

BANBURY AREA GROUP AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



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NEWSLETTER 10
SPRING 2024



We are ordinary people, who live in and around Banbury, who stand up for humanity and human rights. Our purpose is to protect individuals wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied.

We meet on the third Monday of each month except August. You are very welcome to join us. Sign up for email updates via the website.

As a global movement of over ten million people, Amnesty International is the world's largest grassroots human rights organisation.

Review of our activities; opportunities to get involved

It may be helpful for readers of this Newsletter who are less familiar with the work of Banbury Amnesty Group to have a summary of what we're about and how we're currently operating.

In the post-Covid world we've been putting the emphasis more on public engagement and organising events and activities. Our experience is these are the things that people supportive of human rights are inclined to engage with. For this reason our calendar of activities over the last 18 months or so has involved:

- more talks from Amnesty country experts
- regular film nights
- an annual stall at the Banbury Canal Festival (See photo)
- moving to more public locations for our annual Write for Rights activity, where people are encouraged to sign message of support to individual or group cases of human rights violations from different parts of the world, and to write protest letters to their Governments
- social events with a message and opportunities to take action, such as our Summer Garden Party and Christmas Social.



Our stall at Banbury's biggest mass participation event: Canal Festival.

We also seek to arrange an annual meeting with Victoria Prentis, Banbury's MP (and the Attorney-General), and engage in regular correspondence with her – recently over various aspects of the Israel-Gaza conflict and the Government's highly discriminatory anti-radicalisation strategy, PREVENT. We've had a number of letters published in the Banbury Guardian, including a collaboration with our colleagues in the Chipping Norton Group over policy towards refugees and asylum seekers.

We take the view that we need to be flexible in order to take action on campaign needs of the moment, including individual cases that arise, but our main areas of campaigning focus lately have been **Israel/OPT**, **China** and **Kashmir**, as well as various UK human rights issues, particularly **refugees/asylum seekers** and **protecting the Human Rights Act**.

We're lucky in having a number of core supporters prepared to take on particular roles. However, there are three areas of activity each in need of someone to take them on (could you be interested?):

- schools liaison – someone to act as a contact for designated teachers at local secondary schools over engaging students with human rights
- maintaining and developing relationships with Banbury's two Mosques
- acting as a Constituency Rep – someone to submit template letters (drafted by others!) to our MP

Do get in touch at the email address below if you would like to know more about these roles, or have any queries about our group generally. Huge thanks to all our supporters for all that you do for Amnesty and human rights.

Ian Myson, Chair: Banbury Amnesty Group.
ian_myson@hotmail.com



Campaigning

Israel and the OPT

The group continues to campaign on many vital issues. We have made representations to our MP Victoria Prentis on, among other issues, a ceasefire in Gaza. We have urged Rishi Sunak to call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties and help end the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. You can demand an urgent ceasefire in Gaza now [here](#).

PREVENT

PREVENT is the Government's policy whereby schools, universities, hospitals, and local authorities are all under a duty to refer people who are at risk of being "drawn into terrorism." This is supposed to protect us, as a 'pre-crime intervention' but in reality, **it is doing the opposite**. Often the hardest hit are children, neurodivergent people and Muslim people. Find out more and take action [here](#).

Ukraine

We dedicated the last two events to the war in Ukraine. Firstly, we had a fascinating talk by Amnesty's Country Co-ordinator Anna Dzavaha delivered online from Zaporizhzhia as she looked out through her window at the nightly curfew. Next we gathered to watch the unforgettable and hard hitting documentary **20 Days in Mariupol**. We took away letters to write about Russian individuals facing imprisonment for breaking war censorship laws. You can take action on this issue [here](#).



Forthcoming events

Our campaigning programme will continue with more informative talks from experts, including vital actions to take, throughout the summer. Further details will be announced shortly.

We will continue to engage with the public and raise awareness of Human Rights violations at the **Canal Day Festival on 5 & 6 October** and the annual **Write for Rights** event in December.

Amnesty Central England Network

Banbury Amnesty Group is one of 26 currently active volunteer local Amnesty groups in West, East and South Midlands and almost all of them are affiliated to the Amnesty Central England Network.

This is a new flexible, regional Network of human rights activists and supporters – some involved with local groups, some not - who get involved based on the time and resources they have available. Many Banbury Group members are also individual members of the Network. The practical result of this is that events and activities organised and promoted by the Network are also available to Banbury Group supporters.

Over the last couple of months such events have included an excellent anti-racism training session

and webinars with terrific speaker panels on **Gaza, Kashmir** and what can be done about **United Nations ineffectiveness in face of mass atrocities** in different parts of the world. A webinar on **human rights in China** is in planning to mark the 35th anniversary of the Tienanmen Square massacre on 4 June.

The Network's early-stage campaign priorities overlap to a considerable extent with those of Banbury Group: **oppressed minorities (particularly Palestinians, Kashmiris and Uyghurs), refugees/ asylum seekers, and antiracism**.

For further information on the Amnesty Central England Network, or to join it (no cost!) contact ian_myson@hotmail.com

GROUP ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Banbury Amnesty Group invites supporters to pay a voluntary annual sub of £15. If you would like to contribute to Group funds to cover inevitable costs of venue hire, postage etc (with surpluses remitted to Amnesty UK) the easiest way to do this is via online transfer:

Account name: Banbury Area Amnesty International
Account number: 73585709
Sort code: 090155

Please include your surname in the reference so that Ed, our Treasurer, can keep track of things.

“INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE.”

Martin Luther King, African-American civil rights activist