



News from the Minehead Group

www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead Instagram: @amnestyminehead

Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Come along to our stall** on **Friday 11 March** 1000-1200 outside Iceland in Minehead to sign letters about women in **Afghanistan**. This is to mark **International Women's Day** on 8 March.
- ✓ **Invite your friends and come along yourself** to our **fund-raising quiz** on Friday 25 March at 1930 at the Minehead and District Social Club. It's always an enjoyable evening and we need your support! There will be a bar and raffle and there is easy car parking nearby.
- ✓ **Take further action on the Nationality and Borders Bill** by joining in AIUK's new campaign 'People Smuggling Ltd'. The Government claims the Bill will reduce **people smuggling**. But it won't. Instead of targeting people smugglers, this Bill targets the victims. By failing to provide safe and legal routes into the UK, more and more people seeking asylum will be forced, out of desperation, into the hands of smuggling gangs. Send an email to our Prime Minister by following the link on the home page of the AIUK website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/>
- ✓ **Call on the Prime Minister of Israel** to immediately cancel all orders for forced evictions and home demolitions against Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and end the forced displacement of Palestinians. Sign the on-line petition at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/EndIsraelsApartheid> More information on apartheid across Israel and the OPT is overleaf.
- ✓ **Find out more** about the Government's plans to scrap our **Human Rights Act**. They want to replace it with a 'Bill of Rights' - which would severely weaken our protections and make it harder to hold the state to account. Take part in the consultation by going to <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/hra-consultation>



News from our group

At our group's **AGM** on 10 February, we covered all the usual business of agreeing the accounts and appointing our officers, who remain the same as last year. Alison Dietz gave her chair's report and it was encouraging to be reminded of all we had managed to achieve over the past year, despite the pandemic and accompanying restrictions. We agreed to keep our annual subs of £6 as this covers our administrative costs, such as room hire, the £72 affiliation fee to AIUK and other sundries. It also means that any money we raise at our events can go totally to supporting our and AIUK's campaigning work. Unfortunately, we were one short of our quorum so we will have to ratify our decisions at a future meeting.

After refreshments, we followed the AGM with a short meeting to plan our March events – the street stall for International Women's Day and the quiz.

Networking with other AI members across Somerset

Work has carried on to develop a Somerset network. We have established the post code areas to cover and a newssheet will be circulated shortly to all Amnesty members in those areas. All the Somerset groups have been asked to confirm their forthcoming events so that these can be publicised more widely and encourage us to support and learn from each other.



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!

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

Saturday 12 March
SW Regional Conference
0945–1300 at the Mint Methodist Church in Exeter.

Fri 25 March 2022
Quiz at the Minehead & District Social Club.
Starts at 1930 prompt.
£5. Bar and raffle.

Thursday 21 April
Talk on Afghanistan followed by letter writing
1400-1600 at the Quaker Meeting House, Bancks St, Minehead

Campaign News

ISRAEL: Millions of Palestinians live under Israel's system of apartheid. At the heart of this violently racist system is the Palestinian experience of being denied a home. Across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Palestinians are treated as an inferior racial group and systematically deprived of their rights. Amnesty considers this to be **apartheid**. For over 73 years, Israel has forcibly displaced entire Palestinian communities and demolished hundreds of thousands of Palestinians' homes, causing terrible trauma and suffering. Today, over 6 million Palestinians are refugees. At least another 150,000 are at real risk of losing their homes. Every week, the Israeli authorities forcibly evict Palestinians from their homes, demolishing their houses and seizing their land for Israeli settlers. These acts form part of a systematic and widespread attack against the Palestinian population. With more people mobilising around the world against these injustices, Amnesty is calling for us to stand in solidarity against Israel's apartheid. Together, we have the power to demolish this racist system. Please sign Amnesty's on-line petition (see link overleaf) and stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

SOUTH ASIA Cherry reports:

INDIA - I joined an online meeting jointly organised by InSAF (International Solidarity for Academic Freedom) India and Amnesty Germany and Italy sections, to mark India's Republic Day (26 January). It was inspiring to share a platform with 30 people from across the world (India, Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Sweden, US, and Switzerland), united in calling on the Indian government to adhere to India's constitution and end the targeting of human rights defenders, including the **BK16**. We took turns to read parts of a statement to this effect and naming people held in prisons because of their work as human rights defenders. This was posted on You Tube: <https://youtube/s3VOSai2mDY> We listened to powerful testaments from the wives of three prisoners, who all said that conditions in prison are bad and prisoners are all suffering from health problems. Communications are very difficult. They are only allowed 10-minute phone calls and often the connection is poor. They feel angry at the injustice and said 'the right to a fair trial does not exist in India anymore and it is dangerous to express an opinion'.

Two of the prisoners are from the BK16: **Hany Babu**, (see above right) Professor of languages and linguistics in the Department of English, Delhi University, working on minority populations and their identities. His opinions caught the attention of the authorities and he was arrested in October 2020, accused of being a Maoist, based on electronic 'evidence', which was 'found' on his computer after it had been taken away.

Vernon Gonsalves (see right) was arrested in summer 2018, after he participated in an event to pledge to uphold the Indian constitution. His case is also based on electronic 'evidence'.



Professor G.N. Saibaba (see left) is also a professor at Delhi University. Arrested in 2014 he has been sentenced to life imprisonment, accused of being a Maoist. He is a wheelchair user and in very poor health, with a serious heart condition and severe back pain, so that he now needs support with daily tasks. Despite requests, no carer is provided, so fellow prisoners help him.

NEPAL - On a more optimistic note, Amnesty Nepal has been busy organising workshops. These included a joint event with the Human Rights Journalists' Association at which 24 Nepali journalists learned about Amnesty's work in promoting human rights and the role they, as journalists, could play in addressing key human rights challenges and promoting collaboration between the media, civil society organisations and the national institutions. At another event, 52 participants from across the country learned about the impacts of climate change on human rights, particularly for people from marginalised communities. A third event focused on promotion of youth engagement.



How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Email: amnestyminehead@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

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

Chair & group contact: Alison Dietz: Tel. 01984 641603 or 07981 866905 Email: aledietz7474@gmail.com

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

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