



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

June 2014

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

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Campaigning

Our campaigning

We have four main areas of campaign work at the moment:

- **Stop Torture.**
- **Women's Rights.**
- **Individuals and Groups at Risk.**
- **Regional Campaigning**
 - Southern Africa (including Zimbabwe)
 - Middle East and North Africa (including Egypt and Syria)

At the June Group meeting, each campaign lead will introduce the campaign giving us a chance to discuss current work and future plans.

Come along to the June Group meeting to find out more about our campaigns and how you can take part.

Stop Torture

The international Stop Torture Campaign was launched in the UK on March 14th with an event at the Human Rights Action Centre in London, which was transmitted live via YouTube and is available to watch at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSkW1Q4tLEA>

There will be a Global Day of Activism on 26th June, International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. AIUK are holding a mass demo outside the Mexican Embassy in London demanding justice for Claudia Medina Tamariz, who was accused of being a member of a violent gang and taken by marines to a naval base where she was given electric shocks, beaten and kicked. A judge ordered an investigation into what happened to her but no one has yet been held to account for her torture. Hear her story: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Leian4Rno9w> See www.amnesty.org.uk/stoptortureday for more info on the demo. We hope to do something in Manchester as well. More info after our group meeting.

Anne is attending a 'Training for trainers' day on June 14th at the Human Rights Action Centre and hopes to be able to deliver a workshop on this campaign at the July meeting.

Women's Rights

Women in Afghanistan

Amnesty's campaigning in 2014 has focused on calling on the UK government to make women's rights a focus of their policies during the withdrawal from Afghanistan. This precarious position of Afghan women was highlighted by a series of violent attacks against high-profile women and legislative back sliding on gains that had previously been made for women's rights.

The first round of presidential elections on April 5 did not result in an outright winner, so a run-off election is being held on 14 June

with results to be announced on 22 July. Following this, pressure can resume for the UK government to push the new Afghanistan president to prioritise protection for women.

Stop execution of mother in Sudan

Amnesty is calling for the immediate release of Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, a mother of two imprisoned with her children on death row in Sudan. She has been sentenced to death for refusing to renounce her Christian faith. She is also to be given 100 lashes for adultery – because her husband is Christian her marriage is treated as illegal. On 31 May, an official from the Foreign Ministry told the BBC that she would be released – so taking action now is crucial to ensure that pressure on Sudanese authorities is maintained.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/sudan-execution-apostasy-pregnant-woman-mother-meriam-yahya-ibrahim-christian>



Burma - Dr. Tun Aung.

There is no more news about Dr. Tun Aung, which means it is assumed he is still held in Insein Prison, where he was transferred to some weeks ago. This was seen as a step towards eventual release.

June 11th is the 2nd anniversary of his arrest, and to mark that Jean will bring a letter for us all to sign to the group meeting to the President of Burma, highlighting that fact, and again requesting his release.

The present Burmese administration has released most political prisoners, as promised by the President in July 2013, and they are to be congratulated on this, but there are still too many people behind bars for political reasons, among them several journalists who have been arrested simply because they were doing their job.

On a visit to Australia late last year, Au Sung Sui Ky urged the Australians to sign a petition for changes to the Burmese Constitution which was accepted in 2008. She made this request on the grounds that as this constitution gives power to the military, without a free judiciary, changes need to be made if Burma wishes to be regarded as a democratic government.

Zimbabwe

Maggie Towse, The AIUK Zimbabwe country coordinator reports that conspicuous human rights activity remains low in Zimbabwe with very few reports of WOZA and other human rights defenders being visible on the streets.



There have been two events however over the last month that are worthy of note. Firstly, the government called for nominations from non-parliamentarians for the Commissions on Human Rights, on Media, on Gender, on Electoral Reform and on National Reconciliation. The call for nominations has been welcomed by the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP) and others but the real test will be whether these Commissions are properly funded and allowed to exercise real authority.



Secondly, in a clearly retrograde step, the Prosecutor General, Johannes Tomana, has announced that he intends to re-open the case against Beatrice Mtetwa. She, was acquitted of all charges in November 2013 after being arrested in March 2013. Beatrice Mtetwa is Zimbabwe's most high profile human rights lawyer having

successfully defended Jenni Williams of WOZA, Jestina Mukoko of the ZPP, several journalists as well as opposition politicians.

Her arrest in March 2013 arose when she responded to a client's phone call as his premises were being searched by police. On arrival she asked to see a search warrant at which point she was arrested and charged with 'obstructing justice'. The case was subject to numerous delays and was only eventually finally heard in November when the Judge ruled that she had no case to answer.

It seems that this is not an isolated case as recently, "obstruction of justice" charges have been filed or cases reopened against several others in Zimbabwe, including human rights lawyers Trust Maanda and Alec Muchadehama. The latter – who has represented several victims of state-sponsored abduction and torture – was acquitted two years ago, but his case is being re-examined by the Prosecutor-General who claims he is entitled to "challenge any decision in any criminal matter."

We will send a message of support to Beatrice from our June Group meeting.

Write for Rights



Last month we had a good turn out for our informal letter writing session. 10 people got together and between them wrote 40 letters written including letters for the first Stop Torture cases and letters to MPs re. our Burmese prisoner.

Get the next date on your calendar now!

Letter Writing
 Sat 19th July
 The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
 2-4pm
 Pens, paper and case sheets provided!

Group news

Didsbury Festival

We had fun in the rain at our stall at this year's festival. The 'Egg Game' was a great success and helped attract people to the stall and made a £50 profit. We also featured the case of an environmental activist in the north of Brazil, Laisa Santos Sampaio who has been receiving death threats since 2010. Unfortunately, we couldn't do the creative children's action that we had planned, the level of mud just didn't allow it.



The Egg Game

The stall – before the rain came down!



Laura being interviewed by the AIUK camera crew!

Pride Parade

We have taken part in the Manchester Pride Parade for quite a few years. It is a really fun event and means that we get seen by thousands of Mancunians. This year the parade is on Saturday 23rd August (August bank holiday weekend) with the theme Love is love, no matter who you love! This ties in with a lot of material that we already have (e.g. Love is a Human Right placards) and AIUK are also promising more help this year.

Anne was hoping to lead on this but now realises that she will be away on the big day. Does anyone else want to give it a go?? Drop Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) an email asap as we must apply in the next couple of weeks if we are going to do it this year.

Kate Allen, AIUK Director

Don't forget that Kate hopes to be at our September meeting.

Get **10th September** in your diary now!



Last call for this year's subscriptions!

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. If you haven't yet made a contribution, 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.

Monthly Group Meetings

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

11th June: Our Campaigns - review.

9th July: Stop Torture Campaign Workshop

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 For Refugee Week



We need one last push to sell tickets for our musical/poetry fundraiser on **Friday June 20th** at Sacred Trinity (on Blackfriars Road very close to the city centre) in aid of both Amnesty and Musicians Without Borders.

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

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



A flyer is attached with this newsletter. Send it to your friends, put it on Facebook, get it out there!

News from AIUK

AIUK Board

Anne has just received the regular update from the AIUK Board. She is pleased to report that Sarah O'Grady has been re-elected as Chair and Hannah Perry as Vice-chair. Both made excellent presentations at the AGM.

If you want to read the full update, drop Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) an email and she will happily email it to you.

Strategic Goals Consultation

Amnesty International has started the process of consulting with all AI sections and members on where to focus our collective attention and energies from 2016-19. This process will run until April 2015 in time for the 2015 International Council Meeting (ICM), where the final decision on our 'strategic goals' will be determined.

We will hear about this work again in August when AIUK will be consulted by the International Board on options for the draft Strategic Goals themselves. The time frame for this work is longer, from August until October.