



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join us** at our **letter writing** session on Wednesday 12 April 1430-1600 at the Beach Hotel. We will write letters about the cases detailed in AIUK's Spring **Real Lives** supplement.
- ✓ **Write a letter** to our MP asking him to pass on your concerns to the Prime Minister about the UK government's latest **Immigration Bill** which is a heartless and cruel attack on people needing safety. See overleaf for further information or go to the home page of www.amnesty.org.uk
- ✓ Make sure you have the date of the **Amnesty Cantata** performance in your diaries (Saturday 24 June at 3 pm.) and start telling your friends. We'll need help with all kinds of tasks on the day as well as audience members!

News from our group

Our **Quiz** on 3 March was a very enjoyable evening which raised £277 for Amnesty. Many thanks to Jean Humber for providing the interesting and entertaining questions, to Cherry and John for being up on the



stage, asking the questions and marking the answers, to those who donated raffle prizes and to everyone else who supported it. Attendance is still not back to pre-Covid levels but those who came all enjoyed themselves. Here is a picture of the winning team receiving their prizes from Cherry.



Unfortunately we decided to cancel our street stall for **International Women's Day** as the weather forecast was dire. We think we will try something different next year, which is not weather dependent!



Three of us attended the South West **Regional Conference** in Exeter on 25 March. It was an interesting and well organised day, and included a lunchtime action on the cathedral green. Here is a photo of the three of us holding banners for the 'Protect the Protesters' campaign and also one of the whole group. The day started with a video message from Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International. Tom Davies, Priority Campaigns Manager at AIUK, spoke about the '**Protect the Protesters**' campaign which

concerns the UK government's clampdown on protests – first, the Policing Act in 2022 and now the Public Order Bill. This AIUK campaign is part of a global AI one about freedom of expression which will run until 2030. Abigail, a journalist from Nicaragua, spoke about how the lack of freedom of the press and expression is a challenge in Central America. Human rights defenders and journalists are being targeted around the world, and everyone should be able to protest safely and without discrimination.



Diary Dates

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

Wednesday 12 April

Letter writing session
1430-1600 at the Beach Hotel.

Tuesday 9 May

Planning meeting 1430-1600 at the Beach Hotel. To make final arrangements for the concert. Plus campaign updates.

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

IMMIGRATION BILL: Amnesty believes that the **UK Government's Immigration Bill** will not only undermine all our rights but also cause unspeakable damage to those seeking safety from persecution or exploitation. AIUK is working with other organisations to demand that the Government ends its callous treatment of people in need and puts a stop to its campaign of hate. The Bill is progressing rapidly through Parliament with little time for scrutiny or debate. Over 12,000 Amnesty supporters wrote to their MPs ahead of the second reading. This Bill breaks the UK's obligations under international law such as the Refugee Convention 1951 and the European Convention on Human Rights. People caught by this Bill will be excluded from the UK's modern slavery protections and even its basic human rights law, and instead will face detention and subsequent removal or permanent limbo in the UK. This Bill is inhumane and seeks to stir-up further hatred against certain groups, including some of the most vulnerable who seek safety in the UK. This division has been worsened by some of the harmful rhetoric and inflammatory language used in the press and by parliamentarians – including from the Home Secretary.

INDIA: *Cherry writes:* Indian PM Narendra Modi continues to hit international headlines for all the wrong reasons. His increasingly hard-line, right-wing 'Hindutva' policies are particularly targeting Kashmir, though not confined to that region. Here are a few of the key issues recently in the news.

- **Bulldozer politics:** As shown in the photo, the houses and businesses of Kashmiris are being destroyed without warning or valid reason, using JCB equipment (parallels with Israel-Palestine).
- **Adani mining poised for Kashmir:** Profits will go to this massive Indian company (Gautam Adani is close to Modi), not Kashmiris, but they will be left with the environmental damage and displacement.
- **Arrest of another Kashmiri journalist:** Irfan Mehraj was arrested for his links with the same organisation as Khurram Parvez – the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), which has repeatedly criticized the human rights abuses committed by Indian security forces in Kashmir.



And the US government has just released a report heavily criticising the Indian government for human rights abuses including the targeting of religious minorities, dissenters, and journalists. **Yet** the UK Foreign Secretary has just visited India to forge stronger economic and tech ties. **And** Adani has established a connection with the London Science Museum through an offshoot called 'Adani Green' (!) which purports to promote sustainable fossil fuel extraction and use. A campaign by 'Fossil free science museum' is opposing this. Read about it at www.fossilfreesciencemuseum.com

IRAN: On 22 February we heard the good news that Iranian women's rights defenders, Yasaman Aryani and Monireh Arabshai, had been released the previous week after four years in prison. Yasaman, Monireh and Mojgan were jailed for peacefully campaigning against Iran's discriminatory and abusive forced veiling laws. Mojgan was conditionally released early last year. During protests in response to the death of Mahsa (Zhin) Amini in September last year, Iran's authorities have used violence, killing hundreds, with impunity and are now actively using the death penalty as a tool of political repression. There is a petition to sign at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/woman-life-freedom>

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: 15 May 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the Nakba – or catastrophe – when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forcibly displaced and ethnically cleansed at the time of Israel's creation. Forcible evictions and illegal killings remain a daily part of life for many Palestinians. At the beginning of March, Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich called for the Palestinian village of Huwara to be 'wiped out.' Just days before, Israeli settlers stormed Huwara, torched buildings and cars and attacked Palestinian civilians, leaving one dead and 350 injured. We need to continue raising awareness of apartheid in Israel.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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