



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

March 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

March Online Group Meeting

7 pm Monday 8th February

PLEASE NOTE: Change of time to 7pm to allow you to attend Amnesty Live Webinar (see later)

Celebrating International Women's Day + Group Annual General Meeting

Our meeting falls on International Women's Day and we will mark the occasion by looking at current or past human rights cases involving women or women's rights. We are asking a few group members to do a little research about a case and present it to the group (no more than 5 mins please!)

We will also be holding our annual general meeting as required by our constitution. We will need to elect group officers and sort out campaign leads for the coming year. See section in Group News for more information.

If you would like to present a Women's Rights case or have an issue you would like to raise at the AGM please contact our Chair, Hazel, at hazelerrey@gmail.com

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 4 years in prison on 20th March 2021

WE HAVE SEVERAL ACTIONS PLANNED!

1. Action next meeting.

We will take a screen shot of everyone the next meeting holding a sign saying 'FREE AHMED' to put on social media for the twitter storm on March 20th.

Please have your sign ready!

2. Twitter storm Sat 20th March.

Please take part in this storm. We will send a link to example tweets in the weekly action before the 20th.

3. Video clip on-line protest 6.15pm 16th March.

This is being organised by Amnesty Westminster. If you want to take part, please let Kathryn know and she will send you a link: kathrynmbuss@gmail.com.

4. Post cards to the UAE embassy for 20th March.

We plan to send lots of post cards to the UAE embassy in London to arrive on the 20th March.

These are hand lino-printed so will hopefully get noticed by the embassy.

If you would like to send some, please let Kathryn know and she will deliver a pack of 5 or 10 to you (please pass them to any close contacts you have) in time to write your own message and post. kathrynbuss@gmail.com



Covid 19 and UAE prisons

On 22nd February, several human rights organisations called on the UN to take urgent action to remind the UAE authorities of their responsibilities to introduce preventative and protective measures against Covid 19 in their prisons.

This includes the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience.

The absence of sanitation products, the impossibility of social-distancing in vastly overcrowded cells, and the notorious lack of medical care put prisoners in an extremely vulnerable position. Read more at: <http://www.icfuae.org.uk/press-releases/call-unhrc-address-uae-pandemic-response-its-prison-system>

Princess Latifa and other women detained in the UAE.

Many human rights organisations are appealing for the release of Princess Latifa and using this to highlight prisoners of conscience being held well beyond the end of their sentences, including two women.

<https://www.gc4hr.org/news/view/2612>

Sadly, the implication is that once Ahmed Mansoor completes his sentence, he'll be held in a "counselling centre" and not released in March 2027 as he should be according to the law in the UAE.

Refugee Rights

The main news for this month is around the evaluation of the I Welcome Refugees campaign. It ran from 2016 to 2020 and explored new ways of working, focusing on collaboration, local mobilisation and a strong communications strategy to call for refugee rights and welcome refugees in the UK.

Key elements of this campaign focused on the launch of the Families Together coalition in 2018, as well as Football Welcomes. I Welcome becomes Amnesty UK's highest-profile campaign: potential audience reach 950 million. Our group took part in several events and actions, gaining 100s of signatures for petitions and providing opportunities for local residents to express their welcome to refugees.

You can read the full overview here:

http://email.amnestyuk.org.uk/files/amf_amnesty/project_58/I_Welcome_campaign_impact_report.pdf

At the evaluation webinar last week, Tom Davis, Global Campaign Manager, highlighted that holding the line for refugee rights in the coming year will be an achievement in itself, recognising



the challenges on the horizon. The upcoming Immigration Bill, in whatever format it will take, is likely to be another attack on refugees, weakening their rights and making it easier to remove and deport people with unstable legal status.

Upcoming events – April sees us celebrating a month of Football Welcomes, we're busy trying to finalise activities and events with the National Football Welcomes but we hope to bring you a panel discussion, an interactive and online exhibition among other things! Keep an eye out on our social media for more information once we've had everything confirmed.

To show support and connect with refugees and asylum seekers living in Greater Manchester, consider popping along to Manchester City of Sanctuary's Big Conversation on **April 8th from 6pm – 8pm**. There'll be lots to get involved in and lots of fun to be had. They'll be sharing the zoom link on facebook and Instagram, or get in touch with our coordinator Liz at lizhibberd@yahoo.co.uk



Crisis and Tactical

PALESTINE

Historic ICC ruling brings new hope to victims of crimes under international law

In early February 2021, the International Criminal Court announced that it had confirmed that it has jurisdiction to investigate possible war crimes in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

The ruling opens the way for an investigation into crimes committed in the OPT since June 13, 2014. These include allegations against Israel of war crimes, including settlement-related activities, and crimes against humanity, such as persecution, deportation and transfer, as well as the crime of apartheid against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; crimes allegedly committed by Israel and Palestinian armed groups during the 2014 assault on Gaza and during the Great March of Return protests in 2018-19; and allegations against the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank of torture and support for attacks against Israeli citizens.

Tawfiq Abu Jame' is one of just three survivors of an Israeli air strike in Gaza which killed 25 members of his family, including 19 children, on 20 July 2014. He told Amnesty what an ICC investigation would mean to him:

“[An investigation] would not, for sure, bring my kids back to life, however I am certain that I need to continue to try to find some sort of justice. It is shocking to me that six years after I lost so many members of my family and my house that impunity reigns supreme for those implicated in the tragic crime committed [...] We can never achieve justice in Israeli courts, the ICC represents our only hope to achieving long-denied accountability and justice.”

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/israelopt-historic-icc-ruling-brings-new-hope-victims-crimes-under-international-law>

Read the ‘explainer’ here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/campaigns-blog/international-criminal-court-recent-ruling-israelpalestine-major-step-towards>

SYRIA

Justice For Syria –First Conviction

Last year we reported that a former Syrian security officer, Eyad al-Gharib, was subjected to trial in the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, after having been arrested in Feb 2020 by German and French police. The charges against him were that of ‘aiding and abetting the torture of detained protesters in Damascus’. The prosecutors applied the principle of universal jurisdiction.

On 24th February we received news that the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz has sentenced Eyad al-Gharib to four-and-a-half years in prison.



Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said: “Today’s historic verdict – the first of its kind for crimes under

international law committed by a Syrian government official- is a resounding victory for the tens of thousands of Syrian torture survivors and victims of enforced disappearance as well as for Syrian and international human rights and litigation organisations who together, for years, have fought relentlessly for truth and justice”.

“During these ten years, the international community has consistently fallen short of taking concrete action in the face of ongoing egregious violations and to hold those responsible accountable.

“We call on more states to follow Germany’s example by investigating and prosecuting individuals suspected of committing war crimes or other crimes under international law in Syria through their national courts under the principle of ‘universal jurisdiction’. We also reiterate our call to the UN Security Council to urgently refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court to ensure that perpetrators from all parties to the conflict – including those ‘most responsible’ - high-ranking officials and commanders - face justice.”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/germany-syria-conviction-of-syrian-official-for-crimes-against-humanity-a-historic-victory-for-justice/>

MYANMAR

Death Of Protester

Responding to news of the death of Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing, a 20-year-old woman who was shot in the head by Myanmar police during protests in Nay Pyi Daw on 9 February, Joanne Mariner, Amnesty International's Director of Crisis Response, said:

"This is the devastating consequence of the security forces' reckless use of lethal weapons against peaceful protesters.

"Instead of issuing blanket denials, the Myanmar military authorities should launch a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into her killing and other reports of unnecessary and excessive use of force by the security forces.

"As protests continue to grow, Myanmar security forces must cease carrying and using lethal weapons and must respect people's right to peacefully express their grievances.

"It is only a matter of time before the same brutal and abusive policing leads to more death and sorrow."

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/02/myanmar-death-of-20-year-old-woman-shot-by-police-during-protests/>



A picture of Myanmar police during the recent protests

At our February's meeting we heard from Rebecca, our vice-Chair, on her work at the 'Omega Research Foundation', which reasearches the use and abuse of military and police techologies. This is a good example of such abuse. The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials state that security forces must exhaust all non-violent means before employing force as the last resort.

YEMEN

Amnesty's Oral Statement at 46th UN Human Rights Council

Given the serious violations of human rights committed by all parties in the conflict in Yemen, including arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment, during the 46th UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International has called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court. This would open the way to accountability for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Please, find the link to the full statement. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/3716/2021/en/>

Group News

Group AGM

We will be holding our Annual General Meeting during our March meeting. There are three main areas that we need to consider:

Electing group officers

Our constitution (attached with this newsletter for information) requires us to have 4 officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

We also have people nominated for other jobs, e.g. newsletter editor, membership secretary, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and press.

Anne has been putting the newsletter together for the last 9 years and would like a rest. If you'd like a go, please let us know. Anne is happy to provide help and advice to get you going.

If you are interested in any of these roles, please let Hazel know in advance hazelerrey@gmail.com.

Resolutions

We need to review our finances and accept our Treasurer's financial statement (attached). Due to changing over to Google Groups our Data Protection Policy has been updated (attached) and requires accepting (or otherwise!). If you have anything that you would like the group to discuss, please contact our chair, Hazel at hazelerrey@gmail.com.

Campaigns

Normally, we receive a Planning Pack for the year outlining campaigns that we can get involved in. This is not available this year, however we know that the AIUK priorities for this year include:

Legislative threats to human rights in the UK, e.g. the human rights act and through the Overseas Operations Bill, the Covert Human Intelligence Services Bill and the Counter Terror bill.

Syria - marking 10 years of the Syrian conflict (March)

Refugees - family reunion, campaigning (from May) and Football Welcomes (April)

Israel/OPT – campaign around the forthcoming IS report on Israel/OPT institutional discrimination, due on 5 May.

Covid – which could involve workers' rights in the gig economy (from May); the IS report on Covid and UK prisons (due in March); care homes and vaccines.

Individuals at Risk: Work on individual cases is always key to our work and we are encouraged to sign up to work on individual cases and world regions. Currently we work on 2 cases in the UAE and the Europe world region (including Turkey). We also get involved in Crisis and Tactical campaigns which currently includes Syria, Palestine, Yemen and Myanmar. We always take part in the Write for Rights campaign in the run up to Christmas.

We need to discuss where we will concentrate our efforts and decide who is going to take a lead in each area. For a major campaign we would hope that we can form a subgroup to help the lead plan the work of the group – we currently have subgroups running for our Palestine/OPT and UAE work and it would be good to get a subgroup going to support our Refugee work.

If you would like to get involved, either as a campaign lead, as part of a subgroup – let us know.

You can email Anne.walker9@ntlworld.com or volunteer at the AGM.

Subscriptions please!

Our treasurer is still open to receiving your 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 a Zoom Pro licence.

Payment will have to be by bank transfer or cheque this year, so please contact our 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 in the future.

Other News

Amnesty Live! International Women's Day

Poland has a long history of women standing up for their rights and the recent announcement of a near-total ban on abortion has led to some of the largest protests the country has ever seen.

This International Women's Day you can hear from four inspiring women who are standing up for a more equal Poland. Make sure to register for this event and learn more

Register at:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5639934312677045772>



Has Covid-19 changed the international landscape? Are we all in this together?

Wednesday 14th April, 7pm. Online

We have been invited to co-host an online event with Manchester campaign groups from Oxfam and Global Justice. The event is on Wednesday 14th April at 7pm. The organisers hope to have a panel of speakers including a local MP, a speaker from an NGO (likely to be Oxfam) and an academic from the Global Development Institute at Manchester University.

Oxfam, Global Justice Now and Amnesty International along with a growing movement of health and humanitarian organisations, past and present world leaders, health experts, faith leaders and economists are urging that safe and effective vaccines are developed, produced rapidly at scale and made available for all people in all countries, free of charge.

This movement is called The People's Vaccine Alliance. <https://peoplesvaccine.org/>

The event is likely to cover issues related to the Covid-19 vaccine as well as wider global concerns and issues that have emerged during the pandemic. Further details to follow.

Richard Ratcliffe and Sherry Izadi: In conversation

AIUK are inviting members of local groups to a talk with Richard Ratcliffe (Nazanin's husband) and Sherry Izadi (Anoosheh's wife). You will have the opportunity to hear from them both and find out more about what you can do to support them in their campaign to be reunited with their loved ones.

Please sign up for your preferred date below:

Wednesday 24th March

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nazanin-anoosheh-a-talk-with-their-families-tickets-142902480165>

Wednesday 31st March

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nazanin-anoosheh-a-talk-with-their-families-tickets-142903290589>

Anti-racism Survey

Peace News has just launched a new survey of UK Peace News has just launched a new survey



of UK activists and campaigners, with the aim of encouraging them to share their stories of success in winning

concrete gains for people targeted by racism – and in making their groups, events, spaces and projects more racially-inclusive. By encouraging UK campaigners to share their stories of constructive anti-racist action it aims to create a peer-to-peer handbook, based on people's lived experiences that celebrates our successes and inspires campaigners to take action.

You can complete the survey here:

<https://tinyurl.com/arwhatworks> (deadline: Sun 7 March)

Challenge Yourself for Amnesty!

Look forward to the warmer weather and more positive times ahead by joining one of the scintillatingly scenic [walks and treks in 2021!](#) AIUK have teamed up with Action Challenge to offer a number of routes across the country, with a variety of distances to suit all capabilities. The challenges take place at different times

throughout the year (all on weekends) so there will be a date for everyone's diary!

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/ways-to-give/community-and-events-fundraising/challenge-events>

Migrant policy in the NHS

We've been contacted by a group within Greater Manchester Keep Our NHS Public who are concentrating on ending the "Hostile Environment" for migrants policy in the NHS in Greater Manchester.

As a first step, they have written to Council Leaders and Chairs of Health & Wellbeing Boards in all the 10 boroughs of Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Mayor, outlining the consequences to migrants being charged for NHS services and their being subject to patient data sharing, between local NHS Trusts and the Home Office.

If you'd like more information and how to get involved contact Frances Kelly frances.kelly@phonecoop.coop

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

