



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

May 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

May Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 10th May

Human Rights Law in the UK

Our secretary, Anne Walker, will give a short talk on the UK Human Rights Act which is currently under government review and we will also discuss the other impending changes to UK legislation which could seriously affect our rights in this country.

+ Catch up on our Campaigning Activities

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.

Immigration and Asylum - URGENT Action needed by 5 May!



NEW PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION Policy Statement

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of Her Majesty

March 2021

CP 402

The Home Office is planning to make some deeply concerning changes to the UK's immigration and asylum systems. Central to the changes will be the creation of a two-tier asylum system, and the concentration of yet more power, with scant oversight, in the Home Office.

These proposed changes are currently out for public consultation. The consultation closes on 6th May, so **AIUK are asking people to respond by 5th May. There is still time for you to contribute if you act NOW.** It is important that a strong message is sent to the government about the damage that the proposed changes will cause.

Please note:

- While the consultation, which is in two parts, appears a bit overwhelming at first sight, much of it requires only tick-box answers.
- AIUK have produced a detailed guide to help you to contribute.
- Several of our members attended a workshop on 22 April. After this, Rebecca Barnes produced some clear instructions which you can follow. These appear on the next page.

Please contribute if you can, even if only to Part 1, which will take you 15-20 minutes.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/guide-governments-immigration-and-asylum-consultation>

Campaigning

Human Rights in the UK - Immigration, HRA, Police Bill, Overseas Operations

You may have seen the recent article in the Guardian entitled “UK’s ‘Headlong Rush Into Abandoning Human Rights’ Rebuked By Amnesty” reporting on the UK section of the recently published annual report.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/07/uks-headlong-rush-into-abandoning-human-rights-rebuked-by-amnesty>

It makes sad reading.

In particular, there are several changes to UK legislation currently underway which give cause for concern: the Immigration Bill, a review of the Human Rights Act, the Policing Bill, and the Overseas Operations Bill. At our May meeting our secretary, Anne Walker, will refresh our memories about the Human Rights Act 1998 and how it works (from a layperson’s perspective) and we will discuss the concerns regarding the other bills.

Immigration -Make your voice heard on the government’s proposed ‘New Plan for Immigration’

Priti Patel has announced a drastic and cruel overhaul to the UK’s immigration system - which includes creating a two-tiered asylum system, punishing those who arrive in the UK without prior permission regardless of their needs or rights – and we want to do everything we can to stop it.

The Home Office has opened a public consultation - which means you can make your views known on the plan. **It’s vital that as many people as possible take part in the consultation if we are going to make our voices heard** – so please do take the time to do this if you can.

The form can be completed in as little as 15 - 20 minutes and it doesn’t have to be done in one go (you can save and log back in later). Amnesty has provided a guide to all of the answers – most of which just require ticking a box and some Amnesty recommend leaving blank.

Our easy guide to filling out the consultation form:

Deadline: 5 May

1. Go to the HO’s consultation page <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-plan-for-immigration> and create a log in – you will then be emailed with a link to the platform and the **two surveys**.
2. Go to Amnesty’s guide on how to answer each question https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2021-04/Immigration%20consultation%20table.pdf?8VR8bcv_zf2gkM_wMtFVotz00AQjHzWq= or use the link below <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/guide-governments-immigration-and-asylum-consultation>
3. Fill out the two surveys – complete survey one (50 questions) before starting survey two (26 questions)
4. For open questions, please enter your own answers – or leave blank if you are unsure. If you only have time to answer one open question, please answer **question 45** on Survey 1.

For Amnesty’s full guide to the consultation and all links, visit: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/guide-governments-immigration-and-asylum-consultation>

Thank you so much – and if you require any more guidance, please get in touch with us.

Human Rights Act

The UK Human Rights Act 1998 allows UK citizens to seek redress in UK courts if their rights (as stated in the European Convention on Human Rights) are infringed. For some years the Conservative manifesto has promised to replace this act with a UK Bill of Rights. In December last year the government announced a formal review of how the Act currently operates. The call for evidence closed on 3rd March and the report is expected in June.

Human Rights Act

For more information see the links below and come along to our May meeting to hear Anne's overview of the Act, how it is used and why we believe it should stay as it is.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/human-rights-act>

<https://savetheact.uk/about/>

<https://www.bih.org.uk/our-response-to-the-hra-review>

Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill

This new bill is currently going through parliament. It was passed at second reading on 16.3.21 and is currently at being scrutinised by the Public Bill Committee before reporting back to the House on 24.6.21.

The government claims that the right to protest has tipped too readily in favour of protestors and that a 'modest reset of the scales' is needed. The new measures in this bill will 'improve the police's ability to manage protests' (such as the Extinction Rebellion and the BLM protests).

It will increase the power of the police to put a time limit on static protests and stop the protest if it is too noisy (they already have these powers over marches). The police will have greater powers to decide that a protest is disruptive and legally prevent it from continuing. They have greater powers of stop, search and seizure of protesters if they deem the disruption caused by a protest is too great.

There is a great deal of concern that these powers will reduce the freedom to protest and the effectiveness of protest and give the police too much freedom to arrest protestors.

The right to protest is an important, fundamental human right and many organisations have approached the government to express their concerns about these changes.

Amnesty has a report on this at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-policing-bill-will-normalise-dangerous-over-policing-peaceful-protest>

You can find a sample email to send to the Prime Minister to ask him to halt the bill at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/uk-government-stop-assault-our-freedoms>

Some GOOD NEWS about the Overseas Operations Bill

Some good news You may remember that last March (2020), the government introduced an Overseas Operations bill. One of its provisions was to put a 5-year limit on the time that former armed services personnel could be prosecuted for offences committed whilst deployed outside the UK. This was to prevent "vexatious" prosecutions. The bill was widely criticised for decriminalising torture. Vigorous campaigning led to an amendment being tabled to exclude torture, genocide and crimes against humanity from the presumption against prosecution. Having passed on its third reading in the House of Lords on 13th April, the bill went back to the Commons for its final reading on 21st April, and the amendment was passed.

As noted by Freedom from Torture, it is disgraceful that accountability for torture and genocide could ever have been up for debate. This was a victory, but the amendment to the bill does not cover cruel and degrading punishment or inhumane treatment, so we cannot be complacent.

Crisis and Tactical

This month, we focus on the appalling human rights violations which are taking place in Myanmar, and on a campaign to stop the UK Government from supplying arms for use in the war in Yemen.

Myanmar

Serious human rights violations have continued to occur across Myanmar. Horrifying state violence has been documented in response to protests that arose following the military coup. Amnesty also continues to raise concerns about crimes against humanity being perpetrated in Rakhine State against the Rohingya, and has documented war crimes and other serious human rights violations against other ethnic minorities in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin and Shan States.

On 23rd April, Amnesty sent an open letter to the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its member states. In this, Amnesty called the

aftermath of the coup in Myanmar the “biggest test” in ASEAN’s history. Amnesty also called on the bloc to “prioritise protecting the human rights of people in Myanmar and prevent the situation deteriorating into a human rights and humanitarian crisis”.

Emerlynne Gil, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for Research, said, “The Myanmar military appears to be operating with the assumption of total impunity. The situation today is the direct result of a broader failure by the international community, including the ASEAN, to hold the Myanmar military to account for its past crimes.”

Of particular concern is the seeming impunity of Myanmar leaders for crimes committed, including for crimes against humanity. The UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Tom Andrews, has suggested that the repression of peaceful protests in the wake of the coup likely meets the threshold of crimes against humanity (OHCHR link below).

Open letter:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/4014/2021/en/>

OHCHR: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26884&LangID=E>

More info:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/04/myanmar-human-rights-must-be-top-priority-asean/>

Yemen

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) has been granted permission for a legal challenge against the UK Government to proceed to the High Court. For more than six years now UK weapons have been used to tear lives apart in Yemen. Throughout this time the government has continued to promote and protect weapons sales, despite the devastating human cost.

In 2019 legal action by CAAT forced the government to stop issuing export licences for weapons that could be used in the war in Yemen. The government was ordered to retake all its previous decisions in a lawful manner. But in July 2020 the government resumed arms sales, and since then it has licensed more than £1.6 billion additional weapons sales in support of the war.

Judges will now consider whether the government’s decision to resume arms sales is lawful. Hopefully the case will be heard in the next few months. The new ruling is an important step forward, increasing the pressure on the UK government to finally end the arms sales fuelling the war in Yemen.

If you can afford it, please make a donation to support CAAT’s work around the court case. You can do so by following this link:

<https://crm.caat.org.uk/civcrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=1>

Although this is not a current Amnesty campaign we fully support it.



UAE - Update on campaigns for release of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken

The European Parliament published an open letter on 15.4.21 calling on the UAE government to release all prisoners of conscience, for an end to torture and ill-treatment of these prisoners, as well as the protection of prisoners’ families from collective punishment. The letter expresses deep concern over the systematic crackdown on freedom of speech and expression and the subsequent retaliation received during detention.

It mentions the human rights defender, Ahmed Mansoor and states that since his arrest in 2017, ‘the situation in the country for human rights defenders has not improved, in fact it has deteriorated as many government critics endure abysmal detention conditions that infringe existing international laws’.

It has been triggered by an upcoming EU-UAE Human Rights Dialogue this summer. The open letter has been signed by many MEPs. This is a very positive move.

Football Welcomes Refugees

Many thanks to those who shared their footballing memories - we've had some lovely contributions for the Football Welcomes Refugees campaign last month. They are being collated by the National Football Museum right now and we'll share when they're available. The panel discussion that was planned as part of this event has been pushed back to the 17th June. We'll let you know more next month.

In the meantime, you can read more about this initiative at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/football-welcomes-refugees>



You might also be interested in this story from The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/apr/29/shaygan-banisaeid-from-leaving-iran-to-coaching-dream-in-england-fulham-football-welcomes>

Refugees in Europe

On 27th April, an Amnesty Press Release highlighted a recent decision by the Danish Government to revoke residency permits of Syrian refugees, on the grounds that it would be safe for them to return to certain parts of Syria designated “safe zones”. The idea that certain parts of Syria are safe for return is in direct contradiction to assessments made by international experts on Syria and the UNHCR. There are currently 39 people who are at risk of being deported.

For more information see <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/denmark-will-be-breaking-international-law-if-syrian-refugees-forced-return-0>

Amnesty is inviting supporters around the world to write to the Danish Minister of Immigration and Integration calling for the ongoing protection of Syrian refugees in Denmark at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur18/4010/2021/en/>

Group News

Covid 19 vaccines

**I WANT A
PEOPLE'S
VACCINE,
NOT A PROFIT
VACCINE.**

#PEOPLESVACCINE
PEOPLESVACCINE.ORG



51 people, including several from the Manchester Amnesty group attended the webinar entitled “COVID19: Are we really all in this together?” which was put on by Global Justice Manchester, Oxfam, and Amnesty, in conjunction with the People’s Vaccine campaign, on 14th April. This was followed by a question and answer and discussion session the following week.

At the webinar, we learned that despite COVID 19 being a global pandemic, and despite the fact that we need to vaccinate the entire world in order to control the virus, there is no global vaccine strategy. The entire world is dependent on a small number of big pharma companies to produce enough vaccines for the world, and they don’t have the capacity to do that. However, in order to protect their profits, they are refusing to share knowledge and expertise that would enable other drug companies in low and middle income countries (LMICs) to produce more vaccines. There is massive shortage of vaccines. Existing vaccines have been largely bought up and are being hoarded by wealthy countries, and at the other end of the scale, only 2% of vaccinations worldwide have been given in Africa. The COVAX initiative led by the WHO is only aiming to reach 20-27% of people in LMICs this year– this is simply not enough – and in any case, due to vaccine shortages, is already behind schedule in its activities.

What can be done? The World Trade Organisation proposal to waive intellectual property rights and to lift patent protection on vaccines has been blocked by the wealthy G7 countries. The WHO has set up a Covid Technology Access Pool to allow pharmaceutical companies to share knowledge and technological expertise, but they have so far declined to participate. Clearly, they need to be pressurised into acting differently.

PeoplesVaccine.org held a fortnight of action from 19th-30th April, but it's never too late to act. Please visit the webpages of PeoplesVaccine.org to find out how you can join actions to pressure governments and pharmaceutical countries to act ethically. Here is the link: <https://peoplesvaccine.org/take-action/>

The recording of the expert panel webinar is now available: [COVID 19: Are we really all in this together? 14.04.21 - YouTube](#). It is well worth watching.



If you would like to get involved in a subgroup to support a particular area of work, email Anne.walker9@ntlworld.com and she will put you in touch with the relevant group lead.

Other News

Kate Allen retires

Kate Allen, the Director of AIUK for the past 21 years has announced her retirement. In her retirement message to supporters she said:

"It has been the privilege of my life to be part of the global Amnesty International movement and to lead the UK Section over the past 21 years. We truly are an extraordinary movement of people. The thing I have loved most about my job is the time I have spent with activists, working together and enjoying our solidary and shared passion for human rights.

I have seen so much positive change for human rights, met so many committed and inspiring people and I know that our global movement for human rights is in a stronger place now than when I joined it 21 years ago. It needs to be, the struggle for human rights changes shape over time, but that struggle is always there, and Amnesty is unique in being a global community who act in solidary and support to make change happen."

We wish Kate all the best for a long, happy and fulfilling retirement.

Racism at Amnesty International Secretariat and AIUK office

On 20th April, following media coverage (including an article in the Guardian, see link below) reporting on allegations of racism at the Amnesty International Secretariat and Amnesty UK office, the outgoing Director of AIUK, Kate Allen, emailed supporters.

Her email expressed deep regret for the pain caused to former colleagues and current supporters and reiterated Amnesty's commitment to providing "a positive environment where all individuals can thrive and fully contribute to the human rights work we are all so passionate about and that achieves so much. We want to build an anti-racist organisation that applies the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in all that we do, both in terms of how we operate within AIUK and our campaigning work."

On 26th April, Julie Bullough, the Amnesty Activism Representative for the North West Region emailed the Manchester Amnesty Group Chair. It is clear that many Amnesty supporters do not think that the action taken so far is sufficient. Julie's email is

reproduced in full at the end of this newsletter. Please read it carefully. Julie would welcome any views from groups or activists within groups.

Julie's email and the whole issue of racism was discussed at a group Coordinators meeting on 29th April, a programme of possible actions was decided upon and further communications will be sent out in the coming weeks.

Link to Guardian article:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/20/amnesty-international-has-culture-of-white-privilege-report-finds>

Reminder about the Festival of Social Justice

which was advertised in last month's newsletter and which is currently ongoing until May 31. Find the full programme and booking information here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/central-england/festival-social-justice-event-programme>

Amnesty International UK, AGM

And another event to look forward to is this year's AGM. Following consultation with the Board's Activism Sub Committee, AIUK we have decided to hold the AGM on **19 June**. This will be an online meeting with all AGM business elements taking place across a single day and will include presentations from the Chair, Treasurer and Director, as well as debates and voting on resolutions. The **deadline for the submission of resolutions is 21 March 2021**.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm2021>

You should have received your AGM notice and credentials for logging in by email or by post. If you have not received these, please contact the supporter care team

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-us>

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe



You will have heard the sickening news that, following a hearing before an Iranian Revolutionary Court in Tehran last month, on 25th April, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was given a new one-year jail sentence for "propaganda against the system." She also received a ban on leaving the country or a year after the sentence has finished.

This news has come as a blow to her family and all those who have campaigned for her. As Amnesty say, the sentence is further proof of the incredible cruelty of the Iranian regime. Nazanin has been subjected to two court trials based on trumped-up charges. Instead of spending the last five years with her young daughter, she has been unjustly and arbitrarily trapped in Iran, much of that time enduring harsh and inhuman conditions in prison.

Amnesty will be renewing efforts to put pressure on the UK government to act to secure Nazanin's release.

Please follow this link to read more about Nazanin's case and see what actions you can take:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/nazanin-zaghari-ratcliffe-whats-happening>

**Do you like doing things in hundreds?
Here is a fundraising opportunity for
you.**



On 30th April, Captain Tom would have been 101 years old. In his memory, and to celebrate his achievements of last year, his family is asking everyone in the UK to do something extraordinary for the causes they love. Amnesty International UK would love its supporters to take on the Captain Tom 100 challenge to raise money to support its work defending human rights throughout the world. Here's what to do:

1. Choose your 100

Team up or go it alone to do 100 of anything! You could do 100 star-jumps, walk 100 miles, tell 100 jokes, stay silent for 100 minutes, do 100 good deeds, send 100 letters or say 100 hellos.

2. Start your fundraising

You can choose Just Giving

<https://captaintom100.justgiving.com/fundraise>

or Virgin Money Giviing

<https://captaintom100.virginmoneygiving.com/givin>

[g/captaintom100/?](https://captaintom100/?) and select Amnesty International UK.

3. Share your journey

Share your challenge with friends and family and ask them to sponsor you.

4. Capture your success

You could use apps like Strava to track your activity, set up a zoom meeting if people are joining you or video yourself to post on social media using #CaptainTom100.

5. Get together and have fun!

This is all about bringing people together and sharing something uplifting to get us through challenging times.

Amnesty's Community and Events Fundraising Team is on hand to provide you with assistance all the way, so if you have any questions at all, get in touch with us at fundraise@amnesty.org.uk.

Text of email from Julie Bullough reproduced in full

You are receiving this email as one of the main contacts I hold for your Amnesty Group.

Content warning: Racism

Dear All,

You may have seen last Tuesday (20 April) a Guardian article highlighting racism at both the Amnesty International Secretariat and the Amnesty International UK office. You may also have received an email from Kate Allen, the Director of AIUK in response (see below). Since then former staff and board members have shared more detail on social media of their own experiences including Hannah Perry former vice chair. <https://twitter.com/hanaperrynow/status/1386384193723187201?s=21>

As human rights activists, I am sure we will all find this deeply painful to read and have real sympathy for the staff and former staff affected by this. Many activists will be understandably angry.

On Thursday at our monthly Regional Representatives meeting we were joined by a member of the Senior Management Team to discuss our views and feelings and those of the local groups we had heard from, as well as to hear from management how they see the situation (which largely reflected the detail in Kate's e-mail). We expressed our anger and disappointment, as well as the doubts we have about whether the planned steps outlined by management are enough. The Regional Reps now plan to meet again on Thursday evening without staff present to discuss our thoughts further and whether we want to take further action.

The email from Kate highlighted that anyone wanting to discuss this with her could email activism@amnesty.org.uk. That is also the best address if you want to email your individual or group views directly to Amnesty. The email also notes plans for a session for activists to outline Amnesty's approach to anti-racism, details to follow.

For my part, I would welcome any views from groups or activists within groups. As the Regional Representative for North West England, it is my role to reflect the views of our local groups to the Board and staff. I can do this most effectively if I have heard directly from you. If anyone would like me to join a group meeting to discuss this let me know. I should be clear, that I would be attending to try and outline the issue and what we know, and hear the views of members, I would not be there to provide the corporate position of AIUK or be there to defend anyone.

Finally, I would highlight that Kieran Aldred, one of the former staff members who has spoken out about their experience of racism at AIUK, has noted that his personal view is that what is needed is resignations of leaders at AIUK but does not feel people withdrawing membership/ donations is the answer as he still considers the work of AIUK to be vital. Also, it is extremely important that individuals continue as members so that we can collectively make our views known at the AGM. If you cancel your membership we will lose that power.

Please forward this email to your group members.

Do get in touch if you want to share your or your group's views with me.

Thanks,

Julie Bullough

[Activism Representative for the North West region](#)

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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
