

**Chester Amnesty Group**

**Minutes of monthly meeting held on Monday 16th July 2012, 7.45pm @ The Sieber’s**

Meeting chaired by Alan Sieber; minutes recorded by Laura

1. **Present:** Alan, Wendy, Laura, Precious, Alec Kilpatrick

**Apologies:** Peter, Mike, Val, Daoud, Julie, Anne

**2. Minutes / Matters Arising**: Thanks to Jackie for minutes of the last meeting which were accepted as a true record. Following on from members writing to their MPs and signing a e-petition regarding the Arms Trade Treaty (negotiations currently ongoing in New York), Amnesty reported on 2nd July that ‘Prime Minister David Cameron has sent the right message - just in the nick of time:

'[We] want to see a Treaty that contains strong provisions on human rights, international humanitarian law and sustainable development' Prime Minister David Cameron.

We welcomed returning member Alec Kilpatrick, Press Officer for the Chester group in the 1990s.

**3. Treasurer’s Report - Alan**

Alan asked for it to be minuted that the group needs to begin 2013 with a new treasurer.

We were delighted to hear that the group’s finances have never been better during recent years. We noted in particular the success of the Bag Pack (January) raising £250 and donations at the Amnestea (July –including some book sales!) £150 – far more than was anticipated on both occasions.

Expenses are lower without rent for meetings, and we have a large stock of aerograms.

This leaves us with £536 in cash due to the closure of the bank account. It was noted that we need to reopen the account; it was agreed that this was a job for the new treasurer. It was noted that we need to consider our running costs and how much money the group should hold onto and how much should be sent on to Amnesty. Alan felt that the group should get past the next bag-pack before making decisions about this.

Alec mentioned that in the past the group has sold Christmas cards (eg at the Cathedral and Wesley) as a fundraising initiative. Some initial outlay is required to buy the cards.

We discussed the issue of meeting venues – this will become more pressing as the group continues to grow. Reported that rooms at Wesley £12 pcm, St Peters c.£15pcm. Alec also suggested Saltney Oddfellows Hall.

As agreed we are donating half of the proceeds raised from Amnestea to the Movement for Democratic Change (Zimbabwe opposition party) branch in Coventry where it will be used to provide educational and practical support to people in Zimbabwe. Precious thanked the group. She will pass the money on and provide a receipt. The rest of the Amnestea money will be sent to Amnesty UK.

**4. Taking the group forward**

Further to a conversation with Alan, Laura suggested that the group needed to improve its communication and make the website effective. Laura offered to take on a communications role including running the website and developing social networking for the group (eg. Facebook, which is the main way to keep in touch with the Chester University Amnesty group).

The group were broadly supportive but it was felt that this needed to be finalised with more members present and will be discussed at the September meeting.

It was also felt that it would be desirable to have a social for group members, as with the Delamere walk and pub meal in June 2011.

Laura to talk to Joe Sieber over the summer about the website.

**5. Future Events**

* **Greetings Cards – Monday 26th November 2012, venue tba**

We would like to hold this as a one-off event and invite people on a similar scale to the Amnestea. Wendy to investigate possible venues including: the Friends’ Meeting House; Queens’ Park High School; Wesley café; Function room at the Customs House.

* **North West Regional Conference – Saturday 17th November, Lancaster Friends’ Meeting House**

Alan had been in contact with the North West Regional Representative for Amnesty International UK, Jennifer James, who invited group members to attend this event. The programme will focus on Human Rights in the UK and MENA (Middle East North Africa) and speakers include Kate Allen – director of AIUK. The group may be able to subsidise transport/fee for people to attend – to be discussed at September meeting.

Alan to keep in touch with Jennifer James for now, potentially Laura could become link person to Jennifer in a communications role so that updates and information could go straight onto the website.

* **Fundraising**

**Bag Pack at Morrisons –** Laura to continue to chase up.

Alec is a member of **Chester Guitar Orchestra** who have just held their first (and very successful) concert – potential for a future event as a fundraiser for Amnesty.

* **Write for Rights?**

It is not yet known whether AIUK plan to repeat this national event. It was felt that if they do we would like to hold an event at Chester Library again. If not, the possibility of repeating the greetings cards event for the general public – again at the library – was discussed.

* ***All future events for Autumn/Winter 2012 to be discussed again at September meeting.***

**6. Burma Campaign**

Laura had received a text update on the Burma campaign just before the meeting which read ‘Good news! “Thank you all so much” – Khun Kawrio and 23 other political prisoners freed in Burma’. The group had previously written on behalf of Khun Kawrio so it was great to receive this news.

For more information on Amnesty’s text message action network, ‘pocket protest’, look at:

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=12197>

**7. Death Penalty Campaign**

**Joshua French** – <http://www.reprieve.org.uk/cases/joshuafrench/> is a man with joint British / Norwegian nationality who along with a Norwegian friend is facing the death penalty in DRC. - *No updates on his situation.*

**Linda Carty** <http://www.reprieve.org.uk/cases/lindacarty/> is a British grandmother on death row in Texas, having been convicted of murder in what Reprieve describes as ‘a catastrophically flawed trial’. A TV documentary about this case alleges that her defence council were negligent. *Update:* Radio 5 live recorded an interview with Linda which can be listened to via the Reprieve website. Linda appeals for a retrial; her only chance is for Governor Perry to grant clemency in her case.

<http://www.reprieve.org.uk/tvandradio/2012_06_28_linda_carty_bbc_radio_5live/>

Members may also be interested to listen to **Clive Stafford Smith**, founder of Reprieve, on Radio 4’s Midweek programme from 18/7/2012. Clive’s section starts at 13.50 minutes in and is about 5 minutes long.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01ks653>

**8. Zimbabwe**

We wrote to Innocent Matibiri, Deputy Commissioner-General (Crime) at the Zimbabwean police HQ to ask him to stop harassment of WOZA leaders.

**9. Autumn Meetings**

Dates agreed:

No meeting in August as people are away.

**September 17th** at **8pm** at the Siebers (please note change of time for one-off)

**October 15th** at 7.45pm

**November 26th** – Greetings Cards – Venue and time tba.

**10. AOB**

**September 15th Amnesty Fundraising Advisory Group at AIUK HQ, London.**

Laura is on the email list for the fundraising advisory group having attended in 2011. It is a helpful forum for ideas and keeping in touch with groups’ news and fundraising suggestions from other groups and from Amnesty UK. Laura is happy to attend again on 15th September or equally happy for someone else to take the opportunity – please contact her (bellinger.laura@gmail.com) if interested or for more information. Expenses are paid by AIUK.

**Date of Next meeting:**

**No meeting in August**

**Next meeting 17th September, 8pm at The Siebers’.**