

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK SECTION

ACTIVIST CODE OF CONDUCT

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



1. INTRODUCTION

Amnesty International's central principle is that people make change happen. The more people who actively engage in our movement, the more we can promote and protect human rights. We encourage as many people as possible to participate in and feel part of this vibrant movement. Promoting equality and valuing diversity are fundamental to our mission.

We want to maintain an environment for activists that is open, safe, accessible and welcoming. Everyone has a role to play.

This Code of Conduct provides guidance on the behaviours that we need to uphold. It also details the procedure to follow on the rare occasions when complaints or other issues arise.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Code outlines reasonable guidelines for the behaviour we expect of Amnesty activists.

Should any situation arise where an allegation may warrant a police investigation or raise child protection concerns, Amnesty International UK (AIUK) will seek advice from the police or the designated safeguarding lead on how to proceed.

3. DEFINITIONS

An **activist** is anyone who carries out unpaid activity on behalf of Amnesty International UK, including fundraising, campaigning, training or providing support to other activists.

The Code of Conduct does not cover AIUK's Board. Board members have a separate code that relates to their governance responsibilities.

Volunteers who work in AIUK's offices and shops have their own charter, while staff are governed by a separate Code of Conduct and employment policies and procedures.

AIUK staff have a separate staff Code of Conduct.

An **'activist role-holder'** has a regular, specific role, for example regional representative, country coordinator, officer of a local or student group, network committee member and so on. Please see the list of activist roles.

4. FOUNDATIONS

The foundations of this Code of Conduct are drawn from the following sources:

- Amnesty International's core values as articulated in our International Statute
- AIUK's Behaviour Framework: Commitments
- AIUK's Dignity at Work Policy
- The Fundraising Code
- Relevant UK legal frameworks

5. CORE VALUES

Amnesty International is a global community of human rights defenders. Our guiding principles are the universality and indivisibility of human rights, effective action for the individual rights holder, impartiality and independence, democracy and mutual respect, international solidarity and global presence.

6. BEHAVIOUR COMMITMENTS

AIUK is a place where everyone feels included, valued and empowered to contribute to human rights change. Our Commitments describe responsible ways of working with each other that should be applied consistently across AIUK to make it a better place to campaign and fundraise.

These behavioural Commitments should guide activists in the course of their work with Amnesty International.

Communication

I listen to others and, when I communicate, I am respectful, clear, honest and inclusive. I give constructive feedback and allow people to feedback to me.

Collaboration

I seek to build strong, collaborative working relationships. I share my expertise where it is required and encourage others to do the same.

Consideration

Guided by our values and strategic priorities, I manage my time and workload and am respectful of the time and workload of others. I am fair and consistent in my decision-making and my dealings with others.

Change

I innovate and improve the way things are done, learning from setbacks. I make time to increase my knowledge and skills, and support others to do the same.

7. DIGNITY IN ACTIVISM

AIUK is committed to promoting and sustaining a positive and mutually supportive environment where everyone is treated with respect, courtesy and dignity at all times.

We have a right to and are responsible for creating an environment free from harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation; where unacceptable behaviour is easily identified, challenged and stopped.

Acceptable behaviour

Activists have a **personal responsibility** in line with AIUK's Commitments to:

- Treat each other with dignity and respect
- Value differences and the contribution that others make
- Be pro-active in developing and maintaining effective working relationships
- Be open, courteous and constructive in the way we communicate with each other
- Take appropriate action where there are difficulties in working relationships

Unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour is unwanted, unwelcome conduct undermining an individual's dignity.

It can take many forms, ranging from the subtle (remarks, jokes, excluding individuals from discussions/meetings/social events) to the extreme (intimidation, aggressiveness and physical attack). It may be an isolated incident, ongoing or a pattern of repeated behaviour where individual incidents are borderline but, when taken together, breach the bounds of acceptability.

Behaviour can be deemed unacceptable even if there was no intent to cause offence or it has overtones that an individual finds offensive, even if it was not directed at them. It may be expressed verbally, written, in actions, via the telephone, e-mail, online or face-to-face.

Discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable. This is where an individual or a group of people are treated less favourably as a result of a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment (including those undergoing or intending to undergo gender reassignment), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (including treating a woman less favourably because she is breastfeeding), race (including ethnic origin, nationality and colour), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Other unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work environment for that individual. This may be related to a protected characteristic of the individual and may be persistent or an isolated incident. However, the key is that the actions or comments are viewed as having an unacceptable impact on the individual.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and may involve an abuse or misuse of power, position or knowledge through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. It is a more general form of harassment not related to age, race, sex or any other protected characteristic of the individual.

8. FURTHER CONDUCT GUIDELINES

Act within the UK law

Activists should observe the law and ensure that necessary consents are obtained and notices given for actions and events.

Act within Amnesty International policy

All public actions and statements related to Amnesty International's work should be in accordance with Amnesty International policies and positions.

Political impartiality

Amnesty International is independent of any political party. Activists should not advocate for or against any specific political party in the name of Amnesty International. The human rights impact of specific policies is a legitimate cause for comment.

Reasonable expenses

AIUK reimburses expenses for some activities. If you are not sure whether yours qualify for reimbursement, ask a relevant staff member. Where expenses are paid, activists should ensure that they are reasonable and follow AIUK procedures when making a claim.

Confidentiality

Much of our information is for public consumption. However, some is marked 'internal' or 'for AI members only' and may contain sensitive information. It may not always be apparent why the information is sensitive. Such information and documentation should not be shared beyond Amnesty. Documents marked 'draft', 'for consultation', or similar, should be regarded as internal.

Copyright

Material produced by any part of Amnesty International is the property of Amnesty International. Consent for its use by recognised activists can be assumed but it can be withdrawn at any time, including for inappropriate use. This also applies to logos and names.

Activists should ensure that they do not violate copyright laws when using material not produced by Amnesty International.

Acceptance of gifts, hospitality or donations

Activists should not accept gifts, hospitality or donations offered as an inducement for preferential treatment or which could be seen as exerting influence over decisions. Small gifts are permissible, as is the acceptance of a facility or service for free (known as a gift in kind).

It is permissible to receive donations but activists are

advised to seek advice before receiving donations of significant value. Permission must always be sought from the Community and Event Fundraising (CEFR) team for a donation or gift in kind from a private company that exceeds £5,000. Activists should always check with staff before accepting money from a governmental body (except for grants made by an educational establishment to its own student body).

Donations collected in the name of Amnesty International must be used to support the organisation's aims and activities which includes the legitimate activities of our groups and networks but not donations to other organisations.

Where activists wish to fundraise for other organisations (jointly or separately from raising funds for Amnesty International) this information must be made clear on all relevant fundraising materials and the fundraising guidelines must be followed.

For more comprehensive guidelines for fundraising as an activist group, see the following:

Local group: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/local-group-fundraising-guidelines>

Student group: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/student-group-fundraising-guidelines>

Youth group: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/schools-and-youth-groups-fundraising-guidelines>

Conflict of interest

Very occasionally a conflict of interest may arise (or be seen to arise) between an activist's work for Amnesty and their other activities. Damage to AIUK's reputation and/or how activists work collaboratively together may arise in these circumstances. Examples might include where a prominent activist role-holder becomes a legislative candidate or where an activist buys a service from their own company or from a relation. We are not generally interested in knowing about membership of other organisations (including political parties) unless the other body is clearly seen as having values at odds with our own.

Activists who are in a relationship with another activist, or an AIUK staff member, should make that known to those activists that they are working closely with.

For group members any conflict of interest should be declared to other members of the group. Members of networks, committees or similar bodies should make a declaration to their chairs. For other activist role-holders, the declaration should be made to the Chair of the Activism Sub-Committee via activism@amnesty.org.uk

Working in partnership with staff

Staff and activists should work together in partnership to promote the best interests of AIUK. It is important that staff, activists and volunteers work within a culture of mutual respect and an understanding of respective roles at all levels. All communications should be conducted in a

respectful and constructive manner.

Differences of opinion and disputes may arise and activists may wish to complain about a member of staff. If they wish to do so, they can approach the relevant staff manager; they can request a network chair to raise the matter; or they can make a complaint in accordance with AIUK's [feedback mechanism](#). If a staff member wishes to complain about an activist, they will alert their line manager who will instigate the process for responding to complaints about an activist.

Drugs misuse

No activist should consume or be in possession of illegal substances during the performance of their duties for AIUK or at an AIUK event.

Alcohol misuse

Activists should not be under the influence of alcohol to the extent that their performance or behaviour is impaired during the performance of their duties for AIUK.

Health and safety

Activists are expected to take responsibility for their own and others' health and safety when undertaking work or organising events on behalf of AIUK. Trained staff can advise on health and safety, including risk assessments. Contact COEH@amnesty.org.uk for advice.

Engaging safely with children, young people and vulnerable adults

Activists should seek to create an environment where children, young people and vulnerable adults can make an effective contribution to Amnesty International's activism and where their welfare is promoted. Activists must adhere to AIUK's [safeguarding policy](#) and follow AIUK's guidelines for working safely with children, young people and vulnerable adults. All safeguarding concerns will be investigated formally. For safeguarding concerns, contact AIUK's Head of Safeguarding.

Data protection

Activists should act in line with [AIUK's data protection / privacy notice](#).

Acceptance of awards

Activists may sometimes be nominated for an award (with or without monetary value) as a consequence of their work for Amnesty. This is usually to be welcomed and celebrated. Nevertheless, advice from Amnesty staff should be sought before accepting any award of regional or national significance, or that may receive media attention beyond local media.

9. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

It is preferable that problems are addressed informally. However, this is not always possible. Our formal and informal processes for dealing with issues and complaints about activists can be seen [here](#).

10. REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Comments are welcome on this Code of Conduct. It will next be reviewed in November 2022. We appreciate that policies and procedures can be improved and welcome suggestions. These should be sent to Chair of the Activism Sub-Committee via email to activism@amnesty.org.uk

Further information and advice

AIUK's Supporter Communications Team provides information and advice to our supporters and will be able to respond to queries arising from this Code or will know where to obtain answers. The team can be contacted by phone on 020 7033 1777 and by email on activism@amnesty.org.uk