

Protest in Harmony, Chair's report to the AGM, 11 May 2024

This last year the world has become darker in many ways and sometimes seems without hope. For me, and I think for some others in PIH, singing has been a way to find and bring light – small maybe, but enduring. The most constant of this has been our sharing of San Ghanny's vigils calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. They have helped me, and I think others, deal with the daily horror of what is happening to the Palestinian people and to not give way to despair. So, many thanks to Penny for initiating the vigils and to her, Jane, Shereen and various songleaders for helping us keep them going. And to Lily and all those who contributed letters to the ceasefire banner. But most of all to all those of you who have come out rain and shine each week to sing for peace and justice.

It is important, too, to remember all of the others we have sung with and for over this year. Listing them has made me remember and be so proud of the wide range of commitments held individually and collectively by members of PIH.

This year, we have brought our songs to: International Women's Day; International Workers' Memorial Day; May Day; the Grenfell Tower fire commemoration; Conscientious Objectors day: events marking the anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the vigil marking the 50th anniversary of the coup in Chile; the Now We Rise Cop28 Day of Action; protesting against the decision to approve the Rosebank oilfield; the End Fossil fuels Global Justice Now event; saving Roseburn Path; marking the anniversary of the Bhopal gas disaster; solidarity events for Sheku Bayoh's family and supporters; showing solidarity with asylum seekers, refugees and all migrants at City of Sanctuary gatherings, in Erskine and in protests against potential Rwanda deportations.

We have also had two special times to celebrate ourselves: our away weekend in Crianlarich; and our wonderful 20th birthday party. These have given us not only time to be together but time to enjoy the wide variety of talent among PIH members – with lots of laughter and some tears.

I want to finish by saying some important thank you's. First and foremost, to our songleaders – who somehow manage to enable us all to sing, to sing together, to sing in harmony and to help us express both sorrow and joy. Second, to our committee who have worked so well together to make all of this possible. Third to Margaret Bremner and Susan Moffat for their work as Treasurers and to Neil Duguid who has helped tremendously with that task by being at the door every month. Fourth to Neil again and to Hilary Patrick for acting as auditors for PIH. Fifth to Chris Booth and Chris Pearson for managing our website and to Jane Dudman and Lily Greenan who have joined them to review and update the website. Sixth to Maxine and Ian for being the guardians and bringers of our PIH banner. And 7th to John Ireson for chairing today.

And a big thank you to all of you for bringing yourselves and your voices.