



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Come along** to the various events planned for **Holocaust Memorial Day** on 27 January and **help advertise** the event if you can. See overleaf for further details. A poster is attached to emailed versions of this newsletter or you can download it from our website.
- ✓ **Take action** to support **Eskinder Nega** who is 4 ½ years into an 18-year sentence for his work as a journalist. Sample letters are attached to emailed versions of this newsletter.
- ✓ **Sign the petition** to the Foreign Secretary asking the UK Government to **stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia**. Devastating air strikes, led by Saudi Arabia, have killed thousands of women, men and children, and destroyed homes, schools and hospitals across Yemen. The UK Government's own research has shown UK-made cluster bombs (which are banned) were used by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Go to www.amnesty.org.uk to find the action on the home page.
- ✓ **Join us** for our New Year's **social** on 7 January starting at 1230 at Alison and Roy's home in Roadwater. Bring and share lunch. This event is for everyone who supports the group – not just those who come to meetings. Email Alison dietz@btinternet.com to confirm you're coming.
- ✓ **Make a note** in your 2017 diary to come along to our **quiz** on 3 March and **invite your friends** to make up a team or two.
- ✓ **Note our change of meeting day** - from January 2017, we will be meeting on the fourth **Thursday** of the month. Same time, same place!

Round up of December group news



At the very end of November (and therefore too late to report in our December newsletter), we held our second successful **fund-raiser** at the Spice Merchant restaurant in Watchet. *Alison Dietz reports:* Over 30 Amnesty members and friends enjoyed an excellent evening of good food, wine and company. We are very grateful to Uddin and his team for their continuing support, excellent food and friendly welcome. The restaurant very kindly donates their profits from the evening to charity. Including the proceeds of a raffle, the evening raised at total of £240 for Amnesty International.



Our Amnesty Tree at the annual **Christmas Tree Festival** at the beginning of December was much admired. The festival took place at the Avenue Methodist Church in Minehead and was seen by hundreds of visitors, including local school children. Donations were collected for the Save the Children fund. The theme this year was 'Time for a Story'. Our tree told the story of people featured in earlier Write for Rights Campaigns, including Albert Woodfox. Many thanks to Ann Lowe for her imaginative ideas, to Chris Lawson for organising us and to all who helped.

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.

Sat 7 Jan 2017

New Year Social: at 1230 at Alison & Roy's home in Roadwater.

Thursday 26 Jan

Group meeting: extended campaign updates and planning our activities for 2017.

Friday 27 Jan

Holocaust Memorial Day: vigil and other activities. See poster.

Thursday 23 Feb

Group meeting: AGM

Saturday 25 Feb

SW Regional Conference: Mint Methodist Church, Exeter. Programme to be confirmed.

Friday 3 March: Quiz

at Minehead Social Club starting at 1930 prompt.

Wednesday 8 Mar

International Women's Day: event details to be confirmed.



Our **Write for Rights stall** and coffee morning at the Avenue Methodist Church on 9 December was another enjoyable and successful occasion. *Chris Lawson reports:* Once again, Cllr Parbrook as Mayor spent time at the signing and talking with people. The cards and letters have gone off with 50-60 signatures on each (some collected in advance). Thanks, once again, to Peter Atherton for providing the stamps. We received some generous donations and made some card sales so we came back with around £80. Previous card sales had raised a further £24. Thanks to everyone who helped. It was a good team effort as usual.

Holocaust Memorial Day Friday 27 January 2017

Here is an outline of the day's events which have been organised jointly by the AI Minehead Local Group, Christians Together in Minehead and the West Somerset Inter-Cultural Friendship Group.



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

1100-1300: Vigil in Wellington Square; light a candle for your commitment to a better world.

1100-1500: Exhibition for reflection in St Andrew's Church, with short presentations of music or words every half hour; refreshments available.

1900: Talk in St Andrew's Church on peace-building. Donald Reeves (Director of Soul of Europe and former Rector of St James's Piccadilly) will give personal reflections from his experience in the Balkans.

Please help advertise this event, and if you can help, contact Jenny Lennon-Wood or Chris Lawson.

Campaign News

I Welcome Refugees: *Jill Walmsley notes:* Petitions have been sent to the Prime Minister and Home Secretary, and a letter to Ian Liddell-Grainger. We are asked to identify ways we could build relationships and work with other local organisations to welcome and support refugees.

Ethiopia: *Cherry Bird writes:* During his recent talk in London, Swedish journalist Martin Schibbye recounted his experiences in Ethiopia in 2011, where he was investigating the activities of an oil company. He and his photographer were ambushed and arrested by government security forces, suffering gunshot wounds in the process. They were threatened with execution and forced to take part in a mock documentary that was afterwards shown on Ethiopian television as an 'example of the arrest of terrorists'. They were imprisoned for 438 days in the notorious Kaliti jail, where journalist Eskinder Nega and British citizen Andy Tsege are also being held. They received no medical care and their treatment and conditions broke all international human rights agreements and standards. To this day he cannot forget the screams of people being tortured. They were released in 2012 only after agreeing to be filmed confessing to their 'guilt'. Martin met Eskinder and says he knows people are writing to him, even though he does not receive all the letters. With the current state of emergency in Ethiopia there is little chance of Eskinder or Andy being released soon, but it is essential that we keep up the pressure by writing to the Ethiopian authorities, reminding them that we are watching and won't go away.

Women's Action Network: *Cherry says:* Please continue to support the campaign for release of Nazanin Zanghary-Ratcliffe, the British-Iranian woman detained in an Iranian prison on the basis of secret charges and an unfair trial. Separated from her young daughter, her health is worsening and her husband, Richard, reports she is near breaking point. Most recently she has been offered the inhuman choice of having her daughter with her in prison, under terrible conditions, or signing away all rights to her. You can sign the petition for her release and send her a message of solidarity at www.write.amnesty.org.uk/writeforrights/action/nazanin-zanghari-ratcliffe.

Recently, AI joined the Centre for Women's Global Leadership in a global campaign, **Sixteen Days Against Gender-Based Violence**. Amnesty commented: 'Imagine living in a refugee camp where you are too scared to go the toilet, or are being subjected to sexual harassment on a daily basis in your host community. This is the terrifying reality for hundreds of thousands of women and girls around the world, and the shameful inaction of wealthy governments is prolonging it.'

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

Chair & group contact: Alison Dietz: Tel. 01984 641603 Email: dietz@btinternet.com

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