



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Call on the UK Foreign Secretary** to help deliver justice for all victims and survivors of **Russia's** full-scale war of aggression in **Ukraine** which has led to the gravest human rights crisis in Europe since World War II. From the start of the war, AI has been gathering evidence of war crimes. AI is calling on the Foreign Secretary to help deliver justice for Ukraine by bolstering international justice mechanisms to hold perpetrators to account. More information is overleaf. Please sign the petition at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/deliver-justice-ukraine>



- ✓ **Support our fund-raising afternoon concert on Saturday 22 October** at 3 pm in Carhampton Village Hall. **Hazel Prior** will be performing a variety of traditional and popular songs, all accompanied by her own unique harp arrangements. Signed copies of her three published novels will also be available for purchase. Tickets at £7.50 including tea and cake can be bought from Toucan in Minehead or by phoning Cherry on 01984 641052. Please come along to support us and encourage your friends to come too!

- ✓ **Help save the UK's Human Rights Act** by writing to your MP or our new Prime Minister, and by signing the petition (if you haven't done so already) at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/save-our-rights> Whilst plans for the Rights Removal Bill have been put on ice, the Human Rights Act remains under threat. The Act protects all of us and allows us to challenge authorities if they violate our fundamental rights. It's an invisible safety net and it is a crucial defence for the most vulnerable.
- ✓ **Make a date** to support our group's events for the 2022 **Write for Rights** (WfR) Campaign. See the diary dates for more details.

News from our group

We had a productive **planning meeting** on 15 September when Cherry gave us an update on South Asia and we planned our events for the autumn, including the Write for Rights campaign. [See the list of diary dates.]

On 7 October our **Quaker** members invited our Group to join the Quakers' monthly quiet half hour and soup lunch at the Meeting House in Minehead.

Alison reports: 'About 15 people were there, and it was wonderful to be in that peaceful space after the mayhem of traffic jams to get to Minehead. There were three delicious soups to choose from plus various breads and cheeses. Our AI leaflets were out on the table for people to look at and just before lunch Jenny spoke about the WS Refugee Support Group, and I said a few words about AI.'



We were very sorry to hear that **Beth Stafford** had died on 6 September. Beth was an active member of our group for several years and was particularly good at engaging with members of the public with her cheerful smile.

News from AIUK – the new AIUK Strategy (2022-2030)

Alison writes: Cherry and I joined other group members from the south west and southern regions for a very informative online talk by Kerry Moscogiuri, Director of Supporter Campaigns and Communications, at which she outlined key points about the new strategy. The starting point in developing the strategy was to look at what has worked well for Amnesty, where we have struggled and the reasons for this.

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!

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

Saturday 5 Nov
AIUK conference: accessible on line.

Thursday 10 Nov
WfR letter writing 1400-1600 at the Beach Hotel, including a short planning meeting.

2 to 4 December
Christmas Tree Festival at the Avenue Methodist Church (tbc)

Friday 9 December
WfR coffee morning 1000-1200 (tbc)

Sat 24 June 2023
Amnesty Cantata 3pm at St Andrew's Church, Minehead. Confirmed!

Kerry noted that overall, human rights (HR) have decreased in the UK, due to attitudes within Government, and as this is not likely to change in the near future, we must adapt accordingly. She stressed that grassroots activism remains key and the work of local groups is valued by AIUK. There are three goals, all mutually reinforcing and all involving local groups, to:

- increase knowledge about human rights and change attitudes among the public;
- build a powerful movement (get people more active and develop partnerships); and
- win human rights victories and bring sustainable change.

There are three cross-cutting themes: climate justice, digital technology and corporate power. And there are six priority issues, of which freedom of expression is one, linked with the new global Right to Protest Campaign. Another is anti-racism. Individuals (and communities) at Risk remains a priority as does HR Crises (such as Ukraine and Syria). Kerry ended by emphasising how much the work of local groups matters to AIUK and assuring us that she and other staff are on hand to give support when needed.

Campaign News

UKRAINE: [Source: AIUK website] AI welcomes the UK government's efforts to protect civilians in Ukraine and uphold international law, but it is now calling on the UK government to to go further and ensure international justice is central to its support for Ukraine, by:

- increasing its support to the International Criminal Court for all situations before the Court, including the Ukraine situation;
- increasing its support for a domestic investigation in Ukraine, into all international crimes and all parties to the conflict, while ensuring the rights of victims and survivors of war crimes are fully realised; and
- ensuring the UK government's commitment to international justice is long-term and comprehensive, including providing support to the UN Commission of Inquiry for Ukraine, cooperating with other states' national-level investigations into war crimes in Ukraine, and considering the possible establishment of other international justice mechanisms for Ukraine.

I WELCOME REFUGEES [Jenny Gateau reports]

This year has given us a wonderfully sunny set of summer holidays for our Syrian and Kurdish friends, (5 families, 24 individuals), all of whom had a week by (and in!) the sea, thanks to the generosity of local supporters and to the lovely flats in the Baptist Holiday Apartments. Many helpers came to meet them, take them out for a little trip, play cricket on the beach or help with transport. We enjoyed garden teas and suppers at different homes, and shared really special music making in Watchet and an open-top bus ride to Lynmouth. *Jenny says 'I recently received a letter from Medecins Sans Frontieres which quoted 'Being a refugee creates a hole inside that you carry with you. I know how important it is to have someone who sees you as a human being first and foremost.'*



That is the gift that we have been giving without even realising. And it does make a huge difference.'

The Support Group is now thinking about the future. Four holidays have already been booked for next year and deposits paid. Jenny is stepping back from her role and a new organiser is needed. If you can help in any way, please phone Jenny on 01643 708471 to discuss the way ahead.

ISRAEL AND OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES [Source: AIUK website]

Whether they live in Gaza, East Jerusalem, Hebron, or Israel itself, Palestinians are treated as an inferior racial group and systematically deprived of their rights. Israel's cruel policies, such as, forced evictions, home demolitions, and separation of families across all territories under its control amount to **apartheid**.

Recognising this racist system for what it is, is the first step to dismantling it. Amnesty International has a major campaign focusing on this. If you'd like to find out more, go to

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories>

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

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