



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Call on Saudi Arabia** to release **Israa al-Ghomgham** who faces execution for simply taking part in non-violent protests. Israa's home was raided in December 2015 and she's been imprisoned ever since, along with several others. Now she faces the death penalty for peacefully defending human rights. Go to the AIUK website www.amnesty.org.uk and find the action on the home page.
- ✓ **Join us** on Thursday 24 January for our event to mark **Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2019**. Between 1200 and 1400 we are inviting the public to drop in to the Minehead Quaker Meeting House to reflect on the horrors of genocides around the world, to write a card, to see the display of HMD and AI materials and to light a candle. Coffee/tea and cake will be provided too. Please invite others in the community who may be interested.
- ✓ **Make a diary date** to come along to our fund-raising **annual quiz** on Friday 22 February at 1930 at the Minehead & District Social Club, North Road, Minehead. The Humber family put a lot of work into organising this for us, so please come and support it and invite your friends to come along too.
- ✓ **Donate a raffle prize** for the quiz evening. Please contact Judith Ward on 01643 705083 to discuss your offer, as she is putting together a Fair Trade hamper and we'd like to avoid lots of duplicate items!
- ✓ **Make a note to support** our group's **AGM** on Thursday 14 February at 1930 at the Quaker Meeting House. Hear a review of our year, contribute to future plans and take part in some campaign actions.

Round up of December and January group news

Our **Amnesty tree** was on display among 40 trees at the annual **Christmas Tree Festival** in Minehead. After the festival was over, our tree stayed in the Methodist Church until the end of December, so hopefully lots of people saw it. The theme this year was 'Celebrating the Seasons' so our tree included messages such as 'Defending human rights through the seasons' and 'Writing letters through the seasons'. It also carried photos of the women featured in the Write for Rights campaign.



Our third and final **Write for Rights** event for 2018 was on 14 December, when we hosted the weekly coffee morning in the Avenue Methodist Church and invited the public in to sign cards and letters. We chose five cases out of the Write for Rights booklet and collected about 55 signatures on each of the greetings/solidarity cards, and between 35 and 55 on each of the letters to the

relevant authorities. In addition, 17 action cards were signed for Nonhle Mbuthuma (South Africa) and Geraldine Chacon (Venezuela). Our steady stream of visitors said they enjoyed the welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in the church, and people took their time to read the case sheets and then stop for coffee and cake. We were particularly pleased that the Mayor of Minehead, Cllr Norman Hercock, was able to join us and sign all the cards and letters.



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 (QMH), Bancks Street, Minehead. We also hold a couple of social events each year. All Amnesty supporters are welcome to join us!

21 January to 2 February

Exhibition and display of books at Minehead Library for Holocaust Memorial Day

Thurs 24 January

1200-1400 drop in to the QMH to mark Holocaust Memorial Day by writing a card, lighting a candle etc. Plus tea/coffee & cake.

Thurs 14 February

Group AGM & Campaign Updates & Actions: 1930 at QMH. More tea and cake!

Friday 22 Feb

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

Friday 8 March

International Women's Day Stall: 1030-1230 outside Iceland on The Avenue, Minehead.

Wednesday 10 April

Letter writing afternoon: and planning meeting.

On the afternoon of 7 January, we held an **informal group planning meeting** at the Beach Hotel, where we were made welcome and were able to take up a corner of the lounge bar. As well as enjoying the excellent coffee, we had a productive meeting, planning our events for the next couple of months. This was an experiment and replaced our usual evening group meeting. Hopefully, we'll do it again. And finally, our most recent get-together was our **winter social** at Alison and Roy's lovely home in



Roadwater on 12 January, when 13 of us enjoyed a bring and share lunch, good conversation and a not too challenging game. Involvement in our Amnesty Group can be fun and sociable, and isn't all work! [Two of the photos show Jenny Gateau with her beautiful home-made ginger bread house.]

Campaign news

I WELCOME REFUGEES: *Jenny Gateau* reported that she attended a meeting of the Syrian Forum in Taunton on 11 January. More families have been settled in Taunton and Bridgwater and positive developments are taking place. The new families are keen to come on a day outing to Minehead, so no doubt Jenny will be looking for help once planning gets underway.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2019: the theme this year is 'Torn from Home' which fits well with our refugee campaign. As you'll have seen overleaf, our group is marking the day by hosting a drop-in session where people are invited to come in to read about the genocides that continue to take place in the world, to reflect and write a card, to light a candle, and to find out more about Amnesty campaigns and also the work of the West Somerset Refugee Support Group. Please join us if you can on Thursday 24 January between 1200 and 1400 at the Quaker Meeting House. There will also be an exhibition in Minehead 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. If you are a church-goer, please tell them about it!

NEPAL: *Cherry Bird reports.* Transitional justice: Amnesty Nepal is concerned at the lack of progress towards achieving justice for victims of the 1996-2006 conflict. Political party leaders continue to wrangle over the future of the two transitional justice bodies formed in 2015 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. Meanwhile, activists say there has been no investigation of the 63,000 complaints of human rights violations registered. Migrant workers: In another example of the lack of rights of migrant workers in the Gulf, 150 Nepali migrant workers are stranded in Abu Dhabi (UAE) after their employer laid them off seven months ago. Since then they have not been paid and the company refuses to renew their visas or provide them with air tickets home. For the last three months the company has also stopped providing them with food.

INDIA: *Cherry Bird reports.* Rohingya: Amnesty India is campaigning to stop the forcible return of Rohingya people to Myanmar, which is against international law. For example, on 4 January, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) stated that a family of five detained Rohingya people sent back to Myanmar the previous day were asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in India, and that Indian authorities had not responded to its requests for access to the detainees to determine whether they wanted to return to Myanmar. The Refugee Agency said it regretted India's decision to return the asylum-seekers to Myanmar, where conditions are not conducive for their return. Human Rights Day: Numerous groups took part in events across India to mark Human Rights Day on 10 December. Amnesty India notes that the past year has seen an increasing pattern of demonising and criminalising organisations and individuals who raise their voices against human rights violations of the poorest and most marginalised communities in India. As well as the recent raid and freezing of accounts of organisations like Amnesty and Greenpeace, 10 eminent lawyers and human rights defenders have been arrested under draconian counter-terrorism laws. Other activists and journalists have been threatened and harassed for seeking state accountability.

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

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