

AMNESTY UK LONDON ONLINE

ACTIVISM CONFERENCE 2021

Thanks to everyone who joined the Amnesty UK London Online Activism Conference on Saturday 17 July 2021 from 14.00 to 17.00 BST.

Agenda

Please follow the links below to video recordings (where available in bold) of the conference plenary and breakout sessions.

14.00-14.20: [[Watch on YouTube: https://youtu.be/N8sOJImOhGM](https://youtu.be/N8sOJImOhGM)]

Opening Q&A session with Abby Grant, Amnesty UK Board Member, and Sacha Deshmukh, the new Interim Chief Executive of Amnesty UK.

14.20-15.05: [<https://youtu.be/N8sOJImOhGM?t=1093>]

Securing Human Rights in the UK panel discussion with:

- Clare Moseley, Founder of Care4Calais.
- Donatella Rovera, Senior Crisis Response Advisor at Amnesty International.
- Sacha Deshmukh, Interim Chief Executive at Amnesty UK.
- Tim Gee, Human Rights in the UK Priority Campaign Manager at Amnesty UK.

15.05-15.10:

Break 1 to prepare breakout rooms.

15.10-15.40:

Campaigns around the world. Choose one of five engaging sessions from Amnesty UK's Country Coordinators:

1. [**Arbitrary detentions, human rights defenders in Venezuela \(Javiera Martínez, Geraldine Chacón\)**](#)
2. Impacts of climate change on the people of South Asia (Jerry Allen, no recording available)
3. [**Marginalising women, civil society and human rights in Turkey \(Chris Ramsey\)**](#)
4. [**Protest and discrimination in Fortress Europe \(Ulrike Schmidt\)**](#)
5. [**Women in South Asia \(Ayesha Mehta, Cherry Bird, Nigina Istanakzai-Zarifi, Saania Munawar\)**](#)

15.40-16.05: [<https://youtu.be/oDdBYr-AaWE>]

Thematic Networks: Children, Feminists, Rainbows and more! (Katherine Walton and Mike Quinn)

16.05-16.25: [<https://youtu.be/oDdBYr-AaWE?t=1146>]

Activism in the time of COVID-19: Q&A session with activists sharing their experiences of organising under lockdown. (Alexis Hatto, Sara Birch, Ian Myson and Graham Minter)

16.25-16.30:

Break 2 to prepare breakout rooms.

16.30-16.55:

Rights, skills and workshops. Choose one of five options from Amnesty UK activists and staff:

1. Children's Human Rights Network presentation (Anna Warren, no recording available)
2. [Community fundraising online and out of lockdown \(Richard Glynn\)](#)
3. [New to social media and online engagement? \(Simone Theiss\)](#)
4. [Regional community organising \(Alexis Hatto, Ian Myson, Graham Minter\)](#)
5. [Socially distanced actions \(Sara Birch, Hugh Sandeman\)](#)

16.55-17.00:

Feedback, thanks and more networking opportunities.

Evaluation and impacts

The conference welcomed at least 60 people over the course of three hours. Unfortunately, the Zoom settings we used did not provide us with a breakdown of the total number of attendees, but we do know there were 50 participants in the first set of breakout rooms and 43 in the second set. Promotion primarily involved use of the [@AmnestyLondon Twitter](#) account and an email to all Amnesty UK members in London regional postcodes facilitated via the [Support Comms Team](#).

We chose to use Eventbrite as our registration platform, as it allowed us to ask attendees (along with their name and email address) the following conditional questions:

- Are you under 18?
 - If you are under 18, please provide your date of birth:
- Which one of the first breakout sessions would you like to join?
- Which one of the second breakout sessions would you like to join?
- Are you a member of Amnesty International?
 - Which Amnesty Section?
- Are you involved with an Amnesty local group?
 - Which local group?
- Do you have any accessibility requirements?
 - Please describe your requirements and we will try our best to assist

We had 93 registrations in total (including two cancellations), plus a further 11 speakers who had been invited but had not managed to register via Eventbrite. Despite the fact that six people had declared themselves to be under 18, only one person provided a date of birth later than 2004 and another merely responded "n/a". Following the [safeguarding guidance](#) shared with all participants prior to the conference, we informed speakers and co-hosts if they were likely to have any under-18s in their sessions.

Membership

The ratio of members to non-members registering was 73 to 18. One of the speakers, Geraldine Chacón, is a member of Amnesty Venezuela; other attendee was a member of Amnesty Turkey, and one more did not declare of which Section they were a member. Of the 70 Amnesty members registered, 39 people were from 24 local groups plus the Kent Network. These included:

- Banbury
- Bognor Regis, Chichester & District
- Bournville
- Bristol
- Chester and Wrexham

- Corby and Kettering
- Ealing
- Guildford
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Hampstead
- Hillingdon
- Hornsey and Wood Green
- Islington and Hackney
- Kent Network
- Kingston
- Mayfair and Soho
- Richmond and Twickenham
- Salisbury
- Southampton
- Sutton
- Tower Hamlets and Newham
- Truro and District
- Westminster and Bayswater
- Wimbledon and Merton
- Wirksworth

Accessibility

Three people declared accessibility requirements, and we tried to make arrangements to support these via live transcript captions and advanced messages to speakers who planned to use slides with text to ensure that these were at least font size 16.

Unfortunately, we struggled with timekeeping given the broad agenda. Future events of this length should have a reduced number of items, allow more time for breakout rooms, and include a more substantial break of at least ten minutes rather than the two five-minute breaks we originally planned but overshot. Some of the breakout rooms also ended rather abruptly, so in future we recommend applying a 60-second countdown (rather than 30) before returning attendees to the plenary sessions.

Zoom video conferencing

By the time we opened registration in June, we had yet to decide whether the event would take place on Zoom or Microsoft Teams. We chose Zoom after the Mayfair and Soho group allowed us to use their paid account, largely because the breakout room settings were far more flexible. We also considered asking attendees to register again via Zoom to facilitate their allocation into breakout rooms; however, we were concerned that there would be an even greater attrition rate if we did so. This did mean that we did need to ensure that participants' Zoom user names matched those which they had used to register.

In addition to Zoom, we used Slack, an online project management platform, for organisers and co-hosts to communicate with each other to avoid taking up space in the Zoom Chat box. This worked fairly well as intended, though we might have benefited from broader uptake and easier transition between screens if we had used a more popular mobile messaging platform such as WhatsApp.

There was one minor disruption involving a person (whose name we did not recognise but whom we nevertheless admitted) playing loud music during one of the breakout sessions; however, because the person had not been assigned to a room, they were muted and left of their own accord.

Zoom also enabled participants to join the optional networking rooms at the end of the event. These allowed attendees to speak with the conference organisers and other participants, to provide feedback and/or learn more about Amnesty UK's local groups, Country Coordinators and social media. These were a very useful addition to the conference itself, and we recommend adding them to online events where possible. There were 15 rooms including:

1. Local groups in North/East London
2. Local groups in South/West London
3. Local groups in South/South East England
4. Local groups in the rest of the UK/World
5. More about Country Coordinators
6. New to Amnesty?
7. Social media speed clinic
8. Eight (#8-15) other 1-2-1 rooms available for anyone who wanted to discuss other topics and/or exchange details.

Anonymous feedback survey

We ran an entirely optional and anonymous feedback survey using Microsoft Forms, which has so far received 19 submissions. We designed the first ten questions (About the conference) based on a template provided by the Amnesty UK Human Rights Education team, while the latter ten questions (About you) were based on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) questions asked in the Amnesty UK staff survey.

In summary, we received largely positive feedback to most questions:

- 1. How clear were the objectives of the conference?**
19 responses; 13 very clear, 2 extremely clear (79% positive)
- 2. Were the objectives met?**
18 responses, 5 strongly agreed and 11 agreed (88% positive)
- 3. Were the speakers interesting?**
17 responses, 9 strongly agreed and 8 agreed (100% positive)
- 4. Was the information given relevant to you?**
18 responses, 8 strongly agreed and 9 agreed (94% positive)
- 5. Were the speakers well prepared and able to answer questions?**
19 responses, 8 strongly agreed and 11 agreed (89% positive)
- 6. Was the length of the conference appropriate?**
16 responses, 10 appropriate, 3 a little too long, 2 a little too short, 1 far too short.
- 7. Were the breakout room sessions well organised?**
19 responses, 7 strongly agreed and 9 agreed (84% positive)
- 8. For how long did you attend the conference?**
19 responses, 12 more than three hours, 5 two to three, 2 one to two hours.
- 9. Would you attend another Amnesty UK Online Activism Conference in the future?**
18 responses, 11 strongly agreed and 6 agreed (89% positive)
- 10. Do you have any comments on the sessions you attended and/or on the conference in general?**
12 responses:
 1. Excellent conference. Very well organised. I was particularly moved by the speaker from Care for Calais. And I felt inspired by the new Director of Amnesty.
 2. Inspiring! I'd like to become more involved as a volunteer.
 3. I think at least one comfort break should be mandatory! I had to miss a bit of one session that I was really interested in. Well done to everyone who organised the technical side of things. It went very well.

4. I found the conference extremely well organised. The speakers were well chosen and impressive. We covered more issues than I remember being available when we last had regional conferences. There was also a "social" opportunity at the end - not usually possible online! All excellent!
5. The conference was very informative and I had learnt so much about the dedication of members and more insight in the AUK.
6. Ideas from other areas e.g. Kent network, Lewis socially-distanced campaigning and midlands social justice conference were very interesting. Also opportunity to talk to others from my area in extra breakout was useful.
7. Excellent organisation - thank you Alexis and the rest of the team!
8. I appreciated the input on women in South Asia. Although I was already aware of some of the information, it was very helpful to have such a sweeping overview with facts and figures to add weight to future action. I attended the session on community organising to gain more clarity as to how our group can find a new direction. I had already heard from Graham and I think the input from all three has answered some of our questions. I found the conference in general very interesting. My MP has endorsed Amnesty's view on the Policing Bill and the Nationality and Borders Bill and I wonder what more I can do. I was grateful to hear Donatella's account of how the crisis team operates. Information like this is so helpful when faced with questions from others. Generally, I felt much clearer about finding a way forward. We have become used to a top down approach and looked to AIUK to give the lead and provide some resources. We do still need support though and in making contact with other groups and individuals in the community, we will need Amnesty's backing if we are to offer substantial help. Anything less than this is not likely to encourage already established and successful groups to be interested.
9. It was very unfortunate that technical problems affected my afternoon breakout topic - children's rights. The sound was rather mushy, there were long periods of silence and the speaker's face wasn't visible. Time for a tea break, I'm afraid! Otherwise, I thought the conference was excellent
10. The speakers were very variable, the stand out was Tim Gee who was excellent.
11. Timekeeping was good overall but it would have been nice to have had the couple of 5 minute breaks, as 3+solid hours on Zoom is wearing.
12. I think longer than 3 hours is difficult online, particularly as there were no breaks really as sessions slightly overran!

We have shared the results of the equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) survey with the Community Organising team. In summary, 11 respondents were from London, 5 from South East and 1 from South England; 14 aged over 45, 3 under 45; 10 women and 6 men. The full results are available for discussion on request from Alexis Hatto (alexis.hatto@amnesty.org.uk).

Next steps and actions

Since the conference ended, we have been following up on questions about Amnesty research to support the rights of persons with albinism. Two recent examples of this research are available on the Amnesty International website:

- [Southern Africa: Promoting & protecting the rights of persons with albinism: A manual for national human rights institutions | Amnesty International](#)
- [Malawi: Resurgence of killings and abductions of persons with albinism spells a dangerous escalation | Amnesty International](#)

We were also delighted to hear that two new members have joined the Kent Network as a result of the conference. Please do let us know if you have any further comments and feedback.

The following notice comes from Chris Ramsey, Country Coordinator for Turkey:



1. Büyükada case

We are still waiting for the decision of the Court of Cassation regarding the convictions of the four human rights defenders in the Büyükada case. The prosecutor has issued his opinion asking for the conviction of former Chair of Amnesty Turkey, Taner Kılıç's, to be upheld while requesting that the convictions of Günal Kurşun, İdil Eser and Özlem Dalkıran be overturned.

We expect a decision very soon, potentially within the coming weeks or months.

This case is emblematic of the deteriorating human rights situation in Turkey and in particular the efforts of the state to neuter civil society NGOs and minimise their ability to criticise the government. In order to ensure that the government of Turkey is reminded of the importance of this we would like you to do further online actions.

1. Twitter: Please share this Twitter post from AIUK that sees out the timeline of the Büyükada case <https://twitter.com/AmnestyUK/status/1416005164306210821>

In your posts please use [#Turkey](#) and:

Tag Amnesty Turkey (For Twitter @aforgutu and Instagram aforgutu)

Tag the Turkish Embassy in London: @TurEmbLondon

2. Facebook and Instagram: Please use the image at the top of this action request to draw attention to the deteriorating Human Rights situation in Turkey with simple messages such as:

4 human rights defenders in Turkey including the former Chair and Director of Amnesty Turkey have been convicted of crimes they did not commit. They are simply being punished for their courage in standing up for the rights of others. Acquit them now!

[#Turkey](#) we are watching you

2. METU case



You will perhaps recall that included in the Write for Rights Campaign 2020 was the case of 19 people (18 students and one academic) facing trial over a peaceful protest at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara.

The WfR campaign highlighted Melike Balkan and Özgür Gür, prominent members of the LGBTI+ Solidarity Group at METU, who have organised numerous marches, meetings and other events amid an upsurge in homophobia and increasing restrictions on freedom of expression in Turkey. METU LGBTI+ Solidarity Group has organised an annual Pride march on campus since 2011. In 2019, the university's management told students the Pride march planned for 10 May could not go ahead. Undeterred, the Solidarity Group staged a Pride sit-in. The university called the police who used excessive force, including tear gas, against the peaceful protesters. They arrested at least 23 students – including Melike and Özgür – and some who were not even taking part in the protest.

Eighteen students and one academic are now in the middle of the trial period. In the latest hearing on 16 July the prosecutor requested the acquittals of **six** of the defendants on grounds that their participation in the march could not be proven. Among the thirteen remaining defendants for whom the prosecutor asked that they be found guilty of refusing to disperse, one student is also facing a charge of insulting a police officer. The prosecutor asked that the lower limit be one year (max two years or a fine) with a 1/6th added to the sentence due to the public nature of the insult.

Call to action:

Action 1

Please email the Minister of Justice calling for the acquittal of all the defendants in the METU trial through the following website link:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/demand-justice-turkish-students-defending-lgbtq-rights>

Action 2

On Facebook and Twitter please post the following text:

Hey @abdulhamitgul

Turkish students Melike & Özgür were simply defending their right to celebrate Pride when they were arrested.

They could now face up to three years in prison.

We are calling on you to ensure that they are acquitted #LoveIsOnTrial

Please send Alexis Hatto (alexis.hatto@amnesty.org.uk) any details of further actions you would like to add to this document.

Thanks

[Activism Representatives](#) Alexis Hatto and Hugh Sandeman would like to thank all our speakers and co-hosts, and special thanks to the organising team:

- Clare Calland, Mayfair and Soho group
- Júlia Peña, Westminster and Bayswater group
- Nick Hodgson, Mayfair and Soho group
- Richard George, Wimbledon and Merton group
- Simone Theiss, Westminster and Bayswater group
- Victoria Brignell, Hammersmith and Fulham group