

## **Minutes of Amnesty International Reading Group Meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

**Chair: Peter Howe**

### **1. Welcome and introductions**

Eight people attended.

Apologies from Sue Bingham & Sean O'Leary.

### **2. Campaign updates**

Zimbabwe - Alice gave us an update on Itai Dzamara, a Zimbabwean journalist and democracy activist who was abducted in Harare on 9 March. Organisations around the world are campaigning on his behalf and Occupy Africa gathers in central Harare every week, just as he used to, in order to raise awareness of human rights in Zimbabwe. ZOWA carried out their traditional Valentine's day march with more than 500 members in attendance. They used this to raise awareness around the economy, water shortages and women's rights. President Mugabe is currently in South Africa trying to raise money to support the failing Zimbabwean economy – he is still claiming that the problems in his country are directly attributable to Tony Blair and the UK.

Death Penalty – Liz spoke about the recent news that Indonesia has refused appeals from Australia and France for their citizens currently on death row for drug trafficking.

The action was a letter to the President of Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi Embassy in the UK asking that the execution of Muhammad Kamaruzzaman. He stands accused of mass murder during the war; Amnesty welcomes the move to investigate this but does not support the death penalty.

Cuba - Sue had sent through an update to say that detentions of dissidents are continuing in Cuba, with over 100 activists recently arrested. Everyone signed a petition asking for improve the human rights situation in the country.

South East Asia – Michael reported that Thailand is currently under martial law and there are reports of ill-treatment and torture. Letters were provided to the Chief of the Armed Forces asking for an investigation of such reports and that detainees are afforded the appropriate legal safeguards.

### **3. AIUK monthly news:**

- The monthly action was to send a letter to the press about the Human Rights Act, to coincide with the general election campaign. Helen agreed to send this out to the local press.
- AIUK has a couple of exhibitions that they will loan out to local groups. Peter suggested that we might explore whether it would be possible to link up with the Henley College Group and display one of these during the Henley Literary Festival which falls between 28th September and 4th October. He would contact Sue to suggest perhaps using the Chantry House over the weekend of 3rd & 4th October.
- We agreed to focus on the Stop Torture campaign for the East Reading Festival, with the Human Rights Act as a back-up if necessary.

### **4. Events**

- 18-19<sup>th</sup> April – Amnesty UK AGM at Warwick University. Sue, Helen, Anne & Alex will be attending from the group.
- 14<sup>th</sup> May – monthly meeting – new campaigns
- 14<sup>th</sup> June – East Reading Festival in Palmer Park. Peter asked for volunteers.
- 24-26<sup>th</sup> July - WOMAD Charlton Park, Wiltshire. Free tickets are available for people that change their electricity provider to Ecotricity.

### **5. AIUK AGM**

The group discussed four of the 17 resolutions to be discussed that AIUK AGM. These were:

B3: Amnesty International's stance on abortion – pro-choice

C1: The United Kingdom: rendition and torture

C2: Asylum detention in the UK

C4: AIUK will undertake research into the wrongful detention of torture and trafficking victims in British detention

There was much discussion on each of these resolutions. The group was not in support of the resolution on the first one (abortion). There was a lot of sympathy for the sentiment behind each of the other three; however they each had elements that the group did not feel were either entirely practical or necessarily quite right in terms of timing. Helen and Anne were empowered to use this discussion between members to inform how to use the group's vote on the day, depending on the outcome of any amendments to these resolutions.

## **6. AoB**

Helen confirmed that she would chair the next meeting.

In the event that the new campaign co-ordinators do not receive materials in time for the next meeting, the back-up plan is to have a letter writing session.

AMMCF: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015

## Reading Amnesty International Group Plan - 2015

	Chair	= group meetings	*events
January	Peter	✓= EAPPI – Liz Bailey	✓* 3 <sup>rd</sup> – Caversham Street collection – Peter Howe
February	Peter	✓= Planning meeting	
March	Anne	✓= West Papua / Benny Wenda – Sean O’Leary	✓*7 <sup>th</sup> – Barn Dance – Liz Bailey
April	Peter	✓= AGM motions debate – Anne McFarlane	* 18 & 19 <sup>th</sup> - National conference - Warwick
May	Helen	= campaign review. Focus on new campaigns – Syria & Indian subcontinent	
June		= Group AGM & letter writing	* 14 June East Reading Festival
July		= Womad prep – Sue Bingham	*24-26 <sup>th</sup> - WOMAD – Sue Bingham
August		= social media – Anne McFarlane	
September		= Stop Torture campaign	*5 <sup>th</sup> - Pride – Anne M <sup>c</sup> Farlane
October		= letter writing	*International Festival???? ??? Syria ???
November		= Cuba – Sue Bingham	
December		= Write for Rights – Anne M <sup>c</sup> Farlane	
January ‘16		= Indian sub-continent – Hilary	
February		= Planning meeting - all	