

October 2020 Minutes



Glasgow West Amnesty International

Attendees: JG, JGi, MDS, FL, CA, KM, CLa

Apologies: CC, CCa

Introducing the new Amnesty Scotland Online Activism Group!

A message from Malcolm, Regional Rep for Scotland:

This has been a difficult year. Our passion for securing human rights in Scotland and around the world is as strong as ever. Amnesty International has been working hard throughout this global pandemic to ensure that everyone's human rights are protected. However, activism has been challenging.

We haven't been able to get together in our local, student and youth Amnesty groups. It has been harder to meet politicians to persuade them to take our concerns seriously. Our ability to responsibly protest the abuses we see has unquestionably been curtailed. And of course sadly there will be no Amnesty Scotland Activists Conference this year.

But we are innovating and finding new ways to organise. So, I'm delighted that we are launching a new Amnesty Scotland Online Activism group allowing us to come together to connect, learn and

take action. This group will build on the success of the conference calls held during lockdown. The group will connect existing Amnesty group activists and provide an online platform for new activists to engage. The group will hold online events twice a month, the first Thursday and third Tuesday of the month. Each event will feature a speaker talking about a different human rights topics.

The first event will be held at 6.30pm on Tuesday 20 October when we will discuss the challenges facing refugees as they arrive in Scotland and in Europe through the Greek islands with guests from the Glasgow Night Shelter for destitute asylum seekers and the campaign group Europe Must Act. Followed by a brief introduction to the Amnesty Scotland Online Activism group, including how those who want to can get more involved.

Join the Group's mailing list by contacting:

malcolm.dingwall-smith@amnesty.org.uk

Follow the Group on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/AmnestyScotlandOnlineActivismGroup>

Register for the events:

<http://AmnestyScotlandOnlineActivismGroup.eventbrite.com>

We've scheduled events up until the end of 2020 (all 6.30pm):

Tue 20 Oct – Refugees Welcome

Thu 5 Nov – Human Rights in Turkey

Tue 17 Nov – Policing in Scotland

Thu 3 Dec – Human Rights in Zimbabwe

Thu 10 Dec – Write for Rights: special event for International Human Rights Day

Tue 15 Dec – TBC

Join the mailing list and follow us on Facebook to get updates on speakers for these sessions and details to register for future events.

Write for Rights 2020

We discussed the plans for our group's campaigning activities for W4R 2020 including:

- Working with local cafes (e.g. having a stall on the street or a table in the cafe)

- Special Write for Rights online meeting on the 10th December
- Possible online/ social media “writeathon”
- A W4R online workshop with the Weekend Club

Thanks to all for their suggestions. Our plans should be confirmed in our November meeting.

The Write for Rights materials are now available online: [Write for Rights 2020](#) and [Get Started with W4R](#).

Secretary’s Report (FL)

Local Group Update

Please follow the link to read the latest Local Groups Update:

[Local Groups Update](#)

New Individual at Risk Case: Saudi Women Human Rights Defenders

Following the release of Ruben Gonzalez our previous Individual at Risk, the group has decided to take on a new case, the Saudi Women Human Rights Defenders.

Case summary: On 15 May 2018, a group of activists, including the country’s leading women human rights defenders who campaigned for the right to drive and the end of repressive guardianship laws were arbitrarily arrested. For the first three months of their detention, at least ten of the activists, including several of the women, endured torture, sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment when they were held incommunicado and in solitary confinement with no access to their families or lawyers.

A year later, the Saudi authorities charged and tried the women for their human rights activism. At least two human rights defenders detained in the same wave remain to date without charge or trial. Following the first trial session in March 2019, several Saudi women activists were released on temporary and provisional basis (Iman al-Nafjan, Aziza al-Yousef, Amal al-Harbi, Dr. Ruqayyah al-Mharib, Shadan alAnezi, Dr. Abir Namankni, and Dr. Hatoon al-Fassi and an anonymous activist), while five remain to this day in detention (Loujain al-Hathloul, Samar Badawi, Naseema al-Sada, Nouf Abdulaziz and Maya’a alZahrani) on charges related to their campaigning for women’s rights.

We look forward to hearing more about this case and starting our campaigning at our November meeting.

Yu Yu Williamson

We have some sad news about Yu Yu Williamson who has recently died from cancer. Yu Yu was an active member of Glasgow West Amnesty for a number of years. She was always very active, not just on raising awareness of the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, but also human rights abuses in China generally. Yu Yu also took part in Amnesty's campaigning on issues around the world. She is fondly remembered by our long-standing members for her passion. We have her family's contact details if anyone would like to send their condolences. Her family also asked for donations to Macmillan Cancer Support. Yu Yu's obituary is available to read here:

[Yuyu Williamson Obituary](#)

Urgent Actions (MR)

Thank you to MR for sharing these urgent actions.

1. Jailed lawyer's health at serious risk

[UA: Jailed lawyer's health at serious risk](#)

Jailed human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh's health is at serious risk after the Iranian authorities returned her to prison from hospital, even though a doctor said she needed a heart-related medical procedure. She had been hospitalized when her health severely deteriorated on a hunger strike, which she is doing in protest at the Iranian authorities abuses in the criminal justice system, including their refusal to release eligible prisoners held on politically motivated charges. She is a prisoner of conscience who must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Please act ASAP and at latest 18 Nov 2020

2. Tortured Kurdish man at risk of execution

[UA: Tortured Kurdish man at risk of execution](#)

Iranian Kurdish prisoner Heidar Ghorbani, 47, is at risk of execution for "armed rebellion against the state" (baghi), despite serious fair trial violations and the trial court confirming that he was never armed. His conviction is based on torture-tainted "confessions", obtained while he was forcibly disappeared. The authorities must quash his sentence and grant him a fair retrial.

Please act ASAP and at latest 17 Nov 2020

3. Free families kept in immigration detention

[UA: Free families kept in immigration detention](#)

As COVID-19 runs rampant in USA family detention centres, immigration authorities continue to lock up nearly ninety families who travelled to the US seeking safety from violence and persecution in their home countries. As of 6 August, at least 130 detained family members and facility staff tested positive for COVID-19. In July, a judge ordered authorities to release children because of COVID-19, but she did not have jurisdiction over parents. Authorities refused to release them together. Releasing children but continuing to detain parents constitutes family separation. We demand authorities release all families together immediately to protect them from the pandemic.

Please act ASAP and at latest 27 Nov 2020

4. PIKPA refugee shelter faces imminent closure

[UA: PIKPA refugee shelter faces imminent closure](#)

Greek authorities intend to close the open, self-organised refugee shelter PIKPA on 15 October. PIKPA has been operating in Lesvos since 2012, hosting and assisting thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers among the most vulnerable. Greek authorities must revoke the decision to close PIKPA, let the organization operate freely, protect its around 100 residents, and ensure and promote open and safe spaces for asylum-seekers and refugees in Greece.

Please act ASAP and at latest 30 Nov 2020

Keep checking the Urgent Actions sites for actions you can take from your home:

[Urgent Actions](#)

Social Media

Don't forget that Glasgow West Amnesty is also on social media!

Facebook - [@glasgowwestamnesty](#)

Twitter - [@AmnestyGlasWest](#)

Instagram - [@glasgowwestamnesty](#)

AOB

Scottish Human Rights Commission Report on social care provision during the pandemic

Thanks to GK for sharing this report by the Scottish Human Rights Commission. Their research shows that a considerable proportion of people who use social care support at home have experienced either a reduction or complete withdrawal of support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read more at the SHRC site.](#)

Amnesty have also been campaigning on similar issues related to the pandemic here in the UK. Please see the website for details:

[AIUK coronavirus issues](#)

Amnesty International podcast ‘Witness’

Thanks to MDS for telling us about a new podcast series by Amnesty International. The podcast introduces listeners to the organisation’s Research and Crisis Response teams – whose investigations take them to some of the most dangerous and volatile places on earth. It is available on normal podcast platforms and at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/witness/>

Next meeting

Thursday 10th December

We’ll be sharing our meeting with the Amnesty Scotland Online Activism Group with a special event for International Human Rights Day and Write for Rights. As always, joining instructions will be sent out ahead of time via our mailing list and social media. With all these calls there is the option to dial in from a landline or mobile if you don’t have internet access. Any issues get in touch with Mal at malcolm.dingwall-smith@amnesty.org.uk