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| LOGO | **MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER****September 2020**<http://manchester.amnesty.org.uk/>Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International Facebook group: Manchester AmnestyTwitter: @amnestymanc |

**Group News**

**September Group Meeting Online**

**6.30pm Monday 14th September**

We have two contributions to our September meeting along with a discussion on campaign plans.

**Climate Emergency Manchester** – a member or two of this new pressure group in Manchester will be talking to us about their concerns and plans for action – see below under Other News section for more information.

**City of Sanctuary** – how has the coronavirus restrictions affected their work and their clients’ wellbeing? Liz Hibberd, who heads up our refugee campaigning work, has a day job working for the Manchester City of Sanctuary. She will give us a brief update on how they have had to change the way they work and how people are coping.

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

N.B. Our regular group meetings will be at 6.30pm online on the second Monday of the month until further notice.

**Virtual Street Collection**

We were scheduled to do our annual street collection in Manchester city Centre on 26th September. We have decided to pull out this year. However, as this is usually our biggest fundraiser, we need to do something to be able to make our usual contribution to funding the essential work of Amnesty International.

**We are holding a virtual collection instead.**

**Please can you all make a donation and share this with your friends and family.**

Visit:<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/manchesteramnesty> and rattle the virtual can.

**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.

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

**Group Meetings**

Our Group meetings will continue online for the next few months. We hope to have meetings on Palestine, Human Rights and Race, and Write for Rights in the run up to the turn of the year. If you have any suggestions for meetings – whether speakers or discussions etc, drop our chair Hazel an email – hazelerrey@gmail.com.

**Campaigning**

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

**TWITTER STORM**

**SUNDAY 20TH AND SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER**

Please join in the monthly Twitter storm on September 20th for Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken. This is shared with several other Amnesty groups in Europe, English PEN, ICFUAE and Friends of Ahmed.

Saturday September 26th is Mohammed al-Roken’s birthday and we will all be tweeting again.

Guidance on tweets for Mohammed al-Roken  and Ahmed Mansoor can be found at:

<http://www.icfuae.org.uk/news-campaigns/eight-years-unjust-detention-join-twitter-storm-dr-mohammed-al-roken>

<http://icfuae.org.uk/news/freeahmed-join-twitter-storm-ahmed-mansoor>

**JOIN US IN PLANNING FUTURE EVENTS.**

Please let Kathryn know if you would like to join us in planning future events in this campaign. We will hold an online meeting towards the end of September.

We are looking into the feasibility of a vigil outside the National Football Museum in the autumn.

Email kathrynmbuss@gmail.com.

**Refugee Rights**

It’s been another disheartening month for Refugee Rights, with one of the most invisible and vulnerable groups struggling to have their basic rights of safety and right to life honoured. We’ve heard about and seen the increase in channel crossings, with grave stories of people losing their lives by drowning.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/channel-crossings-death-16-year-old-must-see-governments-both-sides-take>

The death of asylum seeker Mercy Beguma was another heart breaking event of the last month. Having lost her job, her limited leave to remain expired and she had no recourse to public funds; relying on charities for food and support, she eventually died from extreme poverty, found lying next to her malnourished son.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/26/mercy-beguma-death-home-office-asylum-seeker>

But despite this bleak outlook, there are still pockets of activism, groups that refuse to stand for this treatment. One such individual is the graffiti artist Banksy who has financed a boat to rescue refugees from the Mediterranean, the boat, Louise Michel, has currently picked up 353 people who were in distress; they are waiting for a port to let them dock.

The national City of Sanctuary movement has also reiterated their call to action

*‘We must respond to the appalling media coverage and political scapegoating of people seeking sanctuary across the English Channel. We must call out the media and those politicians seeking to dehumanise the plight of the people in desperate need of safety crossing the channel.*

We urge politicians and media alike to respond with the same empathy and humanity that we did in 2015 – the desperate people making the dangerous journey across the channel are someone’s father, brother, son and friend. The UK should be aspiring to be a country that stands up for sanctuary and welcomes people seeking safety.’

This link provides opportunities for people to get involved.

<https://cityofsanctuary.org/2020/08/14/stand-up-for-sanctuary/>

**Write for Rights**

In the run up to the festive season, Amnesty launch an international campaign of messages of support and appeals to the authorities to a handful of key cases from around the globe. We have just received the order form for booklets.

Usually, we hold greetings card signing stalls etc and take part in the marvellous event organised by Whalley Range Peace and Justice group. We suspect none of this will be appropriate this year. We are thinking that, as well as getting our own members to write, we should try and reach out to other community groups and encourage them to take part in this campaign. We are thinking of local places of worship, schools, women’s groups, neighbourhood groups etc.

We could do with two or three volunteers to get their heads together (virtually of course) and come up with a plan of action. Contact Anne anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

**Please consider volunteering**

**Crisis and Tactical**

**HONG KONG**

*Arrest of Newspaper Publisher*

Jimmy Lai, the owner of pro-democracy Hong Kong newspaper Apple Daily, was arrested in August for “collusion with a foreign country or external elements” under the national security law that took effect in Hong Kong on 30 June.

Hong Kong police [said](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FHongKongPoliceForce%2Fposts%2F3416389378449002&data=01%7C01%7Charriet.garland%40amnesty.org.uk%7C7a0bac9bc4f04c8e7c6208d83d040d47%7C25090f06e2b248028601d6872d95aeed%7C0&sdata=kTPKOlk5UWmBmwZuS8wEP4BAZ7CeD%2FheEEy0YaemHP8%3D&reserved=0) that Lai and 6 others were being investigated under Article 29 of the National Security Law, along with alleged conspiracy to defraud and other offences for which they could face a maximum of life imprisonment. Police [warned](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FHongKongPoliceForce%2Fposts%2F3416389378449002&data=01%7C01%7Charriet.garland%40amnesty.org.uk%7C7a0bac9bc4f04c8e7c6208d83d040d47%7C25090f06e2b248028601d6872d95aeed%7C0&sdata=kTPKOlk5UWmBmwZuS8wEP4BAZ7CeD%2FheEEy0YaemHP8%3D&reserved=0) more arrests may be made.

Also in August, media [reported](https://www.thestandard.com.hk/section-news/section/4/221704/New-unit-to-vet-sensitive-visas) that Hong Kong’s immigration department has set up a new national security unit to handle “sensitive visa applications”, such as those from foreign media and Taiwanese organizations. The Foreign Correspondents’ Club, Hong Kong [said](https://www.fcchk.org/fcc-statement-on-journalist-visas-in-hong-kong/) last week that foreign journalists in Hong Kong had experienced delays to their visa applications.

Under international law and standards, a free, independent and diverse press plays an essential role in protecting the enjoyment of all human rights, including by facilitating the public’s right of access to information and ideas of all kinds.

Amnesty also continues to report on [arrests](https://twitter.com/amnestyHK) made to pro-democracy activists.

**ISRAEL/OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

*Human Rights Defender Mahmoud Nawajaa arrested*

On 30 July, at approximately 3.30am, Israeli forces raided the home of Mahmoud Nawajaa in the city of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank and arrested him. Nawajaa is the General Coordinator of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

Amnesty International are calling on the Israeli authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the Palestinian human rights defender. He has been detained solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association and is therefore a prisoner of conscience. Israel must immediately stop the campaign of harassment, intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and political activists who peacefully advocate for the rights of Palestinians.The international community must also step up its efforts to protect human rights defenders in Israel and the OPT. Governments that criminalize or unduly restrict BDS activities should end such measures and instead ensure that BDS advocates are free to express their views and take forward their campaigns without harassment or threats of prosecution.

Read the full Amnesty report here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/2851/2020/en/>

We are hoping to launch a group campaign for OPT in Autumn, watch this space!

**Other News**

**Climate Emergency Manchester**

In July 2019 Manchester City Council joined other cities in declaring a "climate emergency", with a number of specific commitments. Words are lovely, but the commitments have mostly not been kept, in keeping with previous promises for climate action. In the last two years, Manchester has burned a quarter of its carbon budget for the rest of the 21st century. The people already suffering most - and who will suffer more in future - from such inaction, are of course the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalised.

Climate Emergency Manchester is lobbying the Council for it to keep its existing promises and to expand its ambition. They're linking with many individuals and organisations across the city to do this. One major campaign at the minute is a petition for a seventh scrutiny committee, dedicated to climate change. Anyone who lives, works or studies in Manchester City Council's boundaries can sign it here- <https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=36&RPID=0&HPID=0>

CEM can be found online at [www.climateemergencymanchester.net](http://www.climateemergencymanchester.net).

Our email is contact@climateemergencymanchester.net and our Twitter is @ClimateEmergMcr

**Hear more about this campaign at**

**our September meeting!**

**National AGM**

The 2020 Amnesty International UK AGM will be held on 10 October. Sadly, members will not be able to attend in person this year because of Covid-19, government guidance on social distancing and gatherings, and our concern to protect staff and members. But members can still have their say by voting by proxy. You can also submit written questions to the Board and discuss resolutions by video conference ahead of the AGM.

See <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/national-conference-and-agm-2020> for how to get involved. You will need to be a fully paid up member of the UK section (not just on our mailing list) to fully participate in this.

**Appeal from Blackburn Amnesty Group**

Here is a message from their chair:

*I am sending this in this email in the hope that you may consider the contents. Tinta has been such a support to not only the Blackburn group, but AI in the NW. You may remember that we could not have facilitated the Blackburn NWAGM without his help. I cannot begin to tell you other contributions he has made not only to his own group but the community as a whole.*

*The reason Tinta sought refugee status in this country from the Ivory Coast was because he saw his father, a high level business man, murdered and this makes him a target for the murderers. For some reason the Home Office do not accept this as reason to give refugee status.*

*If you feel able to contribute towards his legal costs, please contact Irene Ryan chair of Blackburn AI group for more information.*

irenechrisryan@gmail.com

**Abortion Support Network – Abortion without Borders**

Here is a message from Mary Gibbs, one of our members, about this local organisation that she is involved with:

This organisation has been mentioned in the newsletter before, particularly with reference to local people providing hosts for women coming from Ireland, and other places, to access a termination which they cannot get at home. Although the law in Ireland has changed, it is often – far too often! – still difficult for women to in Ireland to access abortion before the cut-off date. In addition, since last year, ASN has provided help to women in Isle of Man, Gibraltar and Malta, and since November, as part of an international coalition called Abortion Without Borders, also helps women in Poland. As they say, “We are here to make it so that “I can’t afford an abortion” is never the only reason someone becomes a parent, whether a person lives in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man, Malta, Gibraltar or Poland.”

We have not allowed the pandemic to stop us, though – since a medical abortion is not always possible – travelling has become a real epic for some women. This should not be necessary, but…. Meanwhile, those of us who have acted as hosts for women coming from abroad for a termination, providing somewhere to stay when needed, have not been able to act in this way since the start of the pandemic, and, after recent consideration, ASN feels we still cannot safely do this – so women who need somewhere to stay are being put up in hotels.

All this costs money! – so if anyone feels able to support ASN, with either a regular or a one-off contribution, we would greatly appreciate it. Our average spend per client this year is about **£400 higher than last year, so ASN needs help!**

**To donate, or otherwise support ASN’s work, click on** <https://www.asn.org.uk/support-us/>

**To make a monthly donation, click on** <https://www.asn.org.uk/donate-monthly/>

**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>

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