



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

October 2016

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Campaigning

United Arab Emirates

Birthday of Dr. Mohammad Al-Roken



The 26th September was the birthday of imprisoned human rights lawyer Dr Mohammad al-Roken. To mark the occasion, and raise awareness of his plight, members of the Manchester Group organised a "birthday party" on Sunday the 25th September in Manchester city centre.

We erected a 'cage' in St Ann's Square in which a member of the group, representing Mohammad, stood whilst the party went on around them.

Shoppers and passers-by were treated to birthday cake and invited to take part in a "Freedom for Mohammed" solidarity photo action and to add their names to a letter to Sir Richard Leese, leader of Manchester City Council. The action was a great success and over 90 signatures were collected on the day. In addition, many people also took part in the solidarity photo action and showed interest and great support for the case of Dr. Mohammad Al-Roken.

Amnesty Acoustic event on the 7th October:

On Friday 7th October Steve Lindsay is running an Acoustic Amnesty stage at the Manchester Food and Drink Festival on Friday October 7th, 12.30 – 4.30pm in Albert Square. Details are at: <http://foodanddrinkfestival.com/event/acoustic-amnesty/> and it is free.

So far the performers are:

- Nolan Watkinson
- James Holt
- Hawker Reunion
- Scott Lloyd
- Laim McLair
- Mathew Gray.

Some of us will be there shaking buckets and we will also promote the campaign of Dr. Mohammad Al-Roken, collect signatures for a petition to the Manchester council and the UAE government as well as invite passers-by to take part in the solidarity photo action.



Contact Henrike: Henrikegreuel@gmx.de if you are interested in participating and supporting the action.

Subgroup

We are still very short of people to help Henrike and Heather plan our campaigning on the UAE. Drop Henrike an email (address above) if you can help.

Refugee Campaign

UN Refugee Summit talks end without serious action

As Amnesty anticipated, world leaders wasted a critical opportunity to tackle the global refugee crisis, when talks for a new UN refugee deal ended falling far short of expectations. For News and Update on the outcome of the UN Refugee Summit and the 'Obama Summit' in New York please see https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/un-refugee-meeting-and-obama-summit#.V_EuL-YVDIU

Take action, please write to your MP calling on them to support our campaign for child refugees in the UK to be able to be reunited with their families. You can find more details and a template letter at https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/letter-mp-i-welcome-campaign#.V_EuyeYVDIU

Refugee Campaign Skills Share – 26th November – York

This event had been cancelled due to insufficient numbers, leaving the event in London in October as the only possibility for activists from all over the country. However, following discussions with Amnesty members from the north, it has been decided to reinstate the event.

It is now really important to get people signed up for the event, if we want AIUK to continue to make an effort to put on training and skills share events up north and not just in London. Ideally 40 people are needed to attend this session to make it an energetic, interactive and truly active event.

[Please do register for this event.](#) The deadline is 12th October. For more details please contact Farshid Talaghani: Farshid.Talaghani@amnesty.org.uk

Individuals at Risk

Only three people turned up for our letter writing session in September but they wrote 10 letters - using cases from the Real Lives leaflet and some urgent actions, including a 14 year old detained in Egypt.

In the run up to the festive Season, Amnesty runs an international Write for Rights campaign featuring key cases from around the world. We hope to have at least one stall so that members of the public can take part in this campaign and Hazel is busy investigating possible venues.

If you have any ideas or want to help Hazel and Rosemary plan our involvement in this, email hazelerrey@gmail.com.

The Whalley Range Peace and Justice Group will be running their brilliant annual event at St Margaret's church on Saturday 3rd Dec 2pm - 5pm. As well as sending cards for the write for Rights cases there will be stalls, live music and food. We will have a stall, selling cards and featuring one of our campaigns.

Next Letter Writing Session

Saturday 26th November 2-4pm

The Eighth Day Café, Oxford Road

We will be writing on behalf of this year's Write for Rights cases.

Case sheets, pen and paper provided.

All Welcome.

Women's Rights

Back in May, members of the Manchester Amnesty Group signed letters to the Prosecutor and Health Ministers of Tucuman province in Argentina about the prosecution of "Belén" (not her real name), protesting against her arrest and trial for premeditated murder after she miscarried an undiagnosed pregnancy in hospital. Some group members may be aware that Belén was sentenced to eight years in prison by a lower court. Here is an update copied from the Amnesty UK website -

"On 17 August the Supreme Court of Tucumán, a state in north Argentina, said there were not enough reasons to keep Belén, 27, in pre-trial detention. The Supreme Court of Tucumán is yet to issue a final ruling on the eight-year sentence imposed on Belén by the lower court. Belén was released from jail on 18 August. Although the charges against her haven't been dropped yet, this is a step forward for human rights in Argentina.

"Belén's release is extremely positive and long-awaited news. What we need to see now is for the charges against her to be dropped. Belén should have never been held behind bars in the first place, having a miscarriage is not a crime," said Mariela Belski, Executive Director at Amnesty International Argentina.

On 26 July, Amnesty International handed over more than 120,000 petitions from across the globe to local authorities, urging for Belén to be released. Belén has said she is grateful for such support for her case. Here is the message from 'Belén':

Hello to all women fighters and all the people who are with me at this time. I want to thank you for making my struggle your

struggle. Thanks for supporting me, for making my voice and my truth heard.

I was quiet for two years. I did not dare to speak. I was scared. I was told that I would get a life [sentence].

I was sentenced only on hearsay, for being poor, for going to hospital, for not having the money to go to a [private] clinic and pay for a good defence attorney.

Since 21 March 2014 I have not been able to go back to my home, I have not seen my family. I was deprived of many things. I just wanted help and ended up being a prisoner, surrounded by policemen and pointing fingers. Two years and three months away from my home, they snatched my life!

Nobody asked how I felt that night. I was accused of having had an abortion. My mother was also treated badly. Nobody cared about me. 'She is ignorant, she knows nothing', the hospital said, and they condemned me along with the police. Justice [authorities] also condemned me. I told them that I did nothing wrong, I did not kill anyone.

I did not know I was pregnant. I weep for the injustice I am experiencing. But I am calm, I know there will be justice for me. I'm now stronger, calmer.

I never hurt anyone, never stole, never killed, did not use drugs. I am a woman who worked all her life. I always did what I had to do.

I am eternally grateful to all who are helping me to make my voice heard. From here I send my greetings and hugs. I am very happy that I'm not alone.

Thank you, and thank you to all women. We fight together so they hear us, so there are no more women imprisoned for abortion. Now your fight is my fight.

Greetings and affection to you.

Belén"

Northern Africa,

Here are updates on recent cases that we have taken action for:

EGYPT

DR AHMED ABDULLAH RELEASED

In May 2016 we sent letters on behalf of Dr Ahmed Abdullah, a human right defender, who was arrested at his home on 25th April 2016. We have received news that he has now been released after a bail payment of 1,000 Egyptian pounds (113 US\$ approx.). Although prosecutors have not formally closed their investigation no more action is required for the time being.

INVESTIGATION INTO GIULIO REGENI'S

In August 2016's newsletter we reported the case of Giulio Regeni, an Italian academic based in Cambridge, who was tortured and murdered in Cairo.

Good
News

Good
News

According to the Italian newspaper La Repubblica, the Arab-English news website Al-Araby Al-Jadeed has reported that Egypt is ready to persecute a senior police officer accused of being involved in the torture and murder of the academic. The website also reports that during the recent G20 in China some worldwide leaders have refused to meet with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, due to the unresolved case. Angela Merkel has clearly stated that diplomatic relations between Europe and Egypt will not be resumed until those responsible for the murder are brought to justice.

NGOS' FREEZE OF ASSETS

In July 2016, as a group, we wrote to the President of the National Council for Human Rights in Egypt asking him to help unfreeze assets of several activists and NGOs. Regrettably in Sep 2016, an Egyptian court has upheld the freeze against five human rights defenders and three NGOs. They may now face trial on spurious charges that include accepting funding illegally, operating unlicensed groups and damaging the country's "national security".

Southern Africa,

Updates on individual case that we have actioned.

ANGOLA

FRANCISCO MAPANDA

In August 201 we wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs in Angola concerning Angolan youth activist, Francisco Mapanda, who was imprisoned with the accusation of contempt of court. On 3rd Sep 16 he has been transferred from Comarca de Viana prison to Comarca de Caquila prison after having been beaten by prison officials for asking that his family be informed of the prison transfer before he agreed to it. We will organise for solidarity message to be sent via Twitter and Facebook.

ZIMBABWE

EVAN MAWARIRE



In Aug's 2016 newsletter we reported that there were concerns for the life of Evan Mawarire, a pastor and leader of the #ThisFlag social movement in Zimbabwe. We have been informed that he has now managed to leave Zimbabwe. Even if all charges against him in relation to calling for a national stay-away were dismissed and he was freed, the police continue to look for him. He risks arrest if he returns to Zimbabwe.

Burma and Children's Human Rights,

No updates this month

Group News

Street Collection

Thank you everyone who took part in the Street Collection on 26th September in Manchester City Centre. Thanks to all of your efforts we collected a total of £229.78. Although that is down a bit on last year as we had fewer collectors, it was a higher average amount per tin, so very well done.



Manchester Literature Festival

We have an event in partnership with the Manchester Literature Festival and MMU on Saturday 15th October at 1pm in Central Library.

North Korean-born writer and activist Sungju Lee will talk about his memoir 'Every Falling Star', co-written with author and journalist Susan Elizabeth McClelland. The book recounts his experience of living on the streets following abandonment by his parents at the age of twelve and gives insight into life in North Korea, one of the most isolated countries in the world where many of the freedoms we take for granted do not exist.



Tickets cost £7/ £5. Book on 0843 208 0500 or buy tickets online: <http://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/events/sungju-lee-37279>

Get your tickets before they sell out!

N.B. 50% proceeds donated to Manchester Amnesty International Group

Didsbury Lantern Parade November 12th

We have applied to be in the Lantern Parade which is linked to Disbury Arts Festival and will take place in Didsbury Park between 6 to 8pm. We envisage a giant Amnesty candle or maybe some doves with letters in their beaks. We will be meeting with an artist shortly to help plan and make our entry. If you can be in the parade and/or want to help construct our candle contact anne.walker9@ntlworld.com immediately.

Creative ideas welcome!

Christmas Cards



We have a stock of Amnesty Christmas cards for sale – 20% of the sale price goes to the group.

We are starting off with a stall at St Paul's Church Card Sale in Heaton Moor on October 15th (10-12) and will then be selling them at all events up until Christmas.

Come along and stock up at our next meeting!

If you know of anywhere that we can sell them, let anne.walker9@ntlworld.com know.

October Group Meeting

Normally held 2nd Wednesday each month - 7.30pm.

Wednesday 12th October: Let's revitalise the group!

We have some 233 people on our mailing list but recently we have only been getting 12-15 to our meetings and we aren't getting the normal number of volunteers for events. Come along and discuss what is holding people back and how we can reach out to the wider membership of the group to get them more involved.

We will also have updates on all our active campaigns.

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

MadLab is just a short walk from Deansgate, very close to Salford Central train station and on many bus routes. There is also plenty of on street parking in the streets behind.

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

Other News

North West Regional Conference

Saturday 12th November Liverpool

As Home Secretary, Theresa May stated that: 'The more we understand about modern slavery, the more we realise how great the challenge is that we face. But the enormity and the complexity of slavery must never be an excuse to think that it cannot be beaten. We must take the fight to the slave drivers and traffickers, catch them, prosecute them and lock them up.'

'We must work to raise awareness and spot the signs that people may be victims. We must work together across communities, religions and international boundaries to ensure that the victims of this appalling crime can go free.'

Although slavery was abolished, it still continues today - human trafficking, women forced into prostitution and the exploitation of migrant workers are some of the examples we find today. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) around 21 million men, women and children around the world are in a form of slavery.

Join the North West Regional Conference on **Saturday 12 November** in Liverpool, a city with a strong historical connection to the slave trade, to find out more about the slave trade today and how we can work together to fight it. Hear our key note speakers, Alex Balch, a Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations from the University of Liverpool, who is working on how to combat forced labour and human trafficking and Anette Maudsley from Stop the Traffik. Our panel of speakers from Liverpool John Moores University, Dalit Freedom Network and Amnesty International will discuss the challenges of modern slavery today.

A network lunch, workshops (Death Penalty and Syria) stalls with information and Amnesty goods will provide an opportunity for you to meet with other campaigners, your local regional representative, media officer and trainers.

You will also be able to take part in a street action in the centre of Liverpool.

Registration costs £10 (£5 unwaged) which includes lunch and refreshments. For more details and how to book a ticket, please go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/amnesty-international-uk-north-west-conference-2016-tickets-26756355981>

Leaflet attached with this newsletter – Please promote!

Belarus Free Theatre

10-12 October, Contact Theatre

Featuring Pussy Riot's Maria Alyokina

'Belarus Free Theatre is the first refugee-led theatre company in the UK and the only theatre in Europe banned by its government on political grounds. Burning Doors draws on the company's own experience of political oppression and continues their campaign to stand up for artistic freedom and human rights and prove, once again, that theatre can be a revolutionary act.'

Leaflet attached with this Newsletter

Street Stories – Strangers in a strange land

An event by the Mosaic Justice Network

at Audacious Church, Trinity Way, Salford on Nov 15th 19.15-21.30

Come and hear stories of support for migrants, refugees and trafficked people. The speakers will be

- Dave Smith, Boaz Trust
- Hannah Flint, Stop The Traffik
- Beatrice Smith, Author and Former Refugee

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/street-stories-strangers-in-a-strange-land-tickets-26965413277>

This is a church based conversation/event and will explore what response churches can make.