

March 2021 Minutes



Glasgow West Amnesty International

Welcome and Introductions

Attendees: MDS, CA, JG, JGi, EMCs, MR, KM, ZA, BM

Apologies: CL, CC

Saudi Women Human Rights Defenders (CA)

Thanks to CA for an update on our Saudi Women Human Rights Defenders.

There was a Twitter storm action on March 8th for International Women's Day.

Loujain al-Halhloul

- Loujain al-Halhloul was sentenced on 28 December 2020 by the Specialised Criminal Court to five years and eight months in prison with partial suspension of two years and 10 months, in addition to three years 'probation' and a five-year travel ban. Loujain, cannot speak to media or have a social media account and cannot travel, two ongoing trials.
- Loujain was released on 10 February 2021 and has appealed her sentence.
- Loujain's appeal before the Specialised Criminal Court began on 2 March 2021 where the Public Prosecutor called for Loujain's sentence to be increased. The judges also continued to deny Loujain's torture allegations and the hearing was adjourned until 10 March.

- The family has asked that we do not say that Loujain is “free” because she is only conditionally released.
- Key action for this month: Help demand Loujain’s unconditional freedom. There are two ways you can do this.

Option One:

This is an [easy email action available here](#).

Option Two:

Write a letter to King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud with copies to the Embassy. Remember to send your copies to the Embassy – very important to do this to increase impact.

Addresses:

The King

His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud,

Office of His Majesty the King

Royal Court, Riyadh

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)

Twitter: @KingSalman

The Embassy

His Excellency HRH Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Sultan Al-Saud

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia

30 Charles Street, Mayfair W1J 5DZ.

020 7917 3000

You can either use this model letter or write the letter in your own words. You can write in English or Arabic. You have until 15th April 2021.

Suggested Text

Your Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud,

On 10 February, Saudi woman human rights defender Loujain al-Hathloul was conditionally released from prison after being sentenced by the Specialized Criminal Court in December 2020 to five years and eight months in prison, with partial suspension of two years and 10 months, including the time she has already served in detention since May 2018. She was convicted of trumped-up

charges related to her peaceful human rights work, including “spying with foreign parties” and “conspiring against the kingdom” for promoting women’s rights and calling for the end of the male guardianship system in Saudi Arabia.

Loujain al-Hathloul was arrested in May 2018 and was detained without charge or trial from 17 May 2018 until 13 March 2019, when she appeared for her first court session. She was subjected to lengthy spells in solitary confinement throughout her detention. For the first three months of detention, Loujain al-Hathloul endured torture, sexual abuse and other ill-treatment when she was held incommunicado and in solitary confinement with no access to her family or lawyer.

Even though she is now outside prison, Loujain al-Hathloul is not free yet. She continues to face probation, which means she faces the risk of re-imprisonment - conditional release and a travel ban of five years. In addition, she continues to be denied access to justice and accountability for her allegations of being tortured and harassed in prison during the first three months of her detention.

I urge you to ensure that Loujain al-Hathloul’s conviction and sentence are quashed as she was detained and tried solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression.

I also urge you to ensure Loujain al-Hathloul’s freedom of movement and travel by lifting the ban imposed on her for the coming five years, as well as removing the travel ban on her parents.

Furthermore, I call on you to ensure an impartial, effective investigation into the reports of Loujain al-Hathloul being tortured, harassed and ill-treated in prison, that she receives full reparation, and that those suspected of responsibility are prosecuted in fair trials with no possibility of the death penalty.

Finally, I urge you to ensure Loujain al-Hathloul’s safety and protection from threats, harassment and any kind of punitive measures, to enable her to safely continue her human rights work without intimidation or fear of prosecution.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

Please let Christine know about any actions you take so we can keep a record of our activities: christinealison@btinternet.com

Nassima al-Sada

- Nassima al-Sada was sentenced on 25 December 2020 to five years in prison backdated to start on 23 July 2018 with two years suspended. A five-year

travel ban is expected but an original fine of three million riyals appears to have been dropped. She is expected to be released in early June 2021.

- On 8 February 2021, the Public Prosecutor appealed the sentence and hinted at an earlier release.
- CA also shared a touching message from the son of Nassima who received messages of support as part of the 2020 Write for Rights campaign.

Israa al-Ghomgham

- Israa has been provisionally sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.
- The five other male defendants in her case were sentenced to between eight and seventeen-years' imprisonment.
- The court did reject the Public Prosecution's call for the men to be sentenced to death. It is unclear whether the Public Prosecution will appeal these sentences.
- All six defendants had been charged with filming and uploading footage of protests. None had been charged with using violence. They are being held in Damman prison.
- No additional action on this case is planned at this stage.

Samar Badawi

- Samar Badawi was sentenced on 25 December 2020 to five years in prison with two years suspended together with a one million riyal fine.
- She is expected to be released in early June 2021 and her lawyer has appealed her fine.

Nouf Abdul Aziz and Maya'a a-Zahrani

- Nouf Abdul Aziz and Maya'a a-Zahrani can now be mentioned publicly in appeals but Amnesty does not currently have any updates on their cases.

Jamal Khashoggi Update

- Although not one of our women human rights defenders, you may still be interested in this update on the Jamal Khashoggi case:
- A United States intelligence report has named Crown Prince Mohammed as the person who gave the order for Jamal to be murdered. Amnesty has issued a press release saying that the findings reinforce the need for accountability. The press release can be found [here](#).
- Reporters without Borders has filed a criminal complaint with the German Public Prosecutor General targeting the Crown Prince and other

high-ranking Saudi officials responsible for crimes against humanity. More information can be found here.

- MR also flagged up the film, the Dissident <https://thedissident.com> which is about Jamal Khashoggi.

We are hoping to do some more public-facing campaigning on our Saudi Women Rights Defenders over the course of the year. Perhaps around the Grand Prix as Saudi Arabia is this year's host country.

Second long term case?

If we would like to take on a second long term case, we would need someone from the group to be the lead on the case. If you would like to talk informally about what this would involve please contact christinealison@btinternet.com. As we have not been allocated a second case yet, if there is a particular region of the world/ human rights issue you are interested in please let us know so we can request this.

AIUK Priorities for 2021 (MDS)

Three broad types of campaigning that Amnesty does:

1. Global level: this is on a particular human rights issue, usually last a few years
2. Urgent Actions: people who need help right now, in imminent risk, we share some of these with you every month
3. Long term individual cases: e.g. the Saudi Women Rights Defenders or our previous case Ali Aarrass

AIUK Priorities for 2021:

1. Legislative threats to human rights in the UK, e.g. removal of the Human Rights Act, aspects of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSC Bill) etc.
2. Syria – the conflict has now been going for 10 years. AIUK intends to focus on Syrian human rights defenders going forward.
3. Refugees – in the UK there is the Football Welcomes and Families Together campaigns among other work.
4. COVID 19 – workers rights campaigning with Amnesty's trade union network, calling for enquiry into how pandemic was handled, Covid in prisons, etc.
5. Individuals at Risk – main focus on Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey
6. Write for Rights – annual campaign, will be Nov and Dec this year

7. UK homelessness – new issue for Amnesty, chosen by members in AGM
8. Children’s rights and youth engagement
9. Incorporation of UN international Human Rights treaties into Scots law
10. Defending the Amnesty movement – better supporting our colleagues at threat!

Fundraising/ Campaigning (FL)

Ideas from other Amnesty Groups

To get you inspired, here are some examples of what other Amnesty groups have been up to over the last few months:

- Lewes group’s year-long campaign against human rights abuses in the US (good example of collaboration between Amnesty groups)
- Westminster and Bayswater and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights online event with a variety of speakers in English, Arabic and Farsi (great example of collaboration with other organisations)
- Lambeth group’s virtual embassy crawl – MPs invited to speak on issues important to them. This replaced their usual in-person event where members of the group walk from embassy to embassy delivering Amnesty letters pertinent to the individual countries. We discussed doing something similar here in Scotland. Could we do something similar with the consulates in Edinburgh? Here is a list of all the foreign consulates in Edinburgh - <https://www.embassypages.com/city/edinburgh> Perhaps as a future collaboration with the Edinburgh Amnesty groups?
- Various groups video their events so they can be watched later on YouTube and remain as long-term record of their work
- Themed activities around key dates – e.g. World Day Against the Death Penalty, Black History Month, Refugee Week, etc.
- Ipswich group – poetry night, poetry read by group members
- Croydon group and Glasgow Uni group – auction of promises/ online raffles
- Cardiff and Southampton groups – photo mosaics – option to exhibit these mosaics in the future if we wish

Our ideas (possible now):

Sponsored litter pick

We have decided to do a sponsored litter pick to fundraise for Amnesty and do our bit for our local environment! All you need to do is:

1. choose your litter pick date and location (remember to stay local)
2. ask your friends and neighbours to sponsor you. Freya has made a free flyer on the website Canva to share with your neighbours as per Christine's suggestion.

You can edit and download the flyer to print yourself via this link:

[Flyer on Canva](#)

If you need a hand with this let Freya know (mail@glasgowwestamnesty.org.uk). We've also set up a GoFundMe page for people's donations:

<https://gofund.me/6e80e1bd>

3. take a photo of yourself out on your litter pick and send them to Freya or share them directly to our social media pages (@AmnestyGlasWest for Twitter and @glasgowwestamnesty for Facebook and Instagram)

Christine has some litter pickers you can borrow so get in touch with her if you'd like to use these. If you'd like a buddy from the Amnesty group to do your litter pick with, get in touch with Freya and she can link you up. Remember current rules are four people together from two households. Let's all aim to do our litter pick before the April meeting and raise some much-needed funds for Amnesty!

Auction of Promises

Our second fundraiser is an Auction of Promises. We're asking everyone to think of something we could contribute to the auction by the April meeting.

You can either offer your own services in a promise, e.g. a guided walk, baking a cake, an hour's gardening, a language lesson, cat/dog sitting, house/garden plants, a painting, etc. What special talents do you have?

Alternatively, contact your local businesses and see if they'll donate something to the auction. Their business will be promoted on our publicity for the auction.

Or you could do both.

Here is some inspiration from the Glasgow Uni Amnesty who organised a similar fundraiser with donations from local businesses for Christmas:

[GUAI JustGiving](#)

We look forward to hearing what you all come up with next month. We can aim to hold the online auction in April or May.

We also discussed some other ideas such as another online quiz and reaching out more to our local MPs/ SMPs including inviting them to our meetings.

Our future ideas (as COVID restrictions ease):

- Letter writing picnics

- Relaunch party for first face to face meeting – Amnestea, speakers, photo action, possible new venue? etc.
- Campaigning around COP21 in Glasgow
- Write for Rights large event in collaboration with Interfaith Glasgow. JG suggested a nice idea where the room is in darkness, each person represents a case and as the speaker mentions them, they light a candle. At the end the room is full of the light from the candles.
- Ceilidh (possibly in early 2022)

Secretary’s Report (FL)

Local Group Update

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

[Local Groups Update](#)

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)

Urgent Actions (MR)

Thank you to MR for sharing these urgent actions. Plenty of letter writing to keep you busy in the (hopefully) last few weeks of full lockdown:

IRAN: BRITISH-IRANIAN LABOUR ACTIVIST DETAINED

Mehran Raof, a British-Iranian national and a labour rights activist, is being arbitrarily detained in Tehran’s Evin prison. Revolutionary Guards agents arrested him on 16 October 2020. He is being held in prolonged solitary confinement, in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

[IRAN: BRITISH-IRANIAN LABOUR ACTIVIST DETAINED](#)

IRAN: TWO BALUCHI PRISONERS AT RISK OF EXECUTION

Death row prisoners from Iran's Baluchi ethnic minority, Hamed Rigi and Mehran Naru'i, are at risk of execution. They have been subjected to serious human rights violations including enforced disappearance and torture and other ill-treatment to extract "confessions" used to convict and sentence them to death in unfair trials. Since mid-December 2020, the Iranian authorities have executed 18 Baluchi men, raising fears that Hamed Rigi and Mehran Naru'i may be executed imminently.

[IRAN: TWO BALUCHI PRISONERS AT RISK OF EXECUTION](#)

IRAQ: JOURNALISTS MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY

On 16 February, the 2nd Erbil Criminal Court, in the Kurdish Region of Iraq's capital, sentenced activists and journalists Sherwan Sherwani, Ghudar Zebari, Hussein Issa, Ayaz Karan and Shvan Saeed to six years in prison following an unfair trial, based on trumped-up charges of "destabilizing the security and stability of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)". The five journalists are now on hunger strike as they await the appeal verdict expected to take place by 16 March. They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

[IRAQ: JOURNALISTS MUST BE RELEASED IMMEDIATELY](#)

AOB

Aleksei Navalny

Concerns were raised in the meeting over Amnesty's decision to no longer class Russian activist Aleksei Navalny as a prisoner of conscience.

Thanks to Mal for sharing Amnesty's statement on Aleksei:

[Amnesty Statement on Aleksii Navalny](#)

MR also shared the following article from the Moscow Times which was published before Amnesty's statement on the issue:

[Moscow Times Article](#)

We are being encouraged to contact Andy Hackman at AIUK (governance@email.amnestyuk.org.uk) if we have been upset by the decision.

Next meeting

Thursday 8th April 2021

We look forward to welcoming one of AIUK's South Asia Country Coordinators who will give a talk on the situation for women in South Asia. We will also use the meeting to plan our auction of promises.