

February 2021 Minutes



Glasgow West Amnesty International

Welcome and Introductions

Attendees: LW, CC, FL, MDS, JGi, CA, MR, JG, ZA, BM

Apologies: KM

Talk and Q&A: Lynnda Wardle, Interfaith Glasgow – the Weekend Club

About Interfaith Glasgow – three strands of work:

1. Dialogue – scriptural reasoning (thematic discussions to compare what different faiths have to say on these themes) and Faith to Faith (discussing the more contentious topics)
2. Friendship building – e.g. new project supporting the Glasgow LGBT+ Interfaith Network
3. Cooperation – e.g. the Interfaith Food Justice Network – many Weekend Club participants have been involved, the network has almost doubled in size during the pandemic. Annual One Big Picnic – stalls with free food in George Square, hoping they will be able to have this again this year.

The Weekend Club:

New arrivals to Glasgow found they were most lonely during the weekend.

What it does: monthly fun, free, educational activity on a Saturday. Transport paid to make it more accessible.

Types of activities: visits to cultural centres, museums, safari parks, parks, trips to the countryside, etc.

Often participants go on to become volunteers.

In addition the Weekend Club also builds connections with faith communities.

During the pandemic, the Weekend Club has offered online sessions. Had to get around issues of digital poverty so provided devices and data top-ups. Recent session with Kelvingrove Museum was very successful.

Participants from all over the world. Really positive feedback from Weekend Club participants. A new Weekend Club started in Edinburgh inspired by the Glasgow club.

15 different volunteers – from many faith backgrounds and none

Funding – rely mainly on small grant funding, recently been able to hire two sessional members of staff to help.

How do they publicise their events – connections with other organisations working with refugees, policy to always have 10% new people at every event

Contact details:

weekendclub@interfaithglasgow.org

www.interfaithglasgow.org

Twitter - [@interfaithGlasg](https://twitter.com/interfaithGlasg)

Instagram - (IG: [interfaithglasg](https://www.instagram.com/interfaithglasg))

www.facebook.com/interfaithglasgow

Mobile: 07511044814

Email: lynnda.wardle@interfaithglasgow.org

The Weekend Club are always looking to work with new organisations for their activities so please get in touch if you have any suggestions.

Q&A

Here's a few notes from the Q&A session:

Do you offer support with asylum cases? Short answer no, but we can signpost people to the appropriate organisation. We also do sometimes write references if we know the person well.

How do you volunteer? Please get in touch. We would suggest that you come along to an activity session first and see what we do.

How are you operating during lockdown? Online only, but we are still getting great participation levels (80 people at the last session!) We do data top ups so it remains accessible.

Do you help with travel costs? Yes, within Glasgow.

Do you vary venues? Venues we use church halls, etc. We try to work with faith communities and they offer their spaces for free to us which is great. It's really important to connect refugees with local communities. We need to collaborate!

Thanks again to Lynnnda for giving up her time to share the great work of the Weekend Club with us.

Long Term Case: Women Human Rights Defenders (CA)

Good news on the release of Loujain al-Hathloul:

[Saudi Arabia: release of Loujain al-Hathloul 'an incredible relief'](#)

Please retweet the following tweets -

<https://twitter.com/amnestygulf/status/1359551068229754882>

<https://twitter.com/amnestygulf/status/1359549726287400970>

Secretary's Report (FL)

Local Group Update

Please follow the link to read the latest [Local Groups Update](#)

Note this year is the 60th anniversary of Amnesty International!!

Group action for Nazanin

I did send a letter to the Glasgow Evening Times but got no reply :-)

Treasurer's Report (JG)

Remember to send JG receipts for any stamps for the letters you send as the group can reimburse you. You can email the group and FL will forward on (mail@glasgowwestamnesty.org.uk)

Annual return – thanks JG for sending!

Online/ outside fundraising ideas – bring to next month’s meeting please.

Possible Upcoming Glasgow West speakers (FL)

April meeting – One of the AIUK South Asia Country Coordinators

May meeting - Simon John (Secretary of the Thetford AI local group) talk on modern slavery. Possibility of doing joint session with the Scotland Amnesty Online Group.

Urgent Actions (MR)

Thank you to MR for sharing these urgent actions.

GERMAN-IRANIAN WOMAN ARBITRARILY DETAINED (IRAN)

[German-Iranian Woman Arbitrarily Detained](#)

Nahid Taghavi, a 66-year-old German-Iranian national, has been arbitrarily detained in Tehran’s Evin prison since 16 October 2020. She has serious medical conditions, including diabetes and high blood pressure, placing her at heightened risk of severe illness or death if she contracts COVID-19. She is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

INVESTIGATE SUSPECTED ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE (TURKEY)

[Investigate Suspected Enforced Disappearance](#)

Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit, a former legal advisor at the Prime Ministry who was dismissed following the 2016 coup attempt, has been missing since 29 December 2020. His family suspect him to have been abducted and subjected to enforced disappearance and all their efforts to locate him since have been in vain. The authorities have denied that he is in official custody. Turkish authorities must promptly investigate to determine the whereabouts of Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit and urgently inform his family.

KREMLIN CRITIC ALEKSEI NAVALNY INCARCERATED (RUSSIA)

[Kremlin Critic Aleksei Navalny Incarcerated](#)

On 17 January, prominent Russian anti-corruption and opposition activist Aleksei Navalny was arrested at the airport as he returned to Moscow. He has narrowly survived what has since been independently confirmed as poisoning by

Novichok nerve agent in August 2020 and spent the last five months in Germany recovering. He is a prisoner of conscience, his detention arbitrary and politically motivated.

Update: Please note [Amnesty International's recent statement on Aleksy Navalny](#)

KAZAKH FAMILY AT RISK OF TORTURE IN DETENTION (CHINA)

[Kazakh Family Risk Torture in Detention](#)

Weilina Muhatai and her two sons, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula, have been missing since August 2020. All ethnic Kazakhs living in China's Xinjiang region, their possible detention is thought to be linked to the activism of their husband and father, who they suspect to have died in detention in December 2020. With no communication or access to them for more than six months, there are grave concerns for the health and wellbeing of Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula.

You can download the full PDF or click Take Action at the top of the page for a link to a pre-prepared email/letter action.

Keep checking the Urgent Actions sites for actions you can take from your home - <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions>

AOB

Ali Aarrass

Our previous long-term case was released from prison last year, he sent a message thanking his supporters -

On behalf of the board of “freeali”, on behalf of all its members, on behalf of all my family and myself, I'd like to thank you for your support, your solidarity and your encouragement throughout these past long years. It's true that your ongoing perseverance, alongside our committees/groups and other NGOs, all of your voices have passed through the wretched prison walls in Morocco – where torturers “set to work” on all those who dare to demand their rights and that their dignity be respected.

Let's not forget I've survived these atrocities, these ordeals, such despicable torture in conditions of inhuman detention in Morocco. However, despite everything, thanks to you, they failed at one thing. They weren't able to make an animal out of me. The world knows of their crimes against vulnerable people, who are suppressed and terrorised by their country – a country which wants us to believe that it's a “democracy” or a “State based on law/rights”. All of you

outside of Morocco, you have made a fool of them and revealed the truth – yes – through your noble work, with courage and solidarity. And this is why we must continue relentlessly and stay strong. We must stay united and of course always stay in touch.

Today I'm finally free, even though we can't travel due to the Coronavirus. We're finally free to meet and to get together – even with our family. But that mustn't stop us from continuing the fight – a fight for what we believe to be right and just. Because there is so much injustice and there are so many human rights violations.

I'd also be honoured to get to know each and every one of you – you who've so willingly shared my story over these last 12 years – my testimony of arbitrary unjust imprisonment with which Spain, Belgium and Morocco were all complicit. I'd like to finish by telling you that: I will never stop revealing the crimes and injustices that they did against me.

Thanking you eternally for the support and solidarity that you've given to me and my dear family, Ali Aarrass Aa

We discussed the possibilities of sending Ali a message back. CC will get back to the group about this at our next meeting.

Human Rights Courses

Amnesty has produced a great selection of free online human rights courses on a variety of topics. Check them out here: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/online-learning>

Next meeting

Thursday 11th March 2021

Annual planning meeting (get your thinking caps on and bring your ideas for campaigning/ fundraising activities/ future meeting venues, etc.) If you wish to discuss any of these ideas informally before the meeting please get in touch with Freya (mail@glasgowwestamnesty.org.uk). Joining instructions will be sent via email and our social media.