

## Amnesty International (Solihull)

### Minutes of Meeting - 16 January 2017

**SPEAKER** - Dr.Martin Deddicoat - topic : South Africa today

Martin worked for several years (post Apartheid) in different hospitals and in different geographical areas of South Africa. His talk was very informative and was largely focussed on medical provision in that country since the introduction of free healthcare after 1994. Before that date different hospitals were available according to race - Whites / Coloureds / Blacks / Indians other races. Many of these hospitals were originally Missionary foundations.

Medical provision by the state is highly politicised and is dependent on corruption, wealth, political patronage, tribal association, tradition and/or regional factors across a very big geographical area. In the rural non-white areas hospitals are often inadequate for anything but straight forward medical needs with few doctors per head of population and mainly underqualified practitioners. It tends to be 'fire-fighting' (healing for the already very sick) since many medical conditions require payments which are beyond the resources of most people. Doctors are poorly paid in these hospitals so there is a concentration of medical skills in the larger urban areas where the hospitals are better and doctors are paid more. Even so, most doctors depend on private practice as well. Consequently 90% of doctors treat only 11% of the population. Primary healthcare is largely provided by nurses.

Martin outlined the efforts to reduce the huge incidence still of HIV, Cholera, and Malaria. Progress is being made in all these areas of medical concern in spite of continuing degrees of social resistance to medical interventions (eg. immunisation) and health care ( eg. birth control methods). Due to the political intervention and support by the current President (Zuma) there has been a huge reduction in HIV incidence in babies and vaccination rates for many diseases are actually now higher than in UK.

**AGENDA - Present :** Zayn Richards, Pooja Kaur, Sheniz Shefik, Cathy, Heather, Janet, Amy, Bernard, Pauline, Celia, David

**APOLS** - Trisha Berry

**RECENT EVENTS - HUMAN RIGHTS DAY** The stall for the 'Write for Rights' campaign which we manned at the Manor House on Monday 12 t December was successful. The venue was more favourable than the previous location outside Sainsbury's and about 10 cards full of signatures were sent by us to the two people we had selected from the booklet.

Thanks to Cathy and Lynne's hospitality, our **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** was a great success.

**FUTURE EVENTS** -

**ALDERBROOK SCHOOL 6<sup>TH</sup> FORM ENRICHMENT COURSE** starting 18<sup>th</sup> January. Amy has already planned out her units for this part of their curriculum the first 5 sessions which will be done before she leaves for South Africa after which David and Celia will complete the subsequent sessions, hopefully following the model begun by Amy.

**STREET COLLECTION - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March** - We need to muster a significant number of collectors to make this successful.

**NATIONAL AGM** - Pooja Kaur is hoping to attend.....maybe others could join her?

### **SECRETARY'S ITEMS -**

The new **Regional Amnesty Rep.** ROSE BENNETT

**Verdi Requiem** at St. Mary's, Warwick on Sat 21 Jan. Not known whether anybody from our group can attend.

**Cafod** organised conference on Palestinian matters - Birmingham University 28<sup>th</sup> January -again it is not yet known whether any of our group can attend.

**Monthly Action - Write for Rights** - members requested to take at least one sheet (on the table) so that we could send a letter from our group to all the names in the booklet .

### **CAMPAIGN REPORTS**

- **Sombath SOMPHONE (Laos)** David circulated the new rota for all our members to be involved . It runs to June (incl) and we now have some additional members of the Lao administration to write to. David will encourage new members to be involved in this new rota. Laos Coordinator (Duncan BOOTH) wants us to continue to write even though nothing has been reported from Laos authorities to shed light on the disappearance of this community worker - 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his abduction, Dec. 2016.

- **Johan Teterrisa (Indonesia)** - is one of the people who is part of the Write for Rights campaign, 2016 - 17. New letter writing rota for our group will be prepared when Celia has supplied Bernard with a new list of names for the rota. There was some discussion as to the effectiveness of this campaign as the Indonesian authorities appear to be obdurate even after so many years of letter writing from UK and elsewhere. It was agreed that we would continue as it has taken considerable time in the past to achieve a positive outcome.

- Celia raised the issue of coordinating with other groups who are also campaigning on Johan's part. Bernard and Janet confirmed that they had contacted the Indonesia coordinator and he was reluctant to share information about which groups were participating . Outcome of discussion was that at the February meeting we would compile an email to be sent to national office explaining why we need this information and asking how we can obtain it. We will also discuss how this might lead to a more powerful coordinated approach.

**AOB.** David mentioned that courses are being run by Amnesty (currently, Cardiff and Wrexham) to train AI members who wish to give **talks in schools re Amnesty and its work.** Maybe we could ask our West Midlands Coordinator (Rose Bennett) to host such a training session in Birmingham.

**Next Meeting** Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February

