



News from the Minehead Group

www.amnesty.org.uk/mineheadwww.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Sign the petition** demanding that the death sentence for **Magai Matiop Ngong** be cancelled. He was just 15 when he was sentenced to death and he wasn't allowed a lawyer until after his trial. Children have been hanged in South Sudan recently. There must not be any more. Find the action on the AIUK home page: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/magai-matiop-teenager-execution-south-sudan/>
- ✓ **Please note the CHANGE of DATE** for our group's **AGM** which is now on **Thursday 20 February** at 1930 at Townsend House. All members are invited to come along to hear a review of the past year and help us plan for the future. Do come, as we need 8 to be quorate!
- ✓ **Invite your friends** and make up a team of six to come to our annual **quiz** on **Friday 28 February**. It's a fun evening out and helps raise money and awareness of Amnesty. If you'd like to donate a raffle prize, please phone Judith Ward on 01643 705083.
- ✓ **Mark International Women's Day** by visiting (or helping) with our street stall outside Iceland in Minehead from 1030-1200 on Friday 6 March.
- ✓ **Have a day out** at the **Southwest Regional Conference** on **7 March**. Lots of interesting speakers and the opportunity to meet other Amnesty members. For more information, contact Alison at: aledietz7474@gmail.com
- ✓ **Make a note in your diary** of our fundraising concert at 1500 on Saturday 12 September, with the Hummingbirds (songs and harp) at St Andrew's church.

Round up of January news

We had an informal, but productive, get-together in the Beach Hotel bar on 8 January. We agreed our programme for 2020 and the arrangements for some of our forthcoming events. On 23 January we held an open meeting with a speaker.

Modern Slavery: Cherry Bird reports:

At our January meeting, John Dickinson gave a very thought-provoking talk on this little discussed topic. Twenty-one of us attended, including a number of guests from Taunton Amnesty group, and we went away more aware and better informed about the realities of the terrible trade in human beings that still exists, despite slavery having been formally abolished in most western countries in the mid-nineteenth century. John started by dispelling misbeliefs such as:

- 'We do not benefit from slavery': We do, because goods such as cobalt used in batteries for modern electronic goods are mined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, often using slave labour and children.
- 'Slavery does not exist in West Somerset': It does, in areas such as casual agricultural labour, provision of sex services for incoming workers at Hinkley Point and drug trafficking.

HELP FREE THE UK FROM
**MODERN
SLAVERY**

Modern Slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. Victims are trapped in servitude, which they were deceived or coerced into, and cannot leave.

MODERN SLAVERY INCLUDES:

SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION

FORCED
LABOUR

CRIMINAL
EXPLOITATION

DOMESTIC
SERVITUDE

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!

Thurs 20 February
Group AGM 1930 at Townsend House.

Friday 28 February
Annual Quiz 1930 at Minehead Social Club. £4 per person.

Friday 6 March
Campaign stall 1030-1200 outside Iceland in Minehead to mark International Women's Day.

Saturday 7 March
SW Regional conference at the Mint Methodist Conference Centre, Fore Street, Exeter. 1000-1600.

Wed 8 April
Letter writing session 1400-1530 at the QMH, followed by a planning meeting.

Thurs 14 May
Talk on Ethiopia 1930 at QMH, followed by a planning meeting.

Sat 12 September
Fundraising concert 1500 at St Andrew's Church, Minehead.

How do we define modern slavery? It comes down to whether or not a worker has choice and the option to leave, so it can exist in many forms. John's powerful video clip highlighted the ubiquitous networks that support the trade and how the gang-masters abuse and get around regulations, the money they make and the terrible conditions under which vulnerable people are trapped. A key point to recognise is that our society creates and supports this vulnerability, for example, through the hostile environment towards immigrants and the way the benefits and property rental laws work, not to mention our desire for cheap goods that exploit human labour. We all bear some responsibility. John works with the charity Restore Hope West Somerset, which identifies instances of modern slavery and works with people whose jobs may bring them into contact with such abuses, helping them to see what is happening and use proper reporting channels. Stepping into a situation without understanding can be dangerous.

Campaign news

SOUTH ASIA: *Cherry continues the modern slavery theme.* When I lived in Nepal, girl trafficking was (and still is) a huge issue. Innocent village girls are tricked with offers of marriage or jobs and sold by their parents to men who smuggle them across the border into India, where they are sold into brothels and live the most horrendous lives, servicing 20 or more men a night, with little food and violent punishments if they resist. Some are as young as 9 or 10 years old. Sometimes the parents know what is really happening, sometimes they don't, either way, money changes hands. Village girls are also often sent to urban families (sometimes relatives, sometimes not) as domestic labour. Again, they receive no pay, a minimum of food, severe punishment for any 'failures', work all their waking hours and have no freedom of movement. Sexual exploitation also features. My Nepali landlady, Durga, runs a home for rescue and rehabilitation of some of these girls and has told me a great deal about how traumatised they are and the fact that often their families and communities will not accept them back because they are 'soiled goods'. She and her team give the girls medical treatment, counselling and send them to school. School is the thing the girls most love because it offers them some chance of control and choice in their lives. I have met some of these girls and they are a lively, affectionate little community. They love to dance and have fun, but sometimes you can see signs of the trauma and the frightened child inside.

INDIA: Free the Bhima Koregaon 9: the action on the AIUK website is still open if you haven't managed to do it yet.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/bhima-koregaon-BK9-india>



I WELCOME REFUGEES: AIUK has produced a new report with the Refugee Council and Save the Children, *'Without my Family'*. This highlights the impact of family separation on child refugees in the UK. The UK is the only country in Europe that imposes such severe restrictions on family unification for child refugees. This can have a devastating impact on children who have already experienced so much. Family reunion is a vital policy in helping new refugees to move forward with their lives.

Jenny Gateau has confirmed that Elaine Dew from **RAFT** will give a short talk about their work at St. Michaels Church Hall, Alcombe, at 1400 on 15 February. There will be tea and cake afterwards. This is a LETS group meeting but anyone interested is very welcome to attend.

CAMPAIGNING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UK: here is an extract from the New Year message from Eilidh Douglas, Chair of the Amnesty International UK Section
'The General Election delivered a convincing victory for the Conservative Party, who return to Government with a comfortable majority – in the most diverse Parliament in our history. This new Government and Parliament have a clear opportunity before them, to safeguard and champion the rights of people living in the UK, and to play a leading role in promoting human rights globally. Amnesty's challenge now is to ensure that that opportunity is grasped.....One of the great strengths of our grassroots movement is our ability to forge lasting relationships with local representatives across the political spectrum, and I am confident that many of the new intake – some 140 brand new MPs – will become firm friends of Amnesty and supporters of human rights in the coming years.'

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: aledietz7474@gmail.com

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