



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

January 2015

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

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A Busy December!

The group had a hectic end to 2014 with a letter writing session on Saturday 22nd November at The Eighth Day Café concentrating on the cases featured in this year's Greeting Card Campaign - a video clip was recorded and sent to AI Poland who have put together this lovely compilation of Greetings Card campaigning around the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9QW6v08btA>

On 6th December we had stalls at Birch Community Winter Fair to promote the Greeting Card Campaign and at the Write for Rights event organised by Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group selling Christmas cards and promoting the Tools of Torture petition, calling on the EU to close the loopholes that allow people to profit from the trade in torture equipment for which collected 75 signatures at this and Acoustic Amnesty.

Following this there was Acoustic Amnesty at Sacred Trinity in Salford on Human Rights Day, featuring the Manchester Samba band, The Greater Manchester Humanist Choir, Stone Flowers and three performance poets - Kieran King, Rod Tame and Martin Stannage. More cards were signed, and £413 raised for Amnesty and Musicians without Borders. Huge thanks to Steve and all performers.

And lastly, the following Saturday, we had a Greeting Card Campaign stall outside the Unicorn in Chorlton. The Amnesty stalls generated 215 signed cards and 40 appeal letters. The Whalley Range event generated 513 cards and (combined with their earlier folk event) a donation of £1500 for Amnesty.

Here are a few photos – see more on Flickr

Whalley Range event - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manchesteramnesty/sets/72157650122496376/>

Acoustic Amnesty - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manchesteramnesty/sets/72157650122378196/>



Whalley Range



Acoustic Amnesty



Group Meetings

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

- 14th January:** David Maidment will talk about Children's Rights – see below
Following David's talk we will hold our AGM to confirm election of officers and review our finances. If you wish to raise anything as part of the AGM please let Laura know in advance.
- 11th February:** We hope to have a speaker on human rights in Mexico with particular emphasis on the use of torture – to be confirmed
- 11th March:** 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
- 8th April:** We will be reviewing and discussing the motions for the National AIUK AGM so that our delegates can represent our views.

*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.*

Children's rights

Following on from our recent actions on children's rights, we're delighted to welcome David Maidment, leading member of AIUK's Children's Network and founder of Railway Children, to our January meeting.



For decades, David has been key in keeping children's rights on the AIUK agenda. The Network now operates as a blog, with cases and campaign actions for individuals to act on at www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/childrens-human-rights-network

David's job in safety policy at British Rail took him to India where the dire situation of children living in and around railway stations affected him strongly, and he came away determined to bring about change. The result was Railway Children which now works with children living on the street in India, East Africa and the UK. The charity's workers seek out vulnerable children, offer them safety and security, and reunite them with their families when this is possible.

www.railwaychildren.org.uk

After David's talk, we'll have a **collection** to help fund the work of Railway Children. January is generally a lean month but please see what you can spare. A little goes a long way and a lot goes even further. Thanks in advance.



Come along to our January meeting to find out more

Letter Writing session

Saturday 31st January 2-4pm

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

All Welcome

Campaigning

Stop Torture



The release of the damning US report on CIA torture in December, revealed how detainees have been tortured in secret CIA-run prisons across the world, but we still don't know how deeply the UK was involved.

Demand the UK government investigates the truth: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/cia-usa-torture-uk-investigation>

Workshop

Country Coordinators are holding a conference entitled **'How Activists Can Campaign for Safeguards'** on 14 February at the HRAC in London. This conference will discuss:

- Why safeguards matter and how much difference they can make
- When/where they should be effectively introduced
- How to campaign for safeguards

Speakers will include Craig Murray, the former UK ambassador to Uzbekistan and outspoken critic of torture. In 2002 in a speech to his fellow diplomats and Uzbekistani officials he highlighted the 'prevalence of torture in Uzbekistani prisons.' He was removed from his post in October 2004. He's also the author of *Murder in Samarkand*, a memoir of his experiences. Those who have heard him before know what an entertaining speaker he is.

Lianne, our campaign lead, is hoping to go but it would be good if others could attend. More details on line at <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/events/stop-torture-how-activists-can-campaign-safeguards>. Please let Lianne (lianne.slavin@gmail.com) know if you plan to go.

EU Torture Tools Petition.

If you haven't already signed it, there will be a further chance at the January meeting or you can find it at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/eu-torture-tools-trade-uk>.

Women's Rights

EU strategy

The following is taken from the December letter from the AIUK chair:

The landmark human rights moment for the month has been the agreement by the European Union of a Human Rights Defenders strategy for Afghanistan.

Conscious of NATO's departure at the end of this year and an increasing sense of insecurity, AIUK activists have been working for the past two years to highlight the need to support women in Afghanistan, in particular women human rights defenders, a term that applies to anyone helping to deliver human rights for others – teachers and doctors, as well as journalists or more politically-minded activists. Eventually, your pressure, our staff's work and the inspirational work of Afghan women themselves led to a strategy that is amongst the very best that our experts have seen. I am very proud that we achieved this together and I believe it will have real impact on women and men who place themselves at risk to help realise human rights for others.

Chorlton Arts Festival

We are continuing with plans to stage "Even if we lose our lives", a compilation of interviews with Afghani women, at the Chorlton Arts Festival, in May this year. With the help of the Ice and Fire theatre company, we are seeking three local female actors and a director.

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

Myanmar (Burma)

Jean has received a new Urgent Action on Myanmar and will bring details to the meeting.

South America

We hope to be taking on a long term case to work on – yet to be confirmed. Hopefully more details in February.

There is also a new urgent action on Ecuador, regarding violence against a local indigenous community member. Rodolpho will bring a letter for us all to sign at the meeting, however, if you want to send your own appeal, please see the case sheet attached with this newsletter. Appeals must be sent by 28th January.

Rodolpho Feijó is leading on this area of work. If you are interested in lending him a hand, please contact him at rodolpho.feijo@gmail.com.

Egypt and Southern Africa

No updates received this month

Anne (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) currently coordinates our Southern Africa work 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 consider volunteering! Contact Anne for more info.

AIUK News

General Election

Anne Walker, our local volunteer trainer, is attending a training session in London in early January to prepare to help groups with work in the run up to the General Election. She will deliver a workshop based on this training to the group at our March meeting.

In January 2014, a new piece of legislation received Royal Assent. Officially it's known as the Transparency of Lobbying, non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 – but more usually referred to as the Lobbying Act. AIUK has issued guidance to groups on how this might affect us, see:

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/comply-lobbying-act-guide-local-groups#.VKltpt5yblV>

Basically this legislation should not stop us doing any campaigning but anything that could be construed as lobbying e.g. on the Human Rights Act which the Conservative Party wish to repeal, will come under the Act and we will need to keep details of any expenditure and provide them to AIUK. It is unlikely that this will be significant but Sean, our treasurer, will coordinate any returns that we need to make.

New Refugee Project from AIUK.

No one has yet put their hand up to find out more about this new exciting project. If you are interested even if you can't attend 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/



AIUK Annual 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 and talk to those who have been before (e.g. Laura, Anne, Hazel, Sameena).



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 16 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@blueprintpartners.com
Or phone: **020 8875 8652**

Please book by **Monday 2 March 2015**

RESOLUTION DEADLINE

MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2015, 5pm

Visit the website for more details on how to submit a resolution

Strategic Goals consultation

At the International Council Meeting in August a new set of Strategic Goals for the international movement will be agreed. We discussed a draft at our October meeting last year and passed on our views to AIUK.

Following this consultation, AIUK submitted its response in October, which is attached. Whilst AIUK applauds the progress being made, they believe that some changes are necessary, including the need to give more visibility to Amnesty's "signature" issues (such as our work on prisoners of conscience, the right to a fair trial and the death penalty) and to simplify and clarify some of the language that has been used to date. This all seems very much in line with our discussions.

A further draft is expected in the New Year and our views will be asked again.