

Aylesbury Amnesty

Minutes of meeting held Wednesday 25/9/13

Present: Ollie Palmer, Henry, David, Annelies, Jim C, Jim E

Apologies: Catherine, Bob, Carol, Fran

1. Meetings from the previous meeting were accepted.
2. The group welcomed Ollie who attended the meeting for the first time
3. Annelies shared a reply she had received from the Governor of Maryland regarding the death penalty. Annelies to forward the reply to the group and to AIHQ. Jim E to send Catherine's email address to Annelies.
4. Annelies read the reply she had received from David Liddington (forwarded from Rt.Hon. Baroness Warsi PC, Senior Minister of State) on the subject of women's rights in Afghanistan. Annelies to reply with a note of thanks.
5. Annelies told us about Jetty Sabandar – a lady originally from Indonesia now living in Germany. Annelies found out about her through her friends Barbel and Tony who visited our group in July. Annelies subsequently forwarded a translation of a German newspaper article on Jetty (appended below) so please refer to that for further detail. Carol to be asked to share information on the groups work on Indonesia. It was thought it would be interesting to invite Jetty to speak to the group should she ever be visiting the UK.
6. David had received a reply from ----- regarding democratic progress in Indonesia which he shared with the group.
7. Jim C provided an update on John Tetarissa. Apparently AI UK has quietly closed the case and no one seems to know why. Jim C to follow up with HQ to if he can find further information.
8. All present thanked Annelies for organising the meeting in Carol & Bob's absence.
9. The meeting was duly closed. Next Meeting Wednesday 30/10/13.

From: Annelies Varsey [mailto:varseylah@talktalk.net]

Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2013 11:26 PM

To: THE CORNS; davidbarnard@waitrose.com; Jim Edwards; Jim Cobley; dasy_power@hotmail.com; k.danfous@hotmail.com; Bronwen Lee; oli.palmer@me.com

Subject: Fw: Translation - Jetty Sabandar

Hello,

below is the translation of the newspaper article about Jetty Sabandar, which I promised to circulate.

For the sake of those of us who were unable to come to our last meeting, I feel I ought to explain who Jetty Sabandar is and how she comes to be interested in our group.

At the time of our July meeting in Jim's garden I had visitors from Germany, who came with me to the meeting. Bärbel contacted me a few weeks later, telling me that she knows a lady, Jetty Sabandar, who was born in Indonesia and who is very keen to hear what our group is doing for Indonesia.

She also sent me the link to a newspaper article about Jetty Sabandar, the translation of which I am circulating herewith. By the way, Bärbel and Tony, her English husband, are members of the German-Foreign Friendship Circle, where they met Jetty Sabandar.

You might like to see the logo of the German-Foreign Friendship Circle, which is

www.daf-karben.de,

The short sentences translate as follows:

We want to live with each other.

We want to learn from each other.

We are engaged socially, culturally, politically.

But now the translation of the newspaper article, which was written in 2010, when Jetty Sabandar was 62 years old; she has now retired.

TRANSLATION:

Article in the Wetterauer Zeitung (newspaper) 26.04.2010

Jetty Sabandar: globe trotter with courage

Jetty Sabandar has seen a lot of the world and has a lot to tell. She was born in Indonesia 62 years ago. She grew up in the Netherlands and worked for the NL as an Ambassadorial Secretary in Madrid, Lisbon, Rom, Baghdad and Bonn. But there is only one place to which she is always drawn and which she can't let go. "Karben" says Sabandar and beams. (Karben is near Frankfurt/Main.)

This is the refugium of a woman who asserted herself against discrimination, against ostracism and against lack of recognition.

In 1969, at the age of 19, she came to Germany for the first time and worked in Bonn for 2 1/2 years as Ambassadorial Secretary. Then she went to Madrid, where she met her German husband. In 1978 love took her again to Germany, because her husband's job was in the Rhein-Main area.

Someone who wants to understand Sabandar has to know the story of her parents, who were Moluccan. 400 years ago, the Netherlands were the colonial power in Indonesia. They needed an army to conquer other islands. On the Moluccan Islands they recruited their soldiers and promised them freedom and good wages. Sabandar's father was one of those soldiers. "The Moluccans are fighters, not traders," she says and continues "my great-great ancestors were still head-hunters. One imagines that the jungle is exciting and romantic. But it is not romantic to cut people's heads off." The Moluccans were good soldiers for the Netherlands, because they were very faithful and in addition also Christians.

After the end of the Second World War President Sukarno declared Indonesia's independence. The occupiers were chased out of the country. The Moluccan soldiers were looked on as traitors. They could not stay and so the Dutch simply took them with them in 1954. Between 3000 and 4000 Moluccan and their families were brought to Holland on cargo boats. Sabandar was 2 years old at the time. "I remember a lot of water and that I ran around on the deck with a packet of Maria biscuits." Whenever she is in Spain she buys herself a packet of these biscuits.

In Holland the new arrivals were put in a former German concentration camp in the south of the country. "At that time we had no idea where we were", says Sabandar. Only later, when she visited the Dachau concentration camp with her then husband, she realized where she had spent 12 years of her life. "I thought I was at home. We, too, lived in barracks. Everything was equally divided. Even the fences were the same." Sabandar moved a coffee cup, a milk jug and a sugar bowl around on the table into certain positions. "Here was the camp," she says and points to the milk jug, "here the military camp, and there the prison. The camp was in the middle of the forest, guarded by the military. I thought at the time that they wanted to protect us. But that was not so."

Her parents suffered in their new home country. They realized that they will never return to Indonesia. They did not understand the language. They could not cope with the cold and the strange food. The only thing which kept their spirit up was the solidarity amongst the Moluccan. "And the betrayal by the Dutch", says Sabandar. Because the government gave notice to their former soldiers whilst they were still on the boat on their way to Europe. "When we arrived, we had no rights, no nationality, we lived as stateless." Sabandar's openly smiling face changes and becomes serious. She gets angry. "As thanks for century-long faithfulness the royal house only wanted to give them a medal." Sabandar phoned her father and demanded that he refuses this award - which he did. "The Dutch have to make up for their guilt and they can't do this simply with a medal. Our fate was kept quiet in the Dutch history. Until recently the Moluccans were not mentioned with a single syllable in the school books." She talks herself into a rage. "Damn it, our history is part of the Dutch history." Then it gets too much for her. She gets up and with an "excuse me please" leaves the room. One can only guess how the decades-long discrimination and ostracism, but also the missing appreciation of the services, which the Moluccan provided, have hurt Sabandar.

When she returns she says "I did not think that it still upsets me so much." Sabandar seems to have finished with Holland. She talks about subtle discrimination during her training to become an Ambassadorial Secretary, but also of open hostility. For instance, as a child she was spat at. "In Germany, people walk past me or say to my face that they don't want me here," she says. Against that she can defend herself. "Subtle discrimination is more difficult to bear."

In 1978 she came finally to Germany. Her husband did not support her with her integration. "He was working and I took care of my daughter's and my son's education." She only met other mothers when she took her daughter to the kindergarten. She worked in between at the Dutch Consulate and for a Dutch Bank in Frankfurt. Soon she got an offer which changed her life. In Petterwell they wanted to organize a homework care club. She went with a friend to the meeting, and before she realized it she was a member of the board of the Deutsch-Ausländischer Freundschaftskreis (DAF) - German-Foreign Friendship Circle. "25 years ago I was a founding member," says Sabandar. She felt at home amongst her "fellow sufferers". "Goodness, I thought, these are people, who also have no home, for whom Germany is still foreign."

*When in 1992 in Rostock-Lichtenhagen Germans applauded when Neo-Nazis put fire to an asylumseekers' home** and two Turkish girls and their grandmother died in Mölln**, Sabandar became politically active. The German-Foreign Friendship Circle (DAF) organized a demonstration, which 2000 people attended and Sabandar held a speech. "I am staying here. We are human beings, not rats. We won't let ourselves be smoked out", she said. One can imagine what impact her words must have had at the demonstration. "Germany is my country, my home", she says finally. Sabandar has been active for 15 years in the Karben Advisory Council for Foreigners. She is on the Board of the Länder Advisory Board for Foreigners, on the Integration Board in Friedberg, she is a member of the SDP (Social Democratic Party) and is active as a Town Councillor.*

Sabandar is now working as a lecturer for Business and Employment Studies at a comprehensive School in Offenbach, where 95 percent of the pupils are migrant children. "That is a challenge for me, because these children are disadvantaged and I want to help them," she says. Sabandar ponders briefly before she adds: "Perhaps I am too idealistic. But my life has been very difficult and I would like to show my pupils that they have to try everything to realize their full potential." She tells them that they are not stupider than the Germans, but richer - not only because of their two languages. "Migrants should learn, because knowledge is their capital."

Sabandar is a committed woman who can devote her body and soul to something. Then she talks about the lack of intercultural competence of some teachers. "One only has to go to the internet to find out a little about the pupils' culture, why some men don't shake hands, why many immigrants don't come to the Parents' Evenings, when they are invited in writing." The reason: "When they receive a letter from the school, many think "my God, my son has done something" and put the letter unopened to the side." Sabandar pleads that the parents should be phoned and invited individually. She herself does this before every Parents' Evening. "This takes time, but then they are all coming."

When Sabandar has put her mind to something, then she also achieves it. It is a life motto of this woman. An anecdote from her youth demonstrates this very well. She was supposed to get married at 18, the parents had already chosen a bridegroom for her. When he came with his family to Sabandar, to ask for her hand in marriage, she got angry. She said "I was a good girl for a long time, but not on that day." Her eyes sparkle even now. They mirror aggressiveness, but also self-confidence, which has no fear. "I told him that he should come back in 10 years' time, because I want to see something of the world first." Her parents were

shocked. "For half a year they did not speak to me a single word," she says. She was 19 at the time when she needed a signature from her parents, so that she could work abroad as an Ambassadorial Secretary. "They would have never allowed that. So, I falsified their signature", says Jetty Sabandar and grins from ear to ear.

(Amongst other reactions, these xenophobic crimes sent shock waves through the whole of Germany and large, spontaneous demonstrations against xenophobia took place all over Germany, which often took the form of chains of lights. In several German cities/towns streets were named after Bahide Arsla and groups "Initiative for Tolerance and Responsibility" were established.)**

(Google.)

If anyone would like to see this newspaper article in German or a photo of Jetty Sabandar, please click

http://www.wetterauer-zeitung.de/Home/Artikel.-Jetty-Sabandar-Weltenbummlerin-mit-Courage- arid,177142_regid,3_puid,1_pageid,295.html

Everyone present at the Group Meeting in September felt that we could inform Jetty Sabandar about our campaigning for Indonesia and someone wondered if she could come and talk to us.

Best wishes,

Annelies