



Amnesty International UK

April 2025

News from the Minehead Group



www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

Instagram: @amnestyminehead

Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Mark International Roma Day** by joining the Taunton Group on Tuesday **8 April** when they are hosting Ulrike Schmidt, AIUK Country Coordinator for the Balkans, who will give a presentation on the plight of the Roma people in Europe. Ulrike has led the Amnesty Roma Rights campaign for more than ten years. [See 'Diary Dates' for more details.]
- ✓ **Join us** on Monday **14 April** from 1400 to 1530 at the Beach Hotel, Minehead to write letters on behalf of **Afghan women**. We will provide writing materials and guidance on what to write. All welcome.
- ✓ **Sign AI's petition** demanding that the international community apply pressure on the Taliban to protect women's rights and end corporal punishment in **Afghanistan**. Women in Afghanistan remain trapped in a cycle of violence and repression. Join the global call for justice by signing the petition at: [Break the Silence: End Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan](#).

News from our group

Good news! After a very interesting talk from Cherry on **Pakistan**, we held a positive **AGM** on 13 February, and agreed to keep the group going for another year. Alison has sadly had to resign as Chair, so Cherry and Susan agreed to become joint conveners. We marked **International Women's Day** by meeting at the Beach Hotel and signing letters and cards concerning two human rights cases. One was for Mariya Kalesnikava, a politician in **Belarus**, who is serving an 11-year prison sentence for peacefully protesting against human rights violations during the 2020 presidential election. The other case was of Manahel al-Otaibi, who is serving



an 11-year sentence in **Saudi Arabia**, and has been subjected to a secret trial, solitary confinement and torture for her social media posts advocating for women's human rights. On the same day, we took the information display to the Quakers' monthly quiet half hour and lunch, where more signatures were added.



South West Region

On 22 March, Susan and Cherry attended Amnesty's **SW Regional Conference** in Exeter. The theme this year was 'Think Globally Act Locally'. Speakers told us about human rights issues in different countries, and included a human rights defender from **Somalia**, **Abdalle Munin**, who has himself been a victim of human rights violations in his country, where journalists are persecuted for just doing their job. We also heard about the recently created **UN network** and its current campaign 'Stop mass atrocities. Stop abuse of UN Security Council veto'.



At the final session, we discussed the setting up of a **SW Network** to harness the support of both individual national members and active local groups.

Here are photos of the action on Cathedral Green for Afghan women and in support of a ceasefire in Ukraine and Gaza.



Diary Dates

We aim to meet or take action approximately once a month. All are welcome to join us.

Tuesday 8 April

International Roma Day
Taunton AI Group are hosting a talk at the Taunton QMH, Bath Place, TA1 4EP at 1930. All welcome.

Monday 14 April

Letter writing at the Beach Hotel, Minehead from 1400-1530.

16-20 June

Refugee Week
Event/actions tba

5-6 July

AIUK AGM & Conference at the University of Warwick. Details on AIUK website.

Sat 26 July

Stall at Roadwater Fete
Afternoon - tbc

Sat 16 August

AmnesTea in Susan's garden in Carhampton 1500 to 1700.

Supporting Refugees

At our AGM in February, Jenny Gateau gave an update on the work of the Minehead and District Refugee Support Group. *'During 2024 we managed to give six families a week's holiday in the Baptist Holiday flats. The families were well supported with kind generosity from our friends. As these flats are now up for sale, we hope instead to arrange 'A Day by the Sea' this coming year. At Christmas we sent all 28 families that we know a card and small gift, and we hope to do the same at Easter. Two of us have been going to Bridgwater on a Monday to 'Coffee and Conversation' to help with language skills, organised by Taunton Welcomes. We have collected and delivered a set of luggage for when asylum seekers get their leave to remain, and have to move at short notice from asylum lodging. We have made a donation from very kind members of our Group and from Quakers who have chosen RAFT (Refugee Aid from Taunton) as one of their yearly charities. We thank Amnesty for their support and encouragement.'*

This year, AIUK has been offering grants for **Refugee Week** activities which would make a difference to local refugees and to the perceived view of the general public of the area. Jenny applied, and after an initial 'no', then received an offer of £500. This will be used to help pay for the 'Day by the Sea' during the summer.

Jenny adds *'Given that we have just worked very hard to fund school uniforms for seven secondary children (costing £100 per child), and are just about to send Easter greetings of peace to 26 families, each enclosing £10, this is good news indeed. I'll send more details later when we have a date in mind, probably a weekday towards the end of July, when we will welcome you to join us in the welcome!'*

Campaign News

Afghanistan Cherry writes: Pakistan is still sending Afghan asylum seekers back to Afghanistan, to face the likelihood of extreme danger. Of particular concern is Zahra Mousavi, a human rights activist and member of the Afghan Women's Justice Movement, who has been detained in Islamabad. If deported, she would be at grave risk under the Taliban regime. Amnesty is calling on the international community to act urgently to stop these deportations and provide protection for vulnerable Afghan refugees. You can also read Nigina's blog [here](#). Nigina is AIUK's Country Coordinator for Afghanistan.



Kashmir: As an example of the ridiculous constraints imposed by the Indian Government on freedom of speech in Kashmir, recently a group of local journalists were arbitrarily detained for reporting the felling of Chinar trees. These are considered to be heritage trees in Kashmir and many are hundreds of years old. The journalists were calling out people who were 'guilty of environmental vandalism'. But rather than pursuing the perpetrators, the authorities punished the journalists for doing their job in reporting the crime!

Bangladesh: A survey carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) showed a number of appalling facts about the lives of women in Bangladesh. For example, 70% of women in Bangladesh have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence at least once in their lifetime; 49% of women experienced such violence in 2024; 64% of women who have experienced violence have never told anyone about it. The main reasons for not reporting violence include protecting family reputation, concerns about children's future, and considering such violence as 'normal'. A report by UNICEF, Plan International, and UN Women also noted that over 50% of girls in Bangladesh marry before they are 18 and 24% give birth before that age. Only 59% of girls complete secondary education.

Country specific campaigning

Do you have a particular interest in campaigning on Human Rights issues in a specific country? If so, you could sign up to an AIUK Country Coordinators' mailing list. You can find the list of CCs by following this link: <https://email.amnestyuk.org.uk/c/12ukeM83UPze63DfDUEKF8fyviU>

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead
Email: amnestyminehead@gmail.com

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

Group contact & Joint Convener: Susan Mew 01643 821209 Email: brightmanmew@btinternet.com

Treasurer & Joint Convener: Cherry Bird Tel. 01984 641052 Email: cherrybird@gmail.com