



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2016

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Campaigning

Refugee Campaign



On 19 September there is a special UN assembly to discuss the refugee crisis. The meeting will be a chance to achieve worldwide agreement to resolve the refugee crisis and improve the lives of refugees. Making sure the UK takes its fair share of responsibility is critical to reaching any lasting agreement to helping refugees. In order for the UK to do more we need to show the Prime Minister that people from across the UK want more to be done to help those fleeing war and persecution. To demonstrate this, there will be a march in London on 17 September and in every other capital within the UK. The march is being organised by Solidarity Refugees and Amnesty is one of the many organisations lending support.

How can we help? A major feature of this campaign is the refugee pledge. We are asked to get people from across Manchester to sign the pledge and promote the action in regional media and online we hope to demonstrate there is support for refugees across the UK. The pledge calls on the Prime Minister to lead in delivering a humane and affective response to the global refugee crisis.

We made a start of this at the Acoustic Amnesty event – when we also raised money for the City of Sanctuary in Manchester.

Middle East

As Manchester has close links with the United Arab Emirates (via Manchester City Football club and the UAE's stake in the Manchester Life Development Company for example) we are concentrating our efforts on this area. In particular, we have started campaigning on behalf the human rights Lawyer, Mohammed al-Roken who was jailed for 10 years in July 2013.



We spent some time at our last meeting discussing the UAE. Henrike and Hayley explained the issues and showed a couple of videos. If you weren't there, have a look at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXqHLFngobw> on migrant workers and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb0L3LhqTag> In July, in conjunction with researchers from the Amnesty International Secretariat and Human Rights Watch, we had

meetings with both the Bishop of Manchester and Sir Richard Leese, the leader of Manchester City Council, to discuss our concerns and to ask them to raise these with any contacts that they have. We feel that Manchester leaders raising the issues publically will be of concern to those in power in the UAE and could help make an improvement in the country.

ACTION ON THIS CASE:

The UAE group held a meeting this month to plan their participation in the Peterloo Tapestry event on the 14th of August. The Peterloo Memorial Campaign Group's commemorative event will be the creation of a public participative artwork in the form of an evocative tapestry and the idea is to address the case of Mohammed Al-Roken on that day on the tapestry. If anyone is interested in helping for this event, just contact Henrike (henrikegreuel@gmx.de) or come to our next subgroup meeting at 6pm at the Deli-Lama on the 10th of August. In addition, the group will get in contact with other organisations to work in collaboration on an event for Mohammed's birthday in September/ October 2016.

North Africa

EGYPT –Cambridge student found murdered

In 2011, the body of Giulio Regeni, an Italian PhD student searching into Trade Union rights, was found dumped in the outskirts of Cairo with torture marks redolent of the practices of the Security services. Since then the Italian and British governments have asked the Egyptian authorities to investigate into the murder. The case has been dismissed as an attack by thugs.

Giulio's fate is shared by thousands of Egyptians and foreigners, who 'disappear'. AI highlights that information about conditions in Egypt come from brave researchers like Giulio and his case will be featured in the Write for Rights campaign from Nov/Dec 2016.

Both the Italian and British governments have valuable arms and trade deals with Egypt, which allegedly has made them less willing to put pressure onto the Egyptian authorities to cast light onto this case.

For unknown reasons the University of Cambridge has not answered to calls for co-operation into providing information that could be useful to resolve this case.



MOROCCO –WAFAE CHARAF released

Wafae Charaf was jailed for two years for reporting torture. She has now been released !

In May 2016 Laura distributed solidarity cards in support of Wafae at the stand we had at the theater in Salford Quay, in occasion of the play 'The Last Resort'.

LIBYA –We need a plan B

According to the International Organisation for Migration about 264,000 migrants and refugees are currently in Lybia. Most of them are escaping horrific conditions in their original countries.

In May 2016 the EU has extended Operation Sophia for another year. This is an anti-people smuggling mission in the Mediterranean with the aim to build up capacity of the Lybian coastguard and immigration authorities.

However, evidence gathered by AI reveals serious abuses by the Lybian coastguard and immigration detention centres in Lybia. The evidence includes allegations of abduction, torture, sexual violence and leaving people on sinking boats to drown.

AI is putting pressure onto the UN-backed Government of National Accord (the current form of Lybia's government) to restore the rule of law and also onto the EU to re-think their strategy to let the Lybian coastguard manage the flow of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean.

AI wants the UK government to review its approach to refugees (see the Solidarity with Refugees march and rally in London).

TUNISIA –LGBTI rights

Tunisia's authorities are still unwilling to change laws that criminalise same-sex consensual sexual relations, leaving LGBTI people live in constant fear of being discriminated, harassed, attacked and arrested.

At the meeting we will do an action in support of the LGBTI Community in Tunisia.

Southern Africa



ANGOLA –JOSE' M. MAVUNGO released

The Angolan Supreme Tribunal acquitted human rights defender José Marcos Mavungo on 19 May and he was released the following day. He is now home with his family.

Jose' Marco Mavungo is part of the 17 Angolan activists for which we sent letters in May 2016.

→At the meeting we will sign letters for:

- Francisco Mapanda, an **Angolan** youth activist charged with contempt to Court;
- Benedito Sabao, a citizen of **Mozambique** who as no means on living and is prevented from leaving the country by the country's authorities;
- Evan Mawarire, a pastor and leader of the social movement #This Flag in **Zimbabwe** (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36794384>) whose life is at risk;

Individuals at Risk

We held our regular letter writing session on 23rd July. We wrote 46 letters and solidarity messages on behalf of a number of victims of human rights abuses, including Mohammed al-Roken in UAE, the Roma community in Italy, Costas, a Greek man who suffered a homophobic and racist assault along with his partner, who is a refugee, and Chelsea Manning, who has recently attempted suicide while serving a 30-year prison sentence for blowing the whistle on potential human rights by the American military. Sadly we have heard since the letter writing session that Chelsea may face further punishment in prison, including indefinite solitary confinement, for attempting suicide. This is outrageous and shows how we need to keep up the pressure for Chelsea and all other victims of human rights abuses.

Planning has started for this year's Write for Rights campaign which will start in November in the run up to Christmas. We are hoping to work with the Challenge Project and Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group again but will probably do a stall or two ourselves. If you know a good venues – do let Hazel know (hazelerrey@gmail.com).

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 24th September 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
Case sheets, pen and paper provided.

All Welcome.

Children's Human Rights

There is a human rights crisis in Malawi. Many people are in great danger because they are born with a genetic condition: albinism. They are being killed for their bones and body parts and the perpetrators are going unpunished. There has been a huge rise in the number of attacks in the last two years.

Malawi's government urgently needs to protect the thousands of people with albinism- a vulnerable group of people at risk of abductions and killings.

We are urging all members to sign Amnesty's petition, which can be found here:

www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/malawi-stop-ritual-murder-abduction-albinism-withcraft

We will also have a paper copy to sign at the next meeting.

If you would like to get involved with Manchester Amnesty's

Children's Rights campaign, please contact:
kieranroberts@gmail.com

Acoustic Amnesty

Acoustic Amnesty was again a success. A total of 376 GBP were raised and will be split between Amnesty and City Of Sanctuary.

Also, the sales of the Acoustic Amnesty album raised 170 GBP for Salford and Manchester's Women Aid.

We also collected signatures for a petition on behalf of Mohammed al-Roken.

Women's Rights

No update this month

Burma update

No update this month.

Coming Events!

Group Meeting

Normally held 2nd Wednesday each month - 7.30pm.

Wednesday 10th August

Preparing for the Pride Parade!

at MadLab Salford (218 Chapel St, Salford M3 6BY –
<https://madlab.org.uk/madlab-salford/>)

As well as updates on our current campaign work, we will be getting the banners / flags / costumes etc ready for the Pride Parade.

There will be something all can do, however creative you are!

Some of us will meet beforehand (at about 6pm) in the Deli Lama café next door to MadLab for a bite to eat.

All welcome

Peterloo Tapestry Event

Sunday 14th August

In support of Mohammed al-Roken.

If you are interested, please contact Henrike henrikegreuel@gmx.de or take part to the sub-group meeting on 10th August at 6 pm at the cafe Deli-Lama (220 Chapel St, M3 5LE)

(See Middle East section for information on this event.)

Freedom from Torture event (see flyer attached)

End August Bank holiday weekend

Pride Parade

Saturday 27th August



We will again be taking part in the hugely popular Manchester Pride Parade – as a walking entry. The theme is 'Once upon a time . . .' and we will be dressing up as Amnesty candles freeing prisoners of conscience with a banner: *Amnesty International fights so you can live happily ever after* (or something like that!)

It is a great event to be part of and means that our message will be seen by many thousands of people. We need at least 12 volunteers to make an impact – preferably a lot more.

Please let Laura know if you can make it –

laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk

We will have a craft session at our August meeting to make some extra banners etc – come along and help us be creative. If you have specific arts and crafts skills and would like to help mastermind the costumes and banners, WE NEED YOU. Please get in touch with Laura.

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Street Collection

Saturday 17th September



We will hold our annual Street Collection on Saturday 17th September in Manchester city centre. We need plenty of volunteers to help raise funds from the Manchester public so we 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 and a half on the day, please sign up at the August meeting, or contact the collection, Sean Dunne, by email to sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com. Please let Sean know when you are available - we will be starting at 10 a.m. and finishing at 4 p.m.

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

Other Events in the Pipeline

Manchester Literature Festival

We have an event in partnership with the Manchester Literature Festival and MMU on Saturday 15th October at 1pm in Central Library.

North Korean-born writer and activist Sungju Lee will talk about his memoir 'Every Falling Star', co-written with author and journalist Susan Elizabeth McClelland.

The book recounts his experience of living on the streets following abandonment by his parents at the age of twelve and gives insight into life in North Korea, one of the most isolated countries in the world where many of the freedoms we take for granted do not exist.

Tickets cost £7/ £5.

Tickets booked on 0843 208 0500 or

Manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk

(50% proceeds donated to Manchester Amnesty International Group)

Didsbury Lantern Parade

November 12th



We have applied to be in the Lantern Parade which is linked to Didsbury Arts Festival and will take place in Didsbury Park. We envisage a giant Amnesty candle or maybe some doves with letters in their beaks. Creative ideas welcome!

Workshops will be held to help us create our entry – sounds fun!
More details to follow.