**Meeting of Solihull Amnesty Group**

**21 October 2013**

**MINUTES**

Present

Celia, Pauline, Bernard, Janet, Maurice, Cathy, Phil, Aisha, David

Matters Arising

Having read information given to us by Jenny Dixon at our last meeting, members discussed their views on the current situation in Syria. Points covered were:

* The usefulness of western intervention at an earlier stage in the conflict.
* The massive problem caused by the volume of displaced persons – a worsening situation since the closing of Turkey’s borders,
* Evidence of atrocities by both sides as described in AI publication ‘Shooting the Messenger’
* The need for a European response to the crisis.

Future Events

* Rally in Parliament Square on 26 October. This event will mark the 25th birthday of Syrian prisoner of conscience Anais al Shogre. The aim is to draw the public’s attention to the extent of the human rights crisis in Syria and the need for a non- violent response. Celia will attend.
* Coffee morning at Pauline’s house on Tuesday 26 November, 10-2. Details to be finalised at next meeting.
* Greetings card campaign stall in Solihull, 10 December. Rota to be ar ranged at next meeting.
* Fairtrade Fortnight Open Meeting 24 February 2014. Bernard and Pauline will arrange for a speaker to come and alter our room booking

ACTION Bernard & Pauline

* David’s talks: more talks have been requested. We expressed our appreciation for David’s work which is raising considerable funds for our group
* Street Collection: Bernard should know the date by the November meeting

Secretary’s Items

* Monthly Action: We were asked to write letters to support AI’s campaign for governments to boycott the the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka because of that country’s poor human rights record.
* ‘Gagging’ Bill: Pauline passed on Lorely Burt’s response to opposition to part 2 of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill.

Treasurer’s Report

An updated version of our accounts is available.

10 Minute Talk

Janet read articles on a) Iranian man who survived hanging but may have the same punishment repeated b) Torture of prisoners, who found themselves caught up in demonstrations, by the Egyptian authorities.

Campaign Updates

Johan Teterissa: Although the case has been described as closed on the AI website, this is not actually the case. AI will be working more intensely on Johan’s case over the next few months. He and 2 other prisoners will be the focus of a ‘Help get them home’ campaign with advertisements on London tubes and buses asking people to text their support thus compiling a petition. Celia will prepare and circulate a new letter writing rota before our next meeting.

 ACTION CELIA

Syria: It was decided that our group should send a letter to both our MP’s asking what is being done by the government to achieve AI’s 5 targets which would improve the human rights situation in Syria. (Possibly the letter should also be sent to Ed Miliband). Phil will draft the letter and circulate it before the next meeting. Celia will send the letter to the local press.

 ACTION CELIA & PHIL

Date of next meeting: Monday 18 November

Minutes: Janet Tea & talk: Maurice