to be heard"*

See

https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/8447/council_leader_thanks_protesters_following_peaceful_black_lives_matter_demonstration for his full statement.

Having read this, we wrote to Sir Richard Leese to ask him to extend his support to the right to protest in the UAE. We are waiting for his reply. We have also written to the MEN, Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, and some of the City councillors who have supported our UAE campaigning in the past.

Trying to make the most of football

We have written to several journalists asking them to include information about the human rights abuses in the UAE when they write articles about the coming CAS decision on the MCFC appeal against their ban for financial irregularities.

WhatsApp group

We have set up a UAE Campaign Group WhatsApp group for those of us who are actively involved in this campaign,

so we can communicate quickly. If you'd like to join, email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Letter writing rota

If you haven't got time to be in the subgroup but still want to be involved, you could join our letter writing rota. This involves sending letters and emails to the UAE authorities on behalf of Ahmed and Mohamed a few times a year. Kathryn Fletcher has taken over masterminding this, email her at bussk@btinternet.com.

Crisis and Tactical

SYRIA

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's action, calling on the Russian government to support the renewal of the UN resolution on 10th July allowing the delivery of vital aid to NW Syria. There is a danger that Russia will veto the renewal, cutting off a lifeline for hundreds of thousands.

Sign the petition before 10th July!

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/demand-aid-for-north-west-syria/>

Sweida detainees

Amnesty calls on the Syrian government to immediately and unconditionally release 11 men who were detained following peaceful protests in the predominantly-Druze city of Sweida.

"The Syrian authorities are waging a campaign of intimidation - again involving enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions - to try to stop peaceful protesters from voicing their concerns," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director.

"The Syrian government's brutal response to protests since 2011 has led to years of bloodshed and unfathomable suffering for people in Syria. This latest crackdown goes to show that the government has no intent of changing its brutal and repressive practices nine years on."

Read more here:

<https://amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/syria-peaceful-protesters-detained-in-sweida-must-be-released-immediately/>

HONG KONG

After the sudden introduction of China's security law for Hong Kong on 30th June, Amnesty sees many threats to human rights. So-called crimes of separatism, subversion, terrorism and "collusion with foreign or overseas powers" to endanger national security are banned under the law. The law allows for secret trials, handpicked judges, and mainland Chinese security agencies operating freely in Hong Kong. Already protestors have been arrested under this new law.

As the head of Amnesty International's China Team, Joshua Rosenzweig puts it 'Beijing has calculatingly created a weapon of repression to be used against government critics, including people who are merely expressing their views or protesting peacefully'.

While welcoming the extension of visa rights for those with Hong Kong citizens with British National Overseas status, AIUK is calling on 'the full support of the UK Government' to ensure activists are not left at the mercy of Beijing - read the press release <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/hong-kong-front-line-activists-need-full-support-uk-government>.

Take Action now!

Retweet + Comment on Amnesty's video about the law - remember to tag @amnestymanc
<https://twitter.com/AmnestyUK/status/1277963749106712581?s=20>

PALESTINE

Petition delivered to Tripadvisor



On 25th June, Amnesty delivered a petition to TripAdvisor's CEO, Stephen Kaufer, calling on the organisation to remove from its website listings of amenities and activities in illegal Israeli settlements, located on Palestinian land in the West Bank. The petition was signed by more than 300,000 people worldwide.

By profiting from the advertisement of these amenities, digital tourism companies like TripAdvisor are contributing to human rights violations and even war crimes by the hands of the Israeli government. According to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, in fact, transferring the occupying power's civilians onto occupied land amounts to war crime.

An example of such amenities is a vineyard and an archaeological site in Susya in the southern Hebron hills, an Israeli settlement that has forced generations of Palestinians out of their homes. Palestinians are forbidden from entering the site, including even ex-residents of the village on whose ruins the site was constructed.

Last year, TripAdvisor stated:

"We understand that this issue is a sensitive matter with cultural and political implications. The listing of a property or business on TripAdvisor does not represent our endorsement of that establishment."

No statements have been issued since then, despite requests for comments from Amnesty ahead of the delivery of the petition. This is not good enough.

Watch this space!

Annexation: law of the jungle

Israel is planning the annexation of approximately a third of the occupied West Bank that include Israeli settlements and the Jordan Valley. This is the part of an agreement between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival Benny Gantz to form a coalition government.

Annexation is the claim to acquire territory by force and is a flagrant violation of international law. Such a step by Israel would violate the UN Charter, norms of international law and obligations under international humanitarian law.

Amnesty International is calling on the Israeli authorities to abandon such plans and on the international community to take firm action against the annexation proposal.

The UK Government has said it [opposes](#) the annexation plan, but it has not specified what action it would be prepared to take if the annexation went ahead. Amnesty is calling on the UK to clarify the consequences of an Israeli annexation.

Kate Allen, Amnesty International UK Director, said: *"UK ministers have said they oppose annexation, just as they've always said they opposed the settlements - but they need to be clear that rogue behaviour from Israel of this magnitude needs a resounding response. As a minimum, we want to see the UK stopping goods from Israel's illegal settlements from entering the UK market, and stopping UK companies from operating in the settlements or trading in settlements goods."*



Israeli soldiers escorting an Israeli settler through the West Bank

Good news for campaigners!

In Sept 2009, five campaigners of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement handed out leaflets in a supermarket in north-eastern France, calling for a boycott

of Israeli products. They were charged with “incitement to discrimination”, a criminal offence in France, and convicted to a suspended fine of €1,000 and €7,000 in damages. On the 11th June European Court of Human Rights stated that the convictions violated their right to freedom of expression.

Marco Perolini, Amnesty International’s France Researcher stated: *“Amnesty does not take a view on the BDS movement. It is up to individuals and organisations to determine what strategies to use in furtherance of human rights. We believe that advocates of BDS should be allowed to express their views and take forward their campaigns without harassment, threats of prosecution or criminalisation, or other measures that violate the right to freedom of expression.”*

YEMEN

CAAT will be back in Court

The organisation Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) will be back in Court against the UK Government, which is challenging the Court of Appeal’s 2019 ruling that all new UK licences for the export of weapons to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen must be halted and all existing licences be reviewed.

Despite the Court of Appeal’s 2019 decision, the UK government and UK arms manufacturers have continued to supply weapons to the Saudi regime, profiting from the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. The case will be heard between 23rd and 25th November 2020.

(Information taken from Caat’s website)

TAKE ACTION!

If you want to make a donation to help CAAT pay legal expenses, please use the following link: <https://www.caat.org.uk/support-our-work/donate>

Although this is not an action for Amnesty, we want to support it. Amnesty have also campaigned on this issue. Caat has won against the UK government in the previous hearings and we hope they will win this final round.



UN must reconsider de-listing of Saudi Arabia from UN watchlist for violation of children’s rights

Amnesty International and 23 other NGOs have [written](#) to UN Secretary General António Guterres calling on him to reconsider the de-listing of Saudi Arabia from a UN watchlist of warring states and armed groups found to be violating children’s rights.

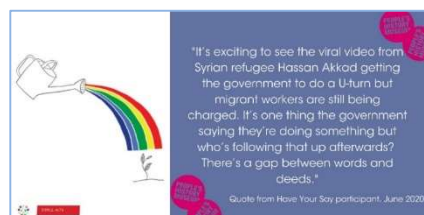
In 2015, Saudi Arabia was included in the children and armed conflict report because of its conduct in Yemen. However, it was removed the following year by then Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who later publicly criticised Saudi Arabia for effectively blackmailing the UN by threatening to de-fund UN programmes. The reports published in 2017 and 2018 again downplayed Saudi Arabia’s role in endangering Yemeni children.

For the past five years, Amnesty has [reported extensively](#) on how all parties to the Yemen conflict have committed violations of international humanitarian law - including likely war crimes - against children and other civilians. Sherine Tadros, Head of Amnesty International’s UN Office in New York, said *“The Saudi Arabia and UAE-led Coalition has rained down bombs on Yemeni children as they travelled in a school bus and in their homes as they slept, as well as used internationally-banned cluster bombs that can maim and kill children for years to come. “This premature delisting shows the UN’s mechanism is highly compromised and therefore warrants a full, transparent review of how it’s working. Year on year, we have seen it weakened and a course correction is desperately needed to ensure an accurate and consistent approach to the listing process. The only way we see that happening is if Secretary-General Guterres initiates a full and independent review.”*

Refugee Rights

The first virtual Refugee Week was successful held, with many engaging and informative events taking place across the country but especially locally.

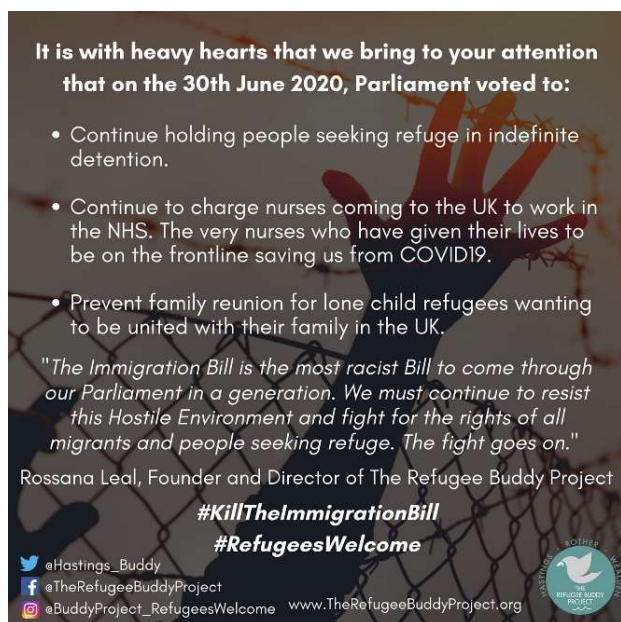
Almost 80 people joined an online talk with Tom Davies, Priority Campaign Manager at Amnesty International UK and Caroline Pritchard, Campaign Coordinator for the Families Together Coalition about the I Welcome/Families Together campaign. It was an interesting and motivating evening where we heard about the origins of the campaign and looked at how the campaign was due to move forward. We also looked ahead to how we could get involved in the Football Welcomes campaign and hope to do so.



(Photo from People’s History Museum, 2020)

Locally, several group members took part in an event in conjunction with People's History Museum and members of the wider community, including participants of their Community Programme Team, all of whom have lived experience of migration and the need to claim sanctuary. We discussed how Covid 19 was changing people's perceptions of migration and about refugees and asylum seekers.

Unfortunately, off the back of a very positive Refugee Week, we enter July with some frustrating and disheartening news.



Alongside this, we had the news of two serious attacks that took place in Reading and Glasgow that demonstrating the truly heartbreaking results of a lack of mental health provision for asylum seekers stuck in the system.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/28/home-office-urged-investigate-treatment-asylum-seekers-in-glasgow>

Europe

Twitter Action for Nadera



Syrian refugee Nadera Almonla was attempting to cross a river on the Turkey to Greece border with her husband and

children. Greek soldiers fired shots towards them and Nadera disappeared. We still don't know what has happened to her.

Join in the Twitter action to ask the President of Greece @kmitsotakis #WhereisNaderaAlmonla

See <https://humanrightsturkey.org/> for more details.

Positive news from Hungary

You may remember reading about two Iranian sisters studying in Hungary who were made a scapegoat for Hungary's state propaganda on Covid 19. The great news is, that at the last minute their deportation was cancelled and they both can now complete their studies in Hungary.

You may also be aware that Hungary has legislated to criminalize NGO's and charities who are supporting the most vulnerable including refugees. There has been a ruling of the European Court of Justice:

The Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) declared that Hungary's "foreign funding" legislation is in clear breach of EU law in imposing discriminatory and unjustified restrictions on the financing of civil organisations by persons established outside the country, contrary to free movement of capital. Moreover, the CJEU ruled that these restrictions violate the right to freedom of association, the rights to respect for private and family life and to the protection of personal data

Women's Rights

Northern Ireland - Women still prevented from obtaining care

The change in the law on abortion in Northern Ireland has been very welcome, but it is not (yet) enough to provide full equality. Apart from anything else, it was finally implemented just before lockdown, and many services have simply not yet been established. And although the law in mainland Britain has been modified (because of Covid 19 restrictions) to allow pregnant women to have a doctor's assessment over the phone, with provision of tablets for medical abortions to be taken at home, (thus avoiding the requirement to attend a clinic), this has not been extended to Northern Ireland. Combined with the fact that a substantial number of Northern Ireland doctors are still unwilling to provide abortion advice, or even to refer women, this means that - at present - abortions are still difficult or impossible to access for many Northern Ireland women.

Please follow the link

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/northern-ireland-abortion-coronavirus-covid-19>

to sign an email to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland demanding the same care for women in Northern Ireland as women on the mainland already have.

Group News

July Group Meeting Online

6.30pm Monday 13th July

With Oscar Jenz, AIUK UAE Country Coordinator

Our regular Group Meeting will again online and we will spend part of the meeting hearing from Oscar Jenz and discussing our campaigning on behalf of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohamed al-Roken. We will have our usual business discussions as well – please let Hazel know if you want anything adding to the agenda.

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

Weekly Actions.

We are keeping going with the Weekly Actions, at least until we can start face to face events again. They will appear in your inbox Friday morning and we ask you to do them during the following week. Last week we featured the online petition to Russia regarding Syria and we are planning a photo action on behalf of Ahmed for this coming Friday.

If you have any ideas for future actions, please drop Anne Walker an email with your suggestion – anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Please take part and make a difference!

Group Meetings

Our Group meetings will continue online for the next few months. For our August meeting, when traditionally we would be preparing to take part in the Manchester Pride Parade, Rob Cookson, Deputy Chief Executive of LGBT Foundation will join us. The LGBT Foundation is a national charity delivering advice, support and information services to LGBT communities.

Mailing Lists

We have used Yahoo groups to keep our email lists for many years. Recently, we have been having problems getting people onto the lists and our secretary Anne is seriously looking at alternatives. If you have any experience of using mailing services such as MailChimp or MailerLite, Anne would love to chat with you. Please email her at anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

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 contact Treasurer Sean Dunne and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

(Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com)

Thanks!

Other News

Pride Inside

As most Pride events have been cancelled due to the pandemic, Amnesty International UK, UK Black Pride, ParaPride and Gendered Intelligence, with support from Stonewall, have teamed up to bring Pride 2020 online with Pride Inside. It started 27th June and we hope that you caught some events. There's still time as it continues until 10th July with events every day – see <https://prideinside.uk/>

Online courses

Do you 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>

Talk on Brazil

Richard Crossfield, South American country coordinator, is doing a Zoom presentation on the situation in Brazil and how this region is coping with Covid 19. His talk is scheduled for **Thurs 23 July 7pm** and will last about half hour with opportunities for q & a.

If you wish to receive the link, please email philipnewsham780@gmail.com.

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