

ACTIVIST CODE OF CONDUCT



1. INTRODUCTION

Those who today still feel a sense of impotence can do something: they can support Amnesty International. They can help it to stand up for freedom and justice.

Peter Benenson, Founder Amnesty International 1961

We're creating a new kind of force for human rights. It combines the worldwide strength and reputation of Amnesty, with the voices of grassroots activists everywhere.

Atila Roque, Director, Amnesty International Brazil 2014

In 1961 Amnesty International was conceived – originally as a one-year campaign. The idea was simple: to call on 'women and men of good will' around the world to unite and demand that the human rights of six individual prisoners of conscience be upheld – and that they be released. It worked. And the world's largest human rights movement was born.

Central to everything we believe is the principle that **people** are the instruments of change. And the more people actively engage in our movement, the more we can do together to promote and protect human rights for everyone. And so a key focus for all activists and staff at Amnesty in the UK is to encourage and enable more people – all people who share our belief in human rights – to join, actively participate and feel part of a modern, vibrant, effective movement of people for human rights.

As activists for Amnesty International we all need to be proactive in creating and maintaining an environment throughout the movement that is open, accessible and welcoming to everyone who shares our belief in justice and human rights for all. We believe everyone has a role to play and we know that Amnesty is privileged in having supporters with incredible skills, knowledge, connections and passion. Our collective job is to encourage and enable our supporters to become actively engaged in our work and campaigns – to become activists in a way that makes sense for them and promotes the aims of the Amnesty movement.

The way we behave when meeting and working together and the way we represent Amnesty when dealing with and collaborating with partners and associates is crucial in maximising the numbers and diversity of people we are able to welcome to Amnesty and in maximising our impact. This document sets out a detailed 'code of conduct' to provide guidance on the organisational values and behaviours we all need to uphold as well as detailing the procedure to follow should any complaints or other issues arise. But in simple terms what we really are asking of all activists is:

- Make people feel welcome and enabled to contribute in ways that make sense to them and draw on their skills.
- Recognise that we are all working for a common cause and work together – valuing and respecting different opinions and approaches to achieving our aims.
- Be open to and test new ideas and different ways of working.
- Recognise that we all represent the global Amnesty

movement and need to represent Amnesty in a way that serves to promote our aims and encourage more people to become activists for human rights.

- Work together – with other activists, with staff, partners, supporters and potential supporters to create a world where human rights are known, claimed and enjoyed by all.

Peter Benenson:

The success of the 1961 Amnesty Campaign depends on how sharply and powerfully it is possible to rally public opinion. It depends, too, upon the campaign being all-embracing in its composition, international in character and politically impartial in direction. Any group is welcome to take part which is prepared to condemn persecution regardless of where it occurs, who is responsible or what are the ideas suppressed. How much can be achieved when men and women of good will unite.... experience shows that in matters such as these governments are prepared to follow only where public opinion leads.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This code of conduct describes the values that inform the work and activities of Amnesty International's activists. It also sets out guidelines for the kind of behaviour that we expect of each other. It describes what happens when Amnesty International UK receives a complaint or an allegation that an activist has not lived up to our values or reasonable expectations of behaviour.

The Code establishes guidelines, not a binding commitment or legal obligation. AIUK reserves the right to vary its processes and timelines if exceptional need arises.

Should any situation arise where an allegation may warrant a police investigation or arouse child protection concerns, AIUK will seek advice from the police or the designated Child Protection Officer on how to proceed.

Further information and advice

AIUK's Supporter Care Team provides information and advice to our supporters and will be able to respond to queries arising from this Code or will know where to obtain answers. The team can be contacted by phone (020 7033 1777) and by email (activism@amnesty.org.uk).

Additionally, the Community Organising, Human Rights Education, Artists Relations and Events Team (Core Team) can provide information. Experienced activists can also be a good source of advice.

3. DEFINITIONS

An **activist** is anyone who carries out unpaid activity on behalf of Amnesty International UK in order to advance its work. That activity might include fundraising, campaigning, training, or providing support to other activists. There are many different ways to contribute to our work and we value everyone's contribution.

The Code of Conduct does not cover AIUK's Board. While our Board members are undoubtedly activists, they have a Code that relates to their governance responsibilities. We also have many activists who are under 18. We expect them to adhere to the values and behaviours described in this code. However, where a complaint or an allegation is received, it will be addressed in a manner that is consistent with broader child welfare concerns. Specific advice will be sought from the designated Child Protection Officer and other specialist staff.

Volunteers who work in AIUK's offices and shops have their own charter, while staff are governed by a separate code of conduct and employment procedures.

We use the term '**activist role-holder**' within this document. This denotes someone occupying one of the following specific roles:

- Members of Board sub-committees;
- Country coordinators
- Regional representatives
- Officers of local and student groups and adults who are the named contact persons of youth groups.
- Trade Union Network Committee members
- Trainers
- School speakers
- Student Action Network Committee members
- Officers of our networks (including LGBTI, Children's Rights, Women's Action Network, and other networks that might be formally or informally recognised by AIUK through its Board, Activism Sub-Committee, or senior staff)

We hope that this document assists our activists. It is important to understand that AIUK has tens of thousands of women, men and children who give their time to human rights. Every year they organise hundreds of events, raise hundreds of thousands of pounds and contribute to our campaigns and our wider work in different and dynamic ways. Problems are very rare and where possible, we aim to resolve difficult situations informally.

4. VALUES

The values that inform our work as activists are drawn from a number of sources including, by inference, those that underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as those extrapolated from the Amnesty International Statute. The Nolan Principles for Public Life have also informed the development of this Code of Conduct.

a) Dignity, respect and equal opportunities

We believe that everyone is entitled to dignity and should have an equal opportunity to contribute to our work. We will treat everyone with respect, including those who disagree with us.

AIUK's equal opportunities policy is available on our website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/equality-and-diversity-policy>. It is intrinsic to the values expressed in this document.

Additionally, values of dignity and respect encompass recognition of different roles within the movement, including those of other activists, volunteers and staff. These different roles imply differing constraints and authority.

b) Voluntary

Activists undertake their work in the interests of Amnesty International UK and the wider international movement. They do not seek to gain financial or other material benefit for themselves, their family or friends through this work.

c) Integrity

Amnesty's activists avoid placing themselves or AIUK under financial or other obligation to outside individuals and organisations that might influence us in our work for the organisation, or create a reasonable perception that such influence exists.

d) Impartiality

AIUK is committed to the defence of human rights and is willing to praise conduct that advances human rights and criticise conduct that infringes them. Our praise and our criticism should be objective and based on Amnesty's own research and statements. We are not part of a party political organisation, we do not advance any particular form of government or religion and we are impartial in our approach to political and social disputes that are not connected to fundamental human rights.

When activists carry out activities for Amnesty or make decisions on its behalf, they will make choices based on merit, including with respect to making appointments, awarding contracts, recommending people for rewards or obtaining goods and services on behalf of Amnesty.

e) Accountability

Activists are accountable for their actions and willing to submit themselves to the scrutiny that is appropriate to their particular roles.

f) Openness

Activists will be as open as possible about their decisions and actions. They will be willing to give reasons for their decisions, where possible, and be willing to provide information except where it is not in the public interest, in AIUK's interest or in the interests of those we work with or for.

g) Honesty

Activist role holders will declare any personal interests that may be perceived to impact on their choices or actions when contributing to AIUK's work. Please see "Conflict of Interest" on page 6 for more information.

h) Independence

AIUK activists are encouraged to work with other activists and organisations from time to time in a way that maintains (and is seen to maintain) AIUK's independence.

i) Democracy

We are a democratic organisation. Activists will promote

participation in the democratic processes of AIUK and the wider international movement. They will maintain the integrity of those processes and respect their decisions.

j) International solidarity

AIUK is one part of a global movement and its human rights concerns are also global in scope. We respect our partners in the international movement and the wider body of human rights defenders and champions. We show solidarity where possible and appropriate. Activists should always take care to avoid action that will negatively impact on human rights defenders and partners.

5. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR BEHAVIOUR

This section provides guidelines to inform the conduct of activists in specific situations. The guidelines are not exhaustive but are provided to help activists negotiate dilemmas that we know can arise.

a) Public actions and statements

All public actions and statements related to Amnesty's work should be in accordance with Amnesty's policies and positions.

Activists should observe the law and ensure that necessary consents are obtained and notices given for actions and events.

b) Acceptance of awards

From time to time, activists may be offered an award or nomination for an award (with or without monetary value) as a consequence of their work for Amnesty International. This is usually to be welcomed and celebrated. However, concerns may arise from time to time, so activists should seek staff advice before accepting an award that may be of regional or national significance, or receive media attention beyond the local press.

c) Reasonable expenses

Activists do incur expenses from time to time and AIUK reimburses expenses for some activities. If you are not sure whether your expenses will be met by AIUK, please contact a relevant staff member. Where expenses are paid by the Section, activists should ensure that they are reasonable and should follow AIUK procedures when making a claim. AIUK will process claims promptly.

d) Confidentiality

Activists should respect confidentiality, including of documentation. Much of our information is for public consumption. However, some is marked 'internal' or 'for AI members only' and may contain sensitive information. It may not always be apparent why the information is sensitive. Such information and documentation should not be shared beyond Amnesty International members. Documents marked 'draft', 'for consultation', or similar, should always be considered to be internal.

e) Copyright

Material produced by Amnesty International (whether the UK section, International Secretariat or other AI entity) is the property of Amnesty International. Consent for its use by recognised activists can be assumed but it can be withdrawn at any time, including for inappropriate use. This also applies to Amnesty International's logos and the use of its names (eg Amnesty International, Amnesty International UK).

Activists should also ensure that they do not violate copyright

laws when using material not produced by Amnesty International. Attribution and acknowledgement of authorship should be used where appropriate.

f) Acceptance of gifts, hospitality or donations

Activists (individually or collectively) should not accept gifts, hospitality or donations that are offered as an inducement for preferential treatment, or which could be reasonably seen as exerting influence over decisions. Small, standard marketing gifts are permissible, so is the acceptance of a facility or service for free (a form of donation known as a gift-in-kind). It is also permissible to receive donations. Activists are advised to seek advice before receiving donations of significant value and in any event must seek permission for a donation or gift in kind from a private company that exceeds £5,000 in value. Similarly, activists should check with staff before accepting money from a governmental body (except for grants made by an education body to its own student body).

Donations collected in the name of Amnesty International must be used to support the organisation's own aims and activities, which usually includes the legitimate activities of our groups. If a donation is sought or given for a specific purpose then it cannot be diverted to another purpose without the donor's consent.

g) Conflict of interest

Activists have a range of different interests outside AIUK. Very occasionally a conflict of interest may arise (or may be seen to arise) between an activist's work for Amnesty and her or his other interests and activities. We are mainly worried about the damage to AIUK's reputation that might arise in certain rare circumstances. Examples might include where a prominent activist role holder becomes a legislative candidate or where an activist buys a service from her or his own company, or from a relation. We are not generally interested in knowing about ordinary membership of other organisations (including political parties) unless the other organisation could reasonably be viewed as having values that are a clearly at odds with our own.

For group members (including officers), a conflict of interest should be declared to other members of the group. Members of networks, committees or similar bodies should make a declaration to their Chairs. For other activists, or if in doubt, the declaration should be made to the Chair of the Activism Sub-Committee, via the Head of the Community Organising, Human Rights Education and Events (CORE) Team.

h) Drugs and alcohol misuse

Activists should not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs to the extent that their performance or behaviour is impaired during the performance of their duties for AIUK. No activist should consume or be in possession of illegal substances during the performance of their duties for Amnesty International or at an event organised by AIUK.

i) Health and safety

Activists are expected to take responsibility for their own health and safety and the health and safety of others when undertaking work or organising events on behalf of AIUK. Staff at AIUK can provide advice on health and safety, including risk assessments.

j) Child protection guidelines

AIUK's child protection guidelines are available on our website at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/child-protection-policy>. They should be adhered to.

k) Avoid behaviour that could be construed as harassment or bullying

Activists should treat others with respect and refrain from behaviour that may be construed as bullying or harassing, including malicious gossip. AIUK uses definitions provided by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). This is described below. While it is geared to the responsibilities of employers, AIUK understands the definitions to also apply to activists and across all age ranges.

Harassment, in general terms, is 'unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women...It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.'

Bullying may be characterised as 'offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipients'.

Bullying and harassment may be by an individual against an individual, or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

Bullying and harassment may or may not be deliberate.

If someone raises a concern about bullying and harassment with an activist, it is important that they try to be open-minded and see things from the other person's perspective. This can be difficult but can help to resolve problems informally.

l) Privacy and data protection

AIUK's data protection policy is available on our website at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/data-protection-policy>. It should be adhered to.

m) Work in partnership with staff

Staff and activists should work together in partnership to promote the best interests of AIUK. It is important that staff, activists and volunteers work within a culture of mutual respect and an understanding of respective roles at all levels of the organisation. This includes ensuring that all communications are conducted in a positive and constructive manner.

Differences of opinion and disputes may arise and activists may wish to complain about a member of staff. If they wish to do so, they can approach the relevant line manager or senior manager, they can request a network chair (for example) to raise the matter, or they can make a complaint in accordance with AIUK's feedback mechanism.

If a staff member wishes to complain about an activist, they will alert their line manager who will instigate the process for responding to complaints about activist outlined in annexe one.

6. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THINGS GO WRONG?

It is preferable that problems are addressed informally. However, this is not always possible and so someone might make a formal complaint.

Please see Annex One for our procedure for dealing with complaints about activists.

7. REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Comments are welcome on this Code of Conduct from anyone at any time. The Code will next be reviewed in November 2017.

We appreciate that policies and procedures can be improved and welcome suggestions on how to do this. These should be sent to Chair of the Activism Sub-Committee, via the Head of the CORE Team at AIUK.

ANNEX ONE

Process for responding to complaints about activists' conduct

It is preferable that problems are addressed informally. However, this is not always possible and so someone might make a formal complaint.

We would normally expect the complaint to be made shortly after an incident has occurred. However, we accept that in some circumstances this may not be possible, including where concerns arise from accumulation of events.

When a complaint is made or an allegation received about the conduct of an activist, it should be drawn to the attention of the Head of the CORE Team, or the Director of Supporter Campaigning and Communications or the Director of the Chief Executive's Office (who are senior staff at AIUK).

The flowchart on page 7 outlines the process for responding to complaints. The document below explains this in more detail:

a) Informal process

Senior staff may arrive at a view that a complaint about activist conduct can be resolved informally. This will normally be the preferred course of action, although it should be noted that it is not a requirement to pursue informal approaches before formal processes are used.

Informal action will usually involve a conversation with the activist concerned describing the complaint and listening to their version of events. If the grounds for complaint seem reasonable then recommendations may be provided in writing to avoid a recurrence of the incident.

Depending on the circumstances, senior staff may seek the advice or support of a leading, experienced activist to help resolve a situation.

If, during discussion, it appears that informal action will not satisfactorily address the complaint or allegation, the formal procedure may be used.

b) Formal process

i) Investigation

A formal process will be used where a complaint or allegation is serious, or where repeated concerns about behaviour have arisen. In such circumstances, the Head of the CORE Team, the Director of Supporter Campaigning and Communications or the Director of the Chief Executive's Office will need to satisfy themselves that there are grounds to proceed with an investigation. A decision to investigate an incident does not indicate support for a complaint, merely that further enquiry is necessary.

After determining that grounds for an investigation are merited, the activist will be notified in writing about the complaint and about the decision to investigate, and will be provided with the name of the person who will undertake the investigation. This will always be a staff member.

At this point, the activist may wish to seek support from another activist during the process, including through attendance at any meetings together. If the activist whose behaviour is being investigated feels a need for support but does not know who to approach, they can contact the Head of the CORE Team, or the Chair of a representative activist

body. Every effort will be made to identify someone willing and able to provide support.

AIUK will aim to complete an investigation within 20 working days, although this may not always be possible. The purpose of the investigation is to establish whether there are reasonable grounds for believing that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred. If no reasonable grounds are found to exist, the activist will be notified and the matter will be closed.

If reasonable grounds do exist, the activist will be notified in writing and requested to attend a Code of Conduct meeting, which will normally be convened within 15 working days of the notification being issued. The assessment arising from the investigation and all relevant supporting evidence will be provided to the activist concerned as well as the person(s) responsible for conducting a Code of Conduct meeting. Only relevant supporting information will be provided.

ii) Code of Conduct meeting and outcomes

• **Activist role holders:** The Code of Conduct meeting for activist role holders will comprise three members of the Activism Sub-Committee (known as the Panel) to be determined by the Chair of that Committee. They will determine whether to uphold the complaint or allegation and determine a course of action in response. The activist will be informed in writing of the results of the meeting, including the reasons for any decision, within seven working days of it taking place and he or she will have 15 working days to request a review of the decision.

• **Other activists:** The Code of Conduct meeting for activists not holding roles described previously in this paper will normally be conducted by the Head of the CORE Team sitting with one other person (known as the Panel). Composition of the Panel will be determined by the Director of Supporter Campaigning and Communications and it will determine whether to uphold the complaint or allegation and determine a course of action in response. The activist will be informed in writing of the results of the meeting, including the reasons for any decision, within seven working days of it taking place and they will have 15 working days to request a review the decision.

iii) Use of witnesses

The Panel may draw on advice from AIUK's Human Resources Team and will always involve a note-taker. In some circumstances, the meeting may wish to hear from witnesses who can provide additional information to that provided by the person who has made a complaint or the person who has been complained about. Both the complainant and the person subject to the complaint may request witnesses but the Panel is under no obligation to agree to these requests.

When a witness is invited to attend, they may meet the panel alone or accompanied by someone who is willing and able to provide support. Any new information arising from this discussion will be put to the person who is subject to the complaint.

In exceptional circumstances, a witness may provide information anonymously. However, anonymous information will be summarised for the Code of Conduct meeting and the person being complained about. This will be in a format that does not compromise the individual supplying the evidence. If this is not possible, then the information will not be used.

iv) What happens if the complaint is not upheld?

The complainant will be informed that their complaint has not been upheld. While they may appeal under the terms of AIUK's Feedback Mechanism, it is unlikely that an investigation into behaviour would be renewed.

The subject of the complaint would also be informed and we hope that their involvement with AIUK's work would continue unaffected.

v) What happens if the complaint is upheld?

If the complaint is felt to be justified and an activist has fallen short of the standards expected in the Code, then the Panel will determine the remedial action that is required.

In some circumstances, this may involve a determination that AIUK should no longer allow an activist to undertake a particular set of responsibilities. This would happen if the allegations are particularly serious or where repeated patterns of conduct have been identified.

In other cases, the remedy is likely to involve the provision of recommendations to prevent a recurrence of the complaint. These recommendations will be specific to the case and may involve (for example) additional training or support, a request to change a particular form of behaviour, or a suggestion that a different role be pursued. As well as making recommendations to the activist concerned, the Panel might make them to AIUK as an organisation.

The Panel cannot terminate an individual's membership of AIUK. However, it can recommend this to AIUK's Board. Should this occur, the provisions of AIUK's Constitution (available on our website) will be observed.

vi) Review of the decision

The person who is subject to a complaint may request a review of the outcome of the Code of Conduct meeting. This should be made within 15 working days of the formal notification of the meeting outcome and the reasons for requesting the review must be set out in writing.

The review will be conducted by two or three members of the Active Members Sub-Committee, appointed by its Chair. They are known as the Review Panel. Membership of the Review Panel will be entirely different from that of the original panel.

The Review Panel will decide whether a meeting is necessary or whether to proceed based on the paperwork provided. The person requesting the review will be consulted on this matter before a decision is taken.

There is only one stage of review and its outcome is final.

vii) Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and should be regarded as binding by everyone concerned. An allegation and any subsequent information will only be disclosed in the interests of an effective investigation, ensuring a fair Code of Conduct meeting (or review) and to the extent clearly required for the implementation of recommendations or instructions.

