

Minutes of [Amnesty International Reading Group](#) Meeting

Thursday 12th October 2023

Chair: Anne McFarlane

This meeting was held via Teams.

1. Welcome and introductions

13 people joined the meeting for some or all of it: Anne, Helen, Vicky, Iona, Liz, Ruth, Sue, Hilary, Angus, Mary, Silver, Jenny and Nabila

- Apologies - Michael

2. This month's speaker was Nabila Hanson, AIUK's China and Taiwan country coordinator

Nabila set the scene for us and our work for China

- how we need to campaign these days, the need to do things in a different way, not just letter writing and petitions.
- She talked about the reality that China cares less what the UK thinks these days.
- two particular areas of focus for AI's work at the moment
 - The Xinjiang Province and the persecution of the Ughurs
 - Hong Kong

The Xinjiang Province



Nabila talked about the restrictions on all aspects of daily life for the Ughur people, who can be interned for such simple acts as growing a beard, giving Muslim sounding names to their children or going to a mosque.

Nabila said that Xinjiang covers was renowned over centuries for the ancient Silk Road, which was and is a flourishing global trade route for China. Rich in coal, natural gas and oil, Xinjiang is intertwined with many of China's economic, strategic and foreign policy goals. China's leaders now consider stability in Xinjiang vital to the success of the "Belt and Road Initiative", a massive global infrastructure development programme aimed at strengthening China's links to Central Asia and beyond. Amnesty believes China has escalated restrictions in this province to ensure any separatists movement is quashed. They are also developing relations with Pakistan, in the hope that they are sympathetic and on board with their plans.

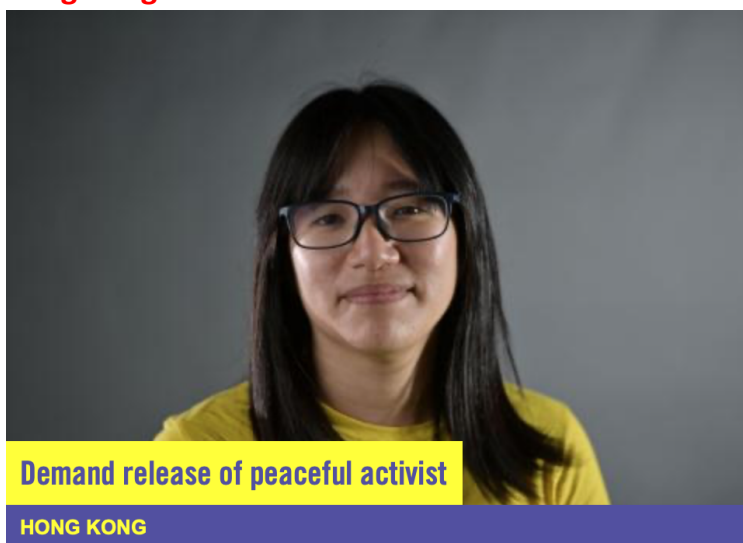
Nabila gave examples of work in the UK with local Muslim groups, to develop relationships and enable conversations about human rights abuses in Xinjiang. She created an Iftar in a school hall and invited members of the local community to come along. Within that context, she was able to start dialogue about Amnesty's work and have meaningful discussions.

For more information -

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/08/china-anniversary-of-uns-damning-xinjiang-report-must-be-wake-up-call-to-action/>

To take action - <https://xinjiang.amnesty.org/#cases>

Hong Kong



Nabila told us about Amnesty's on-going campaign to call for the release of lawyer and human rights activist Chow Hang-Tang. Chow was part of 2022's Write for Rights campaign.

For many years, Chow has helped to organise a peaceful annual remembrance of the Tiananmen Square crackdown. In 2021, after she posted on social media to encourage people to light candles at home, Chow Hang-tung was arrested.

Nabila talked about protests held in the UK to stand with Hong Kong activists, particularly on 4th June to commemorate the Tiananmen Square massacre.

Silver, founder member of [Reading's CIC Hong-Kongers](#), said his group were planning future events and would be in touch with to see how we could work together.

3. Group accounts

- The group noted the accounts, particularly noticing that it was the year we came out of COVID. We had a brief discussion about future plans for fund-raising.
- Anne proposed the accounts. Iona seconded them - the accounts were agreed by all members.

4. Group News & Upcoming Events

- **Amnesty Central England Network launch debrief**
- **Reading University Freshers Fair** - Thursday 21st September - Hilary, Blanca and Helen represented the group and got over 20 new people signed up the newsletter.
- **Chance2Dance4Charity** - Sue gave a review of the recent dance which raised £80 for Amnesty.
- **Exodus magazine** - see notes in monthly newsletter
- **Write4Rights** - We will be hosting two Write for Rights sessions this year.
 - Reading University on Monday 20th November over lunchtime in the students union.
 - Reading Biscuit Factory on Thursday 14th December from 7.30pm.

Photo Action for Ahmed Mansour's birthday - Sunday 29th October. We will be posting this picture for his birthday to send best wishes and our continued support. We are delighted that Ahmed is included in this year's Write for Rights campaign.



5. Campaign Updates

- see [monthly newsletter](#) (and weekly updates for regular attendees)

6. AoB & monthly meeting schedule

Group Meetings: Nov23 – Apr24



Month	Group Meeting	Events
November	Ilyas Nagdee - Racial justice	AIUK National Conference
December	Write4Rights	
January	<i>tbc</i>	
February	Grainne Teggart – Northern Ireland	
March	Lise Rossi - USA	
April	<i>Letter writing and planning – in person meeting</i>	

**Next meeting: Thursday 9th November at 8pm -
Ilyas Nagdee, Racial Justice**