



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2014

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

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Write for Rights seasonal events

The simple act of writing a letter can make a huge difference. Whether we're contacting the authorities to pressure them to address an injustice, or writing to individuals who have suffered human rights abuses, letting them know they are not alone in their search for justice – our messages together have the power to change lives.

Messages from people like us bring hope and comfort even in the face of the worst abuses. They can also help keep individuals safe, as sack-loads of cards are a sign to prison guards and governments that the world is watching.

Every year, AIUK makes a big push to get letters and cards sent on behalf of selected prisoners, their families and human rights defenders. From whistleblower Chelsea Manning to Amnesty contact and prisoner of conscience Mohammed al-Roken, there are twelve individuals featured in this year's campaign:

- [Alfreda Disbarro](#), Philippines
- [Chelsea Manning](#), USA
- [Erkin Musaeu](#), Uzbekistan
- [Hakan Yaman](#), Turkey
- [John Jeanette Solstad Remø](#), Norway
- [Kalpana Chakma](#), Bangladesh
- [Liu Ping](#), China
- [Mohammed al-Roken](#), UAE
- [Moses Akatugba](#), Nigeria
- [Prageeth Eknaligoda](#), Sri Lanka
- [Raif Badawi](#), Saudi Arabia
- [Yolanda Oqueli](#), Guatemala

Find out more at <http://amnesty.org.uk/local-groups-how-make-most-write-rights-0#.VHycCd5yblU>

On Saturday 22nd November we held a letter writing session at The Eighth Day Café. This was followed by a craft evening making cards for our December stalls:

Saturday 6th December

- **Birch Community Winter Fair 2 - 4pm.** We will have group members staffing a stall & encouraging people to sign cards at the winter fair at Birch Community Centre on Brighton Road.
- **St Margarets Church Rufford Rd, Whalley Range 2 - 5pm** – There is also another BIG Write for Rights event in Whalley Range, Manchester on the same day. This has been run every year for the past 10 years by Whalley Range for Peace & Justice, getting 100s of cards written and sent off every year. There will be food, live music and stalls as well. We plan to have a stall on the Stop Torture campaign and to promote the group as part of this event.

Wednesday 10th Dec, 6.00-7.00pm - we will be writing cards before the start of an Acoustic Amnesty event at Sacred Trinity near Manchester City Centre (at the junction of Chapel St and Blackfriars St, 2 mins walk from Deansgate) in place of our December group meeting. We will then be asking members of the audience to write cards before the event starts and during the interval. See further details of the Acoustic Amnesty below!

Saturday 13th Dec, 12-4pm – Unicorn Grocery in Chorlton

We will have a stall outside the Unicorn Grocery (between Barlow Moor Road and Albany Road) in Chorlton,



All invited to come along to any of these events and write cards.

If you want to help man the stalls, contact Hazel Errey (hazelerrey@gmail.com) or for the Whalley Range event Lianne Slavin (lianne.slavin@gmail.com).

Acoustic Amnesty

December 10th is Human Rights Day.

It also marks the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)

We are holding another Acoustic Amnesty event to mark the day, this time in conjunction with Greater Manchester Humanists.

Steve has worked hard putting together another great line up as you'll see from these videos:

- Kieran King <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTBNfuQjgHM>
- Rod Tame <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp1D-zAWowA>
- Martin Stannage aka Viseral <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15gg2BjNcJl>
- Greater Manchester Humanist Choir http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f06FuY_2CDA
- Manchester Samba http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MG_fpK9yW1Q
- Stone Flowers (the Musicians Without Borders band) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msE_BNsDP8s

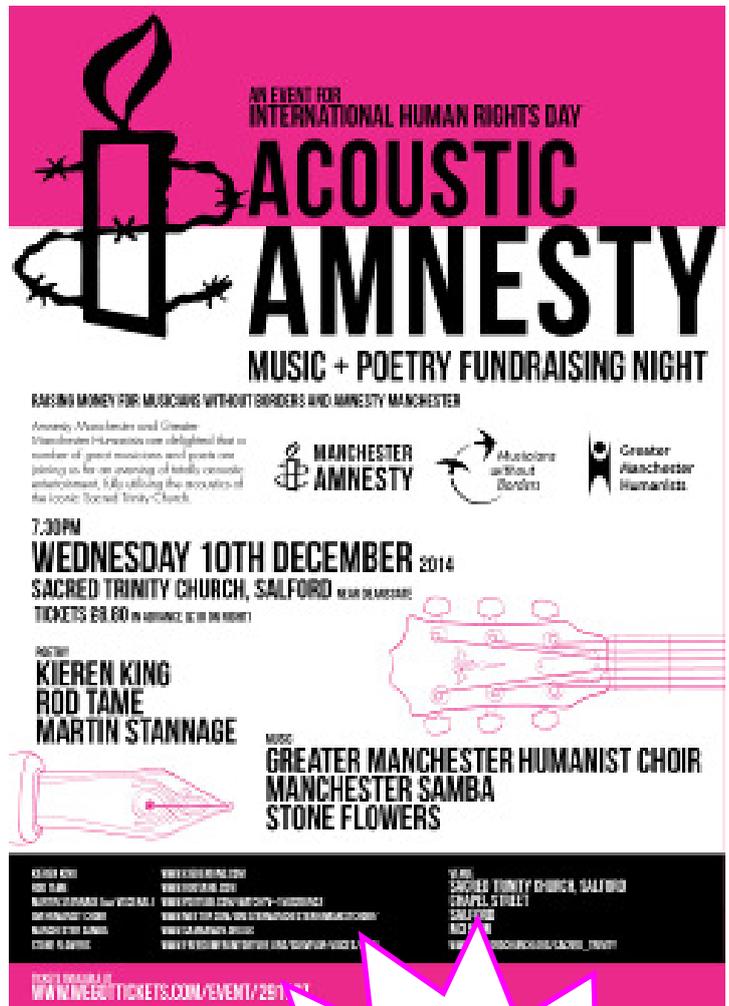
It will be seated and totally silent for performances with the (well stocked!) bar in a separate room.

We will hold our December meeting at 6pm before the concert, at Sacred Trinity, and will concentrate on signing greetings cards as part of the Greetings Card Campaign. We will then man stalls at the back of the church so that people can sign cards as they come in and during the interval.

Tickets are only £8.80 in advance for all of this entertainment – £10 on the door.

Buy yours in advance to make sure of a seat, get them from:

<http://www.wegottickets.com/event/291937>



AN EVENT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

ACOUSTIC AMNESTY

MUSIC + POETRY FUNDRAISING NIGHT

RAISING MONEY FOR MUSICIANS WITHOUT BORDERS AND AMNESTY MANCHESTER

Amnesty Manchester and Greater Manchester Humanists are delighted that a number of great musicians and poets are joining us for an evening of totally wonderful entertainment. It's utilising the resources of the local 'Social' 'Trio-C' 'Acoustic'.

MANCHESTER AMNESTY Musicians without Borders Greater Manchester Humanists

7:30PM
WEDNESDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2014
SACRED TRINITY CHURCH, SALFORD (near Deansgate)
TICKETS £8.80 IN ADVANCE. GET IN ON THE DOOR!

POETRY:
**KIERAN KING
ROD TAME
MARTIN STANNAGE**

MUSIC:
**GREATER MANCHESTER HUMANIST CHOIR
MANCHESTER SAMBA
STONE FLOWERS**

ACoustic Amnesty
POET ROD TAME
MUSICIANS WITHOUT BORDERS
MANCHESTER HUMANIST CHOIR
MANCHESTER SAMBA
STONE FLOWERS

7:30PM
SACRED TRINITY CHURCH, SALFORD
CHURCH STREET
SALFORD
M10 1JH
www.wegottickets.com/event/291937

Flyer attached–
circulate to all.

Group Meetings

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

10th December: Greetings card campaign – send cards to prisoners and their families and human rights defenders to show your support. 6 – 7pm Sacred Trinity Church (at the junction of Chapel St and Blackfriars St, 2 mins walk from Deansgate). N.B. this precedes the Acoustic Amnesty event and replaces our usual group meeting for December!

Note the change of venue and time in December!

14th January: David Maidment, who heads the Children's Network for AIUK will be talking about the need for paying special attention to children's rights and about the work of the network.

Campaigning

MONTHLY ACTION

El Salvador's total ban on abortion kills women and girls

El Salvador has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Abortion is totally banned in all circumstances and harsh prison sentences befall those accused of terminating a pregnancy.

María Teresa Rivera is serving a 40-year prison sentence for having a miscarriage. She was 28 years old and was working in a garment factory when one day she felt the urgent need to use the toilet. She was found by her mother-in-law, bleeding on the bathroom floor. She had not known she was pregnant. She was rushed to hospital where a member of staff reported her to the police. Police officers arrived and began questioning María Teresa without a lawyer present. She was later found guilty of aggravated homicide

This month we are being asked to call on the El Salvadoran government to decriminalise abortion on all counts, and release all women jailed for pregnancy-related "offences" and tackle the deep-seated discrimination against women and girls that restricts their every move.

Read more on this action at:

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/local-groups-activity-pack-december-2014-el-salvador-end-ban-abortion>

Sign the petition at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/end-ban-abortion-el-salvador-beatriz> and/or send a letter to President Sánchez Cerén.

Stop Torture

Stall

We will be holding a Stop Torture stall at the Whalley Range Peace and Justice card writing event on 6 December (2-5pm), St Margaret's Church, Rufford Road. The Stop Torture stall will be asking members of the public to sign appeal cards relating to our key cases, and to help us in petitioning the EU to close the loopholes that allow people to profit from the trade in torture equipment. Please stop by and show your support for the campaign.

EU Torture Tools Petition.

If you haven't already signed it, you can find it at

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/eu-torture-tools-trade-uk..>



Women's Rights

Womens' Rights Round-up

Nairobi's miniskirt march exposes sexual violence in Kenya
The stripping of a woman by a mob in downtown Nairobi, triggered a social media-fuelled debate about women's rights in Kenya. The subsequent #MyDressMyChoice march took place on 17 November, calling for a woman's constitutional right to be protected from sexual violence, and to wear a miniskirt. Read more: [http://www.theguardian.com/global-](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/nov/18/nairobis-miniskirt-march-exposes-sexual-violence-in-kenya?CMP=share_btn_tw)

[development/2014/nov/18/nairobis-miniskirt-march-exposes-sexual-violence-in-kenya?CMP=share_btn_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/nov/18/nairobis-miniskirt-march-exposes-sexual-violence-in-kenya?CMP=share_btn_tw)

16 days of action in Greater Manchester against domestic abuse
Events are taking place between now and March 2015 in support of victims of domestic abuse, to raise awareness of the issues involved, and to highlight the impact of cuts to funding of womens' refuges and services. Read more: <http://www.endthefear.co.uk/practitioners/da-training/> on the End the Fear website and find a local event to get involved in.

Algeria accused of 'tokenistic' response to sexual violence against women

Amnesty has produced a new 30 page briefing highlighting the limits of current Algerian measures to protect women from sexual violence. Marital rape is not considered a criminal offence, and rapists of minors can escape prosecution by marrying their victim. Read more <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/algeria-accused-tokenistic-response-sexual-violence-against-women-new-briefing#.VHRiKiHAVN8.twitter>

Saudia Arabian restaurant ban on single women

Some restaurants have caused outrage amongst human rights advocates after putting up signs forbidding women from entering unless accompanied by a male guardian. Despite this not being required by law, the owners claim that they have seen incidents of flirting and want to avoid being shut down because of the 'misbehaviour of an adolescent or mentally unstable woman'. Read more <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/saudi-arabia-restaurants-ban-single-women-avoid-shocking-behaviour-1476240>

Women's Rights Play

Those of us who went to last year's AGM saw a moving play reading entitled "Even if we lose our lives" which is a compilation of interviews with Afghani women. We all found it a very powerful reminder of what such women face in their daily lives. We would love to put this on in Manchester, probably at the Chorlton Arts Festival, in May next year.

Our Women's Rights sub group has been in touch with Ice and Fire (<http://iceandfire.co.uk/>), the theatre company who put it on at the AGM and they have circulated an ad seeking three local female actors and a director.

If you might be interested in being involved or helping in any way, or know someone else who may be interested, have any suggestions or possible contacts please email Mary Gibbs on gibbs.mary@gmail.com

World Region work

At a recent meeting of the group coordinators, we decided to change our commitment to working on different areas of the world, to include South America and reduce our commitment to the Middle East and North Africa. This is due to changes in the active group membership with Michelle dropping out, Helen being horrendously busy completing her PhD and Rodolpho joining the group. This is what we agreed:

Myanmar (Burma)

We have been working on behalf of specific prisoners in Burma for some years now and plan to continue. We currently campaign

on behalf of Dr Tun Aung and Jean Mary coordinates
(chnmanchester@gmail.com)

South America

This is a new area of work for us as we have done little campaigning on countries in this area for quite a few years. Rodolpho Feijó, who hails from Brazil, will lead on this. If you are interested in lending him a hand, please contact him at rodolpho.feijo@gmail.com.

Middle East and North Africa

We will be concentrating on work on the Mansoura women, with Helen Underhill (helsunderhill@yahoo.co.uk) coordinating. We will, of course continue to work on countries in the Middle East and North Africa as part of other campaigns such as Stop Torture and Emergency actions but this means that we will not be getting regular updates and actions.

Southern Africa

This is a long standing commitment (since 2006) and we would like to continue as we receive regular updates from the excellent Country Coordinators team with plenty of actions, primarily on Zimbabwe but also on Swaziland and South Africa. Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) currently coordinates but is keen to step down to concentrate on being the group secretary. This would be a good introduction to AI work for someone new to coordinating, please contact Anne if you are interested.

Egypt

We plan to work on the case of three students Menatella and Abrar, and teacher Yousra, were jailed for attending a protest at their university on 21 May 2014. Yousra was sentenced to six years in prison, and Menatella and Abrar to two years. You can find out more and send an appeal by visiting <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/egypt-free-mansoura-women>

Myanmar and Southern Africa

No updates received this month.

New Refugee Project from AIUK.

If you are interested in the following area of work, especially if you are thinking of attending the meeting at AIUK, please let Laura know (laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk).

NEW ACTIVIST PROJECT
**REFUGEE, ASYLUM
SEEKER AND
MIGRANT RIGHTS
IN THE UK**



Are you interested in these rights?
Are you keen to campaign in your community?
**Do you want to collaborate with activists
across the country?**

Then get involved! Join our initial meeting on 17 January to discuss the work Amnesty is doing and how activists can take this forward.

When: 17 January, 11am-4pm
Where: The Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard,
London EC2A 3EA

Fill out the form below if you want to come to the meeting, or for further information. If you're unable to attend there will be other opportunities to get involved.
[Amnestyuk.wufoo.com/forms/refugee-activist-project-kickoff-17th-jan/](https://amnestyuk.wufoo.com/forms/refugee-activist-project-kickoff-17th-jan/)

