



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Send an instant email** to Iran's head of the judiciary calling for the immediate release of three women jailed and charged with prostitution for not wearing a veil. Shown speaking out against laws forcing women to wear the hijab, a video went viral of their campaign on International Women's Day. Days later, they were arrested. Since then, **Monireh, Yasaman and Mojgan** have faced intense interrogation, solitary confinement and abuse. Take the action on the AIUK website <https://www.amnesty.org.uk>



- ✓ **Invite your friends** to our next fund-raising event – a **Harp Concert with tea** - on Sunday 22 September at 1500 at Carhampton Village Hall. Fliers are available now from Cherry or Susan for giving out, and posters will be going up at the beginning of September. **Hazel Prior** will be playing and talking about her harp. She will also be selling and signing copies of her book: *Ellie and the harp maker*, published by Bantam Press.
- ✓ **Offer to help** if you can, by putting up a poster, selling tickets to your friends, and/or making a cake for the harp concert. Please let Cherry know what you can do to help – *contact details overleaf*.



Round up of June/July news

Refugee Week 17-22 June – Minehead Library hosted our **exhibition** that included information from the I Welcome campaign and photographs from an AIUK photo exhibition. Also in Refugee Week, we held our **AmnesTea** in Susan's garden in Carhampton. Lots of people came despite the cool and showery weather, and we raised £420, including some kind donations from those who couldn't attend. Many thanks to those who helped in various ways, and to everyone who came along on the day, making it an enjoyable and worthwhile afternoon.



July letter writing session:

Alison Dietz reports: Letter writing may be a dying art, but Amnesty members are keeping it alive. On the afternoon of 18 July, 13 people, including both members and non-members of AI, met at the QMH to write letters on behalf of six individuals at risk, 130 men and boys disappeared in Cameroon, LGBTI people in Chechnya, and women and girls denied adequate healthcare in South Africa. In the space of 1.5 hours we wrote 54 letters to nine countries: the three mentioned above plus Iran, Vietnam, Egypt, North Korea, Turkey and the USA. In this way we put pressure on those in power to improve human rights.



Donation: we were very grateful to receive a donation of £350, collected for Amnesty international in memory of Geoff Nichols, a Minehead resident who died recently.

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!

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.

Tuesday 15 Oct
Group meeting at 1930 at QMH. Update on AIUK's current campaigns + planning.

Friday 1 November
Speaker on AIUK's Death Penalty Project. 1900 at the QMH.

Thursday 14 Nov
Letter writing afternoon: 1400-1530 at the QMH followed by a planning meeting. Start of 2019 Write for Rights

Campaign news

I WELCOME REFUGEES: *Jill Walmsley reports:* We have had a complimentary response from AIUK acknowledging our activities during Refugee Week. On 13 June, Jenny Gateau and I attended an event in Taunton - **Refugee Tales** - when Refugee Support Groups from around Somerset heard from volunteers who visit Gatwick Detention Centre. These volunteers give invaluable support and companionship to detained asylum seekers who are often there for many months with no release dates or information about their applications for refugee status. A young man from Eritrea, at last with refugee status, also spoke movingly about his detention in Gatwick. Refugee Support Groups have been asked to come up with ideas to recruit foster carers interested in fostering **unaccompanied asylum seeking children** (mostly teenage boys). I approached a Yeovil-based foster carer doing just that, and she has agreed to speak at a lunch at the Quaker Meeting House in Taunton (hopefully on Saturday 5 October from 12noon). A second speaker will be the granddaughter of Clement Atlee, whose family fostered Kinder transport children. Amnesty members are welcome to attend. *Contact Jill for details and lifts.* At our July meeting, Jenny Gateau reported that **Syrian families** living in Bridgwater and Taunton are continuing to enjoy day visits and holiday breaks in Minehead (thanks especially to Alison and Susan).

AMNESTY FEMINISTS NETWORK: *Cherry Bird writes:* First, here is some good news:

- After years of campaigning by many organisations, including Amnesty, UK MPs have voted to legalise same sex marriage and extend access to abortion in Northern Ireland. This must become law by 21 October unless the devolved government in Stormont is restored.
- In Pakistan, the top judge has announced the creation of 1,000 courts to tackle violence against women, which is a huge and often ignored issue in the country.

And some not so good news:

- The latest Amnesty research shows that one in five women experience online abuse, some of which is directly misogynistic (half said this) and even physically threatening (27%). [Read more about this: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/online-abuse-women-widespread?utm_campaign]

SOUTH ASIA: *Cherry Bird reports:*

Amnesty **Nepal** has just publicised its analysis and key recommendations on the Right to Housing Act 2018 enacted by the Government of Nepal in 2018 as part of its constitutional obligation. Amnesty says there are still shortfalls in the provisions for ensuring the right to housing for everyone and meeting international human rights obligations, particularly with regard to protection against forced eviction and security of tenure. New construction initiatives and an increasing focus on urbanisation are rendering many marginalised communities homeless and ignoring the rights of rural communities who have traditionally lived on the land. Furthermore, there was criticism of the lack of transparency or consultation by the government in enacting laws relating to fundamental rights.

India: A criminal case against the Lawyers Collective is the latest use of the foreign funding law by Indian authorities to harass outspoken rights groups. In June, the Central Bureau of Investigation filed a criminal case against the Lawyers' Collective for allegedly violating the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA). The group provides legal aid, advocates for the rights of marginalized groups, campaigns to end discrimination against LGBTQ people and seeks enforcement of workplace sexual harassment laws. *"The Indian authorities are evidently targeting the Lawyers Collective because of their work defending human rights activists and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups,"* said Aakar Patel, head of Amnesty International India. The repeated misuse of the foreign funding law restricts groups' ability to operate, in violation of their rights to freedom of expression and association. An article in the Guardian also noted that India is among the most dangerous places to be a journalist, particularly reporting on environmental issues and land rights.

AND FINALLY SOME GOOD NEWS: On 20 June, the courts ruled that **British arms sales to Saudi Arabia** – for possible use in the conflict in Yemen – are unlawful. The judges concluded that government processes to approve these arms exports were 'irrational and therefore unlawful'.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

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