



**Dear Amnesty activist,**

The AIUK staff, held a one-day strike in September. It was our first time in over 20 years and we did so with heavy hearts. A second day of strike action is planned for 10 October. We believe you deserve an explanation from us as to why we feel we have been left with no other option, so we are writing to you to share our concerns about the restructuring process currently being pushed through by AIUK senior management and the Board. These have implications not only for the staff, but also for the section as a whole and for the wider Amnesty movement.

**In brief:**

- On 30 May AIUK's Senior Management Team announced a programme of large budget cuts, accompanied by inevitable redundancies.
- Reports on AIUK's finances presented at the AGM in April failed to mention the imminent need for cuts totalling £2.5 million.
- The programme considered cuts in all areas of the organisation, with the sole exception of AIUK's annual payment to the International Secretariat which are set to increase.
- AIUK is a thriving section of the international movement, and cuts on the scale envisaged are likely to undermine its growth, and ultimately reduce its capacity to contribute to growth in the global South.
- The risk of undermining a successful section is compounded by senior management's determination to push the programme through at great speed, but with little thought or planning, without a clear vision for the organization and without meaningful consultation with the trade union.

**In more detail:**

The Board of Amnesty International UK has agreed to increase its annual payment (or 'assessment') to the International Secretariat (IS) from 30% of AIUK income to 40% by 2021. The increases began this year, with a move up to 33% of income. Continuing the payments at this level would leave AIUK with a budget deficit in years to come because our income is not growing at the rate needed. On 30 May this year the Senior Management Team (SMT) announced that budget cuts totalling £2.5 million would be necessary by 2013, and that this would inevitably require redundancies before the end of 2012.

We were told that the increased assessment and consequent cuts were necessary to support 'moving closer to the ground' in the global South. Board members and senior management initially informed us that paying the increased assessment in full is a legal obligation on AIUK; however, they later admitted that this is not actually the case.

The SMT launched a two-stage Cost and Priorities Programme (CAPP). In the first phase, completed in July, AIUK pared back its budget by £1.25 million, with some cuts implemented immediately representing a cut of 4.7% affecting virtually all aspects of our work. The cuts include a pay freeze for 2013 offered by union members.

The announcement of cuts and inevitable redundancies – just six weeks after an AGM where there was no indication of the scale of financial difficulties arising from the increased assessment – came as a shock to Amnesty staff. Of course, we were anxious for our jobs. But we were equally deeply concerned with the implications for the future

of AIUK. Staff at AIUK are supportive of the principle of 'moving closer to the ground'. It is not only desirable, it is imperative. But if the changes needed to achieve it are not implemented in a sustainable and proper manner, it will instead drastically undermine Amnesty's ability to deliver human rights work. We should not dismantle what we have before we construct what we want.

AIUK is a thriving section and while it has not met our management's ambitious target of 6 per cent growth in the midst of a double-dip recession, its income is growing. Cuts in staffing will undermine future growth, and ultimately reduce the contribution we can make to growth of the movement in the global South and East. This makes no economic sense. To weaken AIUK in this way is ultimately to betray the vision of growth in the global South. We believe Amnesty should invest in the success created by its hard-working staff and dedicated activists like you.

Amnesty International claims to be a democratic movement. Yet members of AIUK had no say in a set of decisions that could radically change how the organisation operates. The obvious place for this discussion was the 2012 AGM, which has the power to make decisions. Instead, members in a handful of cities were invited, in the middle of the summer holidays, to belated 'consultation' meetings with a limited agenda and no decision-making role.

Phase 2 of the CAPP is being pushed through in such haste as to preclude sufficient thought and effective consultation with staff and these problems were compounded by the lack of advance warning and the fact that much of the process took place over the summer holidays. The upshot is that important decisions about the future of AIUK are about to be taken with insufficient discussion and little regard for the potential long-term consequences.

The staff and union at AIUK have tried to work with the CAPP process as well as possible and we have communicated our concerns to SMT and the Board on numerous occasions. But while the SMT was happy to accept our offer of a pay freeze, our concerns have not been addressed: the SMT refuses to discuss or negotiate on the speed of the process or the increase in assessment. This left us with little option other than to withdraw our labour in an attempt to express our deep concerns over the lack of meaningful consultation with the union about changes affecting staff and the future health of Amnesty International – of which many of us are also members.

We are proud to be working for human rights worldwide and proud to work for Amnesty International. Many of us have high levels of specific expertise and experience. We believe that the planned increases in our payments to the IS are unsustainable in their current form and will damage AIUK in the long term, and we have urged SMT and the Board to reconsider them.

The AIUK Board meets on 20 October to decide on the future of the UK section of Amnesty. If you are as concerned about the future of AIUK as we are, please contact the Board and the director, Kate Allen, to share your concerns and ask for a suspension of the current ill-conceived cuts programme. You can reach **Kate Allen** directly at **kate.allen@amnesty.org.uk** You can write to the **Board** care of **sct@amnesty.org.uk**. Please send a copy of your email to **union@amnesty.org.uk** The final decisions on cuts and redundancies are due in October, so please act now. Please circulate this message to contacts in your Amnesty networks so that everyone is aware of the situation.

Thank you. Amnesty International UK unionised staff