

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UNITED KINGDOM SECTION

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGM DECISIONS June 2021 BOARD MEETING

The AIUK Section Board receives a report at each meeting, setting out the progress in implementing AGM resolutions. These reports will be posted on the website after each Board meeting to enable members to keep up to date with developments. At the December 2020 meeting, Board members agreed on responsibility for the oversight of each resolution as follows:

S1 (2020) To create two reserved seats for youth members on the Board

The Articles have been amended to give effect to the decision that the minimum age for a Director shall be 16.

Following discussions, and in agreement with the proposers of this resolution, the reserved seat for the person aged 18-23 years has been enacted and is available through the 2021 Board election process. The reserved seat for the under 18 year old will be enacted through the 2022 elections to the Board.

Tom Harrison

Tom.harrison@amnesty.org.uk

01 (2020) Discrimination against minority groups in the UK

In 2010, the AGM adopted a decision to clarify that AGM decisions should be implemented in “the following planning year”. Due to the lateness of the 2020 AGM, we were unable to incorporate plans to implement this resolution in the operational planning cycle for 2021. At the start of January, due to the impact of lockdown on staffing capacity, we rephased and reprioritised existing operational plans in order to reduce workload. At present, we are pessimistic about our ability to allocate the additional staffing capacity required to implement this resolution during 2021. We will keep this under review as the year progresses and will look to incorporate this work into plans for 2022.

In the context of our work on the Human Rights Act and Policing Bill we have been focusing on minority groups in the UK and the impact of that legislation on them. we have organised events and are building partnerships with Roma and traveller supporting organisations around the threat to Right to Roam; and with Black and Communities of Colour over the increase in stop and search powers.

Thomas Chigbo

thomas.chigbo@amnesty.org.uk

02 (2020) The humanitarian crisis in the Syrian city of Afrin and surrounding refugee camps

The International Secretariat is considering an output on arrests & abductions by pro-Turkey armed groups in Afrin/North East Syria for Autumn 2021. No firm date has been set by the IS yet for releasing the output, but AIUK will have to be guided by IS plans and can not initiate a campaign on this issue if it is outside of IS plans and strategy.

In advance of any possible IS output, AIUK's Crisis & Tactical Campaigns Manager has contacted and consulted several Syrian HRDs on critical issues relating to Afrin. This includes human rights information about Afrin within the broader Syria context, political dynamics, and gaining agreements with Syrian HRDs to engage in AIUK communications content if the IS releases anything.

AIUK has built-in capacity and resources in its 2021 plans to take on any Afrin-related work and is ready to act, but only if it aligns with IS plans and strategy. The focus for our Syria work throughout 2021 remains our Justice for Syria campaign and supporting Syrian HRDs working towards our shared objectives.

Helen Horton

helen.horton@amnesty.org.uk

03 (2020) Human Rights and the dignity of lives in Kashmir

The IS have had little to no capacity for any India research work since AI India was forced to cease operations, close its office, and lay off all staff, in September 2020. It has been a struggle to get information about India and colleagues have attempted going through SARO and other channels, but to little avail.

Without a doubt the lack of India research and campaign guidance since AI India closed has greatly affected AIUK's ability to inform and influence UK govt and Parliament on the human rights situation India and in Jammu & Kashmir. However, despite this AIUK have attempted to keep the Foreign Office

updated on human rights developments, particularly about the situation of AI India. This has largely been down to the former Director and the Country Coordinator.

The IS did manage to issue this piece on in October 2020, following its office closure. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/india-counter-terror-raids-on-civil-society-groups-signal-escalating-crackdown-on-dissent/> On the back of this press release, AIUK Foreign Policy Adviser met with the Kashmir APPG on 11 December 2020 to brief them on human rights situation including the AFSPA and PSA, as well as about reprisals against HRDs. As follow up to this, the Kashmir APPG Chair, Debbie Abrahams MP, wrote to the Foreign Secretary, asking what his Department was doing about the repression of dissent in Jammu & Kashmir, and about the forced closure of AI India.

Amnesty, IS/AI India have called for the repeal of AFSPA and it was quite likely AI India's campaign on this that was a key factor in the current situation as our staff faced reprisals for this work?

The UK PM was due to visit India end April 2021, but this was cancelled due to concerns about the Indian variant of Covid-19.

Helen Horton
helen.horton@amnesty.org.uk

04 (2020) Campaign to end excessive, cruel and inhuman cellular confinement in UK prisons

In 2010, the AGM adopted a decision to clarify that AGM decisions should be implemented in "the following planning year". Due to the lateness of the 2020 AGM, we were unable to incorporate plans to implement this resolution in the operational planning cycle for 2021. At the start of January, due to the impact of lockdown on staffing capacity, we rephased and reprioritised existing operational plans in order to reduce workload. At present, we are pessimistic about our ability to allocate the additional staffing capacity required to implement this resolution during 2021. We will keep this under review as the year progresses and will look to incorporate this work into plans for 2022.

Given resource constraints internally; the lack of existing Amnesty policy or internal expertise; the decision in January to cut operational plans in response to the third lockdown; internal staff wellbeing and capacity issues; expectations on strategic planning and several other factors aside, we simply haven't had the money or capacity to action this resolution which would require substantial multi-year investment to make an impact.

We have decided to start work within the community organising team to support an activist-led campaign on this. A project group consisting of activists from the Cardiff local group has had their first meeting and made a decision to try to expand the number of activists involved in the group. Following on from this, a notice went out to all activism reps about the project asking them to share details with groups and encourage suitable activists to put themselves forward to join the group. One community organiser will attend the regular meetings of the group, where group members will plan this campaign, take on tasks that they can do themselves, and ask the community organiser to feedback requests for support from AI staff. One idea that is being explored is doing a media focused mindmapping session in which we plan ideas for how to get the media to cover this issue.

Abigail Tuxworth-Grant
abigail.tuxworth-grant@amnesty.org.uk

05 (2020) European Court of Human Rights and the UK Human Rights Act

We are currently developing campaign plans to address the current threat to the Human Rights Act.

Abigail Grant
Abigail.tuxworth-grant@amnesty.org.uk

A2 (2019) Remote participation at the 2020 AGM and National Conference

The COVID-19 epidemic radically altered our plans for the 2020 AGM, leading to its cancellation as an in-person event. A scaled down event took place in October to satisfy legal requirements and with minimal attendance. This was preceded an online resolution discussion day.

In 2021, we will separate the National Conference and AGM.

The AGM will take place on 19 June and will be almost entirely an online meeting, allowing remote participation in plenary debates and live voting on the day.

We are planning a National Conference later in 2021, in the autumn. It is too early to decide whether this will be online, in person or a mix of the two.

Abigail Tuxworth-Grant
abigail.tuxworth-grant@amnesty.org.uk

B3(2019) A disabled peoples' activist structure

The establishment of a Disability Rights Network remains an explicit part of our plans. This is one of two new activist structures that we planned to establish in 2021. However, the ongoing lockdown in late 2020 and early 2021 and the resulting impact on staff capacities has required us to review workload and plans. As a result, we aim to launch an anti-racism network in the second half of 2021 and a Disability Rights Network in 2022.

Abigail Grant
Abigail.tuxworth-grant@amnesty.org.uk

E1(2019) Toxic Culture and Staff Wellbeing concerns at Amnesty International's International Secretariat

This decision has been implemented and implementation is ongoing.

At the first AIUK staff and volunteers meeting after the AGM, this decision was noted during feedback on the event.

With respect to the International Secretariat, this decision was overtaken by events. Shortly after the AGM, the International Board and Secretary General announced the need to identify significant savings, with an unavoidable requirement for redundancies to achieve those savings.

In the spirit of this AGM decision, the Section's Board agreed an additional donation of £250,000 to the international budget, as well as a loan offer of the same amount.

Our understanding is that resources to implement the KonTerra recommendations received significant protection from the budget cuts.

The KonTerra report raised a number of questions in relation to wellbeing, and we have taken these very seriously at AIUK.

The KonTerra report raised 5 questions to support Sections in thinking about how they manage wellbeing. The AIUK Section Boards considered these 5 questions and proposals for response at its June 2019 meeting.

- **WHAT?** Strive to establish a culture of care and respect.
- **WHO?** Attend to the staff wellbeing of all staff, not only staff who engage in field work.
- **WHY?** Amnesty staff are placed under unusual stressors that necessitate specialized support.
- **WHEN?** Don't wait for a crisis to be the impetus to make wellbeing a priority. The time is now.
- **HOW?** Begin with a needs assessment for your Section office (see details below)

The COVID-19 crisis has brought significant challenges, with staff being required to work remotely. Maintaining staff well-being has been a priority throughout, with an emphasis on maintaining contact and communication between staff, allowing flexibility for those with caring responsibilities and regular monitoring.

In addition to wellbeing support, one of the key areas of pressure for staff is workload, which has increased due to the COVID-19 crisis. Whilst developing our next strategic plan to start in 2022, we have identified interim priorities in order to support our people to prioritise their workload in order to manage this workload pressure.

A summary of key actions taken is detailed below.

There is an outstanding requirement to communicate these actions to members. This will be taken forward by September 2021.

Helen Horton

helen.horton@amnesty.org.uk

Key deliverable

1 WHAT? Strive to establish a culture of care and respect.

A good measure of the health and success of any human rights organisations is the extent to which the organisation has created an internal culture of care and respect. Human rights organisations who are unable to attend well to the humanity of their own workers will ultimately fail to embody their values and achieve an important part of their vision.

How this has been implemented

A number of initiatives currently being undertaken which will collectively help with achieving this including:

- 1 Creation of Safeguarding framework including respective work streams focusing on preventative mechanisms including risk assessments, to reduce risks around safeguarding and wellbeing and ensure adequate support is in place where risk is identified. This has also included a number of specific trainings working with individual teams where risks are greatest including community organising teams, lead activists and campaign teams. In addition, a new safeguarding policy has also been implemented which clearly outlines expectations and accountability in relation to safeguarding and what standards are expected.

- 2 Roll-out and embedding of Commitments - (Consideration, Collaboration, Communication and Change) to guide the behaviours on how our people should work with each other
- 3 Provision of training which was undertaken by all staff to seek to address various unconscious bias including:
 - Unconscious bias training
 - Anti-racism training
 - Trans awareness training
 - Mental health awareness training for managers
 - Mental health awareness training for all staff
- 4 Establishment of wellbeing project group chaired by AIUK director, and led by Head of HR and Head of safeguarding with representatives from across the organisation including TU reps. The wellbeing project group specifically focuses on staff wellbeing, including developing a wellbeing strategy and having capacity to respond to current wellbeing issues. Some of the areas focused on by the wellbeing project group include:
 - Managing staff wellbeing during the pandemic and putting additional wellbeing measures in place, such as bereavement support, trauma support when needed.
 - Reviewing staff wellbeing surveys and responding to issues identified
 - Reviewing EAP wellbeing offer for all staff.
 - Reviewing wellbeing implications of remote working.
- 5 Specific wellbeing initiatives have been put in place including:
 - mental health and resilience training during the pandemic,
 - Wellbeing activities including weekly mindfulness sessions, and focused weeks on looking after your wellbeing eg workshops on various topics, yoga, chair massage, meditation, laughter yoga, blood pressure checks etc
 - Promotion of mental health awareness activities through participating in Time2change week, where we provided a weeklong programme of mental health awareness activities including talks.
 - Wellbeing days in addition to annual leave which can be taken at short notice.
- 6 Leadership capacity has been strengthened through development:
 - a Senior managers - Leadership development programme was completed by all leadership teams and SMT including 360 feedback, 3.5day residential training and follow up individual leadership coaching completed over a 6 – 9-month period.
 - b People managers - management development program undertaken by all line managers including 360 feedback, management workshops and 121 coaching
 - c Other role specific and people skill training ongoing in line with organisational needs
- 7 Prioritising of equity and inclusion activities, through the appointment of an EDI lead and establishment of an EDI steering group and EDI strategy. Some of the EDI activities already delivered including listening and check in sessions for staff with different protected characteristics e.g. staff of colour, staff of faith, etc. There has also opportunities for staff to disclose experiences, as part of an “in your shoes” process of healing through moments of resolution.
- 8 Staff have completed personal safety training delivered by Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Key deliverable**2 WHO? Attend to the staff wellbeing of all staff, not only staff who engage in field work.**

There is a misperception that only staff in the field (or staff who work directly with those experiencing human rights abuses) are susceptible to stress and trauma. During the last twenty years, however, research and awareness around the impact of secondary stress on helping professionals has increased. Many organisations have come to understand that all staff working in this arena are susceptible to exceptional stressors and every staff member has the right to excellent wellbeing support.

How this has been implemented

- 1 Training as described above given to all staff including anti-racism training, unconscious bias training, mental health training.
- 2 Wellbeing initiatives as described above, offered to all staff including EAP assistance and specific wellbeing initiatives. This included mental health resilience training during the pandemic to help support staff who were struggling, and all 4 sessions were fully booked. An additional EAP provider was offered to all staff in addition to our existing EAP provider, giving our staff choice of 2 providers (CiC and Metlife).
- 3 During periods when additional specialist trauma and bereavement support were provided during the pandemic and in dealing with effects of institutional racism, these were offered to all staff.
- 4 Implemented recommendations from review in 2018 specific to Supporter Comms Team including appointment of senior support comms officer focussing on team wellbeing, call escalation, training and support and dedicated group therapeutic support for all staff in SCT team to minimise risks of vicarious trauma.
- 5 Further vicarious trauma support planned for high-risk teams in 2021 including campaigns team, media team, CORE team, tele fundraising teams and advocacy teams.
- 6 Provision of lone worker training for all staff

Key deliverable**3 WHY? Amnesty staff are placed under unusual stressors that necessitate specialized support.**

The work that Amnesty staff undertake is inherently stressful and quite different from the sorts of jobs that many in society hold. As such, any community mental health services available are unlikely to meet their needs, and it is incumbent upon the Sections to ensure that adequate mental health services are accessible and available.

How this has been implemented

Specialist trauma support has been provided to staff when needed and 2 EAP providers also provide counselling for our staff. One of the providers CiC, has specific expertise in the humanitarian sector including supporting Amnesty International Secretariat staff.

Key deliverable**4 WHEN? Don't wait for a crisis to be the impetus to make wellbeing a priority. The time is now.**

Sadly, it often takes a crisis for many organisations to understand that prevention works a lot better than response when it comes to supporting wellbeing. Adequately attending

to wellbeing means investing time, energy, and resources to the cause on a proactive and continuous basis.

How this has been implemented

The wellbeing project group which has been operating since 2019 has a remit of looking at wellbeing strategy but also focusing on dealing with current wellbeing issues as they arise and being proactive in addressing these. This group is made up of representatives from across the organisation with all departments and levels represented. This acts as the eyes and ears on wellbeing across the organisation, so that wellbeing issues and trends across the organisation can be picked up at an early stage. This is also supported by implementation of the staff survey twice per year, which acts as a temperature check of the organisation and helps to identify wellbeing trends emerging.

In addition, the work done by the safeguarding workstream is also focused on preventative mechanisms including risk assessments, to reduce risks around wellbeing and ensure adequate support is in place where risk is identified.

Key deliverable**5 HOW? Begin with a needs assessment for your Section office.**

Take a deliberate, thoughtful approach. Find out first what staff need and what they believe is missing. Conduct a survey of staff in conjunction with interviews by a trusted external source to learn what staff really think about the tone of the office culture and whether there are gaps in staff support policies and practices.

How this has been implemented

Wellbeing survey of all staff was undertaken in February 2020 and a follow up staff survey in June 2020, specifically looking at wellbeing during covid. This has provided valuable data to assist the wellbeing project group in addressing gaps identified in wellbeing support and provision. We then did a follow up wellbeing staff survey in Jan 2021 and have identified further wellbeing issues which is feeding into the development of our ways of working project, which is developing the future of working including the possibility of hybrid working long term at AIUK.

In addition, we have undertaken two separate working from home surveys during the ongoing pandemic to understand how staff are dealing with working from home and ascertain additional needs. We have provided access to online training and specialist ergonomics assessment to support with ensuring a safe work space in the home including supporting with providing and purchasing equipment.

B1 (2018) Homelessness

As noted in the implementation report provided to the 2020 AGM, plans for research into homelessness were well advanced in early 2020 and fieldwork was scheduled to commence when the UK went into lockdown. As a result, plans were put on hold.

This continues to be the case unfortunately. The researcher at the IS who is going to carry out this research has been in India for personal covid-related reasons and has only returned to the UK at the end of May 2021.

We are hopeful that this work can resume with a slightly broader focus on the impact of Covid on vulnerable older

people, including housing and health, and we expect to be able to publish the report in the first quarter of 2022.

Sen Raj

Sen.Raj@amnesty.org.uk

C1 (2018) Freedom of Religious Expression

In response to an outline strategic direction produced by the International Secretariat in November 2019, AIUK set out a range of suggestions, including a call to include freedom of religious expression within the next strategic plan.

In January, AIUK prepared a “proposal for a motion” to the 2020 Global Assembly on this topic. However, we decided not to submit the proposal as it became increasingly clear that the Preparatory Committee (an international committee tasked with helping to prepare the Global Assembly) would not accept the proposal and intended to deal with suggested amendments to the global strategic plan through a process of amendments at the meeting itself. Due to the COVID 19 crisis, plans to approve the strategy at the 2020 Global Assembly were postponed for year.

In February 2021, the International Secretariat circulated a final draft strategic plan. This includes the right to freedom of expression as a priority area of work. Work to combat discrimination against specific groups is included as one of a number of topics described as flexible areas of work that will receive some limited IS support.

Abigail Grant

Abigail.tuxworth-grant@amnesty.org.uk

C2 (2018) The right to live with your spouse or civil partner

Our work to address this particular resolution focused on the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill. In the 2017-2019 session of Parliament, we briefed in relation to an amendment to a Government Bill of that name and assisted parliamentarians and campaigners in relation to drafting a suitable amendment to be brought back in response to Ministers’ objections to the amendment that was debated in Committee. The Bill ultimately fell with the dissolution of Parliament for the 2019 general election.

In 2020, we again briefed to an amendment tabled to a Government Bill of the same name. However, the Bill’s narrow scope was a barrier to progress. It received Royal Assent in November 2020. We will need to determine if there are other opportunities to achieve progress on this issue.

Our parliamentary advocacy on refugee and migrant rights during the pandemic focused on the need to ensure people’s rights and wellbeing were not put at risk - either by measures taken in response to Covid-19 or by the pandemic’s impact on existing immigration policy and practice. Whereas this did not focus solely or specifically on the rights of spouses and civil partners to live together, aspects of that advocacy (such as in relation to No Recourse to Public Funds conditions) related to matters that have undermined the right to respect for family life between spouses and civil partners where one or other partner is subject to immigration controls.

We will continue to monitor opportunities to achieve progress on this specific issue; and to include consideration of spouses and civil partners in relation to current and future advocacy. However, it is important to acknowledge that over the last several months, the Government has been signalling its intention to effectively dismantle the UK’s asylum system and commitment to international asylum law; and, by its recently published plan, now indicated that this intention will be at the core of the next immigration bill (expected this year). That, alongside other prior commitments, is likely to demand our focus over the forthcoming period.

Helen Horton

Helen.horton@amnesty.org.uk

C3 (2018) Discrimination based upon caste using the Equality Act

The implementation report provided to the 2020 AGM noted that following a consultation that generated 16,000 responses (in which the majority rejected legislation), the government concluded that including the term ‘caste’ in legislation would be unnecessary (as it is already addressed in case law) and divisive.

We noted that AIUK had co-signed a letter to MPs and Lords to support the inclusion of caste in the Equalities Act. This was an initiative of the Dalit Support Network.

We also noted that the we were considering whether a Law Commission of review of hate crime law presented an opportunity to further this work. In the event, the Law Commission’s consultation paper concluded that “we are not currently persuaded that a different approach should be taken for the purposes of hate crime laws.

Developments on this have been impacted by the Covid crisis. We’ve been supporting the work of the Dalit Solidarity Network who have been leading the advocacy and campaigning on this. They had planned a letter to MP’s and Select Committees which were supportive of, however, the planned letter didn’t go as a result of lockdown.

We also contacted the IS who had recruited a researcher who was looking caste issues in West and Central Africa and South Asia. They were also planning some work on caste in 2021 to mark the 20th anniversary of Durban conference on racism. In September 2021, the UN General Assembly will bring together world leaders for a one-day meeting in New York to mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and this will likely provide an opportunity for both domestic and international advocacy on racism. The IS were interested in the work of the Dalit Solidarity Network in the UK and we agreed to continue discussions and explore opportunities.

Sen Raj

Sen.Raj@amnesty.org.uk

C3 (2017) AIUK Events

This work is ongoing. During the Covid Pandemic staff and activists alike have delivered a range of online events. Now we are moving out of Covid restrictions we will be able to evaluate options for hybrid and offline events towards the end

of 2021 into 2022 (Student Conferences, Regional Conferences, Youth Conferences, Prides etc) The implementation of IoM strategy will help to frame the approach to AIUK events

The intended centrepiece and initial focus of our activist events strategy is the evolution of the AGM / National Conference into an annual 'festival of human rights'. For 2021 we will deliver a single-day online AGM in June, to deliver all AGM business and to produce a National Conference event in the autumn. Plans are underway to deliver this both on and offline. The format for this event will feel more like a festival to help us scope plans for a 2022 'Human Rights Festival' style event.

Thomas Chigbo

Thomas.chigbo@amnesty.org.uk

A4 (2016) Review of Amnesty International's international policy on access to abortion services

This resolution has been implemented. The updated policy recognises abortion, provided in a manner that respects human rights, autonomy, and dignity, as the right of anyone who can become pregnant. This policy also calls for universal access to safe abortion and related care and information, in addition to full decriminalization. The policy is now publicly available on the IS website: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/09/amnesty-releases-updated-policy-on-abortion/>

Sen Raj

Sen.Raj@amnesty.org.uk