



# News from the Minehead Group

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## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Come along to our Group's AGM** on **Thursday 10 February** at 1500. Take part in our review of the past year's activities and contribute to our plans for the future. The formal part of the meeting will take a maximum of 45 minutes and we'll have time for tea and chat!
- ✓ **Take action** to stop the Government's assault on our freedoms here in the UK. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is still going through Parliament. If you haven't done so already, please write to your MP or **sign the petition** on the home page of the AIUK website: [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)
- ✓ **Find out more about the Nationality and Borders Bill** by downloading and reading Amnesty's **Fact Checker**, available from the home page of the AIUK website: [www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk) Perhaps you could share this with your friends who have supported our actions/activities on refugees? And more letters about this to our MP would be good!
- ✓ **Sign the petition** urging governments around the world to (1) negotiate with the Taliban to respect women's rights and (2) allocate specific funding for programmes and projects to advance women's rights in **Afghanistan**. Go to [https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/afghan-women-they-are-the-revolution-stand-with-them/?fbclid=IwAR34d-1ZiHLs99M3bbhn\\_y9WoamntVSvDAuVGh13xE5twrSwqBeK9qi7sng](https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/afghan-women-they-are-the-revolution-stand-with-them/?fbclid=IwAR34d-1ZiHLs99M3bbhn_y9WoamntVSvDAuVGh13xE5twrSwqBeK9qi7sng)

## News from our group

Despite Covid and the very cold weather, our **coffee morning** and **letter/card signing** on 10 December went well and attracted about 30 visitors. As well as signing cards and letters about cases in the **2021 Write for Rights** campaign, everyone enjoyed relaxing and chatting over coffee and cake, for which we were pleased to collect £72 in donations. So together with our earlier letter writing session in November and the outputs of our dedicated members writing letters at home, we feel that we made a significant contribution to the 2021 campaign. Many thanks to everyone who helped.



Our **January meeting** was via Zoom when we met with members from Taunton, Wells, Frome and Weston-Super-Mare and heard about the new Kent network. [See Alison's report overleaf.] We followed this up two weeks later with a further Zoom discussion as to how to progress this idea in Somerset. We will report further on this in due course.

## Diary Dates

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

**Thursday 10 Feb**  
Group AGM at 1500, at the Quaker Meeting House, Bancks Street. Followed by a short planning meeting.

**Friday 11 March**  
Stall for International Women's Day  
1000-1200 on the Avenue.

**Saturday 12 March**  
SW Regional Conference  
Details tbc. Could be in Exeter as planned or on Zoom. Look out for further announcements!

**Fri 25 March 2022**  
Quiz at the Minehead & District Social Club. Starts at 1930 prompt.

**Thursday 21 April**  
Letter writing afternoon  
1400-1530 in Minehead (venue tbc).

## Networking with other Amnesty members across Somerset

*Alison reports:* On 7 January, Graham Minter of the Maidstone Amnesty group gave us an inspiring talk about his new venture: setting up a network in Kent which not only links existing Kent local AI groups, but reaches members of Amnesty who live too far from groups to join them, members who can't or don't wish to join a group, and people of other organisations and interests who might wish to support certain campaigns. He mentioned that most of the new supporters were people of working age who were very busy working but made time to support human rights. Graham's motivation initially was the shrinking as well as closing of local groups.

His venture is now recognised by AIUK as a pilot project. With the help of the AIUK office, he was able to reach all Amnesty members in Kent. A survey was sent out, and his core team of four created the Kent network. The message was '*Here we are, come and join us*'. Numbers built up gradually; most people were not members of local groups. Of the 100 who have joined, about a quarter are actively involved. Another important message is to encourage participation: '*We'd like you to get involved, so how can we help you do that?*' Covid has been a benefit as well as a challenge, because meetings and talks could take place on Zoom. He stressed the importance of sending out a monthly newsletter, and sent us his latest one after the talk. That is an area where we are already ahead of the curve, thanks to Susan's excellent newsletters.

On local activism, he suggested having an Amnesty member giving talks to local organisations. We have done this, but perhaps we could do more. On advocacy, our aim could be to reach every MP in the county - not just our own. He suggested arranging an annual face to face meeting with our MP, and lobbying our local council on human rights issues.

## Campaign News

*Cherry reports:*

**India:** Aakar Patel, former Director of Amnesty International India, explains in his latest book how the Modi government has targeted Amnesty's work in India over many years, as part of a 'war on civil society'. Tactics include various forms of coercive action, frivolous and expensive court cases, frozen accounts, inspection notes, and labels such as 'threat to national security' and 'anti-national'. Amnesty is not the only NGO to have been targeted and the result has been seriously detrimental to human rights and freedom of speech within India. This is particularly true in **Kashmir**, where harassment and arbitrary arrests continue. The latest victim is **Khurram Parvez**, (*see right*) a widely respected Kashmiri writer and human rights activist who has worked with the UN and Amnesty over many years. Arrested in November 2021, he is being held in Delhi under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, under which bail is almost impossible to get.



## Nepal

In Reality Check 2021, Amnesty highlights Qatar's failure to build on reforms in its labour system initiated in 2017. As well as ending restrictions on workers wishing to leave the country or changing jobs, these included regulation of working hours for live-in domestic workers, labour tribunals to facilitate access to justice, a fund to support payment of unpaid wages, and a minimum wage. However, it seems many of the old abusive practices have resurfaced and the daily reality for migrant workers, many of whom are Nepali, remains harsh. As the World Cup approaches and the rights of migrant workers are under scrutiny, Amnesty is calling on the Qatari authorities to take urgent action. 'Apparent complacency by the authorities is leaving thousands of workers at continued risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers, unable to change jobs and facing wage theft. They have little hope of remedy, compensation or justice. After the World Cup, the fate of the workers who remain in Qatar will be even more uncertain.'

### ***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)

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