



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Call on Secretary of State for International Trade** Liam Fox to stop the UK supplying deadly weapons to **Saudi Arabia**. The British Government is selling billions of pounds worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia, fuelling a dreadful conflict that's left 22 million people struggling simply to survive. Thousands of people have been killed. Despite this unimaginable human suffering, the UK government has shown no signs of halting these sales. These must be stopped. Go to the AIUK website www.amnesty.org.uk and find the action on the home page.
- ✓ **Join us** for our **Write for Rights** coffee morning and letters & cards signing on Friday 14 December 1000-1200 at the Avenue Methodist Church in Minehead. Please **tell your friends** and family and encourage them to come along too. And extra help is always welcome.
- ✓ **Come and see our Amnesty Tree at the Christmas Tree Festival** on 7 and 8 December at the Avenue Methodist Church.
- ✓ **Join us** for our **Winter Social** on Saturday 12 January from 1230 at Alison and Roy's home in Roadwater. All Amnesty supporters are welcome – not just those who attend meetings. Please email Alison at dietz@btinternet.com for directions and to say you are coming.

Round up of November group news

We launched our 2018 **Write for Rights (WfR)** campaign with a **stall** at the bellringers' coffee morning at Carhampton church on 3 November. Although those present were mostly interested in drinking coffee, perusing the stalls and chatting, we managed to get 20 action cards signed and collected about 20 signatures on two letters concerning WfR cases. Thanks to Judith, Chris and Christina for their help.



Our next event was the **letter writing afternoon** on 8 November. *Here is Alison's report:* Members of Minehead Amnesty group, together with members of the public, sat quietly writing letters (63) and cards (38) for an hour and a half. We were taking part in AI's annual **WfR** campaign 'Write a letter, change a life' and wrote to presidents, police chiefs and foreign secretaries. We also wrote solidarity messages to individuals and their families to show that they were not forgotten. We wrote to those in power to encourage them to act with justice and humanity both in the UK and in the rest of the world. We hope for a change of mind when thousands of letters arrive from all over the world politely requesting, (for example) that an individual imprisoned after an unfair trial should be released. And recently a Vietnamese Human Rights Defender called Me Nam, one of the cases in the WfR campaign, was released. We believe that we play a part in fighting injustice wherever it is.



Keen stamp collector and member, Peter Atherton, has once again done a wonderful job providing stamps for all our cards and letters. This has saved us £122 in stamps. Fantastic – thank you Peter!

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 or film. Meetings take place at the Quaker Meeting House, Bancks Street, Minehead. We also hold a couple of social events each year. All Amnesty supporters are welcome to join us!

7 – 12 Dec

Xmas Tree Festival at Avenue Methodist Church, Minehead.

Friday 14 Dec

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

Mon 7 January

Informal planning get together at 1400 at the Beach Hotel Minehead.

Sat 12 January

Winter Social: from 1230 at Alison & Roy's home in Roadwater

Thurs 24 January

1200-1400 Event to mark Holocaust Memorial Day: details tba

Thurs 14 February

Group AGM & Campaign Updates: 1930 at QMH

Friday 22 Feb

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

Members have also been out and about this month. Susan visited the Weston-super-Mare Amnesty Group on 14 November to talk about the **Ban Israeli Settlement Goods** Campaign. [For a reminder of this campaign see our October Newsletter.] Alison and Susan attended workshops in London and Exeter run by the **Holocaust Memorial Day Trust**. The theme for January 2019 is 'Torn from Home' so it links well with Amnesty's campaign, I Welcome Refugees. We are planning an event for 24 January and we hope that other interested groups will be involved. A slot has been booked for a display in the library and as the actual day, 27 January, is on a Sunday this year, we hope that local churches might also mark the day in some way.



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY 27/1

Campaigns news

WRITE FOR RIGHTS: our next event for this campaign is on Friday 14 December. We will once again be hosting the regular **coffee morning** in the Avenue Methodist Church from 1000 to 1200, and we will invite the public in to sign cards and letters concerning four of the cases featured in this year's campaign. Do join us if you can, and bring your friends, family and neighbours! We will also put some of the campaign booklets underneath our tree at the **Christmas Tree Festival** for people to pick up.

WfR continues with the theme of the **BRAVE** campaign. The campaign booklet tells the stories of 12 people or groups who have been attacked or threatened for defending human rights. It includes **Pavitri Manjhi**, from the Indian state of Chhattisgarh. Pavitri, as village head, is defending the rights of her Adivasi community to remain in their ancestral homes and keep their farms and livelihoods, and resist the forcible acquisition of their land in the name of development. Pavitri and her community have faced continual harassment and threats from the police and local 'strongmen'.

I WELCOME REFUGEES: *Jill Walmsley reports.* A petition was handed into Downing Street earlier this month calling for more unaccompanied **child refugees** to be allowed into the UK. Shamefully only 20 unaccompanied children have come to the UK from the Middle East and N Africa under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, when the Government pledged two years ago to settle 3,000. And there has been a disappointing low take up under the Dubs amendment, when the Government, having promised to resettle 480 unaccompanied children from Europe, has in fact admitted less than half that number, despite County Councils saying they have room for far more. More children have died in the Mediterranean Sea than have been admitted to the UK. The South Somerset Refugee Support Group are lobbying councillors at Taunton County Hall at 1000 on 28 November - please support them. Details from Jenny Gateau (01643 708471), or just turn up - it is a public meeting.



SOUTH ASIA [*Cherry Bird reports*] **Female Genital Mutilation:** Did you know that FGM is practised among certain communities in India and that there is no separate law against this terrible practice? FGM, which causes long term physical and psychological harm to women and girls, is shrouded in secrecy as many women are afraid to speak out. But this is changing, due largely to the work of a survivor-led Indian organisation called *We Speak Out*. Read about their activities at www.wespeakout.org. Now the Minister for Women and Child Development in India has publicly stated that FGM is a crime and asked religious heads of the affected communities to end this practice. Judges have also said that FGM is in violation of the bodily integrity of the child, but many religious heads still support it.

Amnesty India targeted by Modi's government: Shocking news that the offices of Amnesty International India were raided by security forces in October and electronic equipment and documentation taken away. Amnesty India's bank accounts have since been frozen, effectively stopping their work. Aakar Patel, speaking for Amnesty India, says that Government authorities are increasingly treating human rights organisations like criminal enterprises and Amnesty is just the latest target in the government's assault on civil society – the accounts of Greenpeace India were also frozen in October. Something to bear in mind as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is welcomed by world leaders and praised for promoting India's economic development!



Season's Greetings to all Amnesty International supporters!



How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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