



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join us** at our **vigil for the BK16** on Thursday 7 September at 1230 at St Peter's Chapel on the Quay in Minehead. And help us **make the lanterns** on Wednesday 6 September at 1430 at the Beach Hotel. More information below, under campaign news.
- ✓ **Write letters** in support of **Umar Khalid**, jailed in September 2020 and repeatedly denied bail, just because he joined and spoke at peaceful protests against the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019. See **India** report below for further information and letter addresses.
- ✓ **Join** AIUK's campaign to **protect the right to protest**. All around the world, the right to protest is being reduced, alongside the rise of authoritarianism. In the UK, the Police Act restricted our right to protest and now the Public Order Act is reducing our rights still further. Follow this link for more information and to sign up <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/help-protect-the-protest>



News from our group

A group of us met at the Beach Hotel on 19 July and wrote letters about cases in Nigeria, China, Israel, Thailand, Eritrea and Zimbabwe. Since then, some members have written more letters at home. Many thanks to Peter for providing the stamps again. We also discussed what we would like to do in the autumn. And we have come up with a full programme as you will see overleaf under 'Diary Dates'.

Campaign News

INDIA: [Cherry Bird] Our lantern-lit vigil for **the BK16** is timed to mark India's hosting of the G20 summit meeting from Friday 8 September, and the fifth anniversary in August of the first nine arrests of this group of human rights defenders. We will be joining other activists across Europe and USA who are planning vigils at significant locations in their neighbourhoods, with photos posted on social media platforms. Please join us on Thursday 7 September at 1230 in St Peter's Chapel by Minehead quay. And if you can, come along and make paper lanterns the day before, on Wednesday 6 September at the Beach Hotel at 1430. As you can see from the photo above, the lanterns are simple to make from an A4 thin card or thick paper, lit with a battery-operated tea-lights and with holes punched through the card to let the light through. Cherry will bring the necessary materials and more detailed instructions!



Action for Umar Khalid, in prison without trial for three years for peaceful protest

Umar Khalid is a Muslim human rights defender and scholar who has faced many years of repression by Indian authorities due to his activism. He was active in the protests against the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December 2019. [The CAA legitimised discrimination on the basis of religion, is in violation of the Indian constitution and sparked widespread criticism.] As a result, Umar was arrested on 13 September 2020, accused of inciting communal violence through speeches. Since then, Umar has remained in prison without trial and his bail applications have been repeatedly rejected by the courts. [Read more here](#)



You can write a solidarity letter to Umar in prison: *Dr Syed Umar Khalid, ID Number 626714, Jail No. 2, Tihar Central Jail, New Delhi – 110058.*

Also write to the Home Minister demanding Umar's immediate and unconditional release. Address: *Union Home Minister of India, Mr Amit Shah, Ministry of Home Affairs, North Block, New Delhi – 110001, India.*

Salutation: Dear Union Home Minister. Email address: iscpg-mha@nic.in

More on India: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was feted by the Biden administration during his recent state visit to the US, which was clearly intended to bolster relations



between the two countries for trade and global politics. But there was no mention of the long list of civil society activists languishing in India's prisons, including the BK16. At a press briefing, Modi was asked by a White House reporter about measures his government intends to undertake to better

the rights of Muslims and other minority groups, and to uphold the principles of free speech. Since he usually avoids press briefings, Modi was rather thrown off balance and could only answer with vague statements about democracy. Afterwards the reporter was the target of a torrent of abuse on social media, which can only have been orchestrated from the side of his government. So much for free speech!

To add insult, during the visit, Modi led an estimated 2,000 people in a yoga session from the UN lawns. He continues to promote yoga as 'India's gift to the world' promoting health, wellness and peace!

KASHMIR: come to our meeting on 5 October and hear from Cherry about the latest situation there.

SYRIA: here is news from AIUK of a positive development. 'For more than a decade, families of the missing and forcibly disappeared in Syria have faced immense challenges in obtaining any information about the fate of their loved ones. In June, The UN General Assembly voted to establish a new body that will work to reveal the fate of over 100,000 people missing or forcibly disappeared in Syria. A crucial advancement that wouldn't have been possible without the tireless campaigning of Syrian human rights activists and organisations. We at Amnesty International UK are proud to have supported some of these organisations on this important initiative and will continue our engagement with them.'

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (OPTS).

One of the actions in our last newsletter was for us to write to our MP, asking for Israeli settlement goods to be banned from entering UK markets. I expect we've all had the same reply! Here are some of his key points:

- The UK's position is for a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.
- The UK repeatedly calls on Israel – both bilaterally and via the UN – to abide by its obligations under international law and is in close dialogue with Israel regarding various issues relating to the occupation.
- Israel & the OPTs are a human rights priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and raise concerns with relevant authorities.
- HM Government continues to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. Where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, HMG advocates for swift, transparent investigations.
- Re 'settlement goods', the UK does not recognise Israeli settlements in the OPT as part of Israel. Goods from settlements are not covered by the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement. It is ultimately a decision for individuals/companies whether to operate in the settlements in the OPTs and the UK Government neither encourages nor offers support to those who operate in settlements in the OPTs.

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 6 Sept

Group meeting 1430-1600 at the Beach Hotel. Making lanterns for the vigil and sharing information/updates.

Thursday 7 Sept

Vigil for the BK16 at 1230 St Peter's Chapel, Minehead Quay.

Thursday 5 Oct

Talk on Kashmir at 1800 Quaker Meeting House, Bancks St, Minehead

Wednesday 1 Nov

1430-1600: launch of Write for Rights (WfR) 2023 with letter writing at the Beach Hotel.

Saturday 4 Nov

AIUK conference in London.

1-3 December

Minehead Christmas Tree Festival. Set up date/time tbc.

Friday 1 December

Quaker quiet half hour at 1230, followed by soup lunch at 1300 and then WfR card/letter signing. Amnesty members are welcome to join the Quakers for any part of this event.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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