

❄️ *Happy New Year to All* ❄️



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

January 2014

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

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Greetings Card Campaign Writing for Rights

Every year we take part in the Greetings Card Campaign during November and December – sending messages of hope and support to victims of human rights abuses and human rights defenders. For 2013 AIUK had selected 13 cases with an optional 8 more, including Eskinder Nega, an Ethiopian journalist serving 17 years for criticising the government, Miruam Lopez Vargas, a Mexican torture victim and COFADEH (The Committee of relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Honduras). Tan Aung, our group's adopted prisoner in Burma, was also among the cases selected.



This year we had 3 stalls: at the Peoples' Museum, at Unicorn in Chorlton and at the Birch Christmas Fair. In addition, we had a productive session writing cards at the group December meeting.



We also sent a special greetings card with lots of our signatures and messages to the Zimbabwean women's group, WOZA.

This year we sent at least 152 cards.
Well done all!

Throughout the year we have regular letter writing sessions, usually on a Saturday at Eighth Day café on Oxford Road. Our first in 2014 will take place on Saturday 25th January, 2-4pm. Come along and get stuck in to some core Amnesty work whilst enjoying a cup of tea and a slice of the café's superb cakes.

If you can't make the Eighth Day sessions, you can still send emails, sign petitions and write letters at home. Make a habit of regularly checking the AIUK website for new cases to move you to put pen to paper. Go to <http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/actions> for cases to work on.

Group meetings

Monthly Group Meetings

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

8th January: A very important meeting – our AGM

12th February: Kate Allen, Director AIUK

Why not join a few of us for a pre-meeting meal just after 6. This month we will be in the bar at Jamie's (the top of King Street). It would be good to see you there.

Letter Writing

Saturday 24th January
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
2-4pm

Pens, paper and case sheets provided!

STOP PRESS

Kate Allen, Director AIUK, will be at our February Group Meeting. Get it in your diary and start thinking of questions to ask her!

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Campaigns

Burma

Political prisoner amnesty announced.



As has been widely reported, on the 30th of December 2013, President Thein Sein of Myanmar pledged to release all prisoners of conscience convicted of or prosecuted for various offences under seven specific laws, including unlawful association, peaceful assembly, treason and sedition, by the end of 2013.

On Tuesday the 31st of December, at least 5 political prisoners are thought to have been released, information which appears to be corroborated by the state's official press release on the matter. It has been reported in the press that more prisoners were expected to be released in the 1st week of January, but again there do not appear to be any reliable and consistent reports providing updated information in this respect from AI or any other media sources.

Regrettably, several high profile prisoners of conscience, including our Dr Tun Aung, have not been included in the Amnesty to date and remain behind bars, despite pleas from the UN and FCO Minister Hugo Swire pressing for their cases to be reviewed.

Syria



The situation for civilians in Syria is still dire. AIUK's Campaign Manager - Crisis & Tactical, Kristyan Benedict, regularly blogs about the situation in Syria on the AIUK website - see <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/kristyan-benedict>

His most recent blog, posted 1st January, is **44 reasons most Syrians will not have a happy new year in 2014** and you can see all his other posts including his and Als really important work with the Syria Non Violence movement.

There is also the IS campaign updates on <http://campaigns.amnesty.org/campaigns/conflict-in-syria> which includes all the urgent actions for Syria and the latest AI briefing on Syria published 19.12.13.

We will get a full campaign update in February from AIUK.

We have been asked to organise a stall at a memorial for Dr Abbas Khan and the thousands of other victims of Syria's prisoners to be held at the British Muslim Heritage Centre in Whalley Range on Friday 17th January at 8pm. AIUK's Kristyan Benedict has agreed to sponsor the event.

If you can help out on the stall contact Michelle Eddisford (sheddie@live.co.uk) asap.

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## Other Amnesty news

### AIUK AGM 2014

Don't forget to book for the 2 day 2014 AGM in Edinburgh - 12th -13th April 2014 at Herriott-Watt University.

See [www.amnesty.org.uk/agm](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm) for full details. N.B. The resolution deadline is 11th Feb and booking deadline is 3rd March.

AIUK are asking for working party chairs to facilitate debate on amendments to AGM motions - training will be provided - deadline for applications is 31st Jan. Same website address for applications or if you want to discuss it, ring the supporter care team on 02070331777.

### Board Elections

Elections for the board are coming up: anyone wishing to apply for consideration must request a nomination form by 8th Jan and return the form by 15th Jan: info from [www.amnesty.org.uk/boardelection](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/boardelection) or email [nomcom@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:nomcom@amnesty.org.uk).