



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

February 2015

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

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Campaigning

Myanmar (Burma) – Good News!

Prisoner of Conscience, Dr Tun Aung, was conditionally released from prison on 19th January. He was arrested in 2012 after trying to calm the crowd during a riot involving Buddhists and Rohingya and sentenced to 17 year's imprisonment. More details are in the press release from the AI International Secretariat:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/myanmar-freedom-all-prisoners-conscience-must-follow-activist-s-release-201>



We have worked on Dr Tun's behalf since early 2013. According to a letter from Myanmar's National Human Rights Commission, the letters they received from Amnesty International members prompted them to look further into Dr Tun Aung's case.

Many more remain in prisoner in Myanmar. We plan to continue working on Burma and have asked for another long term case

Individuals at Risk

We had a busy letter writing session on 31st January at the Eighth Day café with 11 people writing a total of 38 letters.



We wrote on behalf of all the Stop Torture cases, Raif Badawi (Saudi blogger on the news recently) and to El Salvador regarding women's right to abortion when their health or life would be at risk if the pregnancy continues. In particular, we wrote to the El Salvadorian president urging him to decriminalise abortion & release all women imprisoned for pregnancy related "offences".

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 28th March 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
Case sheets, pen and paper provided.
Buy your own cakes! All Welcome.

Stop Torture

Workshop

As explained in our January newsletter, the Country Coordinators are holding a conference entitled 'How

Activists Can Campaign for Safeguards' on 14 February at the HRAC in London. We have booked a place but unfortunately Lianne, our campaign lead, is now unable to attend. Can anyone stand in and represent the group?? Contact Lianne lianne.slavin@gmail.com.

Volunteer needed to attend on our Group's behalf

More details online at

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events/stop-torture-how-activists-can-campaign-safeguards>.

EU Torture Tools Petition.

If you haven't already signed it, you will have your last chance at the February meeting or you can find it at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/eu-torture-tools-trade-uk>.

Women's Rights

My Body My Rights

Amnesty will shortly be launching a major campaign to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive rights. They have produced some amusing Valentine's cards – available at the February group meeting.



Performance

We are continuing with plans to stage "Even if we lose our lives", a compilation of interviews with Afghani women, and have received some interest from a local actor. However it appears unlikely that we will be able to do this as part of this year's Chorlton Arts Festival. If you are 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

Southern Africa

Simona Mattanza has taken over leading on this area of work. If you are interested in lending her a hand, please contact her at Simona.mattanza@gmail.com.

No new actions this month but we have received a newsletter from the Southern Africa Country Coordinators – see attached – with updates on Mozambique, Angola, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Children's Human Rights

After the excellent talk from David Maidment last month, Mary McBride has joined the AIUK Children's Network on behalf of the group and will be bringing along the occasional action to our meetings. If you are specifically

interested in this topic, contact Mary

mary.mcbride@blueyonder.co.uk.

During his talk David mentioned an Early Day Motion on the proper financial funding of youth services in the UK. It is currently the 3rd most signed up EDM on the books <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2014-15/488>. If your MP hasn't signed it, please encourage them to.

South America

We have received a new Urgent Action from the AIUK South America team. It concerns criminal proceedings taken by the Ecuadorian government against environmentalists Darwin Javier and Victor Hugo, who have been protesting against the impact of mining activities in their communities. This has been the second UA from Ecuador regarding environmental issues in less than one month. This country seems to be a focal point for AIUK work in South America.

Rodolpho will bring along a letter to sign at the meeting but if you have time the case sheet is attached so that you can do your own appeal.

N.B. Appeals must be sent before 3rd of March.

Group News

Group AGM

We held our AGM at the end of our January meeting. Sean, our treasurer, presented the accounts and we confirmed the group officers for the coming year.

Our expenditure over income was £469. Our main sources of income were the Acoustic Amnesty events total £498 (thanks Steve!), the street collection st £330 (thanks Sean!) and donations from group members £465. Last year we bought ourselves a data projector and paid £550 for room hire for our monthly meetings as well as making a £850 donation to AIUK. If anyone wants to see the full accounts, drop Sean an email (sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com).

Although donations from members were a significant element in our income, only 27 of the nearly 200 on our email list made a contribution. It would be really helpful if a few more of you could be generous this year! – see below.

Subscriptions please!

Annual donations from members are vital to keep the Group going. The suggested sum is £20 if you have a wage, £3 otherwise, or whatever you can afford to give. Please bring your cash or cheque to the next meeting or contact Treasurer Sean Dunne (Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

Thanks!

Officers		
Chair	Laura Barsby	laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk
Vice-chair	Hazel Errey	hazelerrey@gmail.com
Secretary	Anne Walker	Anne.walker9@ntlworld.com
Treasurer	Sean Dunne	Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com
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Women's rights	Mary Gibbs	Gibbs.mary@gmail.com
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Individuals at Risk	Hazel Errey	hazelerrey@gmail.com
Burma	Jean Mary	chnmanchester@gmail.com
Southern Africa	Simona Mattanza	simona.mattanza@gmail.com
South America	Rodolpho Feijó	rodolpho.feijo@gmail.com
Children's Rights	Mary McBride	mary.mcbride@blueyonder.co.uk
Egypt	Helen Underhill	helsunderhill@yahoo.co.uk

Volunteer needed!

Laura is currently overseeing our social media. It would be great if someone could take on this role to let her concentrate on being Chair. Have a word at the meeting or contact her as above.

Group Planning

We received the 2015 Planning Pack from AIUK last month and the group officers and coordinators met to discuss and plan for the coming year. We do not expect to significantly change our campaigning this year, and hope to take part in the main AI campaigns on Stop Torture and My Body My Rights whilst keeping our World Region and IAR work commitment. To help us plan, we have put together a calendar with events that we aim to be involved with – suggestions for others welcome!

Month	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Group Meeting		General Election workshop	Review of 2014 and looking forward to 2015	AIUK AGM resolutions	My Body My Rights workshop tbc	
Event			Letter writing (28 th)	AIUK AGM (18/19) General Election Lobbying	Letter writing	Didsbury Festival Acoustic Amnesty (26)
Month	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Event	Letter writing Amnestea	Pride Parade (29)	Street Collection (26) Letter writing	Manchester Lit Festival	Letter writing	Greeting Cards

Next Group Meeting

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

11th February:

Anne Walker, a volunteer trainer for AIUK, will facilitate a work shop to prepare us for campaigning in the run up to the UK General Election. See <http://amnesty.org.uk/resources/local-group-update-general-election-campaign-january-2015>.

Why not join a few of us for a pre-meeting drink/meal just after 6pm. This month we will be at The Pizza Express on the top end of King Street.

AIUK General Meeting

The National Conference and AGM will be held over the weekend of 18/19 April at Warwick University.

This is always great fun and very inspiring. If you are interested have a look at the AIUK website www.amnesty.org.uk/agm and talk to those who have been before (e.g. Laura, Anne, Hazel, Sameena . . .).

If you are an individual member of AIUK you can attend and vote in your own right. If you are solely a group member, you can still attend and help decide how to vote use the group votes. Deadline for booking – 2nd March. Please let Anne anne.walker9@ntlworld.com know if you plan to go so that we can coordinate.



Join us at Warwick University in Coventry for Amnesty's

NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AGM 2015

Meet your fellow Amnesty members, hear international guest speakers and have your say on how our organisation works.

Location: Warwick University (Coventry)
Date: 18 and 19 April 2015

WHO CAN ATTEND AND VOTE
All Amnesty International UK members can attend and vote at the National Conference and AGM.
See www.amnesty.org.uk/agm for more information.

KEY DATES
Resolution deadline: 5pm, Monday 18 February 2015
Booking deadline: Monday 2 March 2015

HOW TO BOOK
Visit the website for more details: www.amnesty.org.uk/agm
Request a booking form: amnesty@ukamnesty.org
Or phone: 020 8876 8662

Pre-book your stay: Monday 2 March 2015

RESOLUTION DEADLINE
MONDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2015, 5pm
Watch the website for more details on how to submit a resolution.

Pride Parade 2015

We hope to be part of the Manchester Pride Parade this again year. This is a marvellous way to get our message seen by thousands of people. It is real fun as well – so make sure that you are around on Saturday 29th August (the bank holiday weekend).

AIUK are beginning to plan their support for all the Prides and have invited us down to a meeting at the HRAC in London on Saturday 14th March – if you are interested in going down and reporting back to the group let Anne know asap (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com).



Holocaust Memorial Day

Greater Manchester Police Training School in Sedgley Park - a first for the Manchester Group ?

We were invited to run a stall at the Holocaust Memorial Day event. The focus was genocide, and the speakers were the son of a Holocaust survivor, a Chief Inspector who had visited Srebrenica and Richard Wilson from Amnesty. Richard's sister, together with Tutsis and other foreigners, had been killed by Hutus in an attack on a bus in Rwanda.

All the speakers talked about the need to tackle prejudice and hate crime in the context of human rights, and Richard emphasised the importance of bringing the perpetrators of genocide to justice and Amnesty's role in promoting the International Criminal Court.

He also commended local Amnesty groups!

Acoustic Amnesty for the Big Issue

ACOUSTIC AMNESTY
IN AID OF **north**
FRIDAY 13TH MARCH

ROBBIE CAVANAGH
IAN TILL
JOHN MACKIE
JAMES HOLT
KIERAN KING
BEN MELLOR

THE YOUNG VANISH
ROSE CONDO

*a circle of songwriters**
a metre of performance poets

DOORS 7PM
STRICT 7:30 START
SACRED TRINITY CHURCH
CHAPEL STREET, SALFORD

* as heard on The Indie Profile with John Mackie on Fat Radio International

Steve is holding another Acoustic Amnesty event at Sacred Trinity on 13th March. This time it is solely for The Big Issue in the North. Steve is already planning a further one on 26th June (International Day for the Victims of Torture) in aid of Amnesty International.

He promises that it will be seated and totally silent for performances with the (well stocked!) bar in a separate room and that they will be returning to their roots with no sound system whatsoever - totally acoustic using the natural acoustics of the venue.

The acts are:

- Circle of songwriters - John Mackie, Ian Till, The Young Vanish, Robbie Cavanagh & James Holt.
- Metre of performance poets - Kieran King, Ben Mellor & Rose Condo.

Free on-street car parking is available and the venue is a stone's throw from Deansgate/Market Street in Manchester city centre. Tickets are only £8 in advance for all of this entertainment - <http://www.wegotickets.com/event/303264>

It will be a great night so please support. I hope you can make it.

Mark Thomas - Cuckooed

Amnesty awarded a Freedom of Expression award to this show by Mark Thomas, now appearing at the Lowry on 25th February, on how Britain's biggest arms manufacturer (BAE Systems) came to spy on a comedian.

See <http://www.thelowry.com/event/mark-thomas2> for more details and booking.

Some of us are thinking of going – if you plan to be there let Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) know if you fancy meeting up for a bite to eat before the show.