



# News from the Minehead Group



[www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/minehead) [www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead) Instagram: @amnestyminehead

## Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Take action** to support human rights in **Kashmir** by signing a new petition [here](#). This sends an email to the Indian High Commissioner in London urging him to ensure human rights are at the heart of democratic government in Jammu & Kashmir. And please **join us** on 1 August to mark the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the downgrading of the state to two union territories, ruled directly from Delhi.
- ✓ **Use any opportunities you have**, in the lead up to the **UK's general election**, to question our parliamentary candidates about their attitudes to human rights. For example, will they try to protect the UK's Human Rights Act? Will they support the right to protest? Will they back demands for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza? What do they know about the BK16?
- ✓ **Mark the 18 July in your diary** to come along to our fund-raising **AmnesTea** at 1500 at Mayhill in Carhampton. Donations for the **raffle, book and produce** stalls will be very welcome, and do invite your friends to come along and join us!

## News from our group

Our very sad news this month is the death of our wonderful, veteran campaigner and Amnesty supporter, **Philippa Gerry** on 13 May. Philippa was a member of our group from when it started in 2002 and was unflinching in her support for Amnesty and our group's activities. She was an exemplar letter writer, always writing on behalf of all the cases in the AIUK magazine and in the annual Write for Rights Campaign. Last autumn, at the age of 91, she led a



weekly vigil in Minehead about the war in Gaza and was there on her mobility scooter, whatever the weather. Her determination, compassion for others, intelligent understanding of world events and her sense of humour were an inspiration. We feel privileged to have known her and will miss her greatly. *Jenny Gateau says:* The Minehead Quakers will be quietly



remembering Philippa at the Friday Lunch on **7 June**. Any members of Amnesty who would like to join us are, as ever, most welcome; quiet meeting at 12.30 and lunch at 1pm as usual. Our collection that day will be for Amnesty. A memorial event for Philippa will be at 1.30pm on Saturday **15 June** at St. Andrews Church Minehead, again with donations to Amnesty.

## West Somerset Refugee Support Group

*[Jenny Gateau reports]* It has been lovely to meet our Syrian/Kurdish families who have been on holiday in Minehead during half term. If you can help in any way with the summer holidays for our refugee families, please contact Jenny on 01643 708471. On **Saturday 22 June**, 1000 to 1300 at the Museum of Somerset in Taunton, there will be celebration for Refugee Week '**OUR HOME**', with food, music and performance. Do go along if you can.

## Diary Dates

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

### 17 to 23 June

Refugee Week: country-wide events including a celebration at the Museum of Somerset, Taunton on Saturday 22 June 1000-1300.

### Saturday 22 June AIUK AGM

Further details on the AIUK website.

### Thursday 18 July

AmnesTea 1500-1700 at Mayhill, Woodland Close, Carhampton. Contact Susan for more information.

### Saturday 27 July

Amnesty Stall at Roadwater Fete. Set up 1230, fete opens 1400.

### Thursday 1 August

Kashmir event to mark the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kashmir being made a union territory rather than a state. Details to follow.

### Saturday 14 Sept

Fund-raising afternoon concert with harpist and author Hazel Prior. 1500 at Roadwater Village Hall. Music followed by tea & cake.

## Campaign News

**INDIA** Cherry writes: In Amnesty's latest State of the World's Human Rights report, misuse of national financial and investigation agencies against civil society, human rights defenders, activists, journalists and critics is highlighted (this is how the Amnesty India office was forced to close). Also noted is that government officials, political leaders, and BJP supporters have advocated hatred and violence against religious minorities with impunity, particularly Muslims, leading to a rise in hate crimes. The campaign group for international civil liberties, Freedom House, says that journalists and others who question the BJP government have increasingly been harassed, and classifies India as only 'partly free'.

**BK16:** Good news that one of the BK16, Gautam Navlakha (in prison since March 2020) has finally been released on bail. However, he will remain under strict house arrest and have to pay expenses for 'security'!!

**Bhopal:** In a new report *Bhopal: 40 years of Injustice* published ahead of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, Amnesty outlines how the failure of the US-based chemical company, Dow, to provide remedy to victims of a deadly gas leak from a pesticide plant in India that resulted in the deaths of more than 22,000 people, has created a 'sacrifice zone', in which as many as 500,000 people across multiple generations continue to suffer.



**Afghanistan – a recommended read:** *Zarifa: A Woman's Battle in a Man's World* by Zarifa Ghafari with Hannah Lucinda Smith. A very readable personal memoir of Zarifa's battle to become Afghanistan's first female mayor, in November 2019. The book gives profound insights into life in Afghanistan. Her courage is astonishing.

## New UN Network

Cherry says: I have joined this new initiative, which aims to increase Amnesty's engagement and visibility with the UN, starting with a particular campaign on limiting the use of the veto by the five permanent members of the Security Council in cases of mass atrocities. We have all seen the huge negative impacts of this in stopping resolutions aimed at preventing, or at least mitigating, current horrors such as Gaza and Ukraine, and many more in the past, such as Rwanda. It's a tall order, but there are some impressive people working on this issue, who spoke at the launch webinar.

## Other News

**British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR):** Alison attended an online training event in May about this small independent charity. Its aims are:

- To empower individuals
- To help community groups use a human rights based approach to achieve their aims
- To work with public bodies
- To influence policy which supports human rights.

The UK's Human Rights Act (HRA) sets out 16 key rights. BIHR exists to empower individuals and community groups trying to resolve a problem with a public authority, by supporting them in their use of a Human Rights approach. For example, a disability group in Wales challenged a decision that they felt was unfair citing Article 14 of the HRA and the decision was overturned.

Community groups can apply for grants to help them resolve issues with public bodies without recourse to a lawyer.

### 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](http://www.facebook.com/amnestyminehead)

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

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