



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

November 2020

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

Campaigning

THIS WINTER

Your voice is powerful

Send a message for human rights



**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 for a handful of key cases from around the globe.

The booklet featuring all the cases can be accessed via the AIUK website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2020-get-started>. We will be featuring some of them in our Weekly Actions. We also plan to take a closer look at the cases during our December meeting and hold a Zoom card writing session.

You are all invited!

Usually, as well as getting our own members to send messages, we hold greetings card signing stalls etc and take part in the marvellous event organised by Whalley Range Peace and Justice group. As none of this will be appropriate this year, we plan to 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. **If you have any contacts for groups who you think might be interested, please let Kathryn Fletcher have the details at bussk@btinternet.com.**



Refugee Rights

Last week we heard the heart-breaking news of another boat full of people coming to the UK for safety and security, sinking in the English Channel, leaving an Iranian family of 4 dead. Despite Priti Patel's comments "I'm truly saddened to learn of the tragic loss of life in French waters this morning. My thoughts and prayers are with their families and loved ones at this time," there still remains opposition for opening safe and legal routes to the UK to claim asylum. This last few weeks has seen MPs vote against an amendment to the immigration bill that would allow children to enter the UK legally.

On arrival, asylum seekers struggle to receive adequate care and attention while their claim is processed. With many of those arriving in boats and those still appealing against a rejection being accommodated in hotels and more recently military barracks which are unsuitable and overcrowded. Earlier in October 200 people and organisations in Kent came together to show that they welcomed the refugees and that they were there to support them.

More than 200 gather at former barracks housing refugees to counter far-right activity



▲ Pro-migrant demonstrators outside Napier Barracks in Folkestone, Kent, gathered in a show of support to welcome migrants to the area. Photograph: Andrew Aitchison/In Pictures/Getty Images

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/oct/17/refugee-supporters-clash-with-far-right-activists-in-kent-protests>

Europe Must Act Vigil

From 8pm on October 31st to 8pm on November 3rd
Europe Must Act call for a vigil to remember all victims of

the systematic violence along Europe's borders and to send a clear message to European leaders that enough is enough.



Post a picture of a candle and a paper boat on social media. Tag the minister(s) responsible for asylum policy (suggestions: Priti Patel MP and Chris Philp MP (Minister for Immigration Compliance), you can use some of the sample posts in the links below.

Join the FB event: <https://fb.me/e/awT7cfPMG>
Find more info here: <http://europemustact.org/safe-passage>

Some Positive News

The Amnesty International UK initiative Football Welcomes is being organised at the moment, taking place in April it will be an opportunity for Football and those that love the game to get involved with challenging negative stereotypes and narratives around refugees and the refugee experience. We're planning some exciting events and activities and want to make a call out to anyone who knows a grassroots football club that might want to get involved! Let Liz know on lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk.

Campaign for the release of Dr Mohamed al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor, imprisoned in the UAE.

Ahmed Mansoor remains in Al Sadr prison and has not been able to see his family since January 2020. The planned visit for April was cancelled because of the Covid outbreak but he is able to speak to them by phone. We continue to have little information about Mohammed Al-Roken but we know both men remain in solitary confinement and there continue to be cases of Covid in the prisons.

The UAE continues to refuse access to independent prison monitors from the UN, the EU and the International Committee for Red Cross. This is in violation of their obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture and particularly important in view of the current pandemic.

City council support

The councillors who are working with us are sharing information about these two human rights defenders and

hope to put a motion to the city council in support of them in the near future.

2nd December is UAE National Day

We are not sure if the monthly twitter storms will continue, but as December 2nd is UAE National Day, it would be a good day to put out a message for the UAE government on social media in support of Ahmed and Mohammed.

Other human rights abuse concerns in the UAE

Single women who become pregnant have to serve a prison sentence because sex outside marriage is illegal in the UAE. Migrant domestic workers cannot leave the country until they serve the sentence. Now out of work because of the Covid pandemic they are also unable to serve the sentence because the prisons will not accept them, also because of Covid. They are trapped and destitute. This is the case for many migrant workers in the UAE at the present.

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/oct/12/they-have-to-be-punished-the-mothers-trapped-in-the-uae-by-love-crimes?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Crisis and Tactical

MYANMAR

General Elections 2020

On 8th November 2020 the General Elections will be held in Myanmar. In view of



this important event, Amnesty International, AAPP (The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners - Burma) and Athan* have issued a joint statement highlighting that:

- ! The next government must champion human rights.
- ! It is imperative that parliamentary candidates, political parties and campaign groups focus on the urgent human rights situation in the country.
- ! All parliamentary candidates and political parties are urged to make a public commitment to respect and promote the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; protect human rights defenders; and ensure access to information.

The full statement can be found at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ASA1632342020ENGLISH.PDF>

**Athan is a research-based activist organisation active in Myanmar involved in research advocacy and education to promote freedom of expression*

SYRIA

Update on Iqraa school -Aleppo



Back in March 20 we organised a fundraising event for Amnesty for their work in Syria and for Iqraa School in Aleppo (Syria), which our friends at Rethink Rebuild helped set up and run.

Regrettably the event could not go ahead due to the start of the Covid-19 outbreak. However, EVERYONE (!) who paid for the event did not ask for a refund. Thank you again!

The latest update is that the school was re-opened in September 2020, after a few weeks of having to manage the lessons remotely, because of the Covid-19 outbreak. We wish all the best to students and staff.

If you want to find out more about this school, please follow this link: <https://www.rrsoc.org/node/65>

YEMEN

Appeal for the arbitrarily detained and disappeared civilians

Since the beginning of the conflict in the Yemen, seven years ago, countless civilians, including journalists and activists, have been subjected to arbitrary detentions, abductions and enforced disappearances.

Since 2016, Mwatana for Human Rights has documented a total of 1,605 cases of arbitrary detention and 770 cases of enforced disappearance by all parties to the conflict, including the Government of Yemen. The Mothers of Abductees Association has also documented another 236 cases of enforced disappearances since the start of the conflict.

Amnesty International and seven other organisations* have issued a joint appeal urging all parties to the conflict, including the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and the Ansar Allah (The Houthis), to "issue accurate lists with the names of detainees held in both official and unofficial detention centres, and allow for visits from family members and regular communication between them and their lawyers.

They have also called all parties to "provide families with information on the fate and whereabouts of relatives who have been forcibly disappeared or arbitrarily detained" and "to give unimpeded access to independent international monitors to visit detainees in all places of detention".

The humanitarian organisations remind the parties to the conflict of the international basic rights of detainees, which include access to legal assistance, legal proceeding in accordance to international fair trial standards, access to medical care and absence of torture and other ill treatment.

They also highlight that the current outbreak of Covid-19 poses further health risks to both the detainees and the prison officials, calling on the immediate release of all civilian detainees.

**these associations are: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Committee to Protect Journalists, Mwatana for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Mothers of Abductees Association, International Federation for Human Rights, Yemen Journalists Syndicate*

Here is the link to the plea:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE3131732020ENGLISH.PDF>

HONG KONG

Secession charge for student activist is latest attack on freedom of expression

Tony Chung, a 19-year-old student activist, is now facing a max sentence of life imprisonment.



Joshua Rosenzweig, the head of Amnesty International's China Team, said:

"The charges brought against Tony Chung once again expose the Hong Kong government's disdain for freedom of expression and dissent.

"Chung's detention comes against the backdrop of a rapidly shrinking space for critical voices on campus. Students have the right to put forward their political views like everybody else.

“And at a time when the Hong Kong Police are reportedly set to launch a ‘hotline’ to gather intelligence from the public on those purported to have violated the national security law, the climate of fear in the city grows ever more oppressive.

“Tony Chung has been targeted solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and he should be released immediately and unconditionally, and all charges against him dropped.”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/hong-kong-secession-charge-for-student-activist-is-latest-attack-on-freedom-of-expression/>

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Save the Children have published a new report showing that Palestinian children in Israeli-run prisons face cruel & inhumane treatment such as beatings, psychological abuse, weeks in solitary confinement, and being denied access to a lawyer and their families.

Read the hard-hitting report here:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/defenceless-impact-israeli-military-detention-palestinian-children>

Group News

November Online Group Meeting

6.30pm Monday 9th November

Bilal Hussain,

the new Community Organiser at AIUK for Football Welcomes and local groups, will be joining us.

(He apologises for missing our last meeting and promises to make it this time!).

It will be a great opportunity to find out more about his role and how we can work together.

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

Our Virtual Street Collection hits target of £1000!

This year we could not hold our usual annual street collection in Manchester, so we decided to hold an online collection instead via JustGiving. We advertised it to our supporters in the Newsletter and in our Weekly Actions, and in less than two months we managed to achieve our target of £1000 in donations. It was a fantastic achievement.

All the money donated, plus Gift Aid of £241, will go to the Amnesty International UK Section Charitable Trust, less JustGiving's very small commission. The money will contribute to Amnesty International's work to expose the truth about human rights violations, to help free those who have been unjustly imprisoned, and to make those in power change their ways.

Many thanks to all those who donated!

Google Groups

We currently use Yahoo Groups to manage our mailing list. However, Yahoo is pulling the plug in December, so we have been looking at alternatives. We've looked at MailChimp and MailerLite but we're going to start with Google Groups which seems to operate in a similar way to Yahoo and should give us the flexibility we desire.

Anne Walker, our secretary, is in the process of setting up a Manchester Amnesty Google Group and uploading all your emails. She has set it up so that only selected group officers can see the list and post to it, general members cannot see details of other members nor can they post. This will ensure privacy and also should avoid unnecessary emails. We hope that it will operate essentially in the same way as the old Yahoo Group.

When your email is added, you will get a message to say that you have been added to the Manchester Amnesty Google Group. You do not need to reply or do anything. Of course, if you no longer wish to receive our mailings, please let Anne know (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) and she will remove you from the group.

N.B. The first time that we will use the Google Group in earnest will be for the Weekly Action this coming Friday, 6th November.

If you do not get the Weekly Action, please email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com and she will investigate.

We do have a Manchester Amnesty Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/109895619228>) which is available for all members to post to if you want to flag something of interest to members or start a discussion. This is a closed group and you will need to ask to become a member. We also have a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/amnestymanc>), which officers of the group post to to flag campaigns and events, and we are active on Twitter and Instagram.

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. In the run up to Christmas we will mainly feature case from this year's Write for Rights campaign.

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!

Christmas cards and presents.

Most years we buy a large stock of cards and other festive products to sell to our group members and at Christmas Fairs etc in the run up to Christmas. This year we won't be doing the usual stalls or meeting face to face.



However, you can still buy a wide range of Amnesty cards and Ethically Produced products from the online Amnesty Shop. C

Click the link and get shopping!

<https://amnestyshop.org.uk>

Group Meetings

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

Other News

Tom Hurndall Memorial Lecture: *How Britain's mainstream media bends to the wind.*

4 November at 5.30pm

Tim Llewellyn, a former BBC Middle East Correspondent, examines UK broadcast and press coverage of Israel and Palestine during the past half century, and finds it once again in a mood to avoid the truth.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/15th-tom-hurndall-memorial-lecture-tickets-126975604451>

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