



# News from the Minehead Group



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## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join us** on **Tuesday 9 April** between 1400 and 1530 in the Beach Hotel to **write more letters** about brave human rights defenders who have been unjustly imprisoned, tortured and suffered ill-treatment. Case details and writing materials will be provided, but please buy a cup of tea or coffee, as the hotel allows us to use a corner of their bar area for free. All welcome!
- ✓ **Call on the Home Secretary** to scrap the anti-protest measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023. Add your name to the on-line petition at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/scrap-new-anti-protest-laws>
- ✓ **Book a place** at the **South West Regional Conference** in Exeter on Saturday 20 April. Lots of interesting speakers and smaller group sessions, as well as the usual action on Cathedral Green. Come and be inspired to take action.

## News from our group

On 8 March, **International Women's Day**, we took the soft option and arranged some letter signing inside at the Beach Hotel – rather than risking rain and wind and having to cancel an outdoor stall at the last minute. Signing letters, drinking coffee and chatting made for a much more relaxed and enjoyable morning! Here is a photo of some of our supporters who came along.



We signed letters in support of women in prison in **Afghanistan** and **Iran**, two of the worst places in the world to be a woman. Our display encouraged everyone to support our sisters across the world and celebrate the courage and creativity they show in the face of enormous persecution. Our featured women were: **Manizha Seddiqi**, a member of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women who was



forcibly disappeared on 9 October 2023 and later found in Taliban custody. Imprisoned on 5 December 2023, she has now been handed a two-year sentence. She does not have access to lawyers or regular family visits and is at risk of torture and other ill treatment. And ... **Narges Mohammadi** has been an



activist for Iranian women's rights for decades, for which she was awarded the Nobel Peace prize last October.

She consistently refuses to wear the hijab and has been sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in Tehran. Having already served many years, her health has been severely affected, but she has been refused access to medical treatment. *If you missed the event on 8 March, you can still send a letter – they'll be attached to the emailed version of this newsletter.*

**Fundraising news:** our Group's Treasurer, Cherry, recently sent off our annual **Financial Return** to AIUK. We were pleased to receive the following response from Richard Glynn, Community Groups Fundraiser: *'It's great to see the (Minehead) group's finances are in such good shape and that you were able to make a generous contribution to the Amnesty International UK Section last year. We appreciate your support!'* So a big thank you to everyone who helped with our fund-raising in 2023.

## Diary Dates

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

### Tuesday 9 April

Letter writing session using AIUK's latest 'Real Lives' supplement; 1400-1530 at the Beach Hotel, Minehead.

### Saturday 20 April

SW Regional Conference at the Mint Methodist Centre in Exeter. 0945 to 1550. Further information: [exeteramnestygroup@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:exeteramnestygroup@hotmail.co.uk)

### Friday 21 to Sunday 23 June

AIUK AGM & conference. Further details on the AIUK website.

### Saturday 27 July

Amnesty Stall at Roadwater Fete.

### Saturday 14 Sept

Fund-raising afternoon concert. Details tbc.

## Campaign News

**INDIA** *Cherry writes:* there is actually some **good news** from India, with the release of **Professor GN Saibaba**, a disabled academic who has been in prison for some years, linked to the BK16 prisoners and false accusations of links with the Maoist movement. His health has deteriorated significantly and his release has been the subject of major celebrations. Signs of a charm offensive ahead of the national elections in India?

**PROTECT THE PROTEST:** In July 2022, Amnesty International launched Protect the Protest, a **new global campaign** confronting the unprecedented and growing threat to the right to peaceful assembly across all regions of the world. Amnesty's goal is to enable all people to take peaceful action and exercise their right to protest safely and without repercussions. It will do so by challenging attacks on peaceful protest, acting in solidarity with those targeted and supporting social movements pushing for human rights change.

Since 2022, the **UK government** has passed two different anti-protest laws to clamp down on everyone's ability to peacefully protest in England and Wales. At the same time, they have demonised and scapegoated protesters. Amnesty believes that the anti-protest restrictions in the **Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022** and the **Public Order Act 2023** must be scrapped. No matter where we come from or who we vote for, we all want those in power to listen to our concerns on issues we care deeply about. The UK has a long and important history of street protest, such as anti-apartheid protests and marches for climate action. Yet the UK Government continues to attack freedom of expression and our right to protest. It is trying to restrict challenges to its actions, stopping us from holding the Government to account.

**Across the world**, authorities are increasingly resorting to unlawful use of force and repressive legislation to crush protests. Governments are treating protests as a threat rather than a right, and law enforcement officials are viewing their role as being to suppress and subdue protesters rather than to facilitate their rights. As a result, thousands of people are being unlawfully dispersed, arrested, beaten and even killed during demonstrations. They also face devastating consequences afterwards, just for participating in protests.

**Torture free trade:** In many parts of the world, communities are faced with torture if they speak up and police forces are increasingly misusing equipment to violently repress protesters. Some of these weapons are produced and sold by UK-based companies. This is why Amnesty is campaigning for **Torture Free Trade**. At the United Nations level, Amnesty is asking for a treaty to bring the trade in torture equipment under control. In the UK, Amnesty wants the Government to strengthen its own export controls system.

### THE UK's RWANDA BILL:

Before Parliament's Easter break, the House of Lords sent the Bill back to the House of Commons, insisting that amendments respect both domestic and international law. This delay further demonstrates the concerns raised by thousands of us, as well as by Lords and MPs, that the rights of people seeking safety and respect for the rule of law must not be compromised. This Bill threatens to strip basic human rights from people seeking safety. **Amnesty believes it is immoral, dehumanising and callous.** At its heart is the UK Government's policy of refusing to process asylum cases, which has resulted in thousands of people being stuck in limbo with devastating consequences. Rather than put an end to this policy disaster, the Rwanda Bill increases the harms being done by tearing up the ability of courts to decide on the facts or rule that clear breaches of human rights are unlawful. These are the most basic aspects of human rights protection and Amnesty considers it to be a deeply alarming development for the UK. If you want to follow this campaign, AIUK advises us to check for updates on its social media.



### **How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:**

**Website:** [www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead)

**Email:** [amnestyminehead@gmail.com](mailto:amnestyminehead@gmail.com)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead)

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