



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

6th December 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

December Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 13th December

Write for Rights

December's meeting will focus on the annual Write for Rights campaign. *It would be great if different members could briefly introduce one of this year's cases to the group during the meeting. We just need a brief introduction about the person or organisation and also a few words about why the case matters to you or resonates with you.*

***Please let Hazel Errey know if you would be willing to do this and which case you would like to introduce.
hazelerrey@gmail.com***

+ Catch up on our Campaigning Activities

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

Saturday 11th December 2-3pm, Hulme Park, M15 4ZY

Manchester Stand up to Racism, and Care4Calais. Please bring good quality men's winter coats, or monetary donations, for refugees in need. See "other news" section for more information.

Saturday 11th December 1pm-4pm, St Peters Square, Manchester

"You can't kill us all" Solidarity with those oppressed by the CCP – **focus on Hong Kong**
Exhibition of 3D printed model of the Pillar of Shame. See "other news" section for more information.

Sunday 12th December 2pm, Craftivism Group

In the Horsall room, Manchester City Art Gallery. See "group news" section for more information.

Saturday 18th December, Write for Rights drop-in session 10am-2pm.

We will have a table near the café in Central Library in Manchester. Please drop by and sign some cards or write an appeal letter. See "Write for Rights" section for more information.

Campaigning

Human Rights in the UK

Nationality and Borders Bill

This controversial Bill is currently at the report stage and is expected back in the House of Commons on December 7th. Amnesty has grave concerns about much of the bill – find out more at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/nationality-borders-bill-truth-behind-claims>

If the government really cares about preventing people making dangerous journeys and falling victim to smugglers and traffickers, then their proposed new Bill - ought to provide safe and legal alternatives.

TAKE ACTION

Click this link to email your MP and ask them to expose the flaws in the bill:
<http://amn.st/6181JUKEh>

Write for Rights

Every year in November and December, Amnesty International runs a global campaign to show solidarity for 10 people and organisations around the world enduring human rights abuses. It only takes a few minutes to write a letter or card, send an email or social media message, or sign a petition but for an environmental activist facing a long prison sentence, a citizen journalist detained for reporting on the pandemic, or an LGBTI organisation suffering homophobic attacks, these simple gestures have a powerful impact. As past campaigns have shown, our messages of solidarity – alongside those of fellow Amnesty supporters across the globe – are a great source of comfort and support for people doing the difficult and often dangerous work of standing up for human rights. Our letters, words and actions also put pressure on the authorities to take action to free prisoners of conscience, protect the vulnerable, and bring perpetrators of human rights abuses to justice.

Join the sub-group

The Stop the rights Raid campaign is on-going. We expect to be asked to take more actions, especially when the long-awaited report of the review of the Human Rights Act is published.

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



We will be focusing on Write for Rights at our December online meeting so please join us as we learn more about the people and organisations in this year's campaign. Pre-Covid times, we usually shared some festive food at our December meetings so please don't let Zoom prevent you from getting into the festive spirit with a few lights, decorations along with your favourite festive snacks and tipples!

As well as taking part yourself in this year's Write for Rights, please consider involving a friend/neighbour/family member or another group that you belong to. We suggest that you pick a case from the booklet (link below) and prepare a card so that it is easy for the people you ask to take part. In the past, our members have encouraged a variety of groups to take part including local religious groups, work colleagues, neighbours, book clubs, women's groups, gardening groups or friends and family members. Please let us know if you take part and if you are able to involve anyone else so that we can add it to our group total that we will send to AIUK following the campaign.

The Write for Rights 2021 booklet can be found here:
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2021-get-started>

The yearly Write for Rights event at St Margaret's Church, Whalley Range took place "in person" on 4th December, having been called off due to COVID last year. The event was reasonably well attended despite the truly horrible weather and about 400 cards were written! It was good to see old friends on various stalls and the music and food were great too.



On the Amnesty stall, we gathered signatures for a letter about Uyghur children separated from their families.



Some participants at the Write for Rights event at St Margaret's church, Whalley Range, 4th December.

Central Library Write for Rights Drop-In

On **Saturday December 18th** we have a table near the café in Central Library in Manchester. Please drop by and sign some cards or write an appeal letter. Anne will be there 10am – 2pm (N.B. ending 1 hour earlier than previously publicised so that she can get to her granddaughter's carol concert!)
Please come along and keep Anne company. Stay as long as you like – from 5 mins to a few hours!

Many of the cases require non-religious, non-Amnesty cards. We have a small stock of these but if you could bring some along, it would be helpful.

UAE Update

Concern over appointment of Emirati to head of Interpol

Human rights organisations and MEPs have expressed deep concern about the recent appointment of General Ahmed Naser Ak-Raisi as president of Interpol. He is the inspector general of the United Arab Emirates' interior ministry and has recently faced complaints of torture, filed in France and Turkey. One of these is from the British national Matthew Hedges who was detained in the UAE in 2018 on false charges of

espionage during a study trip for his PhD. He claims to have been tortured during his detention. Another complainant is the British citizen, Ali Issa Ahmad who was accosted and detained for wearing a Qatar football shirt. Interpol has the right to issue red notices – a call by one country for the arrest of individuals in another country. Human Rights organisations are concerned that Raisi's election will increase the risk of Interpol allowing abusive states to use politically motivated 'red notices' to pursue political vendettas.

Europe and Turkey

Italy

Healthcare workers in Italy who raised concerns about unsafe working conditions in care homes during the Covid-19 pandemic have been subjected to disciplinary proceedings and retribution from their employers. A new report from Amnesty International has underlined how employers attempted to silence workers with dismissal and anti-union measures for raising awareness of the issue, with over a third of

those interviewed by AI reporting “a climate of fear and retaliation” in the workplace.

Amnesty calls on the Italian parliament to set up an independent commission of inquiry into the situation at residential facilities, along with the serious concerns raised by staff about their working conditions during the pandemic.

Actions: [Please sign the petition for an independent enquiry to be established here!](#)

Poland

There were mass protests in Poland last month after a pregnant woman died following a refusal to grant her access to an abortion, despite multiple scans demonstrating the foetus was incompatible with life. Named only as Izabela, the 30-year-old woman suffered septic shock when the foetus died in the 22nd week of her pregnancy, during which time multiple medical professionals had confirmed as the foetus as

incompatible with life, but refused to perform an abortion whilst they still detected a heartbeat. Poland has the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, and removed last year the last legal access to abortion on grounds of fetal abnormality. Thousands of people protested in Warsaw after the incident (click [here](#) for more information).

Austria

Amnesty International has produced new research about the exploitation and poor working conditions of migrant care workers in Austria, the majority of whom are women who work as live-in carers for the elderly. These conditions have reached breaking point as a result of the pandemic, and have been compounded by a lack of access to minimum wage, working hours’ protection and access to sick pay. 98% of live-in care workers are self-employed, so do not obtain these benefits, leading to a wide disparity in working and living conditions for those in the industry.

Action: [For more information, you can find Amnesty’s full report here.](#) These two reports are part of a series of research conducted by Amnesty International in various European countries on the impact of Covid-19 on the rights of essential workers.

If you would like to join the campaigns in support of the better working conditions in Europe, please contact the following email address for more information:

iovana.bosniak@amnesty.org

Turkey

We reported last month on the acquittal of Özgür Gür, Melike Balkan and 17 other defendants on charges brought following the break up by police of the Pride sit-in at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in 2019. Speaking after the verdict, Melike and Özgür [posted a video on Twitter \(which you can see here\)](#) thanking everyone who has taken

action on this case which first appeared in the Write for Rights Campaign 2020.



Crisis and Tactical

Syria

Manchester Amnesty's November meeting was a special event, featuring guest speakers and a raffle. Many thanks to our invited guest speakers, Dr. Haytham Alhamwi, from Rethink Rebuild Society, and Kristyan Benedict, from the Crisis and Tactical team at Amnesty International UK.

For more information on Rethink Rebuild: <https://www.rrsoc.org/>

For more information on AIUK's Syria work: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/syria>

Both speakers brought different perspectives on the ongoing crisis in Syria, and we are grateful that they were willing to share their expertise and experiences with us. Kristyan spoke on Amnesty's advocacy work and their support for justice and accountability, including strategic litigation. He also noted Amnesty's role in providing training and strategic advice.

Kristyan referenced the legal work being done in Germany, which has been reported by Amnesty, including in this February 2021

article: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/02/germany-syria-conviction-of-syrian-official-for-crimes-against-humanity-a-historic-victory-for-justice/>

Kristyan also referred to the *Bringing Assad to Justice* documentary, which we hope to be able to screen in Manchester soon! For more info on the film:

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

Noting that the Syria conflict has been ongoing for over 10 years, Haytham generously provided the group with a brief history of the conflict, addressing the military situation, the

geopolitical factors, the economic position, and humanitarian concerns.

Syria Map Today and current situation



When asked what Manchester Amnesty members can do, either individually or as a collective, Haytham suggested:

- Campaign against the return of refugees
- Campaign for humanitarian access to be maintained/restored
- Advocate for the rights of detainees
- Call for accountability.

The raffle prizes for the Syria evening were generously donated by members of Manchester's Syrian community and members of Manchester Amnesty. We were thrilled to have so many people attend the meeting and buy raffle tickets.

We sold 147 tickets and raised £735. Of this, £366 has been given to Rethink Rebuild Society and £366 will be forwarded to AIUK via Manchester Amnesty group funds.

Thank you to all who sent great feedback on the event!

Refugees

Following on from the appalling loss of life in the English channel and the government's response to this tragedy, an emergency demonstration was called, which took place in St Peter's Square on 28th November. Despite the

wind and snow, a few of our braver members turned out to support the demonstration. See more on actions you can take to support refugees in the "other news" section.

Palestine

In mid November, Amnesty produced a major new report on the role of the UK digger company JCB in manufacturing and selling equipment which is used in the destruction of homes and the construction of illegal settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territories. These actions deny Palestinians their human rights, including the right to housing.



The full report can be accessed here:

[http://email.amnestyuk.org.uk/files/amf_amnesty/project_58/JCB_Off_Track - Full Report.pdf](http://email.amnestyuk.org.uk/files/amf_amnesty/project_58/JCB_Off_Track_-_Full_Report.pdf)

Members of Manchester Amnesty have already been involved in calling on local authorities to exclude from tendering processes any companies which are involved in these human rights violations in Palestine. Amnesty have produced a resource pack which can be accessed on the link below:

[Find the Resource Pack here](#)

Anti-Racism

Anti-racism subgroup

The anti-racism subgroup is currently meeting every 6 weeks and discussing 3 areas of work:

- Education for ourselves and the wider group
- Anti-racism campaigning
- Links with local anti-racism organisations

We are currently reading the book, 'Me and White Supremacy' by Layla F. Saad, which we are all finding very interesting and a challenging read in terms of exploring our own white privilege and the systems that support it. We have decided to work steadily through the book and will be discussing the first section called 'The Basics' in our next meeting.

Mary Gibbs continues to co-ordinate our campaigning work, which is focused on Greater Manchester Police and issues of racial disparities in policing. We are currently working out how to move this campaign forward and are considering ways of working alongside other anti-racism organisations.

Several Manchester Amnesty members attended a demonstration in St Peter's Square organised by Manchester Stand Up to Racism

and Care for Calais following the deaths of 27 people in the English Channel as they tried to reach the UK. It felt important for Manchester Amnesty to stand in solidarity on this tragic occasion alongside many other Manchester organisations who work to support refugees and asylum seekers as well as organisations working for anti-racism.

Three of us also attended a recent online meeting with Manchester Stand Up to Racism, which was called in order to start building support for the UN Anti-Racism Day 2022. This takes place on Saturday March 19th so please get the date in your diaries!

We would very much welcome more members in the Anti-Racism sub-group. We welcome anyone who would like to learn alongside us as we develop this part of Manchester Amnesty's work. There is no expectation of anti-racism expertise – we are all learning as we go and also making mistakes along the way so please feel free to join us! Our next meeting (Zoom) is on Tuesday 4th January at 6.30pm. Please contact Hazel Errey for a joining link.

hazelerrey@gmail.com

Group News

Results of group survey on meetings

Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey for all members about our meetings (timing, format, content etc.) for 2022 onwards. We had 25 responses in total with the following findings:

- The majority of people (18 out of 25) want a mixture of online and in-person meetings and can see the benefits of both formats.
- The majority of people would prefer online & in-person meetings to start at 7.00pm. (The majority was smaller for online meetings than in-person).
- The responses showed that members like to have a range of different types of meetings. Visiting speakers, campaign planning & education workshops were all very popular. Craftivism and letter-writing attract a smaller number of people but still enough to make them an important part of the group's work going forward.

Following a co-ordinators' meeting, we have decided to **change the start of meeting times to 7.00pm from January 2022.**

Newsletter and weekly action emails – future plans

At a recent coordinators meeting we discussed the possibility of modifying the format and frequency of the group newsletter and the weekly action email. The suggestion is to make the weekly action email the main vehicle for conveying news of events and group activities

We will maintain a mix of online and in-person meetings & activities throughout 2022 but we have decided to keep all our monthly group meetings online for the time being. This will be reviewed every few months as the Covid situation changes.

We will continue to provide speakers, campaign planning & workshop style meetings. However, if we want to have regular speakers from outside Amnesty, we decided that we need to consider making a donation to their organisations as well as covering any expenses. We will discuss this in more detail at our AGM in March 2022 but it is likely that we will set up a specific fund to cover this, which will be part of our suggested annual subscription for all group members.

Following some specific feedback in the survey, we have also decided that any photo actions will take place at the end of online meetings so that people do not feel under any pressure to participate. We fully understand that there are a variety of reasons, including people's personal safety, which mean that individuals would prefer not to be included in photo actions and we don't want anyone to feel under any pressure to participate.

(while retaining the weekly action), and to produce the newsletter less frequently (bi-monthly or quarterly) but to include more in-depth articles. So it would be useful if members could think about what they get out of the newsletter and weekly action emails ahead of the AGM which will take place in March, where these proposals will be discussed.

Craftivism Group

The craftivism sub-group is busy making a gift for Bev Craig to welcome her as the head of Manchester City Council this month. We will be assembling the components and putting finishing touches to the gift at 2pm on Sunday 12th at Manchester Art Gallery. **Please join us!**

We are sending a letter to Bev Craig requesting a meeting to discuss our areas of concern and to present her with our gift.



Finally, we send a big thank you to Simona Mattanza for all her work on Syria and other campaigns over recent years. Simona will continue her work with Amnesty a little closer to home (in Italy).

If you would like to get involved in any of our subgroups 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

Hong Kong and China demo

YOU CAN'T KILL US ALL
The Pillar of Shame-Solidarity for the suppressed by CCP

Date : 11th Dec 2021 (sat.)
Time : 1300-1600
Venue : St Peter Square, Manchester

Despite the forced removal of The Pillar of Shame at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the massacre of June Fourth Massacre and the ongoing deterioration of democracy and human rights in Hong Kong, the Art voices out loud to the public: "STAND TALL & STAY STRONG"

In response to the call by Danish sculptor Jens Galsboet, the creator of The Pillar of Shame, to help spread his art all over the world, the 3D printed model of the Pillar will be exhibited in Manchester's public space on 11th Dec, 2021. We would like to invite you to witness this historical testimony.

- Display of the 3D model The Pillar of Shame Sculpture
- Sharing:
 - The Former District Councillors Mr. Clara, Cheung / Mr. Chris, Tsang Chun-sing
 - Founder, Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities: Tensing Passang
 - 3 Anonymous HK Refugees
- The CCP Shame Exhibition
- Music Performance

Action:

- Sign the petition
- Join the letter campaign TG
- Facebook Like
- Sign List

QR codes for the petition, letter campaign, Facebook Like, and Sign List are provided at the bottom.

An event will be held in St Peter's Square, Manchester on Saturday 11th December to support people who are being oppressed in

China and Hong Kong. We are hoping that there will be an Amnesty speaker at the event.

The organisers are calling for:

1. The Hong Kong government to release all political prisoners, and to respect Hong Kong's promised freedom and democracy.
2. The Chinese Communist government to stop spreading fear, to stop suppressing dissidents, and to stop interfering with the freedom of the press in Hong Kong.
3. To nominate British citizen Jimmy Lai for Nobel Peace Prize, in order to honour Lai's achievements in advocating the value of democracy and freedom, especially the freedom of press.

There is a petition which you can sign here:

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/601971?fbclid=IwAR0VkdI6y59V9Fpx_c98iltRIZY3WZRoedlhRcbTcwbjtZcmQemo_kx2EZs

For more information, please visit:

<https://hkspirits.weebly.com/>

Coats for Refugees please



Manchester Stand up to Racism and Care4Calais are asking for good quality men's coats for refugees.

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