

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

ER1: The Future of Amnesty's Bookshops

Proposer: Islington and Hackney Local Group

Summary: Seeks to pause the proposed closure of four of the nine local bookshops and the online bookshop pending a more thorough review and consultation process.

Resolution text: This AGM resolves that the Board of AIUK immediately pauses the recently proposed closure of four of the nine local Amnesty International UK Bookshops (Hammersmith, Kentish Town, York and Great Malvern) and the online Bookshop, and undertakes a more thorough review before any further decisions about the future of the Bookshops are considered, including a transparent and detailed assessment of the potential of each individual shop to generate income for AIUK.

The review must include meaningful consultation with all affected staff and the many Bookshop volunteers, as well as full exploration of the:

- community and recruitment benefits of the Bookshops to AIUK;
- current state of the market for second hand book sales;
- alternative cost savings options;
- methodology and details of income projections;

- rationale and explanation of the calculation of 'centrally incurred costs' shown on the accounts of the Bookshops.

Background note: AIUK announced a consultation exercise on 2 June 2025 on a proposal to close 4 local bookshops and the online bookshop, with feedback initially requested from staff and volunteers by 23 June, subsequently extended to 7 July. This came without prior discussion or warning and with insufficient background information on the profitability of each individual shop and the online Bookshop or explanation of the process of reviewing the bookshop activities. We recognise that the primary function of the shops is to generate income for Amnesty, but have not been provided with adequate evidence that each branch is not profitable.

Board background note:

The Board remains neutral and looks forward to hearing the debate on this resolution.

Work to date

The Section operates nine second-hand bookshops and a centrally managed online bookshop. Their primary purpose is to generate profits to support human rights work. Bookshops are staffed by a combination of paid staff and volunteers. The Board recognises the dedication of both groups and their commitment to Amnesty and human rights.

Unfortunately, a number of those shops have for some time been heavily loss-making and are forecast to continue to face financial difficulties.

Between 2016 and 2024, Hammersmith bookshop made a loss of over £379,000,

Kentish Town (opened 2019) a loss of £406,000, York a loss of £486,000 and Great Malvern a loss of £224,000. The central online bookshop made a loss of £123,000, even with cost-free space for stock storage.

Future projections for these shops were informed by a review led by the Section's Social Giving & Retail Team leadership. They forecast ongoing loss-making. The Section's calculations of profits/losses from shops, including the apportionment of centrally incurred costs, is externally audited, forming part of the trading profit / loss reported to HMRC to determine corporation tax liability. The Board is confident that the methodologies and financial calculations for the bookshops are robust and reflect accepted accounting practice.

Loss-making by these shops reduces the amount of funding available for the Section's human rights work.

A consultation is underway with affected staff. The Section exceeds statutory requirements in the conduct of such consultations and adheres to other recommended good practice (such as ACAS guidance). In addition to statutory requirements, meetings have been held that were open to all volunteers in the affected shops. Decisions will only be made after detailed consideration of the consultation responses and any alternative proposals received.

Resource implications

Delays to the process will prolong uncertainty for shop staff and volunteers, and will require ongoing support from teams supporting the consultation. Delays will also prolong the losses incurred in the shops proposed for closure.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

The proposed changes were subject to a full EIA. Where a potential effect was identified, mitigating actions have also been identified. The resolution itself has no significant equalities impact, although this may be dependent on the length of delay.

