



MANCHESTER AMNESTY GROUP NEWSLETTER

October 2013

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Recent Happenings

Street Collection

On Saturday 28th September 15 group members turned out on the city centre streets to shake a tin for Amnesty. In total we raised £325.50 - a bit more than last year but still down on past years. A particular thank you to Sean for organising the collection and for manning the desk all day.

Thanks to all group members who helped out at our annual street collection!



AIUK Governance Day

One of our members, Sameena Matthiessen, attended the AIUK governance day in London on 21st September and provides the following update:

"I have recently joined the Active Members Sub Committee (AMSC) in Amnesty UK and was therefore invited to the AIUK governance day, where board and committee members as well as management and staff representatives come together. It was a really interesting day with a lot of presentations, workshops and networking opportunities (and lots of coffee!). The day was divided into three sections: Information on board and committees (get to know the governance of AIUK), updates on AIUK's financial situation and on the recent ICM (International Council Meeting) and finally a workshop to discuss how to improve governance and engagement of members.

For me the key points were:

- The budget for this year is looking better than expected due to legacy payments (wills) but unfortunately still a really poor outlook for the following years, particularly due to poor income growth
- Feedback from several of the sessions highlighted the lack of communication between the governance layer and members and this is something we want to address in the next few months. This could be a key role for the committee I am a member of, so I will keep you posted on this.
- The work and role of the nominations committee needs to be reviewed.
- The AIUK restructure is underway and most of the senior management team has been appointed. They have received 19 voluntary redundancy requests.
- One of the reasons for the poor financial situation is due to an increased contribution to Amnesty International. It was therefore good to hear that the new sections, in India, Brazil and Ghana for example, are doing really well and are having a big impact in their individual countries.

We also had an emotional plea from a member, who while suffering from Hodgkin's Lymphoma, was shocked by the story of a Palestinian suffering from the same disease but denied treatment for political reasons. She is running a half marathon and is looking for donations to Amnesty. I will certainly be supporting her and you can also support her here:

<http://www.justgiving.com/Liesbeth-ten-Ham>

In terms of an update on the ICM, a report will be issued and available on the AIUK website shortly and we will also get an update at the regional conference in November. If you are interested in finding out more about the governance structure or to get involved, you can find that information here <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10098>

Here you can find information on the structure, board members, financial reports, etc. The board have 5 vacancies this year and the deadline for nominations is 15 January 2014 (earlier than previous years). There are also a couple of vacancies (unpaid) for a treasurer and trustee - details here: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/jobs.asp> - deadline is 11th October. "

Any questions, please feel free to contact Sameena on sameenadk@yahoo.com

Campaign News

Women's rights in Afghanistan

We have just received a campaign update on this priority campaign. It provides a summary of progress since the last update at the beginning of the year, for example:

- In March the Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening MP, speaking at the AIUK office announced that violence against women will be a strategic priority in the next Department for International Development (DFID) Operational Plan for Afghanistan.
- Baroness Warsi, in evidence to the International Development Committee, stated the importance of increasing the number of women police officers and Family Response Units in Afghanistan – two of our asks from the earlier MP action.
- In July, three youth activists handed over AIUK's 19,000 strong petition to Baroness Warsi. The FCO released a press release supporting our campaign quoting Baroness Warsi saying "Amnesty are doing outstanding work to ensure that the voices of Afghan women will never again be pushed into the background".
- AIUK staff submitted a briefing on the strategic priority to DFID officials – they asked them to fully consult with Afghan women's rights organisations and ensure support and protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders are built into the strategic priority.

The next phase of the campaign will focus on making sure that the Afghan government and its international partners prioritise tackling violence against women and ensure women human rights defenders receive the support and protection they need. On 6th November AIUK will be organising a campaign event at Speakers House hosted by John Bercow MP.

There are also several suggested actions that we, as a group can decide to take part in:

- Letter writing to UK MPs and the Afghan government
- Make patches for a solidarity patchwork quilt
- Get local media coverage

We will be discussing this campaign at the October meeting. Come along and find out more.

Zimbabwe

It is now a couple of months since the elections in Zimbabwe and a little over 2 weeks since President Mugabe announced the new cabinet. Apart from the letter writing action that we did at the last meeting which concerned women who fled their homes immediately following the elections, there have been few other reports of human rights abuses associated with the poll itself.

An IS Researcher has recently returned from Zimbabwe and he reports that the atmosphere in the country is generally subdued, even depressed. It was noteworthy that even the victors – ZANU-PF – have not held any great celebrations following the announcement of the election results. NGOs he visited were not active and there was a general sense of just waiting and watching. However, since his return WOZA have re-emerged with their usual determination and well considered strategy. To mark the UN Day of Peace WOZA organised 2 demonstrations to highlight that 'peace' requires 'freedom' not just lack of overt violence. On the 2 days of 19 and 20 September in Harare and Bulawayo over 1500 members took to the streets to deliver demands to local and national government. These demands were based on the ZANU-PF election manifesto which promised improvements in housing, education, utilities and economic stability and growth. On each of these protests the demonstrators were met with police violence and many were arrested although after hours of confusion in police stations all the protestors were allowed to leave with no charges being presented against them.

There will be an international day of action on Day 100 – i.e. the 100th day of the new government. The date of this is yet to be determined as several options are possible for the start date: day the election results were announced, of swearing in Robert Mugabe as president or the new cabinet was appointed. Maggie Towse, AIUK Zimbabwe country coordinator, will let us know as soon as this is confirmed.

WOZA will once again feature in the Write for Rights campaign as one of the main cases for action. We are asked to continue to send messages of solidarity and Anne Walker will organise something for the November group meeting to send on the International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders on 29 November.

People's Postcode Lottery

Last week the People's Postcode Lottery in conjunction with the Daily Mirror launched the Vote That Counts, which pitches nine national charities against each other. It is pretty simple. The charity that gets the most votes gets £50,000. And if Amnesty wins, the money will go to supporting AIUK's human rights education work. That will mean helping get more speakers into schools, producing fantastic teaching resources and, most importantly, inspiring a new generation to take an interest in human rights.

Find out more at

http://www2.amnesty.org.uk/vote-that-counts-mirror-amnesty-international?utm_source=aiuk&utm_medium=Homepage&utm_campaign=Education&utm_content=votethatcountsblog

Log on and vote. <http://votethatcounts.org/>

Coming up...

Manchester Literature Festival Event: Writing a Path through Palestine

Saturday 19th October, 2-3pm

Cross Street Chapel,
Tickets £7/£5 (concessions)

Bidisha is an internationally renowned writer, a regular guest on the BBC shows Front Row, The Review Show and Saturday Review and guest presenter of the World Service books show The Word. She is also a regular contributor to the Guardian and the Observer.



See her blog at <http://bidisha-online.blogspot.co.uk/>

Bidisha is the highest profile writer we've had at the Festival, so book your ticket and spread the word.

North West Regional Conference

Saturday 16th November 2013.

St Peter's Chaplaincy, Oxford Road, Manchester

We have just confirmed a key note speaker from the Survivors Speak OUT network who comprise former clients of Freedom from Torture who have completed therapy and have come together to campaign against torture and for the rights of torture survivors. The network has been going for a few years now and has been highly successful, speaking on panels at the UN, the EU, and with UK government ministers including the Foreign Secretary. In addition, we plan sessions on Zimbabwe, the Roma, Ethiopia and Afghanistan + Creative action to take onto the streets.

As this will be in Manchester, our group will need to provide support in the form of sorting out drinks, putting lunch out etc. If you plan to come to the conference and are happy to help out, contact Anne Walker (anne.walker9@ntlworld.com) to volunteer.

Booking now open!
See flyer with this newsletter.

Group Meeting

Held 2nd Wednesday each month - Cross Street Chapel - 7.30pm

9th October: Amy Lythgoe, founder of Refugee Welcome Trust is talking about setting up the charity and her work and motivations.

If you are in town, why not join a few of us for a pre meeting meal just after 6.

*This month we will be in the bar at **Jamie's (the top of King Street)**. It would be good to see you there.*

Group Calendar

Month	Oct	Nov	Dec
Group Meeting	Amy Lythgoe (Refugee Welcome Trust)	TBC	Greetings cards/IAR/ /creative session
Events	Manchester Lit Festival (19 th)	NW Regional Conference, Manchester (16 th)	Greetings card stalls