



# DERBY AMNESTY

Amnesty International (AI) Derby and District Group Newsletter

<http://derby.amnesty.org.uk>

November 2012

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## “Write for Rights” or Greetings Card Campaign Saturday 8th Dec St Peter’s Church Derby



**Join us to  
 send a  
 message of  
 hope on  
 December 8th.**

Each year for over 20 years we have held an event to which we invite the public to send letters of support to prisoners of conscience or to the families of those suffering abuse of their human rights. This has gone under various headings “Write a Thon”, “Greetings Card Campaign”, and this year “Write for Rights”.

We are gathering in **St. Peter’s Centre, St Peter’s Church, St Peter’s St. Derby on Saturday 8th December between 10am and 4pm** to sign and write cards to many in various parts of the world who might otherwise be completely forgotten. In addition we will write appeal letters to authorities. In the past we have used various venues but are delighted this year to have the chance to sample the very new Centre in St. Peter’s. It is warm, well lit and comfortable. Information and materials will all be supplied.

Do drop in for as much time as you can spare and invite your friends and relatives too. In addition to writers we need several people to help set up between 9 – 10am and to help clear at 4pm. Please use the tear off slip or email Kate Ball with your offers. **If you cannot come, donations would be very welcome, as postage costs are likely to be very steep.**

### Letters and Cards do make a difference!

If you need persuading that our letters and cards do have some effect you can take heart from these two  
 The first from an ex-prisoner

*“Every week I was waiting for those letters. I was reading them again and again, thinking of those people who took five minutes, or maybe more, to write or to draw. Five minutes of their time gave me the energy to survive two years of unlawful imprisonment.”*

Chekib El-Khiari who was imprisoned in Morocco.

The second is a letter to a local member from Ostrava, in the Czech Republic after she took up the case of the Romani 16 August 2012,

*“Dear Mrs. Wall,*

*I have received your email with a copy of letter to the Mayor of Ostrava concerning current situation of the Romani families from the street in the City of Ostrava. You asked the Mayor of Ostrava not force these evictions without consultation with the families concerned and to look to establish a long term solution to the problem. I would like to ensure you that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic is monitoring situation in this area directly through its subordinated organisation like the regional branch of the Labour Office of the Czech Republic in the City of Ostrava and it is in the contact with all other relevant local and regional authorities. We are also in daily contact with the Public Defender of Rights - Ombudsman, who is consulting the situation with the affected Romani families and who is together with local authorities from the City of Ostrava exploring all feasible alternatives to eviction and also forms of help suitable for the Romani families.”*

### ✂ Reply Slip Write for Rights Reply Coupon 8 December

- ◆ I am able to help at the Write for Rights event on Sat 8th Dec between ..... and .....
- ◆ I am unable to attend, but am sending a donation towards costs. I enclose a cheque for ..... (made to Derby Amnesty Group)

Name.....Address.....

Email ..... Phone .....

Please return to Kate Ball, 9 Thornhill Rd, Derby DE22 3LY (D 384622) by 1 Dec.

# THE BIG AMNESTY SKILLSHARE

## Report by Vrushik

On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012 Amnesty International held The Big Amnesty Skill Share at the Human Rights Action Centre in London. This was a full day event with strong attendance from many Amnesty groups which made it a good opportunity to network with fellow activists.

The day began with a brief overview of the Human Rights Act and how rights are currently protected in the UK. The Human Rights Act (HRA) came into force in the UK on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2000 and it protects everyone in the UK without exception. The key points presented were: the HRA makes rights more accessible as it allows people to claim their human rights within the UK legal system. Human rights are not just about the law and taking cases to court, it requires all public authorities to act compatibly with the rights it protects. Finally, wherever possible, existing laws have to be interpreted and applied in a way that fits with the human rights act. If this can't be done, courts can make a 'declaration of incompatibility' and parliament can consider how to change the legislation to make its human rights compatible.

In the afternoon there were four skill share workshops to choose from, these were creating a brilliant... event; street stall; photo stunt/street performance and local media story. I chose the event workshop. An interesting exercise was coming up with ideas for an unsuccessful event! We came up with poor publicity, lack of information, difficult access to the venue as some of the things which would prevent the event from being a success (things we hope to avoid!). At the end of the session participants from each workshop took turns to present what they had learnt with the street performance being very entertaining! Finally, the last segment was about how to tackle tricky conversations. Various scenarios were presented and we discussed how best to deal when presented with this situation. The tips to deal with a situation like this were to use non-aggressive body language, use everyday language, clarify the reality or truth regarding this aspect of human rights and present facts to dispel the myth. In summary the skill share workshop was enjoyable and very useful. Now armed with ideas and techniques this should benefit our activism work.

**Vrushik came back with many leaflets about "How to Do things" which were shared with the group. These exist as PDFs and can be sent to anyone interested. Kate Ball. Kate.Ball@cantab.net D384622**

## Diary Dates . . . Diary Dates . . . .Diary Dates .

*Group Meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Friends Meeting House, St Helen's St. Derby*

- Tue 13 Nov** Group Meeting 7.30pm FMH. Planning "Write for Rights" event.
- Sat 8 Dec** Write for Rights, St Peter;s Centre, St Peters St 10am—4pm
- Mon 10 Dec** Human Rights Day
- Tues 11 Dec** Group Meeting 7.30pm FMH.
- Tue 8 Jan** Meal together at the Yaffle Café . 7.30pm £10 –12. Contact Kate Ball D. 384622 for more info and to book a place.
- Sat 13 Apr** Book Sale, Guildhall Clubroom, Derby 10.30 – 2.30

## Flag Day

Our Flag Day held on Sat. 13<sup>th</sup> Oct, raised a total of £404.79, which will be used to support Amnesty's work. Very many thanks to all who collected. The Flag Day is one of our major fund-raising events and whilst this is a useful amount, it is much lower than usual. There are several possible contributory factors; the economic climate, the weather, Nottingham University students collecting for Oxfam at the same time. I think the fact that we had significantly fewer collectors than in previous years is also a major factor. This was partly due to clashing with other events, which was unfortunate and unforeseen. The number of possible helpers seems to decline each year.

*When we have arranged a date for next year please put it in your diaries straightway and maybe everyone could bring a friend to help?! If you didn't collect this year, could you consider giving an hour next year? The more helpers we have the greater the total, I think!*

*Anne Feist*

## AI UK Annual General Meeting

The Amnesty International (UK Section) National Meeting and AGM took place at Manchester University in April. The main theme of the meeting concerned the Arms Trade Treaty negotiations at the UN in July. As we now know the negotiations unfortunately did not lead to a final treaty but Amnesty is hopeful that a treaty will eventually become a reality.

The Treasurer gave his report on the finances of the UK Section. The growth in income was less than planned and Amnesty is currently operating with a deficit between income and expenditure. Although the Section's reserves are healthy, it was decided that the deficit would need to be eliminated within the next couple of years. This means Amnesty will have to prioritise the campaigns it wished to run. Since the AGM the Senior Management Team announced that that its expenditure will be reduced by £2.5 million each year. This means that redundancies are being contemplated.

We had a pleasant surprise when Jenni Williams of (Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) addressed the conference. Last year she was hiding from the Zimbabwean authorities because they had intended to prosecute her for treason. Fortunately Amnesty and others managed to persuade the authorities to drop the charges.

*James Lam*