

TEN YEARS OF ACOUSTIC AMNESTY

Manchester Group Quarterly Bulletin  
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*This newsletter is compiled by the Group Communications Secretary, Alison Wearden ([alison.wearden@gmail.com](mailto:alison.wearden@gmail.com)). If you have any ideas for short or more in-depth articles for the newsletter, please feel free to contact her. We would welcome pieces on any area of Amnesty’s work, and also human-interest stories. If you would prefer to stop receiving this newsletter, please let Alison know.*

**“We never expected it would last ten years.”**

**Celebrating Acoustic Amnesty’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.**

*Alison Wearden in conversation with Steve Lindsay.*

I find that whenever I ask someone how long they have been a member of Amnesty, they say “a very long time.” This is also how long our local group member Steve Lindsay has been a member of Amnesty, drawn to the organisation by the way it helps people whose human rights are being violated across the world. And for the last ten years of that very long time, Steve has been putting on Acoustic Amnesty gigs, combining his passions for defending human rights with his love of music.

Like most people, Steve got into music as a teenager. In the absence of older siblings, he relied on friends and on his reading of the charts when deciding what to listen to. When he moved to the city centre of Manchester, he started to attend a lot of gigs and found that the ones he enjoyed the best were those with small venues and local acts. He got friendly with some of the gig promoters and eventually started thinking about whether he could put on gigs himself to support good causes like Amnesty. He was pleased to find that there are venues, acts and others who are willing to provide their services free of charge for the right causes.

As you might guess from the name, Acoustic Amnesty gigs are generally totally acoustic with no amps at all. Usually the audience are seated and they keep schtum during the performances allowing all the acts to be heard. This also means that the audience can hear themselves think while they listen to the acts, which might consist of singers, bands, choirs, and poets.



*The first Acoustic Amnesty gig*

The first Acoustic Amnesty was not surprisingly nerve racking for Steve as he was learning on the job. With nine acts performing at 2022NQ, the timings were probably too tight, but there was a brilliant atmosphere and everyone loved it.

There are a few gigs from over the years that stand out in Steve's mind – an all-female gig, the largest gig which involved several quite well-known acts, the comeback gig after the pandemic (this one was not entirely acoustic) and this April's gig at which Steve's grandson introduced his parents on stage. There was also the time that Acoustic Amnesty took a minibus full of performers to the Butefest festival on the Isle of Bute – a great adventure.



*Steve listening to a performer.*

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary gig, on 8<sup>th</sup> September, will be the twenty-second gig. These have taken place across nine different venues and have involved 67 acts. Over the years, Acoustic Amnesty has raised about £8000 for Amnesty and other good causes (22 of them) - a fantastic achievement.

What could be better than an enjoyable evening in the company of friends, listening to great music, being introduced to new performers, and contributing towards good causes? As a local group, we are very lucky to have had Steve bringing all this to us, and we would like to thank him for all the work he has put into making Acoustic Amnesty such a great success.

Here's to the next ten years!

**Acoustic Amnesty, 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary gig, 8<sup>th</sup> September**

**Get your tickets [here!](#)**

## From the Archives: How our Amnesty group began

by Anne Walker.

According to records at the AIUK office, the group began in November 1970. However, our group records only start in 1974 when I began taking the minutes for the group – if you have anything earlier, please let me know!

We were known as the Manchester III group, as there were 2 other groups in Manchester at that time. I believe that the group had been formed by staff and pupils at the local Methodist college in Victoria Park, with Rev Dick Jones taking the lead. Dick remained active in the group until he moved away in the late 70s. By 1977, we had stopped referring to ourselves as Manchester III, so I assume that the other two groups had folded, and we became the one and only Manchester Amnesty Group.

I joined the group early in 1974, having been active in the Manchester University group previously. At my first meeting, I was asked to be secretary – and I agreed!

Our work was very centred around three 'adopted' prisoners of conscience.

- **Chile:** Alban Lastaste Hoffer, ex-president of the Bank of Chile, held in Chacabulo Camp, apparently for misuse of bank funds in support of Allende. As well as sending appeals, we attempted to involve the banking communities (both in the UK and Chile). He was probably released in 1975 when the prison camp shut but we didn't find out until the following year.
- **Spain:** Julio Garcia Aneiro Fernandez, a Spanish trade unionist. We contacted various members of the TUC and the then General Secretary, Len Murray, raised his case at the International conference in Brussels. He was released on completion of his sentence in 1975 and we received confirmation the following year by letter from the Director of Spanish Prisons.
- **Zanzibar:** Ishak-Haj Juma Harkata, sentenced to death in connection with the assassination of Zanzibar president Sheikh Karume, but held in Tanzania. He was released in 1979 and we then sent money to support him on his release (£300!) at the request of the International Secretariat.

We didn't just do our prisoner work but we got out and about in Manchester; with a pub crawl, a flag day with the Altrincham group, carol singing around the pubs in Didsbury, and a stall in Cross Street with a cage from Belle Vue and a parade by members of the Methodist college all tied together.

We started a regular monthly newsletter to all our members in October in 1974. This involved me typing onto a stencil and then traveling into the centre of Manchester to use a very inky and messy Gestetner machine. It doesn't look as professional as our current excellent Bulletin and weekly email, but it served the purpose of keeping members informed.

**If you have any old records, especially photos, I'd love to add them to our archive.**

Anne Walker

[anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com)

Oct. 1974.

Presenting a short summary of the recent activities of our group and future plans.

**PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE WEEK**

To mark Prisoner of Conscience week the Manchester 3 group held a stall and display in Cross St, the aim of which was to provide contact with the public and press, and to collect signatures for two prisoners on this months Postcards for Prisoners campaign. In reaching the first aim we seemed reasonably succesful, the posters were eye-catching and informative, the cage(courtousy of Belle Vue Zoo) did attract attention, the roped-together march round town (thanks to the volunteers)was a great aid to leaflet distribution and certainly received some curios looks.Unfortunately no press representatives turned up. Few signatures were collected, probably due to the unpleasent weather. I am enclosing copies of the petitions in the hope that group members will be able to collect enough signatures to enable the petitions to be sent to the governments concerned.

**ALTRINGHAM FLAG DAY**

On Sat. Nov. 2nd. the Altringham group will be holding a flag day in Altringham town centre. It is hoped that members from our group will lend a hand. Meet in the Regent Rd car park (off Stamford Rd.)by a brown capri. 9.30 am to 4.00pm. To help organisation Stephen Wills would appreciate a telephone call at Lymm 2029 to let him know the time that you can spare.

**ADOPTED PRISONERS**

Chile - Alban Lastaste Hoffer, ex president of the Central Bank of Chile. HQ. have confined that Alban is no longer an investigation case . Limited corresponsance with the Chile embassy.

Spain - Julio Garcia Aneiros Fernandez, trade unionist.Have contacted Len Murrayabout possible pressure by British trade unions.

Zanzibar - Ishak-Haj Juma Harkata, held in Tanzania in connection with assassination of Sheikh Kanume, under sentence of death in Zanzibar.We sent a telegram several months ago asking that his sentence be commuted to one of imprisonment.

Although we receive no letters from the governments concerned letters are being constantly sent to officials in the countries concerned.

**FUTURE PLANS**

Next general meeting Nov 6th, Wed., 8.00pm, Sylvia Bailey's,8 Mardale Ave., Withington.

To discuss carol singing and possibility of getting speakers (among many things).

We also hope to hold a stall in Stockport market in the New year.

Christmas cards are available from Sylvia, please sell them to freinds.

Amnesty badges are available(20p each) from Anne Walker.

Leaflets on Human Rights and copies of the Covenants on Social and Political rights from Anne Walker.

Anne Walker, Sec.  
18 Albert Rd.  
Levenshulme.

*Our very first newsletter!*

## Anti-Racism



As was mentioned in the June issue of this bulletin, the Manchester Group submitted a resolution to the Amnesty UK's AGM on 24<sup>th</sup> June:

'This AGM requests that the Amnesty International UK Section Board investigates ways in which the Joint Enterprise and conspiracy laws are being used against communities in the UK, including the use of racist gang narratives in prosecutions, particularly of young people of colour. In addition, this AGM requests that the Board make representations and/or campaigns on any human rights issues identified.'

Our resolution was supported by the Board, and, to our immense satisfaction, was passed almost unanimously by the conference, with 98% of those voting supporting it.

Since the AGM, the Anti-Racism group have been in touch with Ilyas Nagdee (Racial Justice lead at AIUK) about what the success of our resolution means in practice. We have also been in touch with JENGBA (Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association) and our friends at Kids of Colour (see the last bulletin).

JENGBA are currently busy contacting MPs to gain their support for a Private Member's Bill, *The Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill*, which would make it much easier (or indeed, possible at all) for prisoners - mostly young black men - convicted under the doctrine of Joint Enterprise, or conspiracy laws, to appeal their convictions.

The Supreme Court declared some years ago that the doctrine of Joint Enterprise had been wrongly applied for years, resulting in whole groups of young people being wrongly found guilty of murder, or similar assaults, committed by one or two of them, often on the grounds of very peripheral involvement, and with no evidence of intent. However, the Supreme Court decision did not open the floodgates on appeals, since the law requires appeals to be made within a short time of conviction, unless there is new information, or "substantial injustice" can be shown to have occurred. Essentially, this requirement means that those prisoners convicted under the Joint Enterprise doctrine have to prove they are innocent before they can appeal to the court to declare them so. Not surprisingly, only two prisoners have managed to successfully appeal their convictions in the last few years.

The Criminal Appeals (Amendment) Bill, if passed, would amend the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 to remove the 28-day time limit for those appealing against conviction for an offence which no longer exists, has been reformed, or where a new defence has been made available which casts into doubt the safety of the conviction. Subsequently, the Act would abolish the substantial injustice test and set a fairer test for these cases.

The Bill will be having its Second Reading on November 24<sup>th</sup>. On 11<sup>th</sup> September, JENGBA will be lobbying MPs to gain their support for the bill in the House of Commons. JENGBA have prepared a template letter which you can send to your MP asking them to support the bill. This was the Manchester Amnesty Weekly Action of 1<sup>st</sup> September, or the letter is available [here](#). Please do this action before 11<sup>th</sup> September if you can.

## Craftivism



*Banner made by Lima in support of Pride in Türkiye*

We are delighted that Lima has offered to become the new coordinator for this group. It is a busy and friendly group, using craft to support our campaigns.

The craftivism group has supported the refugee campaign with orange hearts and banners at the Open Gardens in Chorlton and Levenshulme (photos in section on Refugee Rights).



*Placards for the Pride parade*

Recently, we helped to make placards for the August 26<sup>th</sup> Manchester Pride parade, reported in the section on LGBTQ+ rights, including the beautiful banner made by Lima in support of Pride in Türkiye.



*Our Planet Our Rights centrepiece*

As reported in our last bulletin, we have used art blocks to promote the campaign in the lead up to COP28, aiming to raise awareness of human rights violations in the UAE and climate rights.

Unfortunately, the event which we were looking forward to taking part in at the Arab Arts Festival in Liverpool in July was cancelled at the last minute due to stormy weather and high winds.

However, we were pleased to be able to work with our colleagues from Liverpool Amnesty and Greenpeace on a stall at Granby makers community market in Liverpool on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Visitors were able to do art blocking onto tee-shirts, sign our petition about human rights in the UAE and talk to us about climate rights



Photos of our stall with Liverpool Amnesty & Greenpeace at Granby market, Liverpool, on 2nd September.

We are currently considering our next piece of work, possibly something to support the Ahmed Mansoor / human rights in the UAE campaign.

Please join us. Lima Al-Iskalachi [limazakoor@gmail.com](mailto:limazakoor@gmail.com)



## Human Rights in the UK

The passage of the Illegal Migration Bill, obviously a terrible assault on the rights of those seeking asylum in the UK, is covered in the section below on Refugees.

On July 5, several of our members attended an online quiz about Human Rights in the UK. This had been put together by Elena Auer, Joint NW Activism Rep, with help from James Farndon (AIUK Campaigner - Human Rights in the UK), and Tom Southerdon (AIUK Programme Director - Law & Human Rights). Members from all over the UK took part, and after each question Elena explained the correct answer, providing lots of additional information. The evening was both very enjoyable and quite depressing, and definitely a great learning experience.

Since the quiz, Elena has convened a small group of people in the North West who are interested in campaigning on issues relating to human rights in the UK. We have only had one meeting and are still considering where and how to focus our efforts given the resources we have. One idea was to raise awareness of the increasing use of statutory instruments to determine the details and interpretation of legislation. This insidious practice lacks both transparency and accountability, and provides a way for governments to bring in legislation without parliamentary scrutiny. One example is the introduction of civil injunctions which can be brought by companies against protesters – these were brought in by statutory instrument. Another example is the use of statutory instruments to define “serious disruption” under the new Public Order Act – this is currently being contested by Liberty. Read more [here](#).

However, to campaign on statutory instruments (a difficult concept to put across simply) might be difficult. Another idea which we are discussing a campaign to raise awareness of how the European Convention on Human Rights (and our Human Rights Act) have been used to protect people’s human rights, coupled with some work to ensure that voters know what candidates have said about human rights when the general election is finally called.

More details on the North West Human Rights group, and on a forthcoming AIUK campaign on voter ID will be passed on as they become available.

In the meantime, members may wish to sign Liberty’s pledge to protect the UK’s membership of the European Convention on Human Rights. You can do so by clicking the link below.

[TAKE ACTION](#)

## Individuals at Risk and Write for Rights 2023

### Individuals at risk

At our bi-monthly appeal writing session at Manchester Central library on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, we had 4 group members (including one new member) writing appeals, and were also pleased to attract 2 passers-by. We wrote 15 appeals and 4 messages of solidarity via a range of letters, emails, tweets and Facebook messages. This included 4 emails and 1 letter to MPs about Julian Assange.



The next appeal writing drop-in will be on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2-4pm. All are welcome, and you can come for the whole two hours or drop in for half an hour or so. Due to another exhibition in the Library café area in July, our table was moved – possibly to a more favourable position. So when you attend on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, if we are not in our usual place, just have a look around and you will spot our banner.

### Write for Rights Campaign

Every year Amnesty run a 2-month campaign leading up to the festive season, calling for messages of support and appeals for about 12 key Amnesty cases. This year, we believe that Ahmed Mansoor, the UAE prisoner who we work for, will be featured.

**THIS WINTER**  
Your voice is powerful  
Send a message for human rights

**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**



Last year we held Write for Rights stalls at the Cathedral and Central Library and also dedicated our December meeting to the campaign. A couple of individuals also got their local churches involved.

hear your ideas for where we could hold stall and how we can involve local communities. If you have any thoughts or would like to lend her a hand to organise this year's campaign, drop her an email [anne.walker9@ntlworld.com](mailto:anne.walker9@ntlworld.com)

# Israel and Palestine

## Concern for children

Save the Children has published a [new report](#) on the plight of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/injustice-palestinian-childrens-experience-of-the-israeli-military-detention-system/>

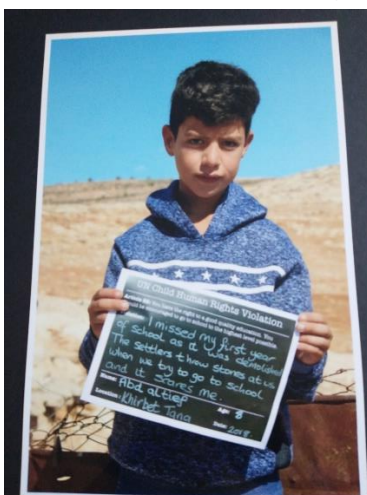
The report results from sustained, careful research. It builds on Save the Children's 2020 report: "[Defenceless: the impact of Israel's Military Detention on Palestinian Children](#)". The situation has worsened for Palestinian children since 2020 – it was terrible then, and for decades before.

Save the Children, supported by Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights, has issued a new call for action at the end of this report, seeking "an immediate moratorium on Israeli military authorities arresting, detaining and prosecuting children. No child should come into contact with this abusive detention system until substantive reforms are made".

The call for action is the right call. No state should be above the law. In this instance, Israel is breaching international Conventions it has entered into freely. Save the Children and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights hope to secure a debate in the House of Commons when Parliament resumes in September. The Balfour Project (<https://balfourproject.org/>) will host a webinar on the plight of Palestinian children, to help raise awareness of this systematic crippling of young lives.

## Concern by Manchester Amnesty Members

Manchester Amnesty members recently prepared an exhibition featuring photographs of Palestinian children bearing simple messages about their lives. Some had lost their homes, their school, their siblings.



We are now looking for venues to display this exhibition. Perhaps in churches, colleges, union buildings, community centres etc. **Can you please help find suitable places?**



We had an experimental display of the exhibition in Exchange Square, Manchester on 1<sup>st</sup> July, but attracted less attention than we had hoped for. Possibly this was because it was grey and drizzling, and people were not stopping in the square. Ideally, it would be good to display the exhibition in a place where people are lingering, and have time to consider the powerful pictures and messages.

*Exhibition of photos of Palestinian children displayed in Exchange Square*

Mike Reed continues to give talks on Amnesty's Israel report and campaign. The presentation now includes three brief video clips which are very effective in communicating the facts. Recent talks have included several church based groups and have been well received by people who are well informed and deeply concerned.

## **Growing Concern of People Everywhere**

This concern may indicate a growing awareness of the injustices suffered by Palestinians. An example of the growing awareness comes from a recent long article in [the Guardian](#) by Benjamin Pogrund, reprinted from an original article in the English language version of the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz. Benjamin Pogrund is a journalist, born and raised in South Africa, but living in Jerusalem since 1997, and heads his article: *"I have long rejected claims that Israel is an apartheid state. Now I believe that is where it is heading"*.

Even stronger evidence of growing awareness comes from the USA where uncritical support for Israel and its actions is the norm. An [interview by Phyllis Bennis](#), a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington DC, cites many examples of this change of attitude. She reports that the Jewish Electoral Institute showed that 25% of US Jews viewed Israel as an apartheid state. She says: *"young Jews growing up ..... are overwhelmingly increasingly critical of Israel. They're concerned with it because they hate what it's doing in their name."* That is a new and interesting perspective. She goes on: *"organizations .... are outraged at what Israel is doing to the Palestinians, whether it's assaults on Gaza, theft of Palestinian land, displacement, or the detention of children"*.

She refers to scholarly associations which have endorsed a boycott of Israeli academic institutions, including the American Studies Association, the Association for Asian American Studies, the Middle East Studies Association, the National Women's Studies Association, and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. The latest one is the American Anthropology Association which represents thousands of anthropologists and scholars. It recently passed a historic resolution in support of Palestinian rights and freedom, pledging to boycott Israeli academic institutions that are complicit in maintaining

Israel's oppressive apartheid system. The vote passed with an overwhelming majority - 71% in favour. This is a huge shift from a similar resolution in 2016 which failed narrowly.

Phyllis Bennis also quotes the appeals to President Biden to reverse course and call for a ceasefire during the 2021 Israeli assault on Gaza. One was sent by senators and members of the House. Another was sent by Democratic Party operatives – the people who helped get Biden elected. 500 of them [signed the letter](#).

<https://matan-aradneeman.medium.com/dear-president-biden-b19600918a67>

## **Deep Concern of World Leaders**

The Elders are independent leaders - Nobel Laureates, former Heads of Government and State, and prominent human rights defenders - working together for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007. The group is chaired by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Its members have included Desmond Tutu, Ban Ki-moon, Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter and many other distinguished names.

The Elders recently made a visit to Israel and met with Israeli and Palestinian leaders and civil society organisations. At the end of their trip, they [issued a statement](#) warning that the reality is now rapidly extinguishing the prospect to bring peace and security to both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. "The Government of Israel's intent to exercise sovereignty over all the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea undermines the democratic ideals of the Israeli state, denies the Palestinian people their right to self-determination, and risks an uncontrollable explosion of violence on both sides."

Ban Ki-moon, Deputy Chair of The Elders and former UN Secretary-General, said: *"I leave Israel and Palestine with a heavy heart. I have seen and heard compelling evidence of a one-state reality, with systemic impunity for violators of international law and human rights. There is a lack of political vision and leadership in Israel and Palestine and among Israel's allies, who continue to revert to a short-term approach. The people of Israel and Palestine, and the world, deserve better. And they deserve it now, before it is too late."*

## **Concern at intransigence of UK Government**

Last year the UN General Assembly voted to request that the International Court of Justice should deliver an advisory opinion which would consider the question of the legality of the Israeli military occupation of East Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and Gaza. The occupation is now in its 56<sup>th</sup> year. Our government voted against the request, but lost. UN member states then had the opportunity to submit observations to the Court. The British Government has done so, and has gone against the advice of distinguished legal experts.

The UK Government states that the ICJ should decline to consider the request by the General Assembly. The UK put forward the same argument to the ICJ in 2004, hoping to prevent ICJ consideration of the legality of the Israeli separation barrier, constructed almost entirely on occupied Palestinian land. The UK argument failed then. It deserves to fail again now. Read more in [this article in The Guardian](#).

<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/24/uk-seeking-block-icj-ruling-israeli-occupation-palestine>

## Your Concern - Take Action

Please write to your MP to express YOUR concern. Point out that the government has repeatedly made pronouncements on its commitment to upholding international law. The Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said (regarding Ukraine) in his speech to the House of Commons on 22 October last year: *“Everything that we do is considered and calibrated .... in accordance with international law. The rules-based system has protected all nations from such naked and unprovoked aggression over the past 75 years. This Government will always defend the rules-based system, because it is fundamental to who we are. It provides peace and security for this country and for our partners and allies.”*

## LGBTQ+ rights

In the past three months, the subgroup has taken part in a series of activities to celebrate the long and hard way LGBTQ+ people have come, and also to remember the fight there once was for love and freedom, and the fight for love and equality there always will be.

On the 9th of July, some group members attended the Sparkles Weekend, which is a festival to celebrate trans rights and their identity. The group set up a stall alongside Sackville Garden the theme of which was to demonstrate that trans rights are fundamentally human rights. At the stall, visitors were able to take action in support of trans rights in Paraguay and another on behalf of two trans women fighting for the right to change their names legally. At the end of the day, more than 80 people had signed the petition.



Our group at Manchester Pride 2023, August 26<sup>th</sup>.



In August, the subgroup was busy preparing for the Pride Parade. Two weeks before Pride, a craftivism session was arranged to provide an opportunity for group members to make their own banners to show solidarity to certain groups within the LGBTQ+ community. During the session, the action to protest for LGBTQ+ rights in Türkiye was carried out by making banners for Pride in Türkiye. On the Parade day, around 30 people came and joined the Amnesty International Manchester Group for the walk. All participants carried

different placards and banners ranging from the handmade banner made by the craftivism group to placards reading 'Love is a human right,' jointly branded with the Amnesty and Co-op logos.

Although Pride is over now, we should still fight for LGBTQ+ rights in our daily lives especially under the current hostile environment in the UK. Please feel free to contact the coordinator of the LGBTQ+ subgroup @ weiyi.zoe.song@gmail.com if you wish to participate in any future events.

## Press Freedom and Julian Assange

Members will be aware that the journalist and Wiki-leaks founder, Julian Assange, has been in Belmarsh Prison for the past four years, awaiting extradition to the United States, where he faces charges of espionage. While there is still the possibility that a final appeal to the supreme court will be successful, the extradition papers have been signed so Mr Assange could be extradited at any time. In addition to the blow to press freedom which Mr Assange's extradition would represent, [Amnesty \[amnesty.org\]](https://www.amnesty.org) have repeatedly said that Mr Assange is unlikely to receive a fair trial in the US, and is likely to be held in inhumane conditions. This [article](#) by Duncan Campbell in the Guardian is well worth a read.

Our weekly action on 28<sup>th</sup> July was to write a letter or email to your MP asking them to put pressure on the home secretary to halt Mr Assange's extradition. If you have not yet taken this action, you can find your MP's email address [here](#) and a template letter [here](#).



On 10<sup>th</sup> June, members of the Press Freedom subgroup (group leader, Lima Al-Iskalachi, [limzakoor@gmail.com](mailto:limzakoor@gmail.com)) attended La Fiesta de las Artes, at The Sandbar and The Bread Shed in Manchester, where they had a one hour slot for a musical fusion event, with a poet (Jack Horner), a guitarist (Cheyo Melara Page) and a drummer (ZOLATEC) to raise awareness of the case of Julian Assange. This event was joint with a representative from Liverpool Amnesty.

On Julian Assange's birthday weekend (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> July), Lima attended the "Not a Cult" underground music festival where she had a stall, "Angels for Assange," featuring a craft activity and at which members of the public could sign Amnesty's petition about Assange.



On 25<sup>th</sup> June, during refugee week, Lima attended an event put on by Liverpool Amnesty entitled “Fly a Kite for Human Rights”, at which kites relating to refugees, press freedom and Julian Assange, among other human rights issues, were flown. Luckily, they had a warm and fairly windy day.



Looking forward, Lima has been in conversation with the team who coordinate [Free Assange Emergency Toolkit](#), which will report on the work of our Press Freedom subgroup. Links are being made with an Amnesty press-freedom/Assange group in Adelaide Australia, to see if there could be an actions in common. It is hoped that the Toolkit will be a platform to bring these groups together.

Finally, Lima has reached out to the electronic music producer Isabella Pakulska (aka ISA) and provided her with a recording of a speech by Julian Assange. ISA will incorporate parts of this speech one of her songs to create a new version of her single, namely “I’m going to make you watch – unchain the truth version featuring Julian Assange.” The new single will be out on all the major audio streaming services in the next couple of weeks and will be available for use alongside campaigning activities.

## Refugee rights

During refugee week (19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> June) members of our refugee subgroup displayed felt and fabric orange hearts, banners, leaflets and QR codes at a number of gardens participating in the Chorlton Open Garden weekend event. It was a glorious weekend up until the last few hours when the heavens opened, and the event was very well supported, so lots of members of the public saw and talked about our materials.







Thanks to Chorlton Open Gardens for allowing us to display at their event.

Since the last edition of the bulletin, a further piece of rights-destroying legislation has come into being, with the passage of the Illegal Migration Act, which received royal assent on 20<sup>th</sup> July. This law designates any asylum seeker arriving by “irregular means” (e.g. on a boat) as “illegal” and makes them liable to detention and deportation whatever their reasons for fleeing their homes. Sacha Deshmukh, Amnesty International UK’s Chief Executive, [said](#):

“Today is an extremely bleak day for human rights in this country. Disqualifying people’s asylum claims en masse regardless of the strength of their case is a blatant assault on international law and is a failure of UK leadership. Ministers are using vulnerable and traumatised people for political ends - feeding the public misinformation about asylum issues, stoking resentment and division, and then pushing through ever more extreme measures to perpetuate the same policies that keep doing so much harm.”

The government’s wilful incompetence at dealing with asylum seekers has [generated a record backlog](#) in cases awaiting determination. They have resorted to underhand means to try to cut the numbers of asylum seekers – for example, [it has been reported](#) that asylum claims made by large numbers of survivors of modern slavery have been designated “bogus” because the claimants were unable to quickly provide documentation that they were, by definition, almost certain not to have.

Eight thousand Afghan refugees who have been living for up to 2 years in Home Office bridging hotels, have been [given notice to leave their accommodation](#) by the end of August amid warnings from the Local Government Association that there is a [high risk](#) of families becoming homeless.

The government’s incompetence and cruelty had laid them open to numerous legal challenges. The Home Secretary has endured a series of court defeats. On 24<sup>th</sup> July, she lost a challenge in relation to delays in providing asylum support and payments to pregnant women and people with children under three. On 26<sup>th</sup> July, interim relief was granted in

relation to the worsening treatment of survivors of modern slavery since the Nationality and Borders Act. On 27<sup>th</sup> July, the practice of housing unaccompanied children in hotels was held to be unlawful. On 29<sup>th</sup> July, the UK Court of Appeal ruled that the government cannot proceed with the plan for the forced relocation of asylum seekers to Rwanda, as it is not deemed a safe place. The government is planning to appeal against this ruling.

On the same day as the Illegal Migration Act became law, the Bibby Stockholm barge arrived in Portland docks. The government experienced several setbacks as they rushed to place asylum seekers on this totally unsuitable floating prison, described by AIUK's Refugees and Migrant Rights Director Steve Valdez-Symonds, as "reminiscent of Victorian prison hulks." This [Guardian article](#) describes the experiences of some of the asylum seekers who were detained on the barge prior to its evacuation when the bacterium causing Legionnaire's disease was found in the water supply.

AIUK say

"We need a total rethink on asylum. The use of barges, former military sites and other completely unsuitable places of accommodation should end, this terrible new law and the Rwanda deal should be scrapped, and there should be a renewed focus on properly-resourced decision-making and the creation of safe and legal asylum routes."

## United Arab Emirates

### Human Rights and Climate Justice

We continue to campaign for the release of Ahmed Mansoor and Mohammed al-Roken in the UAE, with the coming UN climate conference, COP28, in Dubai in Dec 23 as our focus. We hope that, as was the case for the World Cup in Qatar, the COP28 will shine a focus on poor human rights in the UAE. Many Human Rights NGOs are working together, with Amnesty International, to make more people aware of the situation in the UAE. We have worked closely with one group called SANID, Stand Up for UAE detainees.

As part of this focus, Ahmed Mansoor will feature in this year's Write for Rights. We are delighted that he will get much needed attention as a result and we are in talks with AIUK to discuss how we might promote the case of Ahmed Mansoor in Manchester later in the year.



MMU stall



Disbury Festival

We held a stall at the MMU Sustainability event and other stalls at Didsbury Festival and in Liverpool using art blocking activities to draw people in. This allowed us to have conversations about our campaign and we now have many signatures on our petition which we plan to send to the UK delegation attending COP28. We hope to hold a couple more stalls in the autumn, including a stall at the People's History Museum on 1<sup>st</sup> November, during half term for many, and suitable for families.

Our craft stalls are great fun to do because people love the creativity. Please let Kathryn Fletcher [bussk@btinternet.com](mailto:bussk@btinternet.com) know if you would like to join us.



Some tee-shirts which we made

## **AIUK National Conference. 4<sup>th</sup> November, 10.00-19:30, in London but online tickets still available.**

The AIUK National Conference returns on Saturday 4 November 2023! Expect a jampacked day of workshops, speakers, networking, food and fun, showcasing and celebrating the amazing work going on across the Amnesty movement in the UK.

Here's a taster of what to expect:

- Take part in training sessions and workshops
- Hear from people in our movement and meet other activists
- Learn about current campaigns, share skills, take action
- Enjoy an evening of celebration, food and music
- Meet and connect with friends old and new.

This conference is for everyone! You might be a student or local group member, a country coordinator or someone interested in Amnesty's work. This is an opportunity to come together and discuss how to build a more powerful, diverse and impactful movement across the UK.

Join us in the fight for human rights on 04 November at the 2023 AIUK National Conference! Free online tickets still available on the link below.

**Book here [\[email.amnestyuk.org.uk\]](mailto:email.amnestyuk.org.uk)**