



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

April 2014

<http://manchester.amnesty.org.uk/>

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Campaigning

Planning pack 2014

We have just received this year's planning pack from AIUK with details of all the campaigns, country and Individuals at Risk work that we can take part in. We are currently opted in to most of the campaigns and our coordinators will be meeting in April to plan action. We will dedicate the June group meeting to an explanation and discussion of our plans. Make sure that you come along to find out what all the campaigns are about and decide what you want to be involved in.

Women's rights

The Group marked International Women's Day with a Twitter marathon. Marie-Louise posted 19 tweets to remind all of our followers of the women's human rights issues in Afghanistan. Well done Marie-Louise!

Syria

At our March group meeting we marked the 3rd anniversary of the Syrian Uprising by sending letters to both the Syrian government and the opposition forces calling on them to take action to stop the suffering of Syrian civilians. At the end of the meeting we held a mini photo shoot in St Ann's Square. This is one of many being held by a global coalition of NGOs and civil society (including Amnesty) who have created a joint campaign to mark the anniversary with a demonstration of solidarity with ordinary Syrian people.



Amnesty continues to campaign on the atrocious suffering of the people of Syria. Sign the petition at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/stop-deliberate-starvation-civilians-syria>

Stop Torture

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention against Torture (CAT). Whilst this legal framework remains in place, the past decade has witnessed an alarming

rollback on the prohibition of torture. In 2012 AI reported the use of torture in 112 countries.

On 13th May Amnesty will launch a major international campaign against the use of torture. This will be a priority campaign for the whole of the international movement and will continue until December 2015. We expect the first campaign mailing shortly however, we have already made a start as we hope to feature this campaign at an event during the Manchester Literature Festival in October.

If you are interested in being part of the sub group working on Stop Torture, email Lianne at Lianne.slavin@googlemail.com.

Write for Rights

Only 3 of us turned up at the last Letter Writing session at The Eighth Day café – however 19 letters were written. Put the next date in your diary now so that you don't forget!

Letter Writing

Saturday 17th May

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

2-4pm

Pens, paper and case sheets provided!

Even if you didn't make the letter writing session, you can still write letters. I've attached the Real Lives case sheet with this newsletter for you all to have a go at.

Remember - Letter-writing changes lives.

A letter from you could help free a prisoner, stop an execution or help a bereaved family receive justice.

Zimbabwe

Maggie Towse, AIUK Zimbabwe country coordinator, recently met Jestina Mukoko, the Director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, an organisation that collects information on incidents and the effects of political and state-sponsored violence in Zimbabwe. The organisation and its staff have been targeted repeatedly over the years. The arrest of Jestina and other staff members in 2008 was the most serious in terms of overt violence to them, but raids on their offices and victimisation of staff has continued since then. Despite this they have continued to function, monitoring violence, compiling evidence to present to the authorities, and also identifying victims of violence and finding them the support and treatment that they need. They are

planning a new project to help children who have witnessed violence towards their parents and older siblings.

Jestina wishes to convey her thanks to all AIUK members who have worked for improved human rights in Zimbabwe and particularly those who sent her messages of solidarity during her period of detention and torture in 2008-09. She says that those messages came to her at a time when she felt 'down and out'. The cards and letters helped her to feel

that although she was 'down' she was most definitely not 'out!'

Zimbabwe gained Independence on 18 April 1980 and we will mark this date by signing a card at the April meeting to the Ambassador in London, to congratulate the country on its anniversary and also to remind the authorities of their obligations to uphold human rights for all its citizens.

Group news

AIUK AGM 2014

Laura, Sameena and Anne will attend the 2 day AGM in Edinburgh on 12th -13th April 2014.

As usual, there are a wide range of resolutions. The main area of controversy is likely to be around the new proposed sex workers policy. Last month we circulated a summary of the consultation and Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) can provide more information if asked. There is an interesting response to the consultation from the EVAW - the End Violence Against Women consortium, see: <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/news/142/evaws-submission-to-amnesty-internationals-consultation-on-prostitution>

There are also other interesting resolutions on such diverse topics as the Human Rights Act, Bangladeshi garment workers, Guantanamo, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, AIUK governance and the possible effect of Scottish independence.

At our April meeting Laura, Sameena and Anne will explain some of the resolutions and ask for guidance on how to vote on behalf of the group. Come along and have your say so that our vote really can reflect our members' views!

Didsbury Festival

We will be having a stall at the very popular Didsbury Festival on Saturday June 7th. It will feature the Egg game and campaigning material – yet to be decided.

It is great fun and volunteers will be needed!

Monthly Group Meetings

Held 2nd Wednesday each month - Cross Street Chapel
7.30pm

9th April: How shall we vote? – a discussion of the resolutions at the forthcoming AIUK AGM so that our representatives can cast our group vote the way you want them to!

14th May: Speaker Lis Murphy from Musicians Without Borders

11th June: Campaigns review.

Why not join a few of us for a pre-meeting meal just after 6. This month we will be in the bar at The Grinch on Chapel Walk. It would be good to see you there.

Acoustic Amnesty

Steve is well underway planning the next musical/poetry fundraiser, this time jointly with Musicians Without Borders. It is scheduled for **Friday June 20th** at Sacred Trinity (on Blackfriars Road very close to the city centre). Colorama (<http://www.colorama.org.uk/>) are already booked as our first top act.

Tickets are from <http://www.wegotickets.com/event/267175>

Keep an eye on the Facebook page for updates - <https://www.facebook.com/events/236787429860057/>



Subscriptions please!

Annual donations from members are vital to keep the Group going. The suggested sum is £20 if you have a wage, £3 otherwise, or whatever you can afford to give. Please bring your cash or cheque to the next meeting or contact Treasurer Sean Dunne (Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

Thanks!