



Manchester Group Quarterly Bulletin Number 3 December 2022



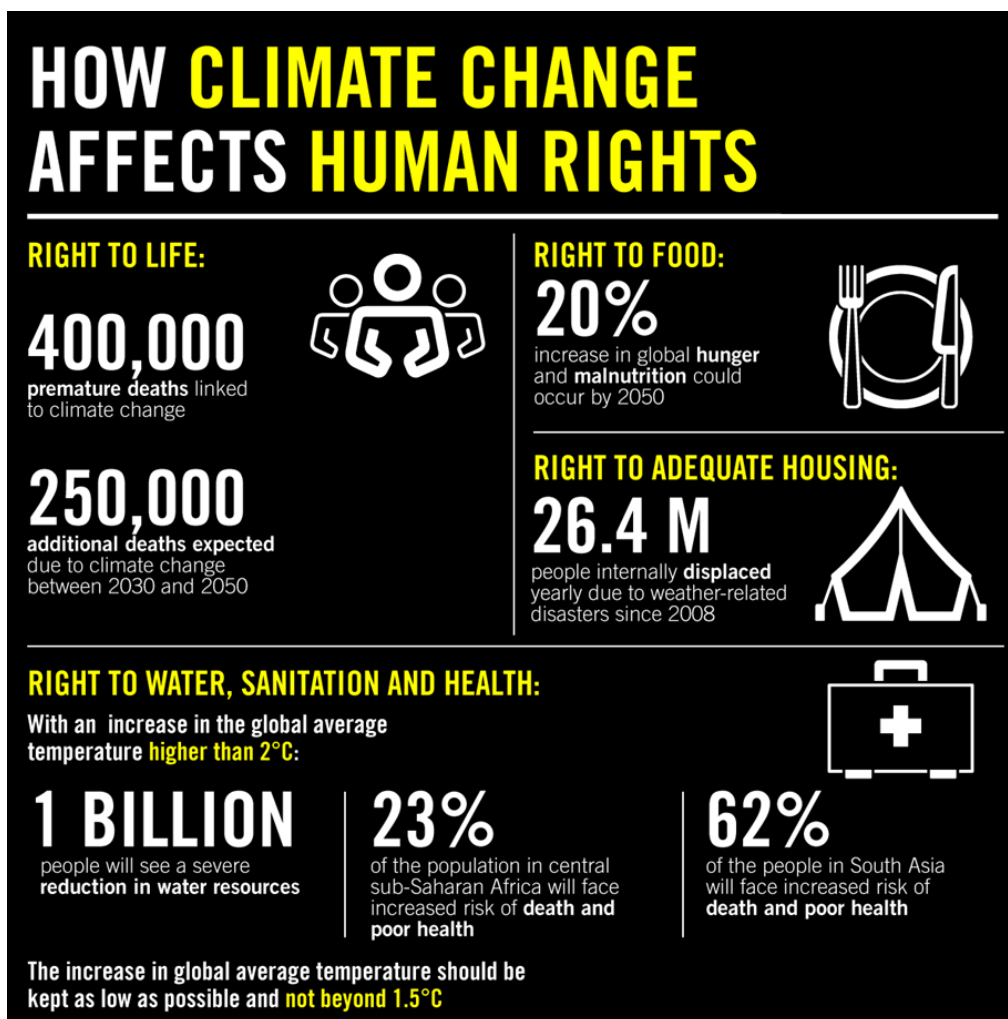
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This newsletter is compiled by the Group Communications Secretary, Alison Wearden (alison.wearden@gmail.com). If you have any ideas for short or more in-depth articles for the newsletter, please feel free to contact her. We would welcome pieces on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

Climate change and the right to protest

In this quarter's edition, we are very pleased to have an inspiring article from Grahame Buss, a supporter of Amnesty International, giving us a personal take on his climate activism with Just Stop Oil. While Amnesty has not taken a position on Just Stop Oil, it always supports the fundamental right to non-violent protest. Amnesty has itself called for an end to the use of fossil fuels, and the figures in Amnesty's graphic below underline the obvious relevance and importance of the climate crisis to human rights. Unfortunately, the recent COP27 meeting did very little to adequately address the issues. You can read about Amnesty's demands with respect to the climate crisis [here](#).



Climate change poses an existential threat to the lives of people everywhere, and the threat of climate change has led to protests all over the world. Here in the UK, we are currently experiencing an unprecedented attack on our right to protest about both climate change and other human rights issues. Amnesty has repeatedly defended the right to peaceful protest about climate change. In November, together with several other civil liberties groups, [AIUK wrote to the Home Secretary](#) about the arrests of journalists covering Just Stop Oil protests, and demanded that the government urgently rethink the Public Order Bill which is currently going through parliament.

Our first article this quarter is about the Public Order Bill, and Amnesty's campaign *Protect the Protest*.

The Public Order Bill and Protect the Protest campaign



Members may remember that the government's **Police Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act**, which came into law in April 2022, was amended in the House of Lords during its progress through parliament. Nevertheless, the act introduced a number of measures which Amnesty regards as detrimental to our human rights. These include giving the police wide-ranging powers to place restrictions on peaceful protest (e.g. they may ban a protest if it is deemed too noisy), restrictions on the rights of travellers, and a curtailment of the means available to challenge or contest unfair treatment.

Now, the government is having another attempt at bringing into law some of the provisions that were rejected during the parliamentary consideration of the PCSC Act. In May this year, they introduced a new **Public Order (PO) Bill** (sometimes dubbed "The Protest Bill") which, if enacted, will place further excessive restrictions on the right to protest. The bill has passed through three readings in the Commons and is currently at the Committee stage in the House of Lords.

Among its provisions are **Serious Disruption Prevention Orders (SDPOs)**. Under these, people could be banned entirely from protesting either after two prior convictions for protest-related crime, or if, on two prior occasions, they have caused "serious disruption" (without conviction). The bans would prevent attendance at protests and certain protest-related activities. To enforce the bans, the government plans to allow electronic monitoring (the fitting of ankle tags).

Our laws already allow the police extensive stop-and-search powers, which are well known to have been used in a highly discriminatory manner, particularly against Black people. In the Public Order Bill, the government are proposing to widen the conditions under which **stop and search** can be carried out. For example, they plan to introduce "intentionally and recklessly causing public nuisance" as grounds for stop and search, a definition which is broad and vague enough to encompass perfectly legal acts.

Other provisions are the criminalizing of "**locking-on**" and "**going equipped to lock on**" (which could mean carrying glue, wearing a belt or having a bike lock). An additional offence of "**wilful disruption of the highway**" is proposed. We already have offences of obstruction of the highway, and of obstructing the passage of emergency vehicles, which are used and which work perfectly well. "**Obstruction of major transport works**" will be

criminalised so that if a big march happens to pass some major roadworks, it could be deemed unlawful.

AIUK evaluates the provisions of the bill against three overarching and fundamental tests of legislation in relation to human rights, these being **legality, necessity and proportionality**, and finds it failing on all three. Many of the items in the Public Order Bill are framed in such broad terms as to allow unacceptable discretion to the authorities, and to invite biased or politically motivated prosecutions. People protesting against government inaction on the climate crisis may be at particular risk from the Public Order Bill.

If implemented, the provisions in the Public Order Bill would place the UK in breach of multiple aspects of international human rights law. Amnesty points out several instances where the proposed laws are simply unnecessary as we already have adequate existing provision. And in terms of the balance of the rights of protesters against the rights of people not to have their lives disrupted, Amnesty takes the position that the bill's provisions are vastly disproportionate. [They point out](#) that if the provisions in the Public Order bill were adopted, these would mirror those in place in countries which the UK has often condemned for repressive policies, including Belarus, Egypt, the Philippines, Russia and Turkey.

Amnesty joined with many other human rights organisations to produce a [briefing](#) for the bill's report stage in the Commons. It is well worth reading. Also see the briefing AIUK produced for the House of Lords second reading which can be accessed [here](#).

While this article has focused on protest in the UK, Amnesty International currently have a global campaign, "*Protect the Protest*," which you can read about [here](#). The campaign starts from the premise that there is indeed a right to protest and argues that protest has historically resulted in advances in human rights. You can read AI's July 2022 in-depth report on the right to protest internationally [here](#), and join the campaign [here](#). There will be a free AIUK online course coming soon, which we will publicise in the Weekly Newsletter.

In Manchester, we are going to make "protect the protest" a focus of activities in our craftivism group. We plan to make colourful ankle tags to wear and to distribute at demonstrations to highlight the government's plans to electronically monitor those people (including those with no prior convictions) it bans from protesting under the provisions of the Public Order Bill.



Why I am part of Just Stop Oil – a personal view. Grahame Buss



We are in a climate catastrophe. As Sir David King (former chief scientist to the government) said, 'it is appropriate to be scared'. Climate change is remorseless – it does not care about our promises, our pledges, our debates, our hand wringing. It only responds to what we do. And yet, António Guterres said at COP27 'We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator'.

Last summer with temperatures of 40° C in England apples cooked on the trees, potato crops failed, grass fires destroyed an entire street of houses. Forests burned. We saw the worst day for callouts for the fire brigade since WW2.

A friend of mine living near the Mersey had two flood evacuation warnings in a year – something that might have been expected for each just once in a hundred years. The Environment Agency recognises that the Mersey flood defences built so recently are now inadequate. In Canada 1 in 10 homes are uninsurable due to flood risk. This is coming to us too. As our king said – adapting to climate change will consume our economy.



My greengrocer in Didsbury has family back in Pakistan. Their farm was destroyed by melting glaciers. 33 million people have been affected, 8 million displaced and 600 thousand in relief camps. In India birds dehydrated and dropped out of the sky. For some people it was too hot to leave the house to walk the distance to the well – a terrible choice.

The once green island of Madagascar is becoming a desert. Madagascar is where most of the vanilla pods came from. I used to buy them by the handful – now one pod is £2.50. An inconvenience for your custard and a famine for the Madagascans. It won't stop there – the destruction of our rain forests will do the same for chocolate.

If all countries meet their legal and voluntary commitments to address the climate crisis, we have a 50:50 chance of seeing a temperature rise of +2 deg. We are currently at just over +1° C so don't make the mistake of thinking this is ok. It is not. +2° C will see our world irreparably damaged. In the UK our countryside will change beyond recognition. In our oceans we will see the shells of sea creatures dissolve as the seas becomes increasingly acidic.



But we are not meeting those commitments, not even the legal commitments. If we meet just the legal commitments, we have a 50:50 chance of seeing +2.7° C. This will see the desertification of most of the Global South and more than a billion people living in uninhabitable conditions. They will either die or flee.

It gets worse. There is a problem with these numbers – they describe the median case – the 50:50 case. There is a significant risk that it could be much worse. There is a credible risk of an uninhabitable world. It goes without saying that this risk is not worth it.

Except that it doesn't. Most Governments including ours think this risk is worth it. That is why the recent 27th COP was already preparing for the next talking shop at COP28 – in, of all places, the UAE.

Weirdly, the Government recognises their failure. The Government's risk register has civil unrest as a high probability (now a certainty) together with another pandemic. The Lancet says the climate crisis is the greatest global health threat in the 21st century. The police see organised crime arising from shortages and we will certainly see conflict. So, we face an apocalypse – famine, pestilence, war and the destruction of our natural world. The highway to climate hell.

My blood runs cold. And that's why I support Just Stop Oil. My role is to publicise our demand by giving interviews to the press, radio and television.

In 1974 the OECD nations formed the International Energy Agency (IEA) to provide advice to fossil fuel companies and states. In 2021 the IEA's advice was that there should be no new oil, gas or coal projects anywhere. This is of course in line with the science and aligns with a just and fair transition. It an absolute pre-requisite to a safe and liveable world.

I used to work for Shell, but now I work with a different group. Now my colleagues and friends are in prison, risk imprisonment or unlimited fines: caring people with ankle tags and criminal records. Calling for a modest change – no new oil and gas projects in the UK. A demand so modest and so essential that it is bizarre that it is objected to at all.

Just Stop Oil are a non-violent civil resistance movement. We are disruptive, we make no apology. We understand the anger of people stuck in traffic because of our actions. We ask the people of this country to recognise that the disruption of the climate catastrophe will engulf us. And indeed, many do. In a recent survey two out of three say they support Just Stop Oil both in the demands and the methods.



Years of quiet engagement have failed, and now non-violent civil resistance is our best hope. The government calls for peaceful protest but what they want is our silence. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022 brings draconian powers of search, and arrest. On 29 November, Just Stop Oil (JSO) protester Jan Goodey was sentenced to six months in prison for 'causing a public nuisance' under the provisions of the PCSC Act. He took part in a protest on the M25 motorway which brought traffic to a standstill but caused no physical harm to anyone. The Public Order Bill currently going through parliament will criminalize protest further, as described in the preceding article. Recently, we have seen that to silence us the police are now [arresting journalists](#), apparently unlawfully. But you cannot arrest your way out of a climate crisis. The answer to the climate crisis cannot be more police powers.

Israel's Apartheid Against the Palestinians

Talks

Mike Reed is continuing to give talks with slide presentations on the Amnesty report and campaign. He would welcome suggestions of individuals or organisations to approach to offer this talk. He has spoken to several Amnesty Groups in the northwest region and also to a conference organised by a Palestine twinning group in the midlands.



In November, Mike spoke at the launch event for the Sheffield Anti-Israel Apartheid Free Zone. This was the first event of its kind and is built on strong support for the Palestinians among trade unionists and Labour supporters in Sheffield. Other speakers were Andrew Feinstein (see below *), Manal Shqair of Stop the Wall, and Dr Haidar Eid of al-Aqsa University, Gaza.

Photo: launch of the Sheffield Anti-Apartheid Zone

This group and others have welcomed the Amnesty report. It is clear that the many groups campaigning for the Palestinians deeply appreciate the value of Amnesty's work on this

issue, and recognise that we provide a very different approach. Many of those campaigns call for boycotts of companies trading with Israel such as Barclays and Puma. The BDS movement aims for general boycotts, divestment and sanctions against the state of Israel. Palestine Action takes action to close down Israeli owned arms factories in the UK. The factory in Oldham closed recently after determined work by Palestine Action including damage to the factory premises leading to criminal prosecutions.

It is important to note that Amnesty does not take this approach. It does not undertake any militant or violent actions and does not call for general boycotts. Amnesty does call for some very specific sanctions: a ban on the import of goods made in the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, as these settlements are illegal under international law; a ban on contracts with JCB which supplies equipment which is openly used to demolish the homes of Palestinians – a shocking abuse of basic human rights. Over 8,000 homes have been demolished in the last decade.

Amnesty's approach involves a very narrow focus on breaches of international law, such as the Apartheid Convention, and widely accepted international conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also focuses on the crimes and human rights abuses which damage and destroy lives. It is this narrow focus and its impartial approach which gives Amnesty its great credibility all over the world.

Israel Apartheid Photo Display

In the new year we hope to have a photo display available on large exhibition boards. We are looking for places to take this, whether for a few hours or for a prolonged period, and whether indoors or outdoors. Any suggestions for possible venues – and any offers of help – will be most welcome. We hope this will attract attention and contribute to our prime objective of raising awareness.

Awareness raising

The campaign is still in its first phase of raising awareness and widening the understanding that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians does amount to Apartheid as defined clearly in international law. This awareness and understanding is a vital first step in achieving change. And Amnesty has an ambitious objective for change - ensuring that Israel dismantles its system of Apartheid, which is built into many of its laws, policies and practices. Whatever solution may be found to the Israel-Palestine situation – and Amnesty does not prescribe what this should be - the dismantling of Apartheid and respect for the human rights of every citizen is fundamental.

The Arms Trade and Human Rights abuses

* Andrew Feinstein, who attended the Sheffield event on Israeli Apartheid, was an ANC member of the South African Parliament. He resigned over the alleged corruption in a major arms deal. He has since written *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms trade*, a major work which is the definitive treatise on the arms trade. It is highly recommended. Amnesty International was instrumental in securing the International Arms Trade Treaty and continues to campaign against the human rights abuses resulting from misuse of arms and security transfers.

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

Reports from the sub-groups

Refugee rights update and sub-group news



The main focus of the refugee subgroup has continued to be the fight against the Government's plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. In September we made a small contribution to an action organised by Together with Refugees, *Fill the Skies with Hope*, with some of us sending orange heart cards with a simple message about Rwanda to our MPs.

Members may recall some weekly actions organised by Freedom from Torture calling on various airlines, and groups who frequently use them, such as football teams, to refuse to fly refugees from the UK to Rwanda. In October, we received the good news that the airline Privilege Style has now withdrawn its services from the deportation scheme.

During the second week of October, the UK High Court heard the case brought by Asylum Aid seeking judicial review of the government's Rwanda plan. We are now awaiting the court's ruling on this and previous similar actions brought by Care4Calais, Detention Action and the PCS union. Whatever the outcome of these court proceedings, we need to keep fighting and speaking out against the government's cruel and inhumane plans. If you want to get involved, please contact alison.wearden@gmail.com



Some of us attended a small demo in St Peter's Square on 13th November.

United Arab Emirates update and sub-group news

Our group sent about 90 handmade keys to the embassy to call for Mohammed al-Roken's release. This was a coordinated action with several other local groups in the UK. Thank you to everyone involved in the massive action. The UAE embassy will have received about 600 in total from groups around the country – not something they can ignore! Recently, another 30 keys were sent following the Whalley Range Peace and Justice event on 3rd December.



Our members posted poems by Ahmed Mansoor as part of a twitter storm on October 22nd, to recognise his birthday.

We continue to liaise with Manchester City Council. We are pleased that our recent actions have led to stronger, more collaborative links between Manchester Amnesty and the Council which we hope will continue to grow.

We are contacting local businesses with links to the UAE. This has not been too fruitful so far but we have raised some awareness and we won't give up!

Please join us. Our group is at an interesting time, making positive steps forward and hopeful that the debate over the World Cup might engender more interest in the human rights of countries that our city has close dealings with.

Bussk@btinternet.com

Craftivism subgroup

Our current project is to make ankle ornaments to represent electronic monitoring devices (ankle tags) which the government is proposing to use to enforce the Serious Disruption Prevention Orders (SDPOs) which are included in the Public Order Bill (see main article on p3 for more on SPDOs). Our ankle tags will have a QR code attached, which will link to information on the Public Order Bill. We plan to start by giving out our crafted 'ankle tags' to people attending protests. At the moment, the exact format of the ankle tags is still under development, and we welcome suggestions as to how to make them more eye-catching.



Please join us to make these crafty subversive items! Contact Kathryn at: Bussk@btinternet.com

Anti-racism sub-group update

We have continued to have discussions based on the book *'Me and White Supremacy'* by Layla F. Saad. We are working our way gradually through the book and have recently talked about *'white saviourism'*, which felt very relevant to our work as Amnesty activists. The book encourages readers to reflect on their own lives and behaviour, which is very enlightening and definitely increases our understanding of what it means to be anti-racist in a proactive way.

Our campaigning work has focused on the imprisonment of ten young people of colour from Greater Manchester who were found guilty by association of conspiracy to murder or conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm. Some of the young people concerned were convicted solely on the basis of contributions to a closed group online chat and music videos that they had watched on their phones. Most of the young people imprisoned were not involved in any incidents where harm occurred, and nobody was murdered as a result of the messages or music videos cited by the prosecution. The police and prosecution made much use of gang narratives, which are often unfairly used in relation to young men of colour. One of the young people involved, Ademola Adedeji, has recently been denied the right to appeal his sentence. This was reported in the Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/16/manchester-youth-leader-jailed-ademola-adedeji-conspiracy-texts-denied-permission-to-appeal>

A short Channel 4 documentary has also recently been released telling the story of Ademola and the other young people. It can be watched here: <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/jailed-over-a-group-chat-untold>

Lucy Powell MP has taken up the young people's case and raised her concerns about their conviction with the Justice Secretary. We are currently drafting a letter to Lucy Powell expressing our own concerns about the case and asking her to continue supporting the young people and campaigning for changes to the 'guilty by association' laws that can result in innocent people being convicted and found guilty of offences that they didn't commit.

We are always pleased to welcome new members to the sub-group so please get in touch if you would like to join us: hazelerrey@gmail.com

Events and Campaigning Activities

Manchester Amnesty Human Rights Walk



On 8th October, we held the #AmnestyManc Human Rights walk in Manchester city centre. We were fortunate to get a beautiful sunny day and 46 people joined the walk, including some of our friends from Rethink and Rebuild Syria and Women Asylum Seekers Together. We were delighted to raise over £400 for group funds. Enormous thanks to our member Steve Roman who led the walk and provided so many fascinating facts about the history of Human Rights in Manchester.



Amnesty Stall at Julian Assange Event



On October 15th, we had an Amnesty stall at the fabulous afternoon of music and poetry organised by our member Lima Al-Iskalachi, to raise funds for and awareness of the ongoing campaign to free Julian Assange, who is currently in danger of extradition to the US. Members may also have seen a [letter](#) sent by leading newspapers urging that Assange be released from Belmarsh Prison where he has been held since April 2019.

Acoustic Amnesty

On 18th November, Acoustic Amnesty held a party at 53two in Manchester, featuring poets, singers and bands including James Holt, Dead Tenant, Rose Condo, Dr. Uko, Dave Viney, Louise Fazackerley, The Awful Truth and Chris Flynn.

There was a great crowd and the event raised £850 for Manchester Amnesty and three of our partner organisations: Freedom From Torture, Rethink Rebuild Syria, & Kids of Colour.

Many thanks to Steve Lindsay for all his work organising this fantastic event, and to J Darcey MCR for the photos.





Individuals at Risk: Write for Rights 2022

Every year Amnesty launch an international campaign during November and December to send messages of support and letters of appeal on behalf of people, communities and organisations who have suffered human rights abuses. This year the campaign features ten cases of people who have been persecuted because they have been involved in protest.

THIS WINTER
Your voice is powerful
Send a message for human rights

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

<p>1. BANGLADESH</p> <p>Shahnewaz Chowdhury</p>	<p>10. CAMBODIA</p> <p>Joseph Mamembe, Cecilia Chantiri and Metsai Woroso</p>
<p>2. CAMBODIA</p> <p>Dorgelesse Nguessan</p>	<p>9. RUSSIA</p> <p>Aleksandra Shochlenko</p>
<p>3. CHINA</p> <p>Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara</p>	<p>8. FINLAND</p> <p>Yrjö Rotola and Marjatta Sipilä</p>
<p>4. FRANCE</p> <p>Zineb Redouane</p>	<p>7. HONG KONG (WESTERN SARAH)</p> <p>Nasser Zofzafi</p>
<p>5. HONG KONG (WESTERN SARAH)</p> <p>Chow Hong-tung</p>	<p>6. IRAQ</p> <p>Vahid Alhazri</p>

© Write for Rights 2022

The right to protest is under threat not just in the UK and but throughout the world and Amnesty has recently published a major report and launched an international campaign. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/protect-the-protest/>

As Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General, says:

“Instead of facilitating the right to protest, governments are going to ever greater lengths to quash it.”

This year, we held a Write for Right's stalls at Central Library, as part of our regular appeal writing drop in session. We also contacted some religious communities and were delighted that Manchester Cathedral offered us a stall in the cathedrall. **Thanks to all who helped.** So far we have 62 messages of solidarity and 14 appeals written and hope to get more at our Group meeting on Monday 12th December. If you aren't able to come along, do still take part – all details at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-for-rights>



We also had a group presence at the vibrant Write for Rights event at St Margaret's Church in Whalley range, organised by the Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group. As well as selling our Christmas cards, we ran a stall making key shaped postcards to send to the UAE embassy cally for the release of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohamed al-Roken.



January Appeal Writing Drop-in session

We hold regular in person drop-ins on the 4th Saturday every 2 months to write appeals on behalf of Amnesty cases. Our next session will be

Saturday 28th January, 2-4pm, Central Library.

Get it in your diary NOW!

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.

All welcome

Conference news

AIUK National conference 2022 cancelled

Unfortunately, AIUK had to cancel the national conference which had been planned for 5th November, due to rail strikes scheduled for that day. As members may recall, this year, the business of the AGM was separated from the rest of conference business, with that meeting taking place in June, but it was a shame that members missed out on the opportunity to meet their colleagues and discuss and share their activism.

Amnesty Regional conference planned for 2023

Activists in the North of England are planning to hold an Amnesty regional conference, provisionally set for 11th March 2023. The aim of the conference would be to network with our colleagues from other areas and to share campaign ideas and resources. If anyone would like to be on the steering committee for this conference, please email alison.wearden@gmail.com who will pass on their details.