



News from the Minehead Group

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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Ask your local councillor to speak up against hate.** In the last few days, reports of hate crimes in the UK have increased. Fuelled by years of hostile rhetoric, coupled with divisive campaigns, racism and xenophobia are on the rise in our communities. We need our local leaders to condemn these actions immediately and do everything in their power to make people safe and welcome. Ask your local councillor to speak out now. Go to www.amnesty.org.uk to find the email you can send.
- ✓ **Experience what it feels like** to be in **Syria** by trying out AI's 360° virtual reality headsets at the AmnesTEA or Roadwater Fete. Syrian activists, trained by AI, have supplied 360° spherical images taken using smartphones.
- ✓ **Join us** for the **AmnesTEA** on Saturday 9 July at the home of Karen Mills in Porlock and bring your friends. And please **help** if you can. Even if you can't be there on the day, offers in advance of cakes, books or raffle prizes would be very welcome. (Contact Cherry on 01984 641052.)
- ✓ **Visit our stall** at the Roadwater Fete on Saturday 23 July and take part in our actions on **refugees**. Offers of **help** with the stall are also welcome. (Contact Chris Lawson on 01643 704779).
- ✓ **Send a letter** to **Tunisia** about the mistreatment of LGBTI people, to **Argentina** about the imprisonment of a woman for having a miscarriage and to top electronics firms who use cobalt mined by **child labourers**. (Letters circulated separately by email.)
- ✓ If you're going to be in **Taunton** on Saturday 16 July between 1000 and 1430, please go along to Castle Green and **support** the Taunton Group's action against forced marriage in **Burkina Faso**.



Round up of June group news

At our June group meeting, Cherry Bird updated us on human rights issues in the **South Asia Region** (*India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives*). Cherry writes:



Hot news this month is the publication of Amnesty's latest report on Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Afghanistan, *'My Children Will Die This Winter: Afghanistan's broken Promise to the Displaced'*. The shocking statistic is that the number of people displaced by violence has more than doubled in the last three years, from around

Diary Dates

Monthly meetings:

We meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month (except August and December) at 1930, at the Quaker Meeting House on Bancks Street, Minehead. The first part of the meeting is open to all and features a speaker, film or workshop. After a tea break, AI members are invited to stay for a short business meeting which will end by 2130.

Saturday 9 July

AmnesTEA 1500-1700 at Karen's home - Westbrook, Furzeland Road, Porlock TA24 8NF. Tel 01643 863409

Saturday 16 July

Taunton Group action 1000-1430 Castle Green, Taunton

Saturday 23 July

Stall at Roadwater Fete Focus on refugees. Set up 1130; starts 1400.

Tuesday 26 July

Group meeting: special item will be a film: 'This is Exile' (portrait of child refugees forced to flee from Syria to Lebanon).

Tuesday 23 August

Summer Social starting at 1800 at Susan's home in Carhampton. Bring & share supper in the garden (hopefully!)

Tuesday 27 Sept

Group meeting: Holocaust Memorial Day planning for 2017, with representatives from local churches.

500,000 to **1.2 million**; in addition, an estimated 2.6 million Afghan citizens are living outside the country as refugees. IDPs in Afghanistan are mostly living in desperate conditions in very basic camps, with inadequate food, water, shelter and healthcare, and very limited opportunities for education or employment. Despite passing a new IDP policy in 2014, spelling out the rights of IDPs and a plan for implementation, the Afghan government is providing little or no support to these people and in fact subjects them to harassment and forced eviction. Only a small number of international NGOs are active in the country and they are under-funded. The world's attention has moved on since withdrawal of international troops at the end of 2014, with UN humanitarian funding much reduced. The report calls on the Afghan government and international community to ensure the most urgent needs of IDPs are met and the new IDP policy is implemented immediately.

'... Our situation has gone from bad to worse. I feel like we are forgotten, there is no attention on displaced people anymore.' Quote from a 16 year old IDP girl in a camp in Kabul.

'...I would prefer to be in prison than this place – at least I would not have to worry about food and shelter.' Quote from a woman in a camp in Herat.

Campaign News

Women's Action Network

Encouraging news from Saudi Arabia as the Justice Minister has ruled that all clerics must provide a copy of the marriage certificate to the bride as well as the groom, to ensure women are aware of the terms of their marriage contract and their rights. Since marriage contracts are negotiated by male family members, this is highly significant in safeguarding women's rights.

The battle to decriminalise abortion continues in Northern Ireland, El Salvador and Argentina. In Argentina, a 27-year old woman called Belen has been in prison since she had a spontaneous miscarriage in March 2014. Police officers surrounded her hospital bed after hospital staff reported her. She was subjected to a degrading examination, arrested, held in pre-trial detention for two years and charged with murder, for which she was sentenced to 8 years in prison. Her appeal in May 2016 was denied and she remains in detention. **Please sign and send the letter calling upon the Argentinian authorities to release Belen.** (Letter previously circulated by email.)

Ethiopia

British citizen Andy Tsege continues to be held in prison in Ethiopia, although there has been some improvement in his conditions and he now has access to regular consular visits, local family visits and medical care. According to a reply to our letters, the UK government, through the Foreign Office, continues to raise his case with Ethiopian officials. Reprieve has a new petition demanding his release <https://reprieve.bsd.net/page/s/andy-tsege-official-register>. His nine-year old daughter has said she will sue the UK government over its handling of his case.



Please don't forget to support our AmnesTEA on Saturday 9 July in Porlock and our fete stall at Roadwater on Saturday 23 July!



How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead

Facebook: www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead

Chair & group contact: Alison Dietz Tel. 01984 641603 Email: dietz@btinternet.com

Vice Chair: Jenny Lennon Wood Tel. 01643 706900 Email: rodent.major@btopenworld.com

Treasurer: Cherry Bird Tel. 01984 641052 Email: cherryebird@gmail.com

Press officer: Jill Walmsley Tel. 01643 705061 Email: jillwalmsley09@btinternet.com

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