



# Amnesty International Guildford Group

January 2008

## Summary Report of Activities in 2007

### Monthly meetings

*Second Monday of every month* (except August), 7.30 pm, St Nicholas Church Rooms, Bury Street.

We had a speaker at 7 meetings in 2007:

- January.** **Stop Violence Against Women.** Lizann Peppard, AI's South East Regional coordinator, on sexual and reproductive rights.
- March.** **Parliament and Women's Rights.** Anne Milton, Guildford's MP, Vice-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security.
- April.** **Water: human right or corporate right?** Vicky Cann, World Development Movement.
- May.** **Israel and the Occupied Territories.** Hilary Stephenson, Guildford Group member just returned from a visit to Palestine.
- June.** **Slavery in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.** Lucy Chandler, Vice-Chair, Anti-Slavery International.
- September.** **China in the run-up to the Olympics.** John Lilly, a frequent visitor to China.
- November.** **Conflict Diamonds.** Aikta Hancock, AIUK. (Joint meeting with the Farnham Group)

In the other months our meetings were devoted to planning future activities or - in December - to the Greetings Card Campaign; see below.

### Monthly Letter-Writing Sessions

*Last Saturday of every month*

(except August and December),  
11 am to 12 noon,  
Café-Bar of the Electric Theatre.

Members and friends join together to write letters in support of political prisoners and other individuals at risk.



### Campaigning

The group is involved in a number of AI campaigns, with one group member taking the lead for each. The campaigns deal with either a theme or a country where serious human rights abuses occur. Our campaigns are:

- Themes** **Stop Violence Against Women.**  
**Business and Human Rights.**
- Countries** **China - Nigeria - Palestine.**

### Haslemere

We have a sub-group in Haslemere. Though small, the group excels at fund-raising (through book and produce sales, as well as street collections), has regular letter-writing sessions, its own Greetings Card Campaign, and is involved in the campaign for human rights in China.

### Conferences

- **AI South East Regional Conference, East Grinstead, January.**
- **AI National Conference and AGM, Edinburgh, March.**

Members of the Guildford Group attended both conferences.

## Street Events

### January. Guantánamo Bay.

Demonstration calling for the release of British residents. Guildford High Street.



July  
Street Collection and Stall,  
Guildford High Street.

## Refugee Week

### June

#### Asylum Monologues.

Play-reading in the Guildhall with professional actors who gave their time and skills free. In cooperation with Guildford Refugee Action Group and Actors for Refugees. Readings took place in many other towns and cities across the UK.

Times (Week ending Saturday, June 30, 2007)

## Play aids refugees

by Rebecca Younger

TELEVISION personalities joined forces at an event in Guildford last Wednesday to highlight the plight of refugees.

Well-known actors and actresses from shows such as Hollyoaks and The Avengers starred in the Asylum Monologues, a play by Sonja Linden.

It gives an account of the UK's asylum system in the words of people who have experienced it. Co-hosted by Guildford Refugee Action Group (GRAG) and Amnesty International Guildford Group (AIGG), it took place at the Guildhall to mark Annual Refugee Week.

It featured the familiar faces of Anna Carteret, aka Inspector Langdon in Juliet Bravo, Gary Hope, from The Avengers and Just William, and Abigail McKern from Hollyoaks and Madam Tisdelle Murders, all of whom are members of Actors for Refugees.

GRAG chairman Sir John Alleyne said: "If only people knew more about some of the remarkable people we have in this country who have had to flee from their own homes and places of birth, I think we'd see our opportunity to welcome them as good news. The tragedy and absurdity of it is that they are reintegrated as a nuisance."

The play attempts to highlight the difference between asylum seekers and economic migrants and the difficult journey some have experienced in trying to seek asylum in Britain.

Under the UK's current system, asylum seekers have to fill out complex forms and find a lawyer and interpreter to help them plead their case before a judge. The process can take years and lead to a spell in a detention centre. If the decision is not made immediately, asylum seekers have to live in a temporary accommodation, highlighting the destitution which many asylum seekers have, who are not allowed to work and some of them who do not receive any benefits at all. Lots of people said after the play they had heard about these problems but it didn't really hit home until they heard the actors speak the words of those who have actually gone through that experience."

Guildford Borough Council deputy mayor Jennifer Jordan (centre back) with Sir John Alleyne, Bob Jarrett, actors Abigail McKern, Anna Carteret, Gary Hope and guitarist Russell Jarrett.

## Guildford Book Festival October

### 2 Amnesty International events:

- **Murder in Samarkand.** Craig Murray, former British Ambassador, spoke about his book, his time in Uzbekistan, and British government attitudes on human rights.
- **Another Sky: Voices of Conscience from around the World.** Readings by authors and actors from this book of pieces by writers persecuted for their writings. In cooperation with English PEN.



## Annual Greetings Card Campaign

Human Rights Day, 10 December

A social evening, beginning with a concert of chamber and choral music, and a reading by professional actors of the play **Voices from beyond the Dark.**

Then, wine and nibbles, and the chance to write greetings cards to political prisoners across the world. Stalls were also set up in 2 local churches. In all 421 cards were written and sent.

The events on this page raised funds for Amnesty International, though the main purpose was to raise awareness of human rights abuses.