



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

June 2021

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

Facebook page: Manchester Amnesty International

Facebook group: Manchester Amnesty

Twitter: @amnestymanc

June Online Group Meeting

6.30 pm Monday 14th June

We'll be joined by a member and a recipient of the **Migrant Destitution Fund***, a local, grassroots organisation that provides cash grants to those destitute and with "no recourse to public funds." They'll be talking about the impact of the fund and how it benefits those who are unable to get support elsewhere.

* <https://www.migrantdestitution.co.uk/>

+ Catch up on our Campaigning Activities

We will send out an agenda and link beforehand. Keep an eye out for it!

Regular group meetings will be at 6.30pm online on the second Monday of the month until further notice.

Coming up very soon....

Amnesty Live!

There is still time to register for an AIUK event entitled

"What's wrong with the Police Crackdown Bill?"

This will take place online on Tuesday 8th June, 6-7pm.

For more details and a link to register for the event please go to the next page

Refugee week

Refugee week UK is 14-21st June

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

See details of Manchester Amnesty Group and Refugee Week activities on the **Refugees** page of the newsletter.

AIUK consultation meetings

Members are being offered the opportunity to hear about and discuss changes to the structure and governance of AIUK at consultation meetings on 9th and 16th June. Please see last page of newsletter for more details.

Campaigning

Refugees and Refugee week UK 14-21 June

The theme for this year's Refugee Week UK is "We cannot walk alone."

Please see the refugee week website for details of numerous activities which will be happening during June.

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>

There is also news of a refugee-related event at the People's History Museum under "Other News" at the end of the newsletter.

Football Welcomes

We're finally able to share the panel discussion that will take part on June 17th at 6pm as part of Football Welcomes. We'll be joining the National Football Museum along with members of the initiative and community members, who will share how they have been able to use football as a vehicle of welcome.

Migrant Destitution fund

Here is a link to the main website for the Migrant Destitution Fund, where you can find out more about their activities, and also donate to the fund.

<https://www.migrantdestitution.co.uk/>

Immigration and Asylum

Thanks to all who took part in the Home Office consultation on the new immigration and asylum plans. The plans are unjust and create more division: "These plans threaten to create a discriminatory two-tier asylum system, undermining the 1951 Refugee Convention and longstanding global co-operation on refugee issues," said Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor, the UNHCR's representative in the UK.

Read more here:

<https://www.ft.com/content/9740512b-7807-48b4-b735-6af4597a829e>

Whilst we await the government's response the feedback from the consultation, Greater Manchester organisations gear up to celebrate Refugee Week in June. With the easing of lockdown restrictions for most, we're hoping to take part and share events that are happening locally. This year's theme is 'You cannot walk alone', a theme that feels very pertinent right now.

Amnesty blog

Amnesty have an interesting blog about the millions of refugees who live in very poor conditions throughout the world.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/country-specialists/forgotten-refugees-south-asia>

Human Rights in the UK

Immigration, HRA, Police Bill, Overseas Operations

Do you live in Heywood or Middleton?

The bill is now at the committee stage, which is the part of the process where a committee of MPs from different parties come together to scrutinise and recommend changes to a bill going through parliament. One of the MPs on the committee is Chris Clarkson (Conservative), whose constituency is Heywood and Middleton. If you live in his constituency and would be willing to do some lobbying, please let us know ASAP. AIUK will provide help and guidance.

Amnesty LIVE!

What's wrong with the Police Crackdown Bill?

Join AIUK online **on 8 June, 6-7pm**, to hear from leading voices from across sectors who will explore the Bill in greater depth, including the ways that, if passed, the Bill would clamp down on peaceful protest, entrench racial injustice, and increase discrimination against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Find out more and register at:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2375364445146744588?source=Main+email>



Human Rights presentation

At our May group meeting, Anne Walker, our secretary, gave a presentation on the Human Rights Act. It covered a bit of background history, a very basic look at how it works and who it helps, its image problem and current developments. The presentation is now up on our website

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/manchester/human-rights-act-presentation>.

N.B. Further information and links to resources are included in the Notes for some of the slides, so do look at these.

Human Rights Act

Subgroup

The Human Rights Act is currently the subject of a government review and we expect a report of the review in the next month or so. Amnesty remains worried that this process might lead to a weakening of our rights and is preparing to campaign in support of the current Act.

We have started a small subgroup to take a lead in planning our involvement on the campaign. If you'd like to lend a hand, please email anne.walker9@ntlworld.com.

Faiths and Beliefs letter

As a preliminary action, AIUK have been circulating an open letter to leaders of faiths and beliefs in support of the Human Rights Act as it currently stands. We have sent it to many local faiths and beliefs leaders and are delighted to report that the Bishop of Manchester, David Walker, has agreed to be a signatory. In addition, the local humanist groups have expressed their support. Unfortunately, the deadline was quite tight which limited how much we could do. The deadline is now past.

UAE - Update on campaigns for release of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken

The monthly twitter storms for Ahmed Mansoor are continuing on the 20th of each month, the next one being on Sunday 20th June. Please join in if you can. Suggested tweets at:

<http://icfuae.org.uk/news/join-twitter-storm-immediate-release-emirati-activist-ahmed-mansoor>

Many members of Manchester Amnesty wrote to their MPs about Ahmed Mansoor last month as one of the weekly actions, and several have received positive replies.

Crisis and Tactical

This month, we are focusing on the rights of Palestinians, and have a piece on 10 years of war in Syria. There is also further action to be taken following last month's piece about Yemen

Palestine

Amnesty condemns attacks on civilians

Following the recent conflict between Israel and Gaza, Amnesty issued a statement calling on both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza not to repeat violations of international humanitarian law that led to killing and maiming of civilians and destruction of homes and infrastructure.

Saleh Higazi, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty, stated: "All sides in the conflict have an absolute obligation to protect civilians. They must remember that there is an active investigation before the International Criminal Court and must not assume they will enjoy past impunity for violations." "Both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups have carried out war crimes and other violations with impunity. Israel has a deplorable record of carrying out unlawful attacks in Gaza killing and injuring civilians including war crimes and crimes against humanity. Palestinian armed groups have also committed violations of international humanitarian law with impunity."

Amnesty highlights that Israeli forces have a pattern of targeting residential buildings causing deaths of civilians and damaging civilian property, in attacks that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Amnesty has documented four recent deadly attacks by Israel launched on residential homes and is calling for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to urgently investigate these attacks. In one of the heaviest episodes of bombardment, Israel completely destroyed two residential buildings, killing 30 people – 11 of them children.



Lamya al-Atar and her three children were killed in their home in Gaza

In addition to residential homes, Israeli attacks have damaged water and electricity infrastructure as well as medical facilities and halted the operations of the North Gaza Seawater Desalination plant, which supplies water to more than 250,000 people.

Saleh Higazi stated: "There is a horrific pattern emerging of Israel launching air strikes in Gaza targeting residential buildings and family homes – in some cases entire families were buried beneath the rubble when the buildings they lived in collapsed." "No prior warning was given to the civilian residents to allow them to escape. Under international humanitarian law, all parties must distinguish between military targets and civilian objects and direct their attacks only at military objectives. When carrying out attacks, parties must take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians

Saleh Higazi added "The International Criminal Court has an active investigation into the situation in Palestine and should urgently investigate these attacks as war crimes. States should also consider exercising universal jurisdiction over those who commit war crimes. Impunity only works to fuel the pattern of unlawful attacks and civilian bloodshed, which have we have repeatedly documented in previous Israeli military offensives on Gaza".

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2021/05/israel-opt-cycle-of-impunity-leaves-civilians-once-again-paying-the-price-amid-escalation-of-hostilities/>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2021/05/israel-opt-end-brutal->

[repression-of-palestinians-protesting-forced-displacement-in-occupied-east-jerusalem/](#)

TAKE ACTION!

According to the organisation CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade) during May's 2021 attacks, Israeli forces have used advanced F-35 fighter jets. 15% of the value of each aircraft is made in the UK. Reports also point to the use of F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopters, both of which include UK-made components and have played a key role in the bombing.

Since 2015, the UK has licensed over £400 million worth of arms to Israeli forces. Furthermore, reviews conducted by the government found evidence that UK arms were "likely" to have been used in Israel's 2014 and 2009 bombing campaigns that left thousands of Palestinians in Gaza dead, including hundreds of children.

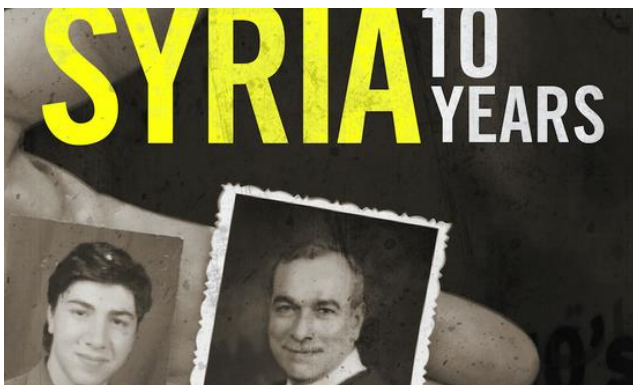
Please, email your MP and demand that the UK government ends its complicity in these atrocities.

<https://caat.org.uk/take-action/campaign-with-us/stop-arming-israel-email-your-mp/>

You may also be interested in this article from The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2021/may/19/israel-palestine-crisis-explained-why-has-the-violence-escalated-again-video>

Syria



The crisis in Syria continues. As Amnesty members will know, March 2021 marked the 10th anniversary of the Syrian conflict. In light of this, we remind you of an Amnesty International podcast series from 2020 entitled 'Witness'. Episode 1, 'The Party', addresses the Syrian conflict, and the recording and transcript are available

here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2020/09/witness-episode-one-the-party/>.

There have recently been demonstrations in Denmark in response to the Danish government's withdrawal of residence permits for Syrian refugees. Amnesty International calls on Denmark to immediately stop these plans. Syria is not a safe country, and Syrian citizens continue to risk persecution and human rights abuses. Dan Hindsgaul, Acting Secretary General of Amnesty International Denmark, states, "Our research shows that Syrians who have been sent back are routinely subjected to interrogation by Syrian security forces. The security forces are known and notorious for being behind arbitrary detention, torture and murder. Wanting to send people back to such a risk is contrary to Denmark's human rights obligations." For more information, see

here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/denmark-syria-is-not-safe-nationwide-demonstrations-against-return-of-syrian-refugees/>.

Amnesty International recently published a report on the torture or other ill-treatment faced by Syrian refugees arbitrarily detained in Lebanon.

You can download the full report in English or Arabic from Amnesty's website, ****please note that this report contains descriptions of torture****: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde18/3671/2021/en/>

For Amnesty's Syria country page, click here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/>

Yemen

Amnesty calls on Huthis to end arbitrary detentions

Amnesty have released a new report called *“Released and Exiled: Torture, Unfair Trials and Forcible Exile of Yemenis under Huthi rule”*.



RELEASED AND EXILED

TORTURE, UNFAIR TRIALS AND FORCIBLE EXILE OF YEMENIS UNDER HUTHI RULE

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/3907/2021/en/>

This is an investigation into the experiences of non-fighters, including journalists, political opponents and Baha’i religious minority members, who were released as part of political deals in 2020 after being unlawfully detained and tortured for up to seven years. Upon their release, the Baha’is were forced into exile, with the United Nations (UN) facilitating their departure and eight other detainees were banished to other parts of the country.

Exile on account of religious beliefs or political opposition constitutes an egregious violation of international human rights law. The exile of Baha’i detainees violates the prohibition on forced displacement in international humanitarian law and can amount to a war crime.

A member of the Baha’i community described how he was taken straight to the airport upon his release: “I begged them [the authorities] to allow me to see my father but they didn’t. He is 80 years old and I won’t be able to see him again. That was the hardest thing in my life, leaving my father behind,” he said.

Heba Morayef, Middle East and North Africa Regional Director at Amnesty International, said: “No one should be forced to choose between staying in unlawful detention or abandoning their home or country.”

All 12 former detainees interviewed by Amnesty were tortured or subjected to other forms of ill-treatment during their interrogation and detention, sometimes simply for asking for food or water. Many of the detainees continue to suffer from physical injuries and chronic health problems as a result of this abuse and the lack of health care they received during their time in detention.

Heba Morayef stated: “The Huthi authorities must put an end to forcible exile – which is an outrageous breach of international law and a damning addition to the long list of other violations that Huthi authorities are responsible for. They must allow the return of exiled individuals to their homes.” “As well as putting an immediate end to these abuses, Huthi authorities must order the immediate and unconditional release of anyone detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights - without exile or banishment.”

TAKE ACTION!

Send a message to the Huthis. Tweet the message in the inverted commas.



Group News

Manchester Pride

We are planning to apply for Manchester Amnesty to take part in the Pride Parade on Saturday Aug 28th this year. Everything is dependent on the Covid restrictions being lifted but if it goes ahead, there will be a limited number of places in the parade so we are applying early! Follow this link for more information about this year's Pride.

<https://www.manchesterpride.com/parade>

The Craftivism sub-group have started plans for a banner on this year's theme, *'The Garden of Freedom'*.

Craftivism group

Thank you for everyone's ideas for the banner to use in the Pride parade. We will incorporate them all. We would like as many members to be involved in putting it together either by making a bee or a flower in fabric (which I can provide) to be stitched onto the banner. We will discuss this more at the next meeting.



Ripples of Hope festival

On 13th May, several members of our group attended an online event entitled "Is there justice in our justice system?" put on by the Robert F Kennedy Foundation for Human Rights. There were inspiring and informative talks by Nazir Afzal, Brenda Birungi, and Baroness Helena Kennedy - and the short answer to the question in the title is "No!". The event launched an exhibition of visual, writing and creative art by people from secure and community settings which was on at HOME Manchester until 5th June. Although this is now past, you can attend the Ripples of Hope festival at HOME from 15th-19th September

<https://www.ripplesofhopefestival.org/>

If you would like to get involved in a subgroup to support a particular area of work, email Anne.walker9@ntlworld.com and she will put you in touch with the relevant group lead.

Other News and Events

New interim CEO of AIUK

Following the previous announcement of Kate Allen's retirement, AIUK has appointed an interim CEO, Sacha Desmukh who will be in post from now until January 2022. Sacha is an experienced leader in the charity, public & private sectors, whose first priority will be to develop an anti-racist and inclusive culture within AIUK for all staff, volunteers, activists and stakeholders.

Amnesty have also announced some changes to the structure of the Senior Management team, and are offering members the opportunity to discuss these changes with members of the Board, at a series of 4 consultation meetings on 4 consecutive Wednesdays, prior to the AGM.

Weds 26 May - 6pm – 8pm

Weds 2nd June - 6pm – 8pm

Weds 9th June – 6pm -8pm

Weds 16th June – 6pm – 8pm

While the first two of these dates have passed, if you wish to attend the discussion/briefing meetings on either 9th or 16th June, please email governance@amnesty.org.uk to book your place

Amnesty International UK Annual General Meeting.

As noted in last month's newsletter, AIUK's Annual General Meeting will take place online on Saturday 19th June. The new Secretary General of Amnesty International, Agnes Callamard, is a special guest, and will be speaking at 11.30.

Meeting papers, including the Agenda and the resolutions to be debated, can be accessed here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/agm2021>

If you are unable to participate on the day, you can still have your say, either by attending our June meeting to discuss our group response to resolutions, or you can vote individually online ahead of the meeting.

Go to www.amnesty.org.uk/vote and enter your Voter Reference Number and PIN.

The submission deadline is 09.00 on 17 June 2021.

This year there will be an election for five places on the Board. Manchester Amnesty has nominated Sen Raj for one of the places. Full details of Sen's manifesto and those of other candidates, plus details of the ballot process and other candidate information can be found here <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/board-elections-2021>

and you can cast vote online

at www.amnesty.org.uk/boardballot

In order to access the meeting and to vote on resolutions or for board members, you need to have a PIN and your Voter Reference number. If you wish to attend and/or vote and have not yet received these please contact the supporter care team, at the link below, or email the AGM team at agm@amnesty.org.uk

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-us?utm_campaign=MEMA4016S_UPT_GOV_AG_M-June21&utm_content=46474&utm_source=amnestyuk&utm_medium=email

Manchester Palestine Action

are holding protests against Elbit Systems, Israel's largest arms producer, at their factory in Oldham at 3.30pm each Tuesday in June (or until Elbit Ferranti agree to shut down, which could be some time!). The first one, on 1st June, was well attended. For more information about this campaign, please see the Facebook page of Oldham Peace and Justice, which is working with Manchester Palestine Action and XR North on this campaign:

<https://www.facebook.com/Oldham-Peace-and-Justice-533354543778749/>

For more information about Elbit and its arms production activities, please see:

<https://caat.org.uk/resources/companies/elbit-systems/>

Peoples History Museum Radical Late - online

Thurs 10 June, 6.30pm – 8.00pm

An upcoming Radical Late event at PHM will be taking place on Zoom, exploring the British Museum Spotlight Loan - *Crossings: community and refuge*.

£6 | £2 | FREE – Plus booking fee for paid tickets

Please use the link below to find out more about the event, and to book your place.

<https://phm.org.uk/events/exploring-crossings-community-and-refuge-a-british-museum-spotlight-loan/>

The alternative human rights roadshow

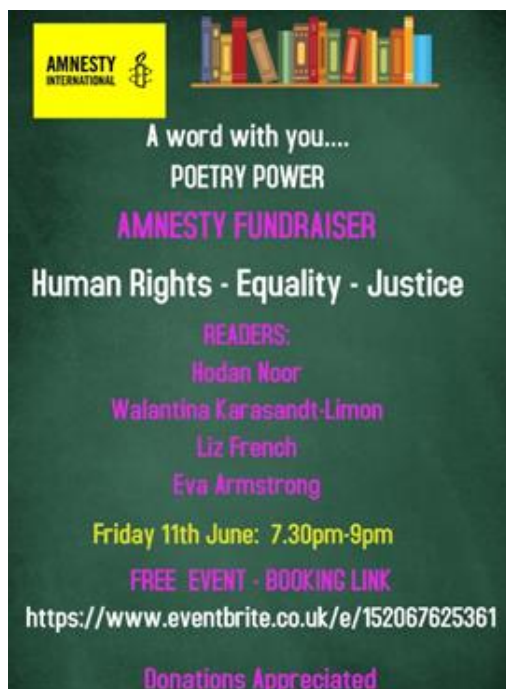
With Craig Mathieson, the father of a severely ill young man, who took the DWP to court and won. Tue, 29 June, 18:30 – 20:00 BST, online. [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-alternative-human-rights-review-roadshow-tickets-](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-alternative-human-rights-review-roadshow-tickets-157224481657?utm_source=eventbrite&utm_medium=email&utm_content=notification&utm_campaign=following_published_event&utm_term=The+Alternative+Human+Rights+Review+Roadshow&aff=ebemoffollowpublishemail)

[157224481657?utm_source=eventbrite&utm_medium=email&utm_content=notification&utm_campaign=following_published_event&utm_term=The+Alternative+Human+Rights+Review+Roadshow&aff=ebemoffollowpublishemail](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-alternative-human-rights-review-roadshow-tickets-157224481657?utm_source=eventbrite&utm_medium=email&utm_content=notification&utm_campaign=following_published_event&utm_term=The+Alternative+Human+Rights+Review+Roadshow&aff=ebemoffollowpublishemail)

Take on a challenge for Human Rights

Team Amnesty have published details of various walks, treks and runs which are taking place all over the country this summer, in order to raise funds for Amnesty. Why don't you give one a go?

https://www.amnesty.org.uk/ways-to-give/walks-treks?utm_campaign=MCFR936T_EVE_GEN_SummerTreks&utm_content=46936&utm_source=amnesty_uk&utm_medium=email



Or if you prefer a more gentle fundraiser, there's a Poetry Power fundraiser for Amnesty on Friday 11th June at 7:30pm

N.B. If you wish to subscribe to, or unsubscribe from this newsletter and other general group emails from the Manchester Group of Amnesty International, please email manchestergroup@amnesty.org.uk