

GROUPS NEWS



THE NEWSLETTER FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK LOCAL, STUDENT AND YOUTH GROUPS

WINTER 2015



RALLY FOR REFUGEES

People unite to say: Refugees are welcome here

Politicians have had to keep up with the public mood regarding refugees fleeing war-torn Syria and the Middle East.

On 12 September, a national day of action for refugees, Amnesty members supported high-profile demonstrations across the UK urging the government to do more.

In York more than 1,000 people, including members of the York group (pictured), called for the city to be a sanctuary for refugees. They marched through the city centre with a banner 'Refugees Are Welcome Here', finishing outside York Minister. The crowd then heard speeches from refugees, local refugee

services, Rachael Maskell, York Central MP and Barbara Lodge, York group member. Barbara conveyed Amnesty's perspective: 'York is my home and I want to welcome refugees into my home. It's only marches and social movements that can change social policy.'

York Minister supported the march and rally and has taken a leading role in plans to bring refugees to the city.

Other marches in UK cities included London, Belfast, Bristol, Glasgow, Brighton, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Manchester

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STOP TORTURE
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Amnesty is campaigning to free Ali Aarrass, the Belgian/Moroccan prisoner serving a 12-year sentence in Salé Prison in Morocco for terrorism, after his unfair trial and conviction based on confessions obtained under torture. Ali, a bookseller, is said to have an indomitable sense of humour. To cheer him up we have sent him a little illustrated book of terrible jokes sent in by Amnesty school groups. Here's one: **Q:** What did the inflatable teacher say to the inflatable pupil who brought a drawing pin into the inflatable school?

A: You have let me down. You have let the whole school down. But worst of all you have let yourself down.

Over the years I have heard many jokes and japes used by PoCs to keep up their spirits in the worst of times.

Irina Ratushinskaya, the great Ukrainian poet and dissident, and her dissident husband, Igor, were sure their mail was being intercepted, their phones tapped and home searched by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs – NKVD. In the evenings they'd type pages and pages of letters and numbers in a meaningless stream. They hid their sheets of gibberish in plastic wrappers on top of the lavatory cistern, sure they would be secretly and desperately studied for days on end in the Soviet equivalent of our codebreaking centre at Bletchley Park (where incidentally Peter Benenson used to work in the War).

Jack Mapanje, Malawian poet, university professor and prisoner of conscience, used to save up the anti-malarial (and probably useless) chloroquine pills given to prisoners in Lilongwe Jail. He used his pills like chalk, scratching letters onto the concrete floor to teach a fellow detainee how to read and write. One day some of his fellow detainees asked Jack to give them his pill chalks for a jape. On the cell floor they drew a large and detailed floor plan of the prison. Here and there they made and labelled dotted lines indicating imaginary 'Escape tunnel here' and 'Way out'.

As planned the jape drove the screws into a complete frenzy. Beatings ensued as the guards tried to find where these non-existent tunnels were. The prisoners felt the prank was worth it for the laugh.

We hope Ali gets some joy from this book. As I write, he's suspended a hunger strike which left him seriously ill. He's said how proud he was of the support he's received. He is determined to keep fighting for justice – so needs our support, hope and thoughts more than ever.

Dan Jones



Patcham High School students, winners of the Songwriter (Performer) Youth Award 2015 © Carmen Valino/AIUK

YOUTH AWARDS

Our Youth Awards is an annual programme that engages young people with Amnesty's campaigns and human rights issues.

Awards are given to pupils aged seven to 19 who creatively capture human rights topics in six strands: reporting, performing, photography, campaigning, fundraising and, new to 2016, poetry. Last year we had over 800 entries and welcomed Sir Trevor McDonald as one of our judges.

Applications for our 2016 Youth Awards are now open: amnesty-youth-awards.org.uk, or call 01453 872731. The competition closes on 24 February 2016.



GET ON BOARD

Board members play a crucial role in ensuring Amnesty International UK is a strong, effective and influential organisation. We are currently looking for nominations for members to serve on the board for the 2016-19 period. There are four vacant seats: three are unreserved; one is reserved for nominees from local groups.

A key priority is to increase the board's diversity so we can be more representative of the UK population. We particularly need Board members with experience in one or more of the following areas: finance, charity governance, IT management or equality and diversity.

Members of AIUK wishing to stand should apply for full details and a nomination form no later than Monday 4 January 2016 (by 5pm) from Selma Shirazi.

Completed nomination forms must be returned to Selma no later than 5pm on Friday 8 January 2016.

Contact: Selma Shirazi, Director's Office, Amnesty International UK Section, Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA; call 020 7033 1556; or email selma.shirazi@amnesty.org.uk

Download an Election Pack at www.amnesty.org.uk/electionpack (available from 16 November).

INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

ACTION FOR ESKINDER NEGA

July marked three years since journalist Eskinder Nega was imprisoned in Ethiopia for expressing his views. The **Horsham** group called for his release outside the Ethiopian embassy. They delivered a letter and personal messages of support, along with photos of the World Press Freedom Day action the group held with the staff of the *West Sussex Country Times*. At the time, the paper ran a feature on Eskinder and Amnesty, written by group member Alison Marshall. The **York** group, who hosted speakers from Ethiopia and Eritrea, and **Sheffield** group continued work on his case, sending photo actions to the embassy. Meanwhile the **Moray** group spent an evening writing solidarity cards to Eskinder and his wife Serkalem.

SOLIDARITY WITH HAKAMADA IWAO

The **Devizes** group supported freedom for Hakamada Iwao. They sent a message and photo (pictured) to Amnesty Japan on their Day of Action on 27 March, marking one year since Hakamada was released from death row pending a retrial. The group also sent birthday greetings on 10 March – Hakamada’s 79th birthday and the first time he has celebrated outside prison since he was 30. In June, the **Lewes** group reached their target of folding 1,000 origami cranes for Hakamada – giving this number is considered good luck.

PHOTOS AND SIGNATURES

The three Mansoura women, arrested after peacefully protesting at their university in Egypt, were the focus of a talk given to students at Croydon College. Ann Marcus, member of the **Croydon** group and Country Coordinator for Egypt, also spoke on the judicial system and mobilised a photo-action (pictured). The **Glossop** group collected 400 signatures on behalf of Raif Badawi, who may be flogged again ‘soon’. Continue to keep up the pressure on the Saudi authorities.

LET’S GO FLY A KITE

Rain didn’t stop the **Colwyn Bay** group flying kites on the beach to draw attention to human rights. Students from Eirias High School joined them. Passers-by signed petitions for Iranian artist Atena and lawyers imprisoned in China.

On October 26, the **Buxton** group flew five kites – one for each of the Lao students arrested six years ago for peaceful protest. Letters and photos were sent to the Laos authorities.

SHAKER AAMER RELEASED

We took up Shaker Aamer’s case in 2005. It’s a hard-won release. Thanks to all who campaigned, including the **Lewes** group, **Priory School Amnesty** group, and **Brighton and Hove** and **Sussex Sixth Form College**



Hereford

SOLIDARITY DROP-IN SCHEME

This year we started a monthly drop-in letter writing group at the library. We hoped to build on the popularity of the Write for Rights campaign and reach people who aren’t committed members but share human rights concerns and the struggle of prisoners of conscience. We guess many sympathisers shy away from the local group fearing a casual enquiry may result in a Chairman/Treasurer appointment! So we made this group as non-threatening as possible, asking for just a few minutes to write a letter or card with the added bribe of coffee, tea and biccies! Every month one or two new faces appear. Some come again. Some sign a card and leave with a little more understanding than they had before. Every month we send off 20-plus letters. It’s a well-worthwhile experiment and going from strength to strength.

Mandy Lawrence, Hereford group
 See Write for Rights resources, page 19

who held vigils before he came home. Newly-elected MP Maria Caulfield was one of 282 people who signed the Free Shaker petition to US President Obama.



Glossop



Devizes



Lewes



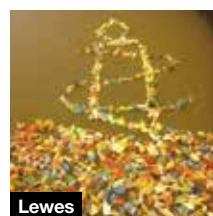
Buxton



Colwyn Bay



Croydon College



Lewes



Horsham

REFUGEE RIGHTS AND RESETTLEMENT

The biggest test of our humanity in decades

REFUGEES WELCOME HERE

On 12 September many Amnesty groups attended national Refugees Welcome Here demonstrations called in response to refugees losing their lives or struggling to find a safe haven. As well as York (cover), members of the Manchester group joined a rally condemning David Cameron's plan to accept 20,000 refugees from Syria as vastly insufficient, highlighting the harmful conditions in refugee camps. Newcastle group members took part in the city's Refugee and Calais solidarity march. In Belfast a demonstration took place in front of Belfast City Hall. Thanks also to the many group members who travelled to London to join the protest against the government's handling of the crisis. Jeremy Corbyn MP told the crowd that the

government needed to 'open their hearts, minds and attitudes towards supporting people who are desperate.'

As part of Refugee Week, the York group had a positive letter printed in *The York Press* recognising the great impact of refugees in the UK. Heaven Crawley, Professor of International Migration at Coventry University's Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, spoke at the Mid Gloucestershire group's meeting. She brought members up to date on the immigration situation.

On 11 July London groups organised an Open to Syria action in Parliament Square aimed to put pressure on the UK government to accept more Syrian refugees. For a month, local group members met at the HRAC to create paper chains of

human figures to represent the 3.8 million refugees. They were displayed on large boards, with one lone board showing the shameful British contribution – at that point 187 refugees accepted. People were photographed with the #OpenToSyria twitter hashtag. The event was covered in *The Times*.

The Chelmsford group had a letter published in the *Essex Chronicle* about the crisis in Calais.

In October, Lewes group members carried Refugees Welcome placards on a weekend walk to the Seven Sisters. Group chair Sara Birch said: 'Many members of the public stopped us to express their support for refugees and join us in extending their welcome to those seeking asylum in the UK.' This was followed



London



Ysgol Eirias



Lewes



London



Malvern Hills

by a march and rally in Solidarity with Refugees, organised by the Lewes Amnesty group, Lewes group in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and Diversity Lewes.

One of the first actions of the newly-formed Eirias Park youth group was to transform Colwyn Bay beach with a grim row of 'body bags' to raise awareness of the refugees' plight to local people and politicians. Over 100 campaigners turned out, including a local councillor and prospective candidate for the forthcoming Welsh Assembly elections and Party Officials. Students tweeted: Don't let them drown.

On 15 October, the Malvern Hills group, which has been working on the Syrian Refugee Resettlement programme for 12 months, organised a march to show their

commitment to accommodating Syrian refugees. Supporters carried banners and a wreath of snowflakes in memory of the six children who froze to death in refugee camps bordering Syria last winter. A petition signed by 1,200 local people was presented to councillor Melanie Baker, housing portfolio holder at the Malvern district council. The march was covered by local press and *Channel 4 news* who interviewed group member Ruth Forecast, a driver of this amazing work.

Similarly the Kendal group urged their council to act at a rally in September. Over 600 petition signatures collected called on South Lakeland district council to house ten refugee families. A letter written by Dave Plumb, Kendal group secretary, titled 'Country has to respond' was published in

the *Westmorland Gazette*.

After contacting their MP David Cameron about the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean where at least 3,419 people have drowned attempting to reach Europe, the Chipping Norton group received a reply. In it, David Cameron talked about deploying *HMS Bulwark* for search and rescue. But he went on to say: 'We have to make sure that we are not doing anything which encourages more people to make these perilous journeys – or which makes it easier for the gangs to operate. That is why the UK will not participate in a mandatory system of resettlement or relocation. We must also distinguish between those genuinely fleeing persecution and economic migrants crossing the Mediterranean in the hope of a better life.'



Woking



York



Manchester



Chelmsford



Newcastle



Mild Gloucestershire



York

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

The run-up to the General Election in May saw a flurry of activity as Amnesty groups across the country organised husting events, sent press releases, and debated the merits of the Human Rights Act with members of the public at street stalls. The aim: to keep human rights firmly on the political agenda.

CARRY ON LOBBYING

During the last Parliament, we achieved some impressive results – changing the government’s mind on resettling vulnerable Syrian refugees and welcoming in the world’s first global Arms Trade Treaty.

With the new Parliament in place, and 178 new MPs installed at Westminster, now is the time for us to talk to our MPs and show them how much we care about human rights. There is plenty to do: the threat to the Human Rights Act is bigger than ever and more support is desperately needed for refugees fleeing conflict and persecution. Over the coming months, our activists will be keeping the pressure on politicians. Any feedback from groups on meetings or correspondence with local MPs, Councillors or MEPs will be invaluable so please keep us posted.

CANVASSING THE CANDIDATES

One of the most ambitious election related projects was the **Birmingham** groups’ survey of parliamentary candidates, posing four key questions on support for asylum seekers and the Human Rights Act. Twenty-seven candidates replied. Responses came in from across the political spectrum (with a notable absence from the Conservatives).

There were a few surprises: the two UKIP candidates disagreed on the asylum issue, with one supporting an end to the enforced destitution and indefinite detention of asylum seekers and the other opposed. Otherwise, the response – from Greens, Labour, Lib Dems, Respect and the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) – was overwhelmingly positive. Lib Dem candidate Ian Griffiths commented: ‘I welcome Amnesty International standing up for the Human Rights Act this election. I believe it is of vital importance as the UK would be a lesser place without it. I would be ashamed if the UK was no longer a signatory to it.’

A number of groups lobbied their local candidates. **Bromley and Orpington**, and

Lewes groups wrote to their candidates, with Lewes also getting out into the streets to sign up 231 people to their petition and pledge cards. The group used social media to energise the campaign, with individuals posting their human rights pledges online via Facebook. In **Oxford**, group members received some interesting responses from candidates in both their constituencies, with plans to arrange further meetings once the new Parliament was in place.

HIGH POINTS OF THE HUSTINGS

In **Manchester**, the local group organised a closed hustings, quizzing four candidates on a range of human rights issues, including detention of asylum seekers, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. The group kept the issues in the news with a press release to the local paper.

Public hustings are a pillar of pre-election campaigning, and four groups organised their own public hustings events, bringing in candidates from across the political spectrum. **Buxton** group’s event covered a wide range of issues from support for the arms trade to



Colwyn Bay



Perth



Southwark

the limits (or not) on free speech. More than 100 people attended a hustings organised by the **Cambridge** group, which succeeded in getting coverage in the local paper, posted a film of the event on YouTube and tweeted from the audience. In **Colwyn Bay** 150 people packed Rydal Penrhos School hall to listen to a lively debate from the seven candidates. This was a great example of local networking with a number of organisations helping to publicise the event. With an active Amnesty youth group attending from the school, the group now plans to build closer links with other schools in the area. **Welwyn Hatfield** group also presided over a packed hall for their event. Group chair Brenda Weeden said, 'I think the candidates were left in no doubt that many local people are seriously concerned about human rights at home and abroad.'

A number of groups made their presence felt at other hustings events. **Croydon**, **Liverpool**, and **Fylde Coast** groups all put questions on the Human Rights Act and torture to their local candidates, while **Wolverhampton** group was overwhelmed

with requests for pledge cards at the event they attended. In **Downpatrick**, the hustings produced some lively discussions on a range of issues with gay marriage proving a particularly hot topic. Democratic Unionist Jim Wells was forced to resign as Northern Ireland's health minister as a result of his comments – at the meeting and elsewhere during the campaign – which seemed to link child abuse to parenting by same-sex couples.

In **Perth**, the group attended a local hustings where all the candidates agreed to show their commitment to the Human Rights Act campaign. They also achieved some great media coverage with a letter in the local paper and an article in a widely distributed free magazine. As a result of this, the group was asked to give a talk to the local branch of the National Women's Register, showing how media work can produce some invaluable local connections.

WORD ON THE STREET

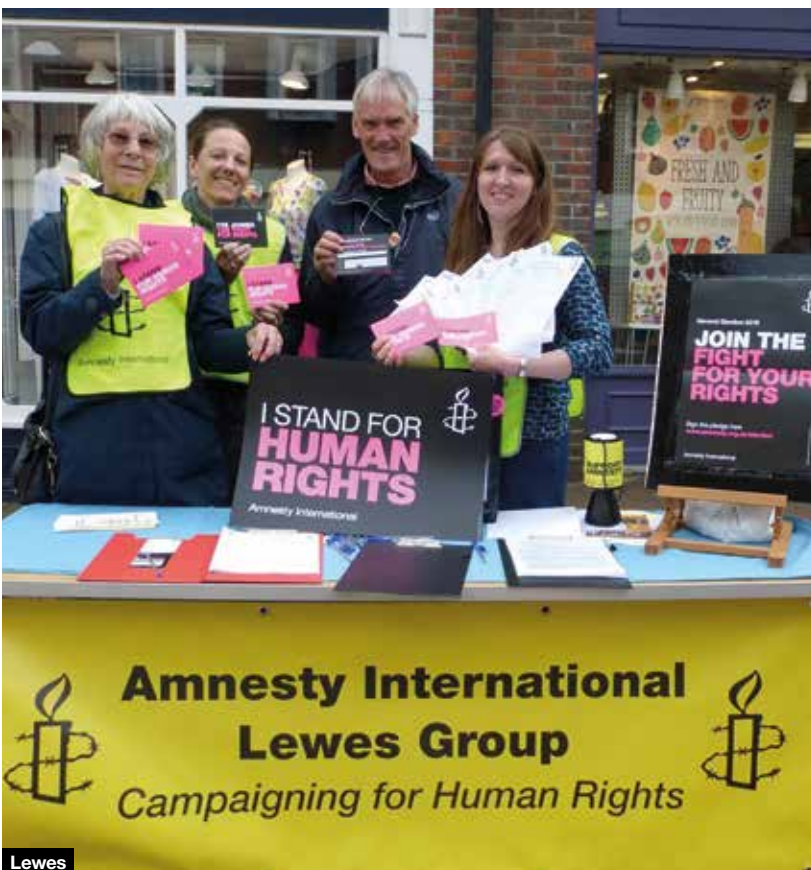
Many groups did a great job of getting the human rights message out into their

local communities. The **Saffron Walden** group put out a press release, and **Kirbymoorside** sent a letter to the local paper. In **Canterbury**, the group signed up the Labour and Lib Dem candidates to supporting the Human Rights Act, and met their local Conservative MP Julian Brazier. **Mid Down** group held a stall and persuaded their candidates to sign pledge cards.

FROM THE COUNCIL TO THE GRAVE

Our campaign to preserve the Human Rights Act continued before, during and after the election. In **Manchester**, following the distribution of Amnesty International UK's briefing on the Act to all the councillors, the City Council unanimously voted for a motion in support of the Human Rights Act.

Southwark group took the novel approach of campaigning in a graveyard when they attended Nunhead cemetery open day. The group reported an enthusiastic response to the campaign.



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

MY BODY MY RIGHTS

On 14 March, members of the **Manchester** group participated in the first one-day 'Being Watched' conference for 13 to 19-year-olds to raise awareness of the My Body My Rights (MBMR) campaign. These young women discussed issues of social media, surveillance and control in their lives. The group set up their Tree of Change, and asked people to write a message on a leaf – either a change they wanted to see or an issue to overcome in the fight for rights in this area.

Our group activists made nearly 4,000 'Keys of freedom' containing messages of support for women currently in prison as a result of the abortion ban in El Salvador. See **Colwyn Bay** and **Henley College** youth group (pictured). The keys and ribbons have been added to an international sculpture presented to the Minister of Justice and Public Security in El Salvador, who has the power to free these women.

Wandsworth group's 'Embassy crawl'

on 26 September tackled issues around the MBMR campaign. Leading supporters to six embassies – Algeria, Chile, Ireland, Tunisia, Iran and Morocco – ambassadors were asked to make changes so more people can enjoy their fundamental rights.

WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

On the eve of International Women's Day the **Isle of Man** group held a 'health and safety' demonstration outside the House of Keys to highlight the perils faced by Afghan women in frontline jobs like medicine, politics and the law. The island's only two female Members of House of Keys (MHKs) sported hard hats and high-vis jackets and the doors of the building were blocked with hazard tape. The 'tongue-in-cheek' stunt made the morning news and generated media coverage.

A performance of '*Even if we lose our lives*' in support of women's rights in Afghanistan was performed to a packed hall in Southampton. It was produced and

directed by Anna Carr, an Amnesty supporter. The evening included music from Iranian singer Nomi Basra and a short talk and Q&A session led by the **Southampton** group.

ROMA RIGHTS AND REMEMBERING

In April supporters for Roma rights demonstrated outside the Hungarian embassy against the forced evictions of around 160 mostly Roma families in Miskolc. These families have lived there since the early 60s. At the Roma Rights event in May held at the Human Rights Action Centre, Sandor Szoke, Roma Civil Rights activist from Hungary, spoke about the evictions and how the Roma minority in Hungary are the victims of escalating racist persecution and violence. Meanwhile Amnesty supporters joined a moving memorial day in commemoration of the Roma genocide at the Holocaust Memorial Stone, Hyde Park. It took place on 2 August – significant because on 2 August



Newcastle



Isle of Man



Manchester



Wandsworth



Roma rights



Colwyn Bay

OBITUARY

The Bognor Regis, Chichester and District group are sorry to announce the death of May Berry MBE. May was a key founder of the Bognor group and on its merger with Chichester was elected Chair. She was an ardent packer of parcels for their first POC, Ryszard Nogajewski, who kept in touch; they finally met in 2002. She opened her home and magnificent garden to Amnesty events, and year after year helped welcome new recruits. May will be much missed.

1944 all the Sinti and Roma in Auschwitz were murdered.

In July *A People Uncounted* was screened at the Human Rights Action Centre in London to promote Roma rights. William Bila, Roma Rights advocate and participant in the film, led a Q&A and Kate Allen, Amnesty UK director, gave a passionate speech. It's a harrowing film about the genocide of Sinti and Roma people during the Holocaust, highlighting the brave resistance of Roma people in the Gypsy Camp in Auschwitz. If groups would like to organise a screening, contact ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

In May the York group welcomed human rights defender Ahmed Al-Kolaibi to its meeting. Ahmed, who grew up in Yemen, is one of the visiting fellows on the Protective Fellowship Scheme for Human Rights Defenders at Risk at the Centre for Applied

Human Rights at the University of York. He spoke of his work as a mediator in the warring villages where he tries to arrange truces between rival sheikhs. Through the organisation Dar Al-Salam (House of Peace), he has helped to train 260 other mediators and has even secured the release of abducted foreigners.

MAY DAY

On 2 May, the Newcastle, Wearside and Hexham groups had a stall at the Tyne and Wear May Day march and rally. Speakers on the day included Ann Schofield of the Tyneside Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and MP Ian Mearns – along with a Newcastle group member who talked about Amnesty's work.

SPECIAL GUESTS

In May members of the Mid Gloucester group saw the 'moving and illuminating' film *The Other Interview* in the presence of its star, Park Ji-hyun. The film, made by

Amnesty, is her account of fleeing North Korea and surviving torture and prison. 'It was unforgettable – in fact people are still talking about it,' said the group. Journalists from *Stroud News and Journal* attended and ran a profile piece on Ji-hyun.

In July the Chelmsford group held their AGM, and were pleased to welcome the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

STILL MISSING

2015 is the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. On 11 July, London group members stood on the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields to remember the over 8,000 men and boys killed, and the thousands of others 'disappeared' in Bosnia, never to be seen again. Dressed in white, petition signatures were collected calling on the Bosnian government to honour their pledge of a fund for victims and to find those still missing. Thanks to Deepa Shah, Country Coordinator for the Balkans, who organised this.



Roma rights



York



London



Henley College



Mid Gloucester



Henley College



Southampton



Chelmsford

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

MAGNA CARTA FREEDOMS

To mark 800 years of the Magna Carta, the Salisbury group joined forces with the Salisbury Cathedral, which has the best surviving copy of the Charter. Around 200 students took part in an anniversary conference held at the cathedral on 15 June. They questioned Kate Allen, Amnesty UK director, David Davis MP and journalist Peter Osborne. A patchwork made by Amnesty's South region was on display. Kate also attended the Playhouse for 'Magna Carta Now' organised by the Salisbury group. Actor Edward Fox read out various sections of the Charter and a panel including writer Ben Rawlence and Professor Guy Standing discussed their relevance today. The event was chaired by Peter Curbishly of the local group.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

In October, the newly-formed AKS school group raised awareness of women's rights in El Salvador at their Open Day. Student Maddy Haslem attended the Fylde Coast group meeting with Afzal Khan, North West MEP, who was kept busy discussing the value of the EU and how to work effectively with MEPs. The youth group, with the support of Fylde Coast group members, are now planning The Secret Policeman's Beach Ball at the school in March 2016.

STORY COMPETITION

The Ely group held its second human rights short story competition. A big thank you to local author Jill Dawson who judged it and donated prizes. Read the winning stories at www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/ely-city/short-story-competition-2015-winners



Flyde Coast



Salisbury Cathedral patchwork

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The East Anglia Conference in Norwich on 28 March opened with Victoria Brittain, UN consultant on the impact of conflict on women, speaking on 'Torture, Guantanamo and the CIA'. This was followed by a Stop Torture action. In the afternoon, David Mead, Professor of UK Human Rights Law, University of East Anglia, spoke on 'What's Wrong with Rights?', and the threat to the Human Rights Act.

At the London Regional Conference on 3 October, around 100 people took part in talks, workshops and campaign actions on the theme 'Refugees and the Human Rights Act'. Steve Symonds, Amnesty's Refugee and Migrant Rights programme director, and Fatima Elbanna, ex-UNHCR worker, spoke. Laura Trevelyan, campaign manager, spoke about the Human Rights Act. The day also included presentations from country coordinators, and workshops on fundraising, the Human Rights Act, social media and asylum seekers.

The first West and East Midlands conference took place in Birmingham

on 17 October. Human rights defenders Aida Baijumanova from Kyrgyzstan and Natalia Zviagina from Russia spoke on freedom of expression. Over 70 delegates also heard the latest on the current refugee and asylum crisis, and how to defend the UK's Human Rights Act. After a march to Victoria Square, delegates were photographed with all the rights protected under the HRA, with actors representing David Cameron and justice secretary Michael Gove attacking them (pictured).

On 24 October, the North West Conference took place in Blackburn in the name of justice for asylum seekers. The harrowing stories of Dr Charles Dotou and Eman Mashhour, refugees and human rights defenders from Senegal and Yemen, left the 86 delegates inspired and slightly tearful. Food was prepared and served by refugees and asylum seekers from the area and a 'Refugees are Welcome Here' street action was accompanied by drum playing by a refugee from the Ivory Coast. Workshops on My Body My Rights and Working Effectively with activists in the area were so popular they were held twice.



North West Conference



West and East Midlands Conference



London

SOLIDARITY WITH SYRIA

Groups marked the fourth anniversary of the Syrian uprising with candle-lit vigils in March, pointing out the need for the UK government to do more. The **Runnymede** group gathered for a #withsyria vigil, poignantly at the Magna Carta memorial. The **Berwick and Eastern Borders** group held their vigil at the Flodden Peace and Reconciliation garden. The **Silsden** and **Ilkley** groups remembered the victims of the Syrian civil war with a four minute silence and vigil, covered in the local press. Both groups also wrote to each of the five prospective parliamentary candidates for the Keighley constituency to ask what their party would do to help victims of the war. The **Nottingham** group joined up with the local Syrian community organisation to demonstrate. Other candle-lit vigils were held by **Ely**, **Mayfair and Soho**, **Sutton Coldfield**, **Cardigan and North Pembrokeshire** and **Hexham** groups. Meanwhile members of the **Romsey** group spelt out 'Syria' in tea lights. 'The purpose was to shine a light on the continued troubles and help people remember those ordinary Syrians for whom life is increasing dark,' group member Fay Fleming told the *Romsey Advertiser*.



Runnymede



Cardigan and North Pembrokeshire



Nottingham



Silsden and Ilkley



Sutton Coldfield



Ely



Mayfair and Soho



Romsey



Berwick and Eastern Borders

FESTIVALS

In June, the **Orkney** group held a 'Cage' event at the St Magnus International Festival. Eight local celebrities each spent 15 minutes caged to highlight the plight of prisoners of conscience including Raif Badawi and Liu Xiaobo. Star 'prisoner' was resident composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (pictured), who helped establish the festival in 1977 and was extremely willing to show his support. The day concluded with a successful AmnesTea.

In August the **Reading** group manned a stall at the WOMAD Festival to support the campaign against discrimination of Roma children in education. During the weekend, 330 little mini-me figures were stuck to a giant petition with messages to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic. More than

294 action cards were signed and £203 was raised for Amnesty's work. Thanks to the volunteers, who cheerfully coped with 'solid rain and a lot of mud!' The petition was handed in to the Czech embassy.

The **Diss** group held a stand at the Burston Strike School Rally in September. A petition to justice secretary Michael Gove, asking him to keep the Human Rights Act, was signed by 95 people including Jeremy Corbyn MP, main speaker at the rally. Many others signed a letter to business secretary Sajid Javid calling for tighter laws on selling tools of torture.

The **Liverpool** group attended the city's Africa Oyé Music Festival at Sefton Park and kept up the pressure to save the Human Rights Act and

#BringBackOurGirls, the 270+ girls kidnapped by the Boko Haram armed group in Nigeria. Approximately 230 girls are still missing.

Redhill and Reigate group used the Glastonbury Festival to support the Amnesty Global Day of Action to Stop Torture, on 26 June. Supporters gathered at the Little Burmese Tea Shop at Green Futures Field for a photo action. The tea shop was opened in 2001 by former Burmese prisoner of conscience turned human rights lawyer Ko Aung who was tortured and imprisoned by the authorities in Burma. The struggle for peace and justice continues: innocent villagers in conflict areas are still being tortured and killed by the Burma military.



Diss



Orkney



Reading



Liverpool



Reading

FUNDRAISING

The **Croydon** group's sponsored walk through the aptly-named Happy Valley raised almost £1,000. Ten walkers, who enjoyed the 8.5 mile route, were rewarded with a pub lunch, and tea and cake. The **West Cumbria** Walk for Life for Human Rights this year was part of the group's campaign to support Syria, highlight the value of the Human Rights Act and Stop Torture. See page 16 for other Stop Torture walks.

A garden party and book sale was organised by the **Dundee** group in June. Held in a member's house and garden, the event was attended by 80 people and raised £422. A petition was signed in support of Raif Badawi, Saudi prisoner of conscience. In August the **Minehead** group's AmnesTea raised £625. Over 45 people enjoyed tea and cakes, browsed the book stall, and picked up information about Amnesty's

work. The legendary **Blackheath and Greenwich** group's book sale proved to be another success, raising £9,107. See page 16 for info on their creative Stop Torture stunt on the day.

In September, the **City University RAG Society** chose Amnesty as their RAG week charity. A number of events helped to raise £279, including a Bubble Football tournament where you take to the field in a mini zorbing ball! Students at Brunel University have also chosen Amnesty as one of their fundraising charities this year. We look forward to working with them.

The annual Branscombe Silk Road Supper, organised by the **East Devon** group, was a sell-out this year. Over 120 people enjoyed a three course meal, quiz, raffle and entertainment all based on countries along the old Silk Road. It was a lively night. MC David Evans talked about Amnesty's work,

and campaign petitions were signed. Guests even joined in with the belly dancing.

King Alfred's Sixth Form group raised £1,904, a magnificent end result of two years of fundraising for Amnesty. A cheque was handed to Emma Hart, Amnesty East Midlands regional representative, who visited the school. She gave a speech about Amnesty's work in assembly, and ran workshops on the death penalty. She also had lunch with the Sixth Form Amnesty Committee to discuss how human rights were being addressed in the run up to the General Election.

Well done to the **Saffron Walden** group who raised £802.50 during their street collection in September. The **Hackney and Islington** film pub quiz 'A night at the movies' on 7 September raised £225. The **Brighton and Hove** silent auction raised £533.91.



Croydon



Minehead



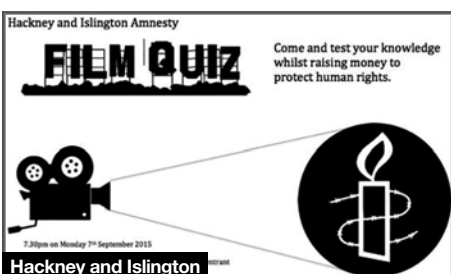
West Cumbria



Blackheath and Greenwich



East Devon



Dundee



City University

PRIDE AND EQUAL MARRIAGE

Summer of 2015 was a successful Pride season with local groups attending over a dozen parades

On 13 June the **Blackpool** group took part in their first ever Pride and 'had never had so much fun.' The Amnesty banner was hard to miss (see photo). But the EuroPride banner, made to take to Riga, attracted huge attention, as people realised they could send Amnesty's message across the world. Over 200 action cards were signed to claim justice for Noxolo Nogwaza, a South African lesbian LGBTI activist who was brutally murdered in 2011, and Ihar Tsikhanyuk, beaten by police in Belarus for being gay. The group's verdict: 'We learnt a lesson in visible activism and can't wait to do it again.'

EuroPride banners were also taken to **Birmingham** and **Oxford** Prides where many people were keen to support Riga. On 20 June, LGBTI committee members delivered the banners and took part in this

historic EuroPride, held for the first time in Eastern Europe.

RAISING RAINBOWS

The **York** group rose to the occasion as they marched on 20 June. The theme this year was 'Raise your rainbow'. Before setting off, the group met long-standing Amnesty supporter Rachael Maskell MEP for a photo action to support LGBTI rights. At the group's stall passers-by played their 10-foot high Snakes and Ladders human rights games board. The Lord Mayor supported a photo action calling on Bulgaria to enforce its law against hate crime with a banner remembering Mihail Stoyanov, murdered in Sofia for being gay.

In July, the **Bristol** group had a stall at the city's Pride event calling for justice for Noxolo Nogwaza and Ihar Tsikhanyuk.

Over 200 cards were signed for them. Thirty letters were also signed on behalf of Cameroonian human rights defenders. Cameroon is one of Africa's most hostile countries for sexual minorities, and activists face intimidation, harassment, death threats, arbitrary arrests and detention. In 2013 prominent gay rights activist Eric Ohena Lembembe was killed.

On 27 June around 300 Amnesty members joined the parade sweeping through the streets of **London**, highlighting LGBTI activists John Jeanette Solstad Remo (Norway), Ihar, Elena Klimova (Russia) and Noxolo. All 1,000 Amnesty flags were given out in the first half of the parade! Participants including Kate Allen, Amnesty UK director, and Sarah O'Grady, Chair, dressed in feather boas, glitter and masks. The stall in Trafalgar Square ran



out of action cards, signed up new LGBTI Network members and welcomed Jeremy Corbyn and prominent activist Peter Tatchell among their visitors.

EQUALITY – IT’S TIME

On 1 August, thousands took part in the 25th annual Belfast Pride parade. The theme was ‘25 years building equality. It’s time.’ As predicted, it was a bigger turn-out than usual following the Yes vote in the Republic’s referendum on same-sex marriage and subsequent push for marriage equality in Northern Ireland. Kate Allen, who attended, said: ‘Things have really changed in Northern Ireland, and there was a warm welcome for the marchers. Members of the Belfast group told me that even five years ago that was not the case.’

Back in June, an estimated 20,000 people

marched for marriage through central Belfast in a demonstration for equal civil marriage rights, organised by Amnesty and other organisations including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Rainbow Project (largest LGBTI group in Northern Ireland). The march culminated in a mass rally in front of Belfast City Hall.

ONWARDS

The Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch group supported the Bourne Free Pride in July, highlighting cases of human rights abuses. They collected action cards at their stall, as did the Hertfordshire group at their local Pride.

The Brighton and Hove group were proud to be part of Brighton Pride’s 25th anniversary. They held a stall outside the Amnesty bookshop and talked to people

about the human rights side of the occasion.

In August thousands attended Glasgow’s Pride – focus on #behappy. Meanwhile the Manchester group, maybe thinking coloured wigs and huge placards weren’t enough, celebrated their Pride in a new way. They invited the superb Bloco Mundo Samba drumming band to march with them – thrilling the crowds and getting the Love is a Human Rights message noticed.

■ Send more pictures and reports to lgbtinetnetwork@amnesty.org.uk or tweet them to [@amnestyuk_LGBTI](https://twitter.com/amnestyuk_LGBTI)

For 2016, download A Pride Guide for local activists, www.amnesty.org.uk/webfm_send/1573



STOP TORTURE

Not alone, never forgotten: on 26 June you stood with all those whose lives have been marked by torture

On 26 June, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, groups held a wide range of events to remind people that thousands are being tortured around the world.

In **Newcastle**, Amnesty Wearside and Freedom from Torture launched their first Giving Voice event. Speakers included Chi Onwurah MP, with poetry from torture survivors and music from Crossings Choir and One Love Hip Hop Crew. The event, attended by the Lord Mayor, not only highlighted how widespread torture is globally but also how torture survivors are being helped in the North. The event was covered by local radio.

The **Bolton and Bury** group asked people to join the Stop Torture campaign in Bolton town centre. They gave out Amnesty balloons, and collected action cards and letters in support of torture

victims. They also asked the public to spin a specially created 'Wheel of torture' to remind them of the horrors of torture. Shoppers were shocked when they heard the wheel was used by police in the Philippines to decide how to torture detainees.

The **Leeds** group took to the streets to focus on the trade in torture equipment, followed by a card writing session. The **Bournville** group went to Birmingham city centre to oppose torture and demand justice for torture survivors. Their banner read: 'We are with you Uzbekistan', where rampant torture plays a central role in the country's justice system. Members from the **Norwich** group showed their stance against torture in an hour-long vigil in the city centre.

In **Bristol**, the group went on a walking tour of the area, handing out leaflets and

action cards. The **Oxford City** group walked a section of the Thames Path in glorious sunshine in September raising awareness of the Stop Torture campaign. Six members of the **Exeter** group took part in a 10.5 mile walk, raising £100. On 6 June, the **Southampton** group held their annual sponsored walk to Stop Torture. Other groups who have taken part in campaigning walks are **Devizes, Sheffield, Hull, Northern Ireland groups, Cambridge, Bury St Edmonds, Manchester and Southend**.

The **Guildford** group Stop Torture stall collected £200. At **North Hertfordshire** group's stall in Hitchin, 39 people were photographed with Stop Torture placards. Cards were signed on behalf of Ali Aarrass and Claudia Medina Tamariz and £160 was collected. The **Kingston** group supported Stop Torture with a stall.



Stop Torture actions carried on throughout the year. On 9 May the Mazazik Egyptian dance group and Chechelele international choir performed at a Stop Torture stall run by the York group. It drew in the crowds: 150 cards were signed.

On 25 May, the Lytham St Annes and Blackpool (now called Fylde Coast) group held an awareness raising day at St Anne's Square, setting up a Stop Torture exhibition around the amphitheatre. Over 200 action cards were signed calling on governments to investigate allegations of torture in their prisons. Local musicians supported the campaign, playing from 10am to 4pm. The group were also pleased to be joined by members of the AKS school group.

At the Blackheath and Greenwich group's famous book sale in June, more

than 150 cards for the Stop Torture campaign were signed and 324 people signed petitions. As people queued to enter the sale, a piñata saying 'Stop Torture in Mexico' was smashed, and video of the stunt uploaded onto YouTube.

In July, the Penzance group held a silent vigil as part of Cornwall's Stop Torture campaign. They wore blindfolds to emphasise the point that governments should not turn a blind eye to torture. Cards were signed to send to the authorities in the five priority countries. Truro group chair Hetty Tye was interviewed by *The Cornishman*, and said: 'We are calling for people to support this important cause and let governments everywhere know we are following their actions and that torturers will be held to account.'

GOOD CAMPAIGN NEWS

- Shaker Aamer has been released.
- In September MEPs on the Trade Committee voted through an amended version of the EU law prohibiting the trade in torture equipment, which addressed the majority of our concerns around loopholes. In October, Members of the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to close these loopholes. The vote was in the region of 630-30! The fight isn't over. Individual member states will now need to agree to the proposals from the EU parliament.
- 102,550 people viewed the spoof advert we produced for the London Arms Fair in September. It highlighted the illegal advertising of torture equipment at past fairs. www.amnesty.org.uk/armsfairs



Norwich



York



Newcastle



North Hertfordshire



Bolton and Bury



Bournville

EVENTS

3 DECEMBER

LONDON

Booksale and AmnesTea
11am-3pm, Human Rights Action Centre, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA
Buy books for £1 and gifts from the Amnesty shop. Also join an AmnesTea (1pm-3pm) with a card writing session.
Contact books@amnesty.org.uk

3-4 DECEMBER

MELROSE

Card signing session
7pm, Ormiston Rooms, Market Square, Melrose TD6 9PN.
Contact Moira M Walsh
01573 225500

5 DECEMBER

FARNHAM

Concert
7.30pm, Pavilions at St Andrews Church, Farnham, GU9 7PW
Candles of Hope 30th anniversary.
Contact [Pauline Lalor](mailto:Pauline.Lalor@ntlworld.com)
Pauline.Lalor@ntlworld.com

5 DECEMBER

BRIGHTON

Write for Rights signing session
Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton
Contact brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com or 01273 607110

5 DECEMBER

WIRRAL

Write for Rights
10am-2pm, Church of the Good Shepherd, 118 Telegraph Road, Heswall, Wirral CH60 0AJ
Contact Linda Hackett
0151 6323277

6 DECEMBER

HULL

Card signing session
11am-2pm, Vintage Café, 209 Chanterlands Avenue, Hull HU5 3TT

7 DECEMBER

WOKING

Write for Rights evening
8pm, Trinity Methodist Church, Brewery Road
Contact Ruth Breddal
breddal@btinternet.com

10 DECEMBER

YORK

Write for Rights card signing
10am-4pm, St Crux Parish Hall, Pavement, York YO1 9UP
Contact 07889 443205 or susan.buchanan1@gmail.com

11 DECEMBER

MANCHESTER

Concert
7pm, Sacred Trinity Church, Chapel Street, Salford, £8
Acoustic Amnesty in aid of Manchester Women's Aid and Amnesty. **Tickets** www.wegotickets.com/event/334698

12 DECEMBER

WOKING

Write for Rights stall
Commercial Way, Woking
Contact Ruth Breddal
breddal@btinternet.com

14 DECEMBER

GUILDFORD

Write for Rights campaign
St Nicolas Parish Room, Bury Street
Contact Marilyn Jarrett
01483 202502

REGIONAL CONFERENCES AND AGM

30 JANUARY

SOUTH MIDLANDS

10.30am-4.30pm, Royal Latin School, Buckingham
Contact Emma Hart
emmahart121@yahoo.com

30 JANUARY

NORTHERN IRELAND

10am-4pm, Clanmil Housing Association, 3 Waring Street, Belfast BT1 2DX
Contact Grainne Maginnis
gmaginnis@gmail.com

6 FEBRUARY

EAST ANGLIA

Friend's Meeting House, 12 Jesus Lane, Cambridge
Contact Liesbeth ten Ham
liesbet7200@gmail.com

15 DECEMBER

BANBURY

Write for Rights campaign
7pm-9pm, Bloxham Parish Rooms, Church Street, Bloxham, Banbury OX15 4ET
Contact Ian Myson
ian_myson@hotmail.com

20 DECEMBER

BRADFORD

Concert
7.30pm, Rawdon Quaker Meeting House, Quakers Lane, Rawdon, Leeds.
Many contributors of the Bradford Music Club perform. Ending the Rawdon Amnesty Series of music and drama events organised by Rawdon Quakers. Free. Donations to Leeds group.
Contact Barbara Parry
barbaraparry@waitrose.com or 0113 2503867

4 JANUARY

FARNHAM

Write for Rights campaign
7.30pm, Pavilions at St Andrew's Church
Contact Pauline Lalor
Pauline.lalor@ntlworld.com

RESOURCES

GIVE IT UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS KIT

Give It Up is a great way to learn about human rights and fundraise at the same time. The concept is simple: get sponsored to 'give up' one of your rights for the day in solidarity with others who have no choice.

The kit contains everything you need to run your Give It Up Day, including stickers, My Rights Passport and suggestions for sponsored activities. **You can order your kit by calling 020 7033 1650, emailing fundraise@amnesty.org.uk or download resources www.amnesty.org.uk/youthgiveitup**

NEW



Community Fundraising Pack

Full of fundraising ideas and advice

Product code: CFR177

DREAMS OF FREEDOM

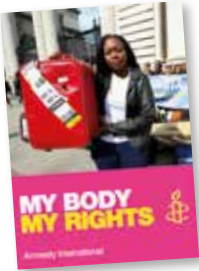


Our new book introduces children to the concept of freedom and human rights.

£12.99, order from www.amnestyshop.org.uk

CONTACT US

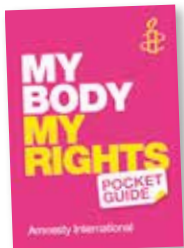
MY BODY MY RIGHTS



MBMR campaign leaflet
(A5, featuring fold out map)
Product code: MBM005



MBMR stickers
Product code: MBM006



MBMR pocket guide (A7)
Product code: MBM0013



MBMR temporary tattoos
Product code: MBM009

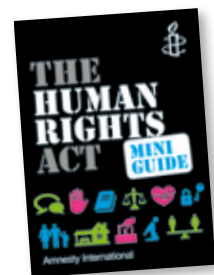


MBMR branded condoms
Product code: MBM0010

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT



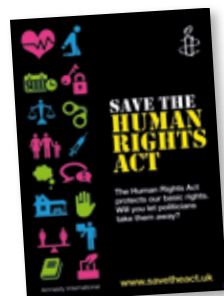
HRA badges
Product code: HRA004 (pink)
Product code: HRA005 (blue)



HRA Mini guide
Sets out the HRA with cases and an action to Michael Gove.
Product code: MBM001



HRA pocket guide
A condensed version of the mini guide.
Product code: MBM002



HRA poster
The protections the Act gives us all, with examples of people it has helped.
Product code: MBM003

WRITE FOR RIGHTS



Write for Rights Campaign Booklet 2015
Includes information on all the cases featured in this year's campaign.
Product code: WFR021



Write for Rights Campaign Poster (A3) 2015
Product code: WFR022



Write for Rights map of cases 2015
Product code: WFR023

All available to order from MDA, 01788 545 553
You can also download Write for Rights materials from www.amnesty.org.uk/write

EXTRA CASES
An extra nine Write for Rights cases are available to download www.amnesty.org.uk/write or call 020 7033 1777

LOCAL, YOUTH AND STUDENT GROUP ENQUIRIES
0207 033 1777
Email activism@amnesty.org.uk

FUNDRAISING ENQUIRIES
020 7033 1650
Email fundraise@amnesty.org.uk

Amnesty International UK
The Human Rights Action Centre
17-25 New Inn Yard
London EC2A 3EA
Telephone 020 7033 1500
Facsimile 020 7033 1503
Textphone 020 7033 1664

GROUPS NEWS EDITORIAL TEAM
Dan Jones, Farshid Talaghani, Richard Glynn, Ruth Taylor and Anne Montague
DESIGN
Amnesty International UK
Copy deadline for next issue
5 February 2016

TELL US IF YOU HAVE CHANGED
It is vital that you let us know about any changes to your group's office holders, such as Secretary, President, Campaign Coordinators and Treasurer. This will help us to communicate with the right person in your group. When the office holders or their addresses change, please send us details of name, address, phone and email, as well as details of the outgoing person. Please send details to Community Organising Team at activism@amnesty.org.uk

IF YOU'RE SENDING IN PHOTOS
Photos should be high-resolution jpegs (at least 300KB) and emailed as an attachment or sent on a CD. For more tips, read the 'Women's rights in Afghanistan – let's take action!' blog post at www.amnesty.org.uk/afghanistan

STUDENT CONFERENCE

In November, 180 students came together for a weekend of sessions, campaigning and networking at the annual Student Conference.

Four plenaries covered the global refugee crisis, the Human Rights Act, workers' rights and barriers to accessing abortion services in Ireland. Speakers included Steve Symonds, Refugee and Migrant Rights programme director of AIUK, Jan Sutton, recent winner of the Liberty 'Close to Home' award, and Isa Al-Aali, who as a 17-year-old student was involved in the uprising in Bahrain in 2011.

Students were kept busy with workshops on fundraising, communications and Write for Rights. The focus was about turning knowledge and ideas into action back on campus, and how to ensure a campaign has big impact.

New to the conference was Marketplace,

a space where different networks and campaign sections showcased their work and talked to the students about their involvement. This included Human Rights Education, Stop Torture, Asylum Justice Project and Bahrain Action.

The fundraising efforts of student groups were celebrated with the annual Raise Off awards. Students agreed the target of £20,000 to raise throughout the next academic year.

Causing the most interest was the students' campaign action on Albert Woodfox, 43 years in solitary in Louisiana despite his conviction being overturned three times. They took a life-size cardboard cut-out of Albert to three London landmarks for a photo action, then assembled outside the US embassy to demand his immediate release. It was

proof to the delegates of how campaign creations can visually stand out. The photos will be sent to Albert in solidarity.

NEW STUDENT ACTION COMMITTEE

At their Student Conference, students elected a new Student Action Network Committee (STAN). We'd like to welcome Rose Bennett (Birmingham), Nuri Syed Corser (Edinburgh), Emily Pugh (Royal Holloway), Rona Hardie (Aberdeen), Marian Abdullah (Kent), Ehanuele Sanna (Kings College London), Megan Hitchcock (Academy of Contemporary Music) and Thokozile Tembo (City). STAN's focus for 2016 will be on supporting the growth and sustainability of student groups across the UK, as well as promoting collaboration between student, youth and local groups.



Student Conference



STAN Committee



Refugee workshop



Albert Woodfox campaign action



Student Conference

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact: **Tel 020 7033 1777**
Textphone 020 7033 1664 / Email sct@amnesty.org.uk