

## **Minutes of Meeting - Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**Present** Celia , David, Janet , Megan , Luisa

We welcomed Baldip who attended our meeting for the first time.

**Apologies** Bernard , Pauline , Cathy

**Change to planned agenda** - in the light of the absence of several members who would like to hear the talk by Meghan re her visit to BOSNIA, it was decided to postpone that talk to next month's meeting and instead just complete a business agenda this evening.

### **Matters arising**

1. REPLIES TO LETTERS/EMAILS SENT TO MPs Caroline Spelman and Julian Knight re the Private Members Bill being brought by an opposition MP and debated in the Commons on 16<sup>th</sup> March on the topic of extending the rules regarding the right of recent unaccompanied child refugees to formally request that their families be allowed to join them in the UK.

Both our MP's said in their replies that they did not support the bill. Janet had listened to much of the debate in the House and outlined the essential opposition to the Bill. Both MPs replied to our letters along similar lines (although worded somewhat differently). Julian Knight essentially just reiterated the Government's current position. Caroline Spelman was more forthcoming giving a wider assessment of the Government's position. I. Although the vote was eventually in favour so that the Bill would go on to the Committee Stage, it was made clear that the Government would oppose it at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading stage. The overriding argument was that such a proposal could be manipulated by intending immigrants to gain legal entry to UK by sending their younger members as unaccompanied child migrants, exposing them to all the dangers of possible exploitation and abuse without any guarantee that the families would actually be able to follow them as legal immigrants.

2. CAMPAIGNING - David was asked whether an approach to Duncan Booth ( AIUK coordinator for campaigning action in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos) had yielded any progress yet to find another At Risk person for whom we could campaign. The answer was 'not yet' but that he had made further email contact with Duncan and was awaiting his reply. We need also to be aware that the cost of overseas postage is likely to be raised shortly.

**Future events** 1. The AIUK AGM is on 7/8th April. Members who had gone to the AGM in the past agreed that it was a stimulating and worth-while experience.

2. STREET COLLECTION IN SOLIHULL The date offered us by the local Council is 25<sup>th</sup> August ( actually Bank Holiday) but it looked as if we would have sufficient collectors to make this date worthwhile - we have in the past raised £400 or more from this collection

3. AMNESTEA New date Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August at Celia's.

4. FUN IN THE PARK This is an annual event in Tudor Grange Park in September. Several members feel that as it is largely an event concerning performances by children and young people and there are also stalls and sideshows, the 'seriousness' of our stall and the nature of our work, does not really fit in well with the general atmosphere. The view was also expressed that the stall brings AI's work to public attention and may sow seeds which lead to action later on. DECISION TO BE MADE AT APRIL MEETING.

5. BIRMINGHAM CANOLDIR MALE CHOIR - concert in aid of Solihull charities - 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018 in Christ Church, Solihull. This is being planned by David. Amnesty could raise money at such an event, so we would look at this favourably and await further information.

### **Secretary's items**

1. Monthly Action - AIUK is being proactive re support of Human Rights defenders all over the world, where they are under threat of violence, false imprisonment, etc. (THE 'BRAVE' CAMPAIGN). As 22<sup>nd</sup> March is 'WORLD WATER DAY' it is appropriate that the Monthly Action this month is in support of an activist in Chile' Rodrigo Mundaca, who is suffering considerable opposition from vested interests (politician, police , land owners) re his work for Water Rights for poorer people in CHILE. Half of our group would write letter of support directly to him and the others letters to the Chilean Embassy re this matter.