



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

7th March 2022

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

March Online Group Meeting

7.00 pm Monday 14th March

Annual General Meeting

We will be electing our officers, reviewing the past year, and discussing plans for the year ahead. More details and full agenda appear on the "Group news" page

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 7.00pm online on the second Monday of the month until further notice.

COMING SOON AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

*****THIS EVENING*** 7th March 2022 6-7pm HRA consultation webinar**

Amnesty webinar at which you can work on your response to the governments Human Rights Act review consultation. Register here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3131572264907282701>

8th March 2022 7-8pm Online meeting on Palestine

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-is-israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-and-what-can-we-do-tickets-275669152857>. This meeting sets out plans for a week of action to launch Amnesty's campaign

21st-27th March. Week of Action on Palestine.

See "Crisis and Tactical Section"

11-26th March Rethink and Rebuild presents Celebrating Syria Festival

Various venues including HOME. 2 weeks of events celebrating Syrian Art and Culture.

<https://www.celebratingsyria.org/>

<https://homemcr.org/event/celebrating-syria/>

Central Library Saturday March 26th 2-4pm. Amnesty letter writing

Letter writing drop-in session to support and campaign for individuals at risk. Details in "group news."

Campaigning

Human Rights in the UK

Human Rights Act

The government have been holding a consultation on their plans to replace the Human Rights Act with a 'Bill of Rights'. Their proposals are very wide ranging but at their core, Amnesty believes that they would lead to human rights protections being severely weakened and make it much harder to hold the state to account for any violations. Behind all of the technical language is a move to gut the Human Rights Act and limit not only what rights are but who gets them.

The consultation closes on March 8th. Quite a few of us have had a go at responding using the online form. This has not been a quick exercise as many of the questions are quite technical but was made far easier thanks to the AIUK guidance.

Many thanks to all who took part.



Nationality and Borders Bill

At the time of writing this, there is some good news on this controversial bill. The government has suffered a number of defeats in the House of Lords, see [this article](#)

See this link

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/december-2021/lords-debates-nationality-and-borders-bill/>

for a list of the amendments dealt with so far and the voting figures.

The amendments make a huge difference to the bill – we can only hope that the government does not attempt to reinstate the House of Lords changes. Please contact your MP and ask them to vote accordingly.

Policing bill

The bill is currently back with the Commons – see here for Amnesty's latest

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/policing-bill-mps-must-follow-lords-rejecting-deeply-authoritarian-legislation>

Subgroup

This campaign is on-going. We expect to be asked to take more actions over the coming weeks.

We have a group of members who are specifically working on this campaign. Anne has been taking the lead on this but would like to hand over to someone else at the AGM, to allow her to concentrate on our Individuals at Risk work. If you are interested in being involved, please get in touch with Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) or put yourself forward at our next meeting.



UAE Update

UAE subgroup

Next meeting Monday 21st March
6.30pm - Please join us! Contact
kathrynbuss@gmail.com for link.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the meeting last month. The UAE subgroup has since met to discuss the ideas that came out of the small group discussions. We will be trying to keep our campaign local to Manchester, possibly approaching the Manchester Business School, the Manchester Law Society and the UAE tourist board. I will keep you updated.

We are calling for the release of Mohammed al-Roken at the end of his 10-year sentence on 17th July 2022 (not 2023 as I said last month). There is concern that he will be subjected to an indefinite extension of his sentence in the 'Munasaha (counselling) centres' like many similar prisoners of conscience in the UAE. The letter writing rota will switch the focus to calling on his release. We hope to plan some more Twitter storms with other Amnesty groups leading up to 17th July.

Please let me know if you would like to join the rota. You will be asked to write about twice a year. My email is kathrynbuss@gmail.com

Crisis and Tactical

Ukraine update

On Saturday 26th February, members of Manchester Amnesty joined a crowd of over a thousand people at the peace rally held in Piccadilly Gardens. Similar peace rallies in support of Ukraine were held around the world.



In the past week, news of the escalating Russian invasion of Ukraine has been swiftly changing, but has remained hugely distressing. As Amnesty [notes](#), "Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a manifest violation of the United Nations

Charter and an act of aggression that is a crime under international law".

Rather than attempt to recount the events of the war, following are some resources I have collated – please get in touch if you have others that you would like to share:

****The following includes distressing content****

Amnesty cannot vouch for the content of external sites – be aware of the extent of misinformation circulating about the Russian war on Ukraine, particularly on social media

- Amnesty Ukraine is on [twitter](#) at @Amnesty_UA
- Amnesty's [country page](#) on Ukraine includes a range of reports and news articles – many of these are an opportunity to learn about Ukraine beyond the war
- Evidence from Amnesty's [Crisis Evidence Lab](#) verifying indiscriminate attacks during the early stages of this most recent invasion
- Amnesty UK [press release](#) on the use of cluster munitions (press release from 27th February) – this includes

information on cluster munitions, which, as inherently indiscriminate weapons, are prohibited under customary international humanitarian law.

- Amnesty UK [briefing](#) on the “Human Rights Catastrophe”
- Freedom from Torture [petition](#) calling on the UK government to help Ukrainian refugees
- [Information](#) on Russian police violence in Russia towards anti-war protesters within Russia itself, recalling that protest is a human right.
- The London School of Economics has refuted the version of history Putin has attempted to use to justify this aggression

- The BBC has launched the Ukrainecast [podcast](#)
- The Kyiv Independent provides updates [online](#) and via [twitter](#)
- The Ukraine Crisis Media [Center](#)
- The UK Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine [Appeal](#) (involves 15 charities, including the British Red Cross)
- Suggestions from the [Guardian](#) of “ways you can help the people of Ukraine from the UK”, including contributing to campaigns, supporting local journalism, and writing to your MP.

[Amnesty Action](#): send an email to Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation and demand that Russia ends the aggression immediately, protects civilians and respects international law.

Syria

Amnesty International UK does not appear to be updating the *Justice for Syria* page regularly, but the content there remains an interesting read: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/syria>

Amnesty International maintains a Syria [country page](#), which includes reports and news. The most recent news published by Amnesty addresses the deeply concerning violence in the [al-Hol camp](#). At the start of February, at least one child was killed, and another three children and three women were injured by Asayish, the Syrian Kurdish Autonomous Administration’s police force.

This case, Amnesty noted, is a “chilling reminder” of the conditions faced by those forced to live in the camps since the conflict with the Islamic State armed group ended in 2019. Diana Semaan, Amnesty International’s Syria researcher, recalled the tens of thousands of children currently living in such camps, and the urgent need for

“States with nationals in al-Hol must take meaningful action to end the horrors at the camp and repatriate the tens of thousands of children living there. Governments must stop ignoring their international human rights obligations and take all measures to uphold the right of every child to life, survival and development.”

Some more information on the al-Hol camp is available [here](#).

At the other end of the age spectrum, Human Rights Watch published a [report](#) at the end of February called *No One is Spared: Abuses Against Older People in Armed Conflict*, which features Syria as one of the example case studies. The report presents accounts of older people – particularly older refugees – who have faced human rights abuses and persecution. (This report contains distressing content).

Palestine

On February 1, Amnesty launched a landmark report, Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians. The report marks the beginning of a multi-year campaign to help dismantle Israel's crushing system of apartheid against Palestinians. The campaign has received widespread media coverage and high profile support, including the South African Foreign Minister and the UN's expert on human rights in the OPT, Michael Link.

Amnesty are holding a meeting online on Tuesday, March 8, 7-8 pm. They will discuss how activists and groups can participate in a week of action, which will take place between 21-27 March.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-is-israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-and-what-can-we-do-tickets-275669152857>

Refugees

Ukraine

The UNHCR is regularly updating [this page](#) to report on those fleeing the war in the Ukraine.

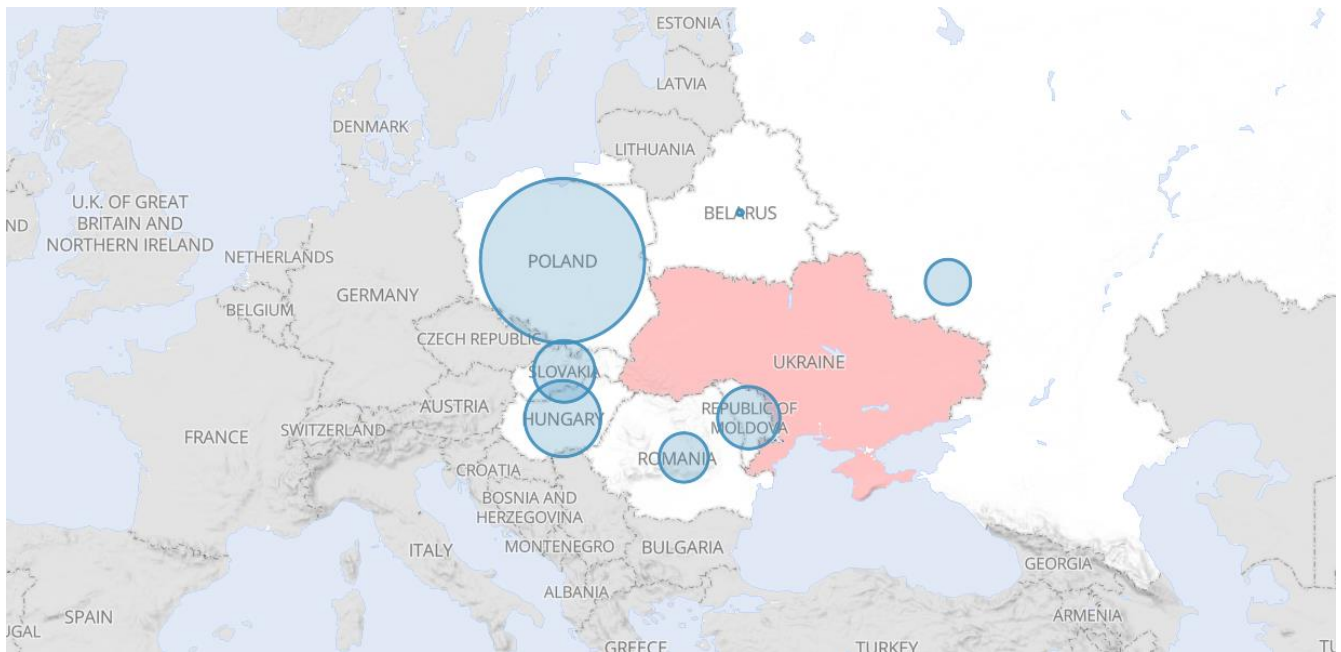
As of 5th March, the UNHCR were reporting that 1,534,792 people had been forced to flee their homes and were in need of protection and support, and that number is obviously growing.

You can make donations to support Ukranian refugees using the following links:

[UNHCR](#)

and

[DEC](#)



Asylum seekers in the UK

Further to the piece on the Nationalities and Borders Bill which appears above in the Campaigns Section (Human Rights in the UK), one of the significant amendments to the bill which passed in the Lords would allow asylum seekers to work if their case had not been settled within 6 months. If retained in the Commons, this would make a major difference to the lives of many asylum seekers in the UK.

You can take this action sponsored by Refugee Action. Call on your MP to vote to retain the Lords amendment which would lift the ban on asylum seekers working:

<https://act.refugee-action.org.uk/page/100508/tweet/1?ea.tracking.id=3jw58500&ea.url.id=5788436>

Anti-Racism

The Anti-Racism sub-group continues to meet every 6 weeks. The next meeting takes place on Zoom on Monday 4th April, 6.30-7.30pm. Please contact hazelerrey@gmail.com if you would like to join us.

Group News

Manchester Amnesty Annual General Meeting

We will be holding our AGM at our next meeting on Monday 14th March. The agenda will be as follows:

1. Election of group officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer).
2. Treasurer's report
3. Summary of actions & campaigns achieved during 2021-22
4. Confirm campaign areas for 2022-23 & appoint co-ordinators
5. Proposed change to frequency and content of newsletter and weekly action emails.*
6. AOB

Everyone is welcome to attend the AGM including new members. It is a good opportunity to find out about the range of campaigns that we cover and a way of getting more involved if you would like to do so.

*You should all be receiving the "Weekly Action" email, which was instituted at the start of the pandemic. This email has proved popular and has also become a good vehicle for relaying breaking news and details of upcoming events,

thus rendering some of the functions of the newsletter redundant. We are therefore proposing changing the frequency of the newsletter to quarterly, and modifying the content slightly so that the focus is on in-depth articles more than news. We would welcome your views on the proposed changes at the AGM.

We are always looking for people who would like to get more involved in the running of the group, or who wish to take a lead on some of our campaigning work. You can participate to the extent that suits you, all contributions are welcome. So if you want to get more involved, please do feel free to speak up.

If you have any issues that you would like to have considered at the AGM, please contact the Chair, Hazelerrey@gmail.com.

Individuals at Risk

Letter Writing Drop-in session

Central Library Saturday March 26th 2-4pm

Before the pandemic we used to hold regular informal get-togethers to write appeals on behalf of Amnesty cases.

We are restarting these on the 4th Saturday every two months starting March 26th, 2-4pm. We are delighted that Central Library in the city centre have offered us the use of some tables near the café on the ground floor.

This is an excellent way of getting engaged with core Amnesty casework and getting to know our members. It is also guaranteed to produce lots of letters! Please feel free to drop by.

Letter Writing Drop-in

Saturday 26th March

2-4pm

Central Library

Near the café

Look out for the Amnesty banner

All case details and writing materials will be provided. Bring your own device if you want to make use of the free WiFi and send some emails and tweets as well.

All Welcome

Other News

Rethink Rebuild Syria



Join us in the 5th Celebrating Syria Festival. It showcases the talent & creativity of Syrian artists in the UK. The festival brings a wide range of events including live music, workshops, book discussion, talks & theatre. Please spread the word. For all details, visit the festival website: <https://www.celebratingsyria.org/>

AIUK plans for the coming year

In addition to campaigning to limit the worst impacts of the Nationality and Borders Bill; to protect the Human Rights Act and to dismantle Israel's apartheid against Palestinians, this year we will continue to challenge the Policing Bill and will be launching campaigns on the Right to Protest; on homelessness in England, Scotland

and Northern Ireland; on racial justice, including launching a report on the chilling effect of the Prevent Duty on activism and around predictive policing in the UK; and continuing work on cases of individuals including Nazanin and Anoosheh in Iran and others in Saudi Arabia, China and Turkey.

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