



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take action to protect** journalists at Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta who revealed abuse of gay men in **Chechnya**. On 1 April the paper reported that over a hundred men suspected of being gay had been abducted, abused and some even killed because of their perceived sexuality. The journalists' lives are at risk. Call on Russian authorities to protect the journalists, and their freedom to report human rights abuses. Find the action at www.amnesty.org.uk.
- ✓ **Last chance to visit** the wonderful **art exhibition** mounted at Toucan (3 The Parade, Minehead) by the Roadwater Art Group on the theme of 'Human Rights are for everyone'. Open until 13 May. Entry free.
- ✓ **Come along** to our next **letter writing afternoon** on 19 May, any time between 1400 and 1600, in the Annex, St Andrew's Church, Wellington Square, Minehead. Case sheets, guidance and materials provided!
- ✓ **Make a date to join us** on 17 June for 'The Great Get Together' in memory of Jo Cox MP, and part of AIUK's **Campaign Against Hate**. 'There's more that unites than divides us'. We will have a street stall and give out flowers and cakes. Offers of **cakes** to Alison Dietz.
- ✓ **Note in your diaries** these dates: **film show** for Refugee Week on Thursday 22 June in the Quaker Meeting House at 1930, fund-raising **AmnesTEA** on Saturday 8 July in Porlock and a **concert** on Sunday 17 September at 1500 in Alcombe.

Round up of April news

The opening of the Roadwater Art Group's **exhibition** on 3 April on the theme of 'Human Rights are for everyone' was a lovely event. We are very grateful to the artists who produced such wonderful work and also to Toucan staff who donated the refreshments and made us very welcome.



Our annual **Quiz** on 21 April, brilliantly organised as usual by the Humber family, was a very enjoyable evening. £340 was raised, including £112 on the raffle and several generous donations.



On 26 April, Susan gave a **talk** about Amnesty to about 60 members of the local **U3A**. This was well received and stimulated a range of questions.

At our April **group meeting** Alison and Susan reported back from the **AIUK Annual Conference** and **AGM** held in Nottingham at the beginning of April. Illustrated by photographs taken at the conference, they shared the main points from the reports, discussions of resolutions, workshops and keynote speakers. Notes they took relating to particular campaigns are included in the updates overleaf. On Saturday the conference was opened by **Brendan Cox**, husband of Jo Cox, who lit the Amnesty candle and spoke movingly about her human rights activism.



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.

Friday 19 May

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

Thursday 28 May

Group meeting:
Business meeting.

Sat 17 June

Great Get Together action in Minehead. 1000-1200. Venue tbc

Thursday 22 June

Refugee Week Event:
Film 'Fire at Sea' and AI photo exhibition 1930 at QMH.

Saturday 8 July

AmnesTEA: in Porlock.

Thursday 27 July

Group meeting: two short films: women's HR and HR in India.

Sunday 20 August

Stall at Allerford Fete

Thursday 24 Aug

Summer social event

Syria, he said, is our generation's test. The new threat is so-called 'populism' which stands for bigotry and racism. He spoke about the scale of hate within our communities and that we have to speak out.



The report by **Kate Allen**, Director of AIUK, began with Trump and the sharp increase in hate crimes everywhere. Here, our government has set about creating a hostile environment for refugees who are treated as if they were criminals. The political right seeks to undermine attempts to help them, and unscrupulous politicians and media outlets exploit people's fears with their toxic rhetoric. The result is a backlash against human rights. Kate also spoke about the threats to the Human Rights Act (see overleaf), refugees and the appalling events in Syrian prisons, where thousands of extra-judicial executions are taking place. The **keynote panel** spoke about the Against Hate campaign, which was launched in response to the rise in hate crime in both the UK and USA. You can watch a video of this discussion on the AIUK website. Follow the links to 'governance' and 'AIUK AGM 2017'.

The overall mood at the conference was rather depressed and downbeat compared with previous years, owing to the terrible events taking place around the world, as well as in our own country. But Alison and Susan made time to relax with a glass of wine (see photo) at the end of a very long and busy day!



Campaign News

Ethiopia: many of us have signed postcards to mark World Press Freedom Day expressing our concern at continuing attacks on freedom of expression and imprisonment of journalists in Ethiopia, including Eskinder Nega, sentenced to 18 years in jail. Other groups working on Eskinder's case have also signed postcards and they will be all delivered to the Ethiopian Embassy in London for the attention of the Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn.

I Welcome Refugees: this global campaign continues until 2018 and Alison attended a workshop on it at the AIUK conference. The goals of the campaign are as set out in our group's November 2016 newsletter. The number of forcibly displaced people in the world now stands at 65 million. Of these, 21 million have been forced to leave their own country and thereby become refugees. South Sudan is the fastest growing refugee crisis; in just two weeks 20,000 fled into Uganda.



On 30 March Jill attended a Churches Together in Minehead meeting, organised by Rev David Croucher for people interested in taking forward the idea of settling a Syrian refugee family in Minehead. He will explore the process with the Home Office. Jenny Gateaux has met with a Taunton Citizens UK member involved with the Syrian families in Taunton to find out what kind of support families need and has set up a skills audit.

Later in the year, we hope to have a speaker on the Syrian Families Resettlement Scheme.

The Government has acknowledged that an 'administrative error' has meant that not all offers from local councils to accept unaccompanied child refugees have been taken up. 130 more will be taken in immediately. The film 'Fire at Sea', which we plan to show on 22 June, is an award winning documentary about refugees in the Mediterranean. At our last group meeting, members signed a letter concerning women refugees in Athens, and a letter and card for Syrian refugee Noori.

Against Hate: the **Great Get Together** takes place over the weekend of 16-18 June. The target is 10 million people having lunch together. Brendan Cox is promoting this event which is being supported by both AI and 'City of Sanctuary' (www.cityofsanctuary.org) City of Sanctuary supports grass roots attempts to welcome refugees. It encourages local organisations to become involved, to make pledges, and so get their town to be called a 'city of sanctuary'. *Nobody is safe until everybody is safe.*

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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