

SOLIHULL AMNESTY GROUP

Meeting on Monday 20th March 2017 at 8pm

1. **Present** Celia, Janet, Pauline, Bernard, Zayn, Heather, David, Naomi, Pooja
Apologies Cathy
2. **Minutes and actions from February meeting**
 - Celia has compiled and circulated a contact list. Everyone to check their details.
 - Letters have been sent to the local MPs asking about their stance on Yemen. Cathy had a letter from Caroline Spelman which appears to be a standard reply, saying that the Govt thinks a political solution would be best and that peace talks are a priority.
3. **Future Events**
 - Alderbrook 6th form enrichment course – part 2/3. It is felt that this is going very well, with the students keen to be involved in research and debates.
 - 8-9th April National Conference and AGM: East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham (amnesty.org.uk/agm) Celia will be attending and has offered lifts.
 - Solihull Fun in the Park 2017, Sunday 17th September. There was a discussion on whether it is worthwhile attending this event. The cost of a prime location pitch has risen. We will make a decision at the May meeting.
 - The Great Get Together is being held on 17 & 18th June in memory of Jo Cox.
 - International day of the Disappeared is on 30th August 2017
4. **Recent Events**
 - Street collection - there were 13 boxes but these haven't yet been opened and counted. Responses had varied depending on location and time of day.
4. **Secretary's Items**
 - **Monthly Action:** Details have already been emailed to us.
 - 1) End the horror in Syrian prisons. Send an email and tell Russia and the USA to use their global influence to ensure that independent monitors are allowed in to investigate conditions in Syria's torture prisons.
 - 2) Turkey, Eren Keskin. Send a letter: Tell Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ that Eren must not be jailed for her human rights work, and to repeal laws that curtail freedom of expression.
 - No April meeting because it will be Easter Monday
 - Al's Activist Political Effectiveness Programme - details were emailed to us, from Community Organiser Farshid, looking for members to take part in a pilot project that will test how we can better train and support activists in political engagement with their MP and local political representatives. Pooja has already agreed to take part.
 - International postage rates have risen by 12p. Celia had some stamps to distribute but it was generally agreed that we could buy stamps ourselves if necessary.

5. Campaign report

- Sombath Somphone – David. There was no new information. Pooja has been added to the letter writing rota.
- Johan Teterissa – Bernard. No new information.

Bernard has heard from Chris Peel; he would like groups to participate in taking a petition to be handed in at the embassy in support of Johan. People will decide if they can go when we know a date.

Chris Peel says he can't put us in touch with other groups due to data protection laws - most groups use personal email addresses. He offered to visit our group to discuss campaigns; we all thought this was a good idea.

6. AGM – proxy voting arrangements and resolutions from local groups

Celia has confirmed that members can vote by proxy online. There is a voter care number for if anyone has any problems voting 0207 033 1777.

The proposals are:

A category - deals with the Board, Standing Orders etc

B category - proposals from local groups

1. Eviction of the Chagossian people and their right to return to their islands
2. The improvement of standards for the detention of asylum seekers in the UK
3. The freedom of the Ahmadiyya people to practice their religion
4. Make the combating of homelessness a priority campaign

C category - It has been proposed by the Wythall group that the role of Regional Reps should be paid due to the amount of time involved and a shortage of volunteers.

7. A Point of View by John Gray – Protecting our Way of Life

We listened to this broadcast which had originally been on Radio 4.

This looked at the costs of war, how the economies of countries suffer. Also the connections between military interventions and the migrant crisis.

We spent a few minutes discussing some of the points which had been raised.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday 15th May