



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

February 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

February Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 8th February

Our Vice-Chair, Rebecca Shaw, will be talking about the Omega Research Foundation, an organisation that provides independent evidence-based research on the manufacture, trade in and use of, military, security, and police (MSP) technologies. (See Group News section for more information)

We will send out an agenda and link beforehand. 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.

Campaigning

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



Ahmed Mansoor will have spent four years in prison on 20th March. An online action planned.

The various groups campaigning for his release plan to hold an online protest event to post on social media. It would be good if a few people from the Manchester group could join in. Kathryn will have more information of the

format at the February meeting.

New report from Human Rights Watch: The persecution of Ahmed Mansoor. How the UAE silenced its most famous human rights defender.

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights and the Human Rights Watch have just published a report on the arrest, trial and detention conditions of Ahmed. This is based on information from someone who has recently been released after spending time in isolation in the same prison.

They have also received some information about the trial from someone with insider knowledge. It confirms that the only evidence against him was the legitimate work he did with the Gulf Centre for Human Rights and Amnesty International and that there was no due process in his

initial trial or appeals. We also learn details of his reasons for the two hunger strikes and the small gains he has achieved in improving his conditions. Sadly, he is still in isolation, without a bed although he is allowed out to exercise three times a week now.

It is definitely worth reading:

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/01/uae0121.pdf

Refugee Rights

We were really pleased to be able to attend the launch for Football Welcomes a few weeks ago. The zoom event unveiled the exciting new guide to engaging refugee women and girls in football, developed in partnership with the English Football Association. The inspirational event explored the training pack and upcoming training sessions aimed at coaches who want to develop football training in their local community for refugee women.

If you missed it and want to get involved this year, you can catch it here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/FootballForRefugeeWomen>

Amnesty's Football Welcomes programme, which aims to create more welcoming communities for refugees and people seeking asylum, has gone from strength to strength over the last few years. Over 170 clubs, from all levels of the game, took part in the most recent Football Welcomes weekend. More clubs, trusts, foundations and County FAs have set up football sessions with refugees. These sessions promote fitness and good mental health, help people make friends and connections, and welcome them

into the community. But they are usually targeted at men and boys. The new guide and training will help football coaches, and anyone else interested in this topic, to develop the knowledge and skills they need to ensure that refugee women and girls have equal opportunities to participate in our national sport and to benefit from everything it has to offer.

The guide will be available at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/FootballForRefugeeWomen>, and they'll also be running a live training session on a number of dates over the next few months for anyone interested in finding out more and developing their skills further. The February and March dates are already full but places are available in April and June. See the above website.

As a local group we're really excited to see how we can support this initiative and have some really creative and interactive ideas which we're excited to share with you soon.

Crisis and Tactical

YEMEN

The US and Italy cease sales of arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE!

US President Joe Biden has taken the decision to temporarily suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This is something that he promised during his presidential campaign.

Furthermore, several Italian newspapers have reported that the Italian Government has taken the decision to retract, not suspend, licences for the sales of missiles and bombs to Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The previous Italian Government had authorised the Italian company Rwm Italia to sell up to 20,000 Mk bombs to Saudi Arabia. The delivery of these bombs has already started. However, the retraction of the authorisation means that the delivery will fall short by about 12,700 bombs!

These decisions from the US and Italian Governments are also the result of international campaigns from humanitarian and peace organisations, including Amnesty.

Riccardo Noury, spokesperson from Amnesty International Italy, stated that the decision from the Italian government shows that campaigns from citizens can be effective.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have supported the Yemen Government in its struggle against the Houthi rebels, by supplying arms. There is ample evidence that these arms have been used against civilians and civilian buildings,

creating what the UN has described the worst humanitarian crisis of our times.

TAKE ACTION!

If you want to put pressure onto the UK Government to cease its arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, **please send an e-mail to your MP**, by following the link below. This is an action promoted by the organisation CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade and we fully support it.

<https://caat.org.uk/homepage/stop-arming-saudi-arabia/yemen-war-email-your-mp/>



An image from Amnesty's stunt outside the House of Parliament in 2019

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Israel: denying Covid-19 vaccine to Palestinians is 'institutionalised discrimination'

Israel has been hailed as the country that has to date achieved the widest vaccination coverage in proportion to its population size. However, Israel's vaccine roll-out plan so far covers only Israeli citizens - including Israeli settlers living inside the West Bank - and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and prisoners. It excludes the nearly five million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law include a duty to maintain "public health and hygiene in the occupied territory, with particular reference to the adoption and application of the prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics" (Article 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention).

Read Amnesty's full press release here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/israel-denying-covid-19-vaccine-palestinians-institutionalised-discrimination>

Anne shared this action (not Amnesty's) in a recent Weekly Action, please add your name if you haven't already: <https://www.change.org/p/israeli-government-launch-a-covid-19-vaccination-program-for-the-west-bank-and-the-gaza-strip>

Israel/Palestine: Hebron activist faces long jail sentence.

Issa Amro, prominent Palestinian activist, and supporter of nonviolent resistance to Israel's military occupation and settlements, was convicted in military court by an Israeli judge on 6th January. The convictions relate to Amro's peaceful participation in protests and demonstrations, dating back to 2010.



Amro is a founder of the Youth Against Settlements group in Hebron, which organises non-violent activism against the illegal Israeli settlements in Hebron and the discriminatory restrictions placed on Palestinians by the Israeli authorities in the city.

Amnesty is calling on the Israeli authorities to end “systematic attacks against Palestinian activists who speak up and peacefully act against Israel’s long-standing military occupation”.

Read Amnesty’s Press statement here:
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/israelpalestine-hebron-activist-faces-long-jail-sentence>



Local Authorities Procurement Campaign

We have a small group of people planning our involvement in the next stage of the OPT settlements campaign, which involves asking local councils to ensure their procurement chain does not include companies with involvement in the illegal settlements in the OPT.

Please get in touch with Simona or Catherine if you'd like to hear more and/or get involved:
Simona smattanza8@gmail.com
Catherine Catherine.s.garnett@gmail.com

HONG KONG

Mass arrests as security law is weaponised to silence criticism.

Critics and opposition figures in Hong Kong continue to be arrested under the national security law, including 50 in early January.

Amnesty stated: “Charging dozens of pro-democracy lawmakers and activists with ‘subversion’, just because they held their own informal primary contest, is a blatant attack on their rights to peaceful expression and association. People have a legitimate right to take part in public affairs. Political opposition should not be silenced just because the authorities don’t like it.

“The Hong Kong government must stop this dangerous practice of treating critics as criminals and threats to national security. Unless there is evidence that those arrested today have committed an internationally recognised criminal offence, they should be immediately released.”

Read the full press release here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/hong-kong-mass-arrest-poll-organisers-security-law-weaponised-silence-criticism>

MYANMAR

We have just heard of the coup in Myanmar where the military have taken control and arrested leaders of the democratically elected ruling party, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Before this happened Amnesty had made recommendations for the improvement of human rights in Myanmar.

Amnesty’s recommendations to the UN’s Universal Periodic Review.

The UN’s Human Rights Council instigates regular reviews of the human rights situation in member countries – called Universal Periodic Reviews. See

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/basicfacts.aspx>.

In December last year, Amnesty issued recommendations for 12 countries to be included in the 37th Review scheduled for January this year. Here are some of the summarised points for Myanmar as included in Amnesty’s report:

- ! Take immediate steps to restore citizenship rights to holders of formerly valid identity cards
- ! Revoke all local orders and policies which place arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions
- ! Guarantee the safe and voluntary return of refugees and displaced individuals to their prior places of residence or to adequate alternative housing



Members of the Rohingya community running away from violence from Myanmar military

- ! Provide immediate and sustained humanitarian access throughout the country, including by allowing humanitarian organizations to assess and monitor the needs of displaced persons and others in need.
- ! Immediately and unconditionally release all those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights of freedom of expression, association and assembly; drop charges pending against those who are facing imprisonment and expunge the criminal records of those convicted
- ! Ensure that human rights defenders and peaceful activists are free from harassment and criminalization
- ! Commute all death sentences to prison terms and abolish the death penalty for all crimes.
- ! Support the recognition by the UN of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

- ! Ensure all health and essential workers are protected during the COVID-19 pandemic, including by increasing domestic production of PPE and ensure they can exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisals
- ! Ensure the criteria to guide the allocation of Covid-19 vaccines are consistent with human rights standards

Please, find the full report here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/IO4034402020ENGLISH.PDF>

Turkey

At least 45 students were detained following a peaceful protest at Bo aziçi University in Istanbul on 4 January.

Many students have alleged torture or other ill-treatment by law enforcement officers, including being handcuffed and beaten. Some LGBTI+ students have said they were threatened with rape and subjected to insults.

Email the Turkish authorities and demand that they investigate these allegations immediately and bring those responsible to justice?

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/demand-justice-ill-treated-university-students-istanbul>

Group News

Group Meetings

Our group meetings will continue online for the next few months at least.

February Meeting (February 8th)

This month's meeting will feature a talk by our Vice-Chair, Rebecca Shaw on the Omega Research Foundation.

The Omega Research Foundation is a UK-based non-governmental research organisation (<https://omegaresearchfoundation.org/> & @Omega_RF on Twitter) working to protect human rights and prevent grave human rights violations, including torture and other ill-treatment. Omega has a longstanding relationship with Amnesty International (their most recent, co-written publication is available [here](https://omegaresearchfoundation.org/publications/ending-torture-trade-path-global-controls-tools-torture): <https://omegaresearchfoundation.org/publications/ending-torture-trade-path-global-controls-tools-torture>).

Omega works to stop military, security, and policing (MSP) technologies and techniques being used to commit human rights or humanitarian law violations. Through their work, they uncover evidence highlighting loopholes or breaches of trade laws, and identify the weapons and equipment used in specific cases of abuse. They collaborate with and provide training to a range of partners, and share findings with the media, partners, legal professionals, and national, regional, and international human rights bodies such as the United Nations and Council of Europe. Omega's work underpins campaigns to control the trade in equipment used for repression, force governments to change laws, hold corporations and individuals to account, and secure justice for survivors of torture.

March Meeting (March 8th)

As this meeting falls on International Women's Day we will be looking at Amnesty cases of women from around the world.

We will also be holding our AGM where we review the year, consider any resolutions put forward and elect officers and campaign leads for the coming year. If you feel that you'd like to get involved in helping to run the group, this is an ideal opportunity to put your hand up.

In particular, Anne Walker has produced our newsletter for the last 9 years and would quite like a break. She's willing to job share for a year to help someone get the hang of it. If you're interested and want to chat, drop her an email at anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

If there is anything that you want to raise at the AGM. Please let our chair Hazel know – hazelerrey@gmail.com.

WhatsApp Group

The group operates a WhatsApp group as a quick way of getting in touch and sharing actions. If you'd like to be included, email Pascal at pascal.checkley@hotmail.com and let him have your mobile number.

Subscriptions please!

It's the time of year when we ask all our supporters for an annual donation to the group.

These are essential to cover routine expenditure such as postage and room hire (although the latter will be much reduced but hopefully not ruled out entirely this year), and we have paid for an non-time-limited Zoom licence.

Payment will have to be by bank transfer or cheque this year, so please contact out Treasurer, Sean Dunne, sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com, for our bank details or address if you don't already have them. The suggested sum is £20 if you have a wage, £5 otherwise, or whatever you can afford to give. If it helps, Sean can provide details for setting up a standing order – that way it won't slip your mind.

Other News

Online Jazz Concert.



A virtual concert in aid of Amnesty International

....premiered on YouTube

Friday 12th February 2021 7:30pm

Organised by the Bromley and Orpington Group of Amnesty International UK

The Bromley and Orpington Amnesty Group are holding their regular Jazz Concert - now in its 11th year. This time it's virtual and they're hoping to reach a wider audience than ever before.

Details of how to view the concert will be on <https://www.nickbeston.com/live-online-concert> where, nearer the time, you will get the link to see the free concert premiered on YouTube at 7:30pm on Friday 12th February.

Although free to watch, they are asking for donations at www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/amnesty-jazz

Join to watch it together! It will remain on YouTube if you want to watch it again or to see it later.

The Nick Beston Quartet plus Sue Rivers are generously giving their time and all proceeds will go to Amnesty International. The band will play those pieces that audiences have grown to love and appreciate over the past ten years and will feature breath-taking solos from band members. Nick's son Alfie, will also play a part.

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