



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

November 2013

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Bidisha at Manchester Literature Festival

A packed house came to hear Bidisha introduce her book, *Beyond the Wall: Writing a Path through Palestine*.

She relayed her own experience of refugee camps that have existed for four decades, the wall, checkpoints and constant shouts of "Forbidden, forbidden" alongside the words of Palestinian adults and children for whom these are everyday experiences: "We are children. We deserve a childhood". "My hope is that children will not internalize the wall", says one academic. Who would like to live with watchtowers just outside the balcony?" The destructive impact of the occupation on occupiers as well as occupied generated questions and comments on what seems an intractable situation.



While Bidisha signed copies of her book (above) we collected signatures on a letter to the Israeli authorities on behalf of Ahmad Qatamesh, an academic and writer who has previously criticized both the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority. Ahmad is held under a six-month administrative detention order which has been repeatedly renewed since May 2011. The event raised £235 for the Group. Thanks again to the Literature Festival and to all who came along and supported the event.

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### Campaigns

#### Women's Rights in Afghanistan

Hannah Perry, vice chair of the AIUK Board writes:

*I had the privilege of attending an Amnesty reception for MPs at the Speakers' House. The objective was to raise their awareness and win their support for women's rights in Afghanistan. It was very well attended by at least 15 MPs with one MP taking the mic to encourage Amnesty members to keep pushing MPs for their support. Kate Allen spoke together with an Afghan human rights defender. What was wonderful about it was that different Amnesty members involved in the campaign, from youth members, student members, local group members, the Afghanistan country coordinator and International Secretariat researchers to*

*Amnesty staff were all there working together to win the support of MPs.*

*... If you're on Twitter, #afghanwomensrights was used throughout the evening*

**Manchester Amnesty was there, too, in this powerful video that includes interviews with Farzya and Becky at our stall at the Didsbury Festival in June**  
<http://vimeo.com/78623077>

Mary Gibbs will co-ordinate our actions for the next 6 months, supported by Sr. Jean Mary. Look out for information about subgroup meetings.

## Send a message of hope



Our annual Greetings Cards events are being finalised. We will have 3 events at different Manchester venues throughout Nov/Dec, including something over the weekend of 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>

November, venue and time to be confirmed. Hazel will circulate details shortly, and put them on the website.

Cases this year include Dr Tun Aung from Burma whose case we have been highlighting throughout the year, plus others from Afghanistan and Occupied Palestinian Territories (see above) – 13 in all.

If you can't get to one of our sessions and want to take action, you will find all the information you need at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2013>

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Other Amnesty news

NW Regional Conference - Looking outward, getting active Saturday 16th November

There are still some places available for the Conference at St Peter's House, Oxford Road. Kerry Moscogiuri (AIUK Director of Supporter Campaigning and Communications) will introduce the new Stop Torture campaign, and report back on this year's International Council Meeting, Amnesty's international decision-making body. We have guest speakers on Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, the Roma and Afghan women. It's also a great opportunity to meet other Amnesty members from around the region, and get new ideas for actions. Contact Laura barsbylaura@gmail.com to book your place (£12 including lunch)

Website

Have you seen the new Amnesty website? www.amnesty.org.uk It has a very different look, for instance taking you straight to a case and action. Sameena, as a member of the Active Membership Sub-committee, is looking for any comments, so have a look, let her know what you think sameenadk@yahoo.com and she will feed it back to those who manage these things.

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## A final appeal

We have had some very successful fundraising events this year, and many thanks to all who organised and attended them. However, annual donations from group members are vital to keep the group going. If you haven't already donated this year, please bring your cash or cheque to the next meeting (we suggest £20 if you have a wage, £3 otherwise or whatever you can afford) or contact Treasurer Sean [manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk)

Thanks!



### Next meeting – A creative action taking meeting!

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November 7.30 – 9.30 Cross Street Chapel

We'll spend much of the meeting **taking action!**

If you're coming and able, please bring:

- Amnesty letters / actions you would like to have signed by members of the group at the meeting
- Afghanistan patched quilt: We need fabric and materials for your patch eg. marker pens, fabric glue, threads. You could use good quality clothing, plain or patterned fabric, and either sew, write or glue your message or image. Non-fraying fabric would be ideal.
- WOZA posters: I will bring coloured / plain paper. It would be very, very helpful if you could bring coloured pens / pencils, scissors and glue, printed Amnesty logos

If you're in Manchester early and fancy something to eat, some of us will be at Jamie's at the top of King Street from 6pm. Come and join us.