



## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take action** about the tragic situation unfolding in **Afghanistan**. Call on the Prime Minister to ensure the UK plays its full part in securing safe passage for people at risk of being targeted by the Taliban. Email the Prime Minister by following this link to the home page of the AIUK website: [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) (or post the letter enclosed with delivered newsletters).
- ✓ **Help publicise, sell tickets and come along** to listen to some **live music** at our fundraising **Afternoon Tea Concert** on Saturday 11 September at 3 pm in St Andrew's Church, Minehead. The Hummingbirds singing quartet will be performing 'light, secular music' for us and tea & cake will be served in the interval. Tickets cost £7 (to include the refreshments) and are available to buy from Toucan in Minehead or over the phone from Cherry 01984 641052.
- ✓ **Help raise the profile of Amnesty** amongst your friends and in the community. Explain what Amnesty stands up for, tell them about our group and encourage them to join in our activities!

## News from our group

### Letter writing afternoon on 15 July 2021

*Alison writes:* At last we were able to meet face to face again for a letter writing session. Six of us sat at two tables in the Beach Hotel which had been reserved by Margaret, and in spite of a certain amount of chat, we wrote **24 letters**. We covered nine cases from the summer Amnesty magazine and the Real Lives booklets. Six letters were written on behalf of a student who was blinded by police while taking part in a non-violent protest against rising prices and inequality. The other cases were in Colombia, China, Turkey, Gambia, Chile, the UAE, Canada, Malawi, and the Russian Federation. A big thank you to Peter Atherton who has kindly provided the stamps again. Also a thank you to the Beach Hotel who are very welcoming and reserved us tables in a quiet spot.

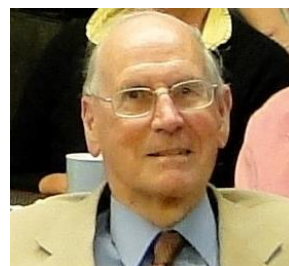


**Amnesteas on 7 August:** We were very fortunate that after a very wet morning, the rain stopped in time for our fundraising garden tea party to go ahead, as planned, at Alison and Roy's home in Roadwater. Around 30 people came to support the event, including the Syrian family who were enjoying their seaside holiday in Minehead (see overleaf). Everyone enjoyed chatting with friends,

neighbours and visitors, and of course the tea and home-made cake. Donations, together with a raffle and guess the weight of the cake competition, helped raise **£341**. Thanks to everyone who helped in one way or another.

### Member news

We were sad to hear of the death of **Michael Sully** on 3 July. Michael was a founder member of our Minehead Group and the treasurer for its first 10 years. We all enjoyed his quiet sense of humour and thoughtful contributions to discussions at our meetings.



Congratulations to **Philippa Gerry** who has completed her 100 'scoots' around Blenheim Gardens and raised an amazing £3,384.50 for Children in Need.

## Diary Dates

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

### Thurs 9 September

Group meeting  
1500 at the Beach Hotel: campaigns and planning future events.

### Sat 11 September

Afternoon Tea concert  
at 1500 with The Hummingbirds. At St Andrew's Church in Minehead. £7.

### Sat 9 October

SW Regional Conference at the Mint Street Methodist Church, Exeter.

### November to end of December

Global Write for Rights campaign (event details tba)

### Friday 10 December

International Human Rights Day (event details tba)

## Update on seaside holidays for Syrian refugee families

Jenny Gateau reports: thanks to the kind help of many people, we have managed to give five of our Taunton/Wellington families a summer holiday of a week each in the Baptist Holiday Apartments by the sea. Despite all the difficulties of the Pandemic, the families are really making great strides in their lives here, which is wonderful to see. Taunton Welcomes Refugees tell me that several new families may be coming to be resettled in the coming year. So we need to continue to support where we can. We also continue to search for a willing landlord in our area to be part of the County Resettlement Scheme. For more information you can contact Jenny on 01643 708471.

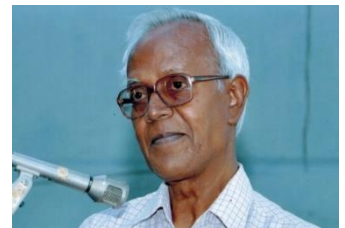
## Campaign News Cherry Bird writes:

**Afghanistan** My colleague, Nigina, who is Country Coordinator for Afghanistan and an Afghan herself, said in our South Asia newsletter in early August: *'They asked, how do you feel about the situation in your country? I replied with tears in my eyes, how I feel, is that even important? Was it ever important to the world how Afghans felt?'* At that time, she was beside herself with worry about relatives still living in Afghanistan. Since then, the situation has moved so fast that all the terrible reports of Taliban violence across the country are now out of date and their conquest is a done deal. While the Taliban say all the right things about supporting peace (on their terms of course) and allowing girls to go to school and women to work (within Sharia law of course), can anything be believed? I suspect not. I hear the voices of brave women and men on the radio who say they will fight for their rights, but what hope for their safety? The likelihood is of a tsunami of human rights abuses, and who will be there for ordinary people, despite the fine words? Not the international governments. I remember the great work Amnesty did under the Women in Afghanistan campaign, which ended in 2014 (!!). We worked with such inspiring women NGOs – we and other civil society organisations must be there for them again.

## Snippets from India

**Lights out on Indian democracy:** A hard-hitting piece by an Indian journalist lists reasons to question the health of democracy in India, taking as an example events that all happened in just one day. 'With Parliament in session, government agencies launched punitive raids against the media, ministers lied about illegal acts and officials meant to protect democracy did their best to stifle it.'

**BK16 now BK15:** Some of you may have seen the sad news that one of the prisoners, Father Swami, a Jesuit priest, died in custody, of Covid. At 84 years old, with Parkinson's disease, he had spent his life fighting for the rights of some of the poorest people in India. It is clear the inhumane regime in the prison played a large part in his death, as he was denied the most basic facilities and support he needed. As one tweet pointed out "what kind of regime is so afraid of a frail 84-year-old man?"



On a positive note, our campaign for the **BK16** prisoners in India received a boost this week, in the form of an email to the mid-Devon group from the son of one of the prisoners. He forwarded a long message from his father, **Vernon Gonsalves**, which confirmed that he has received many of the letters and cards sent by AIUK activists. Vernon ends by saying *'Heartfelt thanks for the cards and letters of solidarity you have been sending. Words are indeed powerful means of support - and don't we all need support always - though I must say we have never, through these three years, been allowed to feel alone. It's persons like you who keep reminding us that the path towards justice may be long, but won't be lonely. Your company lightens the trudge; we'll trip along together singing songs of freedom. Hand in hand we'll see better tomorrows.'*

**Kashmir:** The South Asia team is continuing to work with AIUK staff to develop an activist-led campaign on Kashmir, so watch this space. Meanwhile violence and extra-judicial killings continue, with civilians caught in the middle, subject to checkpoints, curfews and harassment. With **one Indian soldier to every eight civilians**, this is a military occupation. Over time, Kashmiris are at risk of becoming a minority in their own country. The parallels with Palestine are clear and alarming.

### 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)

**Email:** [amnestyminehead@gmail.com](mailto:amnestyminehead@gmail.com)

**Instagram:** [@amnestyminehead](https://www.instagram.com/amnestyminehead)

**Chair & group contact:** Alison Dietz: Tel. 01984 641603 or 07981 866905 Email: [aledietz7474@gmail.com](mailto:aledietz7474@gmail.com)

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

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