

MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2015

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

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Campaigns



The Human Rights Act protects the fundamental rights we all have as human beings, and allows us to challenge authorities if they violate them. You might not have used it, but it's there if you need it. It is now under threat.

If you haven't already signed the AI petition – DO IT NOW:

<http://savetheact.uk/#signup-form>

Our subgroup looking at how we can campaign on this has already had one meeting. Our main aim at the moment is to get as many people as possible to sign the above petition, especially local politicians and councillors. We have already emailed all the Manchester City councillors and our MEPs and received some very supportive responses from the councillors.

Our next task is to ask **YOU ALL** to write/email to your MP to ask them to sign the petition and to give them a copy of the AIUK briefing. Attached with this newsletter you will find a list of the key Greater Manchester MPs that we are targeting with sample letters and a copy of the briefing. If your MP isn't listed, please still feel free to write. The more MPs realise that this is an issue that concerns their constituents the better.



Please can you let Anne Walker know when you have taken action and the name of your MP. Anne would also like a copy of any replies to pass on to AIUK. If you are interested in joining this subgroup contact her on anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Southern Africa

To mark Mandela's International Day on the 18th of July a small group of us took part in an action outside the Friends Meeting House in Manchester asking passers by to sign a petition calling the South African authorities to properly investigate violence against refugees. Thanks to the Manchester Quakers for their support and for letting us use their steps!

Sexual and Reproductive Rights

AIUK are promoting more actions as part of the international My Body My Rights campaign. At our Acoustic Amnesty concert we had a stall featuring this campaign with a tree with what people felt about their sexual and reproductive rights on the leaves. The performers also posed for us to show their support for the campaign.



If you want to find out more with actions to take visit:

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Sexual-and-reproductive-rights>

Individuals at Risk

The Challenge

We have been invited to take part in a citizenship programme for young people in Manchester on the 7th & 21st November, organised by a group called The Challenge. It involves introducing a group of 12 young people to Amnesty's work & providing them with a theme & resources to run an event for us. It may be possible to use Write for Rights as a theme & we are looking for a possible venue. If anyone would like to help with planning this event or meeting the young people please contact Hazel Errey or Mary McBride."

Letter Writing

We hold regular informal letter writing sessions at the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road every two months, usually the last Saturday in the month. At the last one in July we sent 25 letters to Colombia,



Iran, Angola among others. Come along in September and be inspired to put pen to paper.

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 19th September 2-4pm
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
Case sheets, pen and paper provided.
All Welcome.

Refugee Rights.

Asylum Justice Project

The subgroup now has four members. Actions undertaken so far include:

- Laura G is pursuing becoming involved as a visitor at the Pennine House IRC near Manchester Airport
- Heather has made contact with the Regional Asylum Activism group in the North West and will attend their August meeting on myth-busting and contacting MPs.
- Links with City of Sanctuary are being maintained and we are still pursuing the possibility of them coming to one of our meetings to speak about asylum issues in Manchester

How **YOU** can get involved:

- "Like" the Asylum Justice Project Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/AsylumJusticeProject>
- Join the sub-group: contact heathercard12@gmail.com
- Write to your MP – see below

Last week we sent round a plea for as many of us as possible write to our MPs asking them to sign the early day motion to condemn the 30% cut in asylum support for children from £7.50 to £5.20 per day, due to come into force on 10th August. First raised in the House of Commons on 20/7/15, the motion then had only 27 signatories so far. See <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/344>

If you haven't yet done this – do it now. A template letter is attached. Send copies of any responses to Heather at heathercard12@gmail.com.

Bidisha at the Manchester Literature Festival

Our session at Manchester Literature Festival with Bidisha, on her outreach work with asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people in London, and Gulwali Passarlay, on his journey as an unaccompanied teenager from Afghanistan to Lancashire is coming up in October.

Asylum and Exile

Saturday 17th October, 2pm
Cross Street Chapel
Tickets £7/£5 concessions
Booking (*not yet open*) on 0843 208 0500 or
Manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

Burma (Myanmar)

Lotus Action

In our July meeting we took part in the 'Lotus Flower' action started by AI Sections in the Asia Pacific in support of the refugee and migrant at sea crisis in South East Asia.



Lotus flowers are the symbol of compassion. The plan of the Lotus flower action is to encourage members to make and hold the origami lotus flowers and take photos of themselves. AI will then put together all the photos and reach out to the key governments to urge them to continue search and rescue mission and to provide all the humanitarian assistance needed.

Children's Human Rights / Stop Torture / South America

No actions this month

Group News

Acoustic Amnesty

The all female Acoustic Amnesty gig on 18th July was a special one with a capacity audience. We raised over £600 shared between Manchester Women's aid and Manchester Amnesty.



Thanks to all who came to the gig and supported the causes and the acts, to all of the great acts, to Andy and Kolyn at Sacred Trinity for hosting us and most of all to Steve Lindsay for getting it all together.

Pride Parade

We will be taking part in the Manchester Pride Parade again this year. Being in the parade is a marvellous way to get our message seen by thousands of people and is really fun as well – so make sure that you are around on Saturday 29th August (the bank holiday weekend). Bring along your friends and family as well!

Volunteers' names to Laura please: laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk.



Also, do you have one of these Amnesty black T-shirts with the white logo on the front? We need as many as possible so that all can wear one in the parade. Please let me (anne.walker9@ntworld.com) know if you have one that we can borrow – better still bring it along to the group meeting in August to add to the pile!



Press coverage

Thanks to our press officer, David, we got two letters signed by our chair, Laura, published last month, one in the Manchester Evening News on the use of tasers and the other in the Big Issue in the North calling for an investigation following confirmation that AIUK is subject to UK surveillance. Well done David and Laura!

Next Group Meeting

Normally held 2nd Wednesday each month - Cross Street Chapel 7.30pm

12th August – come and help us prepare for the Pride Parade

Why not join a few of us for a pre-meeting drink/meal just after 6pm, this month we will be at Croma (1-3 Clarence St, just off Albert Square).