



Minutes of [Amnesty International Reading Group](#) Meeting

Thursday 14th November 2024

Chair: Helen Ball

This meeting was held via Zoom.

Welcome and introductions

13 people joined the meeting tonight: Helen, Vicky, Iona, Sue, Liz, Mus, Ray, Michael and our speaker Mike

New tonight - Ilaria, James, Robert, Richard

Apologies - Hilary, Anne, Ruth, Bianca, Ian

Speaker - Mike Quinn, AIUK's Rainbow Network lead

- Mike gave an overview of the global difficulties LGBT+ people experience, lots of countries, lots of reasons, an extreme increase in retribution in some areas; for example, in Uganda, it is now a capital offence to engage in acts of homosexual sex - a recent court challenge was unable to overturn this decision. This has become an aggressive and oppressive beacon in the region. In the USA, Mike predicted a roll back on inclusion; for example trans rights within the military. The US represents a global power, so there will be a loss of the US as a human rights advocate.

He mentioned some bright spots - Japan and South Korea now allow same sex marriages.

Mike talked in more detail about the campaign about Trans Discourse in the Media. We covered this at Pride this year.

Mike said that since 2015, there had been an enormous increase in the attention and coverage of Trans issues in the media, which is overwhelmingly negative. There has not been an increased number of people transitioning.

Trans people are already a vulnerable community and are now feeling very focussed on - Ofcom has recognised that coverage is not fair or balanced and there are many examples of bad practice.

Mike explained that the relentless need for balanced media has turned the issue into a debate, when there is no debate. Trans people make up 0.53% of the population, non-binary people are 1.7%.

The current petition is aimed at the BBC, asking them to have a review of their journalistic guidelines. This should be attainable as the BBC have to demonstrate that they have reasonable guidelines. Next year, this campaign will widen to other media outlets.

- Amnesty focussed work going forwards
 - in the UK, the focus will be on the overwhelmingly negative discourse in the media in regards to trans rights
 - The global focus will join with the “Protect the Protest” campaign, looking at Prides in Europe & N America, including in Türkiye. Also excessively harsh laws, such as Uganda. Also watching the
 - AIUK will continue to campaign for LGBT+ rights as Ukraine make other political transitions.
 - The group decided to keep the Trans Discourse in the Media petition we used at Pride as a constant feature at events.
 - Iona will write words we can add to the BBC complaints website to add to this action.

Review of recent events

- **An Evening without Chow Hang-tung & Jimmy Lai - Human Rights in Hong Kong.** As part of RISC’s International Festival, we put on an event with our local Hong Kong Friends. We had an outstanding panel - Amnesty UK’s CEO, Sacha Deshmukh, a former employee of Amnesty Hong Kong (where Chow was a Director which Amnesty was forced to close to protect its staff) and a former employee of Apple Daily (which was Jimmy’s newspaper that was closed due to the National Security Laws).

We were delighted to have a great mix of attendees - some Reading Uni Amnesty members, some local HKers, some friends and some people who saw the event advertised.

Sue commented that listening to real life stories, how this kind of event really strengthens and inspires us to do this work for Human Rights.

A huge thanks to our speakers who brought the devastating situation to life and moved us to take further action.

Campaign updates

- **Cuba** - Amnesty has named [4 new prisoners of conscience](#) There are no accompanying actions presently - we will keep an eye on this. Sue talked about the recent repressions, fuel shortages as well as natural disasters, such as earthquakes and hurricanes are making times extremely difficult for Cubans. Most just want to leave.
- **Anti-death Penalty** - Liz referred people to the most recent newsletter from the Anti-Death Penalty Project - [see our website](#)
 - Helen also mentioned a upcoming urgent campaign to get President Biden to commute all federal and military death row people, fearing the when Donald Trump becomes president in January, he will mark his new presidency with a spree of executions. He executed 13 people in his last 6 months as president - the most executing president since the 1940s.
- **South-East Asia** - Michael has just received some information so will take a look and pass on any actions which will go in our next newsletter.
- **Central England Network** - Helen reported that there will be a webinar about the lived experiences of refugees. "Voices of Resilience - Understanding the Lives of Refugees" is planned for the end of January. She also shared details of the `Keep Campsfield Closed Campaign and the appalling conditions of existing immigration detention centres.
 - webinar details to follow

Secretary report

- Helen has written an intro to the Reading Group letter, which the central office can email out to all Amnesty members in our area. However, no one has received it yet!
 - Helen will chase
- [Write for Rights](#) The largest annual global greetings card campaign is here! Everyone was encouraged to take part, either at our upcoming events or online at home. There are 3 focus people, but only 9 in total, so please do as much as you can!
- [Local groups news](#) Please take a look - we're in it! Also a good way of seeing what other groups are up to and "magpieing" their ideas!

Our Upcoming Events:

Event	Dates	Venue
Chantry House Music Concert	Saturday 7 th December – 7.30pm	Chantry House, Henley-on-Thames Book tickets
Group meeting – Write for Rights campaign	Thursday 12 th December – 7.30pm	Reading Biscuit Factory
Group meeting - planning for the year, including decide on focus	Thursday 9th January 2025	TBC
Petition Hand-in Helen, Anne, Sue, Hillary & Iona	Saturday 11th Jan	10 Downing Street
Group's 50th birthday party	Saturday 1st March - 7.30pm	RISC

Other local upcoming events:

Event	Dates	Venue
Hong Kongers event - Solo Musical Documentary Theatre - "In an Alternative Universe, I Don't Want to Live in the UK"	Sat 23rd November, 2024 - 12:30-13:30	The Wren School, Bath Road, RG30 2BB
Action for Hong Kong	Sunday 24th Nov 11am-1pm	Broad Street
Reclaim the Night Walk - organised by Reading Uni and BWA	Friday 29th Nov - 5-7pm	gather at the Town Hall
Film in Oxford, "All Static and Noise" survivors of Uyghur "re-education camps" in Xinjiang	Friday 29th Nov	...
Keep Campsfield Closed demo	Sat 30th Nov - 12 noon	Campsfield Gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington OX5 1RE

Next meeting: Thursday 12th December - Write for Rights
Reading Biscuit Factory 7.30pm