

# GROUPS NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK  
LOCAL, STUDENT AND YOUTH GROUPS



SPRING 2015



Henley College

## DEFENDING THE DEFENDERS

Over 2,000 young people added their support for Afghan women to a photo petition championed by Amnesty activists.

Photographed with 'danger' signs and placards commemorating victims of violence, the message was clear: support and protect human rights defenders in Afghanistan.

On 10 December – International Human Rights Day – there was good news. The European Union published a plan to do just this. Those who risk their lives to defend human rights in the country will now be able to turn to EU embassies for help.

'This comes at a critical moment for human rights defenders like me,' says Samira Hamidi of the Afghan Women's Network. 'We are the ones risking life and limb to provide essential education and health services to women and girls, to empower women to participate in peace building and political life, and help women

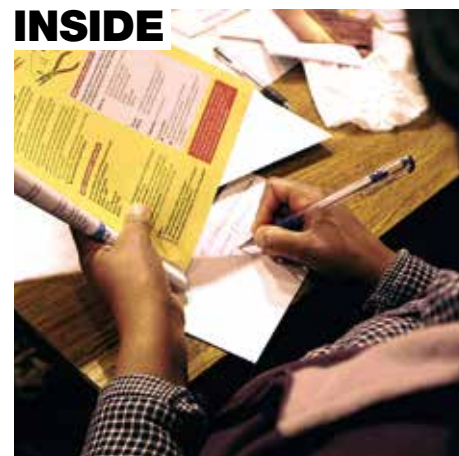
in their communities stay safe and claim their rights. If the UK and other diplomatic missions translate their words into action it could literally save lives.'

The EU and member state diplomatic missions are to meet human rights defenders regularly, so they will know who is at risk. A human rights defender who is in imminent danger will be able to apply for an emergency visa to leave the country. And the plan promises to sponsor a system of safe houses, available for people from all 34 provinces by the end of 2015.

In Afghanistan, the occupational hazards for women in professions such as teaching and medicine include death threats and violent attacks. With the departure of foreign combat troops, many activists feel more vulnerable than ever. Our task now is to make sure the EU keeps its promises, and that the UK plays a full part in that.

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Is this my fifth Amnesty campaign against torture?

Every time these campaigns come round, my head is filled with images of nasty things that nasty people do to their fellow humans in two-thirds of the member states of the United Nations.

In the current campaign we sent student activists onto the streets of East London dressed up as ice cream vendors, offering cheap EU electroshock batons and thumbscrews to shoppers. An Amnesty youth group from Ashford visited the Human Rights Action Centre on a school visit and was soon enthusiastically turning cardboard and aluminium foil into a display of leg irons, stun guns, leg fetters and neck cuffs, cutting up plastic sheets and duct tape as cat o' nine tails for flogging purposes and changing plastic bottles into hypodermic syringes for injecting lethal sodium thiopental into the arms of death row prisoners.

The Salisbury group is bringing the campaign into Salisbury Cathedral where the Chapter House is displaying the original 1215 Magna Carta on its 800th birthday. Article 23 of the Great Charter expressly forbids setting kiddles in the River Thames and the Medway and along the foreshore. Articles 38 and 40 ban the use of torture.

At the east end of Salisbury Cathedral are three striking blue 'Prisoners of Conscience' windows where an Amnesty International candle burns in a beautiful iron candelabra. Every morning the cathedral community prays for our prisoner of conscience for that month. They have invited us to put up an exhibition to accompany their Magna Carta show featuring the charter, the Human Rights Act and our Stop Torture campaign. I was a little nervous about this request.

During our last torture campaign we were invited to put up an exhibition in Westminster Abbey. We assembled display boards with pictures and information from the campaign. We put it up in the abbey. Then we were asked to take it down, please, and quick. Members of the public had been upset by the images. Such shocking things couldn't be allowed in the abbey. Fair enough. We dismantled it. On the way out I did say how totally upset and shocked I was personally by other torture images and sculptures still on open display all over the abbey – of a torture victim hanging from wooden cross, held by nails through his hands and feet, waiting to die. I ventured to hope they would also be removed forthwith.

**Dan Jones**



## KEEPING THE FAITH

This year we hope to increase the size of our network of faith groups. A new group at **St Marks and All Saints Church West Parley** has already begun campaigning and fundraising. 'Our rector expressed a wish to support Amnesty as a group as the support of prisoners of conscience is close to his heart,' explains member Lalia Lock. 'Our first activity was to support the Write for Rights campaign. It's been moving to hear the supportive comments from our more elderly church members who knew very little about Amnesty. We're now looking forward to a talk and information sharing led by the Bournemouth group.'

■ For more [www.amnesty.org.uk/faith](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/faith)

## NEW YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Amnesty's Youth Advisory Group for this academic year is now up and running after being recruited in November. Twenty 14-18 year olds from youth groups in the UK will meet four times a year to give their views on campaigns, resources, events, fundraising and the website – and how to get more young people involved in Amnesty.



## STOP TORTURE ONE STEP AT A TIME

To mark the International Day in Support of Survivors and Victims of Torture on 26 June, Amnesty supporters around the world are being asked to hold a sponsored walk or run to support our Stop Torture campaign. This is the perfect time to organise a Stop Torture One Step at a Time Walk. For details on how to plan yours, contact Richard Glynn, 020 7033 1650, [fundraise@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:fundraise@amnesty.org.uk).

■ See page 15

## THANK YOU

In February, torture survivor Claudia Medina Tamariz was cleared of all charges. A huge thank you to all who worked on the petition and helped pressure the Mexican



authorities. This shows how important our actions are. Claudia confirmed she will continue as an activist: 'I am not going to allow even one other woman to be tortured in Mexico.' Inspiring words to carry on the campaign to get the authorities to carry out a full investigation into her torture allegations.

## STUDENT RAISE-OFF

Our annual student Raise-Off competition is under way. To enter and raise funds, [www.amnesty.org.uk/raiseoff](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/raiseoff)



# WELCOME TO MALVERN

Thousands of you have taken action asking your MP to press the government to increase the number of Syrian refugees it resettles. The **Malvern Hills** group's great campaign win to provide sanctuary shows the power of local action.

On 2 December Malvern Hills District Council voted to allow 60 Syrian refugees (around 12 families) to be resettled into their town. This decision follows sustained lobbying by the group who got local mayor Julian Roskams and district councillor John Raine on board.

After pleas from Green and Liberal Democrat councillors, Worcestershire County Council is now also considering providing sanctuary for Syrian refugees, with a meeting scheduled for June/July.

Malvern Hills group member Ruth Forecast told us about the crucial Malvern Hills District Council meeting: 'Julian gave a powerful presentation about 2015 being the centenary of Malvern taking in 500 Belgian refugees during the Great War and why we should continue the tradition with Syrian refugees today.' Ruth was interviewed by the *Independent* and the result received positive local press coverage.

Buoyed by success, the group is now

setting up meetings with other charities and NGOs as well as local MP Harriet Baldwin. They are happy for other groups to contact them for advice.

■ Download the Welcoming Syria's Refugees to Your City pack from [amnesty.org.uk/resources](http://amnesty.org.uk/resources)

## SUPPORTING SYRIAN REFUGEES

The **Cardigan** group organised a public event for Refugee Week in March: *Syrian Refugees – an Insider's View From the Camps*. It included a live Skype call with two people who work in the refugee camps in Lebanon. 'We became aware of the immense suffering and hardship endured by many Syrians in their prolonged exile,' said member Jess Hope, who was spurred on to organise a benefit concert for Syrian refugees in November.

The **Southampton** group took part in a 'Help turn the lights back on in Syria' photo action. And the **Stockport** group held a candle-lit vigil to demonstrate their solidarity with ordinary citizens struggling to survive each day.

## 25 YEARS ON: CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS TOO

Amnesty groups around the country marked the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November by calling on the USA to ratify the treaty.

Local, youth and student groups, along with members of the Children's Human Rights Network (CHRN), wrote letters to the US Ambassador in London and collected petition signatures. Youth groups also produced amazing pictures and posters illustrating the vital rights contained in the convention.

On 25 March, the petition – signed by over 4,523 people – and the creative actions were handed in to Daniel Madar, political officer, at the US embassy. The delegation of Amnesty activists, including a representative from the CHRN and two members from the **Lady Eleanor Holles** youth group, discussed with him the importance of the convention and the need for the USA to commit to its ratification.

They showed him a book created by the **Henley College** group, *The Tale of the Ratification*, and talked about actions by youth groups across the country. Delegates also discussed the issue of juvenile detention without parole in the US, and the fact that President Obama had stated he was embarrassed that the US had not ratified the convention.



Malvern



Cardigan



Southampton



US embassy



Tadcaster Grammar



The Royal Hospital School

# WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty supporters in more than 100 countries took part in the 2014 Write for Rights campaign, with over 3 million actions taken globally, beating last year's record of 2.3 million. Amnesty supporters in the UK sent more than 85,000 messages and appeals.

Many local groups organised at least one event to promote the campaign. The **Manchester** group's letter-writing session and stalls generated 215 cards and 40 appeal letters. More cards were signed at the Acoustic Amnesty sell-out concert on 10 December, which raised £413. At an event organised by **Whalley Range Peace and Justice** group, 513 cards were signed and £1,500 raised for Amnesty.

The **Saffron Walden** group held five letter-writing sessions in local churches and schools, leading to a grand total of 700 cards.

On 6 December, the **Buxton** group stall asked passers-by to make whistles to send to President Obama, with a personal message on the plight of Chelsea Manning. Supporters also wrote cards to Dr Mohammed al-Roken, the human rights lawyer in prison in Dubai.

That same day, the **Brighton and Hove**

group held their annual Write for Rights vigil supported by Caroline Lucas MP, the mayor and Amnesty UK director Kate Allen. They were joined by students from the local high school (after a group member spoke at their assembly). People decorated quetzal feathers for Yolanda Oqueli in Guatemala, made paper peace cranes to send to Hakamada Iwao and tweeted 'wish you were here' messages to Dr al-Roken while listening to a violinist and local choir.

The **Ealing, Liverpool and North Hertfordshire** groups each combined an AmnesTea with a letter-writing session, while the **Ely City** group offered homemade cakes and hot drinks.

The **Guildford** group wrote 366 letters and raised over £200. A further 150 cards were written by students at **Ringmer Community College** and **Uckfield Community Technology College, Wolverhampton, Mid Warwickshire, Greenwich, Norfolk and**

**Bury St Edmunds** groups also hosted well-attended events, as did the **Nottingham Trent University** group.

Margaret Ritchie MP and Councillor Cadogan Enright contributed to the **Mid-Down** group's 120 cards, while mayor Mike Turner joined the **Lewes** group, with 200 cards signed. The **Shoreham and Worthing** group urged people to sign greetings cards with a stall at the Methodist church during the town's Christmas Festival.

For the eighth year running, the **Cardigan and North Pembrokeshire** group held their 'Making a Song and Dance of it' event. Listening and dancing to the live music, the audience also made cards (turns out adults like colouring and glitter too!). The event raised £2,100.

Card-writers at the **Glasgow West** group's event at Hillhead library were entertained by the Eurydice women's choir.

The **Minchhead** group held a letter-writing



Brighton and Hove



Bury St Edmunds



Cardigan and North Pembrokeshire



Ealing



Greenwich



Lewes



Buxton



tea afternoon and a street stall, where they were joined by the mayor. They collected 210 signatures, despite bad weather forcing them into the warm church. They also took part in the town's annual Christmas Tree Festival with an Amnesty tree.

Over 450 cards were signed at stalls and a coffee morning organised by the **Wirksworth and District** group, and 212 appeal letters were written. Local churches, libraries and the kids club produced another 400 cards. The Amnesty tree in St Mary's church had baubles showing the people featured in the campaign.

The **Horsham** group filled two large cards with signatures to Yolanda Oqueli and Dr al-Roken. A group email to Norwegian John Jeanette Solstrad Remø, seeking legal recognition in her chosen gender, received a reply: 'Thanks to people like you I will go on with this struggle as long as needed.' The **Southend** group also received a warm reply

from John Jeanette.

The **Stockport** group filled large cards for four cases at two Christmas fairs and promoted the Stop Torture campaign. The **Wirral** group wrote 145 cards (the most they've ever written).

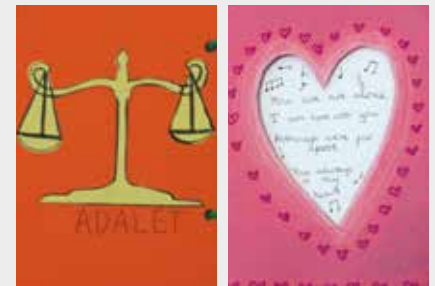
Some **York** group members, dressed as angels, roamed the town centre inviting shoppers to 'Be an angel' by signing cards at their stall.

The **Penzance** group set up a pop-up shop in a former travel agency in the town centre. They sold Christmas cards and people signed 500 messages of hope. They also featured music and poetry sessions on one day. The premises cost £350 to rent but the group raised over £2,500.

In the Highlands artist Peter White – who sent small paintings or drawings to the people featured in our 2013 campaign – held an exhibition of similar work at Kilmorack Gallery. It raised £3,500 for Amnesty.

## YOUTH GROUPS

Youth groups across the country sent more than 3,000 thoughtful and creative messages as part of the 2014 Write for Rights campaign. In a card to Moses Akatugba, one pupil wrote: 'You are not alone. I am thinking of you and send you my best wishes. Don't give up. Hope will always be there.' Another child wrote to Yolanda Oqueli: 'I hope that you get justice. You didn't deserve what happened to you. It should have never happened to you. Have a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.'





# STOP TORTURE

## Groups all over the country are galvanising support for the Stop Torture campaign

On 1 November, the **Birmingham** group and supporters of Freedom from Torture marched through Victoria Square to highlight Stop Torture. They walked in chains and with taped mouths to symbolise the silencing effects torture has on victims. Many passers-by signed action cards calling for investigations into cases of torture.

The **Lewes** group held a Stop Torture stall on 25 October, and were joined by their MP Norman Baker, who vowed to seek a meeting with the Foreign Secretary about the issue. Over 180 signatures were collected in support of torture victims. The event ended with an evening walk to Lewes castle to 'shine torchlight on torture'. They stopped

at the Martyrs' Memorial to commemorate 17 people burnt at the stake for expressing Protestant beliefs during the reign of Queen Mary.

The **North Lincolnshire** group braved the elements for an awareness-raising walk over the Humber Bridge, as part of the 'Stop Torture One Step at a Time' campaign. They were joined by Scunthorpe MP Nic Dakin.

In **Northern Ireland** about 30 people from the **Belfast**, **Shimna College** and **Mid-Down** groups enjoyed a three-hour walk around Drinnahilly and Thomas Mountain, which raised £230 for Amnesty (see page 2).

The **Milton Keynes** group held a stall at the One World Fair, handing out leaflets and

getting signatures for a Stop Torture petition.

Torture materials went on display at the local library in **Hereford**. It included two posters, produced by a member, showing the history of punishments from the 20th Century and the power of letter writing. **Stockport** highlighted torture at their social quiz in November. Over 60 contestants listened to presentations on the campaign, as well as individual at risk Laís Santos Sampaio, and over 100 postcards were signed. It raised £280.

At the **Liverpool** group's stall, the public signed 162 cards, and petition signatures were collected in support of Moses Akatugba, arrested and tortured by the



Cambridge



Birmingham



Lytham St Annes



Stockport



Lewes



Nigerian army when he was 16.

The **York** group held a stall at York St John University, followed by an open mic evening. They garnered more than 70 signed cards for torture survivors and also collected signatures for the EU Torture Tools petition.

A vigil by the **Minhead** group on the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture caused many passers-by to stop and reflect.

In March, there was a great week of campaigning by **AKS school** students working with the **Lytham St Annes** group. The students ran Stop Torture assemblies, created a display, and organised a prize for the most signed action cards. Group

members supported their activism efforts every lunch time. The 'Torture Wheel' made by one member who attended the Skill Share Day aroused a lot of interest and there is talk of the school setting up a youth group in September.

The annual carol concert organised by the **Bournville** group and Freedom from Torture took place on 17 December. Attended by Kate Allen and Gisela Stuart MP, it raised £1,000 for each organisation. Performers sang with images of torture victims projected on the walls.

On 27 February, the **Cambridge University** group launched its annual 'Cage Campaign', with students taking turns in

the cage for 48 hours. This year the topic was Stop Torture and, more specifically, the UK's complicity in torture. Leaflets about the CIA torture report and the UK's involvement were distributed. In total 15 metres of canvas were covered in signatures.

Finally, we took an innovative approach to solidarity actions by asking **youth groups** to tell us their favourite jokes to send to torture survivor Ali Aarass, who we heard has a great sense of humour. The jokes, translated into French, are currently being turned into a joke book illustrated by Amnesty community organiser Dan Jones. One of the jokes is: 'Where do you find a dog with no legs? Where you left it.'



Liverpool



North Lincolnshire



Hereford



Lewes



York



Milton Keynes

## STOP TORTURE WORKSHOP

It was a full house at the How Activists Can Campaign for Safeguards Conference on 14 February at Amnesty's Human Rights Action Centre, organised by our country co-ordinators. Among the speakers sharing their knowledge was Craig Murray, former UK ambassador to Uzbekistan. An outspoken critic of torture, he was told by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that trade interests were more important. Barrister and writer Frances Webber talked about torture and the law, and there were workshops on the five priority campaign countries.

A **Horsham** group member said 'The most memorable quote came from Rhian Beynon from Freedom from Torture who gave us one torture survivor's definition of torture: "The act of killing a man without him dying".' While a **Cambridge** group member reported: 'The main thing we took away was that even if the road to justice is long, pressure works.'



Stop Torture Conference

# NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

## NORTH KOREA

In January, the **Salisbury** group took to the streets to demonstrate against prison camps in North Korea. 'Close the Camps' was the message of the day. The group has campaigned on several occasions concerning life in this country, and posted a video of their action on YouTube – see [www.amnesty.org.uk/salisbury](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/salisbury).

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to the **Brighton and Hove** group, which celebrated 50 years of action with an anniversary stall. Joined by Amnesty UK director Kate Allen and Caroline Lucas MP, over 150 petition signatures were collected and 40 letters written for prisoners of conscience in Egypt.

The **Southampton** group put together a *Book of Memories*, a wonderful collection of campaign press clippings, notes and posters from their 50 years. An exhibition in the gallery of Harbour Lights Picturehouse displayed work made by members illustrating cases and campaigns from the group's history. Visitors signed Stop Torture action cards.

## CONCERTS

The superb 60-strong Poulton People's Choir and young rock band The Solid States helped the **Lytham St Annes** and **Blackpool** groups raise £900 at their Sing for Justice concert in October. Around 200 people filled Blackpool Sixth Form College's beautiful theatre, and members told torture survivor stories. The **Oxford City** group's first black tie gala dinner, with BBC Oxford's Bill Heine as compere, featured dinner, music, raffle and talks by Dame Helena Kennedy. It raised £3,700. **Nottingham University** held a 'Come Dine with Amnesty' event, and **Lady Eleanor Holles School** group's Secret Policeman's Ball raised £350. The evening included a photo action with students holding up a placard stating their most prized human right.

## ON THE STAGE

A trip to London to see *Taken at Midnight* was a moving experience for the **Canterbury** group. This play tells the remarkable story of German lawyer Hans Litten who was imprisoned by the Nazis and his mother's fight for his freedom. Member Barbara Rogers is related to the Littens. Afterwards the group met Penelope Wilton and Allan

Corduner, who play Litten's parents, and writer Mark Hayhurst. Penelope commented on how worrying it was to see intolerance of minority groups on the increase again in Europe.

At the Guildford Book Festival in October, foreign correspondent Christina Lamb gave a sell-out talk about her latest book *I am Malala*. Working alongside Amnesty, she discussed her experience with the schoolgirl who stood up to the Taliban. The following day, Anthony and Ben Holden presented their book *Poems That Make Grown Men Cry*, an anthology published in cooperation with Amnesty. Ticket sales for both events raised money for Amnesty.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS

A Protect the Human Week organised by the **University of Warwick** group included a performance act to close Guantanamo Bay, a flashmob for the right to education and a talk on Dr Mohammed al-Roken. The **Manchester University** group debated free speech and its limitations, and the **Durham University** group welcomed Roberta Blackman-Woods who discussed her role as MP and her work on human rights.



Oxford City



Lady Eleanor Holles School



Guildford



Salisbury



Southampton



Church Stretton



Brighton and Hove



Canterbury



Minehead





## OBITUARY

On 9 April Amnesty members gathered to celebrate the life of **Mary Wright**. Mary was the **Hammersmith and Fulham** group secretary for 17 years. She ran the first Amnesty bookshop, and, until last September, was chair of the Women's Action Network. She also established the lovely Peace Garden in Greenwich. This redoubtable great grandma will be greatly missed.



## ON THE STREETS

The **Minhead** group held a stall on International Women's Day. They collected 130 signatures for three current campaigns – maternal health in South Africa, abortion in El Salvador and an Urgent Action for three 'disappeared' sisters in the UAE. Meanwhile, the **Oxford University** group demonstrated outside the local council offices to stop the expansion of Campsfield House immigration centre.

## MUSIC AND DANCING

The **York** group held their second Latin Night and meal with 80 people and live tunes. It included campaign actions for Mexico and Guatemala, raising £500. In October, the **Croydon** group's evening of folk and blues also raised £500. Thanks to musicians from the Ruskin House Folk and Blues club who generously waived their fees. Rebecca Grove and Stephanie Peat performed at the **Chichester University** group's fundraiser. In January, the **Bournville** group's open mic night saw members speaking on human rights issues, including Burma, the rights of LGBTI people and Pakistan. The **Church Stretton** group's annual ceilidh raised £600 with one

supporter playing his bagpipes. Carol singers at Kingston group's fundraiser, now in its 20th year, raised £895. The **Islington and Hackney** and **Lambeth** groups also went carol singing.

## VALENTINE'S DAY

The Concert for Captured Hearts spotlighted human trafficking in Scotland and raised over £1,000. Organised by the **St Marks** group, people wrote heart-shaped notes to the Scottish government in support of pending legislation against human trafficking while Edinburgh's finest musicians performed. The **Lincoln University** group handed out personalised messages on hearts to raise awareness and increase membership.

## COLOMBIA DAY

In October the **Newcastle** group held a Colombia Day, with actions taken for the Peace Community of San José de Apartado. There were presentations from Peace Brigades International and Justice for Colombia along with theatre from Ice and Fire telling real life experiences of victims of sexual violence. MEP Jude Kirton-Darling explained the work from the EU on the country.

## TALKS

Rob Evans, *Guardian* journalist and co-author of *Undercover*, spoke at the Writers on Rights organised by the **York** group. He led a lively discussion on the ethics of undercover policing, accountability and press freedom. The **Bournville** group welcomed Mark Jones. A Birmingham barrister who specialises in immigration and extradition law, Mark's talk reflected the absurdity of human rights abuse. The **University of Warwick** group and the Nigerian Society held a talk on Boko Haram and the future of Nigeria. It included a photo campaign action to raise awareness of the brutal Baga attacks. The **Woking** group hosted Soroptimist International's Rhobi Samwelly who gave a talk on FGM in Tanzania. Rhobi presented her impressive project to protect girls in the northern region of the country and challenge attitudes to female circumcision as part of a broader effort to empower women and girls. The event received media coverage. At the **Mid Gloucestershire** group's monthly meeting, EU country co-ordinator Richard Kotter spoke movingly of the discrimination faced by transgender people throughout Europe.



Cardigan and North Pembrokeshire



St Marks



Islington and Hackney



York



Kingston



Newcastle



Mid Gloucestershire



# NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

## HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH FILM

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the **Beckenham and West Wickham** group held a screening of *Opium Brides*, exploring the issues of child marriages in Afghanistan. The **Ely City** group's screening of BAFTA winner *Pride* raised funds and highlighted the importance of activism; *Hotel Rwanda*, screened by the **Aberystwyth University** group, motivated students to find out more about the difficulties that continue to plague Rwanda; and the **Oxford University** group showed *Utopia* exploring oppression of the aboriginal people in Australia. Meanwhile, the **Cardigan and North Pembrokeshire** group erected a stall at their local cinema during human rights-themed film screenings. The most recent resulted in a queue to sign letters to the Israeli authorities over the West Bank barrier.

## CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

The **Brighton and Hove** group was honoured to present the Galilee String Quartet during their UK tour. The quartet includes viola player Omar Sa'ad who famously refused

to serve in the Israeli Army seven times. The **Canterbury** group held a commemorative event as part of the UNA One World Week featuring stories of conscientious objectors.

## ART FOR AMNESTY

The **Woking** group organised an exhibition by renowned portrait painter Claire Phillips. *Reclaiming Childhood – Face to Face with Child Labour in India* took place at Worthing Museum and Art Gallery. Claire displayed large-scale oil portraits of child labourers in India where she spent time working with Save The Childhood Movement. The **Malvern Hills** group showed and sold work, including paintings, drawings, textiles and jewellery, raising £1,500.

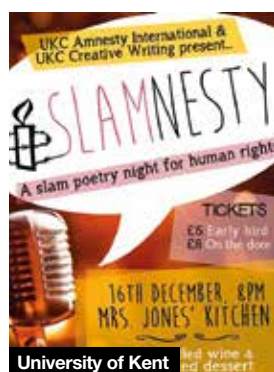
## FUNDRAISING

A silent auction by the **Brighton and Hove** group raised over £400. The group also held an auction of promises (featuring an Indian cooking lesson and guided nature walk). The **University of Kent's** Slamnesty raised £300. The **Freedom of Fundraisers** is a group of students at the **London Guildhall University School of Business and Law**,

and is fundraising for Amnesty during this academic year. They've already notched up £2,000 from events including the Tower Run, where students were sponsored to run up the 250 steps of their Islington campus. The **Glasgow University** group's annual sponsored hitchhike takes place in April. Students from **Cleveland School** group bounced for hours to raise £2,500. **Nottingham Trent University** group held a pub quiz while the **University of St Andrews** group organised 'Jump for Justice' – a 10,000ft skydive.

## GIVING IT UP

Youth groups embraced our Give it Up For Human Rights initiative. Students at **Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls** gave up their right to free expression – by taping their mouths shut for the day. **Broughton High School** gave up a different right every day for a week. **Forest School** spent break times in a cage to deny themselves the right to freedom. **Eastlea Community School** and **Knox Academy** also held their own events. Order a Give it Up For Human Rights Day pack, [www.amnesty.org.uk/youthgiveitup](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/youthgiveitup) (also see page 14).



University of Kent



Cleveland School



London Guildhall University



Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls



Broughton High School



# REGIONAL CONFERENCES

A wide range of speakers and activists inspire delegates at Amnesty regional conferences across the UK

The **North West** Regional Conference in Chester on 8 November opened with accounts by human rights defenders Katsiaryna Borsuk and Hikma Ahmed about their battles in Belarus and Sudan. There followed a talk on combining fundraising and campaigning, workshops on Nigeria, Mexico and the Philippines, and a march in Stop Torture T-shirts.

At the **North East** Regional Conference in Leeds on 15 November Sanna Eriksson reviewed the work of the Centre for Applied Human Rights at York University. Hikma Ahmed gave an account of life for women in Sudan and Ruki Fernando spoke about life for minorities in Sri Lanka.

At the **Northern Ireland** Regional Conference in Belfast on 24 January, pro-choice campaigners and midwives joined Amnesty activists to discuss abortion law reform. Speakers included Dawn Purvis, of

Marie Stopes International and Breedagh Hughes, of the Royal College of Midwives. Amnesty UK chair Sarah O'Grady spoke about campaign successes and the global growth and direction of the movement.

The **South Midlands** Regional Conference in Buckingham on 31 January focused on Stop Torture. John Bercow MP gave a speech and Amnesty UK board member Ruth Breddal gave a rundown of campaign work, successes and aims. The day ended with a panel discussion on free speech with guest Peter Leeson.

On 7 February, the **South East** Regional Conference was held in Chichester with guest speaker Celia Ouellette, staff attorney on Reprieve's Death Penalty Team. Over 60 delegates participated in workshops, heard more about the Stop Torture campaign's focus on the Philippines, and admired Ann Stewart's knitted Universal Declaration of

Human Rights.

On 21 February, more than 60 activists at the **South** Regional Conference in Bristol discussed Syria and Afghanistan, and prepared for the general election campaign. Campaigner Ruth Dawson reported on Syrian refugees and the need for pressure on the UK government. Delegates role played activists and parliamentary candidates to explore the best ways to lobby.

On the same day, at the **South West** Regional conference in Exeter, Hikma Ahmed, a Sudanese lawyer, spoke of the challenges she faces defending the rights of women and children. Delegates also heard the latest on the My Body My Rights campaign, and how activists can defend the UK's Human Rights Act. After a march to Exeter Cathedral, delegates were photographed with Stop Torture banners.



# CAMPAIGNS

## HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

On 6 February, David Cameron met some powerful people – from the **Chipping Norton** group. They discussed the Conservative Party's stance on the UK's Human Rights Act (HRA), and the ramifications of their position for both the UK and our standing in Europe and the rest of the world. The group highlighted the positive aspects of the HRA and what it had achieved to date. No surprise that the Prime Minister disputed this, referring all the time to the prisoner's vote, but he promised to get back to them with a letter addressing some of the issues discussed.

## THE RIGHT TO LOVE

The **Leicester University** group joined forces with their LGBTQ society to discuss global homosexuality laws. The **University of St Andrews** group hosted Panty Bliss, Ireland's top drag queen and LGBTI rights activist.

## INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

Together we've ramped up the pressure on the United Arab Emirates over Dr Mohammed Al-Roken serving a 10-year prison sentence for doing his job as a human rights lawyer. More than 3,000 tweets and hundreds of messages were sent to the President's Facebook page, all calling for his release. The **Scarborough** group were among the many who took part in the campaign. The **Nottingham** group took action for Raif Badawi, along with many other local groups who attended candle-lit vigils outside the Saudi Embassy and collected online petition signatures. Despite nearly 49,000 emails, the UK government has failed to speak out publicly to demand his release. It's possible Raif will go on trial again for apostasy, so keep protesting. Meanwhile, the **Cambridge City** group held a stall at Women of the World on 26 October, with cards signed and a letter sent to Asia Bibi, on Pakistan's death row for blasphemy.

Local groups including **Norwich and District** joined the Save Shaker Aamer Campaign march and demo on 14 February. It marked the 13th anniversary of his detention in Guantanamo. The **Leeds University** group are also campaigning to free Shaker.

On 19 March, Amnesty delivered a petition signed by 41,688 people calling on the UK Prime Minister David Cameron and US President Barack Obama to return Shaker to the UK, unless he is to be charged and brought to a fair trial. We delivered your signatures to Downing Street with the help of Shaker's family and Amnesty supporter David Nicholl, dressed in orange jumpsuit and chains. Later that day, Shaker's case was debated in the House of Commons, and a resolution was passed calling 'on the US government to release Shaker Aamer from his imprisonment in Guantanamo Bay and allow him to return to his family in the UK.' Thank you for taking action.



Chipping Norton



Scarborough



Nottingham University



David Nicholl



Liverpool University



Warwick University



Exeter University



Kingston University



MP Ed Davey



## MY BODY MY RIGHTS

Student groups across the UK launched Amnesty's My Body My Rights campaign on 8 March, International Women's Day. Students collected petition signatures calling on world leaders to protect our sexual and reproductive rights and asked members of the public to give their reasons for supporting everyone's right to control their own body. Responses collected by the Kingston University group included 'Because abortion and contraception are rights, not crimes', and local MP Ed Davey even got in on the action. The University of Warwick and Liverpool University groups also took part.

The Queen Mary University group held a successful AmnesTea offering free tea and coffee to everyone who signed the petition demanding the release of women jailed on suspicion of (attempted) abortion in El Salvador. They held an event featuring a speaker from the Abortion Support Network.

The Essex University group ran an AmnesTea encouraging discussion on the campaign, and held a candle-lit vigil in honour of victims of violence against women.

At St George's University, an eye-opening talk by Professor Sarah Creighton (consultant gynaecologist and honorary clinical professor) and Kerry Abel (chair of Abortion Rights) highlighted the huge challenges facing millions of women and girls.

## WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

The Bagnor, Chichester and District group welcomed filmmaker Janey Moffat to show and discuss her film *Afghanistan: A Difficult Birth*. Janey travelled to Kabul and recorded the challenges Afghan women face from childbirth to equality. The Southampton group's pub quiz in support of women's rights in Afghanistan was full to the rafters.

The Buckingham group took part in the Occupational Hazards campaign for

women in Afghanistan as did youth groups at Boroughmuir, Burgate, Dundee, Freman, Gryphon, Henley College, Hereford Cathedral, Inverurie, Reading Girls School, SEEDs, Shimna, South Hampstead, Stewart Melville College, Stewarton, Bannockburn, Bootham, Bruton, Clevedon, Dollar Academy, Dumfries Global Education, Durham High School, Hinckley, Kyle Academy, Lady Eleanor Holles school, Larbert, Larkhall, St Clares, Stanchester, Thomas More and UCL Academy. Thanks for your great efforts and photos.



Bootham School



Shimna



Southampton



Lady Eleanor Holles School



St Clares



Clevedon



Hinckley



Thomas More



Bruton



Buckingham

## EVENTS

**9 MAY**

### **YORK**

#### **Music and dance**

York group welcomes world music choir Chechelele and North African dance group to their open-air Stop Torture event. Free.

**Contact Tim Phillips,**  
**01904 415224.**

**15 MAY**

### **LONDON**

#### **Talks, music and film**

7-9pm, Human Rights Action Centre

Find out about Amnesty's new campaign against anti-Roma segregation, racist violence and discrimination in the Czech Republic. Free, but donations welcome.

**Contact ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk**

**21 MAY**

### **MINEHEAD**

#### **Folk concert and supper**

7.30pm, Carhampton Village Hall, Carhampton. Minehead group present a singer-songwriter and harp duo. Tickets £6.

**Contact Susan Mew,**  
**01643 704779**

**24 MAY**

### **JERSEY**

#### **Sponsored bike ride**

10am, Maritime Museum start  
Join Amnesty Jersey's Freedom Cycle Ride. Three routes (70km, 36km, 10 or 20km).

### **MAGNA CARTA 800TH ANNIVERSARY**

To mark the anniversary, the **Salisbury** group has been working with Salisbury Cathedral which has one of the surviving copies of the document. The group is hosting a Stop Torture display outside the Chapter House where the Magna Carta is displayed. And on 15 June, the day the document was sealed, an actor will read passages from The Great Charter at the Salisbury Playhouse. For more info, updates and booking **www.salisburyai.com**



**Contact 01534 859566,**  
**amnestyride@gmail.com**  
or just turn up on the day.

**13 JUNE**

### **DOVER**

#### **Refugee Tales Walk**

An 80-mile walk in solidarity with refugees and detainees during Refugee Week takes place from Dover to Crawley. Launch party in Dover includes Amnesty stall. Walkers welcome for the whole route, a few days or a day (approx. 8-10 miles per day).

**Contact Jean Barber**  
**jbarber@uk2.net,**  
**www.refugeetales.org**

**21 JUNE**

### **BLACKHEATH AND GREENWICH**

#### **Book sale**

9am-6pm, Church of the Ascension, Dartmouth Row, London SE10

Featuring thousands of secondhand and new books.

**Contact aibgsocialmedia@gmail.com**

**24-26 JULY**

### **MALMESBURY**

#### **WOMAD music festival**

Charlton Park, Wiltshire  
The Reading group is looking for volunteers for their annual stall at the WOMAD festival.

**Contact Sue Bingham,**  
**s.bingham748@btinternet.com**

## RESOURCES

### **GIVE IT UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS KIT**



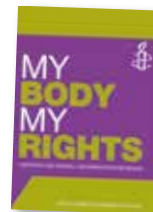
The Ashford School youth group came up with the idea for Give it Up for human rights – and won themselves Most Creative Fundraising category in our 2014 Youth Awards for it.

The pack has now been developed for youth groups and schools. Students choose to 'give up' something or take a creative action to highlight an article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – and get sponsored for it. For example, taking part in a sponsored silence (article 19, the right to free expression) or giving up their phone (article 17, the right to property).

The kit contains everything you need to run your Give it Up Day, including stickers, My Rights Passport and suggestions for sponsored activities.  
**You can order your kit by calling 020 7033 1650, [fundraise@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:fundraise@amnesty.org.uk) or download resources [www.amnesty.org.uk/youthgiveitup](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/youthgiveitup)**

### **MY BODY MY RIGHTS**

This booklet explains the human rights framework of the My Body My Rights campaign.



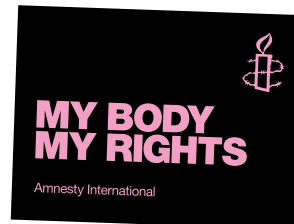
#### **Policy Primer**

**Product code: MBM003**



#### **Card banners**

**Product code MBM001**



#### **Correx placards**

**Product code: MBM002**

#### **A4 card placards**

**Product code: MBM004**

Available to order from TFS,  
**01788 545553**



### **On the brink of death: Violence Against Women and the Abortion Ban in El Salvador**

Amnesty's report on the deadly impact of the country's abortion ban is a key element in the My Body My Rights campaign.

**Download at [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk). Search for El Salvador new report**



## CONTACT US

NEW



### DREAMS OF FREEDOM BOOK

Following on from best-seller *We Are All Born Free*, Amnesty's new book introduces children to the importance of freedom and human rights. Illustrators from around the world bring to life 17 inspirational quotes on freedom from Nelson Mandela, Chief Standing Bear and the Dalai Lama, among others. The result, says author Michael Morpurgo, who wrote the foreword is: 'Brave words and beautiful pictures, woven together to inspire young readers to stand up for others and make a difference.'

***Dreams of Freedom* (£12.99) can be ordered from [www.amnestyshop.org.uk](http://www.amnestyshop.org.uk)**

### DREAMS OF FREEDOM EXHIBITION

We have produced 20 A2-sized display boards and mini information boards about the authors and illustrators in *Dreams of Freedom*.

Available on loan from [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)

### WE ARE ALL BORN FREE EXHIBITION

There are 30 A2-sized display boards plus 28 mini information boards about the illustrators in *We Are All Born Free*. This award-winning book simplifies and illustrates the UDHR in an engaging and accessible way for children.

Available on loan from [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)



### STOP TORTURE ONE STEP AT A TIME

**Sponsorship form (offline)**  
Organise a sponsored walk to support our Stop Torture campaign and help stop abuses, one step at a time.

**Download at [www.amnesty.org.uk/resources](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources)**

### LGBTI Q&A

This 2-page Q&A provides information on LGBTI human rights issues and the work Amnesty is doing in this area, including current cases.  
**Download at [www.amnesty.org.uk/resources](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources)**

### SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

How to get the most out of your social media accounts, plus campaign images to use on Facebook and Twitter.  
**Download at [www.amnesty.org.uk/socialresources](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/socialresources)**

### REAL LIVES

A quarterly supplement to the Amnesty magazine: nine letter-writing cases, printed on A4 paper to make it easy to photocopy for group letter-writing sessions.

Available to order from [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)



### LOCAL GROUP ENQUIRIES

020 7033 1675

### YOUTH AND STUDENT GROUP ENQUIRIES

020 7033 1596

Email [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)

### FUNDRAISING ENQUIRIES

020 7033 1650

Email [fundraise@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:fundraise@amnesty.org.uk)

**Amnesty International UK**  
**The Human Rights Action Centre**  
**17-25 New Inn Yard**  
**London EC2A 3EA**  
**Telephone 020 7033 1500**  
**Facsimile 020 7033 1503**  
**Textphone 020 7033 1664**

### GROUPS NEWS EDITORIAL TEAM

Dan Jones, Farshid Talaghani, Richard Glynn, Dani Beckett and Anne Montague

### DESIGN

Amnesty International UK  
**Copy deadline for next issue**  
15 September 2015

### TELL US IF YOU HAVE CHANGED

It is vital that you let us know about any changes to your group's office holders, such as Secretary, President, Campaign Coordinators and Treasurer. This will help us to communicate with the right person in your group. When the office holders or their addresses change, please send us details of name, address, phone and email, as well as details of the outgoing person.

Please send details to Community Organising Team at [activism@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:activism@amnesty.org.uk)

### IF YOU'RE SENDING IN PHOTOS

Photos should be high-resolution jpegs (at least 300KB) and emailed as an attachment or sent on a CD. For more tips, read the 'Women's rights in Afghanistan – let's take action!' blog post at [www.amnesty.org.uk/afghanistan](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/afghanistan)

# STUDENT EVENTS

In November nearly 200 students came together for a packed weekend of training, networking and campaigning at the annual Student Conference.

They learned about current human rights issues from activists working on the ground: Justine Ijeomah talked about defending torture victims in Nigeria, while Saleyha Ahsan and Reem Al-Assil shared experiences of activism in Syria. A panel of experienced campaigners, Kelly Mackey, Ellie Drake, Mara Clark and Naomi McAuliffe, discussed abortion in Northern Ireland as part of Amnesty's My Body My Rights campaign.

Throughout the weekend students were kept busy in workshops and planning groups. Their campaign action took the students onto London's streets to 'sell' trays of torture equipment. This creative approach attracted

a lot of attention and media coverage. Over 2,200 people signed a petition to close EU loopholes that enable the selling of tools of torture.

## NEW STUDENT ACTION NETWORK COMMITTEE

At their annual conference students elected a new Student Action Network Committee (STAN) – Aneesa Patel (University of Warwick), Hannah Evans (University of Kent), Chris Bovis (York University), Mélanie Thienard (King's College London) and Lily Malcolm-Watts (Durham University). STAN's focus for 2015 will be on developing resources for student groups, and promoting collaboration between student, youth and local groups.

## SCOTTISH STUDENT CONFERENCE

The Scottish Student Conference on 21 February, hosted by the Glasgow University group, brought together delegates from all over Scotland. There was a talk on El Salvador's ban on abortion, and the group's Secret Policeman's Ball, which raised £1,500.

## ACTION FOR CHANGE

On 7 March student activists took part in a day of training to develop their organising and campaigning skills. Focusing on the general election, delegates heard a talk from political strategist Kirsty McNeill, and took part in workshops.

For more student group activities, see Campaigns, pages 12-13.



Student Conference



Student Conference



Stop Torture campaign action



STAN Committee



Action for Change

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact: **Tel 020 7033 1777**  
**Textphone 020 7033 1664 / Email [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)**