



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

September 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

September Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 13th September

Focus on Turkey

+ Catch up on our Campaigning Activities

Manchester Amnesty has opted to focus on human rights in Europe as part of its campaigning work. At this month's meeting we will be joined by AIUK's country coordinator for Turkey, **Chris Ramsey**, who will update us on events in that country and on the work that AIUK is doing in relation to Turkey. There will be the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss our campaigning work with Chris.

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.

*******Monday 6th September 6-7.30pm*******

Supporting our Human Rights Act: What you need to know

with the British Institute of Human Rights. Register here -

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uMv6imxFQX6saOCK2aZRBg

Please see below for more workshops on human rights in this series (13/9, 20/9, 27/9, 4/10).

Online talk on Kenya - September 8th

By Patricia Bartley, AIUK Kenya country coordinator. Organised by Hammersmith & Fulham Amnesty International Group. To attend, please email secretaryhammersmithamnesty@outlook.com for zoom link

Campaign Against the Arms Trade -September 11th

Protest against the Liverpool Arms Fair. See "Crisis and Tactical" section below.

Ripples of Hope Festival 17-19 September

See "other news" section. To reserve your place, in person or online, at one or more of the events:

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

Peace History Conference – September 26th

See "Other news" section at the end of the newsletter.

Human Rights in the UK 10-17 October

Join Amnesty International UK and others in a **Week of Action on Human Rights in the UK**

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/stop-rights-raid-week-action>

Together with this newsletter we are sending out a briefing document on the assault on human rights currently taking place in the UK. This is long but full of useful information and well worth reading!

Campaigning

Human Rights in the UK

There is real concern that several proposed changes to UK legislation could seriously affect our human rights in the UK. Amnesty UK have teamed up with other organisations to hold a **Stop the Rights Raid Week of Action during 10-17 October 2021**. The main ask so far is that we meet our MPs and we have contacted the 3 central Manchester MPs (viz. Jeff Smith, Lucy Powell, Afzal Khan) to ask for a face to face or virtual meeting during that week. So far, we have managed to arrange a meeting with Jeff Smith and are awaiting replies from the other MPs.

We are also planning a photo op with the Stop Sign by the Emmeline Pankhurst statue in St Peter's Square on **Sunday 10th October**. More details to follow but it would be great if you could come along and take part.



We have received an initial briefing document (attached with this newsletter) but here is a short summary of the main concerns:

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021

This new bill passed through the House of Commons in spring and has had the first reading in the House of Lords. The second reading will take place later in September and it will then progress to a committee stage before passing back to the House of Commons for the final stages.

The main concern is that it will give increased powers to the Senior Police Officer to prevent a protest from continuing if they consider the

protest is causing serious disruption or impact on local business or the life of the community. Once the Senior Police Officer has made this decision, the police can then search or arrest any person taking part in the protest and prevent them from returning to the location. This gives too much power to the police to shut down protests and criminalise those attending even when the protest is completely non-violent.

Research shows that 85% of Black people in the UK do not feel confident that they would be treated the same as a white person by the police. The measures in the bill to enhance stop and search and restrict right to roam in relation to protests will increase the racism and discrimination experienced by many minoritized people.

These changes could have a significant impact on our right to protest by criminalising people who attend protests. Fear of stop and search or arrest will prevent many from protesting and this disproportionately affects minoritized people.

There is still time to write to the Prime Minister or your MP to express your concerns.

You can find a sample email to send to the Prime Minister to ask him to halt the bill at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/uk-government-stop-assault-our-freedoms>

Nationality and Borders Bill

This bill is now at the Committee stage in the House of Commons.

Whilst correcting some injustices, anomalies and historical inequalities that have deprived some people of British nationality that ought to be theirs and so will improve justice, most of the rest of the Bill undermines the human rights of people affected by the UK's immigration laws. Of particular concern is that it redefines the meaning of the 1951 Refugee Convention with the effect that some refugees, for example those who travel independently to the UK, will be discriminated against and disadvantaged.

<https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2021/07/nationality-and>

Judicial Review and Courts Bill

This new bill was published in July and is due its second reading in the House of Commons shortly. The bill is a complex and technical piece of legislation and Amnesty UK is still considering its implications. Judicial review is how ordinary people can ask judges to ensure that the government is acting lawfully and enforce their rights. There are concerns that the bill will lead to a weakening of this right and so allow public authorities to get away with unlawful activity.

See

https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jul/21/law-society-sounds-warning-against-judicial-review-bill?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Review of the Human Rights Act

As explained in previous newsletters, Amnesty strongly believes that the Human Rights Act 1998 works well and provides a means for people to uphold their rights, as stated in the European Convention on Human Rights, in UK courts instead of having to go to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The government launched a review of this Act in December, and the report is expected shortly. Concern remains that the current government wishes to see a watering down of the Act to reduce the current checks and balances on its power.

Find out more

Amnesty is holding a series of workshops in September – sign up to educate yourself on this tricky subject that affects us all.

Supporting our Human Rights Act: What you need to know with the British Institute of Human Rights: TONIGHT!!!!

Monday 6th

September 6-7.30pm Register here -

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uMv6imxFQX6saOCK2aZRBg

Craftivism with Sarah Corbett from the Craftivist Collective to inspire your crafting and give ideas to even the least crafty!

Monday 13 September, 6-7.30pm N.B. this is the same date as our group meeting! Register here -

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1956850739186271247>

Influencing your MP and engaging local media session with top tips and support

Monday 27 September, 6 - 7.30pm Register here -

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/272436308828841743>

Ask the experts: a panel to get you up to speed on the Bills

Monday 4 October, 6 - 7.30pm Register here -

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/382331396513584399>

Join the sub-group

We have a group of members working on our plans. If you want to get involved email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com

UAE

There is no news on the situation of Mohammed Al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor.

This month marks the sixth anniversary of the detention of Human Rights Defender Nasser Bin Gaith. He is a distinguished economist and lecturer at the Abu Dhabi branch of Paris Sorbonne University and was forcibly disappeared from his work place in 2015. He was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment

in a secret location for eight months before being sentenced to 10 years for the expression of his conscientiously held beliefs.

Since its inception in 2012, the cybercrime law has been abused by the UAE government to arrest anyone posting dissenting opinions online, including on social media. In many cases, as with bin Ghaith, charges are made not only based on the cybercrime law, but also in conjunction with other laws such as the anti-terrorism law. Having been invited to speak at a conference by the Emirates Ummah Party, bin Ghaith held a speech on Islamic economy in November 2013. In 2014, however, the party was declared a “terrorist organisation” by the government, resulting in bin Ghaith being charged under the anti-terrorism law although he had no formal affiliation with the party. Both the cybercrime and the anti-terrorism law are so vaguely worded that even just expressing one’s opinion can be interpreted as a crime, restricting the right to freedom of expression drastically.

Sections on Turkey, Europe and Refugees will be returning next month.

Like Ahmed Mansoor, he has been on hunger strike to protest his conditions but continues to be held in solitary confinement and to be suffering poor health.

Although our group does not campaign for bin Ghaith, Amnesty International recognises him as a Human Rights Defender and does campaign for his release

There is more information at

<https://icfuae.org.uk/news-press-releases/six-years-emirati-human-rights-defender-nasser-bin-ghaith-remains-unjustly>



Crisis and Tactical

Palestine



Ben and Jerry’s stop selling their product in the OPT

A few weeks ago, USA-based ice cream company Ben and Jerry’s confirmed their decision to stop selling its products in illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). In a statement on 19 July, the company declared that “it is inconsistent with our values for Ben & Jerry’s ice cream to be sold in the OPT”. The company’s founders and original owners explained their support for the decision: “The company’s stated decision to more fully align its operations with its values is not a rejection of Israel. It is a rejection of Israeli

policy, which perpetuates an illegal occupation that is a barrier to peace and violates the basic human rights of the Palestinian people who live under the occupation.”

In their campaign ‘DESTINATION OCCUPATION’ Amnesty has highlighted that Israel’s establishment and maintenance of settlements breaches the international law rules governing what an occupying power may do in a situation of military occupation. Amnesty has also provided ample proof of how the settlement enterprise is inextricably linked to gross and systematic human rights violations against Palestinians. Given these circumstances, companies cannot do business in, or have value chains and business relationships with illegal settlements, without contributing to serious violations of both international humanitarian law and human rights law.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/4559/2021/en/>

Arms Exhibition in Liverpool (AOC Europe 2021)

This is an action proposed by the organisation 'War on Want', which we fully support. In October 21, the ACC Liverpool exhibition centre will host an arms exhibition, where international arms companies will promote their weapons and military technologies to the world's most repressive regimes.

Exhibitors include Israeli companies Elbit Systems, Rafael, and Elta Systems, all of which advertise weapons as 'battle tested', MDBA and Raytheon, which have provided Saudi Arabia with weapons to be used in the war in Yemen.

Weapons on offer in the ACC Liverpool exhibition centre could be used in human rights abuses around the world.

The ACC Liverpool is council-owned. **If the event goes ahead, the council, will be complicit in profiting from the bloodshed inflicted by the arms fair's participants.**

TAKE ACTION!!! Please, sign the petition to stop this fair from taking place.

https://secure.waronwant.org/page/88792/action/1?ea.tracking.id=email&utm_source=Email&utm_medium=WOW&utm_campaign=//007Stopthearmsfair



The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) are holding a protest against the arms fair in Liverpool on September 11th:

<https://caat.org.uk/events/stop-the-liverpool-arms-fair-demonstration/>

The Omega Research Foundation monitors arms and security trade fairs, and maps where and when they take place. Follow this link:

<https://omegaresearchfoundation.org/resources/arms-fairs>

Afghanistan

Safe passage out of Afghanistan

The UK and allies should have foreseen and averted the tragedy in Afghanistan. We need swift and effective action now. Thousands of Afghans at serious risk of Taliban reprisals - are in danger of being abandoned to a profoundly uncertain future.

The UK Government must urgently improve and expand its relocation scheme to ensure Afghan civilians at risk can get to safety. This means ensuring no visa requirements impede urgently necessary evacuation, delivering support for evacuations, relocation & resettlement from neighbouring countries, suspending all returns to Afghanistan and enabling people with family in the UK to be reunited here.

The UK Government pledged to champion the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. It must not abandon them now. The Prime Minister must ensure safe and legal routes to women human rights defenders and their families facing imminent danger.

Finally, a new potential law - the Nationality and Borders Bill - seeks to essentially shut down the asylum system and punish refugees from Afghanistan and elsewhere, who must often take treacherous journeys to seek asylum because no visa is available. The chaotic scenes in Kabul show how some people fleeing conflict and persecution do not have the opportunity to access visa schemes before they escape.



TAKE ACTION!!!

Help us urge the Prime Minister to ensure the safe passage out of Afghanistan for all those at risk of being targeted by the Taliban and a humane response to the refugee crisis.

Syria

****SAVE THE DATE:** Amnesty Manchester's November meeting (8th November) will have a focus on Syria, and will include the opportunity to hear from activists and campaigners. More information to come**

In the previous Amnesty Manchester newsletter, we discussed 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. At the time of the renewal, Sherine Tadros, head of Amnesty International's UN Office stated, in light of the closure of two other aid 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".

In the time since the last Amnesty Manchester newsletter was published, another dire humanitarian situation, this time in Daraa al-Balad, has come to demonstrate the vital importance of international aid in Syria.

Amnesty International reports that around 20,000 people are trapped under siege in Daraa al-Balad, and approximately 38,600 people have fled the region. The siege began on 24th June, 2021, and humanitarian agencies have since been unable to gain access. Amnesty notes that the only medical point was forced to shut down after being hit by government shelling. People in Daraa al-Barad struggle to access food, water,

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/urge_PM_help_Afghanistan_crisis

and medication, and those limited supplies that are smuggled into the city are unaffordable for the majority of people in need.

Amnesty International calls on the Syrian government to lift the siege and allow in humanitarian aid. Diana Semaan, Amnesty International's Syria researcher said, "Civilians are paying the price for battles they have never chosen. The Syrian government must immediately lift the siege to facilitate unfettered access for humanitarian organizations and allow the medical evacuation of the sick and injured...All parties to the conflict must end unlawful attacks, grant safe passage to civilians wanting to flee the area and comply with international humanitarian law at all times."

In mid-August 2021, Amnesty International spoke with a doctor, an activist, and two humanitarian workers in Daraa al-Balad. Their testimonies are recounted in an article dated 27 August, 2021, available here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/08/syria-government-must-lift-deadly-siege-of-daraa-al-balad-and-allow-humanitarian-aid-to-flow/>.

Amnesty UK 'Justice for Syria' campaign page: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/syria>
Amnesty International information on the Bab al-Hawa crossing: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/syria-un-security-councils-compromise-resolution-falls-short-of-humanitarian-needs/>
Amnesty International homepage on Syria: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/>

Anti-Racism

A number of members have expressed an interest in being part of the newly formed Anti-Racism group. Hazel has sent out a doodle poll to set up a first meeting of these people. We are still looking for one or two people to co-ordinate the work of the group. If you are interested in taking this on (or in joining the group), please email hazelerrey@gmail.com.

A few weeks ago, we asked for people to write to Beverley Hughes, the Deputy Mayor of Manchester, about what actions were being contemplated or taken about racial disparities in policing in Greater Manchester. This action was instigated by Mary Gibbs. Those who wrote to

Beverley Hughes will probably have received the same detailed reply that Mary and others received from her, which shows a pleasingly careful attention to the details of their letters, and lists a number of areas in which relevant work is being carried out.

Mary plans to reply to this with thanks for the detailed reply and indicating our desire to hear more about related developments in the future. If anyone else who has done this action, and received the reply, has time to send a similar email, we think this is probably worthwhile, as it cannot do any harm for those in government to be aware that their actions are being observed!

Group News

Manchester Pride Parades

The Manchester Pride Equality March took place on what must have been one of the best days of the summer in Manchester, i.e. Saturday, 28th August. The Manchester Amnesty banner looked wonderful in the sun! Many thanks to all those who contributed bees, candles and flowers, and to our craftivism group for putting together the beautiful banner. Special thanks to Kathryn Fletcher for instigating and coordinating all this. Thanks too to our members who took part in the Equality marches and to Steve Lindsay for the photos.



Craftivism

If these photos inspire you to get involved in future craftivism projects, please email Kathryn Fletcher at bussk@btinternet.com

Fundraising update

Like many organisations, Amnesty International UK's fundraising has been reduced during the pandemic. At our August group meeting, we came up with some possible fundraising ideas for Manchester Amnesty including:

- Selling Amnesty Christmas cards at local events
- Creating, making & selling a range of cards
- Online Quiz
- Event at Alcotraz bar in Manchester
- Lottery
- Social event (Spring 2022)
- Sponsored event e.g. cumulative walking/cycling/running/swimming carried out by individuals to reach a specific relevant total such as the distance from Manchester to UAE where Ahmed Mansoor & Mohammed al-Roken are imprisoned.
- Guided walk/cycle ride linked to human rights
- Stalls at music events e.g. M/cr Academy
- Online cooking events/classes
- Fundraise for birthday on Facebook
- My Co-op membership cards

If anyone would like to explore any of these ideas further or has some additional ideas or experience in fundraising, please get in touch with Hazel Errey (hazelerrey@gmail.com).

Christmas Cards

Anne will be ordering some seasonal goods for us to sell at Fairs etc. in the run up to Christmas, as her local Christmas Card Fair is back again this year.

If you know of any fairs or other similar events at which we could book a stall at, please let her know – anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Survey about future meetings

Please look out for and respond to a survey which has been put together by our chair Hazel Errey, to canvas members' views on our future meetings. While there are no immediate plans to move away from online meetings, Hazel would love to hear your views on the meeting start times and possibilities for return to face to face meetings in due course, if that is what people want.

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 Community Feast

We are involved in hosting a Feast of Hope as part of the festival, with the Manchester Oxfam Campaigns Group and Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group. We are bringing together human rights campaigning groups within Manchester for a fun networking session at Central Library with food supplied by Tibetan Kitchen.

And don't forget to have a look at the programme for the Ripples of Hope Festival (17-19 September) There are lots of inspiring speakers and workshops including Hilary Clinton, Helena Kennedy, Peter Tatchell and many more:

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

Peace History Conference

Members may be interested in the Annual Peace History conference, the theme of which this year is “State Surveillance of Peace Movements”.

Join us at 2pm on Sunday 26th September, the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Speakers include:

- § Journalist Rob Evans on **undercover cops in 1960s – 1970s** peace and environmental movements
- § MP and campaigner Jeremy Corbyn on **state surveillance of CND in the 1980s**
- § Historian Dr Ali Ronan on **surveillance of 1920s/30s pacifist groups**, including Peace Pledge Union and War No More
- § Filmmaker Jason Kirkpatrick (Director of ‘Spied Upon’) on the **human impact of police infiltration**

You can register for the conference via these links:

<https://gmdcnd.com/peace-history-conference-2021/>

[Register via Zoom](#)

The Peace History Conference takes a linear theme this year, exploring state surveillance of peace movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Perhaps one measure of the effectiveness of campaigning organisations is the effort that the government makes to infiltrate, spy on and otherwise monitor those who “march to a different drum” or seek a better world. The British state has a long history of surveillance and control of its people and particularly of those who hold views different to the prevailing orthodoxy: from the time of Shakespeare, through post-Napoleonic Peterloo, opposition to the “Great War”, the anti-nuclear movements and up to environmental protection and Extinction Rebellion. The Conference will explore some of the state’s attempts to silence the message over the past century and will end, as at previous Conferences, with how we can still campaign for what we believe in.

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
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