



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

May 2015

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

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Campaigns

General Election

The aim of this campaign is to ensure that all newly elected MPs in parliament after the General Election are aware that human rights issues matter to their constituents.

Take the Pledge

We have asked all our members to sign a pledge to stand up for the Human Rights Act and to stop torture worldwide.



There has been a slight change as AIUK now want to collect the pledges. This is so they are able to see all the activity that has happened over the country. Can you either hand in the cards at the May group meeting or send all the filled in General Election pledge cards you have collected to the Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA. They are the cards that say 'I stand for Human Rights'. Cards must be in by the end of next week.

AIUK plan to show MPs and the next UK parliament all the activity that has happened and use these to put on pressure nationally.

Return your signed pledge cards NOW.

Writing to PPCs

If you have written to your PPCs, as requested in the last two newsletters, and received a reply, please email a copy to AIUK at lobbyfeedback@amnesty.org.uk and also a copy to the Manchester Group at manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk.

We plan to follow replies up post election to show our newly elected MPs that human rights issues matter.

Please let us know if you have received any replies from your PPCs

Hustings

The group held our own mini hustings last month, having invited each of the major parties to send a representative from their PPCs within Greater Manchester. The panel consisted of the following candidates:

Kieran Turner-Dave (Green – Manchester Central)
Dr John Reid (Liberal Democrat, Manchester Central)

Fiona Green (Conservative – Wythenshawe & Sale East)
Rebecca Long-Bailey (Labour, Salford & Eccles).

They were asked questions based around a human rights theme, covering issues including the HRA/ECHR, the anniversary of Magna Carta, Immigration & asylum (particularly with regards to conditions in detention), the arms trade, FGM/forced marriage, Stop Torture and the TTIP.

Most interesting and I hope that they went away aware of our strength of feeling on these issues.

Stop Torture

Stop Torture 'One Step at a Time' and join us on our guided walk through the streets of Manchester!



To mark the one year 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, we will be hosting a walk around Manchester City Centre on **Sunday 7th June at 1pm.**

Starting at Victoria station, Steve Roman - who helped found the Manchester Peace and Social Justice Trail - will be leading people 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 and will end 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 now on sale online priced at £7 (£5 concessions). All proceeds will go to Amnesty International. Get the at the May Group meeting or on line 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>

Stop Torture: focus countries

Country reports have now been released for four of the five campaign focus countries:

Nigeria: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2014/09/nigeria-s-torture-chambers-exposed-new-report/>

Mexico: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AMR41/020/2014/en/>

Philippines: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/exposed-police-torture-philippines#.VUjy013K1-d>

Uzbekistan: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uzbekistan-torture-corruption-and-lies#.VUjzBF3K1-d>

Following the release of the Amnesty report on torture in the Philippines, the Philippine Senate announced that they would open an inquiry into the widespread abuse in the country.

Individuals at Risk

We hold regular informal letter writing sessions at the Eighth Day Café every two months, usually the last Saturday in the month. The next one is planned for May 30th – come along and be inspired to put pen to paper on behalf of current Amnesty cases.

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 30th May 2-4pm

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

Buy your own cakes!

All Welcome.

Women's Rights

Acoustic Amnesty for Women's Rights - 16th July

The next Acoustic Amnesty fundraiser will again be at the beautiful Sacred Trinity church on Thursday July 16 2015. This time 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. We are returning to our roots and there will be no sound system whatsoever - totally acoustic using the natural acoustics of the venue.

The acts are:

- Circle of songwriters (as featured on John Mackie's show on FAB radio international) – Little Sparrow, Tracey Browne, Raevannan Husbandes & Becca Williams. They will all be on stage together and will perform solo, duets and as an acoustic supergroup!
- Metre of performance poets – Louise Fazackerley & Rose Condo. Performing brilliantly solo.

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 - <http://www.wegotickets.com/event/316058>

South America

Members of the Indigenous community of Cerro Tijeras in northern Cauca Department have been killed and others possibly forcibly disappeared. Further death threats against Indigenous Peoples in the area have also been reported. Amnesty has issued an Urgent Action calling for a full investigation of the deaths, to bring those responsible to justice – case sheet attached with the newsletter. Rodolpho will be bringing this to the group meeting for us all to sign however, if you have time please send your own appeal. Appeals must be sent before June 3rd.

Send an Urgent Action appeal now!

Southern Africa

Simona will have letters to Zimbabwe for us all to sign at the group meeting.

Asylum Justice Project Launch.

We believe asylum seekers are not treated with the dignity, respect and care that they deserve.

AIUK have a new campaign on asylum to be launched at a meeting on **Saturday 16th May** in **York**. The focus of this meeting will be to further define the campaign areas, and to develop concrete actions in two of these areas: challenging indefinite detention of asylum seekers, and changing public perceptions of asylum seekers. The programme will include a panel discussion with Steve Symonds and Allan Hogarth from AIUK, in order to help focus the campaign in ways that fit with the work already being done by Amnesty. They are also planning several film showings, including 'Fit to fly' by Medical Justice.

If you are interested in this area of work and want to go, please let our chair, Laura know (laura.barsby@yahoo.co.uk) and book yourself a place by emailing asylumjustice@amnesty.org.uk stating your name, local group, where you live, and any dietary requirements.

The meeting will be at York CVS (<http://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/>) starting at 10.30am. Lunchtime refreshments will be provided, and they expect the meeting to finish by 4pm. Unfortunately, they do have a limit on numbers due to the capacity of the venue, hence places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. So book your place now!

Burma (Myanmar) and Children's Human Rights

No actions this month

Group News

AIUK General Meeting



Five members of the group attended the National Conference and AGM over the weekend of 18/19 April at Warwick University. We heard an inspiring panel discussion on why it is vital to keep the UK's Human Rights Act, attended workshops on campaigning and took part in

discussing and voting on the resolutions.

Most resolutions were carried (although often with significant amendments) including the motion calling for research on the UK membership views on changing AI's position on abortion. The only motion to be defeated called for AIUK to specifically campaign against anti-Semitism. For more information on the AGM decisions please visit: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm>



Didsbury Festival

We will have a stall at the marvellous and very busy Didsbury Festival on Saturday June 13th in Didsbury Park. We will again be running the 'Egg Game' and plan a campaigning action as well. More details following the group meeting – keep the date free!

Pride Parade

We will be taking part in the Manchester Pride Parade this again year and we will have the superb Manchester Samba Band walking with us to add to our visibility. This is a marvellous way to get our message seen by thousands of people and is real fun as well – so make sure that you are around on Saturday 29th August (the bank holiday weekend).

Spring Groups News

The Spring issue of Groups News can be downloaded from <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/groups-news-spring-2015>. A few hard copies will be available at the meeting

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!

Next Group Meeting

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

13th May – Concentrating on our campaign work and planning for coming events

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).

Other news

Amaretti Chamber Orchestra Concert

The Stockport Group have organised a concert by the Amaretti Chamber Orchestra (see www.amaretti.org.uk) as a major fundraiser on Saturday 9th May. They would welcome our support.

Tickets (£8.50 includes tea/coffee/biscuits) can be ordered directly from the Stockport Group (Amnesty will then receive the whole amount - Tickets bought on the door will not all go to AI.) Contact Liz Nott on einott@gmail.com 0161-486-1690.

N.B. There is parking behind the church and on certain roads nearby.

Amaretti Chamber Orchestra
Saturday 9th May, 2015
St. Andrew's Church
Cheadle Road, Cheadle Hulme SK8 5ET

Concert
Proceeds to support:
Amnesty International
7.30 pm

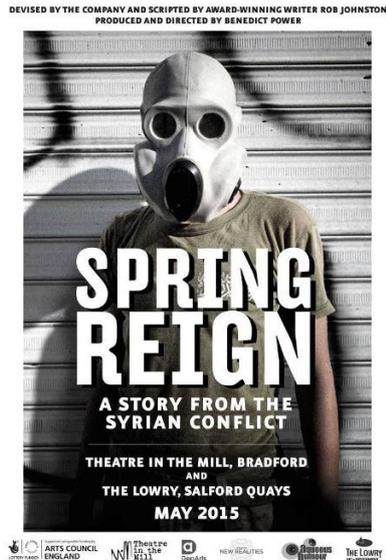
Conductor: **Simón Royo** Leader: **John Payne**

Mozart: Jupiter Symphony
Berlioz: Les Nuits d'été
Soprano: **Rosy Williams**
Mahler: Adagietto (Symphony No.5)
Handel: Water Music Suite No.2

Tickets available on the door or
Contact Peter Aspin: peter@amaretti.org.uk
0161 3 719400

Tickets £8.50 Responsible by Cheadle Hulme School Accompanied children free

Spring Reign – A story from the Syrian Conflict



Syria has descended into civil war and Aleppo is besieged. Salah and Aisha have lost control of their lives and are plunging headlong into an uncertain future. The Syria they hoped to change is gone, in its place, violence and destruction - the arbitrary brutality of war. With the unexpected arrival of two Westerners, who have stayed too long in Syria and must now be given refuge, the fragile existence of the Syrian couple comes under even greater threat. How will they survive as they fall further away from hope, from what they know and from what they used to be?

Based on real-life accounts collected from Syrian refugees, aid workers, activists, journalists and photographers, Spring Reign features live performance, video, original music performed by Chris Davies, and frontline photography by Musa Chowdhury.

Reviews for previous work War Stories - written by Rob Johnston and Emma Gibson, directed and co-produced by Benedict Power:

'The most emotionally engaging piece... performance and production standards are high throughout... beautifully balances direct narrative delivery to the audience and storytelling skills, with emotional expressiveness and impressive restraint.' *The Observer*

'Exceptional... As quietly moving as anything else I've seen on World War One.' *Manchester Confidential*

'A haunting experience.' *Weekend Notes*

'Benedict Power finds some lovely moments of lightness and ease... A solid and powerful piece of theatre.' *The Public Review*

Warning: Some material may be unsuitable for children under 15.

THEATRE IN THE MILL, BRADFORD
WED 13TH MAY - 7.30PM
BOX OFFICE: 01274 233200
BOOK ONLINE: BRAD.AC.UK/THEATRE

THE LOWRY, SALFORD QUAYS
TUE 19TH & WED 20TH MAY - 8PM
(AFTER-SHOW DISCUSSION: TUES 19TH)

BOX OFFICE: 0843 208 6010 - GROUP BOOKINGS: 0843 208 6003
BOOK ONLINE: THELOWRY.COM/THESTUDIO

BENEDICTPOWER.CO.UK/SPRING-REIGN
FACEBOOK.COM/SPRINGREIGNPLAY - TWITTER:@BENEDICTPOWER #SPRINGREIGNPLAY

Amnestea in Liverpool

If you are in Liverpool this coming weekend, drop in at the Amnestea for a cup of tea and meet up with the Liverpool group.



Musicians without Borders



After 5 years working under the banner of Musicians without Borders, they are taking the next step to establish themselves as an independent organisation. From May 2015 Musicians without Borders UK will be known as Music Action International (MAI).

Stone Flowers launch their new album *Ngunda (Refuge)* at Amnesty International HQ in London on Friday 5th June 2015. Get your tickets at <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/stone-flowers-album-launch-event-tickets-16200907350>. Places are limited. Please spread the word and support the cause.