



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

August Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 9th August

Focus on Fundraising

+ Catch up on our Campaigning Activities

Along with many organisations & businesses, Amnesty UK has had a very difficult year for fundraising. Please come along to our August meeting to help us think of some ideas for fundraising over the next 12 months - all ideas welcome whether they're whacky & creative or dull & boring, as long as they make some money!

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.

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.

Notices, coming up soon, dates for your diary

Anti-racism

Following on from July's meeting which at which we discussed anti-racism, we decided to appoint a **Group Anti-Racism Coordinator** and to have a regular **Anti-Racism section** in the newsletter. This section will contain information on campaigning against racism, educational events and opportunities, and actions to improve inclusion and diversity in our group and our activities. We always welcome your ideas and participation on this or any other issue.

Manchester Pride

Please see notice in "Other news" section about covid-related changes to **Manchester Pride** which will take place in a modified form on **28th August**.

Human Rights in the UK

From **10-17 October** Amnesty UK and others are holding a **Week of Action on Human Rights in the UK** (see below)

Campaigning

Human Rights in the UK

Our rights in the UK continue to be under threat. We still await the report of the Independent Review of the Human Rights Act and the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts bill and the Nationality and Borders bill are both making their way through parliament.

On 21st July the government published the Judicial Review and Courts bill which they claim seeks 'to reform the rules around Judicial Review and facilitate a number of procedural improvements across the court system'. Not everyone agrees with this assessment. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57909168> and <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jul/21/law-society-sounds-warning-against-judicial-review-bill>.

In response to these changes in UK law, Amnesty is planning a Stop the Rights Raid Week of Action on 10th – 17th October when we will be asked to lobby our MPs, ideally with some face to face meetings. It's also hoped to have an associated craftivism action.

Could you let Anne Walker know if you have already been in touch with your MP about any of the above bills and let her have a copy of any response that you've received.

It would be particularly good to have contact with the one conservative MP in our area – does anyone live in the Altrincham and Sale constituency of Sir Graham Brady?

We have a subgroup working on planning our involvement; if you would like to help email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

UAE

Concern over Ahmed Mansoor's wellbeing

Human Rights Watch and The Gulf Centre for Human Rights have expressed concerns for Ahmed's wellbeing after a private letter he wrote while in prison detailing his mistreatment

has been leaked to local media and published. They fear he will suffer reprisals and have redoubled their calls for the UAE to allow UN independent observers to al-Sadr prison to check on his safety and the conditions of his detention.

Thank you to those who emails the embassy or posted on social media following last week's weekly action.

UAE implicated in the Pegasus project leak

You may have read about the Israeli company, NSO group, who has sold spyware to several countries including the UAE. Intended for serious criminals or terrorists, the UAE, like many other countries, has used it to access the phones of activists, journalists, politicians and their relatives. Here is a link to more information about the UAE's use of the spyware in the UK.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/21/uae-linked-to-listing-of-hundreds-of-uk-phones-in-pegasus-project-leak?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Turkey

Urgent Actions

Turkey – Büküyada Case

Updates have been made in the case of Taner Kılıç, Günal Kurşun, İdil Eser, and Özlem Dalkıran; 4 of the 11 human rights defenders arrested in 2017 following a raid by Turkish police on a digital security workshop on Büyükada Island, one of the Princes' Islands off the coast of Istanbul, which was organized by local human rights organizations in cooperation with Amnesty International's Turkey branch.

While eight were released in bail after an 113-day sentence (seven of whom were ultimately acquitted), Kılıç, Kurşun, Eser, and Dalkıran were convicted on July 3rd, 2021, of membership in a terrorist organization" and purportedly "aiding a terrorist organization." Kurşun, Eser, and Dalkıran received sentences of two years and

one month, whilst Kılıç's sentence stands at six years and three months.

The convictions are not yet final, and the ruling may be appealed within the Turkish court system; we are awaiting a decision of the Court of Cassation regarding these convictions. In order to demand justice for the Büyükada four, please take part in the following online actions:

1. **Share Twitter Post from Amnesty UK that sets out the timeline of the Büyükada case:**

<https://twitter.com/AmnestyUK/status/1416005164306210821>

Please tag Amnesty Turkey (on Instagram and Twitter @aforgutu) as well as the Turkish Embassy in London (@TurkEmbLondon).

2. **Facebook & Instagram: Please share the below image with simple messages such as the suggested:**

Four 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. Their appeals against conviction are expected in any day.

#Turkey we are watching you.



Istanbul Convention Exit

Unfortunately, Turkey's decision to leave the Istanbul Convention, the most comprehensive international convention against violence against women and domestic violence, was upheld on the first of July, 2021.

Action: Social Media Action to show solidarity with Amnesty Turkey

Twitter: [#IstanbulConventionSavesLives](#)

Using the hashtag [#arkasındayım](#) , which means 'I stand' in Turkish, please join the social media campaign.

Facebook & Instagram: Please feel free to post messages of support along the following lines: *Turkey should reverse its decision to leave the Istanbul Convention on July 1! To put an end to violations of rights and discrimination based on gender, we must all stand together in support of the Istanbul Convention* [#arkasındayım](#)

[#IstanbulConventionSavesLives](#) @aforgutu

NB: You will need to copy and paste [#arkasındayım](#) because of the use of some Turkish letters in the word.

Europe

Denmark

The 20th June saw a demonstration outside the Danish Embassy on International Refugee Day protesting at Denmark's policy of forced return of asylum seekers to Syria. Of particular concern to Amnesty is the coerced removal of Syrian refugees into removal centres where they are under pressure to "voluntarily" return, while Denmark waits for the diplomatic situation to enable them to deport directly. You can continue this action with both Twitter and letter writing actions – please find details below!

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/denmark-syria-refugees-return/>

Sign your name www.amnesty.org/en:

You can also write personal letters to the Ambassador of Denmark at the below address:

Your Excellency Lars Thuesen

Embassy of Denmark

55 Sloane Square

London

SW1X9SR

Greece

A new Amnesty report, 'Greece: Violence, Lies and Pushbacks', covers 21 new pushback incidents occurring between June and December 2020 in the Evros region. It details the experiences of 16 individuals who both witnessed and were subject to illegal pushbacks, violence, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment in

detention. As pushbacks and other acts violating human rights has been ongoing and widely reported for a long time, we need your help in communicating the issues found in amnesty's report so that Greece makes urgent changes in their treatment of refugees and migrants.

Amnesty's calls on Turkey, EU institutions and member states, to Frontex and to the Human Rights Council can be found in the report here: [Greece: Violence, lies, and pushbacks - Refugees and migrants still denied safety and asylum at Europe's borders | Amnesty International](#).

Action: Call on the Greek ambassador to the UK to meet Amnesty's calls in their report.

Highlight to Greek authorities the individual experiences of the refugees and migrants who

have provided their testimonies, and urge them to take the right action under Greek, EU and international law.

Contact details here: [Embassy of Greece in London - Hellenic Republic - Greece in the UK \(mfa.gr\)](#).

Refugee Rights

No campaigning report this month as we have had a change of co-ordinator. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Liz Hibberd for all her work leading our campaigning on refugees over recent times. And thanks too to Rebecca Barnes who has kindly agreed to step in as our new Refugees co-ordinator.

Crisis and Tactical

Syria

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports that there are 13.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection within Syria, and that Syria has 6.7 internally displaced people within its borders. According to the World Food Programme, 40.7% of Syrians displaced just last year are now food insecure.

Authorisation for the Bab al-Hawa crossing point for the delivery of UN cross-border humanitarian aid from Turkey to north-west Syria was renewed on 9th July by the UN Security Council for a further six months (with a six-month renewal subject to conditions). This crossing allows for aid to reach Syrians living in and around, for example, Idlib, western Aleppo, and north-western Hama governorates, where Syrian and/or Russian government forces have been known to target medical facilities and schools. A 2020 report from Amnesty titled, *'Nowhere is safe for us': Unlawful attacks and mass displacement in north-west Syria*, details details 18 such cases.

Head of Amnesty International's UN office, Sherine Tadros, states that this cross-border aid mechanism "provides a crucial lifeline for people in north-west Syria, providing food, clean water and medical supplies to more than a million people." (Medical supplies in question include

COVID-19 vaccines and various life-saving medications.)

Two other cross-border crossings were closed last year, as a result of Russian and Chinese vetoes at the Security Council, meaning that Bab al-Hawa is now the sole remaining lifeline for civilians in north-west Syria. As Ms Tadros states, in light of the closure of the two other crossings last year, the Bab al-Hawa renewal "is essential but minimal and remains woefully insufficient to meet the overwhelming humanitarian needs of the civilian population". The nature of the renewal is seen by Amnesty as a compromise driven by Russia, (a veto power on the UN Security Council), "ignoring the humanitarian needs of Syrians, and instead playing political games with the lives and welfare of millions of people".

Resources/further reading:

2020 Amnesty report (*'Nowhere is safe for us': Unlawful attacks and mass displacement in north-west Syria*) (*contains some distressing content*): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE24/2089/2020/en/>

2021 Amnesty press release on the UN resolution: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/syria-un-security-councils-compromise-resolution-falls-short-of-humanitarian-needs/>

2021 Amnesty background on the resolution: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/syria-russian-threat-to-veto-renewal-of-last-aid-corridor-leaves-millions-at-risk-of-humanitarian-catastrophe/>

2021 coverage from Amnesty USA, including their letter to President Biden, calling for the US to help prevent the resolution from being blocked: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/biden-must-step-up-support-for-critical-humanitarian-aid-into-syria-as-russia-threatens-crossing-closure/>

2020 Amnesty information on the need for the aid crossing: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/05/syria-un-must-not-cut-vital-aid-lifeline-to-north-west-amid-russian-and-syrian-war-crimes/>

More statistics on Syria from the OHCHR: https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria#_ga=2.91355930.1273208517.1627222271-288756651.1627222271

Palestine

Anti-corruption activists arrested

On 19 July 2020, the West Bank-based Palestinian forces arrested 19 anti-corruption activists during a peaceful protest held in the city of Ramallah. While three were released, 16 of these activists have been charged, 10 of which remain in detention. All 10 are on hunger strike in protest of their detention. Authorities must immediately drop all charges and release these activists. Their next court hearing is on 5 August 2020.

► TAKE ACTION!

Please, send an email to the Palestinian authorities. Follow the link below: <https://www.amnesty.org/#/documents/mde21/2779/2020/en/>

Stop the arms fair in Liverpool

This October in Liverpool, international arms companies are due to meet up with delegations from a range of repressive states at the AOC Europe 2021, at the ACC Exhibition Centre. Exhibitors at the arms fair include companies supplying Israel with weapons and military technology. This includes Elbit Systems, the largest Israeli weapons company, whose killer drones are deployed against the civilian

population of besieged Gaza. A coalition of local campaigning organisations are calling on the City Council, and elected mayor Joanne Anderson, to revoke permission for the heinous event to use a council owned venue.

► TAKE ACTION!

Please, sign the petition to stop the electronic arms fair from taking place in Liverpool. <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-liverpool-electronic-arms-fair>

Yemen

Italian Government stops arms embargo with Saudi Arabia and UAE

In February 2021 we learnt the fantastic news that the Italian government decided to retract licences for the sales of arms to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Both countries have supported the Yemeni government in its conflict against the Huthi rebels by supplying them with arms. There is ample evidence that such arms have also been used against civilians and civilian buildings.

Regrettably, according to the press, the Italian Government has decided to reverse this decision and they have written to the Italian companies that already has the licence to sell arms to Riad and Abu Dhabi that the embargo is lifted. This is really bad news.

Myanmar

Extract of Amnesty's oral statement during the update of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Myanmar at the UNHRC

"Madam President, The situation in Myanmar is a human rights and humanitarian crisis of staggering scale, spanning the entire country and affecting all communities. The Myanmar military continues to arbitrarily detain, torture and kill. Humanitarian access remains severely restricted nationwide; and against the backdrop

of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's economy is in freefall and experts are warning of food shortages. Clashes between the Myanmar military and civilians taking up arms have spread, including in urban centres. While the rights of all those in Myanmar are under attack, minority groups have been specifically targeted by the Military, including the Kachin, Karen, Chin, Karenni, Ta'ang and Shan". (These attacks include airstrikes and shelling, which have reportedly killed

and injured civilians and destroyed property, including at least one school. The Rohingya population are forced to live under apartheid conditions, and internment camps).

"So we again urge the international community to take the long-overdue concrete action that is

desperately needed to stem the tide of violations: to set aside politics and work together to hold the perpetrators of grave violations to account – including through an ICC referral – to impose targeted multilateral financial sanctions on senior officials; and to impose a comprehensive global arms embargo. And to protect the rights of refugees in neighbouring countries. Madam High Commissioner, What more can be done to ensure the voices of civil society in Myanmar are central to decision making by the international community; and how can we ensure human rights are central to the international response to the crisis?

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/4394/2021/en/>



Anti-Racism

At our July group meeting we discussed anti-racism and how we can respond to racism as an Amnesty local group. Anti-racism is one of six priorities in Amnesty UK's Strategic Plan 2022-2030. Discussions at our meeting focused on 3 areas:

- Anti-racism education for ourselves as group members
- Anti-racism campaigning
- How we run our group e.g. inclusivity, encouraging diverse membership & participation

Ideas from the meeting include:

- Having a group anti-racism co-ordinator
- Having an anti-racism sub-group to co-ordinate the group's campaigning & education activities.
- Having a book/film/documentary/website/podcasts club for members focused on anti-racism
- Having a regular agenda item in monthly meetings

- Update & information about anti-racism in each newsletter
- Contact other local anti-racism campaigning groups
- Continue use of Jamboard* – provides opportunity for members to ask questions or raise issues anonymously
- Inclusion of racism against indigenous people.

*Here is a link to the Jamboard:

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1LwJyQs7MTN-haSwjg2ji9e8kXiZ7JqfCmbBXne-6uQg/edit?usp=sharing>

We agreed on the importance of providing safe spaces in our meetings for questions and discussions on anti-racism. We acknowledged that we will make mistakes along the way but that it must not stop us from continuing to work actively on anti-racism. We talked about the importance of listening to each other and especially people of colour so that we can increase our understanding of racism in all its forms and take positive action against it.

During the meeting, we also had an update on some potential anti-racism campaigning work related to Greater Manchester Police (GMP), which featured in last month's newsletter. The work originates from the individual work of a friend of one of our members who had made repeated requests for information on what measures GMP are planning to take to address racial disparities in policing, but had received no

reply. Some of our members have already been writing to MPs and the Deputy Mayor of Manchester Combined Authority to express concern about the lack of response from GMP and repeating the request for information. The Achieving Race Equality report commissioned by Andy Burnham, has just been published and has found GMP to be 'institutionally racist'. Despite the evidence contained in the report, Stephen Watson, the chief constable of GMP since May 2020, has rejected this finding. You can read more about the Achieving Race Equality report in this article:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jul/27/manchester-police-chief-rejects-claim-of-institutional-racism>

and you can access the full report here:

<https://www.gmp.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/greater-manchester/about-us/achieving-race-equality-report/gmp-2021-achieving-race-equality-report.pdf>

If you would like to be involved in the anti-racism sub-group, please email Hazel Errey hazelerrey@gmail.com. If you have ideas & experience to contribute that is great, but we welcome everyone, whatever your knowledge or experience. We hope to form the sub-group over the summer so that we can start our anti-racism work in the Autumn.

Group News

Manchester Pride Parade

Unfortunately, Manchester Pride Parade has been cancelled for a second year due to Covid safety concerns. In its place however, there will be 5 smaller Equality Marches taking place on Saturday 28th August. The marches will take place at 12.00, 1.00, 2.00, 3.00 & 4.00pm. Detailed plans and routes have yet to be confirmed. Manchester Amnesty has applied

for 2 places on each march, which is the maximum we're allowed. We are still looking for 4 volunteers to take part - you would only be expected to take part in one of the marches & T-shirts, banner &/or placards will be provided! Please email Hazel Errey if you would like to take part. hazelerrey@gmail.com

Craftivism

This month we have been working on our banner for the Pride Parade. Anyone with ideas for future Craftivism projects or who would like to join the craftivism group, please email Kathryn Fletcher at bussk@btinternet.com



Ripples of Hope Community Feast

We are continuing to plan for a Feast of Hope as part of the Ripples of Hope Festival in Manchester in September. 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 for a fun networking session.

The Feast will be held at Central Library 1-4pm on Saturday 18th September.

We can seat 36 people and are thinking of inviting up to 12 different campaigning groups. If you know of a group that relies on volunteers and which is actively campaigning on human rights issues and you think we should be inviting, please let us know.

If you have any suggestions or would like to be involved in organising this event email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

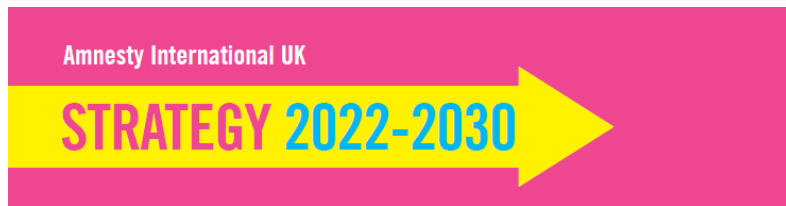
In the meantime, have a look at the programme for the Ripples of Hope Festival (17-19 September):

<https://www.ripplesofhopefestival.org/theweekend>

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

Amnesty UK Strategic Plan



At AIUK's virtual AGM 2021, which we reported on in last month's newsletter, a strategic plan for the years 2022-2030 was introduced and approved.

The document outlines three strategic goals:

- Increase knowledge and change attitudes
- Build a powerful movement
- Win human rights victories

In order to win human rights victories (strategic goal 3), AIUK will focus its work on the following six priorities:

1. Economic social and cultural rights
2. Anti-racism
3. Freedom of expression
4. Human rights frameworks
5. Individuals and communities at risk
6. Human rights crises

The full strategy document can be accessed here:

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2021-05/STRATEGY%202022-2030.pdf?VersionId=eJ.NKqmhU9vVI0m5_wFCBuc_li_MwL3q

AIUK Fundraising update.

As the focus of this month's meeting is fundraising, it might be a good idea to take a look at AIUK's local group fundraising update:

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2021-07/Local%20Group%20Fundraising%20Update%20July.pdf?VersionId=WARq0Zi6fQ6beTpcDYAPSNnGUi4C08nP&utm_campaign=MEMA4095S_Local%20_groups_August&utm_content=58259&utm_source=amnestyuk&utm_medium=email

Examples of activities being organised by local groups are a guided walking tour of Bristol, a live concert in Ely, and a mountain climbing challenge by the Perth group. Help with fundraising activities is always available from AIUK's dedicated fundraising team or you can read their advice and tips here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/ways-to-give/community-and-events-fundraising/fundraising-guides-and-tips>

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