

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

Thursday 9th November 2023

Chair: Anne McFarlane

This meeting was held via Zoom.

1. Welcome and introductions

11 people joined the meeting for some or all of it: Anne, Helen, Sue, Michael, Liz, Ruth, Hilary, Vicky, Iona, Durga

- Apologies - none received

2. This month's speaker was Ilyas Nagdee, Racial Justice lead for AIUK.

Ilyas noted

- that Amnesty had done work in this area before, but it had been a little sporadic and superficial
- a clearer vision has been reached

Vision

In 2030, campaigns to dismantle racist state systems will be **strengthened** by Amnesty International UK's **strong human rights-based research**. There will be an increased ability to **frame these practices in human rights terms** leading to the **creation and communication of a strong narrative** around racism contributing to an environment wherein human rights are not fulfilled and enjoyed. This will contribute to **increasing recognition** of this amongst the wider public, leading to **greater pressure for change**.

AI UK will be an **expert voice** on racial justice and human rights, within the UK and the Amnesty movement, which carries out research and campaigns on public policy **with** racialised communities and social movements.

We will be known **not just for what we do, but how we do it**.

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- the government is creating an environment where people especially racialised communities and children are not coming into full realisation of their rights.
- pieces of state policy and law collectively are an attempt to create a compliant generation
- Amnesty intends to
 - carry out original research to identify violations
 - build power amongst and between organisations, movements and the anti-racism network
 - educate and inform our members and the wider public on the impact of racism on human rights
 - construct and deploy a narrative for our work across this goal

Ilyas then went on to describe Amnesty's new report on the Government's Prevent Strategy - ["This is the thought police - The Prevent Duty and its chilling effect on human rights"](#)

Read [Amnesty's press release](#) outlining the need for the report.

Ilyas also recommended an Amnesty course on race and anti-racism.

3. Group News & Upcoming Events

- Photo action on the screen to say Happy 25th Birthday to the Human Rights Act today!



- Photo action in preparation for UAE twitter storm on 2nd December

- The group noted the £250 we have received from Joy Nalpanis, a former secretary of the group. Joy has left this money as a bequest in her will, for the specific purpose of a party for the group. We thought it would be good to invite previous members back, particularly those who knew Joy. We noted that this Christmas seemed too soon.

Liz then mentioned it would be our group's 50th anniversary in February 2025 - might we do the party then or would that be too late? Discussion continued around the 50th party, have we got records of previous PoC and previous speakers, let the press know, etc...

We agreed to discuss the group party and 50th anniversary further.

- **National Conference review** - Helen attended in person, Iona online. Highlights included
 - intro speech from Sacha Deshmukh, CEO, telling of the desperate times we are in around the world for human rights
 - Panel discussion for Rocky Myers, featured in this year's Write for Rights campaign.
 - speech by Ali Araas, previously featured in W4R 2014, since released. He talked about the impact of the letters to the prisoners themselves
 - so they feel "not alone, they do exist"
 - barrier to ill treatment
 - rights within the prison
 - real protection for the prisoner"
 - Governance panel discussion, including

- the decision to sell the Human Rights Action Centre
- the 3 pillars of Amnesty's work
 - Changing attitudes to Human Rights
 - build a powerful movement
 - win human rights victories
- 6 areas of focus until 2030
 1. racial justice
 2. economic, social and cultural rights
 3. individuals at risk
 4. legal framework
 5. human rights crises - armed conflict
 6. freedom of express and the right to protest

Great to see people in real life and have time to network in the coffee breaks.

➤ **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 - this is our next group meeting

➤ **Ideas for talks to other groups?** Helen is reaching out to more schools to do talks currently. She also wanted suggestions of where else to contact to get into our local community a bit more

- Women's institute
- Sunday Alternative
- U3A group
- Reading Humanists
- Reading Citizens group

4. Campaign Updates - see [monthly newsletter](#) and [weekly update](#)

- **Death penalty** - Iona mentioned that Paul Bridges, chair of Amnesty's Anti-Death Penalty Project, wrote [an article that features on the Museum of London's website](#). It traces the history of the [#deathpenalty](#) in Britain and is currently the website most popular page!

5. 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 14th December

Write for Rights campaign

from 7.30pm - Reading Biscuit Factory