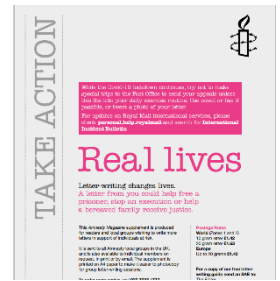




# News from the Minehead Group

[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:

- ✓ **Write a letter** on one or more of the cases featured in the summer edition of **Real Lives Matter**, sent out with emailed versions of this newsletter. All the cases have the option to write to embassies in London, particularly if postal services are suspended to the country concerned.
- ✓ **Take action** in support of the Bhima Koregaon11 (**BK11**). See overleaf for more information on this case. Here's the link to the action: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/bhima-koregaon-BK11-india>

## Shocking news from Turkey

On 3 July, Taner Kilic, the honorary Chair of Amnesty International Turkey, was convicted of being a member of a terrorist organisation and sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in jail. Idil Esler the former Director of Amnesty Turkey and two other members of the Istanbul 10 were also given prison sentences. As Kate Allen, director of AIUK, said *'This is an outrageous miscarriage of justice and it is heart breaking to think of the impact on our colleagues and their families. It is also frightening to think of the signal that it sends to human rights defenders in Turkey. If even members of Amnesty International, with all of our strength as a global movement, aren't safe, then who is?'*



## Round up of June/July news from our members

At our two online **group meetings** in June and July, we shared news on current campaigns. Hannah reported on her successful use of Facebook to publicise Refugee Week. We will wait to see what the social distancing guidance is in September before arranging our next meeting. In the meantime, everyone is invited to a **picnic** on **13 August**. Cherry has attended her first meeting as the 'Activism Representative' for the south west, and she is already picking up useful information from other groups around the region, as well as directly from AIUK.

## Refugee Week 2020

Our mini AmnesTeas in aid of the West Somerset Refugee Support Group were very successful. Between us we raised around £500, which is going towards paying for short breaks for five Syrian families in seaside holiday apartments in August. Jenny said *'the benefit our Syrian friends get from being here by the sea is beyond belief. In a very real way, the thought of eventually having their short breaks has been keeping them going through all these weeks of lockdown.'*



*They have been coping not only with loss of jobs, children not at school, lack of socialisation, but also all the added worries of their families left behind in precarious refugee camps around Syrian borders'. Here are some photos of our happy, socially distanced tea (or G&T) parties including one on Zoom.*



## Diary Dates

The Minehead Group aims to meet at least once a month. All Amnesty supporters are welcome to join us!

### Thurs 13 August

**Group social get-together at 1500.** Please join us for a picnic in Blenheim Gardens. Meet on the grass in front of the bandstand. BYO!

**All other future events for the next few months are cancelled.** But please hold the following dates in your diaries, in case we are able to go ahead by then.

### Sat 10 October

**World Day against the Death Penalty** vigil in Minehead.

### Friday 6 November

**Letter writing afternoon** 1430 at the QMH Minehead. Start of the 2020 Write for Rights Campaign.

## Campaign News

**INDIA: Cherry writes - BK11:** Amnesty India has published another statement calling on the Indian government to release the BK11 activists. Repeatedly denied bail, they have been shifted from one jail to another, investigations have changed hands from the Pune police to the National Investigative Agency (NIA) and a smear campaign by the state and media has accused them of being 'anti-nationals' working against the country.

**In solidarity with the stateless:** Amnesty India, with 82 other civil society actors, has signed a statement calling on states, donors, and other stakeholders to promote and protect the rights of stateless persons in their COVID-19 responses. Most countries are prioritising the needs of citizens, with little thought to those who are denied citizenship and the basic rights that go with it in the country where they live. This is particularly relevant in today's India, in the context of a possible rollout of the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens, both of which could potentially lead to many more of the poorest people living in India becoming stateless.

**Freedom of Speech?** Aaakar Patel, journalist and former head of Amnesty India was detained on 2 June simply for tagging on Twitter a video of a peaceful protest in the US against the killing of the African American George Floyd and tweeting "we need protests like these. From Dalits and Muslims and Adivasis. And the poor and women. World will notice. Protest is a craft." He has been charged for allegedly "provoking public mischief and rioting", on the basis of a complaint filed by the local police station where he lives in north Bengaluru.

**Domestic violence:** Lockdown has imprisoned many women at home with their abusers, so that domestic violence is becoming another, more silent, pandemic globally. In India, information from the National Commission for Women indicates a huge increase in reported cases and there may be many more unreported. Amnesty India is encouraging women suffering from abuse to seek help. Their publication "Domestic Violence Survivor's Guide: How to break the cycle of violence" outlines where women can report abuse and seek shelter and counselling.



**Anti Death Penalty Project:** There's good news from **Chad**, which abolished the death penalty for all crimes on 20 May. The last country in Europe that still has the death penalty is **Belarus**. Brothers Stanislav and Ilya were sentenced to death for murder and it may never be known whether or not the sentence has been carried out. In **Saudi Arabia** the Public Prosecution authority sought the death penalty for **Murtaja Qureisis** in August 2018. He was arrested at the age of 13 for participating in anti-government protests and for attacking security forces. He was moved to an adult prison at just 16, and is awaiting his next trial. *Lynn Maalouf, Al Middle East researcher* said 'The Saudi authorities have a chilling track record of using the death penalty as a weapon to crush political dissent and punish anti-government protesters, including children, from the country's persecuted Shi'a minority'.

**Ethiopia:** we were disappointed to learn that human rights in Ethiopia have deteriorated. Here is an extract from an AI report which Cherry has received. 'To date, Ethiopian government security forces continue to commit extrajudicial executions, mass arrests, arbitrarily detain and mistreat civilians as well as destruct property and forcefully evict people in its Oromia counter insurgency operations. There has been no accountability for the myriad of human rights violations and abuses including, but not limited to, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions and forced displacement of civilians.'

**Ban Israeli Settlement Goods:** AI collected more than 310,000 signatures, including 33,000 from people in the UK, on its petition urging TripAdvisor to de-list all its properties, activities and attractions in Israel's illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. AI is continuing to press TripAdvisor to remove listings in illegal settlements from their platform.

**UK:** in June, MPs voted to confirm Northern Ireland's abortion regulations with a majority of 253 votes to 136. This is the final parliamentary stage and means the regulations will continue to underpin services in Northern Ireland, and that women will have the same rights as elsewhere in the UK. Good news!

### **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: [aledietz7474@gmail.com](mailto:aledietz7474@gmail.com)

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

**Meeting notes, newsletter & website:** Susan Mew Tel. 01643 821209 Email: [brightmanmew@btinternet.com](mailto:brightmanmew@btinternet.com)