



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2015

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Acoustic Amnesty

Friday December 11th Sacred Trinity Church
Doors 7pm



Acoustic Amnesty returns, this time in aid of Salford Women's Aid as well as Amnesty International.

On the bill are Tracey Browne, Little Sparrow, Leonie Kate Higgins, Jacob H James and Becca Williams. The musicians will all be on stage together and will perform solo, duets and as an acoustic supergroup. The gig will be seated and totally unamplified, utilising the venue's natural acoustics. There will be a well-stocked bar in a separate room.

Tickets are now on sale from <http://www.wegotickets.com/event/334698> (£8.80 inc booking fee) or at our December meeting (£8) or on the door (£10).

We need volunteers to help set up and to run a Write for Rights stall – email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Write for Rights

Events so far

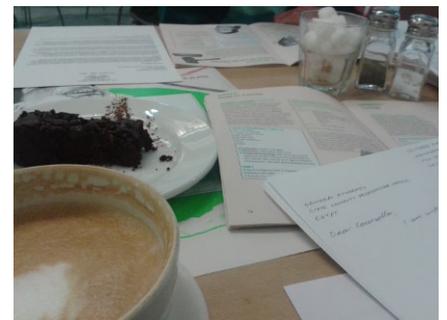
The Challenge Project

Students from the Challenge Project held a Write for Rights event on 21st November at MadLab in the Northern Quarter. This proved an excellent venue and they got some 90 cards signed.



Whalley Range

The local Peace and Justice group held their 13th Write for Rights event on 28th November. This marvellous event featured stalls, folk music, a choir, hot food and plenty of tables for the card signing and letter writing. We had a stall to promote the Manchester group feating a Human Rights Act petition. We also practically sold out of Christmas cards!



Eighth Day Café

On 28th November we also held our regular letter writing session, this time featuring the cases in the Write for Rights campaign.

Events coming up

Group meeting

We will be signing solidarity cards for the campaign cases with some seasonal nibbles.

Burnage Community Centre, Rusholme, Saturday December 12th

We have a Write for Rights stall at this community event. We need a volunteer to help Mary Gibbs set up and run the stall. The fair is from 14.00 to 16.00 with setting up from about 12.30. Email gibbs.mary@gmail.com.

Acoustic Amnesty

We will have a card signing stall at the concert, featuring Burkina Faso Girls Solidarity who support young girls forced being forced into marriage and Teodora del Carmen Vásquez sentenced to 30 years in prison accused of having an abortion after suffering a still birth.

Campaigning

SAVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Petition

We collected 39 more signatures for the AI petition to Michael Gove at the Whalley Range Write for Rights event.

If you haven't already signed DO IT NOW:

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



The Human Rights Act challenge

AIUK are challenging us to come up with the most creative way to visually represent the Human Rights Act. We brainstormed ideas at our last meeting – mainly coming up with some form of street action. There will be a short meeting at 6pm at the Grinch before the group meeting to try and put some bones on this, possibly going on during the card signing activity at the meeting if necessary.

Stop Torture

EU Tools of Torture - Government response to our 'Torture on your doorstep' campaign

We have received a positive response from the UK government in response to EU Tools of Torture campaign. The target of Amnesty's campaign, the Minister of State for Business Anna Soubry, has written to AIUK's director saying that they had received thousands of emails from the public, which is 'evidence of the strength of feeling on this issue'. The Minister indicated that the UK government will support proposals to strengthen controls on torture equipment and will continue to work with Amnesty on this, which is a huge step forward. Well done to everyone who got behind the campaign.

The above comes quick on the heels of the overwhelming vote at the European Parliament in October to close the loopholes in the EU law which prohibits the trade in torture equipment. For these loopholes to close, we need the EU member states to follow suit and support the proposals. AIUK will update us as the process develops and launch any new actions as required.

Shaker Aamer message to supporters

Shaker Aamer has asked for this message to be passed on to all those who campaigned for his release:

I can't tell you how much I want to speak to all of you and stand with all of you, carrying on the struggle for justice for everybody who has been oppressed and needs our help. If there is one thing we can do to save the whole world it is to fight for justice. We will work hard together to close Guantánamo and every unlawful facility run by any government worldwide. Justice has no colour or religion or race.

I promise all of you good people -- those whose names I know, and those whose names I do not know -- that my heart and my spirit feel your thoughts of justice. I care for you all.

Yours sincerely, Shaker Aamer ISN 239

Now that our key objective – of Shaker Aamer being charged or released from Guantanamo – has been achieved, AIUK will focus their efforts on calling for an independent judge-led inquiry into UK involvement in torture and rendition. Shaker Aamer's allegations that MI5 officials were in the room when he was abused in Afghanistan is a further example of why we need a new torture inquiry.

Take action online at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/tortureinquiry>.

Morocco – Ali Aarrass

On 4 November Ali Aarrass suspended his hunger strike after 72 days. His family feared for his life after as he was very weak, in pain and had lost a huge amount of weight. Although Ali expressed his grief over the lack of progress from the authorities, in response to his demands, he said how proud he was to have received so much support from all around the world. He is determined to keep fighting for justice and stressed that he 'suspended' his hunger strike but did not end it. Please keep up the pressure on the Moroccan authorities. Here is a link to the updated Urgent Action for Ali:

http://www.amnesty.org.uk/webfm_send/1883

Uzbekistan – Dilorum Abdukadirov

The International Secretariat team has decided to suspend immediately all work on this case until further notice. There have been problems contacting her family so it's not been possible to decide on further action. Work on her case may resume in future.

South America

This month 3 urgent actions have been sent to all on authorities to ensure safety for the Indigenous community of Cerro Tijeras in Colombia, the Ayoreo Atetadiegosode Indigenous people in Paraguay, and the Mapuche Winkul Newen community in Argentina. Happily this month we also have good news. The Indigenous leader Relmu Ñamku and her two colleagues were cleared of all the charges arising from their resistance to an attempted eviction from their ancestral land.

Burma (Myanmar)

The great news, which most of you will have read is that Aung Sun Suu Kyi and the Movement for Democracy won a majority of the seats in Parliament at the general election on November 8th. Before the election the military government in power gave an undertaking that should the Movement for Democracy win, they would accept the result, and hand over power - whether they will honour that undertaking remains to be seen. The changeover is

not due to happen until the end of January. Aung Sun Suu Kyi cannot be the President, as the constitution states that anyone who has close family who are citizens of another country may not become the President. Aung Sun Suu Kyi's two sons are British citizens. It is a case of watch this space.

One of the cases in the Write for Rights campaign is Phyo Phyo Aung. She is the secretary of the main student union and was instrumental in organizing a protest against the new education law, which students claim will limit their freedom of speech, and democracy in education. She was arrested after the protest, with other students, and all face a lengthy prison sentence. After eight months in hiding, her husband Lin Htet Naing was also arrested and is awaiting trial in Insein prison on Yangon. Both are

considered Prisoners of Conscience since they were simply exercising their right to freedom of speech and of assembly.

There will be letters we can sign as a group at the next meeting, and also individual letters to take and sign.

Asylum Justice Project, Women's Rights, Southern Africa, Children's Human Rights

No updates this month

Group News

Christmas Cards

Send Amnesty Christmas cards this year!

Available for sale at our December meeting and at our events in the run up to Christmas.

All packs £3.95 – please bring the right change if possible.

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 28th January 2-4pm
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
Case sheets, pen and paper provided.

Make a New Year's resolution to write more
Amnesty letters.

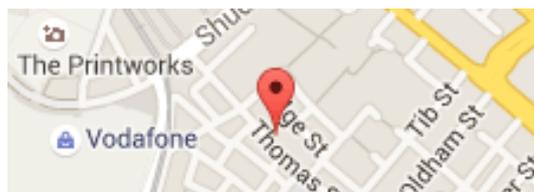
All Welcome.

New Meeting Venue from January

We will be moving venue for our monthly meetings, starting with our January meeting.

Café bar Terrace, in the Northern Quarter, have offered us the use of their upstairs room free of charge. Terrace runs between Thomas Street and Edge Street with entrances on both (postcode M4 1NA). Go up the stairs immediately inside the Edge Street entrance. If you have problems with steep stairs, there is an alternative staircase in the centre of the bar with multiple landings.

Terrace is 5 mins walk from the Market Street Metro stop with NCP parking close by.



Next Group Meeting

Normally held 2nd Wednesday each month - 7.30pm

Wednesday 9th December

Cross Street Chapel

Write for Rights card signing with Christmas nibbles.

*Why not join a few of us for a pre-meeting drink/meal just after 6pm,
this month we will be back at the Grinch on Chapel Walks – right next to Cross St Chapel*

Other News

Amnesty UK Thematic Networks Conference Saturday 5th December

Tickets £5 (which includes lunch):

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/amnesty-uk-thematic-networks-conference-tickets-18907212983>

AIUK would love to welcome you to the first ever Amnesty UK Thematic Networks Conference!

The conference is open to all members of Amnesty UK's three thematic networks:

- LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex) Network
- Women's Action Network
- Children's Human Rights Network

Whatever your experience of Amnesty and human rights - whether you're a seasoned campaigner or completely new to us - this day is for you. All you need is a commitment to human rights and the desire to play a part in the development of the Amnesty networks.

You'll have the chance to:

- Understand more about Amnesty and the networks
- Learn about the issues you're interested in
- Find out how the campaign to save the Human Rights Act in the UK directly affects your network
- Experience Amnesty's democratic processes in action
- Meet like-minded people

WORKSHOPS

- How Amnesty works
- How to lobby politicians
- Blogging for your Network
- Urgent Action letter writing and campaigning on Individual cases

ELECTIONS

If you are an individual member of Amnesty International UK, you'll be able to take part in elections for your Network(s) Committee members.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AGM 2016



AIUK's National Conference & AGM takes place on 9-10 April 2016 at East Midlands Conference centre in Nottingham.

This is your chance to influence AIUK policy by joining in the discussions on the resolutions. The National Conference is also a time to hear from inspirational speakers, attend workshops, meet other activists and AIUK's staff, and hear from the Board of Trustees.

All national Amnesty International members can attend and vote. Group members who aren't individual members of AIUK can attend but do not get an individual vote.

Please visit <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm> for more information and how to book your place.