



# News from the Minehead Group



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## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Email Bangladesh's Minister of Home Affairs** and ask him to stop his government's crackdown on free speech. **Shahidul Alam** faces 14 years behind bars in Bangladesh just for a media interview with Al Jazeera. In the interview he criticised the Bangladesh government and condemned the treatment of student protesters at recent rallies for safer roads. Go to the AIUK website [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) and find the action on the home page.
- ✓ **Call on the UK Home Office** to stop blocking **children's rights**. Children in the UK can only apply for citizenship if they pay the Home Office £1,012. If they can't, they may not be able to study, work or even get hospital treatment. There are thousands of eligible children in the UK being priced out of their rights. Go to the AIUK website home page [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) and follow the links to sign the petition.
- ✓ **Sign the petition** on the AIUK website to free **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**, the British Iranian who has recently been returned to prison in Iran after being released for three days' leave to visit family.
- ✓ **Make a date** to join us for our next **letter writing session** on Thursday 8 November 1400-1530 at the Quaker Meeting House in Minehead.

## Round up of August and September group news

**Summer Social** *Alison reports:* This year's social was as enjoyable as ever. Susan had set up a long table in her beautiful garden, and we were all outside enjoying the home-made food and good company, as well as trying Susan's latest brainteaser. A sad note in the proceedings was the imminent departure of **Chris and Christina Lawson**, the founders and mainstays of the group. We thanked them for their commitment to Amnesty, and presented them with a monoprint of Exmoor by local artist Hilary Adair who was present and who is a loyal supporter of AI.

Here is a photo of Chris and Christina with their picture and the photo below shows Hilary Adair sitting opposite them.



We received a lovely letter from Chris and Christina which is printed overleaf.

Also, that evening, Cherry read out a letter from the Ethiopian journalist **Eskinder Nega** who had just been

released from prison and for whom we have campaigned over several years. His letter is in the autumn issue of the Amnesty magazine.

**Other events** this summer included our wind-swept stall at the Roadwater Fete. Despite the weather, we collected signatures for a petition and children enjoyed the Amnesty-themed games. At our **September meeting**, we discussed the future of the group and how to make best use of our time, talents and enthusiasm for AI. We also made plans for the Write for Rights campaign.

## Diary Dates

The Minehead Group aims to meet at least once a month, either for a fund-raising or awareness-raising event, or for a group meeting that might include a speaker, film or campaign workshop. Meetings take place at the Quaker Meeting House on Bancks Street, Minehead. We also hold a couple of social events each year. All Amnesty supporters are welcome to join us!

### Thursday 11 Oct

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

### Thursday 8 Nov

Letter writing at the Quaker Meeting House 1400-1530, followed by a short group meeting to plan future events.

### 7 – 12 Dec

Xmas Tree Festival at the Avenue Methodist Church, Minehead. Set up on Thursday 6 Dec.

### Friday 14 Dec

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

### Sunday 27 January

Holocaust Memorial Day: details tba

### Friday 22 Feb

Fund-raising Quiz: 1930 at the Minehead & District Social Club.

Dear AIM members

We want to thank you for the kind words that Alison gave at the recent evening at Susan's and for the generous gift to us of the view of North Hill by Hilary Adair. When we look at the picture in our apartment in Lewes, we shall remember you all. We've valued the friendships and will miss you. We're not able to move completely yet so we'll probably still be turning up from time to time.

The Amnesty Group and its activities have been one of the most important parts of our lives in Minehead for the past 16 years. So many great memories – street stalls in the winter cold, Christmas trees in the Methodist Church, summer fete stalls, the quizzes, garden parties and concerts raising funds so well, the meetings about slavery, transparency and Equatorial Guinea – meeting the AI researcher, Marisé Castro being particularly special after all the campaigning the Group did – and the social get-togethers with wonderful food affirming each other and the Group so well. The involvement at national level of some of our members has made us feel a close part of the wider movement.

The monthly meetings with the commitment of members to their particular parts of the work and willingness to join in future public events are great strengths of the Group and we know will continue. We'll check on you on the website page! And we're hoping to be involved in the Lewes Group.

With every good wish for the Group's future, Chris and Christina

## Campaigns news

**BRAVE:** This campaign is about us speaking up for brave human rights defenders. And this month there is some GOOD NEWS! On 20 August Cambodian land rights activist, **Tep Vanny**, received a royal pardon and was freed from prison. She has been peacefully protesting for over 10 years against the destruction of her community to make way for a luxury development. In response she has been viciously targeted by the authorities, harassed, beaten, arrested and imprisoned three times. She was one of the key cases featured in the Brave campaign and we sent lots of action cards on her behalf.



**I Welcome Refugees [Jill Walmsley]:** The clamp down on rescue ships in the Mediterranean is likely to put the lives of thousands of migrants from North Africa at risk. Our petition to the Home Secretary urging action on re-uniting refugee families was taken to Roadwater fete and sent off with 64 signatures. There is another petition for us to collect signatures bringing attention to the prohibitive cost for children to register as UK citizens [see actions overleaf]. The Minehead Refugee Support Group has continued to host day visits for Syrian families living in Taunton. Amnesty members have supported these days out and also the fund-raising events. Two new families with four very young children between them have arrived recently in Taunton and are keen to come to Minehead on a visit. It is hoped this can be arranged soon. Contact Jenny Gateau if you can help – Tel 01643 708471.

**Women's Action Network [Cherry Bird]** While it is great news that women in **Saudi** are now legally allowed to drive, there is still work to do as some women remain in prison as a result of their earlier protests. Take action online to demand their release <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/free-saudi-women-who-fought-right-drive> This encouraging move towards greater emancipation for Saudi women is only the beginning - there is a need for much wider reforms and changes in attitudes.

## South Asia [Cherry Bird]

**India:** Did you know that India's top 10% of earners take 55% of all national income - the highest rate for any large country? Amnesty has identified two women as Individuals at Risk that we can campaign for. Our group has agreed to adopt **Salima Memcha** (Manipur) as a casefile and we will also be writing about **Pavitri Manjhi** (Chhattisgarh) as part of the Write for Rights 2018 campaign.

**Nepal:** lack of transitional justice for victims of the Maoist insurgency continues to be a major issue for Amnesty Nepal and they are working to create a system to effectively address this. The lack of rights for the Tharu people (the original indigenous people from the plains area) are also being researched as they are seriously marginalised and affected by the conflict.

### **How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:**

**Website:** [www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead](http://www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead)

**Chair & group contact:** Alison Dietz: Tel. 01984 641603 Email: [dietz@btinternet.com](mailto:dietz@btinternet.com)

**Treasurer:** Cherry Bird Tel. 01984 641052 Email: [cherrybird@gmail.com](mailto:cherrybird@gmail.com)

**Press officer:** Jill Walmsley Tel. 01643 705061 Email: [jillwalmsley09@btinternet.com](mailto:jillwalmsley09@btinternet.com)

**Meeting notes, newsletter & website:** Susan Mew Tel. 01643 821209 Email: [brightmanmew@btinternet.com](mailto:brightmanmew@btinternet.com)