



News from the Minehead Group

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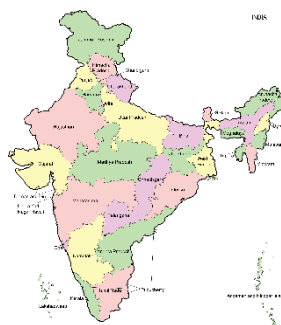
Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Send an email** to the **USA**, calling on the Department for Homeland Security to end family detention and reunite those parents and children who have been separated. Right now, children and their parents are still being thrown into cages in overcrowded detention centres at the US border. Go to the AIUK website home page www.amnesty.org.uk and follow the links.
- ✓ **Visit our stall** at the Roadwater **Fete** on the afternoon of Saturday 28 July, starting at 2pm, and sign the petition re re-uniting **refugee** families in the UK. You can also sign action cards for human rights defenders featured in the **Brave** campaign. Extra help with the stall is also welcome.
- ✓ **Support** the fund-raising summer sale of vintage and collectible items being organised by the Minehead Refugee Support Group on Saturday 4 August from 0930 to 1300 at the Avenue Methodist Church Hall. They are raising money to help fund days out in Minehead for **Syrian refugee families** living in Taunton and Bridgwater. Enquiries to: 07792 189096.
- ✓ **Join us** for our **summer social** on Tuesday 28 August at 1800 at Susan's home in Carhampton. All of our Amnesty friends and group's supporters are welcome. (This is not just for people who come to meetings!) Bring and share supper. It would be helpful to know in advance who is coming and what you are bringing for supper! Contact Susan at brightmanmew@btinternet.com

Round up of June and July group news

At our July meeting, Cherry gave us a very interesting talk on some of the major human rights issues in **India**, which include the treatment of indigenous ethnic groups and caste discrimination; corporate accountability and corruption; treatment of women and girls including violence and sexual harassment; communal and ethnic violence including abuses by armed groups and government forces. These issues are highlighted by three campaigns supported by Amnesty India, which may soon be adopted as casefiles by AIUK:

- In Manipur (NE India) the Extrajudicial Execution Victim Families Association Manipur (EEVFAM) is led by Salima Memcha, whose husband was killed in 2010. They are documenting many such executions and seeking justice for families through the courts, but as a result have been subjected to harassment and threats of violence.
- In Chhattisgarh (central India) Pavitri Manjhi, activist and Village Head, is seeking justice for Adivasi families forced to give up their land for development of a coal fired power station. She also has been subjected to intimidation and threats, which the local police refuse to investigate.
- In Uttar Pradesh (north/central India) Chandrashekhar Azad, campaigner for the rights and education of Dalit people (the lowest caste), remains in jail without charge.



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.

Saturday 28 July

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

Saturday 4 August

Summer Sale: Avenue Methodist Church Hall, Minehead. 0930-1300 (Minehead Refugee Support Group)

Tuesday 28 August

Summer social: at Mayhill, Woodland Close, Carhampton, TA24 6PE. 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.

Thursday 8 Nov

Group meeting: special item tbc.

Summer Days Out – a report by Jenny Gateau

After weeks of preparation, Saturday 16 June saw a minibus full of fourteen Syrian friends from Taunton arriving in Minehead promptly at 1030. Out spilled eight excited children aged from 6 to 14, and six adults, laden with picnic bags. Five volunteers from Minehead and District Refugee Support Group welcomed them all warmly with hugs and handshakes, and then into the Beach Hotel for a complimentary coffee from the kind staff, and a slice of the splendid cake baked by Audrey and Clive, of St Michael's Alcombe, duly iced in pink and white and saying 'Eid Moubarek' - Blessings for Eid.



The day turned out to be one of laughter and smiles. On the beach, the smaller children built a sand castle village, while the older ones set up a splendid and often hilarious cricket match. There was much laughter as rules were ignored (the dads) and wicket keeping hopeless (me). Later they all went off to paddle, despite the lack of sunshine, and by 1 pm everyone was ready for the picnic of both Syrian and English food. There were so many delicious items on the menu, it took us at least an hour to share it all out. In the afternoon the Big Wheel generated squeals of delight as nearly everyone had a ride, thanks to the generosity and empathy of the lady in the kiosk. Then it was time for more beach games, races and writing our names in the sand - simple pleasures but all that space to play on was clearly a real treat. Then we were off to Alison and Roy's in Roadwater for a delicious cream tea in their calm and peaceful home – just what we needed after all the excitement and activity. The children each had a small gift and a book to take home. They all climbed back on the minibus full of thanks and goodbyes and home-baked scones, leaving behind some Syrian biscuits and many happy memories.

Four more families are due to come on 18 August and in September (the July date had to be postponed). If you can help, phone me (Jenny) on 01643 708471. Another family will enjoy a little August holiday in Porlock, thanks to an Amnesty member there. It's a real privilege to get to know them all, and the kind donation from the Minehead Amnesty Group will help make it all possible. Thank you.

Campaigns news

I Welcome Refugees [Jill Walmsley]: President Trump backtracked after global outrage over the inhumane separation of children from their parents at the US/Mexican border. But we have no evidence that families have been reunited. His immigration policy criminalises refugees. *See action overleaf.* We are circulating a petition, which can also be signed online, to our Home Secretary asking that the restrictive rules keeping refugee families apart be changed, family members allowed to join those who have found safety in the UK, and legal aid reintroduced for family reunion cases. The second reading of the bill was passed in March - this is the next step. We shall have the petition at Roadwater Fete.

Ethiopia: more positive news [Cherry Bird]. There have been some really positive developments in the few months since the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office. Not only have both Eskinder Nega and Andy Tsege been released, along with a number of other political prisoners, but the PM has brought an end to an armed and seemingly intractable conflict with neighbouring Eritrea that has lasted over 20 years. By unilaterally renouncing economic preconditions insisted upon by previous Ethiopian governments he has brought the veteran authoritarian leader of Eritrea to the negotiating table. Reciprocal visits have taken place, diplomatic relations have been restored and it was reported that 'previously unthinkable concessions are being tossed around by both sides'. A new broom indeed!

Nepal: [Cherry Bird] Of current concern is lack of justice for women and girls who were sexually abused during the 1996-2006 armed conflict. Their pain and trauma and the continuing stigma has blighted their lives, but when the government formulated an interim compensation policy in 2009 it failed to categorise them as conflict victims, thus excluding them from any compensation. The current process for filing complaints with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is complex and difficult. Child marriage continues to be an issue, with 37% of girls married under the legal age of 18.

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

Treasurer: Cherry Bird Tel. 01984 641052 Email: cherryebird@gmail.com

Press officer: Jill Walmsley Tel. 01643 705061 Email: jillwalmsley09@btinternet.com

Meeting notes, newsletter & website: Susan Mew Tel. 01643 821209 Email: brightmanmew@btinternet.com