



# MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

June 2015

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

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~~~~~ Apologies: the group email was out of action for some time in May: if you sent anything e.g. replies from PPCs or anything that you haven't had a response to, please would you resend it? Thanks ~~~~~

## To start with ... good news



Moses Akatuba was arrested by the Nigerian army at the age of 16 and charged with stealing mobile phones. At the army barracks, and later at the police station, he was tortured and forced to sign two "confessions". On the basis of these, he was convicted and sentenced to death by hanging.

Many of us wrote and signed petitions about his case which was featured in the Stop Torture Campaign, so it's fantastic to hear that State Governor, Dr Emmanuel Uduaghan, has just granted him total pardon.

Here's a message from Moses.

*I am overwhelmed. I thank Amnesty International and their activists for the great support that made me a conqueror in this situation. Amnesty International members and activist are my Heroes. I want to assure them, that this great effort they have show to me will not be in vain, by the special grace of God I will live up to their expectation.*

*Justine Ijeomah is my champion, I will always pray for him in his human rights endeavour. I am grateful also to members and volunteers of human rights social*

*development and environmental Foundation (HURSDEF) for there support.*

*I promise to be a human rights activist, to fight for others. I am thanking the Governor for his kind gesture and for keeping to his words.*

### And good news on the death penalty...

Nebraska became the 19th US state to outlaw the death penalty in May after a coalition of conservative lawmakers came together to override the governor's veto of previous legislation to abolish capital punishment. The state senate, where Republicans hold a majority, went against Governor Pete Ricketts's veto to become the first traditionally conservative state to outlaw the death penalty since 1973. The last time Nebraska lawmakers managed to pass a death penalty repeal bill was in 1979, but senators were not able to override the gubernatorial veto that year.

Many of the state's legislators said that while they supported the idea of the death penalty, they believed legal obstacles would prevent Nebraska from actually employing it. The state lost execution ability in December 2013 after the expiration of one of the three different injection drugs it is required by law to use. Governor Ricketts said in May that state officials had purchased two of the drugs, but this did not appear to sway the state senate during the vote. State Senator Ernie Chambers, who has fought for nearly four decades to get rid of the death penalty, sponsored the bill. Authorities were reportedly investigating death threats made to one of the bill's supporters.

## Campaigns

### Stop Torture – guide walk through Manchester

Join us in a walk around Manchester City Centre on **Sunday 7th June at 1pm**, to mark the first anniversary of the launch of the Stop Torture campaign and in advance of the Global Day of Action to mark the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Starting at Victoria station, Steve Roman - who helped found the Manchester Peace and Social Justice Trail - will be leading us on a fascinating walk around the Trail (see <http://www.discoverpeace.eu>), discussing the importance of sites connected with the growth of Manchester as a centre for radical political activity and human rights. The walk will take approximately 3 hours, ending at Gullivers in the Northern Quarter, where people can enjoy a cup of tea, sign some appeal cards, and find out more about the Stop Torture campaign.



Tickets are on sale online priced at £7 (£5 concessions). All proceeds will go to Amnesty International. Get them online at <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/stop-torture-one-step-at-a-time-a-guided-walk-around-the-manchester-peace-justice-trail-tickets-16377565740>

## Burma

Sr Jean Mary has provided an update on three main areas of current concern:-

1. the desperate situation of the Rohingya people, leaving Burma, where they are harassed and denied citizenship, in flimsy boats, to be denied sanctuary in neighbouring countries
2. the development of the Keptadaung copper mine in NW Burma by a Chinese mining company which is leading to forcible evictions of farming families (many of whom are Rohingya); these subsistence farmers have no other source of income and are not compensated; the government supports the mining company and police help with the evictions
3. the threat to freedom of the press; many journalists and others working in the media who report human rights abuses or criticise the government are serving heavy prison sentences



**Context:** the Rohingya initially migrated from (present day) Bangladesh during British rule of the country, settling mainly in Rakhine state. They form a Muslim minority in a largely Buddhist country, and in recent years have been increasingly marginalised and persecuted. Burma refuses to use the term Rohingya and calls them Bengalis, taking no responsibility for their situation and nationalist Buddhist monks have fuelled the situation. At a recent rally protesting about the international outcry, one speaker said, "The people on the boats in trouble are not really from Burma, they are from Bangladesh. Our people don't want these boat people. I am not a politician I cannot solve the problem, but I can show my desire. We want to send a message to the international community. We don't want them".

**Action re forcible evictions:** please write to the President of Wanbao Mines Ltd., Mr Chen Defang, 17-19, F. West Wing, No.1 Cai Yuan Street, Xi Cheng District, P.R.O.C. appealing to him:-

- ✉ to halt the enforced evictions in relation to Keptadaung mine
- ✉ to hold a consultation with those affected by the company's takeover of land; such consultation to cover any future evictions, resettlement conditions, and compensation and adequate reparations for all land which has been taken
- ✉ to ensure conditions of resettlement comply with international conditions on adequate housing.

## Individuals at Risk

May's letter writing session at Eighth Day Café generated 14 letters for a human rights lawyer and PoC in UAE, the 10 year old Paraguayan girl, raped and pregnant and denied medical support and a termination, and a Colombian Urgent Action. Thanks to everyone who comes along to these events - the company - and cake - is great and it's really satisfying to see the letters mount up. The next date will be late July - see the newsletter and website for confirmation.



## Women's Rights

A reminder of the next **Acoustic Amnesty** fundraiser at the beautiful Sacred Trinity church on **Thursday 16th July**. Details:-

- the acts are all female and we are fundraising for the excellent Manchester Women's Aid as well as Manchester Amnesty
- the gig will be seated and totally silent for performances with the (well stocked!) bar in a separate room; there will be no sound system whatsoever - totally acoustic, using the natural acoustics of the venue
- doors open at 7pm and the show starts at 7.30pm prompt
- 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/31>

A promotional poster for an acoustic show. At the top, it says "AN ACOUSTIC AMNESTY SHOW FUNDRAISING FOR". Below this, it features "MANCHESTER WOMEN'S AID" and "MANCHESTER AMNESTY" with an ampersand between them. The date "16.07.2015" and venue "SACRED TRINITY CHURCH, CHAPEL ST, SALFORD" are prominently displayed. Performers listed include Louise Fazackerley (a metre of performance poets), Rose Condo, Little Sparrow, Tracey Browne, Becca Williams, and Raevennan Husbanes (a circle of songwriters). Logos for WeGotTickets and Piccadilly Records are in the bottom left corner. A graphic of a guitar with barbed wire around its body is on the left, and a circular graphic with the text "a circle of songwriters" is on the right.

## South America

Rodolpho Fiejo, who got us interested and involved in this region, has all to soon moved on to study in the Netherlands. Henrike has offered to take over from him and keep our work on South America going. There are no actions this month.

## Asylum Justice Project Launch

Heather Card and Laura Gibbons attended the launch meeting in York last month. The Project was introduced through the personal testimony of Ivo Kuka who fled from Cameroon and was detained in the UK while claiming asylum, the film *Fit to Fly* by Medical Justice and a panel discussion led by Amnesty staff members.

The main areas for the Project were identified as:-

- ending indefinite detention and the Detained Fast Track system
- challenging public perceptions, understanding and attitudes towards asylum seekers

## Group news

### Anne's Open Garden

Anne Walker opened her garden as part of the Heatons Open Gardens scheme last month and used the opportunity to run the ever-popular Egg Game. This may have been designed with children in mind, but adults, too, get quite excited and competitive when a Curly Wurly is at stake and we made a profit of £71.40.

### Didsbury Festival

We will have a stall at the marvellous and very busy Didsbury Festival on **Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup>** in Didsbury Park. We will have information and a campaign action linked to the Human Rights Act, and will again be running the Egg Game! If you can help on the day, please contact [laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk) or sign up at the June meeting.



### Pride Parade

We are taking part in the Manchester Pride Parade again this year and will have the superb Manchester Samba Band walking with us to add to our visibility (and volume!). The theme for this year's parade is Devotion - we haven't yet started thinking about what that's going to look like in parade terms so some creative ideas will be needed in the next couple of months.

Pride is a marvellous way to get our message seen by thousands of people and is real fun as well (see last year's photo, left) – so make sure that you are around on **Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August** (the bank holiday weekend)

### Manchester Literature Festival

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2pm - Asylum and Exile**

We have a great programme planned, welcoming back Bidisha, journalist, critic, broadcaster and Booker Prize Foundation Trustee, who will introduce her 5th book, *Asylum and Exile: the Hidden Voices of London*, based on her outreach work with refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented people. More about Bidisha at <http://bidisha-online.blogspot.co.uk/>

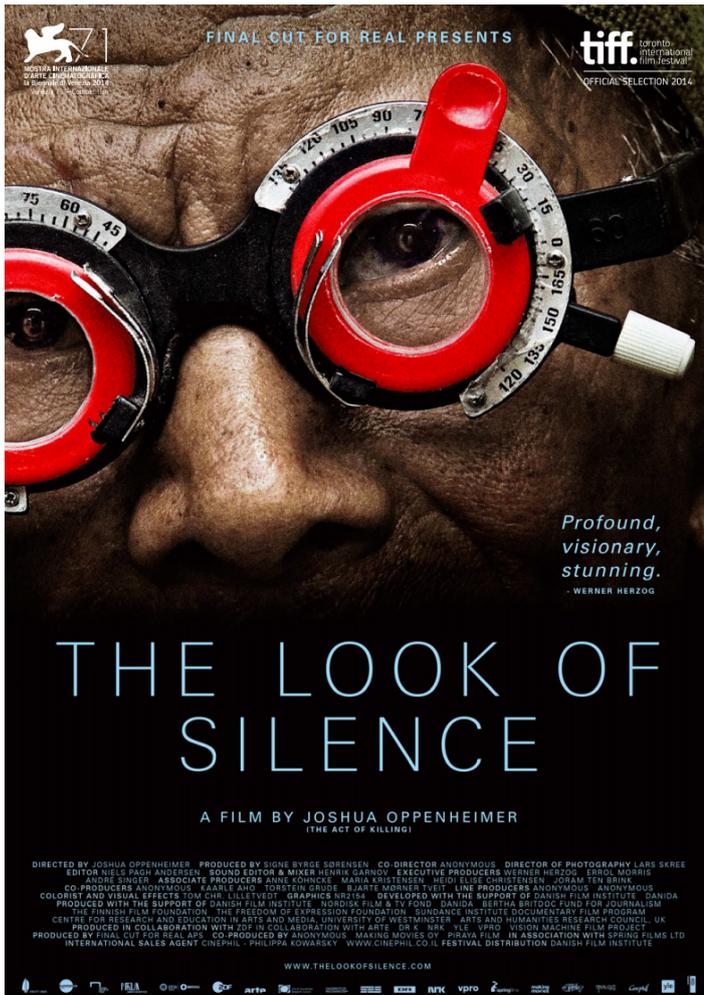
She will be joined by Gulwali Passarlay, whose first book, *The Lightless Sky: an Afghan Refugee Boy's Journey*, documents his journey from his homeland via Iran and the Mediterranean to Lancashire, where he is about to graduate with a degree in philosophy and politics from the University of Manchester. See Gulwali's website here <https://gulwalipassarlay.wordpress.com/>

Book early! When Bidisha did a session for us in 2013, tickets sold out quickly. With Gulwali being based here, he will also attract a good local audience, so don't miss out. Tickets £7/£5 concessions - not yet on sale but keep an eye on the website

[Manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk](http://Manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk)

Proceeds from this event will go to Manchester Amnesty International Group.

## Other news



### Human Rights Film *The Look of Silence* (Indonesia)

Manchester Home and Manchester Odeon Printworks, **Sunday 14th June, 6pm.**

*The Look of Silence* is the companion piece to the 2013 BAFTA-Winning documentary, *The Act of Killing*.

Through Director Joshua Oppenheimer's work filming perpetrators of the Indonesian genocide, a family of survivors discovers how their son was murdered and the identity of the men who killed him. The youngest brother is determined to break the spell of silence and fear under which the survivors live, and so confronts the men responsible for his brother's murder – something unimaginable in a country where killers remain in power.

The screening will be followed by a live satellite Q&A with Director Joshua Oppenheimer, hosted by Louis Theroux.

This blog piece by AIUK tells you more about it and puts it in context

[Amnesty UK: If you do one thing on June 14th go and see \*The Look of Silence\*](#)

as does this link

<http://www.thelookofsilence.co.uk/screenings/>

Booking is advised as it's expected to be a popular event. Tickets: <http://homemcr.org/film/the-look-of-silence/>



**Glossop Amnesty Group** are holding an Amnesteas at the Central Methodist Church, Chapel Street, Glossop, on **Saturday 27th June** at 2 - 4.30pm. If anyone fancies a trip out to support the Glossop group, they will be made very welcome.

**Freedom From Torture** are holding a Survivors Walk in New Mills (linking with train times from Manchester) on **Saturday 13th June**. There is no fixed cost: instead, you are invited to walk and talk with torture survivors who are rebuilding their lives with the help of Freedom From Torture's Manchester Centre, and donate whatever you can afford to give. They also plan a Ride and Picnic at Chorlton Water Park on **Sunday 6th September**.

Find out about their outdoor events, making fundraising fun, at <http://getoutandgive.org/>



A great result for **Stockport Amnesty Group**: their Amaretti Chamber Orchestra Concert last month raised over £1,100 - very impressive and Anne says it was an excellent evening.

# Next Group Meeting

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

**10th June**



Anne Walker, our Group member and trainer, will be introducing Amnesty's worldwide campaign, My Body My Rights - your chance to find out about the context, human rights concerns and key countries we'll be focusing on, and to get involved in planning our actions for the coming year.

***Why not join a few of us for a pre-meeting drink/meal just after 6pm, this month we will be at Croma (1-3 Clarence St, just off Albert Square).***

## **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](mailto:Sean.a.dunne@btinternet.com)) and he will tell you how to get the money to him.

**Thanks!**