



Manchester Group Quarterly Bulletin Number 2 September 2022



Contents:

The Assault on Human rights in the UK	2
Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians - campaign update	5
Reports from the subgroups	
Refugee rights update and subgroup news	7
United Arab Emirates update and subgroup news	9
Craftivism subgroup	11
Individuals at Risk and Write for Rights	11
Anti-racism update and subgroup news	12
Recent events and campaigning activities	
LGBTQ+ rights - Manchester Pride Parade 2022	13
Press Freedom Event	15
Action for Sustainability Event	15
Amnesty Ukraine statement	16
Amnesty International UK conference	16

This newsletter is compiled by the Group Communications Secretary, Alison Wearden (alison.wearden@gmail.com). If you have any ideas for short or more in-depth articles for the newsletter, please feel free to contact her. We would welcome pieces on any area of Amnesty's work, and also human interest stories. If you would prefer to stop receiving this newsletter, please let Alison know.

The assault on Human Rights in the UK

As members will be aware, over the past year, the government has passed legislation which undermines the human rights of people living, and those seeking to live, in the UK, and it is proposing further legislation which will make it much more difficult to hold the government to account when it breaches or fails to uphold citizens' human rights. In the September bulletin's feature article, we bring together information on two strands of the assault on our rights in the UK, focusing firstly on the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, which has already been passed, and secondly on the bill to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a Bill of Rights – this has been dubbed the "Rights Removal Bill."

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act

The act gained Royal assent in April 2022 and came into power in June 2022.

What does it mean for human rights in the UK?

More draconian sentencing

The bill allows for longer sentences for serious crime and ceases early release for some crimes. Britain already has a higher incarceration rate than Europe (134.9/100,00 in Scotland, 131.3 in England and 116.6 average in Europe). In addition, older teenagers can now be given longer custodial sentences undermining their rights as children. These are both worrying trends.

Restrictions of the way of life of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities

The bill increases police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments. This will mean that mobile communities will not be able to stay in places they have used many times before and effectively criminalises nomadic lifestyles.

Increased powers of stop and search

There is concern that the changes in the bill will increase already disproportionate stop and search of black, indigenous and people of colour communities and other marginalised communities.

Limits the right to protest

The bill allows the police to decide that a protest is not permissible and to impose any condition they feel necessary (commonly that the protesters have to leave the location). To do this, police merely have to consider that the protest might cause serious disruption to a community or to activities of an organisation. Once a protest is deemed not permissible anyone breaching the conditions is committing a criminal offence for which the maximum punishment would be one year in prison. In the past someone would have to know the condition had been passed (i.e. been told in person by a police officer) but now they merely *ought* to know. The wording of the bill is such that it leaves space for interpretation and could be used by future Home Secretaries to limit protests to those with minimal impact. It greatly increases the risk of being arrested for attending a protest.

The Gurkhas underwent a hunger strike over several days in 2021, outside Downing Street, and this won them vital assurances for pension rights. This happened because they were noticed. It could now be illegal and result in prison sentences.

In 2019 Quakers were arrested while holding a peaceful, silent, vigil, blocking the road outside the DCEI arms fair. They were not ultimately charged with a crime but this might change under the new bill.

The Government makes it clear in its website that the main targets of the bill are Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter. It has been revealed that the oil giant ExxonMobil gave \$30,000 to a thinktank who published a report to government on how to criminalise Extinction Rebellion. Many of the report recommendations on how to limit the effect of the tactics used by this group appear in this new bill.

Many organisations including Amnesty International and Liberty plus many faith leaders, academics, and business leaders carried out a tenacious campaign against the worst aspects of the bill. The Peers pushed back on many of the more draconian aspects of the bill and some of their amendments were not reversed in the commons e.g. suspicionless stop and search related to protest. In the end, however, the sheer number of Conservative MPs in Parliament made it difficult to make any substantive changes or prevent the bill from passing into law.

What can we do about the bill now?

- Keep an eye on how the new powers are used and how the police interpret the changes and respond to protests. Bring any overbearing policing to public notice.
- There are some grassroots groups that offer support for protest groups and legal monitoring including Netpol, Black Protest Legal Support and Green and Black Cross. Sisters Uncut are training, supporting and forming a series of 'copwatch groups'.
- Demonstrate solidarity with nomadic communities through promotion of positive local stories or by tagging [@GypsyTravellers](#) and help amplify social media posts.

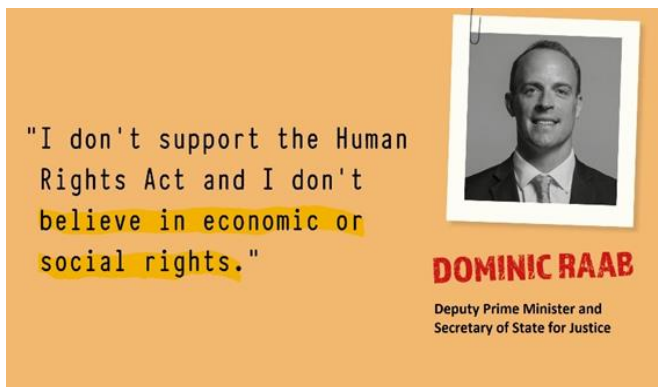
The Rights Removal Bill

On June 22nd, the government published a bill which they say will “overhaul” the Human Rights Act (HRA) and replace it with a UK Bill of Rights. While a UK Bill of Rights might sound as if it will protect us, a look at the bill will show that the intention is to protect the government against claims by citizens whose human rights they have breached or failed to uphold. Consequently, the new bill was quickly dubbed “The Rights Removal Bill” by organisations concerned with human rights, including The British Institute of Human Rights, Amnesty, and Liberty.

When the Human Rights act was passed in 1998, it received broad support from politicians from all political parties. To summarise the Act briefly, it stated that those rights which are set out in the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) would be incorporated into UK law so that if a person's rights are breached in the UK, they could take their case to a UK court, rather than having to go to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg. The Act placed an obligation on the government and public bodies acting for the government (such as hospitals, schools, the police) to respect and uphold human rights, and it said that new laws should be drafted in such a way as to be compatible with the European Convention (although ultimately, parliament would be sovereign and so could pass laws which are incompatible). The only country in Europe which is not a signatory to the ECHR is Belarus.

In the nearly 25 years since the HRA was passed, it has been invoked to protect the rights of vulnerable people with disabilities, the rights of women fleeing domestic violence, LGBTQ rights, the rights of women in Northern Ireland to have an abortion, and, famously, the rights of the families and victims of the Hillsborough disaster. [This article](#) on the AIUK website reviews 8 ways in which the Human Rights Act has allowed people in this country to fight for their rights, and shows that the HRA has in fact made the UK a better place to live in.

However, the political landscape in the UK has now changed drastically. Government ministers repeatedly hint that they no longer want to be bound by the need to respect the human rights set out in the ECHR. The rhetoric is that people are taking frivolous cases to court, wasting courts' time, and impeding the work of the government, although there is no evidence that any of this is actually the case.



The government set up an Independent Human Rights Act Review which reported in October 2021 that “the vast majority of submissions received by IHRAR spoke strongly in support of the HRA.” This advice was ignored and a public consultation set up, which some of us took part in. The consultation was highly technical and confusing and many of the questions were based on dubious assumptions. The government refused to publish the 12000+ submissions made by members of the public and instead combined

them with material from its independent review, eventually publishing the combined consultation on the same day that it published its new bill.

The second reading of the Rights Removal Bill is due to take place in parliament on 12th September. The British Institute of Human Rights has summarised the main ways in which the Bill will, if passed, affect our rights in the UK. The government wants to:

- 1) get rid of the obligation to interpret UK laws in a way that is compatible with human rights
- 2) make it harder for some people, particularly non-UK citizens, to access the right to privacy and family life
- 3) change the definition of a public authority and reduce the “burden” on public authorities to protect human rights. This provision seems particularly alarming as it seems that independent privately owned bodies, even those acting on behalf of the state, such as care homes, could be defined so that they had no obligation to protect human rights.
- 4) instead of allowing the courts to decide whether a claim is “proportionate,” set out rules defining proportionality. In the case of non-absolute human rights, a proportionate claim represents a fair balance of the rights of the complainant and the more general public good. BIHR points out that it was consideration of proportionality that informed the decision that it was unlawful to indefinitely detain foreign prisoners without trial or charge, the decision that it is unlawful to retain DNA of people who are found innocent, and the decision that evictions cannot breach tenants’ human rights. The government wants to decide whether cases like this ever get to be heard.
- 5) make compensation for having had your human rights breached contingent on your previous behaviour. Human rights apply to everyone. A person’s past behaviour cannot diminish their human rights
- 6) make it harder to bring cases to court by creating a new permission stage for court cases

Actions you can take

As you can see, there is plenty for us to campaign about. AIUK are about to produce a new leaflet on the Rights Removal Bill – look out for it on the AIUK website. Also, there is a [webinar for activists](#) on 20th September, with more information on the bill and ideas on how we can resist it. You can register [here](#).

Liberty have a petition [here](#) calling on the government to abandon its plans to overhaul the Human Rights Act. They are also holding a [week of action](#) this week (starting 5th September), during which you can take one or more simple actions to register your views on the Rights Removal Bill.

Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians



A Palestinian woman stands with others (not pictured) as they gather near an Israeli army checkpoint while they wait to reach their olive fields on the other side of Israel's separation barrier (background) after they received a special Israeli permission to harvest their olive trees, on October 13, 2021 near Bait A'wa village on the outskirts of the West Bank city of Hebron. Credit: HAZEM BADER/AFP via Getty Images

Information on Amnesty's report and campaign

In the June bulletin we reported on Amnesty International's major campaign: Israel's apartheid against Palestinians. Amnesty has published a full report on the subject. The report is very long and detailed with a thorough examination of the evidence and the legal advice which led to the conclusion that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians does constitute Apartheid as defined in international law. To help spread awareness and understanding, Amnesty has made some accessible materials available online. We strongly recommend the 15 minute video which explains the situation clearly and the Amnesty UK briefing which is short and easy to read.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUGICfaULXA>

Briefing: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/2022-06/AIUK%20Briefing%20%E2%80%93%20Israeli%20Apartheid%20%E2%80%93%20June%202022%20IOPT21.pdf?VersionId=QwCAqc4FHp0KQne3xMg.HUQzisX.tSvk>

For those who want more, there is a useful Q&A paper and a 90 minute course as well as the full report.

Manchester Amnesty is participating in this campaign. At our July meeting Mike Reed gave a talk and presentation on the Amnesty Report, and is now taking this to Amnesty Groups and other audiences in the North West region. Please contact Mike if you know of any audiences who may like this presentation.

The Big Ride

At the end of July three Manchester Amnesty members took part in the Big Ride for Palestine. Steve Roman and Anne Webster did the full three day ride, Derby - Stoke – Manchester, and Mike Reed joined them for the final day ride around Manchester. The ride ended with a rally in Platt Fields with speakers including Maxine Peake, and our own Mike Reed, to whom many thanks for all his work. The ride is organised by an independent group raising awareness and also raising funds for charities in Gaza.



Manchester Amnesty display at the Big Ride event

Israel closes down Human Rights organisations

On 18 August we received the news that before dawn Israeli armed forces had raided the offices of seven human rights organisations. They confiscated files and equipment, issued military orders to close them down and welded shut their office doors. Amnesty said: “These organizations have contributed enormously to human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and across the globe, yet Israeli army boots trample all over their work. Amnesty International stands proudly in solidarity with our Palestinian partners and calls on all governments to condemn the Israeli army’s attack on Palestinian civil society”.

The director of one of the NGOs, Defense for Children International, told Amnesty: “The army uses military law against human rights law. Israel rejects the position of the EU and the international community, and invests in continuing the occupation and the human rights violations that it causes”.



Amnesty’s researchers found that the military orders on three of the organizations were based on the 1945 Defence (Emergency) Regulations, issued by the British to quash resistance to their rule,

and never repealed. The Israeli military authorities have used these regulations extensively to demolish Palestinian homes, deport residents and hold tens of thousands of Palestinians in administrative detention. Israeli authorities have never used the regulations against Jewish citizens.

Amnesty said: “Amnesty International calls on all states to recognize that Israel is committing internationally recognized crimes, including the crime of apartheid, against Palestinians in Israel and the OPT. Governments must ensure that human rights considerations are integrated into all agreements with the Israeli authorities, and exercise due diligence to refrain from contributing to the system of apartheid”.

Please sign the Amnesty [petition](#) which is nearing its target of 18,000 signatures:
<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/EndsIsraelsApartheid>

For further information on any of the above please contact Mike Reed mikewreed101@gmail.com

Refugee rights update and subgroup news

Update on refugees

As widely reported in the press, and by [AIUK](#), the Home Office published its quarterly update to immigration figures on 25th August. These figures reveal a huge, and growing, backlog in the processing of asylum claims, with outstanding claims now standing at 86,000. Also widely [reported](#) was the fact that a record 76% of those claims which were processed in the year ending June 2022 resulted in the granting of asylum – and as many of those initially turned down go on to win an appeal, these figures make a mockery of the government’s claim that people arriving here are not “genuine” refugees.

As you will be aware, the government were thwarted in their first attempt to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda by a last minute ruling from the European Court of Human Rights on June 14th, which stopped the flights until their legality could be reviewed by the UK High Court. Predictably, the government’s response to the interim ruling was to renew its calls for the UK to leave the jurisdiction of the ECHR, and they have recently issued a whole new set of deportation orders. The case, which is being brought by the PCS union, Care4Calais and Detention Action is due before the court on 5th September. A case brought by Asylum Aid will be heard in October. In the meantime, evidence has emerged that the government was [fully aware of and decided to ignore](#) concerns about [Rwanda’s poor human rights record](#) when negotiating the deal with Rwanda. Indeed, this year alone, the UK government has granted asylum to four refugees from Rwanda, thereby admitting it is not a safe place! See the end of this article for actions you can take to protest against proposed deportations to Rwanda.

According to the [BBC](#), there are still 10,000 refugees from Afghanistan, including hundreds of children, living in hotel rooms in the UK waiting for more suitable accommodation to be found. There are of course many more Afghan people who are living in fear for their lives, including [for example](#) a former senior judge who has now fled to Pakistan while appealing the Home Office decision not to grant her a visa to join her family who are settled here. Amnesty have recently published a [24 page report](#) on the dismantling of human rights that has taken place in Afghanistan since the Taliban assumed control one year ago, and a [further report](#) – called “Death in Slow Motion” - on the terrible impact on the rights of women. [Amnesty is calling on the UK government](#) firstly to use targeted sanctions to influence the Taliban without further harming the people of Afghanistan, and secondly to put in place a proper system for receiving and considering claims for asylum.

It is now six months since the Russian invasion and start of war in the Ukraine and therefore coming up to six months since refugees from Ukraine arrived in the UK to be sponsored and hosted under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Unfortunately it seems that no further provision has been made for these Ukrainian refugees and it is feared that [many will become homeless](#) if their sponsors are no longer able to support them at the end of the six month period.

Five years after the military in Myanmar started to kill and forcibly displace members of the Rohingya minority, there are still almost a million refugees living in overcrowded camps in neighbouring Bangladesh, or displaced to effectively open air prison camps in Myanmar. A UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar has [called](#) for Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and other top military officials to be investigated and prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, but Amnesty has [recently reported](#) that, to date, “not a single high ranking Myanmar military official has been prosecuted.”

Refugee rights Subgroup activities and plans



During May and June, the refugee rights subgroup worked together with the craftivism sub-group to make about 140 orange hearts, using felt and scraps of fabric. Kathryn Fletcher also made a banner for the summer campaign; its first outing was on 12th June at a demonstration in the city centre against the planned deportations to Rwanda.

Orange hearts have been used by “Together with Refugees,” a coalition of organisations concerned with refugee rights and welfare, to symbolise kindness and welcome. For our activities, each heart had a QR code attached, which linked to one of two flyers with information and messages about refugees.



We held a total of four events during June – August, two during refugee week (19-26th June). We hung our banner and pinned up hearts on trees and railings in Didsbury and Chorlton, so that people came across them as they walked round. At the final event, which took place in St Anne’s square on 14th August, we were joined by a group of about 20 women and children from Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST). After we had displayed our banners and hearts for an hour, we approached passers by to engage them in conversation and offer them a heart to take away. We left the remaining hearts in the city centre for people to find, and hopefully activate the QR code.

We have already started to plan an activity for the refugee subgroup to take place next year! This will be a joint Acoustic Amnesty fundraising event with the WAST choir, and will take place on 17th February at the Sacred Trinity Church on Chapel Street in Salford. In the meantime, the refugee subgroup will meet approximately six-weekly to plan other activities. Do join us!

Opportunities for activism

As well as bringing their court cases and supporting individual asylum seekers, Care4Calais and various other organisations have been running the #StopRwanda campaign to raise awareness and protest against the proposed deportations to Rwanda. Well-known actors, politicians and sportspeople have contributed and there are some [easy actions](#) that we can all take. You can find information and printable resources (posters, cards) etc. [here](#).

If you have not already done it, you can also [sign this petition](#) by the campaigning group SumofUs, calling on the airlines Privilege Style, HiFly, Iberojet, Wamos, AirTanker, and Titan Airlines not to be involved in the deportation of refugees.

And you can sign [this petition](#) calling on the government to provide asylum for climate activists in Afghanistan, who are facing particularly severe threats to their lives.

Join our sub-group – contact alison.wearden@gmail.com.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) update and subgroup news

Campaigning for Mohammed Al-Roken and Ahmed Mansoor

We meet monthly on zoom and have been focussing on approaching Manchester businesses with links to the UAE to ask for their support or advice. This includes the Manchester Business School, Law society and travel agencies. Sadly, we have not had much response, but we have raised awareness and maybe opened some dialogues. We hope our meeting with Bev Craig has opened some doors to working with the council on making a statement in support of these two men. We continue to work with the FCDO to request a meeting with the UAE embassy in London.

One recent success!

We also approached the Warwick University School of Law where Mohammed Al-Roken completed his Ph D. Professor Tadros has collected signatures and written to the UAE authorities calling for the release of Mohammed Al-Roken.

The Arab Arts Festival action for Mohammed Al-Roken

On July 17th, we shared a stall with Liverpool and Wirral Amnesty groups at the



Arab Arts Festival family day. We collected 134 signatures for a petition asking for the release of Mohammed Al-Roken a human rights lawyer whose 10-year sentence should have ended on 17th July. This has been sent to the embassy. Children coloured in 67 postcards to be sent to Mohammed Al-Roken when he is released from prison.



Sharing the day with two other Amnesty groups was affirming and we had many enriching conversations with the people attending the festival. Along with the music and dance in the stunning palm house of Sefton Park, it was a day to remember. We will certainly do it again next year.

Joint working with other groups - “Free Al-Roken” keys

We are involved in regular meetings with 5 other Amnesty groups in the UK who campaign for human rights defenders in the UAE to coordinate our actions. We are planning to send hundreds of postcards from each group to the UAE embassy, cut in the shape of a key with the words “free Al-Roken”.



***** JOIN US*****

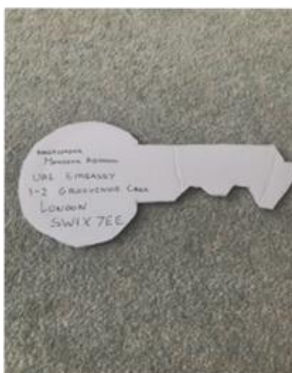
On Saturday 24th September 2pm at Central Library, at our bi-monthly letter writing event we will be making keys. Or you can make some at home. It's very easy (see Noddy-guide below).

We will be asking people to post the keys in the week starting 26th September.

Please let Kathryn bussk@btinternet.com know if you would like one or more ready-made keys to post and she will deliver them to you.

Noddy Guide to making key-shaped postcards

I used gold and silver sheets of A4 card from Hobbycraft but you can also make them from any bits of card similar in thickness to a postcard and glue on silver foil. I make them about 24 cm x 13 cm. Put your "Free AlRoken" message (and illustration if you want) on one side, and the embassy address on the other. Leave room for a stamp. Here are some sample keys:



Then just put on a stamp and post!
The address is:
Ambassador Mansoor Abulhoul
UAE Embassy
1-2 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW1X 7EE

Craftivism subgroup

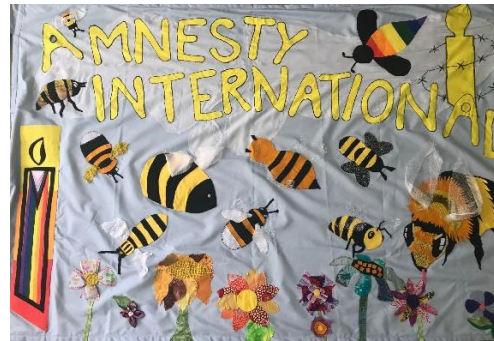


The craftivism subgroup has been busy as we celebrate our first anniversary

Our recent highlight was the presentation of our gift to the new leader of the council, Bev Craig. Our gift is intended as a support to Bev in recognition of the huge responsibility her role has. Our meeting was positive, and we hope it will foster future dialogue with the council over human rights issues.

The craftivism banner (our first project) was in action again at Pride 2022.

We also made the 140 orange hearts for refugee week and hung them around Manchester to promote a welcoming approach to refugees.



Our next project is to make 100+ key postcards to send to the UAE embassy in September.

Please join us – we are a small and friendly group and like to combine coffee, cake and chat with our craft. No prior skills needed! Our next meeting will be combined with the letter writing at Manchester Central Library September 24th 2-4pm to make the key postcards for the FreeAIRoken campaign (see UAE subgroup).

Please let Kathryn Fletcher bussk@btinternet.com know if you have ideas for future craftivism projects.

Individuals at Risk and Write for Rights

Bi-monthly Appeal Writing Drop-in session

There were only three of us at our last appeal writing session in the Central Library café on **23rd July**, but we managed to write 7 letters and send six emails on cases relating to Egypt, Palestine, Iran, Thailand and the UAE. Our table was visited by three members of the public who signed up for more information about Amnesty.

Sending written and digital appeals to government authorities is core Amnesty work. If you haven't got into this yet, come along to a session to find out what it's all about. Case details, and writing equipment is provided. You can also send emails/tweets from your phone.

We hold these in person drop-ins on the 4th Saturday every 2 months. Our next session, at which we will be making key postcards (see UAE section) as well as writing letters and emails will be on **Saturday 24th September, 2-4pm, Central Library Cafe.**

Get it in your diary NOW! All are welcome

Write for Rights

Every year Amnesty runs an international campaign in the run up to the festive season (November/December) featuring key Amnesty cases with details of how to send messages of solidarity (e.g. as a greetings card) and how to send appeals to the authorities.

Details of this year's campaign are not yet available, but to get a feel for what's involved you can see last year's cases here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2021-get-started>



We will, of course, be supporting the marvellous Whalley Range Peace and Justice group's Write for Rights event, where people gather to send cards at St Margaret's church in Whalley Range with music and food. We will also feature this campaign at our Appeal Writing drop-in in Central Library in November and at our December group meeting.

Anne Walker, our Individuals at Risk coordinator, would also like to involve other local community groups in this campaign and run a few stalls at community fairs. She plans to contact local churches/mosques/temples etc, Humanists, Women's Institutes, U3As, Youth Groups etc.

Can You Help?

- Do you have contacts with local religious groups that you could share?
- Do you have suggestions/contact details for other community groups who might be interested?
- Do you have some spare time to help Anne get the word out?

If the answer to any of the above is **Yes** – drop Anne a line at anne.walker9@ntlworld.com today.

The sooner that we get planning, the bigger the impact we can make.

Anti-racism update and subgroup news

The sub-group has continued to meet online every 6 weeks and has increased in numbers to 8 active members. We are always keen to welcome more people to our meetings so please get in touch!

Self-education continues to be an important part of our work and we have continued to use Laylaf F. Saad's book, *Me and White Supremacy* as a focus. Recent discussions have included topics such as anti-blackness against black people, racial stereotyping and cultural appropriation. As well as gaining knowledge and understanding, Laylaf Saad's book helps us to think about our own responses in everyday life and how the things we say and do (or *don't* say and do) affect people of colour and contribute to the racist status quo.

We have focused our campaigning work on the following areas:

- Follow-up letter to Beverly Hughes, Deputy Mayor for Policing, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire asking for an update on progress made within GMP regarding racial disparities in policing that were raised with her last year.
- Continued support for the work of Kids of Colour and Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association (JENGBA) as they campaign on behalf of 10 young people of colour from GM, recently sentenced to 8-21 years in prison after being found guilty (as a group) of conspiracy to murder or conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm. Some of the young people were convicted solely on the basis of contributions to a closed group online chat and music videos that they had watched on their phones. Throughout the trial the prosecuting lawyers emphasised the idea of gang culture and this was

picked up in the MEN reporting. More recently, the Guardian has printed several articles questioning the outcome of the trial, including the intervention on behalf of some of the young people by Manchester MP, Lucy Powell. We plan to outline this case at the launch of the AIUK Anti-Racism network on 24th September in the hope that it may be adopted as a campaign area for the network as whole.

- We have recently written to all Manchester MPs regarding JENGBA's Criminal Appeal Bill, which is due for a brief discussion in the House of Commons in September. If it was widely supported and taken forward, it would abolish the "*substantial injustice*" test, and provide justice to those convicted under the wrong interpretation of the law. This Bill would therefore make a significant difference to many people who are currently suffering the results of the current unjust system.

LGBTQ+ rights - Manchester Pride Parade 2022

We had a bumper turnout for the Pride parade this year (27th August), and brought our customary good weather. Many thanks to all who took part and special thanks to Steve Lindsay for all his work in coordinating this year's effort and to Sen Raj for his help with recruitment. Here are a few photos.





Press freedom Event

On 6th August, we had a stall and display in support of press freedom and the protection of whistleblowers, highlighting the case of Julian Assange, at a music event run by DeRanged Nights at Overdraught Manchester in Levenshulme. Signatures were collected for Amnesty's Julian Assange petition (see below). Many thanks to all who attended and special thanks to Lima Al-iskalachi who put so much into organising the Amnesty presence, which was featured in the monthly AIUK Local Groups newsletter.



Julian Assange is still held in Belmarsh prison in the UK on the basis of a US extradition request. He has been charged with having published disclosed documents as part of his work on Wikileaks. Amnesty opposes his extradition to the US and contends that his work is equivalent to that of investigative journalists. There are also concerns about the treatment he would receive in the US and the likelihood that any trial would not be free and fair.

You can sign the Amnesty petition now demanding that charges against Julian Assange relating to Wikileaks are dropped. Protect the right to freedom of expression! For more information on an activist led campaign about Julian Assange, email alexis.hatto@amnesty.org.uk

[Take Action Now](#)

Action for Sustainability Festival



We had a stall featuring environmental Human Rights Defenders at **the Action for Sustainability Festival** held at Manchester Metropolitan University on 17th June. We presented the case of Leah Namugerwa, a youth climate activist from Uganda who was inspired by Greta Thunberg. Leah is known for celebrating her 15th birthday by planting 200 trees, for her work on banning plastic bags in Uganda, and for leading school strikes to highlight environmental issues. She was a youth delegate at COP25. You can read more about Leah on [this AIUK web page](#).

At the festival, delegates wrote messages of support for Leah, which were then compiled into a poster, a photo of which was emailed to her. Leah was very appreciative of the support, replying "Manchester people this has humbled me. Thank you for the love."

Many thanks to Anne Walker for organising our presence at this event, and to those volunteers who helped her on the day.

Amnesty Ukraine Statement

Some readers may have seen news coverage following Amnesty International's publication of research into the actions of the Ukrainian military and impact on human rights, published during the first week of August. As a local Amnesty group, we have received a response from AIUK's Chief Executive, Sacha Deshmukh which we would be happy to share with anyone who would like to read it. It is a lengthy response explaining AIUK's views on the press release, which was produced by Amnesty's International Secretariat. While strongly supporting the critical importance of Amnesty International's impartiality, and its duty to research and responsibly publish evidence relating to any and all governments and countries, AIUK has also communicated to the IS and the AI International Board that we (AIUK) believe that there are some very legitimate questions concerning the transparency of the underlying research process, the nature of the consultation with Amnesty Ukraine, and possibly the timing of the press release, that do need to be addressed.

Please contact Hazel Errey (hazelerrey@gmail.com) or Alison Wearden (email address) if you would like a copy of the full response from AIUK and we will forward it to you.

Amnesty International UK (AIUK) Conference



AIUK will be holding an in-person members-only day of workshops, speakers, networking, food and fun on 5th November in London. The event (minus the food) will also be livestreamed. There will be updates and information on all of Amnesty's work, plus the opportunity to discuss ideas for campaigns in the coming months. Given the unprecedented attack on human rights in the UK and in the world, the conference will focus on how we can build a more powerful, more diverse and more impactful Amnesty movement. Full price tickets for

adults have already sold out but there are still reduced price tickets (£7.50) for young people, students and concessions, and there are plenty of free on-line places available for the livestreaming event.