



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take action** in response to the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo. Add your voice to an appeal asking our Prime Minister to take action, including targeted sanctions, to help protect the **children of Aleppo**. Go to www.amnesty.org.uk to find the action.
- ✓ **Join us** for our **letter writing afternoon** on Wednesday 9 November at any time between 1400 and 1530 at St Andrew's Church. Materials provided, as well as guidance on what to write and to whom!
- ✓ **Book your place** soon for our **fund-raising meal** at the Spice Merchant, Watchet on Monday 28 November. Numbers are limited so you need to book your places and arrival time – between 1830 and 1930.
- ✓ **Help**, if you'd like to, prepare our tree for the **Christmas Tree Festival** (1-4 December), or just go along and have a look at our tree.
- ✓ **Make a date** to come along to our **Write for Rights** campaign **stall** and **coffee morning** on the morning of Friday 9 December at the Avenue Methodist Church. If you can help, phone Chris on 01643 704779.

Round up of October group news



October Group meeting: our main item was a training session, led by Susan, on the new global campaign – I Welcome refugees. This will last two years, taking us up to the end of 2018. The overall campaign goal is *'Refugees are protected and enjoy their human rights through strengthened global responsibility-sharing and international co-operation'*. AIUK has identified

four long term outcomes, with each having a strand of work contributing to them: *communities, movement building, political change and responding to global events*. As part of the *movement building* we will be endeavouring to make contact and work with other local groups and organisations who are sympathetic to our aims. And we will be using every opportunity we have to raise the issues in our forthcoming events. In the meantime, here are some facts to think about:

- By the end of 2015, there were 65.3 million forcibly displaced people in the world.
- The top five source countries for refugees (UNHCR statistics) are: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.
- The top five host countries for refugees are: Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Ethiopia (UNHCR statistics).
- Palestinian refugees, of whom there are 5.2 million worldwide, are counted separately. Syria hosts the most Palestinian refugees.
- In 2003, 70% of refugees were hosted by developing countries. In 2015, that percentage had increased to 89%. So rich countries, such as the UK, are doing even less to help with the crisis.
- The fastest growing refugee crisis is in South Sudan.



Diary Dates

Monthly meetings:

We meet on the fourth Tuesday 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.

Wednesday 9 Nov

Letter writing afternoon in St Andrew's Church, Wellington Square, Minehead 1400-1530

Tuesday 22 Nov

Group meeting: reports from the AIUK Thematic Networks conference and the AIUK launch of the Write for Rights 2016 Campaign.

Monday 28 Nov

Fund-raising meal at the Spice Merchant, Watchet. Book to arrive between 1830 & 1930. Tel. 01984 634500.

1-4 December

Minehead Christmas Tree Festival: if you can help with our Amnesty tree, contact Chris 01643 704779.

Friday 9 December

Write for Rights campaign stall and coffee morning: 1000-1200 Avenue Methodist Church, Minehead.

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) will be marked in Minehead on **Friday 27 January 2017**. The planning group has been busy developing their ideas for this day. *Chris Lawson reports:* Plans are developing for recognizing this day in Minehead. Revd Simon Robinson and some AIM members have met as a planning group and are now making contacts with a range of people with a view to their involvement. Central features will be a vigil in Wellington Square and events in St Andrew's Church throughout the day. These will include visual and other materials for reflection in the church, with short presentations in words or music at regular intervals. Revd Donald Reeves, a former Rector of St James Piccadilly and Director of Soul of Europe, which seeks to support those in post-conflict situations, will give a talk in the evening, based on his experiences of reconciliation work in the Balkans. Space for an exhibition at the library has been readily agreed and booked. The help of Amnesty members will be wanted in a variety of ways – so please get the date in your new diaries! For more information, contact Jenny Lennon-Wood or Chris Lawson.



Chris Lawson has some packs of **Amnesty Christmas Cards** for sale. Get in touch with him direct on 01643 704779, or email him at c2lawson@care4free.net



Campaign News

Write for Rights: this annual campaign runs from 1 November to the end of December. It features a number of prisoners of conscience from around the world and we are invited to send greetings cards or write letters on their behalf. See the diary dates column for details of our campaigning events on 9 November and 9 December. Information will also be displayed beside our Christmas Tree at the festival. And Susan Mew will be reporting back at our next meeting on the AIUK launch of the 2016 campaign.

Ethiopia: *Cherry Bird writes:* Reports of escalating problems in the **Oromia region** have recently made world news. The BBC reported (3 October) on an incident at a religious festival when police attacked peaceful protestors with rubber bullets and tear gas, causing a stampede into nearby ravines. At least 52 people were killed, possibly many more. This is the latest in a series of violent clashes in Oromia and Amhara, homelands of the country's two biggest ethnic groups. In both cases unrest was triggered by land issues and exacerbated by the fact that while Oromo and Amhara people form 34% and 27% of the population respectively, they feel marginalised by a government that is dominated by people from the Tigray region, who form only 6% of the total population. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn denies accusations of unwarranted use of violence and says rioters caused pre-planned mayhem that caused people to fall to their deaths. He praised troops for their actions.

On 15 Nov at a **public event** in Westminster, London, a Swedish journalist will describe his experiences of being imprisoned in Kaliti (the prison where Eskinder Nega is being held). He was detained there for 14 months for investigating abuses related to the oil industry.

Foreign secretary Boris Johnson continues to refuse to ask the Ethiopian government to release British citizen **Andy Tsege**. For more information about the Reprieve campaign for Andy's release and the truth about Andy's situation follow the link <http://www.reprieve.org.uk/andy-tsege-boris-johnson-response/>. You can help by writing to your MP asking for their support. Letters you can send regarding Eskinder Nega are being emailed to members with the meeting notes.

Afghanistan: the international community and the Afghan government are failing to address the problems of internally displaced people and to recognise that the threat from the Taliban has not gone away. The EU notes that the Taliban now controls more territory than ever before, with 'record numbers of attacks on civilians' and children the fastest growing group of victims. The recent decision of the Pakistan government to send back 3 million Afghan refugees will make matters even worse. Government corruption is a major problem. Those of us who wrote to MEP Clare Moody received a helpful reply mentioning anti-corruption measures agreed on and highlighting the special needs of women and children and ethnic minorities such as the Hazara people.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

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