



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

July Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 12th July

Responding to Racism

We will be discussing anti-racism; one of six priority issues in AIUK's strategic plan 2022-2030, recently passed at the AGM. We plan to consider campaigning ideas but in addition, we will be discussing how to educate ourselves about anti-racism. We also hope to start looking at how we ensure our group is fully inclusive and encourages a diverse membership, participation in meetings/actions/events, and taking on group co-ordinator & officer roles.

Everyone is welcome to attend this meeting including new members. If you have ideas & experience to contribute that is great but we welcome everyone, whatever your knowledge or experience.

+ 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.

Campaigning

Human Rights in the UK

Human Rights Act

Thank you to those who contacted local faith and beliefs leaders to encourage them to sign an open letter to Boris Johnson in support of the Human rights Act. We were very pleased that at least 6 of the 68 signatories to the letter were from Manchester, including Bishop David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, Greater Manchester Humanists and the Social Justice Group of Manchester and Warrington Quakers.

We sent a press release to some of our local contacts and were delighted the online news outlet Mancunian Matters featured the story – see <https://www.mancunianmatters.co.uk/news/24062-021-uk-faith-and-belief-leaders-call-on-pm-to-protect-human-rights-act/>.

If you spot any other articles, please let Anne know: anne.walker9@ntlworld.com

We will be watching with interest the results of the Independent Review (report expected soon!) and the ensuing government response.

Immigration Bill

Thank you to all who took part in the government's consultation exercise. We await developments.

Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill

This bill has now reached the Report Stage which gives MPs the opportunity to consider further amendments and will be debated in Parliament just after this newsletter goes out.



Racism within Greater Manchester Police

At the beginning of the year, Mary Gibbs raised her friend's concerns regarding racism within Greater Manchester Police with the group. Her friend, an experienced worker in health and social care in Greater Manchester, had made repeated requests for information on what measures Greater Manchester Police are planning to take to address racial disparities in policing, but had received no reply.

Some of us wrote to our MPs asking them to raise the concerns, especially the lack of response to the Freedom of Information request, with GMP. The information has still not been forthcoming.

We have discussed this further with staff at AIUK and have been advised that the more communications sent on this subject of police racism in Greater Manchester the better. We think that the Deputy Mayor of Manchester Combined Authority is the appropriate person to contact, as she is responsible for oversight of policing, crime and the fire service.

So please can as many people as possible send the attached letter via email to enquiries@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk (this apparently reaches the Deputy Mayor's Personal Assistant, but the email can be addressed to Beverley Hughes herself).

Please feel free to personalise the letter if you wish, but this is less important than sending lots of communications on the subject, and you need to make sure that the sense of the letter is the same if you do change it.

It would be best sent in the body of an email, rather than as an attachment, but your address (to show you live in Greater Manchester) should be included and MAKE SURE that you put your OWN name in as the signature! If you can, please say you will send it by post as well, address is on the attachment.

Please feel free to ask other Greater Manchester residents to take this action also, but if they want to do so after the end of July, it would be best to check with Mary (gibbs.mary@gmail.com), to make sure that there is no change in the situation.

Finally, if anyone feels that they have the time, energy or experience to go further with this campaign, please get in touch with Mary who would appreciate help.

UAE – We have some progress to report!

Thank you to everyone who helped with the letters to MPs about Ahmed Mansoor.

As a result, now have an offer from James Cleverly, Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, for representatives from Amnesty International to meet to talk with officials from the Arabian Peninsula department of the FCDO about Ahmed Mansoor.

Unexpected death of Artur Ligęska, activist for Ahmed Mansoor

Artur Ligęska, a 40 year old Polish fitness trainer, was detained following a deeply flawed trial in the UAE and kept in a cell adjacent to Ahmed Mansoor in al-Sadr prison where they became friends. Artur was finally acquitted and released in May 2020. He was a main source of information on Ahmed's situation while in prison and since his release he has written about his experiences, which was made into a film called Isolation Cell 32. He has been active with the Gulf Centre for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch in fighting for Ahmed's release, appearing on TV and organising marches. He was training to become a journalist and human rights activist.

The Dutch police are investigating the cause of his death. GCHR and HRW and everyone fighting for Ahmed Mansoor are deeply shocked by his death.

Letter Writing

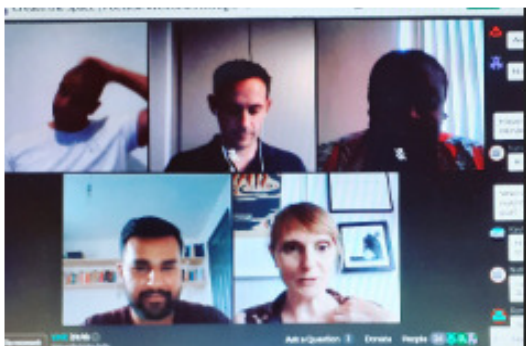
We take turns to write letters to the UAE authorities on behalf of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken. If you would like to join the rota (roughly one letter every 3 months) email Kathryn at bussk@btinternet.com.

Refugee Rights

Earlier this month we were thrilled to be part of the Football Welcomes Refugees panel discussion that was held in conjunction with the National Football Museum.

We were joined by a range of speakers who are involved in different roles and organisations, but who all use football as a way of engaging with people and using it as a vehicle for connection and

welcome. It was fabulous to hear from Comfort Etim, Anwar Uddin and Kevin Coleman as they shared examples of how they had seen football bring people together in so many different ways and tackle the negativity often associated with those seeking safety and sanctuary in the UK.



At our June group meeting, we heard from speakers Dudu and Mariatu who talked about their experiences as destitute asylum seekers and how the Migrant Destitution Fund provided them, not only with a monthly grant, but also dignity and empowerment. To find out more and to make a donation, see the link:

<https://www.migrantdestitution.co.uk/>

And for those enjoying the football at the moment, here's an interesting project from the Migration Museum.

<https://www.migrationmuseum.org/footballmovespeople/>

Europe & Turkey

France Update: #EyesOnFrance

Frédéric Vuillaume, long standing trade unionist, was acquitted at the end of May.

Frédéric was on trial under the charge of 'atroupement' (participation in an assembly that is likely to disrupt public order) for exercising his right to peaceful assembly by attending a demonstration in December 2019 in Dijon. He was risking up to one year in prison and a stern fine. This excellent result emphasises the need for mobilisation and solidarity from the Amnesty movement along with the amazing work that AI France has done on the case in the last months.

Frédéric and his lawyer acknowledged and thanked Amnesty activists for taking actions and for urging

the Prosecutor of Dijon to drop the charges against him. Around 7,500 emails have reached the Prosecutor until the trial date, and the peaceful protesters present in court were also very happy.



Frédéric told Amnesty: "I thank everyone and this is a victory for the right to peaceful protest in France. It is a great victory also for me too. It doesn't erase the violent arrests, the hours in the police custody, but at least I am done with trials... for now. I thank everyone for all the efforts, all the emails sent to the Prosecutor to defend the right to protest and the right to freedom of expression. This was very important, it is thanks to you all, to your mobilisation that we got there, I could not have done it by myself, without your solidarity, your determination. Today is a victory, a really great victory, Thank you all!"

We featured this case as a Weekly Action. Thank you to all who took part in this action and congratulations again to AI France, who did great work for and with Frederic!

Ongoing Actions for the #EyesOnFrance Campaign:

The #EyesOnFrance campaign continues with the 'Arrested for Protest' report published last September:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/1791/2020/en/>.

There is an online petition calling on President Macron to end the criminalisation of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and silencing of dissent. (worrying echoes in the UK with the Police etc Bill!).

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/france-right-to-protest-freedom-of-expression/>

The timeline for the campaign has been extended to September 2021 – **Amnesty are aiming for 200000 signatures world-wide. Please, help achieve this goal!**

Crisis and Tactical

MYANMAR

In a previous Amnesty Manchester newsletter, we noted Amnesty International's appeal to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ahead of the April summit, to prioritise Myanmar. On 24th April, ASEAN released a statement, demanding the "immediate cessation of violence", and calling on all parties to exercise "restraint".

Further media reporting of this statement, is available via Al-Jazeera (*not an Amnesty page*): <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/24/myanmar-coup-leader-in-jakarta-for-southeast-asian-summit> and the New York Times (*not an Amnesty page*): <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/world/asia/myanmar-asean-general-indonesia.html>

On 18th June, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution condemning the worsening crackdown on peaceful protesters and civil society. The resolution calls for the immediate and unconditional release of arbitrary detainees and an end to restrictions on freedom of expression. The text of the resolution was negotiated by nine ASEAN member states and a core group of other states.

In response to this, Amnesty has called for a comprehensive global arms embargo, which the UN Security Council must act to enforce: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/amnesty-calls-global-arms-embargo-myanmar>.

Amnesty has specifically raised concerns about the treatment of journalists within Myanmar, calling for the Myanmar authorities to drop charges against journalists. Amnesty states, "The ongoing persecution, intimidation, harassment and violence faced by journalists in Myanmar constitutes a clear attempt by the military authorities to suppress peaceful dissent and obscure violations committed

by security forces in the wake of the 1 February coup".

At least 88 journalists have been arrested since the coup, and more than half of this number still remain in detention. At least 33 are now in hiding. Danny Fenster, an American citizen, arrested on 24th May, is the third foreign journalist to have been arrested and detained since the start of the coup. He was reportedly taken to Insein Prison and appeared in a court in the prison in mid-June, charged under a section of Myanmar's penal code that makes it a crime to publish or circulate comments that "cause fear," spread "false news" or incite government employees. He was remanded and was due to appear in court again on 1 July. More details on Amnesty's call to protect journalists is available here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/myanmar-cease-persecution-journalists/>

Amnesty's country page on Myanmar is here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/>

PALESTINE

Amnesty calls on the UN to investigate pattern of violations by Israeli police

According to recent Amnesty's research, Israeli police committed a series of violations against Palestinians - including using unlawful force against peaceful protesters- during and after recent armed hostilities in Israel and Gaza.

Amnesty researchers spoke to numerous witnesses and Amnesty's Crisis Evidence Lab verified 45 videos and other forms of digital media to document more than 20 cases of Israeli police violations between 9 May and 12 June. Hundreds of Palestinians were injured in the crackdown and a 17-year-old boy was shot dead.

Evidence shows that Israeli police actions were repressive and discriminatory, failing to protect Palestinian citizens of Israel from premeditated attacks by groups of armed Jewish supremacists, even when plans were publicised in advance and police knew or should have known of them.

Police used unnecessary and excessive force to disperse Palestinian protests against forced evictions in East Jerusalem as well as against the Gaza offensive, while Jewish supremacists were allowed to organise demonstrations freely.

Amnesty has also documented torture at the Russian Compound (Moskobiya) police station in Nazareth on 12 May. An eyewitness stated: "It was like a brutal prisoner-of-war camp. The officers were hitting the young men with broomsticks and kicking them with steel-capped boots. Four of them had to be taken away by ambulance, and one had a broken arm."

Saleh Higazi, Amnesty International's Middle East Deputy Director, said:

"Police have an obligation to protect all people under Israel's control, whether they are Jewish or Palestinian. Instead, the vast majority arrested in the police crackdown following the outbreak of intercommunal violence were Palestinian.

"This discriminatory crackdown was orchestrated as an act of retaliation and intimidation to crush pro-Palestinian demonstrations and silence those who speak out to condemn Israel's institutionalised discrimination and systemic oppression of Palestinians."

Amnesty is calling on the UN Human Rights Council's recently-announced Commission of Inquiry to investigate the alarming pattern of violations by Israeli police.



<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2021/06/israeli-police-targeted-palestinians-with-discriminatory-arrests-torture-and-unlawful-force/>

Group News

Craftivism

Our current project is a banner for the Pride Parade.

**Thank you to everyone who is helping.
Please join us!**

We have 8 volunteers making bees and flowers and the pride-striped candle, but if you want to help please let Kathryn know and she will send information and fabric.

kathrynbuss@gmail.com

Here is the rough, draft layout:



You can hand sew the bee or flower and we will stitch them onto the

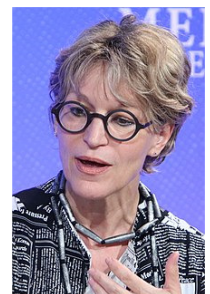
fabric together.

We want the bees and flowers to be individual as possible, so these are just ideas to get you thinking.



Amnesty UK AGM

Two of us attended AIUK's virtual AGM 2021, which took place on June 19th. Most of the day was taken up with the business of the AGM and resolutions but the highlight was a short talk given by Agnès Callamard, the new Secretary General of Amnesty | International. Dr Callamard, a French national, has built a highly distinguished career in the international human rights and humanitarian sectors, working across NGOs, academia, and the United Nations. She answered a range of questions and spoke about the importance of AIUK's role within the international movement, both financially and through lobbying the UK government, which she described as a key player in global politics, to play its part in upholding human



rights in the UK and internationally. Her final words were, *'You've got your work cut out!'* Although she only spoke for 30 minutes, we both found her very inspiring as well as having a vast, in depth knowledge of human rights across the world.

The AGM resolutions were all passed at the meeting, including the Emergency Resolution put forward in response to racism at AIUK & calling for a comprehensive, independent review of racism and

wider workplace culture at AIUK, with input from current and former staff. Other resolutions called for wider participation by young people in the governance of AIUK as well as removing the current age restrictions for membership. AIUK's new strategic plan for 2022-2030 was also passed. Details of all the resolutions can be found on the AIUK website.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm-2021>

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

Ripples of Hope Festival

The programme for the Ripples of Hope Festival organised by the Robert F Kennedy **Foundation in Manchester in September** is now up on their website:
<https://www.ripplesofhopefestival.org/theweekend>

The Festival's 'Weekend to Inspire' (17-19 September) features three days of conversations, workshops and performances, exploring the themes of Dignity & Justice; Activism & Participation; Equity & Equality; Arts & Culture; and the Environment & Our Planet. There are some really good speakers so take a look and book tickets (both live and online available).

Alongside the activities at HOME, The Ripples of Hope Festival also features **Feasts of Hope**, in which people and organisations across Greater Manchester are hosting their own community feasts to bring people together for meaningful dialogue and connection. We are working with the Manchester

Oxfam Campaigns Group and Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group to hold a feast to bring together human rights campaigning groups within Manchester. If you would like to be involved in organising this email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Community Organising Courses

On 13 and 20 July, AIUK are organising another round of **Community Organising Training** for local groups.

Some of us have already attended and they are useful to discover the current thinking at AIUK about working within our community.

They will discuss the theory of community organising as well as useful tools to build a stronger and more diverse and inclusive movement. Sign up at:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/community-organising-training-tickets-156711597607>

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