



## MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

**4<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

### October Online Group Meeting

**6.30 pm Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October**

### Unaccompanied minors and update on Calais. Talk by Quentin Duflos

+ Catch up on our Campaigning Activities

*At our meeting this month, we will be joined by Quentin Duflos who will be talking to us about his work as a legal caseworker with unaccompanied foreign minors in Saint-Omer. He will also update us on the migrants' situation in Calais. Quentin was an active member of Manchester Amnesty group until November 2020 when he moved to France for his current job. We're looking forward to seeing him again on the 11th!*

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.

### COMING SOON AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**\*\*\*\*TONIGHT, Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 6.30-8.00pm \*\*\*\***

Inaugural meeting of Manchester Amnesty Anti-racism subgroup

A zoom link will be emailed to those who expressed an interest. Look out for it!

### 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>

**\*\*\*\*TONIGHT, Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 6-7.30pm \*\*\*\***

Final workshop in series to prepare us for Stop the Rights Raid week of action

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

Register here - <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/382331396513584399>

### Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2pm Emmeline Pankhurst statue, St Peter's Square

Mini demo to kick off our activities for the week of action on human rights - more details below in Campaigning section – please attend if you can!

### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, 12 noon, Climate Justice protest, St Peter's Square

To coincide with other COP26 protests. More details on last page of newsletter and at

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1025938184909751>

## Campaigning

### Human Rights in the UK



To launch the start of the Stop the Rights Raid Week of Action (10 -17<sup>th</sup> Oct) we plan a mini demo by the Emmeline Pankhurst Statue in St Peter's Square on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October at 2pm. Some of us will dress up as suffragettes with Stop the Rights Raid placards, We'll have leaflets to give out and we'll be taking photos for social media and for a press release. We have also placed an advert in the Manchester Evening News, the text of which is reproduced here.

We could do with more bodies for the demo, so please come along. It would help if you could let Anne know at [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) in advance, but it's fine just to turn up.

Amnesty's Week of Action page is here, and will take you to further pages on the various aspects of the Rights Raid:

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

### Turkey

Many thanks to Chris Ramsey, AIUK's new country coordinator for Turkey, who provided a fascinating and very informative talk on Human Rights in Turkey at our September meeting. Chris packed such a lot into his talk, providing the historical context for the current situation

### Our advert in the MEN



**Your right to protest peacefully.**

**Your right to family life.**

**Your right to seek asylum.**

Human rights can't be seen or heard, but they are fundamental to our freedoms and way of life---and they are under threat in the UK. To find out more about how you can get involved and to learn about the Week of Action on Human Rights (10-17 October 2021 )

contact [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk)

### Meetings with MPs

We have now secured meetings during the week of action with two Manchester MPs, Jeff Smith (Manchester Withington) and Lucy Powell (Manchester Central), to discuss the attack on human rights in the UK. Several of us have attended AIUK's webinars to help us to prepare for these meetings. The briefing document which was sent with last month's email has been updated, so we are resending with this newsletter.

#### **Join the Human Rights in the UK sub-group**

We have a group of members working on this campaign. If you want to get involved email [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com)

which sees many journalists and human rights defenders under attack, in prison or in exile, limitations on freedom of expression and assembly, attacks on the rights of women and

members of the LGBTI community, and impunity for torture. Chris also explained some of the

factors which are seen as limiting the ability of the UK to work against human rights abuses in Turkey. Among these are the impact of Brexit and the UK's desire to trade with Turkey, the fact that Turkey is being paid by the UK and EU countries to host many thousands of refugees from Syria and other countries, and the implications of competition for underwater resources in the Mediterranean.

AIUK continues to monitor reports of human rights abuse in Turkey.

This page contains a lot of useful background information:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/human-rights-turkey>

## Europe

Urgent Action:

**Letter-Writing to Polish Prime Minister Prezes Rady Ministrów re: Afghans stuck at the Polish-Belarus border (by 28<sup>th</sup> October)**

If you were unable to undertake this as a Weekly Action last month, **there's still time!**

A number of asylum-seekers from Afghanistan remain stuck at the Poland-Belarus border, where they have been stranded for weeks; despite urgent orders from the European Court of Human Rights, neither country has as of yet complied with the request to give the group food, water, clothing and medical care. This month alone, tragically four of the group have reportedly died of hypothermia and exhaustion.

## Europe/Refugees

**Day Of Action!: Planned Amnesty UK Europe protest in London + Nationwide (23<sup>rd</sup> October)**

Amnesty Europe is organising a Day of Action, located in London, to campaign several pressing

Chris asked that we support Amnesty Turkey on Twitter (@aforgutu) and support their tweets.

Further reading and resources:

Chris highlighted the cases of Erin Keskin, a renowned human rights lawyer who was sentenced to 6 years in prison

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/turkey-human-rights-lawyer-eren-keskin-given-six-year-jail-sentence-terrorism>

Osman Kavala, Ahmet Altan and the Buyukada 4, all of whom can be read about on the AIUK website.

See this for more information on womens' rights

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention-rallies-the-fight-for-womens-rights-across-the-world/>

**Please write to the Polish Prime Minister at the below address to appeal for the group to be given access to protection, shelter, and legal support. A model letter is available in the Urgent Action sheet obtainable here:**

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/protect-afghans-stranded-polish-border>

*Prime Minister Prezes Rady Ministrów  
Mateusz Morawiecki*

*Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów,  
Al. Ujazdowskie 1/3*

*00-583 Warszawa E-mail:*

[sekretariat.rzecznik@kprm.gov.pl](mailto:sekretariat.rzecznik@kprm.gov.pl)

human rights issues in multiple jurisdictions across Europe. These marches will begin at the Italian Embassy, in protest of increasingly harsh sanctions for refugees and search and rescue crews.

Violent pushbacks at the borders of Fortress Europe have led to the criminalisation of both refugees and search-and-rescue crews (21

search and rescue crew, from *Medicins sans Frontieres*, *Save the Children* International and *Jugend Rettet*, a Berlin-based NGO and search-and-rescue crew. Each has been charged with “facilitating illegal entry” in Italy, which can carry severe prison sentences.

The day will continue to Malta House in campaign for the ‘El Hiblu 3’, the three teenagers charged with abducting a ship in their attempt to save refugees from drowning, and then to the Home Office to campaign against the **Nationality and Borders bill**, and for secure status for all Afghan and Syrian asylum-seekers.

**London Location:** Italian Embassy, 14 Three Kings Yard London W1K4EH,

## UAE

Some good news!

On 16<sup>th</sup> September the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the United Arab Emirates condemning the Emirati authorities’ widespread human rights abuses. It also called for the immediate release of Ahmed Mansoor, Mohammed al-Roken and Nasser bin Ghaith.

**Nationwide Locations:** Local groups are encouraged to put on their own days of action, demonstrations or acts and messages of solidarity! If local groups are able to do this prior to the 23<sup>rd</sup> October, send photos to Ulrike: and with permission these will be printed to carry with the group on the demonstration. Use the following hashtags:

**#AsylumisaHumanRight! #RefugeesWelcome! #FortressEuropeKills!**

Let’s stand together and raise our voices in support of Refugees and Human Rights.

It calls on member states to stop the sale of surveillance technology to the Gulf state and to withdraw from the up-coming Dubai Expo. Find more information at this link: <https://icfuae.org.uk/press-releases/european-parliament-adopts-resolution-condemning-uae-human-rights-abuses>

## Crisis and Tactical

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### Syria

March 2021 marked the 10th anniversary of the start of the Syrian conflict. As Amnesty notes, parties to the conflict continue to commit, with impunity, “serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, and gross human rights abuses”.

In March, UN Special Envoy, Geir Pedersen, spoke of the “unimaginable violence and indignities that...[the Syrian people] have faced over ten long years” of conflict, noting “countless” violations of international law, not least “the unspeakable horrors of chemical weapons”. Similarly, in March, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, described an ongoing “living nightmare”, stating,

*“Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have died. Millions have been displaced. Countless others remain illegally detained and often tortured, missing, disappeared, or living in uncertainty and deprivation. For ten years, the world has watched Syria spiral into destruction and bloodshed. In that time, Syrians have been subjected to human rights violations on a massive and systematic scale. The parties to the conflict have also repeatedly violated international humanitarian law, so far with absolute impunity.”*

Amnesty International continues to research the situation in Syria, with the most recent report, from 7th September, 2021, addressing human rights violations against returning Syrian refugees

Resources:

[\(https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/4583/2021/en/\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/4583/2021/en/).

Amnesty International's country page on Syria continues to be updated, including with press releases and statements

[\(https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/). The most recent news item, from 10th September, 2021, also addresses concerns with regards to returning Syrian refugees, particularly noting the UN and Syrian Arab Red Crescent operation to facilitate some of these returning journeys [\(https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/syria-jordan-un-led-return-operation-puts-refugees-at-risk-of-abuses-in-syria/\)](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/syria-jordan-un-led-return-operation-puts-refugees-at-risk-of-abuses-in-syria/).

The 'Syria' entry in the Amnesty International 2020/21 report is available online: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/report-syria/>.

UN News coverage of the Secretary-General's statements on the 10th

Anniversary: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2021-03-10/secretary-general/s-press-encounter-the-10th-anniversary-of-the-syrian-conflict>

UN News release on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1087402>

Amnesty International UK Syria page: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/syria>

## Myanmar

### Amnesty Oral statement at the UNHRC

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, Amnesty made an oral statement at the Interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (UN Human Rights Council Forty-eighth regular session). Here is an extract of the statement:

## Update and fundraise

Our November's meeting will focus on Syria. We will have an update on the situation in Syria from Haytham from Rethink Rebuild, an organisation based in Manchester, which aims at helping Syrian refugees integrate in the community and hopefully from Kristyan Benedict, co-ordinator of campaigns on Syria for Amnesty UK.

We will also hold a raffle to raise funds for both Rethink Rebuild and Amnesty. The tickets cost £5 each\*. There will be fantastic prizes, so please watch out for our Eventbrite invitation which will be made available to you soon!

The funds will be used by Rethink Rebuild for various projects (Haytham will tell us more) and for Amnesty's research and work in Syria.

We hope to see you there!!

\*If would like to take part but think that the ticket price is too high for you let us know and we will accommodate ([smattanza8@gmail.com](mailto:smattanza8@gmail.com))



'In the seven months since the coup, the Myanmar military has killed over 1,100 people and arbitrarily detained more than 6,600 individuals for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma). We are deeply concerned by the rise of surveillance and censorship, including the continued attacks on media workers and those who speak out against the coup, blocking of websites,

introduction of a ban on use satellites dishes and resumption of internet shutdowns in parts of the country.

Armed violence is intensifying across Myanmar, both in ethnic minority areas long affected by armed conflicts and in the broader central and urban areas, reportedly resulting in heavy civilian casualties and massacres. There are about 206,000 internally displaced this year alone.

This comes on top of existing human rights challenges, including related to Covid-19. Communities across the country have been devastated by a surge in Covid-19 cases, including in overcrowded prisons, amid a shattered health care system, severe flooding, and a contracted economy resulting in job, losses particularly affecting women'. ... 'The international community must not look the other way but must take long overdue action to hold perpetrators to account for international crimes, including by referring the situation in Myanmar to the ICC and exercising universal and other forms of jurisdiction to investigate suspected perpetrators. This Council must continue to follow the situation closely and to pressure the Myanmar authorities to end human rights violations and impunity. States must also pressure the authorities to end

## Afghanistan

Amnesty International, together with the International Federation on Human Rights and the World Organisation against torture have published a new briefing detailing how the Taliban have wasted no time in tamping out human rights in Afghanistan.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/afghanistan-taliban-wasting-no-time-in-stamping-out-human-rights-says-new-briefing/>

Dinushika Dissanayake, Amnesty's International Deputy Director for South Asia said **"In just over five weeks since assuming control of Afghanistan, the Taliban have clearly demonstrated that they are not serious about protecting or respecting human rights."** Using aliases to protect the identity of witnesses, the

violations by imposing targeted sanctions on senior officials reasonably suspected of committing human rights violations and serious crimes and a comprehensive global arms embargo on Myanmar.

Local and multinational businesses operating in Myanmar must respect human rights and stop enabling perpetrators. They must conduct heightened human rights due diligence and if they are unable to address the human rights impact of their operations, they must responsibly end their business relationships – severing business ties, for instance, with Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), its subsidiaries and joint ventures'.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/4763/2021/en/>



briefing document details persecution of journalists, suppression of dissent, threats to the rights of women and girls, detention and torture.

The full briefing document can be downloaded here

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/4727/2021/en/>

If you haven't already, please sign the petition calling on the Prime Minister to provide help for Afghan citizens at risk

[https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/urge\\_PM\\_help\\_Afghanistan\\_crisis?variant=0&utm\\_campaign=MEMA4154T\\_ACT\\_CRSS\\_Afghanistan\\_update&utm\\_content=69503&utm\\_source=amnestyuk&utm\\_medium=email#client\\_id=1181435&uid=ed5e59ee4a60e63b](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/urge_PM_help_Afghanistan_crisis?variant=0&utm_campaign=MEMA4154T_ACT_CRSS_Afghanistan_update&utm_content=69503&utm_source=amnestyuk&utm_medium=email#client_id=1181435&uid=ed5e59ee4a60e63b)

## Covid vaccines



It was a whole year ago (2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020) that South Africa and India called for a patent waiver (TRIPS waiver) on the production of covid vaccines. A waiver would mean that instead of relying on the big pharmaceutical companies to produce (and make vast profits from) vaccines, with appropriate help, smaller companies in countries all over the world would be able to produce vaccines for populations who currently can't afford or access them. Since this call was made, an additional 3.5million people have died

of covid, yet many governments including those of the UK, the EU, Norway and Switzerland, still oppose the waiver. As Amnesty's Secretary General, Agnès Callamard, says:

**“Greed is triumphing over human life and human rights... poorer countries are losing precious time to protect their populations.”**

You can read more and sign Amnesty's petition calling for a waiver here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/covid-19-time-for-countries-blocking-trips-waiver-to-support-lifting-of-restrictions/>

and here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/new-report-shows-leading-covid-19-vaccine-pharma-companies-fuelling-unprecedented-human-rights-crisis/>

## Anti-Racism

You may have read about an arson attack at the Didsbury mosque on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Thankfully the fire was extinguished fairly quickly and no-one was injured. At our September meeting, we took a screenshot of us holding messages such as **#we stand together against hate** to express solidarity with the mosque, and then one of our members, Umbareen Siddiqi, delivered a card and flowers the next day. Our actions and support were greatly appreciated.



The inaugural meeting of the anti-racism subgroup will be held tonight at 6.30, zoom link to follow for those who expressed an interest.

## Group News

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### \*\*\*\*\*Volunteers needed – Crisis and Tactical campaigns\*\*\*\*\*

Our group's 'Crisis and Tactical team' is looking for new volunteers to coordinate Amnesty's campaign concerning humanitarian crisis and tactical campaigns, organised strategically around events.

### Help with campaigning – personalising your letters to have greater impact.

**We received this email and offer from Julian Hall, an Amnesty colleague in Devon:**

Hello, I'm a long-standing member of AIUK South Devon Group 115. Back in the 1990s, when I was Group Secretary, I devised an 'App' to generate differently worded campaign letters on the Real Lives appeals and it took off to such an extent that I eventually had to set it up as a separate operation. Thirty years on, it's still going strong thanks to my incredibly loyal subscribers, including several local group

### Christmas Cards

Anne is still interested in hearing about Christmas events where we could sell Amnesty Christmas cards. Please email her on [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com).

Currently, our main campaigns focus on Syria and Palestine, although we keep an eye on Myanmar, Yemen and in the near future possibly also Afghanistan.

If you would like to find out more about what the role entails, please contact Simona [smattanza8@gmail.com](mailto:smattanza8@gmail.com).

members.

I am now offering letters on the current appeals to Vietnam, Eritrea and China to download from our website entirely free of charge. You will find full details at:

<https://www.appealsww.com/>

and our Facebook page is:

<https://www.facebook.com/Writing-for-Rights-made-easy-106562801662492>

The system works equally well on a laptop or mobile so could be used in conjunction with a printer at public 'write-a-thons' or other events.

### Survey about future meetings closes today!

You should have received an email with a link to a survey canvassing members' views on our future meetings. If you haven't replied already, Hazel, our chair, would love to hear your views, but **be quick as the link expires today!** Alternatively, you can contact Hazel directly on [hazelerrey@gmail.com](mailto:hazelerrey@gmail.com)

If you would like to get involved in any of our subgroups to support a particular area of work, email [Anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:Anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) and she will put you in touch with the relevant group lead.

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## Other News

### Ripples of Hope Community Feast

We hosted a Feast of Hope as part of the recent Ripples of Hope human rights festival in conjunction with the Manchester Oxfam Campaigns Group and Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group. We brought together 11 different campaigning groups within Manchester for a fun networking session at Central Library.

The lovely poet Malika Booker opened the event with readings from her poem commissioned for the festival and with an activity to get us thinking about how our activity made us feel. We ate food supplied by Tibetan Kitchen, talked nonstop, played 'Just a Minute' where the different groups had to sell themselves in 60 secs (most took longer!) and got to know each other.



### Manchester Climate Justice March & Rally, 6 November, 12.00.

From Martin Porter, Manchester Greenpeace Group:

As you're all aware, a crucial UN climate conference takes place in Glasgow next month. Rather than everyone heading to Scotland and converging on Glasgow, there will be a series of regional rallies. Manchester is hosting the only

event in the Northwest. Here is a link for more details:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1025938184909751>

Please come along, please bring your friends and please spread the word. Attendance at all post-lockdown events is lower than before the crisis, so it will take a real effort to get people to come out.. The link to the Facebook event is below. If you want fliers ahead of the event or if you have any suggestions for speakers, please let Martin know on [thesnufkin@inbox.com](mailto:thesnufkin@inbox.com)

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](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk)