

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

**Thursday 11th September 2025** - *This meeting was held on Zoom*

**Chair: Helen**

### Welcome and introduction

**13** people joined the meeting tonight: Helen, Iona, Peter, Vicky, Liz, Michael, Ian, Sue, Mus, Paula, Blanca, Ilaria, Ruth  
Apologies - Angus, Hilary, Anne

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### Group Updates – review of recent events:

- **Basingstoke Pride: Feedback**

Basingstoke Pride struggled financing the day which resulted in the venue changing to a smaller site – we therefore lost out on having a stall. However, good weather added to a good enjoyable day. Although we didn't have a stall our presence was felt by handing out leaflets, stickers and 100 postcards. The event was also local for some members. It was decided to see what they come up with for next year.

- **Reading Pride: Feedback**

This event has been going for 20 years, starting small but has flourished. The layout had changed this year and the weather was not on our side, so people didn't stay one as the weather deteriorated. However, it was friendly, energised and 300 people signed petitions. 10 people also signed up and money donated almost covered the cost of the pitch.

NB: lost gazebo due to windy weather and the framework losing nuts and bolts - canopy torn. Reading library of free things sometimes lists free gazebos so we could explore that in the future.

- **Reading Amnesty Group Meal Out:** well attended and went really well

- **Chance2Dance4Charity** – a great night out – very well attended 51 people, nearly £300 for Amnesty. Thanks to Sue for organising as always.

Two tickets to the Rugby final in Twickenham next year had been donated to the Chance to Dance raffle. It was decided to have a silent auction to raise the maximum amount of money - details of this auction to follow.

## Group business

- **Afghan Women Campaign**

As part of our work to raise awareness about, and our own understanding of, the situation for women in Afghanistan, 3 group members attended an event to mark the 4th year since the Taliban regained power. Hosted by Amnesty Feminists, we watched an excellent, BAFTA nominated short film ["Yellow"](#) and heard from its filmmaker, Elham Ehsas. Entrepreneur and poet, Meral Alizada and spoke about how voices need to be given directly to Afghan women and poet Hadisa Hussain Afzalay read some of her very moving pieces. Whilst mostly a tough listen, all three were able to speak of joy and hope, able to bring humour and smiles as well as a passionate determination to do what they can to draw attention to the situation. Members feedback: a fantastic powerful event, left with a different connection to the country and what Afghan women are going through.

- Campaign focus for 2025 - Afghan Women. Please take action by following the [link](#) to the Amnesty Feminists: Rise With Afghan Women Advocacy letter The three main points in the letter are:
  1. What is the UK Government currently doing to protect the rights of women and girls In Afghanistan
  2. Is the UK Government planning to formally join Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands case at the International Court of Justice?
  3. How will the UK Government formally support the [campaign](#) to codify Gender Apartheid under international law?
- Helen and Ilaria will discuss when to present the main petition to 10 Downing Street. The other petition will be handed to local MP Olivia Bailey (Reading West & Mid-Berkshire) who will present it to parliament.
- The webinar is still not finalised. We have speakers and organisers lined up. However, one of our speakers is very involved in the aftermath of the earthquake in Afghanistan, so we haven't heard back from her recently

- **Country coordinators:**

- **LGBTQ:** Hong Kong a bill going through parliament was rejected. Amnesty urging for a revised bill. See [Amnesty USA website](#)
- **LGBTQ:** Poland: Twitter/X Facilitated Spread of Anti-LGBTI Hatred and Harassment [See link](#)
- **Death Penalty Action:** [USA: Missouri's first execution of 2025 imminent](#)
  - Copy and paste the text into the Governor's web site - for State choose Foreign Correspondence.
- **Urgent Action:** [Saudi Man At Imminent Risk Of Execution](#)
- **Cuba:** news from a friend - for people without wealth, access to power has been for only 2hrs a day and water tanks are only refilled once a month. However, tourist areas are okay. Visas to the UK are being refused.
- **PoC** - Helen requested 'Happy Birthday' messages for both of our group's Prisoners of Conscience - Ahmed Mansoor and Dr Mohammed al-Roken from the UAE. Please send them to her.
- **Urgent Action:** [Viet Nam: Grave Concern For Imprisoned Activist's Health](#)
- **South Asia Network** - [August Newsletter & actions](#)
- **Refugees** - please take action for refugees in your local community by adapting [this letter](#) and sending to your local councillors
- It was noted that there are urgent actions in Italy and Spain for the right to demonstrate & associated arrests in the UK

## Upcoming events

- **Reading International Festival** – our contribution this year will be the “Surviving Evin Prison” Exhibition. The Reading Biscuit Factory have offered to host this for free for all of November. See [promo leaflet](#) – so many good events going on!
- **Our Hong Konger friends** have approached us looking for £350 funding for a joint film event, one recommended by Amnesty.  
Helen to see if any funding can be sourced from Amnesty's Hong Kong programme.
- **Barn Dance:** Band ok to do it and same venue booked
  - Mus volunteered to do the flyers and posters.
  - It was suggested we invite Hong Kongers.
  - Suggested to form a sub whatsapp group to organise the event
  - Discussed whether to include food - suggestions of take out food order or bring your own food
- **New letter writing sessions booked.** They will be held on the 4th Saturday of the month. Covering our three local MPs areas. There will be a mixture of paper letters and qr codes

1. Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September – Pangbourne Library 10.45-12noon
2. Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October – Reading Biscuit Factory – 11.30am-1pm
3. Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November – Woodley Library – 11.30am-1pm

### Tonight's Topic

We should have had a fascinating talk from Amnesty's Evidence Lab, showing us how Amnesty uses multiple sources to gather evidence about human rights crimes.

Unfortunately, the secretary had not had replies to the emails sent and the speaker did not attend. Helen to follow up with the group's officer at AIUK.

### Upcoming dates

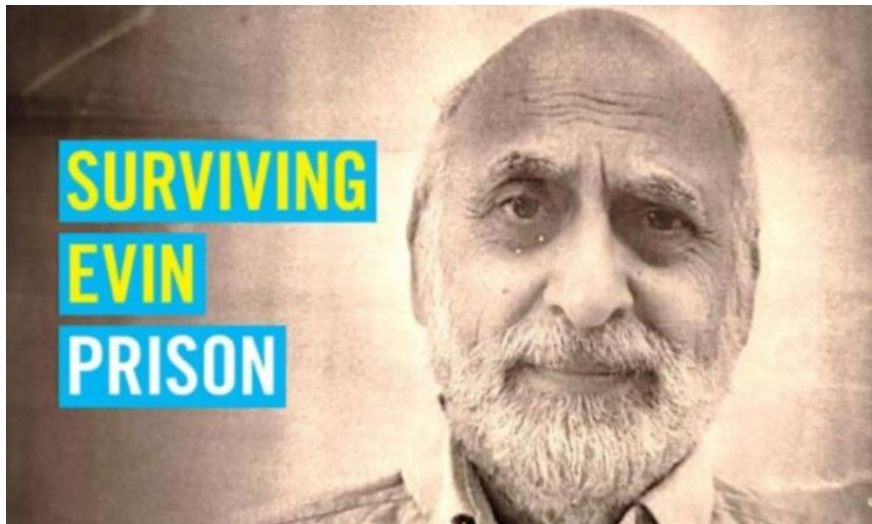
#### Our Group's confirmed Upcoming Events:

Event	Dates	Venue
Surviving Evin Prison Exhibition	1 <sup>st</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> November	Reading Biscuit Factory – see their opening hours
Barn Dance with the Scamping Rogues <b>Booking open now!</b>	Saturday 15th November, 7.30pm	St John & St Stephens church <a href="#"><b>BOOK HERE!!!</b></a>
Write for Rights	Thursday 11th December, 7.30-9.00pm	Reading Biscuit Factory

**Next meeting:** Thursday 9th October 2025 Zoom at 8pm

Zoom link -

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82789559652?pwd=hQpxJaOWfEHppKy3KdMjzaob2X0hF6.1>



**A powerful new pop-up exhibition will lay bare the experience of UK national Anooosheh Ashoori who was arbitrarily jailed for 4½ years in Iran until his release - alongside Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe - in March 2022**

***1<sup>st</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> November – Reading Biscuit Factory***

***upstairs workroom space***

**“Surviving Evin”** recreates the emotional and physical reality of his detention and will feature personal items Ashoori was able to smuggle out of Tehran’s notorious Evin prison after his release.

**This powerful exhibition** is designed to take visitors through the years Ashoori spent in detention, from his arrest by Iranian intelligence officers and his first interrogations, time spent in solitary confinement, daily life with other inmates, the impact of his family’s campaigning back home, and life after release.

**Anooosheh Ashoori said:**

“This exhibition aims to provide a deep insight into the challenges and triumphs I encountered during the 1,677 days of captivity, as well as life after my release.

I think the exhibition is a testament to the ability of the human spirit to endure, to find hope amid despair, to face adversity and to emerge stronger. I hope it reminds everyone who visits of the importance of empathy, understanding and solidarity in our shared humanity.”

This exhibition is part of the Reading International Festival  
and presented by the Reading Amnesty International Group.

[www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/reading](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/reading)

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