



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Send a letter** to our MP asking him to call on the UK Government to prioritise the cases of **Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe** and **Annosheh Ashoori** who are both British/Iranian dual-nationals unjustly held in Iran. Help the campaign to get them both home by Christmas.



- ✓ **Join AI's annual Write for Rights (WfR) global campaign** by writing letters on behalf of the 10 cases featured. You can download a PDF version of the WfR leaflet (sent with emailed versions of this newsletter) or ask us to send you a leaflet.



- ✓ **Take a photograph** or screenshot of yourself writing letters for Write for Rights that we can make into a photomontage for publicity and a press release. Email it to Susan Mew (address overleaf) by 27 November. Karen Mills will put it together for us.

- ✓ **Mark International Human Rights Day** on 10 December by joining us in the Beach Hotel café between 1000 and 1200 (if Covid restrictions allow). Pick up a leaflet from our information table, have coffee and a socially distanced chat! Then either write a letter there and then, or else take some details away with you to write letters from home.

- ✓ **Join us** on on-line on Tuesday 8 December at 1930 for a **talk on Human Rights and the Law** by Ian Myson. (More details below.) Contact Cherry Bird by 1 December at the latest if you'd like to come along so that she can send you the link.

- ✓ **Visit** the 2020 version of the **Minehead Christmas Tree Festival** from 12 December. There will be a display of wooden trees outside the Avenue Methodist Church, including one dedicated to Amnesty.

Round up of October/November news

We have held two **group meetings** via Zoom since our last newsletter. On 9 October we discussed our plans for WfR and heard from Cherry about developments in South Asia. We also agreed some improvements to our means of communications such as setting up a generic email address for our group (to use mainly for publicity and for advertising events) and establishing an **Instagram** account. On 5 November, we were joined by **Bilal Hussain**, who has recently joined AIUK's Community Organising team. Liaison with local groups forms part of Bilal's responsibilities; he also works on the Football Welcomes campaign. He said that AIUK wants to give more priority to supporting local groups as the number of groups has declined from 285 to 170 over recent years.



He suggested that we find a particular issue to focus on that might draw in new members. Your suggestions are welcome!

We were sad to hear of the death of **Norman Stanley** (pictured) in October. Norman, together with his wife Maxine, were active supporters of our group for a number of years.

Talk on human rights and the law - 8 December: Ian Myson, who is Regional Rep for South Midlands, has recently completed a Master's degree in human rights. He will be exploring the relationships between various HR laws and looking at the challenges that exist for Amnesty in trying to improve human rights on the ground. However, he promises to make it 'non-technical'! If you'd like to attend please email Cherry by 1 Dec at cherrybird@gmail.com

Diary Dates

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

Tues 8 December
Talk on Human Rights and the Law
1930 on-line. Contact Cherry for the link.

Thurs 10 December
Write for Rights letter writing 1000-1200
Beach Hotel café (if Covid restrictions allow).

Thurs 14 January
Group meeting
1700 via Zoom (tbc).
Contact Alison to receive meeting link.

Campaign News

I WELCOME REFUGEES [*Jenny Gateau*]: A final consignment of food and toiletries has recently been sent to Calais, but sadly RAFT (Refugee Action from Taunton) is now closed.

SOUTH ASIA: [*Cherry Bird*]: **Amnesty India:** Once again, all financial assets and bank accounts of Amnesty India have been frozen, the office has had to close and all staff have lost their jobs. Amnesty is accused of 'financial irregularities' under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act, but this is merely a cover. In reality, the Indian government is furious about two hard-hitting reports Amnesty recently produced, one on police brutality during the Delhi riots (they stood by as Muslims were violently attacked) and the other on the Kashmir communication lockdown. The situation is very serious, with former staff in fear of arrest. All campaigning work on India is paused. Meanwhile, high-level meetings are taking place between various Amnesty section heads and UK and European governments.

Kashmir: The resolution was passed at AIUK's virtual AGM and we await further information about how they will move forward on undertaking the required research. Meanwhile the Indian government has formally announced that any Indian citizen can now buy land in Kashmir, a move that Kashmiris fear will lead to ethnic dilution as Indian big business money pours in.

Nepal: A new AI report reveals how migrant domestic workers employed in Qatar have been pushed to breaking point by extreme overwork, lack of rest, and abusive and degrading treatment. AI spoke to 105 women who had been employed as live-in domestic workers in Qatar, and found their rights were still being violated, despite recent government reforms to improve working conditions. Long working hours with no proper rest emerged as one of the most common forms of abuse, with many women working 16 hours a day without a day off and without overtime pay. According to their contracts, domestic workers should work no more than 10 hours a day, six days a week. Findings have been shared with the Qatar government, who offered to work with Amnesty to 'investigate the claims and bring guilty parties to account'. Amnesty does not feel this represents a genuine will to bring change, but is just a PR exercise. There are already hundreds of claims awaiting investigation that have not been processed! However, the report has stimulated debate in Qatari community spaces where domestic and family issues are discussed, which is one positive outcome.

DEATH PENALTY: [*Karen Mills and Susan Mew*] AIUK hosted an on-line panel discussion on 10 October, World Day against the Death Penalty. The panel was chaired by Paul Bridges, who came to speak to us in November 2019. The panel members were Dr Paul Malcano (Cardiff University), Ciara San Jose (AI International Secretariat) and Kim Manning-Cooper (former lead for the AIUK DP project). The focus of the meeting was on miscarriages of justice and much of the discussion focused on cases in the USA where policing and the justice system discriminates against young black men in particular. AI monitors the number of death penalties, the number of executions actually carried out and the number of subsequent exonerations. One in ten cases in the USA result in wrongful convictions. But it was pointed out that miscarriages of justice can occur anywhere in the world, as human justice is not infallible. In the USA, there's extensive evidence of racial bias on death row, and the victim's race remains the single most reliable factor in determining whether a defendant will be given a death sentence. Overall, far more black than white people are convicted – often because of a lack of good legal representation. Two films were suggested: 'The executioner' and 'You can't do everything, just do something'.

News from AIUK

Amnesty Shop & Christmas card order: if you're wondering where to buy cards and gifts for Christmas, don't forget that a wide range of gifts and products is available on-line at <https://amnestyshop.org.uk/>

AIUK is planning a national on-line event for **Write for Rights**. Watch out for details.



How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

Email: amnestyminehead@gmail.com

Chair & group contact: Alison Dietz: Tel. 01984 641603 Email: aledietz7474@gmail.com

Treasurer: Cherry Bird Tel. 01984 641052 Email: cherrybird@gmail.com

Meeting notes, newsletter & website: Susan Mew Tel. 01643 821209 Email: brightmanmew@btinternet.com