Islington and Hackney Amnesty Group - Chair’s report 2014/2015

It has yet again been a successful year in terms of fundraising, organising events, awareness raising and new members. Among the highlights were the Comedy Night and the Write for Rights Event.

Through our letter writing sessions during meetings and updates from coordinators, we have written hundreds of letters, providing a significant contribution to Amnesty International’s campaigning work.

Comedy Night

The Comedy Night was yet again a success, raising £1861 and attracting a full house at the Hackney Attic. It’s an excellent opportunity to reach out to new people who wouldn’t necessary get involved in the group and to spread the message about human rights in Burma.

Write for Rights

At rather short notice, we organised a Write for Rights event at the Barbican. We got over 100 letters written and attracted interest from people who had never come across the group before. It was good to establish a link with the barbican and something, perhaps, to build on for 2015.

Accounts

We started the year with £500 in the bank account and finished the year just below £500.  The income and outgoing expenditure were both very close to £3500, and the outgoing, included donations to AIUK of £3000 plus the £72 group affiliation fee.

Meetings

Throughout the year, we tried to vary the meetings with special guests, training sessions, film screenings and letter writing sessions. We had a training session on the My Body My Rights Campaign and a guest from the refugee team at AIUK, plus many letter writing sessions.

Other fundraising events

A pub quiz in March raised £470 through ticket sales and raffle tickets; the carol singing raised in December £500 and the street collection in October was £170.93

This year we didn’t do the Summer Fayre which usually raises over £1,000 due to lack of capacity, but we hope to run on in 2015.

Some highlights from the different campaigns/positions

Burma

This year our Burma campaigning continued to focus on the prisoner of conscience case we started working on in 2013. Dr Tun Aung, a Muslim Rohingya doctor accused of inciting inter-ethnic violence after being requested by police to act as mediator, had his sentence reduced during the year and was subsequently released.

**Stop Torture**

Lots of hard work has gone into to organise a film screening and panel discussion “Beneath the Blindfold” to take place in March 2015.

Lots of group members were inspired at a launch event for the Stop Torture event featuring speakers from the Philippines, Nigeria and Mexico.

**My Body My Rights**

We had a great training session on MBMR with staff from AIUK and the IS, which significantly strengthened the group’s understanding of the campaign.

**Other campaigns**

Coordinators for Latin America, Death Penalty and trafficking, in particular, kept the group well-informed of the relevant issues and AI actions.

**Website and social media**

We have been particularly weak in updating the website, which could have impact in attracting new members, so this is an important priority for 2015/2016. We need to ensure that we have a strong presence on the AIUK site, that is regularly updated.

We have 375 likes of the IHAG facebook page and 325 twitter followers. We are doing much better with updating social media than the website. For example, a report of the social media activities of London groups showed that we had tweeted more than all the other London groups combine. But this also could be improved.

**Conclusion**

IHAG continues to be one of the strongest and most dynamic London groups and has achieved a lot throughout the year. We've also had a lot of fun doing it. But there is room for improvement, especially on the website and certain positions/regions where we haven’t had a consistent coordinator, i.e North Africa, Middle East and Press and Publicity. On the whole, though, we should be very proud of our achievements!:)