



News from the Minehead Group

www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead



Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join the webinar on Thursday 29 January** at 1930, organised by the SW Regional Network. Learn about the experience of an **Afghan refugee** living in Germany. See below for details of how to join.
- ✓ **Come along** to our **AGM** on Wednesday 25 February at 1430 at the Quaker Meeting House, Minehead. Before the AGM business, Cherry Bird will give a talk entitled 'Excluded: The Realities of Life for Minorities across **South Asia**'. The meeting will be followed by tea & cake, and the chance to chat!
- ✓ **Send a solidarity message** in a card or letter to the three **BK16** who are still in prison, Surendra Gadling, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe. Write to them at Taloja Central Prison, Kharjar, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra 410210, India.
- ✓ **Write** a solidarity letter or card to **Umar Khalid**, ID Number 626714, Jail No. 2, Tihar Central Jail, New Delhi 110058, India. **Umar** is a Muslim student activist who has been jailed without trial since 2020. See overleaf for more information about this case.

News from our Group:

Our second event for the **Write for Rights** campaign took place on 5 December



when we joined friends at the Quaker Meeting House to sign cards and letters for three of the cases featured in the campaign. This was in addition to the 28 letters that our members had already written to nine different countries. The photo shows Cherry introducing the campaign and the cases we had chosen to highlight. Many thanks to everyone who helped with this campaign.

Southwest England Regional Network

Membership of our regional network is increasing and the core organising group is planning a series of webinars with different speakers. To join the network, contact aswenetwork21@gmail.com for more information and to receive the newsletter.

The next event is a webinar on **Thursday 29 January**, when **Faissal Sharif**, Amnesty UK Country Coordinator for **Afghanistan**, will speak about the challenges of his lived experience growing up as an Afghan refugee in Germany. This should be of interest to anyone involved in working with or supporting/ campaigning for **refugees** and **asylum seekers**, as well as anyone with a specific interest in Afghanistan. This talk, with Q&A, will take place via Zoom at 7.30 pm, so please use this link to sign up in advance:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/KdUHDR16QgKbTxBrlaSzeA>

You should then receive confirmation and a link to join on the night. Please contact Cherry if you have any problems with this.

Diary Dates

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

Thurs 29 January
at 1930. [SW England Regional Network](#)
event: [Webinar](#) when the AIUK country coordinator for Afghanistan will speak.

Wed 25 February at 1430: Minehead Group's AGM at the Minehead QMH, with a talk on minorities in South Asia.

Tues 10 March
1400 to 1530 at the Beach Hotel. Letter writing for International Women's Day.

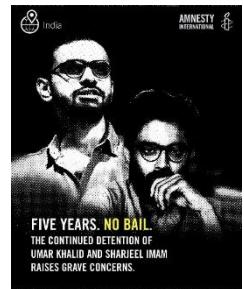
Sat 21 March
SW Regional AI conference at the Mint Methodist centre, Exeter. A chance to meet other Amnesty members from across the South West and take part in a packed agenda of talks. Contact Exeteramnesty@gmail.com to register.



South Asia Campaign News – update on India: [Cherry writes]

Only three of the **BK16** are left in prison, **Surendra Gadling, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe**. You can continue writing solidarity letters and cards to them at Taloja Central Prison, Kharjar, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra 410210, India. [See Actions overleaf.]

Separately, **Umar Khalid** a Muslim student activist who is also an Amnesty 'Individual at Risk' case, has been jailed without trial since 2020 under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (like the BK16). He spoke at protests against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, which links citizenship to religion by excluding Muslims from a path to Indian citizenship, which is available to non-Muslim refugees. Umar has again been refused bail and banned from applying for another year. Please write a solidarity letter or card to Umar. [Address overleaf under Actions.]



Interestingly, recent data revealed by the Ministry of Home Affairs in India shows the conviction rate of those arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act is only 3.2%. This indicates that there was no clear evidence to support most of these arrests, despite the fact that they are often detained for years, as Umar Khalid and the BK16 have been, among many others.

Further evidence of the **increasing intolerance towards other religions**, in a country once known for its secular constitution and religious diversity, is highlighted in two recent incidents. (1) In Bihar state the **Chief Minister** was seen pulling the hijab off a Muslim woman who was receiving an award at a public awards ceremony for Ayush practitioners. A video of the incident went viral and caused a storm of protest at his disrespect for her as a woman and a Muslim. (2) A report by the NGO, Citizens for Justice and Peace, says that violence against Christian communities has intensified. Between 2014 and 2024, documented incidents of violence against Christians rose from 139 to 834, and in 2025 alone more than 700 incidents were recorded.

Kashmir:

A **webinar** entitled 'Kashmir: Where Human Rights are Denied' is taking place on **Thursday 5 March** from 1930 to 2100. You will be able to find out about the current human rights situation on the ground and about action you can take. There will be a panel discussion and Q&A. Panel speakers will include **Mirza Saib Bég**, a lawyer from Indian-Administered Kashmir, and Sajad Rasool, a journalist and activist from Indian-administered Kashmir. A third speaker, to be confirmed, will be from Azad Kashmir, on the Pakistan side, looking at the issues that lie behind recent protests by students and small business entrepreneurs. For more information see the flier sent out with this newsletter or contact kashmircampaign@amnesty.org.uk

News from AIUK

The London office of the UK Section has a new address:

Amnesty International United Kingdom Section
2nd Floor, Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW

For other news about current Amnesty campaigns, go to <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/> or <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/>

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

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: cherryebird@gmail.com