



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

Thursday 9th January 2025

Chair: Anne

This meeting was held on Zoom

Welcome and introductions

12 people joined the meeting tonight: Helen, Sue, Liz, Ruth, Hilary, Michael, Vicky, Ilaria, KC, Durga

New tonight - Qadeer

Apologies - Iona

Review of 2024

What went well

- Chantry House & the quiz night were well attended and raised a lot of money - barn dance already planned for Autumn 25, which should be a similar fundraising event
 - Liz to double check date with Scamping Rogues as Saturday 15th November was pencilled in
 - group keen for Chantry House to happen again, though Helen has concerns about capacity of the team at that time of year - consider again before reaching out to Rachel and her musicians. Maybe request every other year?
- Chance2Dance4Charity - a great fun regular event that raises money too. Next date - Friday 25th April with charity called [Headway Thames Valley](#)
 - Sue to share details nearer the time, but keep the date for your diaries
- Hong Kong evening for Reading's International festival was a good evening. It's been helpful to have links with a local activist group to strengthen our work - that would be ideal but potentially challenging to repeat.
 - continue to keep links with local Hong Kongers and add HK to the group's campaigns, Helen to lead for now
- It's been good to have a Reading Uni group to work with again - they re-started the group in summer 2024
 - continue links with uni group to explore shared events or supporting each others

- Having a campaign for a whole year has been effective for many reasons - activists have built up knowledge about the situation over the year so they are more confident when discussing the issue. A campaign ready to go for all events.
 - discuss year long campaigns for 2025

What's not so good

- Going forwards, there will be no WOMAD in 2025. WOMAD has been a big event for our group for many years. Also we bought a new larger gazebo for 2024's WOMAD that was needed to manage the longer event. A good investment going forward, however.
 - We discussed lending the gazebo out to recoup the costs - decided to discuss that further outside the meeting. Also discussed Reading's "Library of Things" - might that be helpful if we need to borrow equipment.

Review of current campaigns - shall we continue with our current ones?

campaign/country	2025	who
Cuba	continue , although no country co-ordinator which makes getting info & actions more challenging	Sue
Rainbow Network (LGBTQI+)	continue - just taken on in 2024 as campaign all year round	Iona
Anti-Death Penalty	continue - Liz expressed concerns about the "adopt a US state" campaign, Helen to mention at a ADPP meeting	Liz
Hong Kong	continue beyond our annual focus	Helen for now
South Asia	continue , but maybe focus on fewer countries rather than the whole region to make it more manageable. Probably India, Nepal and Afghanistan	Hilary
South East Asia	continue - however similar issues to Cuba, so actions as and when we get them	Michael
Prisoners of Conscience from UAE, Dr Mohammed al-Roken and Ahmed Mansour	continue - however, not much comes through from Amnesty. Some local groups meet online to work together which gives advantages	Ruth

- Helen to complete the forms online for Amnesty so they know which campaigns we are working on

What campaign for 2025?

After a discussion, the group decided, in principle, to proceed with the idea of having an annual campaign about women's rights, particularly in Afghanistan and Iran.

- Helen and Hilary to explore ideas with Amnesty Feminists and present a campaign to the group at the February meeting, as it would be good to launch at our party on 1st March

Format of meetings for 2025?

Discussion changing the current format, which aims to have speakers at most meetings. The group felt it would be good to have time for our current campaigns, as our members have a lot of knowledge about their areas.

- The group agreed alternate speaker/in-house meetings would be a good plan to try.

Speakers

The group felt it would be good to have speakers around some of Amnesty's key area of focus as well as

- our chosen annual campaign
- anti-racism
- freedom of speech
- how do we verify news - Amnesty's Evidence Lab?

Events

- Yes to the usual ones, Waterfest, Reading Pride, Amnesty International Festival
- exploring other or new events
 - continue discussion at next meeting

Chair and Secretary reports

- We discussed the joining the [Keep Campsfield Closed Coalition](#) which is a group of organisations working together for this detention centre to remain closed. The group agreed
 - Helen to write to the Coalition and request membership to the group.
 - Please [sign the petition](#) to Keep Campsfield Closed as individuals.

Useful reading to understand Amnesty's position on issues we will be covering in our campaign for 2025

- Gender apartheid must be recognised as a crime under international law - [read Amnesty's press release here.](#)
- Current **Afghanistan** action on the website - Call on the UK Prime Minister to make Afghanistan a foreign policy priority, and demand the UK work with the international community to ensure that Women's rights are protected in Afghanistan. [Take action here.](#)
- Current page for the Amnesty Feminists, with information about their campaign for women in Afghanistan and links to recordings of webinars, which are really worth watching. [Take a read here.](#)

Also good to read

- [End Gender Apartheid website](#)

Our Upcoming Events:

Event	Dates	Venue
Petition Hand-in Helen, Anne, Hilary & Iona	Saturday 11th Jan	10 Downing Street
Group's 50th birthday party - by invitation	Saturday 1st March - 7.30pm	RISC

Other Amnesty or local upcoming events:

Event	Dates	Venue
Film Screening of Green Border & Q&A Find out more about the struggles refugees face in the Polish-Belarusian border.	16th January	HRAC
Webinar - Racism, riots and allyship Our speaker is author and Amnesty activist, Peter Radford. Peter will discuss the recent riots, the factors that led to them and his own journey from a racist upbringing to working with Amnesty's Anti-Racism Network. Peter will address some of the fears	28th January 7.30-9.00pm	<i>You can register for the webinar here:</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwkc-6ppzsjG905RN4Mc5pBaLi512goFqui?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR0tC-RIHKxXeQhK4m

<p>and queries often raised by white people seeking to engage in anti-racist work as well as unpacking some key principles for navigating conversations around the subject of racism sensitively and effectively.</p>		<p>KLiKeTMzodjNne5MJD9FWt2K47rhD-eGCih9VjflA aem vAzL9LdwmTvYhB_SKh8vVw#/registrati on</p>
<p>Webinar - Refugees in conversation A rare chance to hear the voices of Refugees & Asylum Seekers & explore their journeys, struggles & paths to well-being Joined by panelists talking about their lived experiences of various stages towards refugee status</p>	<p>30th January 7.00-8.30pm</p>	<p><i>You can register for the webinar here:</i> https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAocemvrD8sGNGIMyu9XbaXinLVnrHaWiDe</p>

Next meeting: Thursday 13th February 2025

Zoom at 8pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82789559652?pwd=hQpxJaOWfEHppKy3KdMjzaob2X0hF6.1#success>

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