Amnesty International

### Blackheath and Greenwich

### **Newsletter**

### **January 2017**

**Tuesday, 10 January, 7.30pm**

**Present:**

Amanda Kipling

Andrés Crespo

Angela Dock,

Ann Hillary

Brigitte Hurrell

David Webbe Wood

David Weekes

Dawn Oliver

Dee Weekes

Geoff Torry

Graham Dock Ken Ryder

Olwen Pearson

Rachel Errington

Roger Hardwick

Simon Ware

**Apologies:**

Elizabeth Nieumeier

Guy Ottewell

Tilly Lavenas

1. **Introductions & Apologies, Newsletter writers, Ken and Ann.** Dawn Oliver was welcomed as a new member of the group.
2. **Annual General Meeting:**

(a) **Chair’s Report**:

Simon outlined the highlights of the year: progress in the **Book Sales**, June: £10,000 plus, November: nearly £5,000 and credit cards used for first time. The successful campaigns at the Book Sales: Jo Cox condolences, Write for Rights and letters to MPs. People came from far and near and social media increased attendance.

Between 750 and 1,000 **letters** were sent, an increase over 2015.

Two enjoyable **Socials** at Shelagh’s and Olwen’s (thank you both for hosting!)

**Write for Rights:** Guy and Tilly opened their house for this successful event which included tea and cakes and many cards signed.

Links between AIBG and **AFRIL refugees** wercontinued and developed by Brigitte.

**Campaigns** were led by Angela (China), Brigitte (Burma), David W (Death Penalty), Roger and Tilly (Central America) with many letters sent and some positive feedback.

We had a **Creative Writers poetry** evening. Roger and Angela read theirs.

Dee, Angela and Graham engaged with Blackheath High School about the case of **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**.

Effective **Social media** impacted favourably on the Book Sale and meetings. To date, we have 298 Facebook followers and 1,775 on Twitter.

Simon concluded his report by saying that the team effort of new and old members has contributed to a good group and the successful year.

(b) **Treasurer’s Report:**

Dee gave out her **Income & Expense Statement** as at 31 December 2016 and explained the figures, stating that we were comparing 12 months with 16 months

as we have brought our financial year in line with AIUK’s. Book Sale net Income increased in 2016 over the previous year. Total expenses, excluding the AIUK donation, increased due to a rise in Book Sale expenses and stationery/postage increase. Based on the current bank balance, and after allowing for expenses 2017, it was agreed to **donate £5,500 to AIUK**.

The number of signatures for AIBG expenditure was discussed. Currently there are three signatories: Dee, Krystina and Brigitte. It was decided to add David Webbe Wood.

Selection for group roles then took place and the following were unanimously elected.

(c) **Chair: Rachel Errington** (d) **Vice-Chair: Geoff Torry**

(e) **Treasurer: Dee Weekes** (f) **Secretary: David Webbe Wood**

(g) **Other roles:** (i) **Social Media Co-ordinator: Simon Ware**

(ii) **News Letter Writers: Ken Ryder/Ann Hillary, Graham Dock, David Weekes, Brigitte Hurrell, Roger Hardwick.**

(iii) **Campaign Co-ordinators: China: Angela Dock; Central America: Roger Hardwick; Burma/SE Asia: Brigitte Hurrell; Death Penalty: David Weekes; David & Dee Weekes: Iran**

Graham is interested in co-ordinating a campaign later.

**3. Action in support of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**

Photos of the group holding placards in support of Nazanin were taken and will be posted on Facebook and Twitter. Nazanin’s position is still dire, after a small improvement. Dee told the group that Nazanin likes sewing. It was suggested we could send to her a sewn collaged article, e.g a quilt or scarf.. Dee will find out more and tell us what would be acceptable.

**4. Campaign Updates:**

**Burma: Brigitte.** Human rights abuses continue and Muslims are being persecuted.

Aung San Suu Kyi has remained silent about this. Brigitte had prepared letters about Aung Win Hlaing, who is imprisoned for insulting the President for signing at the meeting or at the Social on Saturday (urgent action by 20 January).

**China: Angela** is preparing letters for the next letter writing evening on two cases:

(i) Huang Qi, founder of Sichvan-based website ’64 Tianwang’, taken on 22 Nov 2016, now formally arrested for ‘leaking state secrets’ – no access to a lawyer and at risk of torture.

Our previous letters helped towards release 5 of 6 journalists who covered protests on website ’64 Tianwang’ regarding the G20 summit.

(ii) Jiang TianYong, suspected of inciting subversion of state power, has disappeared and is without access to a lawyer and at risk of torture.

**Central America: Roger.** The **Mexican** government has refused to release a report on the conduct of investigators into the disappearance of 43 students. The report says crucial suspects were arrested and moved illegally, casting doubt on the evidence given.

AI has launched a platform <http://speakout4defenders,com> about human rights defenders from C. and S. America threatened, attacked and even killed for their work.

**El Salvador:** Relaxation of the total anti-abortion law in cases of rape and some other instances has been proposed by the ruling leftist party in Congress. A bill is due for debate in January or February.

**Honduras**. Berta Caceres. There is an international independent investigation into her murder as Berta’s family raised concerns about the official investigation.

**Mexico**. Veronica Razo, 5 ½ years in prison, raped post arrest. Roger will prepare letter.

**Death Penalty & Iran: David W.** Actions on Website: **Philippines.** The ‘war on drugs’ is encouraging vigilantes. **Iran.** A 15 year old child bride, Zeinab Sehoarvand, faces execution for murder of abusive husband.

**Saudi Arabia.** 15 people sentenced to death in December, accused of spying for Iran. The trial flouted ‘fair trial’ standards.

**Belarus.**  In November 3/4 men executed in a ‘purge’ of death row. They were shot in the back of the head. The country had seemed to be on the way to abolishing the death penalty. It is the only country in Europe still to retain it.

David added that in the USA that although the death penalty is still in place in many States Texas and Oklahoma are the only two regularly executing.

**5. Charity Meal**

Graham said Brian at Hamilton House (the venue) apologised for changing the date, when Kate Allen had been booked to come. Simon will ask her if she can come on a Saturday in early October, or second half September. Graham will then confirm with Brian.

**6. AGM Resolution**

David WW sent group’s resolution on the Chagossian People to AIUK and will email the group about any amendments. The AGM is 8/9 April, Nottingham. Kinnari Bhatt will go(?). Those wishing to go from the group should let DWW know.

**7. Letter Writing**

24 January, Greenwich Tavern, King William Walk, SE10. Letters to DWW by 22 January for photocopying. Rachel asked that the case names be stated in the email Subject line.

**8. Group Winter Social 7 p.m. 14 January, at Shelagh’s, 139 Lee Park, SE3 9HZ.** Food and drink contributions welcomed.

**9. Arrangements for Future Meetings**

**February:** Matthew Pennycook, Greenwich MP, has been invited for a Refugees Welcome discussion and Brigitte will ask an English speaking Syrian refugee family settled in a flat by Lewisham Council if they would like to attend.

**March:** Courtney Howe, Guatemala Campaign Co-ordinator.

**April:** Nola Weerwag, Burma Campaign Co-ordinator.

**10. AOB** DWW asked that any answers to the AI survey he recently emailed to the group should be forwarded to him so that he can return it to AI by mid-February.

**Graham then proposed a ‘vote of thanks’, heartily endorsed by all, to Simon, our outgoing Chair, for all his hard work and his social media activities for the group!**

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|  | **EVENTS 2017** |
| Saturday 14 January | 7p.m Group Winter Social at Shelagh’s, 139 Lee Park, SE3 9HZ |
| Tuesday,. 24 January | Letter Writing, Greenwich Tavern, King William Walk, SE10 |
| Tuesday 14 February | 7.30p.m Group Meeting |

Group Meetings: Second Tuesday every month (apart from June) at 7.30pm in the crypt of St. Margaret’s Church, Lee Terrace, SE13 5DL

Letter writing evenings: Fourth Tuesday every month (apart from December)

Book Sale: A Saturday mid-to-late June; a Saturday after Remembrance Sunday in November; both at Church of the Ascension (COA), Dartmouth Row, SE10 8BF

Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC): 17–25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA; for any official events please register via the website at [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/) or tel: 020 7033 1675

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