

Glasgow West Amnesty International Meeting Minutes
Thursday 8th April 2012

Present: Claire Crossan, Ian Cruik, Malcolm Dingwall-Smith, Paul Dunlop (Chair), Jo Felton, Ingrid Fitzsimons, Jim Gillies, Merle Read, Lavinia Lavizani, Martin Lennon, Rebecca Quinton, Mahdi Saki, Rob Timson, Karen Wylie, Louise Wylie

Guest: Christina Tsering, Tibet Support Group

Apologies: Christine Alison, Julie Allen, Heather Daniel, John Gerrard, Sarah Nash, Ellie Simpson

1. Matters arising from March meeting: None

2. Treasurers Report: Jim gave update. Bank balance at time of meeting £284.07. Only recent expense paid, 3 months meeting room hire. Claire to be paid for postage from February meeting. Claire to inform Jim amount to be paid.

3. AGM Resolutions: Summary of 12 resolutions to be discussed at Amnesty UK's AGM discussed by group. Suggestions made (pro more work on Guantanamo Bay; not convinced by case for Amnesty to work on Brazilian street children). Group agreed that with discussion in mind, group representatives at AGM (Jo, Malcolm, Sarah) should listen to debate and vote as they believe best. Short report back on AGM at next meeting.

4. Events, comms, campaigns sub-group feed back

4.1 Comedy Night: Reminder of event and practicalities discussed.

4.2 Paisley Group - Trafficking & Prostitution Conference: Applications now closed. Claire and Jo waiting to hear if they have places.

4.3 May Day Stall: March starts at 11am in George Square and will then go to Royal Concert Hall (NOT the Fruit Market as in previous years). Heather has booked stall. Practicalities to be agreed by events sub-group. Currently have 6 volunteers to man stall for an hour or two - (Claire, Ellie, Jim, Karen, Mahdi, Paul). Anyone else willing to volunteer should e-mail Ellie, e.simpson.1@research.gla.ac.uk.

4.4 May Meeting - Afghan Women's Workshop: Christine waiting for confirmation than Steffi will be available to deliver training.

4.5 Meeting with Director of Amnesty's Scottish office: Claire and Malcolm met with Shabnum Mustapha in March. Shabnum took up this post recently and the meeting was very positive, with a refreshing commitment to work with groups. Shabnum highlighted the Arms Trade Treaty, Middle East and North Africa and Scottish Gypsy Travellers as focus areas for the Scottish Office over the next few months. Identified a couple of potential areas for joint work and these will be taken forward by the events sub-group.

4.6 Events sub-group: The events sub-group meets monthly to discuss ideas for and the practicalities of organising events, speakers, training etc. At present this group consists of Claire, Ellie, Jo, Malcolm and Paul. If anyone wants to get more involved in this side of the group's work, contact any one of them.

5. Group Website: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/glasgowwest/>

[Update provided by Merle. References to "me" or "I" mean Merle!]

The group's revamped website is now online using AIUK's new blog-type format. If anyone would like to contribute to the site, please contact me (read.m @ntlworld.com) & I'll pass

your email address on to HQ for authorisation. Alternatively you are welcome to send me announcements/photos/video(!) etc & I'll do the uploading.

Comments on the sort of information we want included on the site are welcome. Do we want the minutes posted here as well as circulated via the email list? Do we want e.g. secretary's name & contact details? A post about each of the campaigns we are working on? The Salisbury group's site has a few more posts (www.amnesty.org.uk/salisbury) & gives an idea of what we could be doing.

We have been asked to include at least one or two photos to liven up the appearance of the site. If anyone has any suitable photos of us in action please pass them on to me. Perhaps someone could take a photo at May day & we could use that.

AIUK are keen for us to make more use of the main site to publicise our events, which should raise the group's profile. [Jo has offered to post our events news on the AIUK site]

6. Tibet Support Group: Christina Tsering is trying to establish a Tibet Support Group within Glasgow. Details were circulated at the meeting. Anyone not at the meeting wanting details could contact Malcolm (Malcolm.ds@gmail.com – and I will locate them from wherever I have misplaced them).

7. Board Election Campaign: Hugh Whitby, who is standing for election to the AIUK board, emailed us an invitation to look at his reasons and experience:
<http://www.facebook.com/HughWhitbyForAiukBoard2012>. The voting is now closed.

8. Postage:

[Another update provided by Merle.]

Update: we wrote more letters than usual (43, about £38 worth) & I reckon at next month's prices this would cost us an extra £7. Prices go up on 30 April to 87p for all 10g airmail stamps (at present European stamps are 68p and worldwide 76p): if folk want to stock up on books of airmail stamps, the stamps should have no value printed on them and should be for letters (not postcards). Hillhead PO had none when I checked last week.

- If people do find a supply of unpriced overseas stamps for the group, check with Jim (jim.gillies@bluebottle.com) and he can reimburse you for the costs.

9. Letter Writing

Monthly Group Actions <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10046>

- **Demand justice for student shot by security forces (Ragihar Manoharan, Sri Lanka)**

On 2 January 2006, 20-year-old Ragihar Manoharan sat chatting with fellow students on the seafront of Trincomalee, a town in the north east of Sri Lanka, when a grenade exploded. At least three of his fellow students were injured. When the security forces arrived at the scene, Ragihar's injured friends were thrown into a jeep and beaten. What happened next remains unclear but witnesses report that the uniformed officers, thought to be from the elite Special Task Force group, shot Ragihar killing him along with four other students. Despite this, no thorough investigation has ever been conducted and the perpetrators have never been brought to justice for the murders.

Urgent Actions

- **Andrés Carrión Alvarez (Cuba)**

<http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/ua10012-cuba.pdf>

A government critic has been detained, apparently without charge, for more than a week for peacefully expressing his right to freedom of expression.

- **Isma'il Othman al-Salihah (Syria)**

<http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/ua10112-syria.pdf>

A Syrian man, aged 70, has been held incommunicado since 19 March, reportedly by Air Force Intelligence. He is believed to be detained in relation to his son's pro-reform activities. He is in poor health, and it is not known if he is receiving the daily medication he requires. He is at risk of torture and other ill treatment.

- **Haidar Mahmoud Abderrahman Manis (Sudan)**

<http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/ua10212-sudan.pdf>

On 28 March, student activist Haidar Mahmoud Abderrahman Manis was arrested by security forces in Khartoum North, Sudan. He is being detained in an unknown location, and has no access to his family or a lawyer. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Other Actions

- **Patrick Okoroafor (Nigeria)**

[http://action.amnesty.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1194&ea.campaign.id=8624&utm_source=aiuk&utm_medium=homerpage&utm_campaign=IAR&utm_content=patrickko_nib](http://action.amnesty.org.uk/ea-action/action/action?ea.client.id=1194&ea.campaign.id=8624&utm_source=aiuk&utm_medium=homerpage&utm_campaign=IAR&utm_content=patrickko_nib)

Patrick was arrested age 14. He was questioned without legal representation and alleges that he was tortured. He was tried by military tribunal. Originally sentenced to be executed (later held to be illegal due to his age), he is serving an 'indefinite detention'. He has served 15 years in prison. Amnesty is calling for his immediate release.

- **Dawit Habtemichael (Eritrea)**

Jo circulated a letter calling for information on the health, whereabouts and reason for detention of Dawit Habtemichel. A journalist arrested in 2001, Dawit's current circumstances are unknown. He is a friend of a member of the Glasgow South Amnesty Group and whilst this is not an official current Amnesty action, the case of Dawit has been referenced in a number of Amnesty reports on the human rights situation in Eritrea and was the subject of an urgent action in 2002.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR64/002/2002/en/7cfa8465-d862-11dd-9df8-936c90684588/afr640022002en.html>

- **Uzbekistan Policy of Secretly Sterilising Women**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-17612550>

Claire circulated an article from the BBC World Service on the secret sterilisation of women by the authorities in Uzbekistan. Whilst this is not an official Amnesty action, Claire suggested you may wish to write to Ms Elmira Basitkhanova, Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of the Women's Committee or Mr Adkham Ikramov, Minister for Public Health (addresses available through Google).

9. Next meeting

- 7.30pm, 10th May – Jo chairing, Karen taking minutes
- 14th June – Karen chairing
- 12th July – volunteers to chair welcome