



Secretary, Sue Friend. Treasurer, Roisin Toole. Press, Dinny Hawes. Burma Action, Reg Pyne. Newsletter, Vicky Woodcraft. Website, Peter Simons. Collections, Barbara Foster.

THANKS....

To everyone who helped at the Street Collection on December 12th, when we raised £746.

Special thanks to Barbara for organising everything so well

Also to everyone who helped on our delayed Greetings Card for Individuals At Risk stall in the Howard Centre on Jan 23rd.

After this we sent off over a hundred Butterfly greetings cards, beautifully coloured by children at the Kaleidoscope festival last July. Most of the postage costs were met from donations.

So far in this financial year, which ends on March 31st, we have sent off £2,000 to Amnesty.

SUBS - are now due for 2010 - £5 per family.

This helps to cover the cost of printing and posting those newsletters which are still sent by post and the considerable costs of our Monthly Letter Writing postage and room hire.

Please send cheques payable to Amnesty International to Roisin Toole, 116 Sweet Briar, WGC AL7 3EA if you wish to keep in touch.

NB If we have not heard from you for more than a year we will assume you are no longer interested and will stop sending this newsletter.

BURMESE WATER FESTIVAL

We are arranging an action to coincide with this on Saturday April 24th for a limited period of time during the morning.

Please tell Reg 01707 320510 or Sue 01707 273894 if you can help for an hour.

DEMAND DIGNITY CAMPAIGN

We have opted into Amnesty's latest campaign on behalf of the world's poorest people and will introduce this to the group at the **Letter Writing Meeting on Wednesday March 10th from 8pm.** Please come if you possibly can.

GROUP AGM

The Focolare centre, The Cloisters, off Parkway, WGC, from 7.30pm on Tuesday April 20th.

Our speakers will be 2 Burmese exiles, Moe Bue and Wai Hnin, daughter of political prisoner Ko Mya Aye, one of the 88 Generation student group.

All members are invited - and are welcome to bring a friend.

Letter writers in HERTFORD AND WARE

The letter writing meeting in Bengeo in December attracted 8 enthusiastic writers. Bryan Andrews intends holding another letter writing evening in March.

Contact him for details.

01992 304022/ bryan@lesdarlingsartistes.com

PLANT SALE - OR NOT?

For the past few years our May Plant Sales have been enjoyable, useful to gardeners and excellent fund-raisers. Ann and John Simons who have hosted the last three events in their lovely gardens are willing to do so again provided more people are able to contribute plants for sale.

(For the last couple of years they and Reg & Maureen have contributed most of the plants.)

SO... if you are about to divide your penstemons or sow your sweet pea or runner bean seeds, can you think of Amnesty and pot out/sow a few more?

Please let Ann and John know NOW - 01707 326970 peter@crinklecrag so they can see what is likely to be contributed and decide whether to go ahead with the sale.

REGIONAL MEETING at Aylesbury.**30.01.10**

This was very well organised by our Regional Rep, Bob Corn, and members of the Aylesbury AI group.

We were given a report on the 2009 International Council Meeting, where Amnesty strategy is agreed worldwide, heard from Dr Champa Patel, AIUK's new Head of Activism, on the importance of local groups and the support available from the centre, from the Director of the Jubilee Debt Campaign and from members of an American Muslim Women's group.

Details of all these presentations will be available later but I thought I would focus on the presentation by Nang Seng of the Burma Campaign.

She focussed particularly on human rights abuses among the ethnic minority groups which make up more than 40% of the population.

In what amounts to ethnic cleansing, the army has destroyed more than 3,000 of their villages, forced labour continues and soldiers rape women and girls indiscriminately. Health care is minimal, children are not allowed to speak minority languages in school and those belonging to minority groups are barred from Higher Education.

A 2009 report from the Harvard Law School on human rights abuses concluded that the Burmese Government may be guilty of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, punishable by International Law and although more than 150 UK MPs signed an Early Day Motion on the subject our government has remained silent nor have they supported calls for a UN embargo on Arms sales to Burma.

Elections will be held in Burma this year, which Nang Seng says will be a sham, merely rubber stamping present policy, but this is a good time to press for action. (Vicky Woodcraft)

TAKE ACTION

On the Burma Campaign website - www.burmacampaign.org.uk - click on Campaigns. There are easy-to-follow actions to take on calls for an arms embargo and for the Generals to be brought to justice for Crimes against Humanity.

This is a brilliant and well-presented website. Do have a look!

If you do not have internet access and want to take action contact Reg on 01707 320510

DIARY OF EVENTS

Letter Writing evenings, where we concentrate on Amnesty's core activity - **writing on behalf of Individuals At Risk** - are on the **second Wed of the month** at the Backhouse Room, 116 Handside Lane, WGC. AL8 6SZ, starting at 8pm. All materials and refreshments are provided. For more details contact Sue 01707 273894 or susan.friend@sky-mail.net

- Wed Feb 10th - Letter Writing at the Backhouse Room.
- Wed March 10th - Letter Writing at the Backhouse Room.
This will include a DVD introduction to Amnesty's Demand Dignity Campaign.
- Wed April 14th - Letter Writing at the Backhouse Room.
- Tuesday April 20th 7.30 - Group AGM at the Focolare Centre, WGC.
- Sat April 24th Burma Action. WGC Town Centre. Morning only.

NB I realise that this newsletter is very focussed on Burma. Be assured that in our letter writing evenings we address human rights abuses in a wide range of countries all over the world.