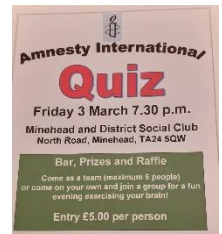




News from the Minehead Group

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



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Support** our **Fundraising Quiz** on 3 March and bring your friends along!
- ✓ **Join us** at our **campaign stall** for **International Women's Day** on 10 March outside the Iceland store. Sign some letters and help us raise awareness of Amnesty in Minehead.
- ✓ **Write letters** to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and to the High Commissioner for **India**, in London, urging that the charges against the 16 activists known as the **Bhima Koregaon 16** be dropped and asking them to immediately and unconditionally release the three who remain in prison. [For more details, see overleaf and also page 35 of the Spring 2023 Amnesty magazine from AIUK.]
- ✓ **And** please make sure you have the date of the **Amnesty Cantata** performance in your diaries (Saturday 24 June at 3 pm.). We'll need help with all kinds of tasks on the day as well as audience members!



News from our group



Write for Rights 2022 (W4R): We held two events for this campaign. The first was a letter writing afternoon on 10 November, when we wrote 21 letters in 75 minutes to 8 different countries. The second was the coffee morning at the Avenue Methodist Church on 9 December when we collected

30 and 40 signatures on cards and letters for three of the campaign cases. Footfall was lower than in previous years but it was an extremely cold day. And as we always say, 'whatever we do is better than doing nothing'!

Christmas Tree Festival: once again we had an Amnesty Tree at the festival which is now back in full swing after the pandemic. We decorated it with pictures taken from the W4R campaign booklet and left plenty of leaflets beneath the tree for people to pick up.

AGM: we held our group's AGM on 9 February, and nine members came along so we were well quorate! We started the afternoon with a very interesting talk by Cherry on human rights in **Sri Lanka**. This was followed by the formal meeting when Alison gave her chair's report and Cherry presented the accounts. Despite being a small group we still managed to achieve a lot over the year, as you will see from chair's report which is being sent out with this newsletter. The current officers and role-holders were re-elected.



Ron Bridle: we were very sad to hear of the death of Ron Bridle in early February. Ron was a very active and supportive member in our group's earlier days. Chris Lawson said: *'I have good memories of his strong presence in Minehead Amnesty group meetings and taking on the role of political lobbyist. Though he stopped coming to meetings he was one of those who helped the group to get going and develop its role in the area.'* We were all glad to have known Ron, and we send Harriet and their family our best wishes.

Diary Dates

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

Friday 3 March

Fund-raising quiz
1930 start at the Minehead & District Social Club, TA24 5QW. Tickets: £5.

Friday 10 March

Street Stall to mark International Women's Day 1000 to 1200 outside Iceland store on The Avenue.

Saturday 25 March

At South West Regional Conference 1000-1600 Mint Street Methodist Church in Exeter

Wednesday 12 April

Letter writing session 1430-1600 at the Beach Hotel.

Saturday 24 June

Amnesty Cantata 3pm at St Andrew's Church, Minehead. Conducted by Emily Feldberg, the composer, performed by a choir and small orchestra. Followed by tea & cake. Tickets: £7.50.



Campaign News

COUNTRY COORDINATORS' CONFERENCE *Cherry reports:* I attended this event at AIUK in London, which was an interesting and inspiring event. We were treated to no less than four human rights defender speakers, from **Bahrain, Philippines, Kenya and Afghanistan**. In particular, Mohammed, from Afghanistan, took 18 months to escape and is now based in Germany – he was extremely critical of the global powers for allowing the Taliban the space to behave as they have. Meggie from the Philippines talked of the work in which she is involved in providing effective and fun education for marginalised ethnic groups in their own language. This was considered subversive and anti-state!

The icing on the cake was a magnificent video-link presentation by **Agnes Callamard**, (see right) Secretary General of Amnesty. She had just returned from an exhausting few days at Davos and then rushed off to catch a train, yet her energy and clarity were undiminished. She particularly focused on **climate justice**, which she feels is one of the biggest threats to human rights at present and has been telling key people at Davos and the UN that using 'rights language' around this is important. She listed countries where worsening human rights are a serious issue, one of which is **India**, of which she is very critical. She believes power structures are going to change significantly, as evidenced by the violent changes happening now and the polarisation of world powers, so Amnesty needs to decide where our niche lies in order to be effective in bringing positive change. She feels our natural partners, who are speaking the same language, include Oxfam, Greenpeace and Global Witness.



INDIA: Action for the **BK 16** – as listed under the actions overleaf, please write to (1) Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Prime Minister's Office, South block, Raisina Hill, New Delhi 11011, India (salutation: Prime Minister) and (2) His Excellency Mr Vikram Kumar Doraiswami, Office of the High Commissioner for India, India House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA (salutation: Your Excellency). If you haven't seen it already you might like to search on i-Player for a recent BBC documentary (in two one-hour parts) on '**India: The Modi Question**'. Members say it is very powerful (and shocking).

REFUGEES: *Jenny gave this update at our group's AGM.* Currently, there are 17 Syrian/Kurdish/Afghan families in Taunton, Wellington and Bridgwater with whom the Refugee Support Group is in contact. During 2022, at Easter and then Christmas, volunteers wrote cards to all the families enclosing a £10 note as a gift. Five families came for a week's holiday in the summer involving 19 adults and children in all. A total of 21 volunteers helped in various ways. The Refugee Support Group held a celebratory lunch in the autumn to review the summer events and to plan for the future. In December, the group was called upon at very short notice to help a young Sudanese asylum seeker who had just received his 'Leave to Remain' and had been re-housed temporarily in Minehead. Five volunteers came forward to help. The Group is currently supporting those whose family members are caught up in the Turkish/Syrian earthquake, such as a Kurdish family whose grandparents in Turkey are safe but living on the street with nowhere to go. Plans for 2023 include four seaside holidays, with Jenny doing the over-all organising but different people leading in the individual weeks. Contact Jenny if you can help at all! 01643 708471.

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: 2022 was another challenging year for Palestinians, with Israeli forces continuing to kill Palestinian civilians with complete impunity. Israeli authorities enacted numerous measures that entrenched apartheid. They escalated their crackdown on Palestinian civil society and subjected the Gaza Strip to another devastating offensive. The new government of Prime Minister Netanyahu is already planning to massively expand illegal settlements, putting countless more Palestinians at risk of forced displacement.

AIUK is hosting a webinar entitled 'Breaking the Silence: Israeli veterans expose the reality of life in the Occupied Territories' at 6pm on Tuesday 14 March 2023. If you'd like to sign up for this webinar, please email Susan and she will send you the email with the links.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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Email: amnestyminehead@gmail.com

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

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