

## **WAR –TORN CHILDREN EXHIBITION**

Regional Cultural Centre Letterkenny - 9<sup>th</sup> February to 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018

The exhibition was commissioned by the Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny in conjunction with Letterkenny Amnesty group.

### **REPORT ON THE LAUNCH OF THE EXHIBITION**

The launch took place at lunchtime on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February and was well attended by people from a variety of interests and organisations in Donegal and further afield.



**Attendees in conversation at the round tables prior to the launch. (Photo: Maire Magenis )**

Shaun Hannigan, from the Regional Cultural Centre, and Mary Ryan, Chair of the Letterkenny Amnesty Group, made the initial opening remarks and welcomed Roberta Bacic, curator of the exhibition.



**Pina Attanasio from Amnesty International Ireland, speaking at the launch.**

**(Photo: Maire Magenis )**

Pina Attanasio from Amnesty International Ireland then gave the keynote address. She gave a very moving account of her visit to Lesbos last year when she volunteered to work in refugee camps on the island. She described how life is for refugee children and their families in the camps with overcrowding, lack of services and little possibility of moving on to a better life. Moria Camp, on Lesbos, was intended to accommodate 2,500 people. Last July, when Pina visited there were 3,700 people in the camp and this month there are 7000. Conditions are better for the minority of refugees who move on to Lesbos Solidarity Camp where local people and refugees get opportunities to interact through language courses, art courses and cooking and eating together. Pina described two individuals' stories as part of her presentation.

Richard Gilpin, a long-time member of Amnesty, then sang three songs relating to children and conflict – Paul Brady's 'The Island', Eric Bogle's 'The Green Fields of France' and his own

composition 'The Man on the Moon and Me', written about growing up in Belfast during the conflict.



**Local musician Richard Gilpin who provided music at the launch. (Photo: Maire Magenis )**

The Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council, Gerry McMonagle officially opened the exhibition commenting on the need to respect refugees. He stated that Donegal County Council is delighted to be associated with the exhibition.



**Letterkenny Amnesty group members with Mr. Gerry McMonagle, Cathoirleach of Donegal County Council, Pina Attanasio, Amnesty International Ireland and exhibition curator Roberta Bacic. (Photo: Maire Magenis)**

Ed Horgan of the Naming the Children Project had been scheduled to attend the opening but was unable to be there. Roberta Bacic spoke about the project.

Following a break for refreshments, Roberta gave an in depth guided tour of the exhibition describing the contexts in which the arpilleras, photos and posters were created. She was assisted in this by Deborah Stockdale, a participating artist, and Rob Fairmichael, INNATE Coordinator.



**Curator Roberta Bacic giving a guided tour of the exhibition. (Photo: Breege Doherty)**

Following the tour, attendees were given an opportunity to participate in the Naming the Children Project by selecting the name of individual children killed in Syria, writing the name of the child on a ribbon and attaching each ribbon to a cloth doll hanging on a tree.



**Attendees writing the name of a dead child on a ribbon, as a way of remembering and naming them. (Photo: Maire Magenis)**

Visitors to the exhibition and attendees at all events are invited to join the knitting corner and knit a small square. Fifteen of these squares make up a baby blanket which will be sent to refugee camps in Greece.

Report provided by Maire Magenis, Letterkenny Amnesty Group.