



**Amnesty International UK  
National Conference and AGM 2012**

# **RESOLUTIONS BOOKLET**

## **A1. Human Rights and the Democratic Republic of Congo**

Proposer - Peter Sagar

Secunder – Rosalie Davidson, Judith Anne Kessler

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM:

- Notes the seriousness of the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC);
- Accepts that there are particularly serious concerns about the extent of sexual violence in the DRC, the lack of freedom of expression and association and the impunity of those abusing human rights, as well as doubts about the fairness of the November 2011 presidential elections;
- Notes a recently published report by Justice First on the treatment in the DRC of returned asylum seekers, and recognises this as a matter of concern to AIUK;

Accordingly this AGM:

- 1) Calls upon AIUK to raise the issue of the Democratic Republic of Congo with the International Secretariat, requesting an increase in its campaigning resources for the DRC, thus enabling it to assess the risks to returned asylum seekers and political activists at all levels.
- 2) Requests that AIUK opt into the 'Protection of civilians within DRC' campaign and make it a high priority in their work; and lobby the UK government on the current human rights crisis in the DRC.
- 3) Wishes Justice First success in their campaign.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly.**

## **A2. Refugees/Asylum Seekers - Still Human Still Here**

Proposer – Wythall and Bournville Group

### **PREAMBLE**

Over the past sixty years the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent Human Rights and Refugee Conventions have placed all governments under an obligation to offer protection to those seeking asylum because of well-founded fears of persecution in their countries of origin. This obligation carries with it, by implication at least, a responsibility for respecting the general human rights of such people.

AIUK has long recognised the failure of successive UK governments to meet this obligation to asylum seekers, and has produced reports and campaigned on specific issues, notably on poor decision making (2004), on the use of detention (2005), and on destitution (2007, and again in 2009 in conjunction with the Still Human Still Here coalition). Most recently, and in a wider context, AIUK has called for investigation of abuses in the process of enforced repatriation.

The Still Human Still Here report 'At the End of the Line' (2010) showed that the arrangements for handling applications for asylum in the UK fell far short, both in spirit and in practice, of our obligations. In particular it identified three key deficiencies in the operation of the current system:

1. Failure to identify speedily and competently those in need of protection;
2. Failure to provide adequately for the legal and welfare needs of asylum seekers while awaiting decisions;
3. The use of destitution as an instrument of policy.

Currently AIUK is working with the Still Human Still Here coalition to gain the support of MPs for allowing some asylum seekers to undertake paid work while awaiting resolution of their applications.

In spite of efforts to clear the backlog of unresolved applications and a drop in the number of applicants there is little evidence of improvement in the legal and welfare provision for those awaiting decisions. The UK Border Agency appears to be unable to meet its commitments, and suffer from a 'culture of disbelief', while destitution remains a major issue, only alleviated by the efforts of voluntary organisations and individuals up and down the country. Alongside these systematic failures the lack of understanding of asylum issues and of sympathy for asylum seekers among the general public seems still to be prevalent, and can be aggravated by some sections of the press and media.

## **RESOLUTION**

This AGM calls on AIUK to continue to work closely with the Still Human Still Here coalition and to intensify its efforts to bring about the changes necessary in the current asylum system to remedy its major deficiencies, in particular making this a priority issue in terms of:

1. Informing AI members and the public at large about the need for a more humane and efficient response to those seeking sanctuary from persecution and widespread human rights abuses in their own countries; and
2. Mobilising their support to generate effective pressure on the government to make the necessary changes in the asylum system.

To achieve these objectives we urge AIUK to:

- Make full use of the AI magazine and website, along with other conventional and electronic systems, and the media;
- Encourage AI groups to work together and with other campaigning organisations to publicise asylum issues at a local level;
- To ensure that the wider public is better informed on the plight of refugees and asylum seekers

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly**

### **A3. Street Children in Brazil**

Proposer – David John Maidment

Seconder –Helle Abelvik-Lawson

## **RESOLUTION**

In the light of the ICM decision to give greater emphasis to campaigning on children's human rights and the current interest by the UN Human Rights Council on issues of concern to street children, AIUK requests the IS to research human rights violations against street children in Central and South America, and particularly Brazil, using the opportunities to campaign provided during the Football World Cup in Brazil in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016. The IS might then further this campaign in other such countries that have human rights violations against street children, and are also hosting major international events in the future, based on the success of this first campaign.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly.**

## **A4. Guantanamo Bay**

Proposer – The Canterbury Group

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM agrees that:

- President Obama has appeared to abandon his commitment to veto the new security law that allows the US military to detain without trial terrorism suspects who have been arrested on US soil. They can now be held indefinitely and could end up being shipped to the Detention Centre at Guantanamo Bay, which would increase in size as a result.
- AIUK did not support Amnesty International's worldwide protests on the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Detention Centre in Guantanamo Bay.
- Apart from the campaign to free British resident Shaker Aamer, who was cleared for release in 2007, and work undertaken by groups opted into work on the USA, AIUK appears to have reduced the level of public criticism of the US 'War on Terror'

The AGM instructs the Board of AIUK to:

- We note that Amnesty-friendly organisations such as the Save Shaker Aamer Campaign, the London Guantanamo Campaign and Reprieve organize regular demonstrations concerning Guantanamo. We urge that AIUK supports and publicizes these events when appropriate to counter the perceived lack of action by Amnesty UK on this issue.
- Progress AIUK's efforts toward the closure of Guantanamo Bay by explicitly prioritizing it in the Section's work on Security and Human Rights with a focus on the campaign for UK resident Shaker Aamer and former UK resident Ahmed Belbacha to return to the UK.
- Liase with media actively to address the issue of Guantanamo Bay amid the coverage of the election campaigns of two major US presidential candidates

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly.**

## **B1. The Human Rights of Environmentally Displaced Persons**

Proposer – Sarah Nash

Seconder – Malcolm Dingwall-Smith

### **PREAMBLE**

Environmental degradation in situations such as Somalia and Haiti has brought the issue of environmentally displaced persons to the forefront of human rights considerations. Environmentally displaced persons suffer distinct human rights abuses, and there is no specific legislation related to environmental displacement. In 2009 the AIUK AGM Motion C2 on human rights and the environment has established the environment as a legitimate campaign area for AIUK.

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM calls on the Board to:

- Request that the IS examines the issue of environmentally displaced persons and in particular the distinct human rights abuses which environmentally displaced persons are facing.

Should the IS conclude that environmentally displaced persons is an area of concern for AI, the Board will ensure:

- That AIUK integrate awareness of environmentally displaced persons into existing campaigns (such as refugees, communities at risk and poverty and human rights), calling for action on their behalf when necessary.
- Resource materials are available to support campaigning in defence of the human rights of environmentally displaced persons, and that relevant keywords are installed in the Mascot database.
- Actions are issued for cases of environmentally displaced persons, should such a situation arise when this is appropriate

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly**

## **B2. International Sport Organisations and Human Rights**

Proposer – The York Group

### **PREAMBLE**

Concern over the way human rights are handled within international sport organisations is drawn to the attention of the conference. In particular concern over the effectiveness of existing governance structures in dealing with human rights.

The constitutions of most international sport organisations include human rights clauses, but human rights do not always appear to be a priority or be dealt with effectively. In the main, international sport is accountable through democratic federations of national organisations but is now run as complex large turnover businesses. Examples of problems to date include the selection and use

of venues that have poor human rights records, the imposition of conditions that alter national justice systems (in relation to arrest and trial) in ways that reduce existing rights of individuals, and corporate sponsorship from organisations that have poor human rights records.

Problems over human rights are not new in international sport, particularly the Olympic movement. These include the Nazi games in Berlin in 1936, the suppression of news of the massacre of student protesters in the run up to the Mexico City games in 1968, and the Cold War games in Moscow (1980) and Los Angeles (1984). Past examples from other international sporting organisations include the FIFA Football World Cups in Mexico (1970), two years after the Olympics, and in Argentina under the 'Dirty War' of one of South America's most vicious dictatorships in 1978.

More recently the particular problems highlighted in this resolution have become clearer. Examples include the postponement and then cancellation of the Bahrain Formula One Motor Racing Grand Prix in 2011 amidst the suppression of popular revolt against state oppression and continued controversy over whether the event should take place in 2012 in the absence of reform, the pressure placed by FIFA on the South African government to deploy 'special courts' to deal with crime during the 2010 Football World Cup tournament, the selection of Qatar as the venue for the 2022 FIFA World Cup tournament and the continuing controversy over the country's repressive laws relating to gay and lesbian relationships, and, not

least, the worthless human rights guarantees extracted from China as a condition of hosting the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing.

Finally, at the time of drafting this resolution problems of sponsorship at the 2012 London Olympics following Meredith Alexander's resignation from the Commission for a Sustainable London over the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games' refusal to reconsider the £7 million sponsorship deal with Dow Chemical. Dow Chemical has unsettled liabilities relating to the 1984 Bhopal disaster. Regretting her resignation the Chair of the Commission said that '... campaigning work on wider human rights issues falls outside the commission's remit, and while we wholeheartedly agree that human rights are of paramount importance, it is not something we as an organisation are empowered to handle.' Dow Chemicals has a separate 10 year sponsorship deal with the International Olympic Committee said to be worth at least £100 million.

This resolution is proposed with the complexity, power and influence of international sport organisations in mind and awareness that existing international sport governance structures have proved ineffective in protecting or addressing human rights. AI addresses important human rights violations in sport but the thrust of this resolution is to develop an integrated and coordinated approach making an international sporting policy in effect an extension of AI's corporate policy dealing with international cooperation.

## **RESOLUTION**

The AGM instructs the Board to take the following motion to the International Council Meeting in 2013:

That Amnesty International:

- draws up a comprehensive policy on the prevention of human rights violations by international sports organisations.
- lobbies for this policy to all international sports organisations to incorporate into their constitutions and to adhere to in the planning and organisation of sports events in order to secure human rights and prevent human rights violations
- assesses the compliance of international sports organisations against this policy with campaign actions as appropriate
- considers what new international mechanisms would be necessary to ensure human rights compliance - examples might be through a United Nations programme or convention – and works towards the establishment of the chosen mechanism.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly**

## **B3. Campaigning for Trade Union Rights**

Proposer – The National Union of Journalists

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM:

- recognises the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests is enshrined as a human right in Article 23 of the UDHR;

- condemns the violent and often deadly attacks on trade unionists around the world from Iran to Colombia to Zimbabwe;
- recognises the contribution trade unions have historically made towards advancing people's rights, in particular, economic, social and cultural rights, but also the civil and political rights of freedom of assembly and speech;
- Notes that repression of trade unions extends beyond physical attacks on individual unions and includes legal restrictions in many countries, including those in the UK that fall far short of ILO recommendations;
- Instructs AIUK to seek to ensure that campaigning for trade union rights around the world is made part of any relevant future Amnesty International campaigns.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly**

## **B4. Workers' and Women's Rights in Middle East and North Africa**

Proposer - UNISON

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM:

- Welcomes Amnesty International's strong crisis response and campaigning across the entire Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in light of the revolutions and struggles of the past year and the ongoing transitions and conflicts.
- Recognises that the labour movement and independent trade unions have played a pivotal role in the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and that women workers have often been to the fore in these struggles for rights and democracy.
- Recognises that workers' and women's rights are fundamental and protected under international treaties
- Welcomes Amnesty UK's commitment to campaign for women's rights in Egypt.
- Notes that a positive change in the human rights situation for women in the Middle East and North Africa cannot be achieved through improved political participation alone, but also requires improved opportunities for economic participation.
- Calls on Amnesty UK to highlight and support women's economic rights within the MENA Region, including their right to work.
- Calls on Amnesty International to support the rights of all workers in MENA countries to join and participate in the running of free and independent trade unions.
- Calls on Amnesty International to campaign for the immediate release of trade union leaders and other labour activists currently imprisoned by the Bahraini and Iranian governments and throughout the MENA region
- Urges Amnesty International to work with UNISON other British unions and the TUC as well as the global unions to advance these goals.
- Calls on Amnesty International UK to convey the messages this motion contains to the International Secretariat and wider Amnesty movement
- Calls on the Board of Amnesty International UK to give serious consideration to taking the sentiments and actions related to this motion to the next International Council Meeting (ICM) in 2013.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly.**

## **C1. Regional Representation and Co-ordination**

Proposer – Eilidh Douglas

Seconder – Emily Segaran

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM agrees that:

- AIUK has a vibrant network which is amongst the strongest - if not the strongest - of all UK non-NGO campaign networks. This network includes local, student, and youth groups (hereinafter 'groups') across the UK, whose importance was overwhelmingly affirmed by motion C1 of the 2007 AGM.
- That AIUK also represents each of the regions of the UK, with offices in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Belfast. These regional offices provide important hubs for campaigning on region-specific issues, including the recent Consultation on Same-Sex Marriage in Scotland, the 2011 Welsh Assembly Elections, and the Institutional Child Abuse Enquiry campaign in Northern Ireland.
- That the most effective campaigning for human rights results from combining the wealth of people and resources from all appropriate elements of the AIUK network, and so strong links between regional offices and the groups they represent is desirable.

This AGM therefore instructs AIUK to ensure the continued presence and sufficient resourcing of permanent regional offices.

AIUK should require that, as centres for coordination of regional campaigning, the regional office proactively:

- keep informed all groups in their region of their intended work.
- build and maintain links with those groups to encourage involvement in their work and encourage links between groups.
- utilise the combined action and resources of those groups in their work to ensure effective regional campaigning.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly.**

## **C2. AIUK Legal and Taxation Structure**

Proposer – The Board

### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM calls on the Board to undertake a review of the legal and taxation structure of Amnesty International UK to ensure that taxation benefits available to UK charities are maximised, subject to retaining AIUK's ability to campaign on the issues that it wants to and maintaining our democratic



structures. The review should also address the issue of the financial supporters of the charitable arm of AIUK who do not automatically receive the same rights as members of AIUK Section

Where this review requires constitutional change, this will be brought back to the 2013 AGM for approval.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly.**

### **C3. Implementation of AGM decisions**

Proposer – The Kingston Group

#### **PREAMBLE**

This AGM is successfully organised to involve all sectors of the membership. This results in a progressive, diverse and strong set of decisions reflecting the concerns and priorities of the Amnesty movement in the UK.

However, to avoid disappointment, ‘best practice’ needs to be adopted so that this spirit of progress and member- involvement can continue after the AGM, particularly with the implementation of the decisions made. This is to ensure that expectations are met and, if there are restrictions to the implementation, alternative courses of action can be considered in good time.

#### **RESOLUTION**

This AGM requests that AIUK:

- Publishes, within a week of the conclusion of the AGM, all the decisions made prominently on the Amnesty UK website and in the May/June edition of Amnesty Magazine (editorial deadlines allowing).
- Includes, with the publication of each decision, an invite for any member/s of AIUK to register their interest in the implementation of the decision.

This AGM decides that, as best practice, AIUK should:

- Appoint, for each decision, a designated and named Board Member to oversee the implementation of the decision and communications with all those members who have registered an interest in that decision.
- Following each Board Meeting, issue a statement to those members who have registered an interest, detailing any progress and seeking feedback.
- The Board will bring forward the timetable for the implementation report so that a draft is shared with those members who have registered an interest to seek comment at least two weeks before the deadline for resolutions to the next AGM.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly**

### **C4. Prostitution**

Proposer – The Paisley Group

## **PREAMBLE**

There are significant human rights issues relating to prostitution and state responses to prostitution.

In 2011, when considering the potential migration strategy looking at migration and labour exploitation, AIUK recommended a review of policy in the area of trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution.

According to the most recent update from the ICM, the International Secretariat will be recruiting an adviser to research and analyse the human rights laws, standards, and practice pertaining to criminalization in a wide range of areas including prostitution.

## **RESOLUTION**

This AGM decides that:

- the particular and inextricable relationship between prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation has not been highlighted sufficiently.
- this should be stressed and prioritised in reviewing policy both in the potential migration strategy and in the criminalisation review.

**The resolution was carried overwhelmingly**