



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Sign the petition** to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, calling on the government to **make housing a reality for all**. Every person has the right to a safe and stable home - but in England, AIUK research has shown that thousands of people remain homeless because they are denied their right to housing due to deep rooted government failings.
- ✓ **Write a letter** to your MP, expressing serious concern over the **government's plans to send refugees to Rwanda**.
- ✓ **Find out** more about the '**End Israeli Apartheid**' campaign by joining AIUK's new monthly activist drop-in where you can ask questions and find out more about the campaign. This will be on the first Monday of the month at 18:30. To book a place, follow this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/end-israeli-apartheid-campaign-monthly-drop-in-for-activists-tickets-349681064477>
- ✓ **Make a date** to come along to our forthcoming events: **letter writing** on 21 July, a **stall** at Roadwater Fete on 23 July, and an **AmnesTea** on 29 July. All welcome at any or all of these!

News from our group

On **21 April**, Cherry gave us an update on the situation in **Afghanistan**, highlighting the human rights abuses being perpetrated by the Taliban against women and girls in particular. Since the Taliban re-took power last year, women and girls have almost disappeared from public life. This includes most of the several million girls who were enrolled in schools, the 88,000 female students who were studying at universities, and the



many women barred from returning to their jobs as judges, prosecutors, senior government officials, business persons and teachers. More recently, the Taliban announced that all women must cover their face in public, setting out an escalating set of punishments for anyone refusing to comply. We followed the talk with tea and cake, and then some **letter writing** using the cases set out in AIUK's spring 'Real Lives' supplement. In less than an hour we wrote 23 letters about cases in nine countries. Philippa went one better by writing more letters when she got home!

Alison reports on our May event: On **30 May** six of us gathered at our home to watch a moving **film** called '200 metres'. The title refers to a Palestinian family who live close to the wall which separates **Palestine** from Israel. Mustafa, the father and central character, lives on the Palestine side with his mother. His wife and children are able to live, work and go to school on the other side of the wall, because they have acquired Israeli residence permits. However, Mustafa rejected this option because he didn't want to lose his Palestinian identity. He chose instead to apply for short-term permits in order to be able to visit and work in Israel. When his son is hit by a car and he cannot reach him because his travel permit has just expired, he uses smugglers to help him cross the border into Israel. This is a long and dangerous journey with checkpoints and violent encounters, but at last Mustafa reaches the hospital. The film provoked much discussion, and a feeling of helplessness in the face of so much repression of the Palestinians. However, it was an excellent film and we cheered ourselves up with a delicious 'bring and share' supper of Palestinian and Mediterranean goodies.



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!

20-26 June
Refugee Week

Saturday 25 June.
AIUK AGM On-line.

Thursday 21 July
Letter writing session – 1400-1600. Beach Hotel (tbc).

Saturday 23 July
Stall at Roadwater Fete
From 1400. Set up in the morning. Info, letters, petitions and games. Help needed!

Friday 29 July
AmnesTea 1430-1630 in Susan's garden: Mayhill, Woodland Close, Carhampton TA24 6PE

Saturday 22 Oct
Harp Concert with afternoon tea 1500 at Carhampton Village Hall, TA24 6ND

Campaign News

I WELCOME REFUGEES *Jenny Gateau* sent this update on the half term sea-side break for a Syrian refugee family, made possible through the Minehead & District Refugee Support group. The weather stayed fine all week, they made us Sunday lunch in their apartment, we had a lovely picnic at the far end of North Hill, tea with our two Ukrainian friends and their host, Friday lunch at the Quakers, and a fish and chip lunch kindly bought by Omar. Best of all, for the first time, he was able to get out of his wheelchair and WALK ON THE BEACH! They send their thanks to all who have made it possible for such a refreshing break.

INDIA *Cherry Bird reports:* The situation in India continues to be a concern. As Nick Cohen writes in the Observer, Narendra Modi and the Hindutva right are changing the world's largest democracy for the



worse. The independence of the Indian courts, civil service and media has become seriously compromised and many Muslims are denied the security of full citizenship, often violently targeted for imagined misdemeanours, such as eating beef. But instead of criticising these developments, the UK government is endorsing Modi's policies and prejudices as we seek lucrative trade deals with the juicy market represented by a population of 1.4 billion. Meanwhile, organisations such as the Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, PEN America, Reporters Without Borders, International Federation of Journalists, International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have publicly condemned developments. In a joint press release on World Press Freedom Day (3 May), they called on India to stop targeting journalists and online critics for their criticism of government policies and practices, saying the Indian authorities should respect the right to freedom of expression and release any journalists detained on trumped-up or politically motivated charges for their critical reporting. However, it seems that economic expediency and political allegiance are more important to the BJP, as India continues to sit on the fence over the Russia-Ukraine war, keeping company with China. There are encouraging developments within Amnesty, as the new IS team for India is working on campaign plans, so we hope to resume activities related to the BK16 prisoners soon and to start work on Kashmir. Amnesty Germany are already making plans for an online petition and I have said we will support them. A particular opportunity is the G7 meeting in Germany at the end of June, to which India has been invited.

And if you happen to be in London on 3 July, here is a message via Cherry from the Coalition for Justice in India. *'On 3 July a number of organisations are standing up for human rights in India with a protest march in London highlighting the Indian government's use of heavy equipment, such as JCBs, to destroy the houses of poor people in India. They especially target people in Kashmir, informal settlements of ethnic groups and Muslim areas across India. These people have nowhere else to go.'*

UKRAINE: Philippa has been busy making blue and yellow ribbons and collecting donations for the Disasters Emergency Committee. So far she has raised an amazing £1,439! Philippa says that a few weeks ago, when she contacted the DEC office, they told her that public giving had reached £350 million.



Other news

The Art of Slavery: An organisation called 'The Sparrows Project' has commissioned a number of national and local artists to create works highlighting the occurrence of unseen modern day slavery. These are displayed in a number of West Somerset venues, including the Regal, Toucan and the Beach Hotel where you can also pick up a leaflet about the art trail.

Member news: We were sad to learn that **Kim Noble** had died on 31 May. Kim was a long-term Amnesty supporter and a generous donor. We were sorry too, to hear of the death of **Maxine Stanley** on 29 April. Maxine and her husband Norman were active members of our group for a number of years.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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