



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join the webinar** organised by the SW Regional Network on 4 December when **Alena Chekhovich** will talk about the human rights situation in **Belarus**. See below for details of how to join.
- ✓ **Take part** in the **2025 Write for Rights Campaign**. Our second event is on Friday 5 December. (See 'diary dates' for details.) But if you couldn't get to our two events, you can look for ideas on the AIUK website of how to get involved. Here's the link <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2025-get-started> Or contact Susan if you'd like a printed booklet of the cases. See below for important updates on the cases.
- ✓ **Take action** on 10 December, International Human Rights Day, by sending solidarity letters or cards to the four BK16 activists still in jail (see overleaf).

Southwest England Regional Network webinar



At 1930 on Thursday 4 December **Alena Chekhovich**, a human rights defender from **Belarus**, will talk about the dreadful situation in her home country and take questions from activists. In Belarus, peaceful dissent is criminalized as 'extremism'. Independent media and civil society have been severely curtailed. Torture and other ill-treatment are

endemic and carried out with impunity. Hundreds of NGOs have been forced to close, and many people have fled abroad.

Alena is a lawyer and legal analyst at Belarusian human rights organisation Human Constanta and international relations manager at the initiative LegalHub.

She works on behalf of vulnerable communities, in particular, refugees and stateless people, in Belarus. Her focus is on discrimination, arbitrary detention and exile of foreigners, detention conditions, access to justice and the rule of law, torture and other inhumane treatments, and on strategies to reduce statelessness and raise awareness of the right to international protection. Alena has, through her human rights work, become subject to intimidation and targeted harassment in Belarus. She had to leave Belarus in December 2022 and now works in exile.

The webinar is open to all Amnesty and other human rights activists. To register for this free event please click on this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/bNMU92y0RvutOJKytfSbpw>

To find out more about the new SW Network please email

aswenetwork21@gmail.com

Write for Rights 2025 – campaign update

If you have already started writing letters, please note the following two changes:

Makhabat Tazhibek Kyzy: this case has been withdrawn, owing to the changing and uncertain political situation in **Kyrgyzstan** and fast-deteriorating operating and security environment. After a thorough risk assessment on behalf of colleagues and partners in Kyrgyzstan, Amnesty has decided that all action must stop.

Sonia Dahmani (Tunisia) was released conditionally on 27 November. However, we still need to press the authorities to quash her conviction and drop all charges against her.



Diary Dates

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

Thurs 4 December

at 1930. SW England Regional Network event: Webinar with speaker Alena Chekhovitch of Belarus.

Fri 5 December

at 1330 card/letter signing for Write for Rights. Following the Quakers' monthly quiet half hour and soup lunch. All welcome.

Tues 24 February

at 1400: Minehead Group's AGM at the Minehead QMH.

Tues 10 March

1400 to 1530 at the Beach Hotel. Letter writing for International Women's Day.

Sat 21 March 2026

SW Regional AI conference in Exeter.

News from our group

Letter writing for Write for Rights: five of us spent a happy hour or so writing letters for this campaign on 11 November while enjoying tea or



or coffee at the Beach Hotel. We wrote 22 letters and since then, Jenny and Pat have written five more. Once again Peter helped us by providing the stamps. Well done everyone! After the letter writing, Cherry updated us on human rights issues in South Asia and news from AIUK. And Jenny told us about a Peace Run (or walk!) in Sweden which she'd taken part in and had a medal to prove it. This 'fredloppet' had raised over half a million Kroner for medical aid to Gaza.



Fund-raising: Susan celebrated a significant birthday in November by holding a big party for family and friends. Instead of presents, she invited donations to Amnesty. An amazing £376 was raised. This was included in a total of £1,000 sent from our group to AIUK at the end of November.

West Somerset Refugee Support Group: [Jenny Gateau writes] Currently we are encouraging donations of warm clothes for RAFT, opening times Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 1000-1400. The faithful band of volunteers there are still dispatching much needed packs to many refugee destinations including Ukraine. Their address is: Unit 4, Enterprise Park, Priorswood, Taunton TA2 8FR.

We will shortly be sending each of the 24 families currently on our books, the usual cards for Christmas containing a small gift. We know the families all appreciate the friendship they have always valued here.

South Asia Campaign News: [Cherry writes] **BK16:** Some good news – **Jyoti Jagtap**, the only remaining female member of the BK16 and the youngest, has been released on interim bail (centre of picture in the patterned top) having been held for 5 ½ years. The bail is only 'interim' until the next court hearing, so there is no guarantee she will remain out of jail, as the charges have not been dropped. **Mahesh Raut** is also on interim bail for medical treatment. This leaves four individuals still in jail; however, even those out on bail still have the charges against them and none has received anything amounting to a fair and legal trial. **Please send a personal solidarity message**, and do not mention Amnesty, to **Hany Babu, Surendra Gadling, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe** at Taloja Central Prison, Kharjar, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra 410210.



Kashmir: Following the bomb attack at the Red Fort in Delhi on 10 November, there has been further harassment of people in Kashmir. The house of one man was destroyed by bulldozers as he was accused (without evidence) of being behind the bombing. Amnesty International said, 'The demolition of Dr Umar Nabi's family home in response to the attack is a serious violation of the fundamental rights of all those who live there amounting to collective punishment.' There are reports that many other houses have also been destroyed. In a further move to target free speech, the Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency (SIA) raided the *Kashmir Times*' editorial offices in Jammu, seizing professional equipment. Yet the office has been closed for four years after earlier harassment. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemned this unacceptable attack on one of the region's few independent media outlets and called for the false charges against the newspaper and its editor-in-chief Anuradha Bhasin (who now lives abroad for his own safety) to be dropped.



Finally, we send Season's Greetings to all our Amnesty friends and supporters and wish you a happy and peaceful time. And don't forget to check out the AIUK shop if you're looking for cards or gifts! Go to <https://www.amnestyshop.org.uk/>

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

Email: amnestyminehead@gmail.com

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

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