



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take further action** about the frightening situation in **Turkey**. Both the chair, **Taner Kiliç**, and the Director of Amnesty International Turkey, **Idil Eser** (pictured) have now been jailed on false allegations for belonging to “terrorist organisations”. And many other human rights defenders (HRDs) are either detained or banned from travel while they await charges. Go to the home page of www.amnesty.org.uk and follow the link to email Turkey’s Minister of Justice, calling for the release of all HRDs.
- ✓ **Send a letter** to the new UK Ambassador to Ethiopia regarding **Eskinder Nega** and **Andy Tsege**. (Letter attached to this newsletter.)
- ✓ **Come along** to the Allerford **Fair** on Sunday 20 August between 1230 and 1600. We will be inviting people to take part in actions in support of the ‘I Welcome Refugees’ campaign. If you can help, please let Chris Lawson know (contact details overleaf) or just come and see us on the day.
- ✓ **Help publicise** our **fundraising concert** on Sunday 17 September (poster attached), **sell tickets**, **bake a cake** and/or offer to **help** with various jobs on the day. (Contact Chris Lawson if you can help.)
- ✓ **Join us** at our **summer social** on Thursday 24 August at 1800 – bring and share supper at Susan’s home in Carhampton. This is a chance for all our supporters to meet and socialise – it’s not just for those who come to meetings! It helps to know numbers and what food you plan to bring so please contact Susan if you plan to come (contact details overleaf).



Round up of July news

On Saturday 8 July, we held another enjoyable **AmnesTea** at the home of Karen and Graham Mills in Porlock. The takings were £148, including gate money, raffle and sale of a few books and veggies. Well done Karen and Graham and thank you both for a beautifully organised event.



At our July **meeting**, Cherry showed a powerful video clip “Set her Free” produced by Women for Refugee Women (WRW), highlighting the human rights abuses suffered by **women asylum seekers** held at the **UK detention** centre at Yarl’s Wood, near Bedford. Around 2,000 women are held each year from all parts of the world, most already traumatised by experience of rape and/ or torture. Despite a Home Office policy stating that survivors of torture should not be locked up, and concerns expressed in the 2015 Prisons Inspectorate report about conditions in the centre, a steep rise in levels of self-harm among detainees (tripled between 2013 and 2015) and women’s reports of feeling unsafe, the UK government continues to maintain that conditions are good and detainees are treated with dignity and respect. WRW cites evidence of serious mental health issues among the women, for whom being locked up brings back memories of the horrors they have been through. They are subject to violations of privacy and dignity, being supervised by male staff who walk into their cells without knocking. Find out more at www.refugeewomen.co.uk

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.

Sunday 20 August

Stall at Allerford Fair 1230 to 1600. ‘I Welcome Refugees’ campaign actions.

Thursday 24 Aug

Bring and share supper at 1800 at Susan’s home: Mayhill, Woodland Close, Carhampton, TA24 6PE. All welcome.

Sunday 17 Sept

Fund-raising concert in Alcombe Parish Church at 1500. ‘Paul Robeson – the songs and the singer’ with Arwel Huw Morgan (bass) and Keith Jones (piano).

Thursday 28 Sept

Group meeting:
Speaker: Cllr Frances Nicholson re SCC’s work with refugees.

Thursday 26 Oct

Group meeting: focus on the new global campaign ‘Protecting space for human rights defenders’.

Friday 2 March 2018

Amnesty quiz

Also at our July meeting, Cherry showed another video clip, "When Land is Lost, Do We Eat Coal?" produced by **Amnesty India**. This showed the environmental devastation and destruction of people's lives caused by **open cast coal mining** in India, where the drive for economic development based on coal ignores the weakest, especially the **indigenous tribal people** under whose traditional lands the coal reserves lie. In the last 60 years, an estimated 24 million Adivasi (indigenous communities) have been displaced by 'development' projects, such as mining, roadbuilding and dams. Water supplies are polluted, forests flattened and the land is left as a desert. No compensation is offered and there is no acknowledgement of the fact that these people know no other life and cannot easily move to a modern urban lifestyle. Their culture and livelihoods are based on their traditional lands, from which they sustainably harvest and farm all their needs. This is one of Amnesty India's campaign areas and there are many Indian activists, such as Veronique Mistiaen from Odisha, who has dedicated his life to the cause and won the 2017 Goldman Environmental prize for Asia.

Campaign News

Ethiopia *Cherry writes:* I had an inspiring meeting with Patricia Bartley, country coordinator for Ethiopia, and Yemi, Andy Tsege's wife. Despite the lack of positive news, Yemi retains her fighting spirit and continues to ensure Andy remains on the radar of politicians and the general public, including standing for election as an MP in her constituency (which happens to be Theresa May's). She is also working with the Peace Group at Sidcot, North Somerset and the Weston Super Mare Amnesty group. She asked that we continue writing to our MP and also suggested targeting MEPs. Patricia reported that the UK Ambassador to Ethiopia, Susanna Moorehead, was scheduled to speak in June at York University, where Patricia is based. More on this in the next newsletter, but meanwhile she is an important person to write to about Andy and Eskinder. Please sign the attached letter to Susanna and copy it to the FCO.

I Welcome Refugees *Jill reports:* Our next actions for this campaign will be at our stall at the Allerford Fair on 20 August. We have a petition started by the Asylum Justice Project to campaign against the degrading and unfair indefinite detention of asylum seekers in the UK, a practice at odds with every other country in the EU. This will be sent to the Immigration Minister in the autumn together with decorated and signed doves, signifying the freedom we hope all asylum seekers will enjoy one day. We have also ordered the Yellow Arms of welcome, and will photograph fair-goers who wish to take part in this action - welcoming refugees with open arms! Christians Together in Minehead held another meeting on 1 July to continue efforts to support the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme in our town. Cllr Frances Nicholson, who has portfolio responsibility on Somerset County Council, is coming to speak at our September meeting about how families have settled in Somerset.

Iran: AIUK has continued to put pressure on the UK Government regarding Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Kamal Foroughi. On 18 July there was a parliamentary debate on British people imprisoned in Iran. AIUK told us that 'the debate was packed. MPs from all parties were present and the majority spoke in support of Nazanin and Kamal. A great deal of them specifically mentioned Amnesty and the vast number of emails they received from their constituents. Even many MPs who had not previously engaged on these cases were in attendance. Following the debate we were relieved to hear that Nazanin has now been allowed to see a psychiatrist.' Several of us had emailed our MP asking him to attend the debate but he told us that he 'already had five meetings and events in his diary at the time of the debate'. However, he assured us that he would 'continue to take an active interest in this matter'.

Other forthcoming events of interest (updates on items in the July newsletter)

Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival: tickets are still available for Thursday 14 September at 7.15pm when **Dr Shirin Ebadi** will be talking about her book 'Until we are Free'. Dr Ebadi is an Iranian lawyer, human rights activist and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. To book, go to www.budlitfest.org.uk

More information about Emily Feldberg's new musical work is available at www.emily-feldberg-music.org

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

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