



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

Thursday 13th February 2025

Chair: Anne

This meeting was held on Zoom

Welcome and introductions

10 people joined the meeting tonight: Adele, Helen, Liz, Sue, Ilaria, Ruth, Blanca, Paola, Iona. No new people tonight; however 3 cats featured :-)

Apologies - Hilary, Durga, Michael, Vicky

Matters arising from our January meeting not covered in today's agenda

- Liz confirmed barn dance date with Scamping Rogues as Saturday 15th November
- Sue confirmed the next Chance2Dance4Charity for Friday 25th April
- continue links with UNI group to explore shared events or supporting each others
 - Helen has emailed, suggesting joint events, further collaboration - invited to the party

Agree Campaign Focus for 2025

At January's meeting we had expressed an interest in a campaign around Women's rights, with a possible focus on Afghanistan and/or Iran.

Cherry Bird, AIUK's regional coordinator for South Asia has agreed to talk to us in March about Afghanistan which will be a very helpful background session for us.

It had been difficult to make contact with the relevant Amnesty team to discuss potential campaigns - however, we do have upcoming opportunities to talk online and at the Amnesty Feminists conference in March, so we can get advice then.

Finalise Format and Agendas for 2025 Meetings

At the January meeting, we discussed changing our usual meeting schedule for 2025, following on from discussions with other groups. We agreed alternate speaker/in-house meetings would be a good plan to try. We had also discussed topics we'd be interested in learning more about. A big thanks for Philippa from Local Groups Admin for putting us in touch with key speakers from Amnesty staff

- MARCH - speaker meeting - Afghanistan, Cherry Bird
- APRIL - in house meeting

- MAY - speaker meeting - anti-racism campaign update from Amnesty's lead on Racial Justice Lead Ilyas Nagdee
- JUNE - in house - group's AGM
- JULY - speaker meeting - Freedom of Speech and the Right to protest - Tom Southerden, programme director - Law & Human Rights
- AUGUST - in person social
- SEPTEMBER - speaker meeting - Milena Marin, head of Amnesty's Evidence Lab - protecting against fake news
- OCTOBER - in house meeting
- NOVEMBER - speaker meeting - TBA
- DECEMBER - WRITE FOR RIGHTS in person

New member Adele spoke about her experiences as an asylum seeker

Adele first joined our group at the last meeting and offered to speak about her personal experience as an asylum seeker (AS) in the UK. Here's a summary of her talk

- Adele told us she was an international student from Saudi Arabia. As a younger person, Adele posted tweets criticising the Saudi Royal family. People are now being arrested for this kind of activism, so Adele cannot return home. Sadly Adele feels very unsafe as an asylum seeker here in the UK - she has experienced bad advice, been targeted by fake human rights organisations, had her phone hacked, been threatened with being taken to mental health ward. She is very cautious of using the NHS. She has been very unwell (including covid twice) and now has difficulties with food that are not being catered for well at AS hostels. She feels she can't be herself and fears that she is being targeted by Saudi secret agents.
- Anne expressed deep sorrow for Adele on behalf of the group. As we are not a group who campaigns for individuals, we are not able to help Adele directly - however, we hope that by being part of the group, she will find comfort and community.

Group campaign updates

- **Cuba** Just before President Biden stepped down, a deal was struck between Biden, the Vatican & the Cuban state. Cuba has announced gradual release of 553 prisoners, with definite news of 3 Prisoners of Conscience conditionally released in the last few days. This includes José Ferrer, who reportedly has been suffering beatings, isolation and health problems. However, there are two activists still incarcerated - Luis Manuel Otera Alcantara and Maykel Castillo Perez. So we hope to hear news of their release very soon.

- **Rainbow Network (LGBT+) update Unite for Türkiye's Pride.** Pride season is just around the corner all over the world. In Türkiye, LGBTI activists want to demonstrate again for unity and human rights, even though they are threatened by bans and police violence. [Sign this petition](#) and call on the Turkish Interior Minister to ensure this year's Pride is free from any threats, excessive use of force by the police, detention and prosecution.
- **Hong Kong** - Helen updated about the group about the letter that was received regarding the petition we handed in to 10 Downing Street. the group felt it was a good reply - Helen will circulate to all the other groups who were involved in the petition. Helen has asked Nabila Hanson (AIUK's China coordinator) for her thoughts on next steps.
- no updates from other group campaigns today

To carry forwards

- group keen for Chantry House to happen again, though Helen has concerns about capacity of the team at that time of year, given that the Barn Dance is just a couple of weeks before that.
- consider again before reaching out to Rachel and her musicians. Maybe request every other year?
- Helen to complete the forms online for Amnesty so they know which campaigns we are working on
- to do

Our Group's confirmed Upcoming Events:

Event	Dates	Venue
Group's 50th birthday party - by invitation	Saturday 1st March, 7.30pm	RISC
Chance2Dance4Charity	Friday 25th April, 7.30-9.30pm	Peppard War Memorial Hall
Waterfest	Saturday 28th June, daytime	Forbury Gardens/Abbey Ruins
Reading Pride	Saturday 30th August, daytime	Kings Meadow
Barn Dance with the Scamping Rogues	Saturday 15th November, 7.30pm	St Michael's church
Write for Rights	Thursday 11th December, 7.30-9.00pm	Reading Biscuit Factory

Other events likely to be planned in

- Human Rights Sponsored Walk - late summer
- International Festival - October/November

Other Amnesty or local upcoming events:

Event	Dates	Venue
A briefing on Israel’s Genocide against Palestines in Gaza	Tuesday 18th Feb 6pm	online
Automated Racism - Predictive Policing	Thurs 20th Feb 6.30pm	online & at HRAC please book in advance
Refugee Week webinar	Wed 26th Feb, 1030am-1pm	please book in advance
THE PREVENT DUTY - what next? webinar	Thursday 27th february 7.30-9.00pm	please register in advance
Guantanamo Bay vigil - monthly	Wed 5th March 1-3pm	Parliament Square
Progressing Women’s rights in Iran	Wed 5th March 6-8pm	please book in advance
Amnesty Feminists Activism in Action	Saturday 8th March. 9.30am-6pm	HRAC only Please book in advance
Demo at proposed site for new Chinese “Mega Embassy	Saturday 15th March 3pm	Royal Mint Court, London

Next meeting: Thursday 13th MARCH 2025

Zoom at 8pm

Hear from Cherry Bird, South Asia regional coordinator about the situation in Afghanistan

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

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