

Sat 5th Nov 2016 at 3.00pm

ISHR-A President's address to AGM

Dear Members

During the last 12 months ISHR-A has continued to work towards our long term goals of

1. Advocacy for Human Rights
2. Refugee Relief and
3. Grass Roots Development

Our association with other like-minded organisations has led to valuable collaboration both financially and through our joint interests. There will be an opportunity for each of these groups to report on their activities during our meeting.

We have continued to move towards the use of electronic means of communication rather than frequent meetings as this suits most committee members. We have had discussions on the use of cloud funding as a means of fundraising.

Our FaceBook page continues to grow with David sending frequent posts. It is now generating substantial numbers of hits which can potentially increase interest in Human Rights and possibly lead to increased membership and revenue.

We continue to have contact with other organisations outside ISHR-A who are interested in associating with us in order to take advantage of our tax deductible status.

We have continued to raise money to support the Elpis School on the Thai Burma border. This school continues to struggle to educate young Karen Refugees. The situation for refugees in Mae Sot, Thailand is rapidly changing as Burma opens up but for the foreseeable future these children still need education to prepare them for life.

John Launder has continued to write many letters on behalf of ISHR-A on Human Rights Issues. One particularly intractable situation is that of the Camp ASHRAF refugees in Iraq. These are Iranians who fled to Iraq from the Iranian regime and have been subjected to violence including rocket attacks and severe harassment. Recent news is that the occupants have been successfully relocated to Albania where hopefully they can resume their lives in peace.

The policies of our own politicians on asylum seekers who come to our shores remain unbelievably harsh. We are still pushing back boats from near Christmas Island and claiming this as a success in stopping the boats. This puts lives at risk as well as causing tensions with our neighbour Indonesia.

The situation on both offshore processing camps remains very unsatisfactory and we need to campaign to close these facilities. Children should not be confined in these camps.

Conflict in many countries of the world will continue to produce high numbers of people with no option but to flee and join the ranks of refugees. Peacekeeping efforts in these areas need to be greatly increased to prevent further conflict and alleviate the suffering of these people. The situation in Syria and Iraq continues to deteriorate. The Gaza Strip needs a huge amount of aid to rebuild after its conflict with Israel. Across Africa there are many conflicts.

Refugee flows away from conflict zones are continuing to cause a great deal of stress particularly in Europe where unfortunately public opinion is turning against compassionate approaches to resettlement.

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During April I was able to visit ISHR in Frankfurt and renew our contact with the International Society. I hope to increase our collaboration with them and with the other sections over the coming year. I was appointed a World vice president of ISHR representing Australasia. This role is still being defined but I hope to increase collaborating with other sections around the world.

Marie Gerrard