



Amnesty International UK

October 2021

# 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)

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## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take action** to **preserve our rights to protest peacefully** in the UK and call on our Prime Minister to stop the assault on our freedoms. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently going through Parliament, will give the police sweeping powers - including additional powers to shut down peaceful protests. Find the petition on the home page of the AIUK website: [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)
- ✓ **Write to your MP** about the **Nationality and Borders Bill** which is currently going through the Committee Stage, before the Report Stage and Third Reading in the House of Commons. If it becomes law, this would reduce the right of people to seek asylum in the UK and has been described as 'the biggest legal assault on international refugee law ever seen in the UK.' Amnesty is campaigning with many other organisations and taking part in a day of action on 23 October.
- ✓ **Join us** for our **letter writing afternoon** on Tuesday 9 November 1400-1530 in the Quaker Meeting House. We will be writing letters on the cases featured in the 2021 global **Write for Rights** Campaign. Help will be on hand and writing materials provided. There will be tea and biscuits too!

## Some good news

Alison shares two pieces of good news: (1) The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to two journalists who founded newspapers in order to protect citizens from the abuse of power, lies and war propaganda. One is Maria Ressa, who has held her ground in spite of intimidation from many sources including the misogynistic President of the Philippines Duterte. The other is Dmitry Muratov who defends freedom of speech in Putin's Russia. (2) Two Turkish students, Melike and Ozgur, became Amnesty Individuals at Risk when they were arrested for taking part in a Pride march. We wrote to the Turkish Justice Minister, Abdulhamit Gül, asking him to acquit them. We were pleased to hear that they have now been freed.

## News from our group

At the beginning of September, we were pleased to meet up with former group members (who still subscribe to our mailing list) Chris & Christina and also Jenny LW, who were all visiting West Somerset. Here's a photo of us all enjoying lunch in Susan's sunny garden.



The **concert** performed by the Hummingbirds in St Andrew's Church on 11 September was very enjoyable and raised £207. We are very grateful to the church for hosting the event and to the performers who sang for free. And thanks too to all those who helped and came along to support our cause.



Photos: The Hummingbirds; Revd Simon welcoming us; Alison speaking about AI; Susan and Cherry serving tea in their new Amnestea aprons!

## Diary Dates

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

### Sat 6 November

Climate Change day of action – look out for local activities.

### Tues 9 November

Write for Rights (W4R) Letter writing session  
1400-1530 at the Quaker Meeting House on Bancks Street. This will be followed by a short planning meeting.

### Sat 13 November

AIUK conference  
Taking place in London, but also accessible on-line.

### Friday 10 December

International Human Rights Day  
1000-1200 Coffee morning and W4R card/letter signing at the Avenue Methodist Church hall.

### Tues 11 Jan 2022

Group meeting: details to be confirmed.

### Fri 25 March 2022

Quiz at the Minehead & District Social Club.

## Campaign News

**Stop the Rights Raid:** AIUK is currently focusing very much on legislation going through Parliament that will undermine **human rights in the UK**. See the actions overleaf. The **Nationality and Borders Bill** is a cruel piece of legislation which, if enforced, would largely shut down the UK's asylum system and criminalise people for trying to reach a place of safety. AIUK has submitted evidence to the Committee scrutinising the Bill and is trying to build parliamentary support to oppose the asylum elements. The **UK's Human Rights Act** is also under threat.

**South Asia:** The team of volunteer country coordinators for South Asia produce a very interesting newsletter. If you'd like to read more about this region, please contact Cherry direct.

**India:** since our last newsletter, the Mid-Devon Group, which also campaigns for the **BK16** prisoners, has received, via a relative, another letter from two of the prisoners – Shoma Sen (on the right) and Sudha Bharadwaj (on the left). In their letter, Shoma and Sudha say how important our letters are to them and thank us all for our efforts: *'every gesture of goodwill towards us has brought a smile to our faces and added steel to our resolve'*.

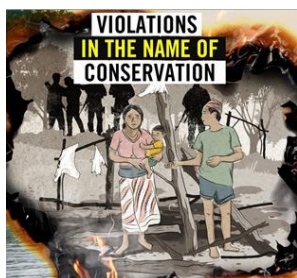


**Kashmir:** Cherry says: 'I recently joined a call with German and Italian Country Coordinators, plus some Indian NGOs working on Human Rights. I hope we will keep up communications.' Cherry will write a further update on Kashmir in our next newsletter.

### Impacts of Climate change on Human Rights

Cherry writes: Not everyone was initially in favour of Amnesty's proposal to work on climate change as part of the drive to protect human rights. But I think it is now widely acknowledged that climate change poses serious threats to human rights in some of the poorest countries. One of those is **Nepal**, where recent exceptionally heavy rains have taken lives, destroyed crops and houses, causing injuries and displacement, and endangering livelihoods. Millions of people are being pushed into extreme levels of food insecurity by **erratic monsoon** seasons. This particularly affects women, who are most often the subsistence farmers. Similar things are happening in **India** and **Bangladesh**.

In addition, **conservation work** in Nepal that has received praise worldwide for its success in increasing the numbers of endangered species such as the one-horned rhino and Asian tiger, has come at a price for indigenous people living in conservation areas. Amnesty Nepal has highlighted abuses suffered by these minorities in a joint report [\*Violations in the name of conservation\*](#),



based on evidence gathered from two national parks. Tens of thousands of indigenous people have been forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands and denied access to areas they depend on for subsistence. The study also highlights how the abusive enforcement of conservation laws and policies has led to injuries and even deaths.

On the subject of **energy resources**, a number of countries, including Nepal, have called on the UN Secretary General to end UN financing of new coal construction and increase financing for renewable sources, in order to keep the goal of 1.5C limit on global warming alive. Nepal does not have significant coal resources of its own, but imports from India. The Himalayan mountains provide scope for hydro and wind power, but exploitation of these also comes with environmental costs and needs to be well managed.

## National and regional AI news

Sadly, the SW conference on 9 October had to be cancelled as not enough people had signed up for it. The national conference is going ahead in London on 13 November. The draft programme is available on the AIUK website and, nearer the time, members will be able to find out how to watch the live-streaming of the events. Go to <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/national-and-student-conference-2021>

### How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

**Website:** [www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead)  
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