



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Demand justice for thousands of Syrian civilians** killed in Raqqa last year, owing to imprecise airstrikes carried out by the US, British and French forces during the US-led Coalition operation against the Islamic State armed group between June and October 2017. Urge the UK Defence Secretary to properly investigate and provide justice for the victims. Go to the AIUK website home page www.amnesty.org.uk and follow the links.
- ✓ **Add your voice** and sign the on-line letter to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland calling for women in **Northern Ireland** to have access to free, safe and legal abortions as they do in the rest of the UK. NI is the only part of the UK where women can face up to life in prison for having an abortion, and the Supreme Court has ruled Northern Ireland's abortion laws are in breach of the UK's own human rights obligations. Find the action on the home page of the AIUK website www.amnesty.org.uk
- ✓ **Put together a bag of toiletries** as part of our action for Refugee Week. [See last month's newsletter for suggestions of what to include and where to take it.] Please let Judith Ward (01643 705083) know if you have managed to do this so that she can keep a tally of our AI Group's total.
- ✓ **Make a date** to help with our stall at the Roadwater Fete on the afternoon of **Saturday 28 July**, starting at 2pm. **We need more helpers!** Offers to Alison please (dietz@btinternet.com)

Round up of May and June group news



Our AmnesTEA held on Sunday 3 June was an enjoyable event and we all enjoyed Gian and Chris Zucchelli's lovely garden in beautiful sunshine. Attendance was disappointing but Alison did a great job persuading passers-by to come in and have some

tea! Thanks to everyone who donated cakes and scones and gave raffle prizes. And of course, thanks to Gian and Chris for hosting the event which made a total of £200, including donations. During the tea party we took part in a photo action to mark the 4th birthday of Gabriela Ratcliffe, daughter of Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe, the British Iranian who has been in prison in Iran since April 2016.



Diary Dates

Monthly meetings:

We meet on the second Thursday of the month (except August and December) at 1930, at the Quaker Meeting House on Bancks Street, Minehead. The meeting begins with a special item such as a speaker or film, as well as campaign updates. After a tea break, AI members are invited to stay for a short business meeting which will end by 2130.

18-24 June

Refugee Week:

collecting bags of toiletries for refugees

Thursday 12 July

Group meeting: talk on South Asia.

Saturday 28 July

Stall at Roadwater

Fete: set up in morning; fete starts at 2pm.

Tuesday 28 August

Summer social: at Mayhill, Carhampton.

All supporters welcome!

Thursday 13 Sept

Group meeting: campaign updates & planning the 2018 Write for Rights campaign.

Thursday 11 Oct

Group meeting: workshop on the Ban Israeli Settlement Goods campaign.

And we all had a go at Chris's special Amnesty games!

Campaigns news

Donald Trump is visiting the UK on Friday 13 July. *AIUK writes:* In the 16 months of his presidency, there has been a deeply disturbing reduction in human rights including the discriminatory travel ban and harmful policies on refugees, women's rights and climate change. Since moving into the White House, Mr Trump has shown an impatience bordering on intolerance toward peaceful protests, the media and even the democratic process itself. His visit to Britain is an important opportunity to highlight this attack on human rights and underline the importance of free speech and the right to protest. AIUK is joining a big march in London on the day of this visit and Amnesty supporters are invited to join. If you plan to do so, you'll need to let the AIUK Local Groups office know so that they can send you joining instructions.

I Welcome Refugees [*Jill Walmsley*]: The refugee migrant crisis continues with rescue ships filled with desperate people being turned away, and more and more countries refusing to accept responsibility. The European Council is to address the asylum system at a meeting at the end of June. There will be a new action soon on the UK's Refugee Family Reunion Bill campaign, after its successful second reading in Parliament in March.

The West Somerset Refugee Support Group are organising day visits to Minehead each month through the summer for Syrian families living in Taunton. These will take place on 16 June, 21 July and 18 August and two of our members are hosting cream teas in their homes on these days. Offers of help and/or money to help cover expenses will be very welcome. Contact Jenny Gateau on 01643 708471 to find out what help is needed.

As noted under this month's actions, our toiletry bag action continues and there is an excellent photo of toiletry bags in the West Somerset Free Press!

Ethiopia [*Cherry Bird*] Great news that **Andy Tsege** has been 'pardoned' by the Ethiopian government (29 May) and returned home to his family in London (1 June). Here is a photograph of him shaking hands with the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed. He was interviewed on BBC Radio 4 and World Service, sounding remarkably calm and balanced about the whole experience of being kidnapped and kept in solitary confinement for four years. He indicated that he will not stop being politically active, though did not make clear what form that might take. As our group has invested so much time in learning and caring about the situation in Ethiopia, we will continue to follow events there. Altogether, the signs are quite positive since the new PM took over, though major challenges remain in terms of longstanding ethnic divisions and economic problems. Amnesty is requesting the Ethiopian Government to withdraw and disband the Liyu police unit of the Somali regional state, whose members are unlawfully killing people in neighbouring Oromia region. The unit was set up by the Somali state as a counter-terrorism special force, and this week its members burnt down 48 homes belonging to Oromo families who were living in Somali, forcing them to flee to Kiro in the regional state of Oromia.



Anti-Death Penalty project: AI has published a new report, *Death Sentences and Executions 2017* which shows both good and bad news. On the positive side, the number of executions declined by 4% compared to 2016 and the number of death sentences fell by 17%. However, more than 21,000 people remained on death row around the world and several countries resumed executions.

South Asia: [*Cherry Bird*] **Amnesty India** has launched a website 'Halt the Hate' to fight the growing number of hate crimes. The latest reported is that of Ghulum Ahmad, a Muslim who was killed because he ran away to marry a Hindu girl. Most of these crimes are linked with religious differences and caste. Even if they are reported, the **Indian Government** tends not to publicise them. The **Bangladesh Government** has declared a Philippines-style (violent) war on drugs, encouraging people to report those they regard as suspicious. Often this results in people reporting those whom they have a grudge against, giving rise to hate, mistrust and injustice.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

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