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**Amnesty International**

### **Blackheath and Greenwich**

### **Newsletter**

# December 2022

## Group Meeting Tuesday, 13.12.2022

1. **Introductions, Apologies, appointment of Newsletter Writer.**

**Present:**

Brigitte

David Wi

Amanda

Anne F

Geoff

Graham

Jennifer

Rachel

Sarah

**Apologies:**

Illona

Tony

Angela

Roger

Ann

Dave

Ken

Anne F was in the chair. Brigitte was Newsletter writer. Welcome to Sarah all the way from Dartford!

1. **Guest Speaker Daren Nair**

Daren talked about the shift from hostages being taken by criminals and extremists to what he calls state sponsored hostage taking where hostages are taken for political aims. He listed countries such as Iran, Venezuela, Myanmar, India and Russia and others.

 His aim is to empower hostages as well as their families by giving them a voice through his podcast so the world can see them as individuals who have not committed any crime but as victims of state sponsored hostage taking. There are now networks of families all over the world and Governments are getting involved by targetted sanctions against state officials involved in hostage taking such as travel bans. He is campaigning for special government teams being set up in western countries to combat hostage taking – the USA having done so already. Darens podcasts are available at <https://www.podhostagediplomacy.com/>

1. **Woolwich Letter Writing**

Georgie Needham-Bennet had to postpone

1. **Country/regional campaigns**

**China**

China Update from Angela

In response to protests that have taken place across China against Covid 19 restrictions, AIUK issued a press release on the 27 November in which AI’s Deputy Regional Director. Hana Young, said: “The Chinese authorities must let people express their thoughts freely and protest peacefully without fear of retaliation”. No action suggested.

 **Iran** .

Iran Update from Graham

In recent press releases, AIUK has stated that the horrifying execution of young protesters, Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavard following expedited and grossly unfair shamtrials, shows how authorities are acting on public threats to expedite capital proceedings and carry out executions in an attempt to instil fear in the public. Amnesty International fears that many others in Iran could face the death penalty in relation to the popular uprising, given the thousands of people arrested and indicted. Amnesty International is calling on the UK government to help end the crisis of systemic impunity, and show support for women and girls in Iran by calling on Iranian authorities to immediately quash all death sentences against protesters.

You can take action: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/woman-life-freedom.

**West & Central Africa.** Geoff
In Guinea, activists Oumar Sylla, Ibrahima Diallo and Saïkou Yaya Barry were arrested by the authorities on 30th July 2022, solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.  Oumar Sylla and Ibrahima Diallo are still detained at Conakry prison, waiting for their trial after they called for a protest on 28th July.  On 12 October, Saïkou Yaya Barry was provisionally released under judicial control and evacuated to Tunis after his health deteriorated during his detention.

The Guinean authorities must drop all charges and immediately and unconditionally release Oumar Sylla and Ibrahima Diallo.  If it is still appropriate to send letters in January, Geoff will prepare one for then; otherwise, he will do so for a different case
**Europe** no update

1. **AIUK Matters:**

Our particiption at the next AIUK AGM: the working group will re-convene asap (Angela, ann F, David Wi, Graham).

Anti-Racism network on line meeting: no one able to attend

**5. Booksale Debrief**

David Wi to send thank you email to – Rosie Chinchen, AIUK Director of Fundraising for speaking and David Blakely for attending

Campaign: Angela reported that more than 150 cards were written (a record) and Brigitte brought the cards to the meeting to get more done and then send them off. Graham commented that AIUK did not provide display material for the campaign and he had to enlarge and print relevant material.

Donation from Happy Fish: Brigitte to check with David W whether the money has appeared in our account.

Removal odf boards and poles from church: Geoff to organise; it should come to about £100.-

Graham has stored the posters and photos from the exhibition of our history.

AI bookshop possibly in Blackheath/Greenwich: We will be asked to provide volunteers.

Article in AIUK magazine: Ann and Ken delivered a text and are awaiting a response from the editor.

**6. Future fundraising initiatives.** Standing item

Further book sales: Rachel was in touch with 4 volunteers but has not heard since she told them about the hours involved.

**7.AIBG AGM**

**All posts will come up for re-election. Please see list of posts further down.**

**NOV 2022 BOOKSALE – FINANCIAL**

Message from David Weekes, Treasurer:

“Following the booksale we now have £9775.93 in the AIBG account.

I think Church of the Ascension kindly said that they would not charge us for the November sale as it was our last, just contribute £50.- to the heating. If we do need to make a donation please let me know and also the amount will need to be deducted from the available ban). Our running costs are currently quite low, £480 per year for the St Margaret;s Crypt, a £75 affiliation fee that we pay AIUK, and stamps, which in 2022 came to £422. At present we can run the group on say £1500 p.a at most (although this of course may change if we step up letter writing or other forms of activism).

 We donated £3000.- to AIUK from the booksale proceeds. This will leave us plenty to run the group for the next three/four years (we donated £2000 to AIUK after the June sale.”

**7.Arrangements for future meeetings**

Winter social to be decided at the January meeting.

8. **Future Meetings and events**

* Chair for future meetings, newsletter writers: tbc at AGM

 **Tuesday, 10th January**: AIBG AGM + meeting

 **Tuesday 24th January: Letter writing**

Location: The Greenwich Tavern, 1 King William Walk, Greenwich, London SE10 9JH Time: 7.30pm

* **Speakers/events:** Sotez Choudhury, AIUK anti racism network tbc

**AIBG posts**

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| **Officers** | **Other Roles** |
| Chair | Social Media Co-ordinator | Website Manager |
| Vice-Chair | Newsletter Writers | London Regional Representative |
| Treasurer | Country Contacts |  |
| Secretary | Membership Secretary | Letter Writing Co-ordinator |
|  | Hospitality | Events |