



Manchester Group Quarterly Bulletin Number 15, December 2025

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This newsletter is compiled by the Group Communications Secretary, Alison Wearden (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.

News from our campaigns

Anti-Racism and Prevent

Anti-racism sub-group update

There was positive news for three families in Manchester last month when the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) referred the cases of three young men found guilty under joint enterprise laws to the court of appeal. The three young men have all been in prison since 2017 following their controversial prosecution under joint enterprise laws. The CCRC has agreed that there are potential grounds for all three of the convictions to be unsafe.

This is very good news for the families and supporters who have worked tirelessly for many years to achieve justice for their loved ones. However, there is still a long way to go before justice is achieved for the three young men. The progress in their cases is another example of the amazing work of the grassroots campaigning group, Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association (JENGbA). JENGbA continues to raise awareness of these cases and many other similar cases as well as campaigning for changes to the law to prevent these injustices occurring.

We will provide updates as we hear more news of the appeal hearings so that we can join supporters in the public gallery at the court of appeal. As well as providing support for the young men and their families during the hearings, it is important to show the strength of feeling from the Manchester community about the injustice that these young men and many others are experiencing as a result of the racist use of joint enterprise laws.

You can read more about this specific case and the upcoming appeals in this recent [Guardian article](#) by David Conn.

Campaign to Scrap the government's Prevent duty

On 29th November, Manchester Amnesty hosted an Open Meeting on systemic racism in government policy and legislation. The event focused particularly on two issues - the campaign to scrap the government's 'Prevent' duty and the campaign against Joint Enterprise laws which lead to so many innocent people, disproportionately young men of colour, being convicted of serious offences such as murder or conspiracy.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Layla Aitlhadj, the Director of Prevent Watch, who spoke about her work assisting people who had been referred to Prevent, and provided some worrying statistics about the effects of the Prevent strategy. We then had a panel discussion with questions and input from the floor. The panellists were Jan Cunliffe, co-founder of JENGbA (Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association), Davina Kaur of the AIUK Anti-Racism Network, and Ameen Hadi, Chair of the NW TUC Black Worker's Committee.

We had about 60 attendees from Amnesty and other organisations, many of whom signed up to join our campaign against Prevent locally. The event was a great success, hugely informative, provoked a lively discussion and there were lots of ideas for future

campaigning. Thanks to our Prevent co-ordinator Tom Milnes for organising such a great event.

We're building a movement and 'Scrap Prevent' team in Manchester - to get involved, sign up [here](https://amnestyuk.wufoo.com/forms/x742z7114ecwg8/) and we'll reach out!

<https://amnestyuk.wufoo.com/forms/x742z7114ecwg8/> [amnestyuk.wufoo.com]



L-R: Tom Milnes, Manchester Amnesty; Jan Cunliffe, JENGbA; Ameen Hadi, NW TUC; Davina Kaur, AIUK; Dr Layla Aitlhadj, Prevent Watch.



Members of the Manchester Amnesty team at the Open Meeting.

Human Rights in the UK

The UK Home Office has opened a ten-week public consultation on police use of facial recognition and biometric technologies (FRBT), aiming to expand live facial recognition beyond the ten forces that currently use it. The consultation includes proposals for a new regulator, though any resulting legislation is at least two years away. The consultation opened on 4th December and runs to 2nd February, and can be accessed [here](#).

The Government has invested over £15 million in facial recognition policing since 2024, despite criticism from human rights organisations. In August, the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) warned that current use is disproportionate and infringes on rights and called on the government to ensure that the use of FRBT complies with human rights law. Liberty director Akiko Hart welcomed the consultation but urged the Government to halt the rapid rollout until strong safeguards are introduced. Liberty have provided useful resources [here](#). [Big Brother Watch](#) director Silkie Carlo said the consultation is overdue and that police use of FRBT should be paused pending its outcome.

Concerns about racial bias are significant: the Home Office acknowledges misidentification rates of 0.04% for white people compared with 5.5% for Black people and 4% for Asian people. Earlier this year, the Metropolitan Police chose not to use live facial recognition at the far-right “Unite the Kingdom” rally, despite deploying it weeks earlier at Notting Hill Carnival. There are countless reports in the media of cases of mis-identification leading to incorrect charges, but there are many other issues to take into account too, including the storage of the data, who will be able to access and use it and for what purposes.

Members may wish to respond to the consultation as individuals. There is also an ongoing discussion among members of the UK-wide Human Rights Collective (many of whom are Amnesty members). Alison can pass on the details for joining if you would like to do that.

Would there be any appetite for convening a small group of Manchester Amnesty members to discuss the issues and co-ordinate our responses? If you are interested, please email Alison Wearden or Richard Umpleby alison.wearden@gmail.com; richump@live.co.uk

Finally, while we have focused on this major consultation on FRBT in this month’s bulletin, it takes place against the backdrop of continued assaults on our rights to protest and on the rights of vulnerable people in the UK. AIUK’s recent [press release](#) condemned the UK’s wish to restrict or reinterpret Articles 3 (against torture and inhumane and degrading treatment) and 8 (the right to family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Ironically, the Council of Europe meeting at which Justice Secretary David Lammy pushed for these changes took place on International Human Rights Day, 10th December.

“You cannot protect the majority’s rights by attacking the rights of minorities. That is the opposite of universal human rights. Appeasement of anti-rights demands has never satisfied those who want full withdrawal from the ECHR. It only encourages them to push further” Steve Valdez-Symonds, AIUK

We are still awaiting the outcome of the Judicial Review of the proscription of Palestine Action.

Individuals at Risk and Write for Rights

We have had two of our regular bi-monthly Urgent Action Appeal Writing meetings at the Central Library this quarter, with a total of 20 attendees, 44 letters, and 15 emails sent. We raised £108 towards postage costs of £118.96. Action's locations were varied and included China, Equatorial Guinea, Saudi Arabia, UK, Mexico, South Sudan, Colombia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Uganda, Iran and Vietnam.



September Appeal-writing



November Appeal-writing

At the November meeting, we combined our usual appeal writing with a Write For Rights (WfR) session and a Together With Refugees action, described below in the section on Refugee Rights. We had too many attendees to get round our usual table and had to go to an overspill table. The appeal writing sessions also reach the general public - three new people have signed up to be contacted by Manchester Amnesty International.



Manchester Amnesty had its usual stall selling Christmas cards at the Whalley Range Peace and Justice annual event "The Pen is Mightier than the Sword" on 6th December (above left). A further WfR activity involved a small group of us getting together to decorate a Christmas tree which is being displayed for five weeks at the Christmas Tree Festival at St Paul's church in Heaton Moor. Write for Rights materials are displayed next to the tree and visitors are decorating their own cards and writing solidarity messages.

Liz Carter held a WfR "At home" session (see picture on next page). Our December group meeting was also given over to Write for Rights. Twelve of us wrote appeal letters and



support messages in cards (some even designed their own). At the latest count, we have 93 solidarity messages and 12 appeals, but there will be more to add to that when the Christmas Tree festival ends.

In 2026, appeal writing sessions at the Library, café area, will be on:

January 24th; March 28th; May 23rd; July 25th; September 26th and November 28th

Israel and Palestine

SIMPLE ACTION No 1



As Christmas approaches here is simple action to take in support of the people of Palestine. Help a remarkable group of artists to take Lullaby: Together for Palestine to No.1 in the record charts. By purchasing a copy, you help provide life-saving support to Gaza's families.

Lullaby is a reimaging of the traditional Palestinian song Yamma Mwel El Hawa (Mama, Sing to the Wind). It features a great line-up: Neneh Cherry, Celeste, Nadine Shah, Brian Eno, Mabel, Leigh-Anne, London Community Gospel Choir, and many more, with new English lyrics written by Peter Gabriel. The release date was 12 December.

All proceeds go to [Choose Love's Together for Palestine Fund](#), supporting Palestinian-led frontline organisations including Taawon, the Palestine Children's Relief Fund, and the Palestine Medical Relief Society.

Brian Eno said: "After a year of unimaginable loss, grief and injustice, we want to end with an act of love for Palestine's children... if we rally together and download it, we have a real shot at landing Christmas No.1."

How you can help

- [Pre-order or download Lullaby](#) (every download counts toward the charts)
- Share it with friends, family, and social media
- Encourage others to join the push before 19 December

A Palestinian lullaby, with artwork by a young Gazan painter, Malak Mattar, could top the UK charts this Christmas. The visibility, the solidarity, and the funding would mean so much.

SIMPLE ACTION No 2

Prisoner of Conscience Appeal

Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya is director of Kamal Adwan hospital. He was arrested on 27 December and is being arbitrarily detained by Israeli authorities. He was not included in the prisoners released in the recent ceasefire deal. He has been subjected to abuse and ill-treatment. Please join Amnesty in demanding his immediate and unconditional release. Please sign the appeal [here](https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/release-dr-hussam-abu-safiya/): <https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/release-dr-hussam-abu-safiya/>



Dr Safiya's case has also been taken up by Avaaz and you can support it again [here](#)

SIMPLE ACTION No 3

The government has tabled an extreme proposal in parliament to empower the police to further crack down on protests based on their 'cumulative impact'. Widely regarded as a further attempt to curtail our right to protest, if enacted this provision would require the police to take into account the "cumulative impact" of potentially completely unrelated protests which happen to take place in one particular area.

Meanwhile, the violence that is still ongoing against the Palestinian people takes place with military, economic and political support from the British Government. Instead of acting to end its complicity, the government wants to place yet more restrictions on our ability to protest about this appalling state of affairs.

[This link](#) will take you to a PSC petition which calls on the government to withdraw the “cumulative impact” proposal.

VIGIL FOR GAZA / PALESTINE

Thank you to all those who attend the weekly vigil. There is still strong support, with around 25 attending each week, except in very bad weather. We have placards and banners protesting against Israel’s apartheid and oppression of the Palestinian people, and demanding recognition of the rights of the Palestinians to freedom and justice.

We will meet in January to consider how long we should continue the vigil. Please share your views prior to the meeting.



Our 100th vigil, originally planned for 24th October, was delayed to 31st October due to the terrible events at the Heaton Park synagogue. We sent a card from the group to the synagogue expressing our condolences. Thank you Kathryn for designing and making the card.

Card sent to synagogue.

The 100th vigil



Many thanks to Mike Reed and Hazel Errey for their work in publicising the 100th vigil, which was well attended and we hope that we made an impression with our specially prepared placards.



Our 100th silent vigil for the People of Palestine on 31st October

100th vigil videos

Mason Jones made several short films at our 100th vigil with views of the vigil participants and their placards, and interviews with Mike Reed, Hazel Errey and Mo Miah. You can watch them here

[Video 1](#) Mike Reed

[Video 2](#) Hazel Errey

[Video 3](#) Mo Miah

[Video 4](#) Along the line compilation

Funds Raised at the Vigil

Our weekly vigil for Gaza / Palestine has received warm support from the people of Manchester. They have also been generous with donations. The total amount raised over the last two years is over £2,630. We have spent £414 on printing and materials for banners, placards and flyers. In 2024 we donated £500 to Amnesty International UK, £350 to Medical Aid for Palestinians, and £150 to the Zaatra project (run by Palestinians in the West Bank).

The current balance is £1,260 and we have now decided how to apply these funds. After circulating a long list of options and considering the responses, Manchester Amnesty Group decided to donate money as follows: £350 each to Amnesty International UK, Medical Aid for Palestinians, and the Pal-Amal project (follow up to Zaatra). We are also giving £100 to Manchester Apartheid Free Zone to help with their local campaign work. We will retain £110 for possible expenditure on vigil materials.

EVENTS

Talks & Presentations

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE

THIS DIDN'T BEGIN ON 7TH OCTOBER 2023...

PALESTINE 1946, ISRAEL 1947 (UN PLAN), ISRAEL 1967, ISRAEL 2012

FRIDAY 10TH OCTOBER
ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH,
 100, LANE, CHORLTON-ON-MEDLOCK, MANCHESTER M14 6PE

6.30pm - DOORS OPEN
 7.00pm - WELCOME/INTRODUCTION
 7.10pm - TALK FROM MIKE REED
 (ISRAELI CAMPAIGN LEADER, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, MANCHESTER)
 8.00pm - REFRESHMENTS
 8.30pm - Q&A DISCUSSION

FREE ENTRY (DONATIONS WELCOME)

A PRESENTATION BASED ON THE REPORT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WHICH OUTLINES THE EVIDENCE OF THE CRIME OF APARTHEID BY THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, FAITH FOR THE FUTURE, ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH, CHORLTON-ON-MEDLOCK, MANCHESTER M14 6PE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: A global human rights organisation with 100+ chapters in over 150 countries. We monitor and report on human rights violations and campaign for their end. www.amnesty.org.uk

FAITH FOR THE FUTURE: A global Christian movement for social justice and human rights. www.faithforthefuture.org

ST CLEMENT'S CHURCH: A church in the heart of Chorlton, Manchester. www.stclementschorlton.org

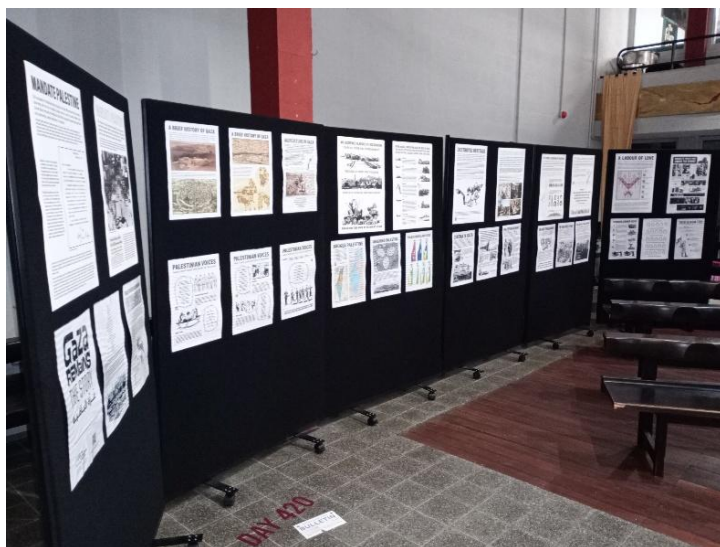
IN 2022 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PROPOSED A TWO-STATE SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION THAT WOULD END THE SYSTEM OF OPPRESSION AND DOMINATION OVER THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. www.amnesty.org.uk/palestine

Mike Reed gave a talk on the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid on 10th October at St. Clement's Church in Chorlton.

He also spoke to the Islamic Society of Britain, youth group on Friday 12 December, at Stretford Public Hall. The 40 minute talk focused on Amnesty's major reports on Israel's apartheid against the Palestinians and Israel's genocide in Gaza. It also gave a brief account of Amnesty's purpose, history and range of work, including information on Manchester Amnesty's work for Ahmed Mansoor, imprisoned by the United Arab Emirates.

Gaza Remains the Story exhibition

Manchester Amnesty has been collaborating with Greater Manchester Friends of Palestine to bring an exhibition entitled **"Gaza Remains the Story"** to the public. So far it has been displayed in various locations around Greater Manchester, including the Friends Meeting House in Manchester and Cheadle Masjid. Since 1st November, it has been on display at Ascension Church Hulme and will remain there until the end of the year. With 30 panels on display it is very impressive. Please go along if you can. You will receive a very warm welcome from Father Azariah France-Wiliams and others at this wonderful church. We expect the exhibition to be displayed at Heaton Moor United Church and possibly at Chorlton Central Church in the New Year.



NEWS

Afzal Khan MP

On 15 November, Afzal Khan held a coffee morning for his constituents with a focus on Palestine. He reported that he had received thousands of emails on this topic and had taken up issues with government ministers. Mike Reed gave a brief overview of Amnesty's work on Israel-Palestine. The people present expressed deep concern at the lack of effective action by the government.

Defend Our Juries protests and arrests in Manchester

On Saturday 29 November Defend our Juries held an event in St Peters Square to protest against the ban on Palestine Action. Many people held placards declaring their support for PA and were arrested. Amnesty UK had a staff member present taking video footage of the event and the arrests, and a reel was posted on Instagram. Over 1600 people have now been arrested for declaring their support for Palestine Action, among them several of our own active members.

Amnesty International has expressed its serious concern at the Home Secretary's decision to proscribe Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation. Amnesty said; "The UK has an overly broad definition of terrorism and proscribing a direct-action protest group like Palestine Action risks an unlawful interference with the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly". Read this [report](#) on the event in the Manchester Evening News.

BMJ Annual Appeal

The British Medical Journal annual appeal is supporting Medecins Sans Frontieres and featuring their work in Gaza saying: "There is no ceasefire - Gazan doctors brace for winter as Israeli attacks and aid restrictions continue". They said: Ongoing attacks, trickling aid, and flooding mean that Gaza and its doctors are in for a tough winter. Despite working for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) for over 22 years, Palestinian doctor Mohammed Abu Mughaisib has never experienced anything like the devastation that Gaza has endured for the past almost 800 days. He told the BMJ: "With all my experience being in Gaza and working during different military escalations, I cannot describe what I saw. We have to stop saying that the health system has 'collapsed' over the past two years. There is no more health system. It has been targeted at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. Everything has been targeted." Mughaisib, MSF's deputy medical coordinator in Palestine, spoke from Ireland, where he was evacuated in September. This year's BMJ appeal supports MSF's work in Gaza and more than 75 other countries. "Donating will save children; it will save patients. It will make a child cry less from his pain. It will save a woman who is pregnant and has medical problems. It will help an injured patient who needs long term care. All the donations will really help to save the lives of patients in Gaza."

Further information here: <https://www.bmj.com/content/391/bmj.r2492>

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty's reaction to the ceasefire

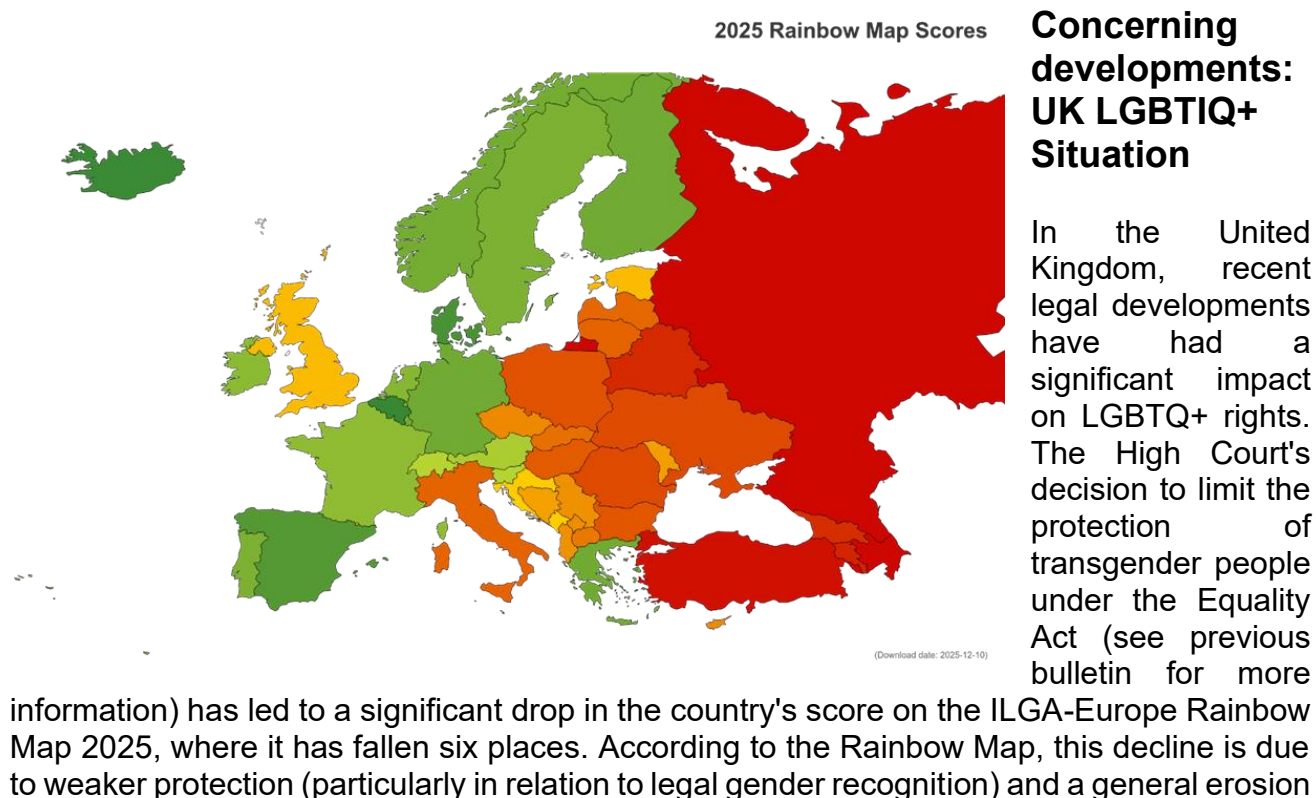
Reacting to the initial news of ceasefire deal announced in late October, Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General, said: "For any lasting ceasefire agreement to succeed it must be firmly rooted in respect for human rights and international law and must include an immediate stop to Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, as well as concrete steps to end its unlawful occupation of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to dismantle the system of apartheid. After two years of shameful double standards and vetoes that strangled the UN Security Council as a livestreamed genocide is broadcast to the world, it is time to seize the opportunity to end this horror, mend what can be mended and salvage what is left of our shared humanity".

An [Amnesty briefing on 27th November](#) concluded that the ceasefire deal has not brought an end to Israel's genocide against the Palestinians and that there has in fact been no significant change in conditions for Palestinians in Gaza, nor has Israel's intent changed.

Amnesty on the Proscription of Palestine Action

Amnesty International does not actively promote participation in the protest actions by Defend our Juries, but it has spoken out against the proscription of Palestine Action and the disproportionate action taken against protesters of the ban in breach of the UK's obligations under international law.

LGBTQ+ rights



of democratic safeguards. Furthermore, the Rainbow Map 2025 report notes that conversion therapies remain legal in the UK, despite successive governments since 2018 committing to banning conversion practices, and warns that while LGB people are formally protected under UK asylum law, protection for trans and non-binary people remains weaker and less reliable.

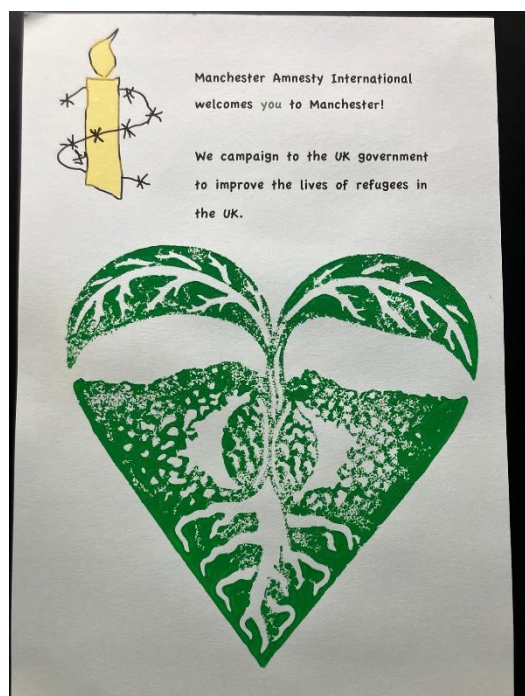
Encouraging Developments: EU LGBTIQ+ Situation

In late 2025, the European Union took two landmark steps to advance LGBTIQ+ rights: Firstly, on 25 November, the European Court of Justice ruled that all Member States must recognise same-sex marriages contracted elsewhere in the Union, even if their own domestic laws prohibit such unions. This decision was triggered by Poland's refusal to recognise a



marriage contracted in Germany. Secondly, the Commission adopted the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy 2026-2030, a comprehensive framework that aims to strengthen protection against discrimination, empower LGBTIQ+ communities and embed equality in all policy areas, reaffirming the EU's commitment to building a Union where diversity is celebrated and protected.

Refugee Rights



In late September, at a time when there were repeated “anti-migrant” demonstrations near hotels where asylum seekers were being housed, we showed our support for the refugee community by delivering some of our hand-made felt hearts and a card (left) to one of the hotels in our area where 26 women were attending a support group. We were told that our positive sentiments were gratefully received. Thanks to Kathryn for making the card.

Over the past month or so, we have linked up with Together with Refugees (TwR) - the largest pro-refugee coalition of community organisations in Britain committed to taking action for a fair, compassionate and well-managed asylum system. Manchester Amnesty International has joined the TwR Organising Network; this has given us access to support, campaign materials and the potential to build links with other organisations in the region.

As part of the TwR network and along with 225 other local community groups, we signed an [open letter](#) to the Home Secretary condemning the latest proposals to 'reform' the asylum system. The letter was covered with an [exclusive report in the Guardian](#) on 5th December. Caroline Glendinning did an interview with Global Media, an organisation which provides news items with Manchester radio stations. We are very grateful to Caroline for speaking to them on our behalf.



We Stand Together With Refugees



Join the movement
www.togetherwithrefugees.org.uk



The letter to the Home Secretary was timed to coincide with a weekend of community action, which we also took part in. Some 50 orange posters with the message **We Stand Together with Refugees** (above left) were distributed to members of the public to put up in their front windows/workplaces. We also printed out messages to MPs expressing our support for refugees and asylum-seekers and stuck these into seasonal greetings cards. From our Write to Rights session in Central Library and the Whalley Range Peace and Justice event (above right), 30 cards were written from constituents to local MPs (the majority to Jeff Smith and Afzal Khan). These have now been mailed to MPs at the House of Commons with the covering letter as reproduced in the box below.

Over the past week, the Manchester Amnesty International group (<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/manchester>) has offered some of your constituents the opportunity to show their support for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Every day we witness people stepping up – opening their homes, volunteering their time, speaking out for fairness and supporting one another. All these actions are real evidence that our local communities welcome asylum-seekers and refugees.

Along with over 200 community organisations Manchester Amnesty International also signed a letter to the Home Secretary in response to the new plans 'Restoring Order and Control' announced on 17 November.

Britain's refugee policies have been uncaring, chaotic and costly for too long. They aren't working for refugees and they aren't working for communities across the country. The new plans do not represent us, our communities or who we are as a country.

Along with 80% of the British public, we want an approach to the asylum system that is well-managed, fair and compassionate.

Covering letter to MPs to accompany cards completed by members of the public

We are still seeking active partnerships with other organisations; as a small group, our voice can be louder if we work together. A discussion with These Walls Must Fall is coming up soon.

For the future, considerable concern has been widely expressed about the Home Secretary's proposed changes to the asylum system. However some of the proposed changes are subject to consultation; the details of many others are still unknown. This [briefing](#) from the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) helpfully summarises the many 'unknowns'. The main impact of the proposed changes so far seems to have been on refugees and asylum-seekers already in the UK, many of whom have been thrown into great anxiety about their future status and security.

At our January group meeting (Monday, 12th January, 7pm, online) we will be joined by a representative from "Refugees At Home", who will tell us about the work of the charity, and we will plan our campaigning for refugee rights over the coming months. Please do join us and share your thoughts and ideas. A zoom link will be sent to all of our members before the meeting.

United Arab Emirates

Sadly, we have no new information about Mohammed Al Roken or Ahmed Mansoor but we will continue to raise awareness of their situation with the use of social media videos and promoting Ahmed's poetry.

Manu Luksch, a film director, joined our November meeting to talk about her film 'I do not have the courage to stay silent' covering the imprisonment of Ahmed Mansoor. We were able to watch the trailer and talked about how we can maximise the impact in Manchester when it is released next year.

We also focussed on Sudan because of the growing evidence that the UAE has been funding the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan and that UK military equipment has been found in Sudan, used by the RSF. for more information read this [Guardian article](#) and [Amnesty's report](#).



In October Mohannad Taha, from Manchester4Sudan spoke at our group meeting and gave us a brilliant overview of the problems in Sudan and in Darfur in particular. We supported Manchester4Sudan in a protest on 2nd November in response to the fall of EL Fasher to the RSF with the loss of many lives.

Kathryn has written to Jeff Smith to register our concern as a group about the evidence of UK weapons being sold to the UAE and used by the RSF in an alleged genocide in Sudan. He has replied that the UK government is scrutinising all evidence of this potential breach of regulation on the sales of arms.

Congratulations to Kathryn on getting this excellent letter (below) on how football fans can resist sportswashing published in the Guardian on 11th November.



Other news

Safeguarding

Anna Stuart and Fynn Kawe have completed Amnesty training on ensuring that all our work complies with relevant safeguarding rules and principles, and have become our safeguarding officers. Please contact them if you have any questions regarding safeguarding issues.