



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2016

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

- find us on Facebook as Manchester Amnesty
- follow us on twitter @amnestymanc

Group meetings



December Group Meeting

7.30pm.

Wednesday 14th December: Write for Rights Social

Enjoy writing greetings cards with messages of support for this year's Write for Rights campaign cases whilst nibbling on a mince pie. There is even a rumour that we might have some mulled wine – bring your own mug if possible.

! Upstairs at MadLab in the Northern Quarter !

36-40 Edge St, Manchester M4 1HN
See below for how to find it.

Note change of venue!

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

❄️ **All welcome** ❄️

Christmas Cards

We still have a few Amnesty Christmas cards for sale – 20% of the sale price goes to the group.

Final chance to buy at the December meeting!



Change of Meeting Date and Venue for 2017!

MadLab in the Northern Quarter have offered us a permanent base in a new ground floor room that they are having built. The Salford MadLab where we have recently been meeting is closing. Unfortunately we will have to change the day of the month that we meet.

So, starting in January, we will be meeting on the fourth Monday every month. Get it changed in your diary now!

From February, we will be meeting regularly at MadLab in the Northern Quarter. The room might not be ready for our January meeting so we are looking for an alternative just for that one meeting - tbc.

How to find MadLab in the Northern Quarter

MadLab is centrally located in Manchester's Northern Quarter at:

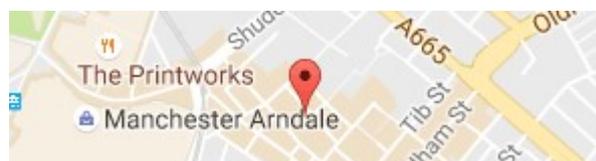
36-40 Edge St, Manchester M4 1HN

It is a very short walk from Shudehill Tram and Bus stations and also from the Market Street Tram stop. There is a nearby NCP car park but familiarise yourself with the one way system first! Bikes are normally allowed inside.



I'll put up an Amnesty sign by the door, so just look out for that.

For more details see <https://madlab.org.uk/find-us/>



Campaigning

Write for Rights

Every year, Amnesty run Write for Rights, an international campaign over November and December where we are encouraged to write messages of support to people around the world who have suffered injustice. This year's campaign is in now full swing. We started it off with a letter writing session at The Eighth Day café, with 32 letters written on behalf of all the Write for Rights cases. Eight people attended including 4 new members. Last weekend we held a stall outside Unicorn in Chorlton so that Sunday shoppers could send greetings cards (32 solidarity cards sent) and we supported the brilliant event organised by the Whalley Range Peace and Justice group (a mind boggling 759 solidarity cards and 101 appeal letters sent). We are running a stall at the Birch Community Fair on Saturday, Jo is also running one at her local church and we will be rounding off the campaign by holding a card writing session at our December group meeting next week. Come along and enjoy!



Don't forget that we hold regular bi-monthly letter writing sessions at the Eighth Day Café on Oxford Road. Our next session will be on Saturday 14th January – it would be good to see you there.

January Letter Writing Session

Saturday 14th January 2-4pm
The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

Kick the New Year off writing letters on behalf of those suffering injustice. Case sheets, pen and paper provided.

All Welcome.

Refugee Campaign

Citizens UK appeal to Amber Rudd

There are over 300 children now safe in the UK. But it's not enough, close to 2,000 more are still in limbo in France following the closure of the "Jungle" camp at Calais. Citizens UK is calling for 1000 of the 2000 unaccompanied minors evicted from Calais to be brought to the UK.

Please write (as individuals) emails, letters or sign petition (see below) to Amber Rudd asking her to follow up on her promise to invite half the children from Calais to the UK before Christmas.

Should you wish to use Citizens UK's suggested template letter, it is attached with this newsletter. Send letters to Amber Rudd at the Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF or email: privateoffice.external@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

More information can be found on the Citizens UK website <http://www.citizensuk.org/> and the petition is at: http://www.citizensuk.org/1000-children?recruiter_id=71094

N.B. this is not an Amnesty action but AIUK are happy for it to be circulated to Amnesty members.

Solidarity vigil.

As winter aid is taken by Manchester University students to help desperate refugees in the camps in France, in Manchester Stand Up to Racism are holding a rally with a clear message

Refugees Are Welcome Here!

2pm - 3pm Sat 10 Dec. St Peters Square. Manchester
(outside Central Library)

Bring a drum - make a noise! Hear from speakers. Donate to the collection for refugees.

See <https://www.facebook.com/events/1250781654980210/>

Subgroup

If you would like to be more involved, join the subgroup by emailing laurahelengibbons@gmail.com.

United Arab Emirates

Dr al-Roken campaign update



Roisin Jacklin, the country coordinator for the United Arab Emirates joined the Manchester Amnesty group during the October meeting. She spoke about the human right abuses in the UAE and gave an update on the case of Dr. al-Roken. The talk was followed by an interactive group session to plan further actions on

behalf of Dr. al-Roken. The UAE subgroup held a meeting to gather all these ideas together and has come up with a draft action-plan for 2017. More details coming soon.

In addition, the UAE group had a stall at the Amnesty North West conference in Liverpool and collected more than 70 signatures on behalf of Dr. Al-Roken during the conference. Signatures were also collected at Acoustic Amnesty and at the Whalley Range Write for Rights event.

Subgroup

We are still very short of people to help Henrike plan our campaigning on the UAE. Drop Henrike an email if you can help (henrikegreuel@gmx.de).



Northern Africa,

'Global Transition'

Amnesty is undergoing a worldwide programme of "global transition", which sees teams that previously worked only from London being re-located to cities around the world. This is part of a plan to broaden involvement in Amnesty's human rights work, and to narrow the geographical distance between campaigners and researchers and the issues they are working on.

New Amnesty "hubs" have already been set up in Mexico City, Dakar (Senegal), Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Hong Kong. The new hub in Tunis will be the next one and more are on the way. The North Africa team is getting ready to move to a new home in Tunis.

Egypt -Activist Refused Presidential Pardon

Four of five activists whose two-year jail sentence was confirmed by a Cairo appeal court on 27 January were released on 18 November through a presidential pardon. Gamila Seryel-Dain remains in a women's prison serving out the remainder of the sentence. At the December's meeting we will sign letters addressed to the Egyptian authorities in Cairo and London asking for her release.

Morocco -A Message From Wafae Charaf

Here is a message from Wafae Charaf, freed in July 2016 after two years of campaigning:

"Greeting to all comrades in Amnesty International... First of all, I would like to thank you for your international, principled and unconditional solidarity with my case. It's not just Wafae Charaf's case, it's a case for all those who are concerned with human rights around the world. I would also like to thank you for all the solidarity letters that I received in jail, which gave me strength to continue as well as to cling to the convictions and principles for which I was arrested... what hasn't already been achieved through struggle will be achieved through more struggle. My warmest greeting to all my comrades in Amnesty International."

Wafae Charaf

Southern Africa

Angola -Francisco Mapanda Released

Back in July, as a group, we wrote on behalf of Francisco Mapanda, a young prisoner of conscience who was sentenced for contempt to Court after being subjected to summary trial. We have received news that he was released from Comarca de Caquila prison on 21 November, seven days earlier than when he was due to be released. The reason for his early release is unknown.

Malawi -Experiencing Albinism In Malawi

Virginia Chimodzi is a teacher with albinism. She has overcome some of the obstacles faced by many people with albinism in Malawi, and is now a teacher working to improve the lives of children with albinism. Here is an extract from her testimony:

'Some people do not treat us as human beings. They think we can achieve nothing in this world. People with albinism are subject to attacks and killings. Wherever we go, we move in fear. I have even lost trust in people and friends because in most cases it is close friends who plan the attacks.'

Access to education is another challenge we face. I am a teacher now. I enjoy acting as a role model to young people. I also educate them about who they are, and how to protect themselves. Most of them are from poor, rural villages.

People can support people with albinism by spreading information on protection, inclusive education, avoiding discrimination.

If we lose our lives, we ruin the country's development. When we are educated, we contribute to the development of Malawi. Killing us is killing the development of Malawi.'

Burma

The Burma country coordinator has been silent for several weeks, perhaps still working on a major campaign to protest against human rights violations against the Rohingya. Courtesy of Burma Campaign UK, Jean Mary has some up to date information, which highlights the plight of the Rohingya at this time:

As reported in the past, the Rohingya have faced discrimination for years, and although they have lived in Burma for generations, they are still denied citizenship, and therefore have no right to vote, while they are always at the back of the queue, or not even in the queue, where health and education are concerned. It is as if Government policy is to keep the Rohingya poor.

For the last 5 years this situation has deteriorated with the army carrying out repressive acts, using rape as a weapon against women, destroying villages, and driving people from their homes. Burma Campaign organised a petition, addressed to the NLD Government and handed in to the Burma embassy a week ago.

Since then the situation has worsened. 3 police stations on the Burmese border with Bangladesh were attacked. The army, convinced that members of the Rohingya were the perpetrators have used the incident to increase the level of violence against the Rohingya. Reprisals include the execution of villagers, destruction of homes and villages on a more violent scale, so that many Rohingya are in IDP camps, where even their access to international aid is restricted.

For anyone who is interested in following up this information, see the Burma Campaign website at:

<http://burmacampaign.org.uk/>.

Women's Rights and Children's Human Rights,

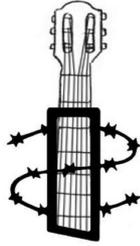
No updates this month



Other News

Acoustic Amnesty

We had another lovely evening of song at Sacred Trinity on Chapel Street and raised £338 for Manchester Amnesty and the Manchester Winter Night Shelter. A particular nice moment was when we gathered round the piano at the back of the hall to sing Leonard Cohen's song Hallelujah – see picture.



Once again – a huge thank you to Steve for getting it together!



Human Rights Day vigil



'wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place, at this moment, becomes the centre of the universe.'

For just one hour, Eccles Town Team celebrates that aspiration and makes Eccles Cross the centre of the community with poems, songs, and readings from people who have experienced persecution and celebrate joy and hope for our future. This event has been jointly organized with Manchester Amnesty. We will hear from local refugees and be writing messages as part of Write for Rights to Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Come along and light one small candle to cast out darkness on Human Rights Day.

(You can bring your own candle or you may light one of ours.)

More details at: <http://www.visitsalford.info/viewevent.htm?id=7848>

Survival International

Survival International have emailed us to draw our attention to widespread human rights abuses perpetrated against tribal peoples due to militarized conservation practices.

Recent examples include:

- Baka evicted from ancestral lands to make way for trophy hunting concession are told they will be shot on sight if they enter to hunt for food or gather plants.
- Botswana police opening fire on Bushmen subsistence hunters from a helicopter.
- The shooting of a 7 year-old boy in India's Kaziranga National Park.

Abuse in the name of conservation is a systemic problem and, they not only aim to challenge specific instances of conservation-related abuse, but rather to drive a sea change in the way conservation is carried out on tribal lands.

Find out more at <http://www.survivalinternational.org/>