

AIM AGM February 9 2023

Chair's report for February 2022 – January 2023

Welcome to our 2023 AGM.

It was a pleasure to be able to resume meeting in person over the last 12 months. I have been surprised while looking back over the year to see how much we have achieved thanks to our supporters who help run events, and those who come along to take part. We were saddened to learn of the deaths of four former group members: Judith Ward, Beth Stafford, Maxine Stanley, and Kim Noble.

One of many highlights was our celebration in October of Minehead Amnesty International's 20th birthday with our founders Chris and Christina Lawson, who came from Lewes to join us and to visit old friends.

We listened to talks on a variety of subjects. Cherry, our Treasurer and Activism Rep for the South West, gave us insights into the struggles of people in India, Kashmir, and Afghanistan. At our IWD stall in March passers-by signed letters on behalf of Afghan women. At the SW Conference in Exeter lecturer Nick Gill gave us chilling details of the hostile environment facing refugees seeking asylum in the UK. And Kerry Moscojiuri's online talk about AI's new strategy was most helpful.

In May we watched a shocking film, '200 metres', which showed the devastating restrictions imposed on the Palestinians by the Israelis.

We held 3 letter-writing afternoons which are so useful as, together, we are motivated to act on behalf of the individuals and groups imprisoned and those in danger. Thanks as always to Peter for providing all the stamps. In December as part of the Write for Rights campaign, we held a coffee morning and letter-signing event in Minehead Methodist church. This, together with our Amnesty Christmas tree in the church and our stall at Roadwater fete, were all helpful for awareness-raising. The local press is happy to publicise our activities, and to print our press officer's reports with photographs.

Our fundraising events took off with another convivial quiz night, especial thanks to Jean Humber who provides suitably challenging questions. Another fundraising highlight was Hazel Prior's concert where she sang and played the harp to the delight of the audience. And in August generous donations for the AmnesTea in Susan's beautiful garden proved another excellent fundraiser.

I would like to mention two members who have stood out because of their activism. First Philippa Gerry, who in her 90s has raised thousands of pounds for Save the Children by scooting round Blenheim Gardens and for Ukraine by selling blue and yellow ribbons. And Jenny Gateau, who has led the Minehead Refugee Support Group for years and has enabled Syrian, Kurdish and Afghan families to have unforgettable holidays at the seaside.

To conclude, a big thank you to Cherry for being instrumental in setting up the Somerset network.

Alison Dietz