

Liberation Annual General Meeting 2021: Activity Report



This short report from the General Secretary and the Executive covers the period a year from the date of the Liberation Annual General Meeting 2021.

With the agreement of General Secretary Maggie Bowden, an executive was proposed in the first quarter of 2020 to assist in the planning and execution of Liberation activity. This was confirmed by the first meeting of Liberation's Central Council.

The Executive comprises council members Ararat Ratoosi, Jamshid Ahmadi and Peter Talbot, plus Katie Ferola and Tom Gill.

Council meetings

We held five Liberation Central Council meetings over the period, on 6 February 2020, on 27 April 2020, 15 June 2020, 19 Aug.2020 and 25 February 2021.

Following the first lockdown in March 2020, we moved the meetings online.

It was very pleasing that among our most regular and active attendees was [Jeremy Corbyn MP](#), former chair of Liberation who, as many longer standing members will know, has been an active member of Liberation for many years.

Central Council were delighted to receive a briefing on the political situation in Guyana from Gail Teixeira, member of Guyana's parliament and minister in the PPP government.

Chair

We would like to put on record our enormous thanks to Kelvin Hopkins who, no longer being a MP, stood down as chair in Aug 2020. Kelvin stood in when Jeremy Corbyn became leader of the Labour Party.

When Kelvin stood down he stated: 'I was honoured and delighted to succeed Jeremy when he became Labour Leader and I remain strongly supportive of Liberation's aims and principles. I would of course wish to continue as a member and to support Liberation's important ongoing work'.

Additionally, due to missed AGMs and Jeremy not being present at some AGMs while being leader of the Labour Party, Liberation would in this report also like to pay tribute to Jeremy for all his incredibly hard work as chair over many years.

We will be formally celebrating by way of a physical event, probably in 2022, at which we will give formal thanks to Jeremy and Kelvin – as well as mark Maggie's 90th birthday and Liberation's 70th anniversary and pay special tribute to Stan Newens and Graham Stevenson.

We have been undertaking a search for a new chair among UK parliamentarians but to this date, the post remains unfilled.

Communications

Liberation revamped our social media activity on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and launched an [Instagram](#) account. We also started a Liberation [YouTube](#) account.

We also launched a monthly e-newsletter using a GDPR compliant email marketing platform, Mailchimp. Users sign up via an online form http://eepurl.com/gXnS_D

We updated the website, removing out of date content, updating info on our aims and objectives, and generally making it more accessible. We have been keeping it regularly updated, with information on our activities and articles.

We made use of video to extend our campaigning messages, recording and sharing on our website and social media accounts a number of video clips of speeches made at our events and council meetings.

We halted production of Liberation journal temporarily in response to the first lockdown, and then in the last quarter took a decision to communicate more effectively with the labour and left movements and extend our reach more generally with a distribution arrangement with the Morning Star newspaper. A newly designed [12-page quarterly journal](#), with analysis, comment and updates on struggles around the world, was included as part of the Saturday edition of the newspaper in November, meaning it was seen by many thousands of people across the UK and beyond. It was included both in the print edition and e-edition of the newspaper. The next issue is being published on February 27.

Events

We held four public meetings via the zoom online platform – on Covid-19 and Internationalism, Trump Deal of Century and the annexation of Palestine, Black Lives Matter and the war on Yemen. Attendances were significantly above previously organised events by Liberation. Guest speakers included

- Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North
- Zarah Sultana, MP for Coventry South
- Sevim Dagdelen MP, defence and foreign affairs spokesperson for Germany's Die Linke (Left party)
- Roger McKenzie, assistant general secretary of Unison

- Andrew Murray, Unite chief of staff and senior member of Stop the War
- Gawain Little, executive member of the NEU and chair of the NEU's international committee
- Iraklis Tsavdaridis, Executive Secretary of World Peace Council,
- Dr Aqel Taqaz, Palestinian Committee for Peace and Solidarity
- Dr Ofer Cassif, Member of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) for the Joint List and HADASH, lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Kirsten Bayes, Campaign Against Arms Trade
- Louise Regan, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, NEU National Officer

Political work and campaigns

We produced a parliamentary briefing on the issue of human and trade union rights and peaceful UK relations with Iran, in conjunction with Codir, an affiliate of Liberation, ahead of a Westminster Hall debate.

We supported international efforts to win freedom for former Brazilian President Lula: Liberation General Secretary Maggie Bowden signed a joint statement to seek his release and collected signatures from senior figures in the UK trade union movement, including Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite, Mick Whelan, General Secretary of ASLEF, Kevin Courtney, Joint General Secretary of NEU, Roger McKenzie, Assistant General Secretary, Unison. Grahame Morris MP also signed.

We also added Liberation's name to the nomination to Cuban medics for the Nobel Peace Prize this year.

Our political work has been informed by two excellent pieces of political research undertaken by volunteer Ayesha Baloch: mapping the UK parliament for MPs with activities and interests that coincide with Liberation's and an analysis of the Labour Party Manifesto of 2019.

Office and administration

The migration of the Liberation office to a fully online operation was challenging but some of the essential aspects, including in and outbound post and other communications, record keeping and billing, were completed swiftly.

The Executive also commenced an overdue updating of policies and procedures, including those relating to GDPR and volunteers.

General Secretary's 90th Birthday

Liberation joined with Maggie Bowden to celebrate her 90th Birthday on 2 September 2020, and expressed its thanks - including with adverts in the Morning Star newspaper – for her massive contribution in keeping Liberation alive and kicking for so many years.

Acknowledgements

We would like to put on record our thanks to the following people:

Aslef trade union for continuing to support Liberation in various ways and assisting with temporary arrangements, like post forwarding, due to the lockdowns.

Graham Stevenson, who sadly passed away on May 1st 2020. Graham had been working on a number of key area of work for Liberation; his valuable energy and commitment has been lost to Liberation.

Christine Blower, former NUT general secretary, for superb chairing of all but one of our public meetings over the past 12 months.

Gawain Little for chairing our event on Black Lives Matter.

Ayesha Baloch, a volunteer with Liberation: in addition to the above-mentioned political research work, Ayesha has assisted in the running of a number of our public meetings.

All the speakers to our events, including the following Liberation members:

Harsev Bains, National Vice President, Indian Workers' Association Great Britain (IWA-GB), Treasurer, Marx Memorial Library
Jacqueline McKenzie, Lawyer, Lecturer I McKenzie Beute & Pope, Centre for Migration Advice & Research, Windrush Justice Project

All the contributors of articles to our journal and website, among which:

Liz Payne, National Assembly of Women
Dr Francisco Dominguez, head of the Research Group on Latin America at Middlesex University, secretary of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign.
Aristos Damianou, member of the Political Bureau of AKEL and Cyprus Problem Office of the C.C. of AKEL and MP in Cyprus
Payam Solhtalab, Convenor of Association for Defence of Pease, Solidarity and Democracy (ADPSD-Iran)

Manifesto Press for assisting with the journal revamp and – in addition to Charlie May - production.

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