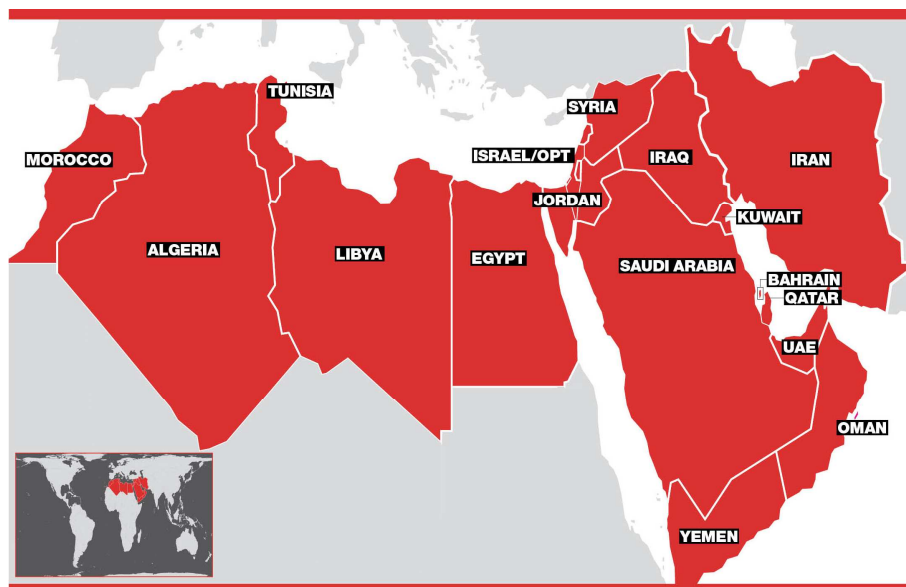




CRISIS RESPONSE: MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Campaign Mailing

April 2011



The popular uprisings we have seen across the Middle East and North Africa are unprecedented and inspiring. They have captured the world's attention, as people in countries across the region have come together to speak out against repression, poverty and corruption and demand real and lasting reform, in what could be the beginnings of a real human rights revolution.

However, we have also seen repressive governments across the region under pressure and desperate to hold onto power. This has resulted in protesters being killed on the streets, thousands of demonstrators being arrested or beaten as state security forces try to quell the unrest and restrict freedom of expression and information by attempting to block social media and the internet.

Amnesty International has been standing in solidarity with people across the Middle East and North Africa, sending staff to many countries in the region to investigate what has been happening and calling on governments in these countries to reign in their security forces and respect the right to peaceful protest.

This mailing contains information on what is happening in the region, what Amnesty is calling for and how you can take action. However, please remember that the situations across the Middle East and North Africa are extremely fast moving. Therefore we ask that you check the Amnesty website for all the latest information, plus press releases, Q&As, Audio Visual content and actions.

Visit www.protectthehuman.com/change

WHAT AMNESTY HAS BEEN DOING:

Amnesty has documented human rights violations and been engaged with civil society across this region for decades, reporting torture, arbitrary detention, unfair trials, and restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, association and information amongst the many human rights abuses.

In recent weeks and months we have been prioritising the MENA region in all our work, allocating more staff and resources to this area consistent with our Crisis Response protocols.

There has been a wide range of work we've been leading on which is integrated across the section and the wider movement to ensure we focus on human rights impact. AIUK have been holding talks with activists from the region including exiles, lobbying the UK government; making sure AI's views are heard in the media, sending communications to all our supporters to keep them updated on the situation; asking people to take action and utilising our social media channels, to raise awareness on the situation in the region and to get people talking about Amnesty's concerns and recommendations.

As well as supporting peaceful protesters across the region in their own human rights revolutions we have also been working on providing effective plans for reform in many of these countries such as the documents we produced on Tunisia and Egypt here - <http://bit.ly/fx4pzG> and <http://bit.ly/ef1R7s>

DAY OF ACTION: IN SOLIDARITY. IN DEFIANCE

On Saturday 12th February, Amnesty UK was one of the many sections from across the movement who took part in a global day of action. Activists from Australia to South Korea, Germany to Benin stood together to show solidarity with the people of the Middle East and North Africa.

In the UK, thousands of activists came together in Trafalgar Square to take part in a truly electrifying rally.



Hours before it began; the news came through that Egypt's President Mubarak had finally stood down. Mubarak is only one man of course and we were very clear that for real reform to start to happen, his machinery of repression must also be dismantled.

However there was no denying that the news did help to bring an air of celebration to the event as Trafalgar Square turned into a party zone for Egyptians but also Algerians, Tunisians, Syrians, Palestinians and many more. A range of speakers, including Amnesty's Secretary General, Salili Shetty, international trade union partners and a group of young activists from across the Middle East and North Africa region, took to the stage to lead speeches and chanting. The event was filmed and was broadcast across our social media networks, in order to be able to send a message to the demonstrators across the region that we were standing with them.

You can view videos and blog entries from the day on our website www.protectthehuman.com/change

WHAT AMNESTY IS CALLING FOR:

In the coming months, Amnesty will continue to prioritise the Middle East & North Africa region. Amnesty is currently developing a regional strategy for the movement and at AIUK we will choose to focus our resources on particular issues, including arms and gender work, and on an agenda for change in particular countries.

Our key public message is that we stand with peaceful protesters across the Middle East & North Africa in their demands for an end to crackdowns, for their freedom, their basic human rights and immediate human rights reform.

Amnesty stands in defiance against all those who try to suppress the growing movement of people standing up for their rights, facing down injustice and offering hope for a better world.

We are calling on Governments across the MENA region to:

1. Uphold the right to peaceful protest and to freedom of expression, association, assembly and information and rein in security forces to ensure this.
2. Deaths, injuries, and detentions must be credibly investigated and there must be accountability
3. Human rights reforms must begin now and people must have the right to participate fully in the political process. There can be no future for governments that maintain power through repression and torture

WHAT IS CRISIS WORK?

Amnesty International undertakes crisis work on occasions when massive human rights violations are taking place. We aim to respond to crisis situations by taking effective and strategic action.

'Crisis response' is invoked by Amnesty's Secretary General in response to

- an upsurge of human rights violations on a scale which AI considers to be very serious in the context of that country or region *and*
- when previously agreed plans and resources are insufficient to respond effectively to the situation.

It is vital that in a crisis situation our work is as fast, effective and as responsive as possible. In order to make our work on countries in crisis as effective as possible, Amnesty tries to bring all parts of the section and wider movement together to work collectively. During crises, we usually reprioritise our resources in order to focus on the human rights issues involved, amplify the opportunities and take on the threats.

Our work on the MENA crisis will require us to make this area of work a priority for a period of time, at this stage; we are envisaging the next 3-6 months. During this time we will send information as required, asking our activists to raise awareness and take effective actions.

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE FOR GROUPS

MEDIA

As we have indicated, the situation in the MENA region is fast moving and Amnesty's position is often different or more nuanced to many of the voices which get profiled in the media.

Please check the website www.protectthehuman.com/change for the most up to date information, including our press releases which indicate Amnesty's position on a particular situation or country.

If you are doing any local media work, please check our press releases for the position Amnesty is taking. AIUK's press team are available to advise and support you, so please contact them if you are doing any media interviews or would like some support. Please contact Neil Durkin (neil.durkin@ambesty.org.uk) or Steve Ballinger (steve.ballinger@amnesty.org.uk)

MATERIALS

If you are holding any events in your local area, you can download our placard messaging from our website. The design (available in both English and Arabic) reads 'In Solidarity. In Defiance'.

To download these designs to produce your own posters, placards, etc please go to and www.amnesty.org.uk, log into 'my amnesty' and click on the 'my resources' tab



COUNTRY COORDINATORS

As well as information from staff, Amnesty's activist network of Country Coordinators are a resource for groups.

Country Coordinators can provide information on what is happening in specific countries, give talks to groups, etc. To find the contact details for the MENA Country Coordinators, please visit <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10864> or contact the Activism Team

WHAT YOU CAN DO – TAKE ACTION

Below you will find three letter writing actions we would like groups to take.

As stated above we do advise activists to check our website for up to date information in these fast moving situations.

You can see all our latest actions by visiting www.protectthehuman.com/change

(1) PROTECT REFUGEES FLEEING LIBYA

Background

Hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing violence and persecution in Libya and desperately seeking safety in neighbouring countries.

While the large majority of those fleeing are Tunisians and Egyptians returning home, increasing numbers of Libyans and people originally from other countries are joining the exodus.

European Union member states, including the UK, must urgently offer meaningful support both to the refugees who are fleeing for their lives, and to the states neighbouring Libya that are witnessing such large number of arrivals.



What you can do

Send an urgent letter to UK Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, Damian Green, calling on the UK government to offer more support to those fleeing Libya. Please use the template below and send to Damian Green UK Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF. Or email privateoffice.external@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Dear

I am writing out of extreme concern for the plight of hundred of thousands of people fleeing violence and persecution in Libya and seeking safety in neighbouring countries.

It is a critical that the UK and other EU countries take a more active and meaningful part in alleviating the growing humanitarian crisis in Libya.

Amnesty International is calling on states with capacity in the international community to respond positively to UNHCR's March 1 2011 appeal for an emergency resettlement effort.

In particular, Amnesty calls on EU member states to:

- increase resettlement capacity to cater for those most in need and immediately establish resettlement programs where they do not already exist;
- assess the needs of refugees to be resettled;
- commit the necessary resources to ensuring expeditious processing and to meeting resettlement needs;
- prioritise particularly vulnerable individuals, including: children, women at risk of physical, sexual or psychological violence or exploitation, survivors of torture, people with urgent medical or other special needs, the disabled and the elderly; and
- ensure integration support and services for resettlement upon arrival.

Other countries, such as the United States, have already committed to significant financial support and agreed to process an increased number of refugee cases from Libya. We urge the UK and the EU to step up its efforts to alleviate the growing refugee crisis.

(2) CALL FOR WOMEN TO BE INCLUDED IN BUILDING THE NEW EGYPT

Background

As people across the Middle East and North Africa have taken to the streets, women and men have stood together in their demands for change. Whilst both men and women have suffered under these repressive governments, women have had to cope with discriminatory laws and deeply entrenched gender inequality.

Now in the context of change in Egypt, women are being excluded by the caretaker government. For example, when a new national committee was formed to propose changes to the Egyptian constitution, the group was composed only of men. This is not acceptable. If the promise of a real human rights revolution is to be fulfilled, women of diverse backgrounds and views must be partners at the table.

What you can do

Send an urgent letter to the Egyptian embassy calling on them to ensure women are part of the rebuilding of Egypt. Please send the template letter below to

(1) His Excellency Hatem Seif El-Nasr, Egyptian Ambassador to UK.
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street, London, W1K 1DW

If you have access to email, please also email the letter to
(2) Essam Sharaf, Egyptian Prime Minister - pm@cabinet.gov.eg

Dear

I write as somebody inspired by the new possibilities the people of Egypt are faced with.

However, it is deeply disappointing that so far, women have been excluded from high level political negotiations to reshape Egypt's future. It is inexcusable that the committee that was established to identify proposals for constitutional reform, appointed by the Supreme Military Council, was entirely male.

Women who advocate for human rights, in particular women's human rights must be properly included in all the key processes directed at political and human rights reform, including full participation and representation on high level committees.

Egypt has a real opportunity to begin afresh on the basis of equality and non-discrimination for all its citizens. But that opportunity will not last long if women continue to be excluded. This current exclusion also risks future stability and prosperity if half the population are not playing an active role in shaping the future of Egypt.

Specific recommendations to ensure women's rights are respected and protected are included in the Amnesty International document *Egypt: Human Rights Agenda for Change* issued on 10 February 2011. I urge you to review this document which you can read here - <http://amn.st/gVfF43>

Please protect the demands of the people in Egypt and include women in any process of political and human rights reform.

I also urge you to ensure that women advocates are represented in any high level process directed at political and human rights reform and that human rights, non-discrimination and equality are at the heart of the new constitution and the new Egypt.

(3) ARMS – CALL FOR A RIGOROUS ARMS TRADE TREATY

Over recent weeks the world has watched as the weakened governments of Libya, Bahrain and Yemen used all manner of weapons including sniper rifles, shotguns, tear gas, rubber bullets, crowd control vehicles and even artillery tanks against their own people who had mounted peaceful protests for greater human rights and freedom.

There is a pressing need for strong international export controls to prevent weapons, munitions and related equipment such as police and internal security vehicles, from ending up in the hands of known human rights abusers. Currently no such mechanism exists.

Amnesty has been working on the arms trade for a long time; the events in the Middle East and North Africa have only served to reinforce the need for more effective arms control.

What you can do

Please write to or email the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, using the template letter below. Send to:

William Hague, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH or email private.office@fco.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing to express my horror at the role that UK arms might have played in the brutal crackdowns in the Middle East and North Africa.

For example, successive UK governments have licensed equipment, including armoured vehicles, crowd control ammunition and related components, technology and training, to countries such as Libya. These licences have been granted with full prior knowledge of the human rights record in the region.

We welcome the UN Security Council's decision to impose an arms embargo on Libya, however arms are being used to commit human rights abuses in Bahrain and other countries in the region. We need an international treaty which would help ensure no weapons or munitions, including police and internal security equipment are sold to known human rights abusers.

Given the current situation in the region I urge you to:

- Lead efforts to support a robust Arms Trade Treaty which stops arms and related supplies getting into the hands of those likely to commit war crimes or grave human rights abuses, as well as those likely to use arms to exacerbate armed violence, crime, gender-based violence and poverty.
- Significantly strengthen the current UK licensing risk assessment procedures to take better account of the risk that UK arms, police and internal security equipment will contribute to serious violations of human rights

Yours sincerely.....

NEXT STEPS – AIUK STRATEGY

AIUK is developing its own strategy for the next few months to push through some long term objectives for human rights reform the UK Government needs to implement.

A key component of AIUKs new strategy now in development will package up several thematic areas directed at urging the UK Government to develop and improve its approach to the Middle East & North Africa which respects and protects the human rights of the people of the region.

Amnesty UK has on the whole welcomed statements made by the UK Government supporting the demands and aspirations of peaceful protestors in the MENA region, in particular their demands for their human rights, including not being tortured, disappeared or otherwise abused by their own governments.

However the UK Government is totally undermining this professed support for greater rights in the MENA region by continuing to pursue a number of counter productive, inconsistent and damaging policies and practices.

Our work will focus on a number of areas and is likely to include our concerns and recommendations on:

- Diplomatic Assurances
- Universal Jurisdiction
- MSP transfers
- Business & Human Rights
- Gender
- Human Rights Defenders

The primary focus of our strategy will continue to be as stated above regarding our calls on Governments in the MENA region. The UK Government can play its part by sincerely helping to realise the human rights based aspirations of the people in the MENA region by remedying its current policies and practices which work to prevent these aspirations being attained.

We are looking at an early May release for this area of work and will send more information about activism opportunities to you in due course.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For all the latest campaign information visit our website www.protectthehuman.com/change

ANY QUESTIONS?

Contact the activism team on 0207 033 1675 or email activism@amnesty.org.uk