

Amnesty International Southend Group

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www.amnesty.org.uk/southend



NOVEMBER 2015 NEWSLETTER

NEXT GROUP MEETING

No Group Meeting on first Thursday in December
Please support the Write for Rights card and
letter writing event on 12th December



Write for Rights

Make a difference!

Annual Greeting Cards and Letter-writing Campaign

Saturday 12th December 10:00am – 1:00pm

The Balmoral Centre Salisbury Avenue Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 7AU

It only takes a few minutes to write a card or letter – please come along for as much time as you can spare to give support and encouragement to someone whose rights are being abused or write to the authorities on their behalf – it could change somebody's life. Cards, stamps & details of who to write to all provided along with tea/coffee and mince pies – just bring a pen!

If you can't come we'd appreciate a donation to help cover postage costs – last year we sent around 200 cards and letters and airmail is now £1 minimum. Cheques payable to Southend Amnesty Group please, to 36 Orchard Avenue, Hockley SS5 5BE.

WRITE, WRITE, WRITE - or e-mail

Atena Farghadani is an Iranian "Individual at Risk. She is a 29-year-old artist is in prison for her art and peaceful activism. She was found guilty of charges including 'insulting members of parliament through paintings and has been forced to undergo a 'virginity and pregnancy test'. This is recognised as a form of violence and discrimination against women and under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Iran has ratified. More details on the [Group website](#), including an address for written appeals, plus e-mail and Twitter contact details.

Southend Group meeting 12th November 2015

Present: Martin, Hedrun, Andrew (Chair).

Apologies: Doug, Richard, Tricia, Audrey, Steve, Maureen, Mike and Muriel.

Business carried forward from the last meeting: Nothing of note.

Letters and Petitions:-

Stop Torture Campaign -

In regard to the three torture victims highlighted in the ST campaign: Moroccan, Ali Arass suspended (but did not end) his hunger strike on 9th November after 72 days. No other significant developments to report in regard to the two remaining victims. Great success attributed to the recent AI petition:- "torture on your doorstep" Amnesty raised the petition during the London Arms fair in September and it has drawn positive responses from British and European politicians. Anne Soubry, Minister of State for Business told Amnesty that the UK Government will: "Support proposals to strengthen controls on torture equipment." Southend High School for Boys is to host a local group exhibition, scheduled for the week commencing 8th December. Though 'STC' focused, the exhibition aims to raise awareness of the importance of preserving Human Rights legislation. More STC detail in Nov-2015 update.

Burma - Nothing to report

(AI-UK case- Letters in regard to the plight of: 'Phooey Phyo Aung'- deferred to WFR event, due to low meeting turnout).

Sri- Lanka - Nothing to report.

Monthly Action - Letters written in support of Ms.Atena Farghadani, an Iranian individual at risk presently suffering mistreatment under Article 7. of the ICCPR.

Yevgeniy Vitishko - Martin advised the group that Yevgeniy has now been released conditionally. *(the AI website reported that a court had ordered his release, effective 20 November, after having served half of his sentence in a prison colony, but nothing apparent on AI UK website and no confirmation of his actual release)*

Secretary - Group encouraged to continue support for AI by buying seasonal gifts from the catalogue. Discussed the need to ensure a group delegate attends next year's Regional Conference.

Treasurer - Group funds stand at: £796:16. However the cheque for the Balmoral Centre (meeting venue) remittance is apparently yet to clear. Heidrun to follow up with Trishia Whelan.

Write For Rights 2015 - Heidrun agreed to contact Tricia Hannafin (patkhannafin@hotmail.com) to ensure the usual websites and local papers promulgate the WFR event. Martin raised the importance of maintaining quality of written submissions rather than just quantity. The WFR event, whilst a popular activity is a considerable drain on the group's financial resources. Various strategies were discussed to improve quality such as the use of a laptop and printer vs. hand written letters and the preparation of some guidelines to assist writers. Posters delivered to the centre for display as per Mike's request.

Fundraising - Various suggestions discussed. 2015's activities to date have been effective, notably 'Martin's walk' and the 'Amnestea'. These can hopefully be repeated in 2016. Exhortation to group to develop fresh ideas for 2016.

Any Other Business - The need for procurement of more contemporary publicity and exhibition materials was discussed again. Andrew to contact Amnesty's resourcing people to discuss and arrange procurement in advance of the next AI School exhibition in December.

Next Meeting: - Will be combined with the 'Write for Rights' event at the Balmoral Centre on the 12th December 2015; - first 2016 meeting presently scheduled for 8th January 2016. Heidrun agreed to ensure centre is booked.

Andrew Jefferson