

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

Thursday 9th October 2025 - *This meeting was held on Zoom*



Chair: Anne

### Welcome and introduction

10 people joined the meeting tonight: Anne, Iona, Vicky, Ian, Sue, Paula, Iona, Blanca, Ilaria, Dylan

Apologies - Helen, Hilary, Mike, Angus, Liz, Ruth

### Group Updates:

- **Chance2Dance:**

Total money made = £616.30 shared between Amnesty and [Brave Mind](#). It was a fantastic Chance2Dance event - one of the best. The next one is in six months time - add it to your diary!

- **Anti - Trump Demo:**

The march was well organised, with well spaced out meeting points for the coalition of 50 groups that took part. Police estimated 5000 people took part. Marching from Portland Place to Parliament Square where speakers included Billy Bragg, former Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana, comedian Nish Kumar, and Green Party leader Zack Polanski.

It was noted that as well as banners and T-shirts Amnesty organisers handed out information about what to do and who to contact if arrested.

Amnesty UK held a debrief after the march along with food and activities designed to further thinking on 'next steps'. It also provided a good opportunity to network and chat with other groups.

- **The Law of Mayhem:**

The play ran at The Haymarket, Basingstoke from 18th–20th September 2025. Not a huge audience, but they were happy to add signatures to the petitions. Also the manager was open to Amnesty returning for other events in the future.

\*It was noted people were surprised to see Amnesty there, as they thought the organisation only dealt with Prisoners of Conscience (see survey below)

- **Reading Freshers Fair 2025:**

It was great fun! The 'Wheel of Misfortune' was used for the first time and provided a great way to start conversations. It was nice to have Care4Calais and Reading Refugee Support Group as our neighbours as we were able to talk throughout the day. Good contacts were made and good to raise our visibility.

9 people joined the mailing list - using the QR code. They were steered towards joining the [UoR Amnesty International society](#).

- **Letter writing:**

Meeting on the 4th Saturday of the month at 3 locations, which covers our 3 Reading MPs. The next one is at Reading Biscuit Factory from 11:30 - 13:00. The decision on which letters to use will be made each month based on location and current events. It will also help to build our visibility - progress will be monitored.

- West Reading Pangbourne Library
- Central Reading Biscuit Factory
- Whitley Library - Saturday 22nd Nov

- **Reading Pride Petitions:**

Numbers have been added to the national figures.

- 160 signatures and lots of postcards for Trans Discourse
- 180 for both End Conversion Therapy and Criminalisation of LGBTQ rights in Russia

## **Upcoming Events and Reminders**

1. **Letter writing** - 25th October at Reading Biscuit Factory
2. **Barn Dance** - [buy your tickets](#) link also on newsletter and Facebook
3. **Surviving Evin Prison Exhibition** - 1st - 30th November at Reading Biscuit Factory. Included on the [Reading International Festival 2025](#) events programme. Helen is hoping to arrange a visit by Anoosheh Ashoori, who is the focus of the exhibition.
4. **Funding for Reading Hong Kongers Film** - No joy from AIUK, although still pursuing this avenue. Reading Hong Kongers are looking at a smaller venue which would reduce the cost from £350 to £100. As a joint event Amnesty could collect donations and members felt as it would be a joint event it did fit in with Amnesty principles. Also China Country Coordinator is in the loop. Therefore in principle members agreed they would be happy to use £100 to help fund the event.
5. **Breaking The Silence Webinar - Disillusioned Israeli Soldiers Speak Out** - 16th October
6. **Understanding United Nations Human Rights** - meeting webinar - 15th October
7. **City of Sanctuary** - 22nd October introductory meeting. Anne will be talking to the new co-ordinator for reading, who has reached out to build connections with Amnesty.

## **Group Campaign Update:**

- **Afghan Women:**
  - Webinar - postponed until the new year because one of the speakers has gone silent following the earthquake. Also a new country coordinator has just been appointed.
  - Petition - Helen and Ilaria are to contact Olivia Bailey (MP for Reading West and Mid Berkshire) to have her present it in The House.
  - 10 Downing Street Petition - Afghan Women Team are looking at a date in early February 2026, allowing time for a final push for signatures.
  - Next month's meeting - AIUK's new Afghan country coordinator speaking about his new role.

## **Country & Campaign Co-ordinators:**

- **LGBTQ** - [Slovakia passed a law recognising only two genders.](#)
- **LGBTQ** - [Burkina Faso: Criminalization of consensual same-sex relations between adults](#)
- **Turkey** - 100 detained on the day of Istanbul LGBTI Pride, but all now released, trials pending.

## Annual Groups' Survey:

Members discussed the following questions and made the following suggestions:

### 6. Skill development

**What skills do you feel your group would benefit from learning? (Select all that apply)**

- To learn how to better run campaigns in your area
- To learn how to effectively advocate and engage with MPs
- To learn about Amnesty campaigns and what actions to take
- To learn how to run successful fundraising events
- To learn how to build stronger relationships and engage with local communities
- To learn how to collaborate more effectively with other local organisations and groups
- Other (please specify)

**What is your preference for training delivery? (Select all that apply)**

- Digital/e-learning platform
- Online webinar
- In-person

We would like to have training on how to deal with the general public to de-escalate situations and deal with difficult conversations. Also to understand and learn Amnesty's priorities

### 7. Support and Overall Group Health

**What additional support do you need from the AIUK Community Organising - Local Activism team? (Select all that apply)**

- Training
- 1-on-1 sessions with Community Organising staff
- Yearly group planning pack
- Activity action packs
- Other (please specify)

**What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the group? (Select all that apply)**

- Lack of active members
- Difficulty in recruiting new members
- Limited resources
- Low visibility in the community
- Other (please specify)

**Considering these various aspects of the group, how would you describe the overall status of the group?**

- Growing: the group is expanding in membership and activities, with increasing engagement
- Stable: the group has a consistent level of participation and activities, with no significant changes
- Evolving: the group is undergoing changes, such as new leadership or shifting focus
- Struggling: the group is facing challenges such as declining membership, reduced activity, or lack of engagement
- At Risk: the group is at risk of closing
- Dormant: the group is currently inactive

We would appreciate additional support for:

- identifying and locating contacts within Amnesty - a top-down Organisational Tree of *who and where*
- connecting with other organisations

Our biggest challenge is around how do we diversify our group. We wondered whether interest might be related to how people perceive Amnesty nationally\*. Reading is a diverse and integrated community, so it was felt our group is not representative of the community at large

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

| <b>Event</b>                                                            | <b>Dates</b>                   | <b>Venue</b>                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Understanding United Nations Human Rights                               | 15th October                   | Webinar                                                        |
| Breaking The Silence Webinar - Disillusioned Israeli Soldiers Speak Out | 16th October                   | Webinar                                                        |
| Letter writing                                                          | 25th October                   | Reading Biscuit Factory                                        |
| Barn Dance with the Scamping Rogues                                     | Saturday 15th November, 7-10pm | St John & St Stephens Church - <a href="#">booking details</a> |
| Surviving Evin Prison Exhibition                                        | 1st - 30th November            | Reading Biscuit Factory                                        |

**Next meeting:** Thursday 13th November 2025  
Zoom at 8pm

[\*\*ZOOM Link\*\*](#)

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