



News from the Minehead Group



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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Help end the horror** in **Syrian prisons** by signing the petition sent out with this newsletter and asking your friends and colleagues to sign it too. Return it to Susan Mew for forwarding to AIUK by 27 July.
- ✓ **Tell** Secretary of State David Davis to end the anxiety of people who call the UK home and ask our government to guarantee **EU Citizens' rights** to remain in the UK after Brexit. Find the action at www.amnesty.org.uk.
- ✓ **Visit** the **art exhibition** mounted at Toucan (3 The Parade, Minehead) by the Roadwater Art Group on the theme of 'Human Rights are for everyone'. Open from 4 April to 13 May during normal café opening times. Entry free.
- ✓ **Watch** part of the AIUK annual **conference** which will be live-streamed on the afternoon of Saturday 8 April and use your **proxy vote** beforehand.
- ✓ **Come along** to our **quiz** on Friday 21 April and **invite your friends** to make up teams of six. If you don't have a full team we can put you with others to make a team. £3.50 entry. Bar and raffle. All welcome.
- ✓ **Note the dates** to come along to our next **letter writing** afternoon on 19 May and our fund-raising **AmnesTEA** on Saturday 8 July in Porlock.

Round up of March news



At our March **group meeting** we discussed the resolutions being put to the AIUK AGM on 8/9 April which Alison and Susan are attending. They will report back on the resolution outcomes and on the AGM reports and conference content at our next meeting at the end of April. At the March meeting, we also heard more appalling facts and information that Cherry had picked up at the South West Regional Conference in February. These are included under Campaign News below.

The fund-raising lunch for the **Yemen** organised and hosted by one of our AI members, Gian Zucchelli and his wife Christine, on 8 March was well supported by AI members and many others. The lunch raised £552 plus £76 in gift aid, which has been sent via Save the Children. Well done Gian!

Campaign News

Women's Human Rights in North Africa

Cherry reports: At the SW regional conference the country coordinator for North Africa summarised major issues on which Amnesty is campaigning in the region, which include forced marriage of rape victims to their rapist (enabling the rapist to avoid punishment and protecting the 'honour' of the girl and her family); focus of the prosecution on whether or not the rape victim was a virgin; violence against women and in particular domestic violence. Among the five countries covered, Tunisia is still the most progressive, with more involvement of women in public life, and with abortion and contraception available on demand. Morocco has also moved to give women more rights. Sadly Egypt has regressed since the Arab spring, with more violence against women and continued widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). Algeria has criminalised domestic violence but still allows forced marriage of rape victims

Diary Dates

Monthly meetings:

We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month (except August and December) at 1930, at the Quaker Meeting House on Bancks Street, Minehead. The first part of the meeting is open to all and features a speaker, film or workshop. After a tea break, AI members are invited to stay for a short business meeting which will end by 2130.

4 April – 13 May

Roadwater Art Group exhibition at Toucan Café in Minehead.

Saturday 8 April

AIUK conference live-streamed in afternoon.

Friday 21 April:

Quiz at Minehead Social Club starting at 1930 prompt.

Thursday 27 April

Group meeting: report back from the AIUK AGM & conference.

Friday 19 May

Letter writing session in St Andrew's Annex 1400-1600.

Thursday 28 May

Group meeting: Film and discussion.

19-25 June

Refugee Week

Thursday 22 June

Group meeting: speaker on refugees in Somerset (tbc)

Saturday 8 July

AmnesTEA: in Porlock.

to the rapist. In Libya the situation is so unstable it is not possible for researchers to go in, so no information is available. One can only guess at the problems women must be facing.

Other facts which Cherry noted from the conference:

- In Egypt 37% of women are illiterate and domestic violence is not a crime
- Since the Turkish 'coup', 375 NGOs have been closed, around 120,000 people have been sacked from their jobs and around 90,000 arrested on unspecified or vague grounds.
- Jails are so full that 38,000 convicted criminals were released to make room for political prisoners
- A further 174 new prisons are planned in the next five years.
- After arrest you become a non-person – cannot get a job, passport taken away, degree annulled and friends afraid to be seen with you.
- An estimated half a million Kurdish people have been displaced from their homes and villages in the Kurdish region of Turkey.
- Nationalistic slogans foster prejudice against anyone who is not mainstream ethnically Turkish, such as the Kurds, eg 'Be proud if you are Turkish: Obey if you are not.'

I Welcome Refugees: the campaign will have a specific focus on child refugees (more than half the world's refugees are children), including:

- Safeguarding unaccompanied children
- Ensuring safe and legal routes for them to come to UK
- Ensuring their right to be reunited with family members in UK
- Children's right to register as UK citizens – making this more affordable



Did you know that: of the (anyway unaffordable) £936 fee for 18 year-olds to register as UK citizens, only £272 is actual costs to the government? The rest is profit!

Engine Room Bridgwater 'Belonging' events and exhibition

On 16 March, Susan went along to the **Engine Room** in Bridgwater to take part in a discussion about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 1: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. This was the first in a series of events exploring the theme of '**Belonging**'. Other discussion sessions will focus on Article 3 (18 April at 1900), Article 7 (20 May at 1100), Article 18 (15 June at 1400), and Article 23 (11 July at 1100). *Susan reports:* While there for the discussion and film session, I had an interesting exchange with a small group of about ten people on Amnesty's role and work, and whether the UDHR was still relevant. I was also pleased to make contact with a member of the Weston-super-Mare Group who was there as well. Since then I have returned to the Engine Room and was fortunate to be given a guided tour of their **digital media exhibition** on the theme of Belonging. I found the exhibition interesting, enjoyable and thought-provoking. The exhibition is on NOW until 7 April and is open 1000-1600 Monday to Saturday. And they have a small, reasonably priced café where you can sit and think about you've seen and heard! In their brochure, the exhibition is described as '*innovative digital art works responding to the theme of Belonging. The theme has been left open to interpretation and could explore the notion of being accepted/included in a social, political or cultural group, individual happiness and well-being or a connection to the land and to nature.*' The exhibition includes a film by Jenny Crosher about two days in the life of RAFT (Refugee Aid from Taunton) with words spoken by the volunteers who work there. The Engine Room is definitely worth a visit.



How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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