



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

**August 2020**

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

## Campaigning

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

#### Update on Ahmed Mansoor and Mohamed Al-Roken

Ahmed remains in solitary confinement at Al-Sadr prison in Abu Dhabi and has been denied access to his family since April 2020. Mohamed AL-Roken remains detained in Al-Razeen prison. There are concerns for the health of both men, in particular because of one reported case of Covid19 in a prison.

#### Meeting with City councillors

We had a really positive meeting last week with two councillors who would like to work with us. We hope to reach out to other interested councillors and help them bring a motion to the council to make a statement of support for these two prisoners of conscience.

#### Protest at the Etihad 7<sup>th</sup> August 6pm – 7.30pm

We plan to hold a small socially distanced vigil for Ahmed Mansoor outside the media car park entrance to the Etihad. The press will have to drive past us as they come to report the game against Real Madrid in the Champions League. We are not expecting any fans to be present. It is possible to park close by in a housing estate and we will meet there.

### COME ALONG AND JOIN US

Please let us know if you want to join us at [kathrynbuss@gmail.com](mailto:kathrynbuss@gmail.com)

#### Twitter storm August 20<sup>th</sup>

We are planning to take part in a twitter storm with several other Amnesty groups in the UK and Germany who are campaigning for Ahmed Mansoor and Mohamed Al-Roken. English PEN, ICFUAE and Friends of Ahmed are also taking part. Kathryn will send out more detailed information with sample tweets nearer the time.

### PLEASE JOIN IN!

#### Letter writing rota

Many thanks for everyone taking part in this. Please let Kathryn know if you wish to be added (or removed).

#### UAE WhatsApp group

Please let Kathryn know if you want to be more involved and join our UAE WhatsApp group.

### Crisis and Tactical

#### OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

**Palestinian-Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab region in the south of Israel face home demolitions that continue through Covid-19**

Today, about 270,000 Palestinian-Bedouins reside in the Negev/Naqab. Most of the community lives in one these townships and 11 newly "recognised" villages. The rest - about 100,000 people - have refused to give up their native and historical rights and are peacefully resisting to remain in their villages, which Israel refuses to recognise.

This non-recognition has important implications: no access to water, electricity, sewage, trash disposal and other essential services, making daily life extremely harsh for the Bedouins. The only service that operates around the clock is house demolitions, backed by racist planning and construction laws: and in violation of human rights and international law.

Read more in a blogpost written by coordinators from Negev Coexistence Forum, a Women led Joint Arab-Jewish NGO fighting for Civil Equality in the region: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/palestinian-bedouin-communities-living-israel-more-vulnerable-ever-during>

Find out more about Negev Coexistence Forum's work here: <https://www.dukium.org/>

#### Amnesty Campaigner on Israel and the OPT address UN about travel ban

Laith Abu Zeyad, Amnesty International's Campaigner on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) - a Palestinian living in the occupied West Bank - addressed the UN Human Rights Council about the travel ban imposed on him by the Israeli authorities since October 2019 for undisclosed "security reasons".

Read about it here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/israelopt-amnesty-staff-member-to-speak-at-un-human-rights-council-about-his-punitive-travel-ban/>

## Annexation

In last month's newsletter we shared Netanyahu and Trump's plans to further annex territory in the occupied Palestinian West Bank, a move which Amnesty International fully condemned. The Israeli authorities planned to do this on 1st July. A month later, these plans have thankfully still not been made reality. International and Israeli outcry may be playing a role in this, as well as fears that Trump will lose the 2020 election, and Israel would gain a far less sympathetic American president.

Here is Amnesty's press release from 1st July, we'll look out for any updates.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/israelopt-annexation-plan-law-jungle>

## SYRIA

### Humanitarian aid allowed to continue in Syria!

Last month we took action and asked the Russian government to vote in favour of the renewal of a UN resolution to keep allowing the delivery of food, medicine and other humanitarian aid to reach Syrian civilians, through the Syrian/Turkey.

Russia and China initially vetoed the renewal of this resolution putting the lives of millions of Syrian civilians at risk. However, after long negotiations the resolution was renewed until July 2021.

**Thank you for having taken action!**



Syrian civilians in refugee camps

## MYANMAR

### Atrocities against civilians carry on

Despite the international outcry and a recent court case at the International Court of Justice against Myanmar's government and its military, Amnesty International has new evidence of atrocities towards civilians and abuses of human rights.

Through remote interviews of civilians, the analysis of fresh satellite images and verified video footage Amnesty was able to report of indiscriminate airstrikes by the hands of the Myanmar military, which have killed civilians, including children.



Satellite images showing the attacked areas

The victims are predominantly from Buddhist and Christian ethnic minorities in Rakhine and Chin States, although Rohingya civilians have also been affected.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [estimated](#) that in July an additional 10,000 people fled their homes as a result of heavy fighting and warnings of advancing military operations.

The attacks are part of military operations against rebel organisations, which Myanmar officially labelled unlawful. The fighting between the two parties surged between March and May 2020.

Furthermore, residents in the areas affected by the bombings have been kept in the dark over COVID-19 and vital information about humanitarian assistance, since internet was cut off over a year ago.

Once again, Amnesty is calling on the ICC (International Criminal Court) to intervene.

Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Regional Director, stated:

“The reliance on airstrikes and internet blackouts may be new, but one constant is the military's remorseless neglect for civilian life”. “The atrocities have not stopped – in fact, the Myanmar military's cruelty is only getting more sophisticated. This relentless pattern of violations is clearly a matter for the ICC. The Security Council must act.”

## HONG KONG

Hong Kong is not officially part of our Crisis and Tactical campaigns yet, but it could potentially become one in the near future. In the meantime, we will give you updates and will ask you to do some actions, when requested by Amnesty.

## Arrests under new security law

On 30th June 2020 a new security law that criminalises acts of “separatism, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign or external forces” was enacted. The law also asserts jurisdiction over alleged offences committed outside Hong Kong and can compel arrested individuals to answer questions, even if leads to self-incrimination. This is in breach of the right to silence, essential part of the presumption of innocence and fair trial. Under this new law, offences are punishable by a minimum sentence of three years and a maximum of life imprisonment.

On 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 four activists aged between 16 and 21 were arrested under Articles 20 and 21 of this new law. The activists were all member of Studentlocalism, a pro-independence group, which publicly announced the dissolution of its Hong Kong branch the day before the security law was enacted, while founding a US branch for overseas members. Computers, phones and documents were seized in police raids on the home of Studentlocalism’s former leader Tony Chung.

Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Regional Director, said:

“The idea that anybody can now be jailed for expressing their political opinion on Facebook or Instagram will send a chill throughout Hong Kong society.

“International human rights laws do not allow states to restrict all peaceful expression in the name of national security. No-one should be arrested solely for expressing an opinion that is contrary to that of the government.

“The Hong Kong authorities must stop using national security as a pretext to excessively restrict freedom of expression and other human rights.”



Police patrolling streets in Hong Kong

## Pro-democracy candidates disqualified from elections

On 30<sup>th</sup> July the government of Hong Kong disqualified 12 pro-democracy candidates from running in the forthcoming Legislative Council elections, due to their advocating for Hong Kong independence, soliciting intervention by foreign

governments, and objecting to the recently-enacted [National Security Law](#). Among them is prominent opposition figure Joshua Wong, as well as lawmakers and young activists who secured the most votes in the pro-democracy “primaries” last month.

Lam Cho Ming, Amnesty International Hong Kong’s Programme Manager, said: *“This mass disqualification appears to be a concerted effort specifically targeting candidates who advocate viewpoints at odds with those of the government. This move is likely to intensify the climate of fear and tension in Hong Kong, where opposition figures, their supporters, activists on the streets and even ordinary people have been forced to self-censor their political discourse to avoid being targeted under the city’s new National Security Law.”*

## Take Action now!

**Retweet + Comment on Amnesty’s video about the Hong Kong National Security law**  
remember to tag @amnestymanc

<https://twitter.com/AmnestyUK/status/1277963749106712581?s=20>

## Refugee Rights

As lockdown continues to ease, and as life is cautiously returning to something that looks more recognisable, we are only just starting to see the real impact that the pandemic has had on those vulnerable in society. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jul/20/women-seeking-asylum-left-without-basic-support-during-uk-lockdown>

Whether this is at a local level, national or international, we continue to witness how those seeking safety from war and persecution; those whose human rights are often ignored, are once again most at risk from deepening ostracization, social isolation and worsening mental health issues.

We continue to campaign for refugees and asylum seekers to be treated more humanely, to have access to health care, adequate housing, and the right to work. With the Prime Minister unaware of some of the toughest restrictions facing those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/why-doesnt-prime-minister-know-about-nrpf> we need to keep raising our voices and to help those whose voices aren’t heard.

On a local level, there are still many refugee organisations that are looking for donations of IT hardware like laptops, so that people can stay connected, keep communicating and reduce social isolation. Most groups are still not doing face-to-face events yet, so are providing social sessions and activities such as yoga, coffee mornings and music



sessions via zoom – only accessible however if you have a laptop or smartphone.

## Women's Rights

### DOMESTIC ABUSE BILL



Due to the current situation, AIUK have not been able to physically deliver the above petition. Instead they have

written to Priti Patel to notify her of the number of people who have signed the petition. The Domestic Abuse Bill has completed its first stage in the Commons. Sadly migrant women have not currently been included in the Bill. The Bill is now moving to the House of Lords.

Amnesty will be working to ensure the Bill has proper scrutiny in the Lords and amendments are made to make sure all domestic abuse survivors get the help they need

### NORTHERN IRELAND

If you haven't taken action on the deplorable access to abortion services in Northern Ireland, as highlighted in our last newsletter and a recent Weekly Action, please do so at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/northern-ireland-abortion-coronavirus-covid-19>

## Group News

### August Group Meeting Online

6.30pm Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August

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.

**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. We are featuring actions from Amnesty websites and also actions from other organisations close to Amnesty's concerns.

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

**Please take part and make a difference!**

### Group Meetings

Our Group meetings will continue online for the next few months. In September we are hoping to explore the issue of antisemitism and the implications for Amnesty campaigns with AIUK staff member Rebecca Ngyen van Thuy – tbc.

### Mailing Lists

We are looking at changing the way we send out newsletters. 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](mailto: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.

[\(Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com\)](mailto:Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com)

**Thanks!**

## Other News

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### Amnesty North West Virtual Session

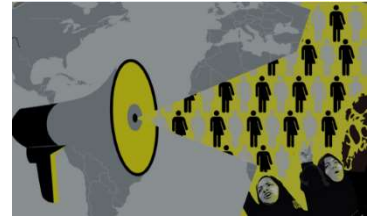
The next virtual session is being planned for **Tuesday August 11th 7pm to 9pm** to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement and racism in the UK. The panellists will be drawn from various groups working with people of colour and people who identify as black.

Our Regional Rep, Julie Bullough will be sending joining details out beforehand. If you want to receive them, email her at Julie at [Julie.Bullough@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Julie.Bullough@amnesty.org.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>



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