



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

June 2016

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Campaigning

Middle East

We are taking on working for human rights lawyer Mohammad al-Roken as a long term case. In June 2013 he was among 69 Emiratis jailed in a mass trial tainted by credible allegations that the defendants were tortured in pre-trial incommunicado detention. From the court documents, it is clear that they were convicted solely for peacefully exercising their legitimate rights to free expression and association. UAE authorities provided no credible evidence to substantiate their claims that the men were plotting to overthrow the government.

A few of us attended a meeting, along with a staff member from AIUK and a researcher from the IS, with one of the City councillors to discuss our request that the council use its influence with the UAE to raise human rights concerns. We hope to take this forward with a meeting with the leader of the City Council, Sir Richard Leese, next month.

North Africa

ALGERIA: Repression on the rise in Algeria - peaceful protesters face imprisonment

Protests against poverty, unemployment and corruption are frequent in this oil-rich country. The falling oil prices are causing a rising of unemployment and a worsening of the economy, leading to an increase of protests.

The Algerian authorities rely on repressive laws to quell peaceful dissent. Prior authorization is required to hold public gatherings while an outright ban on public protests is in place in the capital Algiers.

Four protesters from Ouargla, South Algeria, are facing up to a year in prison for taking part in protests against unemployment in Algeria's oil capital, Hassi Messaoud.

These men are all part of the National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Unemployed (CNDDC), and have been charged with taking part in "unarmed gatherings" in 2015.

Their trial has started on 19th May 16 and if convicted, Amnesty International would consider them prisoners of conscience jailed solely for exercising their right to peaceful expression and assembly. Action might follow.

EGYPT: Photojournalist, Mahmoud Abu Zeid (Shawkan) risks death penalty

Cairo, 26 March 2016: a public prosecutor directed nine phony charges against Shawkan. Before the trial, Shawkan's lawyers were denied access to key documents related to the case, including the charges sheet.

Shawkan was arrested while doing his job. He was photographing security forces' violent behaviour in Cairo's street protests. He has been in detention for more than two years, in violation of Egyptian law. His health is deteriorating and he has been denied access to medication, despite suffering from Hepatitis C.

Amnesty International considers Shawkan as a prisoner of conscience, arrested while peacefully practicing his work.

At the meeting we will sign a letter for the Public Prosecutor in Cairo.

Attached is the extract of a letter that Shawkan sent from prison.

Southern Africa

ANGOLA: Release of Jose' Marcos Mavungo

20th May 2016 -Good news !

Jose' Marcos Mavungo has been released from prison. He was arrested in March 2015 for organising a peaceful demonstration. In November 2015, as a group, we sent a letter on this case.



MALAWI: Lives of people with Albinism at risk

Thousands of people with albinism live in fear of being abducted or killed by criminal gangs in Malawi, where their body parts are sold for use in rituals.

Since December 2014 at least 14 people with albinism are known to have been killed in Malawi, while five others have been abducted. Their fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

"We call on Malawian authorities to ensure that suspected perpetrators of these horrific crimes are brought to justice, and to address the root causes of these killings, which have left people with albinism living in constant fear," said Muleya Mwananyanda, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Southern Africa.

ZIMBABWE: Pro-democracy activist Itai Dzamara still missing –his brother attacked by State Security agents

On 18th April 16, during Independence Day's celebrations at Harare's National Sports Stadium, Patson Dzamara staged a peaceful demonstration, simply holding up a placard reading "Independent but not free – where is my brother Itai?"

Patson is the brother of the abducted pro-democracy activist Itai Dzamara, who disappeared in March 2015 after he was bundled into a car by five unidentified men in Harare. He has not been

seen since. Despite repeated requests, the Zimbabwean government has failed to provide answers to the Dzamara family.

For his peaceful demonstration Patson was punched, beaten and forced to drink about 4 litres of water by State Security agents.

This "is yet further evidence that the Zimbabwean government is prepared to lash out at anyone highlighting its appalling human rights record," said Deprose Muchena, Amnesty International's Director for Southern Africa.

Individuals at Risk

Eleven people attended the last letter-writing session at Eighth Day café in May. Between us we wrote 40 letters on behalf of individuals who had been tortured or were at risk of torture. We also sent 15 cards on behalf of two human rights activists in Morocco. This letter-writing session marked the end of the international Stop Torture campaign although we will continue to work on behalf of individuals who have been tortured or who may be at risk, as we always do.

Thank you very much to everyone who took part in the letter-writing and in the Stop Torture campaign.

GOOD NEWS: we were delighted to learn that Khadija Ismayilova was released on bail by Azerbaijan's Supreme Court on 25th May. This comes within weeks of Amnesty UK groups (including us!) sending letters and emails on her behalf as part of the May Monthly Action. Although we will never know for sure the reason for her release, it would seem that the increased pressure from Khadija's supporters may have contributed to the decision.



Our next bi-monthly letter-writing session at Eighth Day café on Oxford Road will be on Saturday 23rd July between 2-4pm. Please come along even if you only have time to write 1 or 2 letters- every letter can make a difference!

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 23rd July 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road
Case sheets, pen and paper provided.

All Welcome.

Refugee Rights

We have an active Refugee Rights subgroup. They have been concentrating on organising an event for Refugee Week (see Forthcoming Events) and will take the lead in our involvement in the forthcoming global Amnesty campaign on People on the Move. If you are interested in getting involved, do drop Laura Gibbons an email at laurahelengibbons@gmail.com.

Children's Human Rights

We are still looking for someone to take on leading our involvement in this network due to Becky having moved to London, at least on a temporary basis. This would involve receiving emails from the network and distributing the actions to the group, either via the newsletter or at group meetings. Most of the actions involve sending appeals on behalf of individuals or groups.

Forthcoming Events

Chamber Music Concert

Sunday 5th June, 8pm

£5 on the door - informal atmosphere - cash bar
The Wonder Inn, 29 Shudehill, M4 2AF



The Eblana String Trio and friends will be performing present jewels of the repertoire in the snug and relaxed surroundings of the Wonder Inn.

Amnesty is working with communities in Sierra Leone and Burkina to end child marriage and female genital mutilation. Money raised at the concert will go towards this work. Donations for this appeal received between 18th April and 18th July will be matched under the Department for International Development (DfID) Aid Match scheme.

See www.amnesty.org.uk/grouprevolution

Didsbury Festival

Saturday 11th June

Didsbury Park

We have a stall at the wonderful and very busy Didsbury Festival again this year.

We will be using the 360° headsets to show people the devastation in Syria and asking them to send messages of support. We will also have the 'Egg Game' to entertain the youngsters whilst their parents take part in the more serious action.

We need volunteers to help out at a stall – please consider volunteering for a couple of hours and helping promote the group to the Didsbury crowds.

Email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com and indicate which time slot you can do:

10am – 12pm – helping set up
12 – 2pm
2 – 4pm
4 – 5pm – helping pack up

Samba: Free Film Night

Wednesday 22 June 7pm to 9.30pm

RR Multi-facility room, Unit 7, Longsight Business Park,
Hamilton Road, Manchester, M13 0PD

FREE (suggested donation £1)



As part of Refugee Week 2016, Amnesty Manchester and Rethink Rebuild Society are holding a screening of French comedy-drama, Samba.

From the acclaimed directing duo of Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano (The Intouchables), Samba (2014) is the story of an undocumented Senegalese kitchen worker (Omar Sy) battling deportation from his adopted home in Paris. After avoiding the government radar for ten years, immigration authorities hit Samba with an order to leave France immediately. He fights to stay with the help of immigration officer Alice (Charlotte Gainsbourg), an emotionally vulnerable volunteer with little experience, but who is able to see in him something more than just an illegal immigrant.

Tackling a number of challenging and complex topics – as relevant today as they ever have been – in a light, funny and deeply moving way, the film is ultimately a celebration of humanity.

Join us for this funny, sophisticated and thought-provoking film – followed by a lively discussion around the issues raised in the film and refreshments.

Booking not essential but it would help us plan
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/samba-2014-free-film-night-to-celebrate-refugee-week-tickets-25845553747?aff=es2>

Acoustic Amnesty

Friday July 29th

Sacred Trinity Church

The next Acoustic Amnesty fundraiser is coming up and we will be fundraising for the Manchester City of Sanctuary refugee support group (<https://manchester.cityofsanctuary.org/about>) as well as Manchester Amnesty.

The excellent performers so far are: Tracey Brown, James Carson, Chris Flynn, James Holt, Scott Lloyd, Iain Till and Leonie Kate Higgins. The gig will be seated and totally silent for performances with the (well stocked!) bar in a separate room. We are remaining with our approach of no sound system whatsoever - totally acoustic using the natural acoustics of the venue.

Doors will 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 – available here <https://www.wegotickets.com/event/362474>

As if that's not enough, Steve is taking this to the acoustic stage at the wonderful Butefest festival on Sunday 31 July - <http://www.butefest.co.uk/>. This is on the Isle of Bute in the Clyde estuary in Scotland.

We hope to see you at 1 or both of these.

PS. Have you downloaded our album yet? - <https://traceybrowne.bandcamp.com/album/acoustic-amnesty-for-manchester-salford-womens-aid>

Pride Parade

Saturday 27th August

We will be taking part in the hugely popular Manchester Pride Parade – as a walking entry. Please put the date in your diary and let Laura know if you can make it laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk

We have a planning meeting 5th June, 5.30pm at Tampopo in the Corn Exchange in the city centre – come along and help us be creative with the theme 'Once upon a time . . .'

Group Meeting

Normally held 2nd Wednesday each month - 7.30pm.

at MadLab Salford (218 Chapel St, Salford M3 6BY – <https://madlab.org.uk/madlab-salford/>)

Wednesday 8th June – Using the Syria 360 tools

We have borrowed some headsets from AIUK which show 360° views of devastation in Syrian towns and we plan to use these at the Didsbury Festival. Anne Walker will deliver a workshop to help us plan how to use them.

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

All welcome