



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2014

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

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Volunteers Needed!

Pride 2014 – 23rd August

We are delighted to say that Manchester Amnesty will once again be taking part in the Manchester Pride Parade this year. The theme is 'Love is love, no matter who you love', so we will be carrying heart-shaped banners highlighting some of the LGBTI cases that Amnesty is currently working on, as well as our usual 'Love is a Human Right' materials.

The parade route is slightly shorter than usual, due to the ongoing road works in the city centre; it is around 1 mile, and should take approximately 1 hr 45 mins.

We assemble as usual off Liverpool Road, near the Roman Fort. The following schedule will then apply:

- We need to be at the assembly point by 11am.
- At 11.45pm the mayor will judge the parade entries.
- At approximately 12pm the health & safety briefing will take place.
- Parade begins at 1pm.



If you can spare a few hours on Saturday 23rd of August, please contact our chair Laura (laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk) or Simona Mattanza (simona.mattanza@gmail.com) for more information ASAP!

Street Collection – Saturday 13th September



We will hold our annual Street Collection on Saturday 13th September in Manchester City Centre. We need plenty of volunteers to help us raise funds from the Manchester public so we can continue to campaign for human rights worldwide. Campaigns cost money to organise, so every pound we collect really helps.

If you can spare an hour or two on the day, please sign up at the August or September meetings, or contact the collection organiser, Sean Dunne, by email to sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com. Please let Sean know what times you can be available - we will be starting at 10 a.m. and finishing at 4 p.m.

**The more people we have on the streets, the more money we will collect.
Get volunteering now!**

Campaigning

Stop Torture

At our August meeting, Alice Nicolay, Regional Fundraiser at Freedom From Torture, will speak about the important work that FFT do with torture survivors in the UK. Alice will be joined by two of her colleagues, Hazel Batchelor, Psychological Therapist/Trainer, and Jonathan, Chair of the Experts by Experience group, who will speak about their roles within the organisation.

As well as giving an overview of the work done by FFT, they will touch upon the policy and advocacy work they do and the training and capacity building programmes that FFT run with agencies who work with torture survivors.



Women's Rights

AIUK report that they had a significant role at June's summit of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. Two thousand people (from 123 states) were in attendance London's Excel Centre, including politicians, officials, human rights defenders and members of our Student Action Network Committee, who participated in the youth engagement component of the summit. AIUK hosted 80 Human Right Defenders at our Human Rights Action Centre before the summit, so that they could meet each other and discuss their approach to the event. AIUK, acknowledge that this is a significant initiative that was pushed forward by the previous Foreign Secretary but, as ever, the big question is whether the diplomacy will lead to real improvements

for people on the ground, in some of the most challenging parts of the world.

Myanmar

Amnesty issued a public statement on July 15th calling on the Myanmar authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those who have been imprisoned simply for the peaceful exercise of their human rights – exactly one year after President Thein Sein pledged to clear Myanmar's jails of prisoners of conscience – a pledge which to date remains unfulfilled.

The full statement is in the separate attachment along with an extract from the Myanmar Times which provides more information.

We have also received 2 Urgent Actions on Myanmar:

1. On 10 July a court in Pakokku District sentenced, 5 journalists to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour under Myanmar's Official Secrets Act. Amnesty considers all five as prisoners of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.
2. Eight Chin human rights defenders in Myanmar are facing imprisonment for peacefully protesting against impunity for sexual violence in Chin State. If convicted and jailed, Amnesty International would consider them prisoners of conscience

Please do the urgent actions attached before 26th August.

Southern Africa

No news from Zimbabwe this month, however a new country coordinator has joined the Southern Africa team, Josh Hepple, and he is going to cover South Africa and Swaziland. He has already sent us a new Urgent Action on Swaziland (attached with this newsletter).

On 17 July Bhekithemba Makhubu, editor of Swaziland's monthly news magazine The Nation and human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko were convicted on two charges of contempt of court in the High Court in Mbabane, Swaziland. The contempt of court charges arose from two articles published in The Nation magazine in February 2014 in which the convicted men had raised concerns about judicial independence and integrity in Swaziland.

Their allegations of judicial independence seem to have been demonstrated in their own case where the judge presiding over the case had been named in the article which they had written. It has also been said that the judge met with the Minister of Justice shortly before judgement was given. They have been sentenced to two years in prison without the possibility of paying a fine.

Amnesty believe that these two men are prisoners of conscience and therefore are calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Please do the urgent action attached before 29th August.

Group news

Manchester Literature Festival

For a number of years the Manchester branch of Amnesty International has worked to highlight human rights abuses by asking individuals to read from appropriate literature at the Manchester Literature Festival.



This year we are proud to present an afternoon with Sri-Lankan born artist, writer and film-maker, Roma Tearne. Roma was a Fellow at Oxford Brookes University and has had many national and international exhibitions. It was while working as Leverhulme Artist in Residence at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, that she began to write.

Roma's writing is both informed and inspired by her, and her family's experience of fleeing Sri-Lanka. She has written five novels and will be reading from her book Brixton Beach, a TV Bookclub pick and winner of a French Reader's prize, and The Swimmer, which was longlisted for the Orange Fiction Prize. Both novels offer the reader 'a rare insight into the subtle and dramatic ways we are shaped by conflict' and draw on issues of civil war, persecution and torture, migration, self-identity and loss. Roma's talk will be followed by a Q&A and book signing.

Roma Tearne

Saturday 18th October, 2pm

Cross Street Chapel

Tickets £7/£5 concessions

Book on 0843 208 0500 or

Manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

Monthly Group Meetings

Held 2nd Wednesday each month - Cross Street Chapel

7.30pm

13th August

Speakers from Freedom from Torture:

- Alice Nicolay, Regional Fundraiser
- Hazel Batchelor, Psychological Therapist/Trainer
- Jonathan, Chair of the Experts by Experience group,

10th September

Kate Allen, AIUK Director, will be coming up to meet our group. Please send questions for Kate to Laura (laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk) in advance.

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.

Write for Rights

At our letter writing session in July at The Eighth Day café six of us gathered to eat cake and between us we wrote 21 letters. We wrote to the UK government about the situation in Gaza and asking for the UK to stop trading arms to Israel, Hamas and any other organisations involved in the conflict. We also wrote in response to an urgent action for South Africa as well as cases from the Stop Torture campaign.



Next Letter Writing

Saturday 27th September
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
2-4pm

Pens, paper and case sheets provided!

We need your annual donations!

Annual donations from members are vital to keep the Group going. Hiring accommodation for our monthly meetings costs us £600 each year, and recently we bought a projector which cost us £200.

So far this year, of the 180 people on our mailing list, just 23 members have made a donation, giving us a total of around £400.

The suggested amount is £20 if you are working, or what you can afford otherwise.

If you haven't yet made a contribution this year, our Treasurer Sean Dunne will be happy to take your money - see him at the Group meetings, or email sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com to find out how you can pay.

Other News

North West conference

The excellent one day NW AI conference will be held in Chester this year on 8th November. Get the date in your diary!

News from AIUK

We have received a message from the AIUK chair, Sarah O'Grady with a summary of the July Board meeting decisions, a report of the recent Chair and Directors meeting (where all AI sections are represented) and the Strategy Goals submission form AIUK to the International Board. This latter is particularly interesting and I have attached it with this newsletter, (others available on request from manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk). Its final paragraph concludes:

'There was a strong feeling coming from our local groups and activists that Amnesty has spread itself too thinly, that we should focus on fewer issues and avoid duplicating the work of other organisations and use our limited resources more effectively. Many cited poverty and human rights as potentially an area that could be de-prioritised. Alternatively, we should seek other ways of supporting that area of work by either working collaboratively with other NGOs or through capacity building. Working on fewer issues would enable Amnesty to respond more rapidly to human rights challenges as they occur and provide sections the flexibility of working on locally relevant issues.'



Invitation to the free BIHR Human Rights Tour 2014

30 September – 6 November

Universal human rights. Written down 1948. Relevant forever?

Come and join the conversation

You are invited to the 4th year of our hugely successful Human Rights Tour. The idea is simple, go across the UK holding free to attend pop-up events in local communities, raising awareness about human rights, how they are relevant in everyday life & having a space for debate & discussion.

For this year's tour we are holding twelve events across the length and breadth of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We have been invited to lots of towns and cities we have never visited before, and some old favourites. Our fantastic group of local partner organisations will help ensure the events are rooted in local concerns as well as the national debates. For information on where and when we will be coming to your area follow this link: <http://www.bihhr.org.uk/Tour2014>

The Human Rights Tour is for you whether you are an interested individual, a voluntary sector worker or a public servant; come along and join the conversation. The content for the pop-up event is a mix of presentations, discussions and interactive sessions, with some creative elements too! Between 10am – 4pm we'll cover:

- Where do human rights come from? Our human rights history in 60 minutes!
- Human rights law for non-lawyers: Introduction to the Human Rights Act
- Making human rights work in your work: Applying human rights in real life situations
- The human rights conversation: Human rights in the media, in politics and in your community

Our events provide an excellent forum for learning about human rights, and networking with organisations and representatives in your community. We hope you can join us. We would also appreciate it if you could circulate this email to interested staff and colleagues. To find out more, and to book your free place at any of the twelve events, visit our site: <http://www.bihhr.org.uk/Tour2014>

Many thanks
Woody Faulkner and the BIHR Human Rights Tour team



A Message from the Chester-Wrexham and Colwyn Bay Groups

The Chester-Wrexham and Colwyn Bay Groups are collaborating with Theatr Clwyd in Mold to put on a HR Film Season. It is a really good programme of 7 films over a period of six weeks in October and November, and several of them will be introduced by Group members. They will also have an exhibition in the Theatr for the duration of the Season. Theatr Clwyd is easily accessible from the Wirral, Merseyside and Cheshire and for those planning a few days in North Wales during the autumn a trip to the Theatr may just be thing!

HUMAN RIGHTS: HUMAN DILEMMAS – a collaboration between Clwyd Theatr Cymru and Amnesty International UK. What would you do if your freedoms were violated – freedom to live in a democracy, to move freely, to be treated equally, to speak your mind? What do you do when the police are corrupt and your family's in danger? Where do you stand on capital punishment?

THE SQUARE (15) - Thur 9 October

A documentary made during the recent protests in Egypt's Tahrir Square presenting reportage of the events as protests and alliances unravel. Followed by a discussion about regime change led by Bargas Hatem from Conwy Peace Group.

THE MISSING PICTURE (12A) - Wed 15 October

A moving personal account of one man's survival as a teenager during the brutal rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, told using hand-made clay figures. Introduced by Roger Goldsmith from Amnesty Colwyn Bay Group.

5 BROKEN CAMERAS (15) - Tues 21 October

A documentary made by the residents of a Palestinian border village as it resisted the building of the Israeli Wall on the West Bank. Introduced by Chris Jones from Amnesty Colwyn Bay Group.

HELI (18) - Wed 29 October

A hard-hitting story about a young man in drug-plagued Mexico who feels he's left with no other option than to take the law into his own hands when the corrupt and inept authorities fail him and his family. Introduced by Apolo Santana from Clwyd Latin America Human Rights Group.

PUSSY RIOT: A PUNK PRAYER (18) - Thur 6 November

A documentary about the Russian female punk band who protested their right to be heard in a Moscow church and ended up sentenced to two years in labour camps.

WADJDA (PG) - Wed 12 November

A wonderfully engaging story about a 12-year old girl in Saudi Arabia who wants a bicycle just like her male cousin. The only Saudi film ever to have been made by a woman.

DEAD MAN WALKING (15) - Thur 18 November

An Oscar-winning 1995 true story about the special relationship that springs up between a nun (Susan Sarandon) and a prisoner on death row (Sean Penn). Followed by a discussion about capital punishment led by Alan Sieber from Amnesty Chester & Wrexham Group.