



# News from the Minehead Group

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## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take action** to protect peaceful protesters in Hong Kong who have been attacked with tear gas and batons, arrested under vague charges and beaten in custody. Email Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam and demand citizens' rights are protected. Find the action on the home page of the AIUK website <https://www.amnesty.org.uk>
- ✓ **Come along** to our next meeting at the QMH on 15 October and hear updates on **current campaigns** and contribute to the planning of our next events. And on 1 November, come to Townsend House and listen to a talk by Paul Bridges, who is leading AIUK's **Anti-Death Penalty project**.
- ✓ **Note the diary dates** of our various forthcoming events, including our **Write for Rights** events on 14 November and 13 December.

## Round up of September news

At the beginning of September, eight of us met up over coffee in the Beach Hotel to plan our autumn events, including the **Harp Concert and Tea**. This event, on



Sunday 22 September in Carhampton Village Hall, was very successful. About 50 people came along to hear Hazel Prior's beautiful harp music and songs, and to enjoy the tea and cakes afterwards. As well as giving her time for free, Hazel generously donated the profits from

copies of her novel *Ellie and the Harp Maker* which she sold during the afternoon. Over £400 was made for Amnesty funds. We received many positive comments after the event, as summed up by this message: *Excellent afternoon.... I thought Hazel Prior's presentation and programme was just right for a relaxed Sunday afternoon's entertainment. And the cakes were delicious.*



As a local groups' trainer, Susan attended AIUK's **human rights education conference** in Manchester on 14 September. As well as networking with other trainers and school speakers, she attended workshops on climate change and human rights, children's rights, and women's rights. She will be sharing some of what she learnt, with members at our **campaign updates** session on 15 October.

Every year, the Lambeth Local AI Group organises an '**Embassy Crawl**' around central London, and Susan went along to join in the action on 28 September.



This year it focused on issues raised in AI's new report *Laws designed to silence* which details the global crackdown on civil society organisations. About 30 members took part, delivering letters and taking photos outside the embassies of the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, Egypt, Hungary, United Arab Emirates, Iran and Azerbaijan. It was very sociable and enjoyable!

## 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!

### Saturday 12 Oct

Refugee support: lunch and speaker at QMH in Taunton at 1200. More details overleaf.

### Tuesday 15 Oct

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

### Saturday 26 Oct

Simple lunch, summer stories: at QMH in Minehead 1230 for 1300. More details overleaf.

### Friday 1 November

Speaker on AIUK's Anti Death Penalty Project. 1900 at Townsend House, Minehead.

### Thursday 14 Nov

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

### Friday 13 December

Write for Rights Coffee Morning 1000-1200 at the Avenue Methodist Church, Minehead

## Campaign news

**I WELCOME REFUGEES:** An event is planned for Saturday **12 October** for 12 noon at the Quaker Meeting House, 13 Bath Place, Taunton TA1 4EP. There will be a buffet lunch and an opportunity for Refugee Support Groups to hear Elaine Koerner, foster carer from Yeovil, speaking about her experiences caring for unaccompanied refugee children - usually teenage boys - and supporting them into independent living. One or two of the young people are likely to come as well as other guests. **Please let Jill Walmsley know as soon as possible** if you would like to attend – on 01643 705061 or at [jillwalmsley09@btinternet.com](mailto:jillwalmsley09@btinternet.com).

*And Jenny Gateau says:* Many, many thanks to all who supported our efforts this summer to invite **18 Syrian and Kurdish families** for at least a day out in West Somerset. This added up to about 65 individuals, with ages ranging from a gran to a baby. Five of those families have been for a staying visit, the rest for days out. Also good news is that we had 15 new volunteers with us on the beach days, including some young ones. So, we made it! Come and hear what happened, see the pictures, catch up on the latest news. To celebrate and find out more, we are having a **simple lunch, summer stories event** on Saturday **26 October** in the QMH, Minehead, at 1230 for 1300. Do come along or drop in during the afternoon until 1600 for a cuppa and cake. There will be a big crabbing bucket available for donations! **RSVP to Jenny:** 01643 708471, [jenny.gateau408@btinternet.com](mailto:jenny.gateau408@btinternet.com)

**INDIA:** *Cherry Bird reports:* The three issues outlined below are all indications of the increasingly autocratic, authoritarian regime of Narendra Modi. Life for journalists, NGOs and HR activists is becoming harder and more dangerous. Freedom of speech is compromised. Despite attacks in the mainstream media and social media, Amnesty India continues to defend human rights.

**Kashmir:** Revocation of article 370 in August, which gave Jammu & Kashmir special status, shocked the world and kicked off a train of violent events. It inflamed already high tensions in the region and was accompanied by a complete communications blackout, with thousands of troops on the streets and detention of all members of the Kashmiri government. Amnesty is protesting against the communications blackout as a violation of human rights (freedom of speech, access to healthcare, education etc). Kashmiri diaspora are worried about relatives still living in the state. Amnesty India is in a difficult position because the move is supported within mainstream Hindu India and Modi's popularity ratings are higher than ever. The Indian media prints only the government line. Take action to support the campaign <https://amnesty.org.in/take-action/put-humanity-first-lift-the-communications-lockdown-in-kashmir/>

**BK9:** During 2018, nine prominent HR activists (lawyers defending rights of minorities) were detained in Bhima Koregaon, Maharashtra state, under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, a draconian law often used to silence critics of the government. It violates international human rights standards and circumvents fair trial guarantees under Indian criminal law. Amnesty India believes the arrests were politically motivated, aimed at discouraging peaceful dissent, and launched a national campaign to free them on 7 June. Take action to support this. <https://amnesty.org.in/take-action/urgent-demand-the-release-of-the-bhima-koregaon-9-now/>

**Assam:** More than 1.9 million people, mostly Muslim, have been left out of the final list of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) published in Assam on 31/8/19. Amnesty India expressed concerns about the functioning of the Foreigners Tribunals, which will decide whether those excluded from the NRC list are Indian citizens or not, and is urging the Assam State Government to ensure that the Foreigners Tribunals function with transparency and are in line with the fair trial standards guaranteed under national and international law. See the press report from Amnesty India at: <https://amnesty.org.in/news-update/uncertain-destiny-for-millions-in-assam-post-nrc>

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE:** As you may have read in the latest AIUK magazine, we are starting to focus on the human rights impacts of climate change. As a first step, you might like to consider the list of 'Ten things you can do now' initiated by Emily Feldberg. More on this next month.

### ***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)

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