



## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Email the Indian Embassy** demanding the immediate release of the **Bhima Koregaon 9 (BK9)**, prominent activists locked up in India after false accusations by their government. They have fought bravely for the rights of the poorest and most marginalised communities in the country. Far from being anti-national, the BK9 are, for many, national heroes. They should be celebrated, not treated like criminals. Take action: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/bhima-koregaon-BK9-india>
- ✓ **Support the Write for Rights 2019 campaign** by coming along to our **Letter writing afternoon** on 14 November and to our **card signing coffee morning** on 13 December. And **invite your friends** and families too!
- ✓ **Join us** for our **New Year social** on Saturday 4 January in Roadwater. Contact Cherry to RSVP, say what you're bringing for lunch and to get directions. (Contact details at the end of the newsletter.) All welcome!
- ✓ **Note the dates** of some forthcoming events in 2020: a **talk** on 23 January on modern-day slavery, our **AGM** on 13 February and our annual **quiz** on 28 February. The SW **Regional Conference** will be on 7 March in Exeter.
- ✓ **Look out** for our **Amnesty tree** at the Minehead Xmas Tree Festival.

## Round up of October news

At our October meeting, Susan reported back from meetings she'd attended recently – a campaign update for trainers, held at the AIUK offices in London, and the Human Rights Education Conference in Manchester. She updated our group on **AI's current campaigns**: I Welcome, Brave, Ban Israeli Settlement Goods, Children and human rights, and Write for Rights 2019. The week before, Susan had visited the Weston-Super-Mare group to make a similar presentation. The group then spent some time on 'business' and agreed to send another £500 to AIUK after our successful summer fundraising. We then went on to undertake some planning for all our events coming up over the next few months.



The first of these took place on 1 November, when Paul Bridges, Chair of the AIUK **Anti-Death Penalty project**, gave a lively presentation on the work of his group. He quoted some recent statistics from the AI 2018 report on the death penalty. For example, 690

recorded executions took place worldwide in 2018, and 2,531 people were sentenced to death. 19,366 were known to be on death row. However, this is a conservative number as it is difficult to get true statistics in many countries. Such figures are a state secret in China, Belarus and Vietnam. Others do not publish data, such as Laos, North Korea and Syria, and others only partially report (Iran). The world's top five executioners were China (1,000+), Iran (253+), Saudi Arabia (149), Vietnam (85+) and Iraq (52+). After Paul's presentation, we had an interesting discussion about attitudes in the UK to the death penalty, how to change public opinion and how local groups such as ours could contribute to the project.



## 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 14 Nov

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

### 5-10 December

Xmas Tree Festival at Avenue Methodist Church, Minehead.

### Friday 13 December

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

### Saturday 4 January

New Year Social 1230 for 1300 at Cherry & John's home.

### Thurs 23 January

Talk on Modern Day Slavery 1930 at the QMH followed by short planning meeting.

### Thurs 13 February

Group AGM 1930 at the QMH.

### Friday 28 February

Annual Quiz 1930 at Minehead Social Club.

### Saturday 7 March

Regional conference.

## Campaign news

**I WELCOME REFUGEES:** *Jill Walmsley writes:* AIUK asks us to continue to take action on the campaign to Reunite Refugee Families (*perhaps an issue to take up with election candidates*), to use media opportunities to promote positive stories about refugees who have settled in Somerset, and join in with other sympathetic organisations. Jenny Gateau's work in building up a team of volunteers who again hosted summer days out and short holidays in Minehead and district for refugee families settled in Taunton, Wellington and Bridgwater, is a wonderful example of what can be done. On 26 October, Jenny invited those friends and volunteers to a lunchtime gathering at the Quaker Meeting House to share food and heart-warming stories from the summer events. Earlier in October, I helped organise an event in Taunton when Elaine Koerner came to speak about her experiences fostering unaccompanied refugee children in Yeovil. She was accompanied by Elias from Eritrea, who has lived with her now for over a year. It was an inspiring example of how both learnt from each other, overcoming language problems and cultural differences.



**INDIA:** *Cherry Bird reports:*

**Kashmir:** Despite media silence, the situation in Kashmir continues to be of concern. The latest press report from Amnesty India states that Indian authorities are arbitrarily detaining anyone (even a child) who they think holds 'dissenting opinions', often using excessive force and intimidation, ransacking homes and threatening families. Lawyers and families are not informed of the grounds of arrests, preventing detainees from seeking independent judicial review or a fair trial. Some mobile networks have been restored but internet services are still unavailable, affecting access to healthcare and freedom of the press. Amnesty India is demanding immediate release of all detainees currently held without charge or trial and complete lifting of the communication blockade.

**BK9:** Amnesty UK has approved a casefile for the BK9, so local groups such as ours can choose to work on this case. I will lead on this campaign for our group. Taunton group are also interested.

**Hate crime:** Amnesty India's interactive website 'Halt the Hate' has recorded a steep rise in reports of hate crime. In the first six months of 2019, there were 181 reports, nearly double the number for the previous 6 half-year periods. Amnesty India say this highlights an alarming trend in the country, especially when people are targeted for their race, religion, caste or gender.

## AMNESTY FEMINISTS NETWORK

**Domestic abuse:** **Good news** that the UK government has committed to prioritising improvement in domestic abuse laws, particularly to ensure protection for migrant women. [*Another issue to raise with election candidates!*] Amnesty says such women must be able to escape to safe accommodation and report abuse without fear of detention or deportation.

**Abortion in N. Ireland:** More **good news** – after a long campaign, abortion is no longer criminalised in Northern Ireland! Anyone accessing abortion services will not be prosecuted. The UK Government will now put in place a new framework for abortion in Northern Ireland for free, safe, legal and local abortion services, including cases where there is: a risk to the woman's health, serious or fatal foetal abnormality, and pregnancy resulting from sexual crime, such as rape and incest. Regulations governing availability of services must be in place by 31 March 2020.

**Bangladesh:** **Good news** - women are no longer required to declare if they are virgins on marriage registration forms. Now their status is given as 'unmarried'.

**New study:** Findings show that countries with strong women's rights are likely to have better health and faster growth. Thus, gender equality is not only a women's issue but a development issue. '*Even with a lack of resources, if a country has a strong human rights structure, the health outcomes are better,*' researchers said.

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE:** we will be learning more about this new campaign at one of our group meetings in the New Year. The slogan is 'Our planet, our rights'.

### ***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](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead)

**Chair & group contact:** Alison Dietz: Tel. 01984 641603 Email: [alison.dietzuk@icloud.com](mailto:alison.dietzuk@icloud.com)

**Treasurer:** Cherry Bird Tel. 01984 641052 Email: [cherryebird@gmail.com](mailto:cherryebird@gmail.com)

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