



# News from the Minehead Group

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

[www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead)

## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Call on the CEO of TripAdvisor** to remove all listings located within Israel's illegal settlements or run by settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), including East Jerusalem. Thousands of Palestinians have had their homes destroyed, their land stolen and their rights to live, work and move freely denied. But online tourism giants, like TripAdvisor, are profiting from these human rights violations. Take the action on the AIUK website at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/checkout>
- ✓ **Come along** to our fund-raising **AmnesTEA** on Thursday 20 June 1430-1630 in Carhampton, and **bring your friends**.
- ✓ **Offer to help** if you can, by making a cake to eat or sell, bringing along other produce and books to sell, or donating a raffle prize. Help on the day would also be welcome. Please let Susan know what you can do to help – phone 01643 821209 or email her at [brightmanmew@btinternet.com](mailto:brightmanmew@btinternet.com)
- ✓ **Make a date** to join us for our next **letter writing** session on 18 July and our fund-raising **harp concert with tea** on 22 September.

## Round up of May news

**Voices of India:** our event on the morning of Saturday 18 May went well, with 15 people attending. The display of photos by Elizabeth Atkinson was enjoyed by all, Cherry spoke very informatively about human rights in India and we signed letters in support of Pavitri Manjhi and Salima Memcha. Indian background music added to the atmosphere and we all enjoyed Indian snacks, fruit and chai.



**AIUK Southwest Regional Conference:** Alison and Cherry attended this conference in Exeter on 11 May. They enjoyed the varied and interesting programme, and found the two external speakers particularly inspiring.

*Alison writes:* The first speaker was a brave and feisty Turkish human rights defender (HRD), Emel Kurma, who is at risk of being detained when she returns to **Turkey**. Emel is a visiting fellow at York University which has organised a programme of welcoming HRDs since 2007. Politics, Emel said, is how we deal with difference. She spoke about the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, founded in 1990, a non-governmental organisation of citizens dedicated to peace, democracy and HR in Europe. The aim is to be local and small, but think international. The Assembly believes in working bottom-up, so that ordinary citizens put pressure on governments and corporations: (1) to come to the table to resolve difference and find compromise (2) to define norms of rights and freedoms, and (3) to denounce violations, and to demand adherence to agreed standards. In Turkey, Erduran's Government speaks about 'the Armenian question' and 'the minorities question' but Kurma said these are in fact 'the Turkish question'. She said that teachers in Turkey are authoritarian, and this system creates immature citizens who do not take responsibility for what goes on. The fault is always someone else's.

## Diary Dates

The Minehead Group aims to meet at least once a month, either for a fund-raising or campaigning 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!

### 17-22 June

Refugee Week – library exhibition in Minehead

### Thursday 20 June

AmnesTEA 1430-1630 in Susan's garden at Mayhill, Woodland Close, Carhampton, TA24 6PE.

### Thursday 18 July

Letter writing afternoon: 1400-1530 at the QMH followed by a planning meeting.

### Tuesday 30 July

Amnesty social at 1800 at Alison & Roy's home in Roadwater. Bring and share supper.

### Thursday 5 Sept

Informal planning get-together at 1500 at the Beach Hotel in the bar.

### Sunday 22 Sept

Harp concert with tea 1500. Carhampton Village Hall. £6.50.

### Friday 1 November

Speaker on AIUK's Death Penalty Project.

*Cherry writes:* Penny Wilcox gave a fascinating talk about the three months she spent as a witness from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in **Israel and OPT**. Her team lived in Palestinian communities in a small town, accompanying people when there was a risk of harassment or need for the protection offered by the presence of an impartial international observer, for example, children passing military camps on the way to school or people going through checkpoints. Often, they would be called at short notice at unsocial hours, sometimes to a distressing event such as the destruction of a Palestinian house. Her slides emphasised the harsh aridity of the area and basic nature of Palestinian housing and facilities, compared with the luxury of illegal Israeli settlements. Yet to build even a modest house, Palestinians must apply for building permission, which is never granted. If they do build, a destruction order will be served and the bulldozers arrive. As a result, people and the animals on which they depend are surviving in shacks and tents, in an unkind climate.

Alison attended a workshop on the whittling away of HR in **Poland and Hungary**. She says 'it was very depressing'. George Soros, a wealthy Hungarian philanthropist who supports citizens' rights everywhere, is denounced on billboards which accuse him of being a criminal. In fact, anyone in Hungary caught helping refugees is a criminal. In Poland all courts are now under government control. There is a total ban on abortions. In 2017, 60,000 people marched calling for a 'white Poland' and the Minister of Justice called the march 'a beautiful sight'. Fourteen women held up a 'Stop Fascism' banner; they were fined for obstructing a lawful demonstration and beaten up. Hatred is fostered from the top.

Cherry found the workshop on **Venezuela** and the complex history behind its current situation, very informative. Here are some of the points from the Q&A: (1) If Hugo Chavez had stayed would the situation have been as bad? *Yes probably, but the collapse may have taken a bit longer because of his charisma and support.* (2) Why have the military not defected to the opposition? *Because the top brass are so deep into the corruption they need to stay with Maduro's government.* (3) Is American support to opposition leader Juan Guido counter-productive? *Yes, because Venezuelans don't want an American puppet government and because other South American countries support Guido.*

**Group News:** This publication which is sent out to groups every few months by AIUK, includes several photos and mentions of our events here in Minehead. It's good to know that our efforts are noticed!

## **Campaign news**

**I WELCOME REFUGEES:** *Jill Walmsley reports:* The West Somerset Refugee Support group would like more volunteers to act as welcoming hosts when **Syrian families** come for day visits to Minehead over the summer. Contact Jenny Gateau on 01643 708471 if you can spare a few hours on **22 June 22, 6 or 24 July**, or if you have any ideas about offering longer respite breaks. Also, do call in to see our Refugee Week exhibition in Minehead Library 17-22 June. I have written on the Group's behalf to some of the MEP candidates asking for their commitment to supporting Safe Passage's *Our Turn Campaign* to resettle 10,000 child refugees over the next 10 years, ensuring children continue to be able to reach safety in the UK. Our Group continues to keep in touch with Safe Passage colleagues elsewhere in Somerset, especially to seek ways of encouraging potential foster carers for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, usually teenage boys.



**Refugee Tales:** on **Thursday 13 June** at 1900 in the Quaker Meeting House, Bath Place, Taunton, John and Mary Barrett, long term visitors to the Immigration Removal Centres at Gatwick Airport, will share their experiences of visiting detainees. With them will be Osman, to tell us of his long and dangerous journey from his homeland, his detention and the subsequent long wait to be granted refugee status. Let Jill know if you would like to travel with her (tel. 01643 705061).

Philippa asks that we support Shaban, from Kosovo, and his new car washing business at Loxhole, near Dunster.

### **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: [cherryebird@gmail.com](mailto:cherryebird@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)