



SCOTLAND ♥ HUMAN RIGHTS

Scottish Parliament Election 2016 Activist pack

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WEEK OF ACTION
from 9 April 2016



While Amnesty Groups in the devolved nations campaign around their elections, local groups in England will focus on their Save the Human Rights Act activities in a week of action in April. If possible, organise election events for that week.

1. START CAMPAIGNING EARLY

The Scottish Parliament elections take place on 5 May. Candidates, however, will hit the campaign trail as soon as parliament dissolves on 23 March, so the earlier you contact them, the easier it will be to get meetings and events in their diaries.

As the election date gets closer, candidates will be approached by hundreds of different organisations and individuals on a whole range of issues. We want to stand out from the crowd, so make contact early.

Candidates need your votes and should be happy to respond to letters and meeting requests. They should also be expecting you: we have contacted the major parties and asked them to inform their candidates that our local groups will want to meet them and invite them to attend events.

How do the elections work?

On 5 May 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) will be elected. There are 73 constituencies, and each one will elect an MSP by the first-past-the-post electoral system. A further 56 MSPs are elected to the parliament from eight regional lists. So each person in Scotland is represented by a constituency MSP and seven regional MSPs.

In these elections constituents can cast two votes: one for an MSP to represent their constituency and another for a party (or independent candidate) standing on one of eight regional lists. Some parties field candidates in both the constituency and regional list ballots, while others only field constituency or regional list candidates.



Amnesty's focus during the elections

Human rights are a fundamental part of the remit of MSPs, and these elections are a great opportunity to make contact with local candidates and raise their awareness of the issues.

Our core aim is to convince candidates that human rights are a key part of their responsibilities, if they are elected. They are much more likely to believe this if their constituents raise human rights issues with them.

We want all candidates to:

- Sign our human rights pledge card and commit to saving the Human Rights Act (HRA)
- Be pictured with our placards to send a positive message about human rights in Scotland
- Put human rights at the heart of Scotland's international relations
- Continue to welcome refugees to Scotland and push for a solution to the refugee crisis in Europe

We also want to hear all candidates talking positively about the HRA and why it is important to save it. This will build up a strong narrative that will help shape Scotland's views on the importance of keeping the Act.

Westminster MPs on the campaign trail

Many Westminster MPs will be out on the campaign trail to help get their colleagues elected to the Scottish Parliament. While Amnesty members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be campaigning during the devolved elections, Amnesty groups in England will be contacting their MPs about the HRA campaign.

In Scotland, you can talk to MPs and MSPs about this campaign. Remember that MPs at Westminster will have a direct vote on repeal of the HRA while MSPs at Holyrood may be able to block a repeal from Holyrood, so both are important to this campaign.

■ The pledge card is just for MSP candidates to sign. Have the HRA campaign petition to hand for MPs, party officials and members of the public to sign.

■ The Scottish Election leaflet is for candidates and MPs, to give them more information about our campaign. There is space on the back to add your Group's contact details so that they know how to get in touch with you.

2. WHAT YOU CAN DO

Below are some suggested activities. We do not expect groups to do all of them. How much effort you put into campaigning around the election is for you to decide, taking into account your resources and your constituency.

CONTACT prospective candidates from the main political parties in your constituency. Check the party websites for information on their local branches and candidates:

- Scottish Conservative Party
www.scottishconservatives.com
- Scottish Green Party
www.greens.scot
- Scottish Labour Party
www.scottishlabour.org.uk
- Scottish Liberal Democrats
www.scotlibdems.org.uk
- Scottish National Party
www.snp.org

Remember that constituencies are different for the UK and Scottish elections, and that Scottish regions cover a much larger area. Find out more about constituencies on the Scottish Parliament website, www.scottish.parliament.uk, where you can search by postcode or view boundary maps.

WRITE to candidates asking them to support Amnesty's human rights pledge and have their picture taken with it and/or one of our human rights placards. You could ask to meet them and discuss the issues raised in the enclosed campaign leaflet, or ask that they respond to your letter. Candidates are very interested in meeting local people like you whose votes they need.

The Amnesty Scotland office will send the main political parties an election pack, and a copy of the election campaign leaflet, so they can inform their candidates about our campaign. There is space on the back of the leaflet for you to add your Group contact details. The candidate can keep it and knows how to get in touch with you. Remember to include email address and twitter if you have one. Also worth noting when and where your Group meets.

ASK FOR A PHOTO AND QUOTE Take a placard along and ask them to pose with it for a picture. Please also send a copy to the Amnesty Scotland office so we can put them online. You can ask for a quote about why human rights are important to them. Raise the issues detailed in the election leaflet – you may not have time to go through every issue but if your candidate shows interest in a particular issue focus on that and let Amnesty Scotland know. Ask them to sign the pledge card on the spot and take it away with you – this way we can be sure we receive them.

SOCIAL MEDIA is very popular among politicians, and a great way to get in contact and raise issues.

INVITE CANDIDATES TO A MEETING. There are many ways to do this – for some ideas, see section 3: *Organising events*.

RAISE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA:

- Write letters to the press, including open letters to candidates
- Take part in radio phone-ins.
- Send a press release about favourable responses from candidates – the Amnesty Scotland office can help you.

Please note that Amnesty International must be seen to be politically neutral. See more in section 4: *Working with the Media*.

ASK SUPPORTIVE CANDIDATES TO:

- Become Amnesty members
- Join one of our networks such as the Urgent Action, Women's, Children's or LGBTI network.

AFTER THE ELECTION the Amnesty Scotland office will contact all MSPs with information about Amnesty and what they can do about human rights. We will also ask them what issues they are particularly interested in. This would also be a good time for groups to contact them, reminding them of any promises they made during the election campaign and perhaps inviting them to address the group or attend a social event.

It will be really impressive to new MSPs if we are seen to be doing this in a well organised way, so the more information we know about them, the better. Please share your experiences with us.

Please remember to collect signed pledge cards and return them to the Edinburgh office. We will use them for a handover event after the election.

Feedback and support

If you need our assistance, please get in touch. We would also appreciate your sharing any event feedback, photos and press coverage for your campaigns and events.

- For advocacy issues, including contact with MPs/MSPs and organising meetings, contact:

Paul Daly, advocacy and activism officer
paul.daly@amnesty.org.uk
0131 718 6685

- For media and events support, contact:
Pauline Kelly, media and campaigns and human rights education officer
pauline.kelly@amnesty.org.uk
0131 718 6687

Amnesty International, Regus Business Centre,
9-10 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh EH2 2AF

3. ORGANISING EVENTS

First decide what type of event your group wants to host. Consider how many members of the public you could get to attend, what sort of venues are available, and whether you want to work with other groups. Below are some suggestions of the kinds of event you could organise.

It is important that Amnesty is considered impartial, so invite candidates from all the parties. If there are a lot of candidates, however, you may have to decide on a cut-off point to keep the event manageable: this decision must be justifiable on clearly defined grounds, such as level of support at the last election or representation in the last Scottish Parliament.

CANDIDATE CAFÉS

This is a bit like 'speed dating'. Members of the public sit at tables, and candidates circulate between tables, engaging informally. This gives everyone a chance to speak, but it can be quite noisy and needs to have a good time-keeper.

ELECTION AMNESTEA

AmnesTeas provide a more relaxed environment in which to meet and talk to candidates (and if they don't come, the event still works as a fundraiser). Find out more about staging an AmnesTea and order materials from our Community Fundraising team on 020 7033 1682 or amnesty.org.uk/tea

HUSTINGS

This is the most traditional event in which candidates sit on a panel and are kept in line by a chairperson. A series of questions are typically debated by each candidate for a set period of time, and there is usually time for questions from the audience. Hustings allow lots of people to attend, but require a lot of organising and planning.

GROUP MEETINGS

Invite candidates to attend your usual group meeting. This allows them to meet you all and see the group in action, which could come in handy if they get elected. Group meetings also allow you to engage with candidates on your terms, without the pressure of hosting a big event.

ATTEND HUSTINGS

To make sure that human rights are seen to be cutting across all issues, it is a good idea to attend hustings or public meetings on specific topics and raise a prepared question linked to a human rights issue.

STREET STALL

Many groups hold regular street stalls and candidates will often be out in town and city centres to meet voters. Let the candidates and local branches know when you will be having a stall so they can pop by, sign the pledge and have their photo taken.

Don't forget:

- Send your invitations out early, especially if you want to attract a range of candidates
- Remember that Amnesty must be impartial
- Tell the Amnesty Scotland office if you plan to work with other organisations
- Encourage the local press to cover the event
- Get in touch if you need any help or advice
- Let us – and the world – know how your event went. Share pictures on social media and email us with some feedback

MPS CAMPAIGNING IN SCOTLAND

Scottish MPs are also likely to be out on the campaign trail with their fellow party candidates for the Scottish Parliament. Talk to them about the HRA and invite them to events.

The pledge card is NOT for MPs but they can sign the HRA petition and pose for pictures with placards too.

4. WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Getting media coverage of group events or hustings helps to spread Amnesty's message to a wider audience. You can also help to promote awareness of our election campaign detailed in the enclosed leaflet by writing letters to newspapers on human rights issues or open letters to candidates and taking part in radio phone-ins or joining the audience for a TV programme such as Question Time.

Please remember Amnesty International is politically neutral. For help with media work and local media contacts email pauline.kelly@amnesty.org.uk

If you are holding an event or a hustings, send a press release to the media. Photographers or a reporter may be sent to cover it. If someone in your Group is a good photographer, ask them to take pictures of the event which can then be sent to media and used on social media.

If you have a number of candidates, be sure to get a group shot and individual shots. Take placards and badges to your events for pictures.

If you do not stage a public meeting, but have written to your candidates or had a private meeting with them, you could still contact your local press.

- Write a brief press release saying you have written/met your candidates to ask where they stand on human rights, and report what they said. If it is not in writing, check that they agree with what you say they said. Again, if you meet them, take a photograph and send it with the release.
- Alternatively write an open letter to all the candidates on human rights issues for publication in your local newspaper. The Amnesty Scotland office can help with the wording.

Sample press release before the meeting

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release [date]

HUMAN RIGHTS DATE NIGHT FOR SCOTTISH ELECTION CANDIDATES

Amnesty International's [insert town] group has invited Scottish Parliamentary candidates to a 'speed dating' event in the Horsecross Theatre on 26 March so people from the local area can question politicians about human rights issues.

During the elections, Amnesty is asking candidates to pledge to:

- Save the Human Rights Act
- Put human rights at the heart of Scotland's international relations
- Continue to welcome refugees in Scotland while pushing for a solution to the refugee crisis in Europe.

AMNESTY SPEED DATING

DATE: [insert]

TIME: [insert]

VENUE: [insert]

GUESTS: [insert]

Present at the meeting will be [insert names and parties].

The meeting will be chaired by [insert name].

Speaking on behalf of the Amnesty group, [insert name] said: 'Human rights issues affect us all, both here in [insert town] and overseas. We want to ensure that the people seeking our votes are genuinely committed to human rights.'

The event is open to all and members of the public are invited to attend and come prepared to quiz the candidates on their commitment to human rights.

For further details or to learn more about Amnesty International's work, please contact:
[insert name and contact details]

Sample press release after the meeting

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release [date]

ELECTION CANDIDATES VOICE THEIR COMMITMENTS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

At a meeting held on [insert date and place] to discover the prospective parliamentary candidates' views on human rights, the candidates [insert names] said [insert quote(s) or commitments made]

[Insert name] of the Amnesty group said: 'This meeting gave local people a chance to find out where the candidates stand on key human rights issues. We're pleased about many of the commitments that have been made
[insert details of commitments made relating to Amnesty's main concerns, if you are pleased with them].

'It doesn't stop here though – after the election we'll be in regular contact with our MSP to ensure that local views on human rights are represented in parliament.'

For more information please contact
[insert name and contact details].



▶ WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook are great tools for spreading the word, recruiting new members, getting the latest news, and sharing campaign actions. They are worth investing time and energy in. The Amnesty Scotland office can support you to get started on social media if you are a new user or just want some input. There are some things to remember online:

■ BE TRANSPARENT

Say who you are and what you believe in. Be clear about your role as an activist, but also emphasise that your views are your own.

■ BE YOURSELF

Let your personality come out through your engagement on social media. Use common sense. If your post gives you cause to hesitate before posting, then don't post it.

■ BE AWARE

There are people known as 'trolls' who are waiting to start arguments on social media. Ignore them or thank them for their comment and move on.

Getting started

If your group is using Twitter or Facebook for the first time, see our digital guidance *How to communicate online* at www.amnesty.org.uk/communicate. This tells you how to set yourself up, and has top tips for getting the most out of them.

Using Twitter and Facebook to lobby candidates

You can use Twitter and Facebook to contact candidates directly. You could thank them for attending a meeting, comment on an opinion they have expressed or draw their attention to our campaign.

Example:

Huge thanks @ChristinaSNP who attended the @AmnestyScotland event in Dundee. We look forward to hearing your thoughts about human rights during the election.

Example:

@patrickharvie – We at [insert name of Amnesty group] would like to hear your views on our save the #HumanRightsAct campaign [link to website]

■ For a list of MSPs on Twitter, see

<http://twitter.com/ScotParl/lists/msps>

■ For a list of MPs on Twitter, see

<https://twitter.com/tweetminster/lists/ukmps/members>



[amnestyscotland](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyscotland)



[@amnestyscotland](https://twitter.com/amnestyscotland)

5. CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

Materials for the election campaign, the Human Rights Act campaign, are available to order.

Scottish Election leaflet	SCOT 001
Scottish Election pledge card	SCOT 002
Scotland Stands for Human Rights placard	SCOT 003
Human Rights Act pocket guide	HRA 002
Human Rights Act poster	HRA 003
♥ Human Rights badges	HRA 004
HRA stickers	HRA 006
HRA Scotland leaflet	HRA 007
I ♥ Human Rights placard	HRA 008
AI balloons	CFR 048
AI AmnesTea Fundraising Kit	CFR 108

There are more generic and AmnesTea materials available – check online.