

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UNITED KINGDOM SECTION

DRAFT MINUTES

FROM 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK SECTION

10am-4pm 22 JUNE 2024

Held at Sheffield Hallam University, with remote participation online

1. AGM OPENING & EXPLANATION OF BUSINESS

Alex Rhys, AGM Chair, welcomed delegates to the 2024 hybrid AGM and thanked them for attending. He outlined the voting process and explained how the business of the meeting would be conducted. He reminded all delegates of the importance of mutual respect and dignity throughout the proceedings.

The Amnesty candle was lit, and the Chair officially declared the AGM open.

2. KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Keynote Address was delivered by Jaz O'Hara, a refugee rights advocate. She shared personal stories and insights from her background and work with refugees, highlighting the global impact of Amnesty's advocacy and the importance of solidarity in addressing human rights crises.

3. ADOPTION OF THE STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair of the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) introduced the SOC report, informing delegates that there were no changes to the Standing Orders this year. The SOC recommended the report for adoption by the meeting. The Chair emphasized that Special Resolutions require a three-quarters majority to pass and provided an outline of the amendments process.

The Chair reported that two resolutions were received after the closing date. He explained that, according to SO15, for a resolution to be accepted as an emergency resolution, it must address an issue that could not have been submitted before the deadline. The Board had agreed with the substance of the emergency resolution – to review Julian Assange's designation as a Prisoner of Conscience (POC). However, the emergency resolution did not meet the threshold. The Chair noted that if the proposer wished to challenge this, they would need to

debate it at the AGM. The emergency resolution was withdrawn by the proposer.

3.2 The AGM ADOPTED the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) report.

4. ADOPTION OF 2023 AGM MINUTES

There were no amendments to the minutes.

The 2023 AGM minutes were ADOPTED.

5. ADOPTION OF THE 2023 AGM DECISIONS IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

A challenge was submitted to the Implementation Report by the Sutton Group, Westminster Group, and Mayfair Group. The groups expressed concern about the implementation of the previous year's resolution on increased support for local groups. They stated that, despite monitoring the Board's updates over the past year, they felt that the resolution had not been adequately implemented. Additionally, they raised concerns about the discontinuation of the local groups' grants program, with funds being redirected to annual events managed by AIUK, which they felt did not satisfy the resolution's intent.

The groups informed the AGM that they sent an email on 4 June to the Board, CEO, and SOC, following which the Implementation Report was revised and submitted to the AGM. The revised report indicates that implementation is ongoing, with further progress to be reported at the 2025 AGM. They noted that the report also states that funds had been invested in the activist-led framework and that a number of new Activism Representatives had been recruited. The groups urged the Board to make greater efforts to implement resolutions.

The AGM Chair explained the challenge process, noting that a vote would be held on whether to accept or reject the challenged section of the Implementation Report.

Should the section be rejected, the Board would need to return next year with a more detailed report. The Chair invited the Board to exercise their right of reply.

Sen Raj, Chair of the Section Board, responded on behalf of the Board. He acknowledged the work done so far that had been reported in the Implementation Report and agreed that further work was needed. He stated that a further report will be presented at the 2025 AGM.

The AGM Chair inquired whether the challenge was formally requesting that the section of the report be rejected. Following this, the delegates confirmed that no formal challenge was being made, and there was no request to reject the report.

Janet Phillips of the Oxford City Group raised a concern regarding two resolutions they put forward on the visibility and engagement with UN processes and one on campaigning to deter the permanent members of the Security Council from using veto powers in cases of mass atrocities. She expressed disappointment that, despite formal approval to campaign on this issue and active efforts, including a letter to President Biden on 20th February, copying in other permanent members of the Security Council, the Implementation Report did not adequately reflect these initiatives as part of a new campaign. She emphasised that they were actively campaigning.

Owen Collins responded on behalf of the Board, commending the work of the Oxford City Group and noting that their efforts would be acknowledged in the Building a Powerful Movement speech later on. He emphasized that the campaign was open to all AIUK activists and was no longer limited to the Oxford City group.

The AGM Chair asked for confirmation on whether this concern constituted a formal challenge. Janet Phillips confirmed that it did not, and the meeting proceeded to move to the adoption of the implementation report.

The conference ADOPTED the 2023 AGM Decisions Implementation Report.

6. RETURNING OFFICERS REPORT

Rebecca Warren, the Returning Officer, presented the results of the 2024 Board elections. She noted that five Board members had completed their terms-of-office and had decided not to stand again for election:

- Sen Raj (Chair)
- Ciara Garcha (Vice-Chair)
- Julia Pata
- Owen Collins
- Emma Haddad (co-opted to fill a casual vacancy)

Six seats were available in the 2025 election and the following members were elected:

- Unreserved Seat: Nabila Hanson
- Local Group Reserved Seat: Stuart Penny
- Network Reserved Seats: Duaa Abdulal and Freshta Salam
- 16-17 Year Old Reserved Seat: George Randall

As no-one had been nominated for the 18-23 Year Old Reserved Seat, the seat remained vacant.

All candidates were elected unopposed, as the number of nominations did not exceed the available seats. All elected candidates are required to retire in 2027 but will be eligible to stand for re-election. No nominations were received this year that could not be taken forward.

The Returning Officer noted that Helen Horton (Local Group Reserved Seat) and Abdul Abid (unreserved seat) will both complete their three-year terms in 2025. She noted that Article 38.1 requires a minimum of four Board members to retire each year. If this number is not reached through term completion, additional members of the Board may need to volunteer to retire or be selected by lot. The four seats available for the 2025 election are:

- 16-23 Year Old Reserved Seat
- Local Group Reserved Seat
- Unreserved Seat
- An additional seat, depending on who stands down

The Returning Officer informed the AGM that candidates had been required for a number of roles elected by the AGM: the AGM Chair, one member of the Standing Orders Committee, and two members of the Members and Directors Appeals Committee (MDAC).

Two applications were received for the SOC member position by the original deadline, necessitating an election later in the day. No applications were received for the 2025 AGM Chair or the MDAC positions by the original deadline. The Returning Officer invited members present to stand for these seats and stated that nominations would be accepted until 2pm.

The AGM Chair congratulated the newly elected Board members.

7. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE UK SECTION BOARD

Sen Raj, Chair of the AIUK Section Board, provided a comprehensive report on the current human rights landscape, focusing on the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the severe human rights abuses being reported globally. He stressed the importance of building solidarity among activists and supporting human rights defenders who continue to speak out despite the risks.

He discussed Amnesty's critical role in researching and documenting human rights violations in Israel, Palestine, and other conflict zones. He highlighted local group activities, such as the Manchester Amnesty group who exemplify grassroots activism with silent vigils and conferences on Israeli state apartheid.

He also addressed the UK government's complicity in international human rights abuses through arms sales, despite legal and ethical challenges, and the broader trend of democratic states undermining the international human rights order through the policing of protests, with peaceful protesters being threatened with arrest, prosecution and punishment.

The Board Chair emphasized the importance of governance within AIUK and the importance of an inclusive and equitable culture. He noted the significant efforts made in recent years to refresh AIUK's governance structures, addressing institutional racism, safeguarding, and movement building. He stated that AIUK is committed to being anti-racist and to dismantling power structures that inhibit participation by minorities and had established networks to lead work on disability and racial justice.

The Board Chair explained that, globally, work on anti-racism and feminist leadership has led to conversations within the global movement about the redistribution of resources to support smaller sections. The global movement is also exploring the creation of virtual sections in regions where a physical presence is not feasible. He explained that the forthcoming Global Assembly (in Bangkok) will discuss these issues, including a proposal that will require AIUK to allocate a greater proportion of its finances to international work. He explained that the Board will host consultation meetings in July to provide more details on this and other motions. He encouraged members to attend.

The Board Chair announced his impending retirement from the Board, reflecting on his six years of service, including three as Chair. He expressed pride in the progress made, despite the emotional and challenging nature of the work, particularly in addressing internal tensions related to institutional racism. He thanked his Board colleagues, especially Vice-Chair Helen Horton, and the Senior Management Team (SMT) for their support, urging members to consider taking on governance roles within AIUK as a form of activism.

8. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Chief Executive, Sacha Deshmukh welcomed delegates to the 2024 AGM and noted that this month marked three years since his appointment. He reiterated AIUK's strategic goals, which focus on winning key victories in human rights, raising awareness and support for human rights, and strengthening the human rights movement in the UK.

He highlighted AIUK's critical role within the global Amnesty movement. He noted that AIUK is responsible for campaigning on human rights issues in the UK, influencing government policy and media, being a voice on global human rights issues, and contributing financially to global Amnesty initiatives. He informed the AGM that, in 2023, AIUK contributed approximately £9 million to Amnesty's global work, making it the third-largest contributor.

The Chief Executive highlighted AIUK's campaigns, including those in response to the human rights crises in Israel and Gaza. He emphasized that this work demonstrated the critical importance of rigorous, evidence-based advocacy. He discussed AIUK's role in challenging the UK government's arms exports to Israel and informed the AGM that the High Court had recently accepted AIUK's application to intervene in an important legal case concerning the export of those arms.

He reported on AIUK's work on racial justice, including the publication of the report "This Is the Thought Police". He also highlighted ongoing campaigns on economic, cultural, and social rights, including the right to housing and abortion rights.

The Chief Executive affirmed AIUK's non-partisan stance in the upcoming UK general election, with a focus on advocating for human rights commitments from all political parties. He explained that AIUK has noted commitments in the Labour manifesto in support of the European Convention of Human Rights, a commitment to the introduction of a racial equalities Bill and to a full ban on conversion therapy.

The Chief Executive reflected on the progress made in improving AIUK's working culture, which had previously been marred by accusations of institutional racism. He noted significant improvements in staff satisfaction and introduced new members of the Senior Management Team who have joined to further strengthen AIUK's culture and operations.

The CEO thanked the Board, particularly those members stepping down, and acknowledged Sen Raj's significant contributions during his tenure. He also expressed gratitude to the staff and activists for their dedication to human rights, concluding with a commitment to continue advancing AIUK's mission.

9. TREASURER'S REPORT

The AIUK Section Board Treasurer, Andy Townend, presented the audited statutory accounts for the year to December 2023. He noted that the accounts were not for formal approval but that he would present a resolution for them to be formally received by the AGM. He noted that the accounts had been signed off by the Board and the auditors, BDO.

The Treasurer outlined the Section's performance in 2023, noting that the overall result was better than budget, with a net surplus of £0.7 million. The Treasurer emphasised that in addition to £8.5 million income from membership and donations, the Section received a grant of approximately £5.7 million from the Charitable Trust, which represented around 38% of the Section's income in 2023. He noted that this grant is restricted and can only be used by the Section to promote human rights. He added that if the Trust were to experience financial difficulties and could not provide funding, the Section would also face financial challenges. He informed the AGM that this is not currently the case, nor is it anticipated in the foreseeable future.

The Treasurer noted that the Charitable Trust is a separate legal entity regulated by the Charity Commission, and is not controlled by the Section. Despite lower fundraising activity, the Trust's deficit for the year was £0.3 million, compared to the £2.6 million budgeted. The lower deficit was due to restricted income being higher than budgeted. The Trust's free reserves remain above its budgeted levels.

The Treasurer informed the AGM that the UK Section's budget for 2024, approved by the Board in December

2023, shows both unrestricted and restricted budgets together. The 2024 budget anticipates a deficit of £1.8 million, driven by increased operating costs as the Section invests in its human rights strategy and operational enablers, such as updating the data platform, collaboration tools, supporter care platform, and improvements to the website. The Section will continue to utilise free reserves until 2025, after which it will rely more on donations from the Trust.

At the end of 2023, the Section's closing free reserves stood at £6.6 million, which will help to fund the significant planned deficits. The Treasurer noted that reserves are maintained to carry the organization through difficult situations and that the Section Board agreed in 2023 that the target range for free reserves should remain unchanged at £4.3m - £4.8m. The Treasurer reported that total reserves will decrease by the budgeted deficit of £1.08 million in 2024. The Section's budget deficit for 2024 will use reserves to support investment in human rights work and underlying enabling activities. The Treasurer noted that the Section has ambitious goals for growing its human rights work and faces the challenge of increasing income beyond 2024. He noted that projections forecast a reduction in reserves, corresponding to unrestricted deficits anticipated in the coming years before the Section reaches more stable free reserves levels in 2026.

The Treasurer stated that in 2025, the Section plans to relocate to a more appropriately sized office. He informed the AGM that detailed financial modelling, including stress testing, has been conducted and shows that the Section has sufficient funds to operate through to December 2026. Similar financial modelling was carried out for the Charitable Trust, indicating a comparable financial position. Assuming the successful sale of the Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC) as planned, there will be significant reserves to manage. The investment policy is being updated to ensure these funds are used according to best practices, as they cannot be used for deficit budgets.

10. BUILDING A POWERFUL MOVEMENT (BPM) SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

Owen Collins, Chair of the BPM and a member of the AIUK Section Board, presented his report by video. He explained that the BPM Sub-Committee supports the Section Board in overseeing AIUK's delivery of Goal Two of its strategy, which aims to encourage more people to stand up for human rights in their communities. He described the BPM as a living, breathing example of AIUK solidarity. He reported on the progress in growing activism, noting that a dedicated Activism and Education Director, Sotez Chowdhury, had joined the team just four days previously.

The BPM Chair noted that the budget for Goal Two had been doubled from £400,000 to £850,000 in 2024, providing more resources for activist groupings. He emphasised that along with the investment in growing activism, activists had also been given greater control over their budgets.

He acknowledged that placing unrealistic burdens on activists is counterproductive and that AIUK is working to remove hurdles for those who want to launch their own campaigns. The goal is to make AIUK less bureaucratic and less risk-averse by trusting the judgment of local activists and embracing a more appropriate level of uncertainty and risk. He asked for patience, as these changes will take time, and assured the AGM that the Board is always ready to engage in dialogue with members.

The BPM Chair also addressed the failure of AIUK to grow membership numbers in recent years. He explained that AIUK had previously prioritised the recruitment of donors to the Trust but had failed to convert these donors into new activists. The BPM Sub-Committee welcomes the renewed focus on reigniting growth in membership numbers to join and re-energise local groups. He expressed hope that by the next AGM, the Chair of the BPM Sub-Committee would be able to report clear steps taken toward this goal.

The BPM Chair thanked the members of the BPM Sub-Committee, the staff, and the Activism and Education Directorate. He paid tribute to the Section's passionate activists, noting that whilst passion is important, what makes Amnesty activists special is their willingness to make sacrifices for the cause.

11. ADDRESS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD

Anjhula Mya Singh Bais, a member of the International Board, addressed the AGM by recorded video message. She focused on the power and potential of local activism, emphasising the importance of building a diverse and inclusive international human rights movement. She highlighted the opportunity and responsibility that AIUK has to ensure that the movement is equitable, powerful, and representative of all voices.

She praised AIUK's leadership in bringing diverse voices to the global Amnesty movement. She stressed that a diverse movement is a stronger movement, and that inclusion means creating spaces where everyone feels valued, empowered, and heard. She noted that AIUK's anti-racism work has been an inspiration to many within Amnesty International. The International Board has made it a priority to promote diversity in leadership and membership, actively combating any form of discrimination within the organization.

Anjhula Mya Singh Bais described the movement's Lumen Project as a commitment to inclusivity, with initiatives aimed at increasing accessibility and participation for underrepresented groups. She spoke of the importance of strength in unity, building bridges between collective struggles, and the global human rights agenda, and stated that this is at the heart of the Lumen proposals.

She stressed the need to dismantle systemic barriers and ensure equitable opportunities for all, including reviewing internal policies, ensuring fair allocation of resources, and continuously seeking feedback. This principle underpins the equitable distribution of financial

resources motion, which will be considered at the Global Assembly, and which aims to enhance accountability and transparency, ensuring that members have a say in decision-making processes and that resources are distributed justly. She called for the creation of pathways for youth engagement in leadership within the movement, noting that the Vice Chair of the International Board, Christoph Alberts, is only 26 years old.

The IB Chair concluded by reflecting on the principles that have guided Amnesty so far, expressing confidence that by adhering to these principles, AIUK can help to create a world where human rights are upheld, respected, and celebrated, and where every individual has the opportunity to live with dignity and freedom.

The AGM adjourned for lunch.

12. AGM RESOLUTIONS

The AGM Chair welcomed everyone back.

Financial Resolutions

F1: Financial Statements

Proposer: AIUK Section Board

Resolution text: *This AGM to receive the Report of the Directors and the audited accounts of AIUK Section for the year ended 31 December 2022.*

The Treasurer responded to a pre-submitted question regarding the disclosure in Note 7 of the statutory accounts. He explained that statutory accounts must include certain disclosures required by law, but there is some flexibility for management to provide additional information. Note 7 outlines the expenditure across various goals, including an item labelled "Investment in Activist Recruitment" totalling £1.4 million in 2022. This amount relates to staff costs associated with supporting activist groups and recruiting additional activists. The Treasurer assured the AGM that this disclosure is consistent with the practice of the past two or three years, complies with company law, and reflects the directors' discretion to present the expenditure in a way that clarifies the accounts. He committed to reviewing the wording of this disclosure for the next year.

In response to a member inquiring about the possibility of asking a question, the AGM Chair clarified that questions were required to be submitted to the Treasurer 24 hours in advance of the start of the meeting and informed the AGM that the Board had agreed to respond to any questions online. The member was invited to submit their question to the Board for response.

A member asserted that, typically, there is an opportunity for debate or questions on the financial statements. The Chair reiterated that the AGM's role is to receive, not adopt, the financial statements, and that questions should be submitted in advance to the Treasurer. The member mentioned a specific item in the accounts – an investment in activist recruitment in 2023 totalling just over £3 million – and requested clarification.

The Treasurer requested permission from the Chair to respond to the question after the AGM, as he did not have the information readily available and had not received the question in advance. He noted that, having only taken up his role recently, he was less familiar with the previous year's financial details.

The AGM voted on the resolution:

Votes For: 1,077 (99.08%)

Votes Against: 10 (0.92%)

This resolution was CARRIED

F2: Appointment of Auditors

Proposer: AIUK Section Board

Resolution text: *This AGM to reappoint BDO LLP as Auditor of the Company, to hold office until the conclusion of the next General Meeting at which accounts are laid before the Company, and to authorise the Directors to approve the Auditor's remuneration.*

The Treasurer introduced the resolution.

The AGM voted on the resolution:

Votes For: 1,102 (98.39%)

Votes Against: 18 (1.61%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Special Resolutions

S1: Special Resolution to amend the AIUK Articles of Association

Proposer: AIUK Section Board

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves by Special Resolution that the Articles of Association of Amnesty International UK Section are altered by:

- a) *In Article 45.13, deleting the words "of three quarters";*
- b) *In Article 45.14.4, deleting the words "at least three quarters" and replace with "a majority" and, after the words "may be taken by a majority", deleting the words "of three quarters"*
- c) *In Article 45.15, deleting the words "of three quarters"*
- d) *In Article 45.16.3, deleting the words "of three quarters"*

Sen Raj, on behalf of the Section Board, proposed the resolution.

Nabila Hanson opposed the resolution, arguing that all Board decisions require checks and balances to prevent a small group of Board members from making decisions unilaterally. She expressed concern that three co-opted, unelected Board members could potentially make decisions if the resolution were passed.

Sen Raj clarified that under the current rules, any decision made outside a Board meeting requires the agreement of three-quarters of the Board, whereas decisions made during Board meetings require only a simple majority. The proposed resolution seeks to align the out-of-meeting decision-making process with the in-meeting process. He explained that, presently, 11 out of 15 Board members are needed to agree a decision. The proposed change would still require a simple majority of all Board members. He assured the AGM that contentious issues would still be brought to Board meetings, and this change is intended to facilitate the Board's everyday functioning and avoid unnecessary delays if some members are unavailable. He noted that very few decisions are made outside of Board meetings, with only two or three such decisions occurring annually, such as those regarding bookshop leases. Controversial decisions would always be reserved for the scheduled quarterly Board meetings.

The AGM voted on the resolution.

Votes For: 810 (78.56%)
Votes Against: 221 (21.44%)

This resolution was CARRIED, having met the 75% threshold.

Ordinary Resolutions

01: Resolution to amend the AIUK Section Rules

Proposed by: AIUK Section Board

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the following amendments be made to the Amnesty International UK Section Rules:

- 1) *In the title of the Rules, replace the reference to "Article 52" with "Article 53"*
- 2) *Under the section headed "Definitions",*
 - a) *Amend the definition of "Act" so that the term reads "Acts" and definition reads "the Companies Acts (as defined in Section 2 of the Companies Act 2006)"*
 - b) *Remove the reference to "AIUK Director" and replace with "AIUK Chief Executive"*
 - c) *Replace the definition of the "AIUK Chief Executive" with the words "the member of staff who is the most senior paid employee of Amnesty International UK Section, also referred to in the Articles of Association as the "AIUK Director";"*
 - d) *In the definition of "Chair", replace the reference to "Article 44.6 of the Constitution" with "Article 45.6";*
 - e) *In the definition of "Director and Directors", replace the word "Act" with "Acts";*
 - f) *In the definition of Members, replace the word "Constitution" with the words "Articles";*
 - g) *In the definition of "Standing Orders Committee", replace the words "Standing Orders Committee" with "The Committee elected by the AGM to interpret and advise on the AGM Standing Orders";*
 - h) *Replace the words "Vice Chair" with the words "Vice Chairs" throughout the Rules*
 - i) *In the definition of "Vice Chairs", replace the reference to "Article 44.6" with "Article 45.6"*

- 3) *In Rule 1.1, replace reference to "Article 52" with "Article 53"*
- 4) *In Rule 4.6, replace the word "There" with "These".*

The Board proposed the resolution.

The AGM voted on the resolution:

Votes For = 956 (92.73%)
Votes Against = 75 (7.27%)

This resolution was CARRIED

The Chair noted that the Standing Orders Committee had decided to group Resolutions 05 to 09 together, due to their common themes and issues. These resolutions would be discussed in common debate.

05: Increasing the scale and effectiveness of campaigning by improving communications between local groups and AIUK national members

Proposed by: Launceston Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the Board of Amnesty UK:

1. *Puts in place software/systems so that newly-joining National Members are automatically given details about their nearest local group, to be implemented fully by the 2025 AGM.*
2. *Within 2 months of the AGM, sets up a working party to comprise representatives of the following activist groups (2 Board members, 1 activist each from 2 local groups that support this resolution, Country Coordinators 'representative, 1 other thematic network representative) to devise options for straight-forward, direct, unencumbered digital communications between local groups and local national members whilst adhering to the requirements of GDPR.*
3. *Ensures the working party meets online only and reports back to local groups on progress every two months via the monthly local groups' newsletter, and issues a final report on options no later than two months before the deadline for submission of resolutions for the 2025 AGM, in order to provide an opportunity for resolutions to be submitted to that AGM to resolve the matter.*

06: Put in place a full-time Local Groups Officer, together with a system of effective monitoring of local groups

Proposed by: Sutton Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the Board:

1. *Puts in place a full-time Local Groups Officer, whose primary job is to support AIUK local groups, but also to assist with the development of flexible regional networks as needed.*
2. *Ensures that all local groups know who is the Local Groups Officer*
3. *Puts in place a system of effective monitoring of local groups, with the introduction of 6-monthly*

Group Report forms and annual Financial Assessment forms

4. *Implements all of the above fully by the 2025 AGM*
5. *Urgently sets up a working party comprising former and current regional / activism representatives, former and current experienced activists of local groups, a representative from a flexible regional network, and Community Organising team members, including the AIUK Local Groups Officer. The function of the working party, through collaborative working, is to look at strategies to stop the dramatic decline in local groups and to consider the best ways of starting new local groups or other local activist entities. The working party to report its findings back to the 2025 AGM.*

07: Introduction of AIUK Digital Campaigning Workshops for Beginners

Proposed by: Sutton Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the Board put in place an online basic digital campaigning training programme for AIUK local groups and other AIUK activist structures that currently do not use social media or the AIUK website, such basic training to be carried out by the AIUK Digital Campaigning Team. This to be implemented fully by the 2025 AGM

08: Put in place an AIUK Training Programme

Proposed by: Mayfair and Soho Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the Board puts in place a comprehensive programme of training for local groups and activists, in consultation with Activism Representatives, Country Coordinators, theme networks and experienced AIUK trainers. This to be implemented fully by the 2025 AGM

09: Support, empower and re-vitalise local groups to meet the human rights challenges of the present and future

Proposed by: Ulrike Schmidt

Text of resolution

The AGM resolves that the Board of Amnesty UK takes urgent measures to support local groups to sustain them, make them more effective and expand them through:

1. *Training programmes for Amnesty activists to prepare them to take organisational and leadership roles.*
2. *The appointment of 5 Regional organisers (at least part-time paid) to support groups, organise inspiring regional conferences, help coordinate large-scale protests, stunts and campaigns.*
3. *Maintaining and growing the participation of national members, local groups and other grassroots entities in the democratic decision-making process at Amnesty UK*

The proposers presented their proposals in turn, followed by a collective debate on all resolutions.

Owen Collins and Charlie Waring responded on behalf of the Board, acknowledging the shared focus on enhancing local activism. They expressed support for all the resolutions, noting their alignment with AIUK's strategic goals. They emphasized that the recent appointment of a new Director of Activism and Education would bring renewed focus on these issues. Regarding resolutions 05 and 06, the Board suggested that the Building a Powerful Movement (BPM) Sub-Committee may be the appropriate body to oversee their implementation, ensuring no duplication of efforts. They also noted existing plans to update infrastructure, which will contribute to the implementation of the resolutions.

The Board emphasised that the Campaigns Team, the Supporter Communications Team along with the Community Organising Team already support local activism in many different ways. The Board recognised the importance of consulting local groups before creating any new paid roles, especially given the financial implications. On the basis of these observations, the Board informed the AGM that it was happy to support these resolutions.

Nabila Hanson expressed support for paid regional organizers, drawing parallels with political parties that use such roles to sustain local activism. She argued that this investment could reverse the decline in local groups and membership.

Richard Crossfield, Country Coordinator for Brazil and Colombia, emphasised the critical role of local groups in campaign efforts, particularly on regions like South America, where local groups and Country Coordinators handle the majority of the campaigning and advocacy work. He suggested that a lack of membership, and a lack of integration in the UK are major problems.

In terms of the funding for a local groups co-ordinator one member asked what would be lost if funding for a Local Groups Officer was allocated from somewhere else.

The Board stated that they were unable to provide a direct answer to this question ahead of the business planning process, in which all of AIUK's proposed activities would be considered and prioritised.

There were no speeches against the resolutions. However, Alex Jagger, an individual member, cautioned against overly prescriptive resolutions that could burden the Board with specific mandates, suggesting a more flexible approach when requesting more support to local groups.

The AGM voted on Resolutions 05 06 07 08 and 09:

Vote on Resolution 05

Votes For = 1.237 (99.20%)

Votes Against = 10 (0.80%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Vote on Resolution 06

Votes For = 1,168 (97.50%)
 Votes Against = 30 (2.50%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Vote on Resolution 07

Votes For = 1,150 (97.21%)
 Votes Against = 33 (2.79%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Vote on Resolution 08

Votes For = 1,174 (99.16%)
 Votes Against = 10 (0.84%)

This Resolution was CARRIED

Vote on Resolution 09

Votes For = 1,229 (98.95%)
 Votes Against = 13 (1.05%)

This resolution was CARRIED

02: Research into Indigenous Peoples Rights in Guyana

Proposed by: Runnymede Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the AIUK Board urges the International Secretariat to carry out immediate research into the imminent threat to Guyanese indigenous communities of the development of a large highway from Georgetown to Lethem on the Brazilian border, and for this research to focus on the Guyanese government's adherence to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in its proposals and consultations. This research should be made available for campaigning by AIUK and other national sections.

This AGM resolves that the AIUK Board urges the International Secretariat to also research the awarding of licences for oil exploration, mining and logging and the effects of these activities on the rights of indigenous communities, including the threat of military invasion of their traditional homelands from Venezuela.

This AGM resolves that the AIUK Board invites the International Secretariat to consider whether it would be more appropriate, for the purposes of the research, for Guyana to be treated as being within the South America region rather than the North America and English-speaking Caribbean region.

Lisa Ingledon, an individual member and member of the Runnymede Group presented the resolution on behalf of the group.

The AIUK Board expressed strong support for the resolution, noting its alignment with ongoing

international work on indigenous rights. The Board highlighted that the resolution could enhance AIUK's contribution to this global effort, particularly in light of a forthcoming motion by AI Canada to strengthen indigenous rights work.

Richard Crossfield, Team Coordinator for South America, supported the proposal, emphasizing that it is unacceptable that Guyana is one of the few South American countries not covered by the International Secretariat's work.

The AGM voted on Resolution 02:

Votes For: 1,135 (96.84%)
 Votes Against: 37 (3.16%)

This resolution was CARRIED

03: Commitment to Individuals and Communities at Risk work (IAR) by Amnesty International UK**Text of resolution**

This AGM resolves that the Board of Amnesty International UK:

- 1. Continues to give significant priority to Individuals and Communities at Risk work as set out in the Amnesty International UK 2022-2030 strategy and the Global Strategy For Amnesty International's Work With & For Individuals & Communities At Risk (2022-2025)*
- 2. Must consult with Amnesty UK members and then bring an appropriately worded resolution to the AGM if at any time it proposes to downgrade the priority to be given to worldwide Individuals and Communities at Risk work by the section.*

Chris Ramsey of the Truro and District Group presented the resolution, expressing concern that AIUK's commitment to IAR work may be waning. He cited several indicators, including the failure to update the Urgent Actions page on the website, the delay in replacing the IAR campaigner, and the unexpected removal of the "Real Life" section from the magazine. He argued that these developments suggested a de-prioritization of IAR work.

Richard Wild, responding on behalf of the AIUK Section Board, affirmed the Board's support for the resolution. He assured the AGM that IAR work remains a key focus and one of AIUK's six human rights priority areas.

John Elo, Country Co-ordinator for Syria spoke in favour of the resolution, emphasizing that the IAR program is often the last hope for many individuals and communities at risk. He urged members to support the resolution, underscoring the vital role that AI plays in protecting these vulnerable groups.

The AGM voted on the Resolution:

Votes For: 1,257 (99.52%)
 Votes Against: 6 (0.48%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Yasmin Thompson, an individual member asked why an earlier question about work on Syria had been determined to be not relevant. She expressed concern that the decision might be influenced by Islamophobia and institutionalized racism.

The AGM Chair clarified that the Section Board had no involvement in the decision not to consider the question and that the decision was his. He explained that the question was not relevant to the agenda, as it related to a resolution raised three years ago. The decision was procedural and not based on the content of the question.

Sen Raj, the AIUK Section Board Chair explained that the individual who had asked the question had spoken with the Chief Executive during the break to follow up on various issues that related to the International Secretariat.

O4: Increasing the scale of regional/country-focussed campaigning by Amnesty International UK activists

Proposed by: Chris Ramsay

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the Board ensures that on an annual basis, commencing in 2025:

1. *Individual and Family national members of Amnesty International UK are given sufficient information by direct e-mail to enable them to a) decide whether they wish to contribute to regional/country focused campaign work b) indicate which region or regions they wish to work on in the coming year;*
2. *The data from this annual exercise be sent to Country Coordinators so that they can contact the individual members and integrate them into their regional/country focused work.*

Chris Ramsey presented the resolution.

Helen Horton, representing the AIUK Board, expressed support for the resolution. She indicated that the board was in favour of increasing member engagement in regional and country-focused work, aligning with their plans. The Board is also working on updating IT systems, which will facilitate this initiative.

The AGM voted on the resolution:

Votes For: 1,149 (97.95%)

Votes Against: 24 (2.05%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Nabila Hanson, an individual member raised a point of order and enquired whether the board held 1,000 proxy votes.

The AGM Chair explained that proxy votes could be given either to the AIUK Section Chair, the AGM Chair or to another representative present. Individuals may direct their proxy holder on how to vote, or the proxy may be discretionary. The Chair assured the AGM that he does not exercise discretionary voting.

The Head of Governance clarified that the Board does not possess 1,000 proxy votes. Rather, 1,000 individuals had assigned their proxy votes to others.

A further query was raised about emergency resolutions. If individuals have already assigned their proxies and are unaware of the emergency resolution, their vote choice would default to the proxy holder's discretion, which could be problematic.

The Head of Governance confirmed that proxy votes can only be directed through the proxy voting platform where resolutions are listed as set out in the AGM notice. Those appointed as proxies, including the AGM Chair, Board Chair, or another designated person, are required to vote according to the instructions given on these resolutions but may use their discretion in other votes, or where no direction is given. He noted that individuals giving their proxies could give direction on Emergency Resolutions but this would have to be through separate contact.

O10: Delay the sale of the Human Rights Action Centre until a full consultation with the AIUK membership has been undertaken

Proposed by: Watford Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that the Board of AIUK:

Urges the Board of the Charitable Trust to delay the sale of the Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC) until a full and transparent consultation has been had with the AIUK membership, their views and opinions sought and these options voted on at an AIUK AGM.

Nabila Hanson proposed the resolution on behalf of the Watford Group.

Sen Raj, responding on behalf of the Board, opposed the resolution. He stated that the decision to sell the HRAC rests with the Charitable Trust, not the AIUK Section. Any resolution passed by the AGM could not influence or delay the sale, as the Section Board has no authority over this decision. The Section Board is committed to investing in activist spaces beyond London to ensure a broader geographic reach.

Paul Defoe from the Hornsey and Wood Green group, London, criticised the Board's response for lacking transparency and a detailed published business plan. The absence of clear information and the involvement of the CEO, who also sits on the Trust, raised concerns about potential asset stripping and decision-making without adequate member input. The member urged support for the resolution.

The AGM Chair addressed the AGM with a point of information, clarifying that the Chief Executive does not sit on the Board but attends Board meetings.

A member argued for the importance of the HRAC as a physical space for human rights events and education, asserting that such activities cannot be fully replicated online. The loss of this space could result in higher costs for alternative venues.

Graham Bisset from Sutton Group expressed support for the resolution, suggesting that a needs analysis should have been conducted before deciding to sell the HRAC, not after. He emphasised the need for a thorough examination of options and the benefits of retaining the asset.

A member, speaking online, supported the resolution, asserting that delaying the sale until a full consultation has taken place aligns with democratic decision-making principles.

John Elo Country Co-ordinator for Syria commented as an individual member and supported the resolution, questioning how selling the HRAC would affect the cost of hosting events and the effectiveness of future investments.

Stuart Penny from the Cardigan and mid-Pembrokeshire Group expressed concern about the decision, due to a perceived lack of information and consultation. He emphasised the need for a comprehensive business case and analysis of the benefits and potential impacts on conference space and investments.

Nabila Hanson exercised her right of reply, addressing concerns about perceived London-centricity stating that with its Regional Offices the UK Section could already be less London-centric if it wanted to be. She queried how it would be possible to meet the members of the Charitable Trust, as they are making big decisions. She felt that there should be more democratic accountability with more activists being appointed to the Charitable Trust Board.

The AGM voted on the resolution:

Votes For: 686 (63.46%)
Votes Against: 395 (36.54%)

This resolution was CARRIED

Emergency Resolution: Reinstating Two-Day AGM/ National Conferences from 2025 Onwards

Proposed by: Watford Local Group

Text of resolution

This AGM resolves that:

- 1) *Starting in 2025, the AGM and National Conference will be held over two consecutive days, typically in a location outside London, and will include:*
 - *Adequate time for the Board to present its annual reports, including compliance with group year resolutions and a Q&A session on these reports. o Sufficient time allocated for debating resolutions.*
 - *Human rights and activism-focused events, including workshops discussing current human rights issues, talks from Human Rights Defenders, senior members of the International Secretariat, and representatives from other sections or NGOs.*
 - *A report from the CEO of AIUK about their vision for the coming year, followed by a Q&A session.*
 - *Opportunities for members and activists to interact with representatives of activist networks at stalls in a Human Rights Activism "marketplace".*

- 2) *Future AIUK AGMs/National Conferences will continue to follow this format.*
- 3) *The Board will keep the proposers and members who register their interest with the Head of Governance informed about progress in the preparation of the AGM, providing updates upon request and every three months starting from the adoption of this resolution.*

Paul Defoe, from the Hornsey and Wood Green group, London, representing the Watford Local Group, presented the resolution. They highlighted that, following extensive consultation with Amnesty members in May 2023, there was overwhelming support for reinstating the pre-COVID two-day conference and AGM format.

The proposer noted that the Board Chair had expressed support for this format in a September 2023 Board meeting. The new single-day model, implemented post-COVID, led to reduced attendance and a significant drop in the number of submitted resolutions. The initial rationale subsequently given for abandoning the two-day event in 2024 was that the increased number of resolutions necessitated more time than was available in a mixed national conference/AGM format. However, the proposer argued that historically, the two-day format effectively accommodated a large number of resolutions and parallel events. The proposer emphasized that the AGM used to be a key event, providing inspiration and motivation for members.

Helen Horton, speaking on behalf of the Board, stated that the Board was not taking a formal position on this resolution but was keen to listen to members' preferences and explore options going forward.

Yasmin Thompson, an individual member, expressed enthusiasm for the proposed format but raised concerns about accessibility. She noted that a two-day conference could be financially prohibitive for some members. Ensuring that those unable to attend in person due to economic constraints can still participate should be a priority.

Sen Raj, the Section Board Chair, reflecting on his long history of activism, supported the resolution, emphasizing that conferences are crucial for reinvigorating members and maintaining their engagement with global issues.

The AGM voted on the resolution:

Votes For: 365 (95.55%)
Votes Against: 17 (4.45%)

This resolution was CARRIED

13. AGM ELECTIONS

The Returning Officer, Rebecca Warren announced that, apart from the Standing Orders Committee (SOC), there were no other candidates for election.

The two applicants for the SOC position, Nick Hodgson and Claire Taylor were each given the opportunity to

speak for one minute. Nick Hodgson addressed the AGM. As Claire Taylor had to leave the AGM due to a prior engagement, a statement was read out on her behalf by the Returning Officer.

The AGM voted on the election of a member to the SOC.

Nick Hodgson: 146 votes

Claire Taylor: 71 votes

Nick Hodgson was elected to the Standing Orders Committee.

The Returning Officer encouraged members who were interested in AGM roles to get in touch.

14. CLOSING REMARKS

The AGM Chair thanked all delegates for their participation in the hybrid AGM of the AIUK Section. Special thanks were extended to Sheffield Hallam University, the Board, the AGM Team (including Lumi and Computershare), the Standing Orders Committee, the Returning Officer and all who submitted resolutions.

Sheila Banks, Chair of the Standing Orders Committee expressed appreciation for Alex Rhys, the AGM Chair.

The Chair officially closed the 2024 AGM.