

## Spotlight on Sudan

### Manchester Group Quarterly Bulletin Number 13, June 2025

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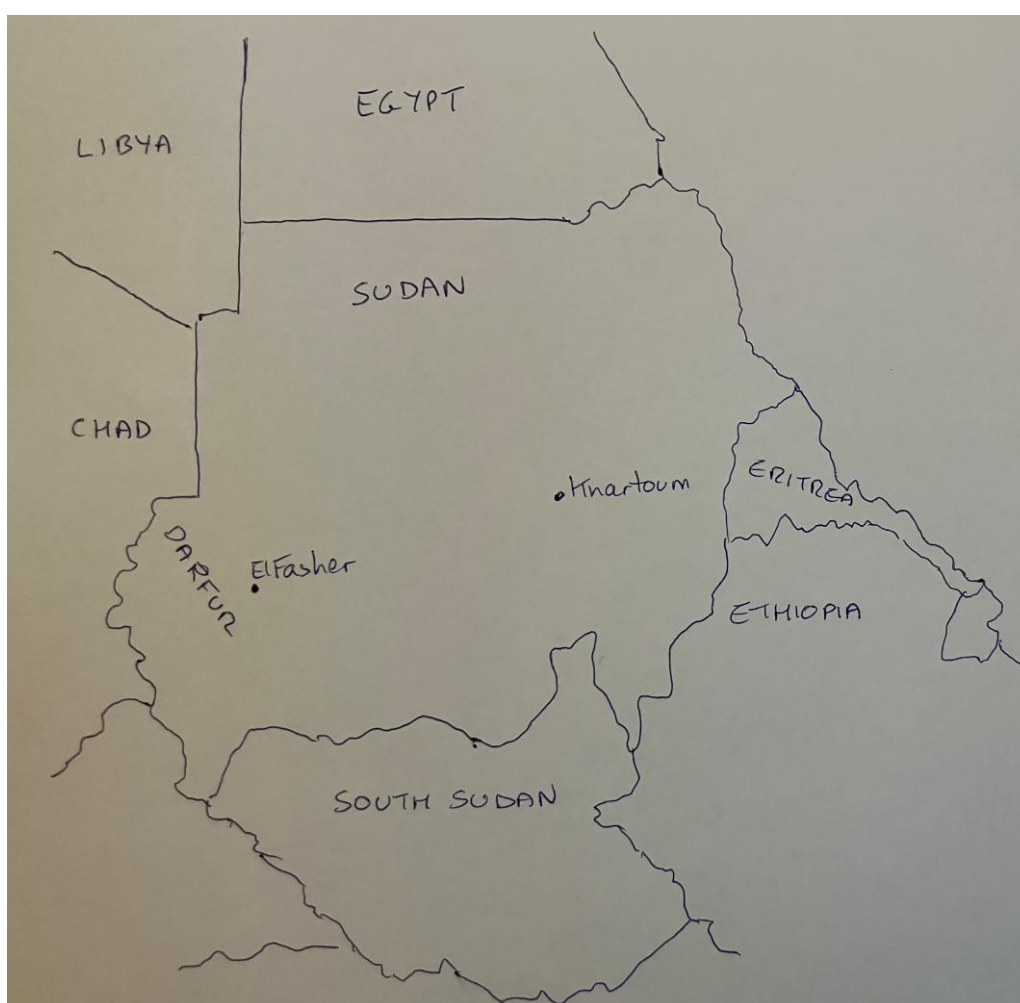
*This newsletter is compiled by the Group Communications Secretary, Alison Wearden ([alison.wearden@gmail.com](mailto:alison.wearden@gmail.com)). If you have any ideas for short or more in-depth articles for the newsletter, please feel free to contact her. We would welcome pieces on any area of Amnesty's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

## Feature Article: Spotlight on Sudan, by Kathryn Fletcher

### Some history

Sudan is home to many of the earliest civilisations. Two of the best known are the Kingdom of Kush and the Nubians, who controlled Egypt for some of its history. In the 14-15<sup>th</sup> century Sudan was ruled by a succession of Arab nomadic groups and later by the Ottomans and then by Egypt. As a result, it became a British 'possession' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The British were forced out of Sudan in 1956 when it became independent.

The British rule was characterised by investment in the Arab north, building schools, roads, bridges and infrastructure while ignoring the Black African south. These inequalities have continued since Sudan became independent and are important factors in the current humanitarian crisis. Currently 70% of the people are Arab-Sudanese and 30% Black African.



Map showing the location of Sudan in North-East Africa

### Background to the current crisis – Omar al-Bashir and the Janjaweed

After independence, democratically elected governments ruled until 1969 when the army ousted the prime minister and established a military dictatorship. There followed years of unstable governments with further coup d'états, popular unrest and periods of famine. In 1989 Omar al-Bashir came to power in a military coup. He suspended all political parties and associations, introduced an Islamic legal code, banned all independent newspapers and imprisoned leading political figures and journalists. His rule favoured the predominantly Muslim north over the south of Sudan, which had a greater concentration of Christians and

adherents of African faiths, which led to continued unrest and civil war. Peace negotiations resulted in South Sudan separating from Sudan in 2011.

The same ethnic tensions were present in the southwestern region of Darfur, home to several tribes of settled agriculturists including the Fur and Masalit peoples. Arab groups of nomadic camel herders were increasingly in conflict over land use and water access due to decreased rainfall at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2003 groups in Darfur took up arms in protest, accusing the Sudanese government of oppressing non-Arab Sudanese in favour of Sudanese Arabs. They successfully took over an army garrison and local town. Omar al-Bashir's army was busy fighting in the South and so he ordered an Arab militia called the Janjaweed to recover the rebel held areas.

The Janjaweed had experience fighting in other African states and had a reputation for human rights abuses wherever they had been active. They entered Darfur and ransacked over 1000 villages, killing 200-400,000 civilians over three years. Three million people were displaced, 100,000 fleeing to neighbouring Chad. Fur villages were singled out, depopulated, torched to the ground leaving adjacent Arab villages untouched.

In 2008, the US government declared this to be a genocide, and the US security council called for the Janjaweed to be disarmed. Attempts were made by the international community to reduce the violence and rebuild Darfur, but many people remained in refugee camps. The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against Omar al-Bashir in March 2009 and on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010, the latter accusing him of 3 counts of genocide by masterminding attempts to wipe out African tribes with a campaign of murder, rape and deportation. The warrants were delivered to the Sudanese government who did not recognise the ICC or the legitimacy of the warrants, thereby enabling al-Bashir to stay in power.

### **The fall of al-Bashir**

In 2018 protests against al-Bashir erupted in the capital, Khartoum, triggered by the tripling of food prices. After 30 years in power, al-Bashir refused to step down. Over 800 protesters were arrested. The Sudanese army finally removed al-Bashir from power in April 2019, placing him and all his cabinet ministers under house arrest. At present, Omar al-Bashir remains in prison in Sudan and has not yet been transferred to the International Criminal Court for trial on the charges against him.

After al-Bashir's removal, protests did not stop and in June 2019 a non-violent student sit-in was fired on, killing over 100 people. This event is referred to as the Khartoum massacre and it led to the suspension of Sudan from the African Union. Attempts were made in 2019, with money from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to support a military council and in 2023 an internationally brokered plan was made to move to civilian rule.

### **The Rapid Response Force (RSF)**

In the intervening years, the Janjaweed militia had changed its name to the Rapid Response Force (RSF) and acted as a paramilitary force under instructions of the Sudan government. It was the RSF that had carried out many of the violent crack downs on the protests in 2019 and it was the RSF who opened fire on the students in the Khartoum massacre.

A growing power struggle between the RSF and the Sudanese army led to the outbreak of the current civil war in Sudan, which has resulted in 5.8 million people being displaced

internally due to the fighting and 1.5 million people fleeing the country. Both sides have since been accused of war crimes.

The situation is worst in Darfur, where the RSF have once again been carrying out ethnic cleansing against the African population. The US formally declared the RSF activities as a genocide in January 2025 and announced sanctions on the RSF commander, known as Hemedti. The declaration was based on well-documented RSF attacks in 2023 in the town of El Geneina in Darfur where 15,000 people died, all non-Arab Masalit or other African groups.

In April 2025 the RSF launched an artillery, drone and ground attack on Zamzam refugee camp and took control. People had been displaced to Zamzam, near the city of Al Fasher, following the destruction of their villages in the last genocide and continued to live there. More than 400 civilians were killed, including aid workers and 400,000 people have fled the camp. Al Fasher is now at risk of falling to the RSF. Humanitarian aid has been difficult to administer because of security risks to aid workers and a communication blackout.



## Role of the UAE



Human Rights organisations and UN experts reveal that the UAE provides weapons in exchange for Sudan's resources. The UAE has invested huge amounts in Sudan's seaports and owns large area of farmland.

In March 2025 the Sudanese government filed a case against the UAE at the International Court of Justice accusing it of violating the Genocide convention and enabling the RSF's attacks on Masalit communities by providing financial and military support. The UAE denied this and the ICJ threw the case out stating that it lacked jurisdiction to rule on the case. However, United Nations monitors have described the accusations that the UAE provided military aid to the RSF as credible.



## Amnesty International on UAE involvement in Sudan

On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025, [Amnesty International published a statement](#) on identification of Chinese weaponry used by the RSF in Khartoum and Darfur that had “almost certainly” been re-exported by the UAE to Sudan.

*“This is clear evidence that sophisticated Chinese-made guided bombs and howitzers have been used [in Sudan](#),” said Brian Castner, Head of Crisis Research at Amnesty International.*

*“The presence of recently manufactured Chinese bombs in North Darfur is a clear violation of the arms embargo by the UAE. Our documentation of AH-4 howitzers in Khartoum further strengthens a growing body of evidence showing extensive UAE support to the RSF, in violation of international law.*

*“It is shameful that the UN Security Council is failing to implement the existing arms embargo on Darfur and not heeding calls to extend it to all of Sudan. Civilians are being killed and injured because of global inaction, while the UAE continues to flout the embargo. The UAE must halt its arms transfers to the RSF immediately. Until they do, all international arms transfer to the UAE must also stop.”*

## Manchester4Sudan

There are about 30,000 people in the UK from the Darfur diaspora who fled the atrocities in first genocide. The Darfur Diaspora Association has accused the UK of putting its relationship with the UAE above its duty to the people of Darfur. In response the UK government has denied there is adequate proof of UAE involvement. In June 2024 [The Guardian](#) revealed that the Foreign Office had put pressure on African diplomats to avoid criticising the UAE over its alleged funding of the RSF.

The group, Manchester4Sudan have written to Bev Craig and Manchester councillors asking them to use their connections with UAE government members to call the UAE to stop funding the RSF.



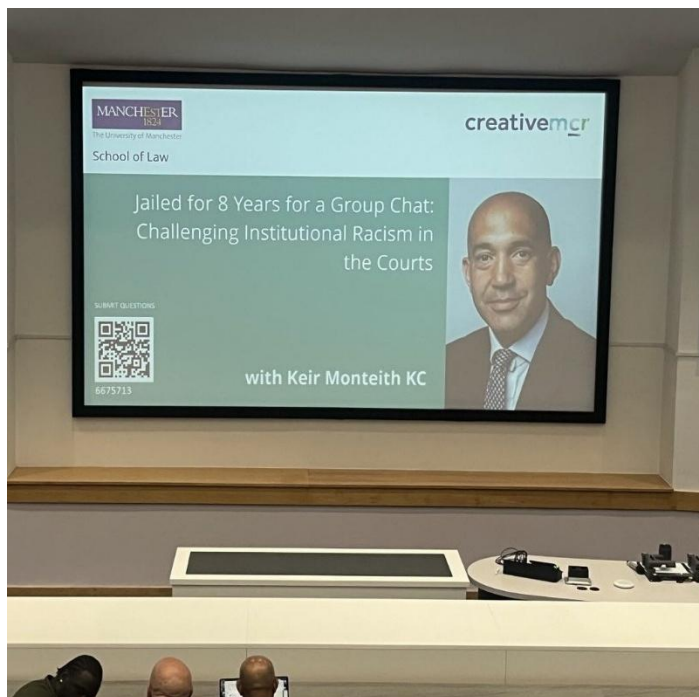
On 5<sup>th</sup> May, two of us attended a demonstration in Manchester aiming to raise awareness of the terrible situation in Sudan, and of the involvement of the UAE.

**In view of our work for imprisoned human rights defenders in the UAE, we would like to discuss with members the possibility of collaborating with or supporting Manchester4Sudan in their campaign, particularly with their focus on Manchester’s strong link with the UAE. We would be interested in your views.**

## News from our campaigns

### Anti-Racism and Prevent

#### Manchester 10 update



Kier Monteith's talk at the University of Manchester

Four of the anti-racism sub-group attended a lecture by Keir Monteith KC, the barrister who represented Ade, the boy who has been acquitted. The lecture took place at Manchester University. Keir Monteith's lecture entitled 'Jailed for 8 Years for a group Chat: Challenging Institutional Racism in the Courts' showed clearly the racism that continues to be inherent within the UK's Criminal Justice System (CJS). Figures quoted in his lecture indicate that,

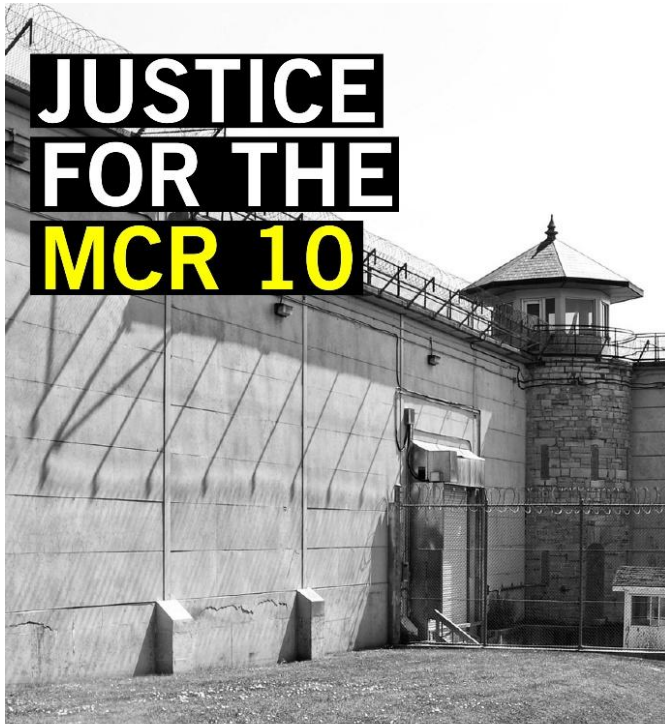
"95% of the legal profession surveyed said that Racial Bias plays some role in the processes and /or outcomes of the justice system  
63% said it plays a significant role  
29% said it played a fundamental role."

In addition to the lecture delivered by Keir Monteith, we were privileged to hear a presentation from Ademola Adedeji, the young man who has been acquitted. He spoke movingly about the impact that his conviction and time in prison had had on him as a young person and on his family. He also described his determination to speak on behalf of those young people who remain in prison and who continue to experience racism at the hands of the CJS. The CJS continues to discriminate against people such as Ade, adding further trauma to them and their families. Unlike prisoners who are released after serving their prison sentence, Ade was offered no support on his release and no apology for his wrongful conviction. Also see [this interview with Ade from The Guardian](#)

We continue to follow and support the Manchester 10 case involving the ten boys/young men of colour who were found guilty of conspiracy to murder or conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm based on a racist 'gang' narrative used by the prosecution. As reported previously, most of the boys are in the process of launching appeals against their conviction and their sentences.

Three years on from the initial sentencing, one of the boys has been acquitted on appeal and three boys have had their sentences reduced meaning that three of the boys are now back home and another will be released soon.

We continue to pay tribute to the tireless, brilliant work done by [Kids of Colour](https://kidsofcolour.com/) who have supported the Manchester 10 and their families throughout this time and continue to do so. They have also co-ordinated support within Greater Manchester for the boys as well as continuing their vital work as an anti-racist youth organisation in our city. Please support them if you are able to do so, by donating to their work and following their social media. <https://kidsofcolour.com/>



We have created a flyer explaining about the Manchester 10 and directing people via a QR code to a statement about the Manchester 10 on our webpage together with some actions that they can take on their behalf.

We are very grateful to Fynn who has recently joined Manchester Amnesty and designed the flyer for us. Thank you Fynn!

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION:**

- Find out more about the Manchester 10 (see overleaf)
- Sign the 'Art Not Evidence' petition to stop music being used as evidence in court at <https://artnotevidence.org/>
- Support Kids of Colour, the Manchester anti-racist youth work organisation supporting the Manchester 10 and their families



## Online Presentation by Umbareen for Amnesty UK's Central England Network

We were pleased to be invited to give a presentation to members of Amnesty UK's Central England Network (ACEN) about the work of our own anti-racism sub-group. Umbareen put together an excellent presentation, which she delivered to approximately 20 people along with some other members of our group. The presentation was well received and those attending were grateful for the opportunity to ask questions and get some ideas about starting their own anti-racism work within their local areas. Umbareen inspired at least one person to start their own Anti-Racism book club straight after the presentation and we hope that many other Amnesty UK groups will include anti-racism education and campaigning in their work. We are very grateful to Umbareen for all the time and energy that she put into giving the presentation on our behalf.

## Campaign to Scrap the government's Prevent duty

At our April in person meeting, Tom Milnes, who is leading the group's Scrap Prevent campaign work gave a very helpful overview of our work to date. Members may remember that in 2024, we researched the interests of Manchester City Councillors and then approached 12 of them who it seemed might be interested in helping with our campaign. We were advised to go straight to the Council Leader, Bev Craig, and wrote to her in December, 2024, enclosing a copy of the AIUK report on the Prevent Duty. Unfortunately, we did not get a response to this letter.

Tom therefore suggested a change of approach. He suggested garnering grassroots support via the use of a petition to Manchester City Council. This approach would both raise awareness of the deep flaws with the Prevent Strategy, and if we could get enough signatures, the City Council will have to take some action. If we can get 100 signatures (from people who live study or work in Manchester) the council is obliged to respond to us; with 1000 signatures will trigger a debate in a Scrutiny Committee, and 4000 signatures would trigger a debate at full council.

Tom is currently in the process of designing a suitable questionnaire, which will then be distributed to gain signatures, so please look out for developments in the Fortnightly Action and Newsletter. Tom has also obtained from AIUK a number of leaflets which can be distributed to the public when we have stalls or a presence at various events.

If you want to speak to your friends and family about Prevent, you might be interested in this very useful [Messaging Guide from AIUK](#), which gives helpful tips on how to get the messages across.

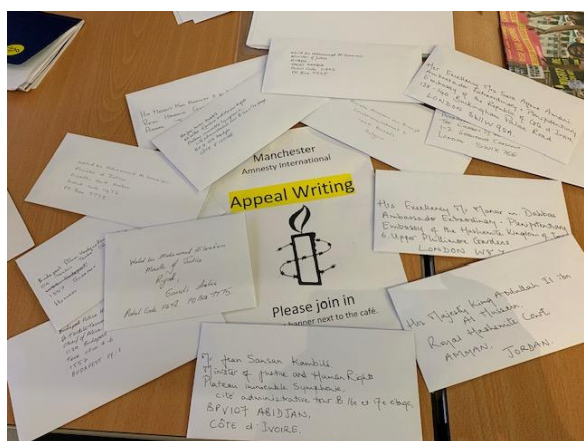


Work on the Scrap Prevent campaign is running alongside and in conjunction with that on the Israeli Settlement Goods campaign (see p 11 below) as both involve trying to engage the support of the City Councillors. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence that people, particularly schoolchildren and university students, protesting about the genocide in Palestine are being made the subject of Prevent referrals.



## Individuals at Risk

We are grateful that Liz Carter has taken over the organisation of our bi-monthly appeal-writing drop in sessions in Manchester Central Library, near the café area. These take place from 2-4pm on the fourth Saturday of January, March, May, July, September and November. All materials and information are provided. Please do join us, and bring your friends. You can come for some or all of the session, no need to book, just drop-in at a time to suit you! The pictures below were taken at the May session.



## Israel and Palestine

### News From Israel-Palestine

Just when you thought that Palestinians had suffered the most extreme suffering imaginable, their treatment becomes even worse. After 20 months of bombardment of Gaza, with well over 50,000 killed, aid convoys attacked, and schools, hospitals, places of worship destroyed, Israel has adopted new measures against the people of that troubled land. In May, Israel imposed a total blockade preventing the entry of all humanitarian aid into Gaza: food, water, medical supplies, fuel. The UN Secretary-General said that Israel's siege and starvation of Gazans makes a mockery of international law. Tom Fletcher, the UN humanitarian chief, said we would expect governments all over the world to stand for international humanitarian law; the international community is very, very clear on that.

The pretext is that Hamas steals the aid to fund its operations. The reality is that a new low has been reached in the inhumanity imposed on Palestinians. This latest action has prompted the British government and other western nations to finally issue strong condemnation of Israel. But even then the suffering is ratcheted up by Israel. In June they introduced a new aid scheme designed to bypass Hamas, with distribution centres controlled by the Israeli military. As thousands of desperate people clamoured for food and vital supplies, those who strayed out of the control zone were shot dead. 61 killed in three days. For being in the wrong place.

**WE MUST ACT. Regardless of whether we will succeed. WE MUST SPEAK OUT.**

Do not remain silent. Write to your MP. Join one of the many weekly rallies and marches organised by Greater Manchester Friends of Palestine. Join our weekly vigil in St Peter's Square – every Friday, 5-6pm.

### Weekly Vigil



Our 80<sup>th</sup> vigil for Palestine took place on Friday 6 June. In recent weeks we have introduced changes to the way we deliver our messages to make a bigger impact. We have a line of large placards with just one letter on each, spelling out: STOP THE GENOCIDE. And we now have a large banner, 60 feet long, spelling out our key messages: CEASEFIRE NOW; STOP THE GENOCIDE; HUMANITARIAN AID NOW; STOP ARMS SALES. (see photo above)

A letter in the Manchester Evening News from our member Steve Roman about the vigil and the long banner is reproduced left. The use of these banners or our pre-existing placards depends on the weather conditions on the day. We continue to receive a warm response and great support from the people of Manchester. We hope that you will join us when you can.

Letter in Manchester Evening News from our member Steve Roman.

## Amnesty UK Campaign - Ban Settlement Goods



Amnesty UK has launched a new phase of its campaign about Israel's apartheid against the Palestinians. The aim is to end UK trade with the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. AIUK's campaign material can be found [here](#), or by clicking the graphics left and below

We were delighted to have a presentation about this campaign from Amika George, AIUK Community Organiser – Local Activism. We are seeking support from MPs for an Early Day Motion (EDM) to Parliament calling on the UK Government to ban imports of goods from the illegal settlements and to prohibit UK companies from selling goods and services from the settlements. And we have set up a petition calling on Manchester City Council to exclude companies which operate or trade with the illegal Israeli settlements from their contracts and purchases.



At first sight these actions seem to set a very limited objective, compared with a total boycott of Israel. But let's look at the strengths of this campaign. Firstly it is based a call to support and implement international law. The International Court of Justice has called for all states to abstain from economic or trade dealings which support Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian Territory. And the UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/24 calls on all states to cease imports of products originating in the Israeli settlements. Amnesty's campaign is totally supportive of these measures.

Secondly there is now a much greater level of awareness and concern about the Israeli settlements. Britain and others have called on Israel to stop expanding the illegal settlements and to put an end to the violence of settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. The excellent documentary "The Settlers", by Louis Theroux ([still available on BBC i-Player](#)) caused outrage at the shocking scenes of killings, property damage and harassment.

Thirdly, Amnesty's objective is achievable. In recent weeks western governments have taken a much stronger line on Israel and have pledged to take punitive measures against them if there is no relief from the humanitarian crisis. Restrictions on trade with the illegal settlements would be an effective measure and one that can be justified on the basis of international law. The Irish Government is now drafting legislation to ban the import of goods from the settlements (see [The Irish Times](#)). We hope that the UK will follow.

## You can help with this campaign

- **Take this action** and email your MP asking them to sign EDM 1266 which can be seen here: (<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/63644>).
- Write to Councillors on Manchester City Council calling on them to support the move to adopt procurement policies which exclude companies which operate or trade with the illegal Israeli settlements.
- Promote our petition to Manchester City Council which will be circulated to Manchester Amnesty members shortly. We need 4,000 signatures to ensure a debate by Manchester City Council. These must be from people who live, work or study in the city of Manchester.

## Resolution to AIUK AGM calling for sanctions

Mike Reed has submitted a resolution to the Amnesty UK AGM calling on the Amnesty movement to support boycotts and sanctions against Israel. Manchester Amnesty Group supports the resolution. The Amnesty UK Board have stated that they cannot support this resolution as it is not in line with current policy of the international movement. They have said that they can propose it to the AI Global Assembly (international AGM) but not until 2026. We have asked the board to act with greater urgency to persuade the AI Movement to revise its policies and call for sanctions. There will undoubtedly be a lively debate at the AIUK AGM on 5-6 July.

## Global March to Gaza

Mo Miah, a keen member of Manchester Amnesty, is joining the Global March to Gaza. This is a peaceful march of 48km in Egypt from Al Arish to Rafah, the southern entry point into Gaza. The march hopes to draw world attention to Israel's illegal blockade of aid and vital supplies into Gaza, resulting in further suffering for the Palestinian people. Mo flies out to Egypt as we write and will march over 2-3 days arriving on 15 June. Watch the news media for further reports. We invite supporters to help Mo with the funding for his brave excursion.

To contribute, please contact Mike Reed, Israel Campaign Leader, Manchester Amnesty [mikewreed101@gmail.com](mailto:mikewreed101@gmail.com)



# LGTBQ+ rights

## United Kingdom

On 16 April 2025, the [UK Supreme Court ruled](#) that the terms 'woman' and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological women and biological sex. This decision followed a legal challenge by campaign group For Women Scotland, which argued against the inclusion of transgender women in the definition of 'woman' under Scottish legislation requiring gender quotas on public bodies. While the court emphasised that transgender people continue to be protected under the Equality Act, the decision sparked mixed reactions: Feminist groups celebrated the decision as a victory for women's rights, while LGBTQ+ organisations raised concerns about potential discrimination. Amnesty International UK [intervened in the case](#) and campaigned for the protection of transgender rights. The organisation argued that removing protection from sex discrimination for transgender people breached human rights laws and emphasised the importance of legal gender recognition in ensuring equality and freedom from discrimination. After the ruling, [AIUK issued a press release](#) saying that it was disappointed and calling for the enforcement of protections for trans people against discrimination and harassment.

On 14 April 2025, it was [reported](#) that pressure on libraries in the UK to remove LGBTQ+ content has increased. This trend appears to be influenced by similar movements in the United States. Research has shown, for instance, that the majority of requests to remove books from UK school libraries are for LGBTQ+ content. Titles such as the Heartstopper series by Alice Oseman, which is about a romantic relationship between two male students, and Billy's Bravery by Tom Percival, which is about a boy who dresses up as a superhero, have been requested for removal.

## Hungary



On 14 April 2025, the Hungarian parliament passed a constitutional amendment allowing the government to ban public LGBTQ+ events, including Pride marches. The amendment, which required a two-thirds majority, was passed with 140 votes in favour and 21 against. The government claims that the law prioritises the moral, physical and mental development of children over other rights and presents it as a measure to protect traditional family values. However, critics

argue that it effectively criminalises LGBTQ+ expression and assembly and represents a further step towards authoritarianism under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government. Human rights activists and legal scholars have condemned the law on the grounds that it undermines freedom of expression and assembly. The amendment also tightens existing legislation prohibiting the 'representation or promotion' of homosexuality to minors and stipulates that a person is either male or female, refusing to recognise transgender identities. This move has been heavily criticised by the European Union and human rights organisations.



Thanks to three of our members who attended a Stockport Pride event on 1<sup>st</sup> June, helping out on the Stockport Amnesty stall.

## US anti-LGBTQI+ movement

Across the United States, bills and executive orders contribute to making life impossible for trans and intersex people under the false pretence of “defending women.” The most recent measures taken by the US government against LGBTQI+ include:

- On 04 June 2025: US Navy to rename ship honouring gay rights leader and veteran Harvey Milk
- Foreign Aid Cuts: A sweeping executive order issued on January 20, 2025, suspended U.S. foreign aid, impacting programs supporting LGBTI rights worldwide. Amnesty International reported that these cuts disrupted HIV prevention, sexual violence survivor support, and humanitarian aid.
- Federal Budget Reductions: Trump's proposed budget for 2025 includes an estimated \$2.67 billion in cuts to programs serving LGBTI communities, according to The Human Rights Campaign. This includes eliminating funding for gender-affirming care research, restructuring HIV/AIDS programs, and removing grants for investigating anti-LGBTI hate crimes

## Refugee Rights

### Our campaign for a fair asylum system

In late March/early April, together with Manchester City of Sanctuary and Rethink Rebuild Society (the Syrian community in Manchester) we wrote to 18 Greater Manchester MPs whose constituents had signed our petition supporting our call for an efficient and humane asylum system. The email, which was based on resources from Together with Refugees, was reproduced in the March Quarterly bulletin. So far, we have received replies from 4 MPs, Lucy Powell, Jeff Smith, Kirith Entwistle and Tom Morrison. Lucy Powell, Jeff Smith and Kirith Entwistle forwarded our emails to Angela Eagle, the Minister for Border Security and Asylum, and then wrote back to us with her response. Dame Angela's letter referred to the government's intention to restore the asylum system by investing in a transformative improvement programme, and also referred to the government's commitment to a programme of integration for refugees.

We replied, saying:

*We will continue to look closely at the Government's policies and practice in relation to asylum-seekers and refugees. We are all in daily contact with refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly helping them to resolve difficulties with their asylum applications and establishing new lives in Britain. We are therefore in a good position to assess how far the Government's initiatives are indeed contributing towards a fair, well-managed and compassionate asylum system*

Tom Morrison asked us to send him some more specific questions that we wanted him to address, and potentially to table for PMQs. These questions were written in consultation with our partner organisations and Together with Refugees and sent in early June.

## New Amnesty International UK Briefing

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, [AIUK published a new briefing](#) for the House of Lords Second Reading of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill (HL Bill 101). The briefing is well worth reading as it highlights the failings of the current asylum system, which is certainly “processing” people more quickly than was the case previously, but the quality of the decisions is highly questionable. The briefing outlines the many inadequacies of the government’s bill and regrets its anti-migrant tone.

Members may not be aware of the extraordinary provisions in Clause 43 of the bill, which would give the Home Secretary sweeping powers to attach draconian conditions and restrictions on immigrants (e.g. on work, study, access to public funds, and the imposition of electronic tagging, curfew, confinement or exclusion from designated areas). The effect would be to introduce policing and counter-terror measures for all migrants in the UK except those who are permanent residents. There would be very limited oversight and scrutiny of the Home Secretary’s decisions. Amnesty describes this provision as a “profound overreach” that would fundamentally destabilise the immigration system.

## Refugee Month Activities



On 1<sup>st</sup> June, the first day of Refugee Month, we had an Amnesty stall at a garden that opened during Levenshulme + Burnage Open Gardens. This year the proceeds from the Open Gardens went to *Levenshulme Growing Together*, a refugee allotment/ gardening project, as well as publicising the need for more hosts to provide emergency accommodation through Refugees at Home. Our presence highlighted Amnesty's support for asylum seekers



and refugees, with a display of orange felt hearts, our “Refugees Welcome” pennants and banner, and information about Manchester Amnesty’s campaigning on refugee rights. We

invited visitors to write a simple message to refugees on an orange heart. These messages (and others which will be collected at similar events during refugee month) will be distributed to refugees via our contacts with various refugee organisations in Manchester.



## Forthcoming event

### Acoustic Amnesty

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June , Holy Trinity Church Salford, 7.30pm  
To welcome refugees and raise funds for Amnesty and Refugee Charities  
Please come along. Get your tickets [here](#).

## Other actions

In April, Manchester Amnesty was a signatory to an open letter to the Prime Minister, signed by 136 organisations and reported in [The Guardian](#), calling for an end to anti-migrant rhetoric. The full text of the open letter can be found [here](#).



In May, after the Prime Minister's "Island of Strangers" speech, Manchester Amnesty signed a statement from Asylum Matters (also signed by some of us individually), entitled "Island of Solidarity not Strangers," deploring the divisive language the Prime Minister had used. This was reported in [The Mirror](#).

## United Arab Emirates

In March 2025 the supreme court of the UAE rejected the appeals of 53 people convicted in 2024 and upheld the sentences of those convicted. 43 people were given life sentences, including Mohammed al-Roken. Five others, including Ahmed Mansoor, were given 15 years. We are concerned to learn that Ahmed Mansoor (whose poem "Final Choice" is reproduced below) remains in solitary confinement.

"It's a tragedy to put on trial innocent citizens who mostly served their initial sentences, solely due to the intention of the authorities to keep them in prison indefinitely for their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities," said Khalid Ibrahim, Executive Director of Gulf Centre for Human Rights.



Our subgroup has started to meet again and has welcomed new members. We will continue to campaign for the release of both men and demand that Ahmed Mansoor is no longer kept in solitary confinement. We are looking at using his poetry to collaborate with local poets as a way to do both outreach and develop material to boost our social media messages. Please contact Kathryn if you are interested in joining the subgroup.

A beautiful poem, entitled Final Choice, by Ahmed Mansoor appears on the next page.



### ***Final Choice by Ahmed Mansoor***

*I have no other means now  
but a tight-lipped silence in the square and through corridors  
Since I have tried everything  
screams, chants, signboards  
obstructing roads  
and lying on the ground in front of the queues  
Cutting through the procession with eggs, tomatoes, and  
blazing tires  
Hurling burning bottles and stones*

*Stripped naked in front of the public  
Carving statements in the flesh  
Walking masked in front of cameras  
Dressed in shackles  
Tied and chained to garden fences  
Swallowing rusty razor blades and splintered glass  
Hacking off fingers with a machete  
and hanging myself from the lampposts  
Dousing the body with kerosene  
and setting it aflame*

*I have tried all this, but you didn't even turn to look  
This time, I swear  
I won't utter a word, or move  
I will stay the way I am  
until you turn to look  
or until I am petrified*

Final Choice by Ahmed Mansoor

## **Manchester Amnesty stall at MMU Sustainability Festival**



For the 4<sup>th</sup> year running, Manchester Amnesty had a stall at the annual Manchester Metropolitan University Sustainability Festival on 6<sup>th</sup> June. As well as showcasing many aspects of the work that our group does, our stall featured a “Human Rights Lucky Dip” (see report on Human Rights festival below for more details of this activity.)

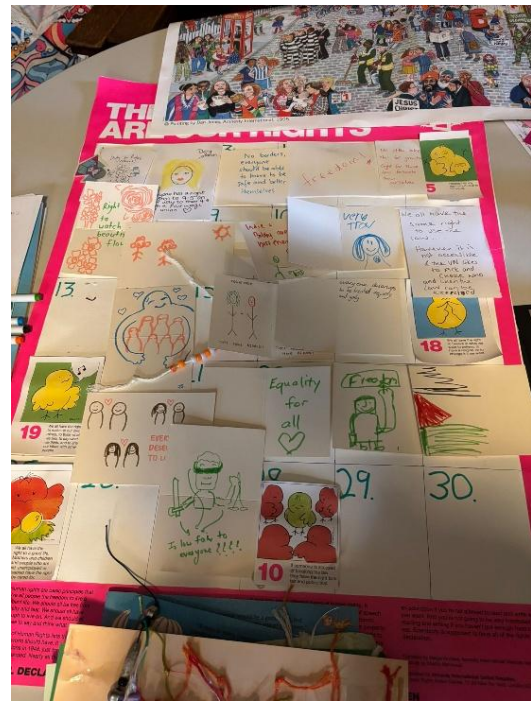
## Amnesty Ole North West Human Rights & Arts Festival, Liverpool, June 7<sup>th</sup>

We had a stall at this wonderful celebration of Human Rights which was organised by North West Amnesty with a lot of help from the Liverpool group. Originally planned to take place in Sefton Park, due to poor weather the venue was switched at the last minute to a nearby church. Many thanks to the organisers who worked so hard to put this on, and indeed to all who accommodated the last minute venue change and made the festival such a success. A wide variety of organisations were represented and there were many great performances.



We were delighted to be joined on our stall by 5 members of the new Manchester University Amnesty group who helped us all day with our activities. Our main activity was a "Human Rights Lucky Dip". We made little candles, each containing a child-friendly representation of one of the 30 rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These were placed in a large bran tub, decorated to look like the Amnesty candle, and festival-goers could dip into the tub to draw out a right. We then provided the opportunity for children (and adults) to draw or write something about the right they had picked out. Children were offered a beaded friendship bracelet as a little present to take away. The activity was enjoyable, and many people engaged with it, especially after we decided to move it to the "Children's Room." See pictures on the next page.

As well as our lucky dip activity, we had leaflets and posters about various aspects of our work, including our Israel/Palestine campaign, refugee rights, and our work for justice for the Manchester 10.



Our lucky dip activities at the North West Human Rights Festival, 7<sup>th</sup> June

## AIUK Social Security campaign



We were pleased that Manchester was chosen for the national launch of a new Amnesty report highlighting how failures of social security in the UK have a major impact on people's human rights, but denying them access to adequate food, housing and transport for example. Several of us attended the launch event.