



News from the Minehead Group



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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join us** for a short **vigil** on Thursday 1 August to mark the 5th anniversary of when the Indian Government revoked a constitutional provision that gave the region of **Jammu** and **Kashmir** special autonomy. For the last five years, this region has been ruled directly from Delhi. And there has been a sharp increase in violence in recent months.
- ✓ **Sign the online petition** to the Iranian authorities calling for the release of **Toomaj Salehi**, an Iranian rapper, activist and hip-hop artist. Through his music, Toomaj calls for freedom and an end to the violent repression of protestors by Iranian authorities. Toomaj Salehi has had his death sentence overturned, but still remains in prison. Go to: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/free-toomaj>
- ✓ **Call on** our new Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, to make human rights central to everything his government does. Write a letter or send an email using this link: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/act-now-call-new-pm-protect-human-rights>
- ✓ **Book your tickets** for our Harp fund-raising concert and tea on 14 September, invite your friends and advertise the event where you can.

News from our group



The sun shone for our AmnesTea!

We were extremely lucky to have fine sunny weather for our fund-raising tea party in Susan's garden on 18 July. We had put up gazebos in case of rain, but in fact these were needed for shade. As well as the tea, cake and chat, visitors enjoyed browsing the bookstall, playing Amnesty-themed games and testing their knowledge by identifying 10 pictures of flags placed around the garden. The raffle was well supported and lots of

people looked at the Amnesty display and **signed letters** to the authorities in **Bangladesh** about two current human rights cases. The first of these was about an atheist blogger who expressed his views on Facebook. When these were shared more widely without his permission, he was arrested in November 2023 under the new Cyber Security Act and remains in prison, despite bail having been granted. The other case concerned over 100 members of the Bawn indigenous community, who were arrested in the Chittagong Hills as a collective punishment for their peaceful protests against military activities in their traditional lands. Thanks to everyone's generosity, including donations from those unable to attend, we were delighted to raise **£500** for Amnesty.



Diary Dates

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

Saturday 27 July

Amnesty Stall at Roadwater Fete. Set up 1215, fete opens 1400.

Thursday 1 August

Vigil for Jammu & Kashmir at 1430 at St Peter's Chapel on the Quay, Minehead TA24 5UL. To mark the 5th anniversary of Jammu & Kashmir being made into union territories, ruled from Delhi.

Saturday 14 Sept

Fund-raising afternoon concert with harpist and author Hazel Prior. 1500 at Roadwater Village Hall. Music followed by tea & cake. Tickets £8 from Cherry 01984 641052.

Campaign News

INDIA and KASHMIR Cherry writes

All eyes are on the new UK government as Foreign Secretary David Lammy heads to Delhi this week. Kier Starmer has made it clear that his government wants to achieve the lucrative free trade deal that eluded the Tories. However, Amnesty says this should not be at the expense of calling out Prime Minister Modi's government on human rights violations in India. Key issues currently of concern are:

- **The rights of religious and ethnic minorities** as the BJP continues to promote its Hindutva philosophy (which essentially says only Hindus are 'real' Indians). To date this has mainly affected Muslims, but more recently we are hearing reports of violent threats to and hate speech about Christian communities.
- **The escalating violence in Manipur state**, a conflict between the dominant Meitei community and the minority Kuki and other tribal hill communities. The Indian government has failed to deal with this effectively, resulting in the deaths of at least 200 people and displacement of more than 60,000. Homes, businesses, villages and places of worship have been burnt down, attacked, looted and vandalised, but the authorities have continued to crack down on those who have dared to speak out against Government inaction.

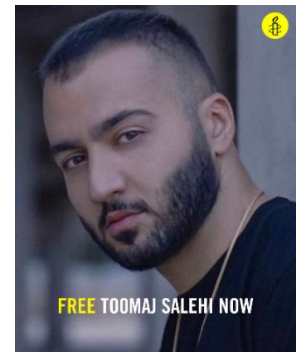


- **Kashmir:** 5 August marks the 5th anniversary of the downgrading of Kashmir from a state to two directly ruled union territories, which has been accompanied by significant repression of free speech and massive changes affecting the lives of residents. One example is a proposed railway development which will take away the land of farmers who grow apples, one of Kashmir's major exports and source of income. They were not consulted and have no choice about the compulsory allocation of their land to the project.



Join us for a vigil on Kashmir on 1 August at the Chapel of St Peter at Minehead Quayside. See details overleaf.

IRAN: Iranian rapper, activist and hip-hop artist **Toomaj Salehi** has been in detention for over a year in connection with his music and posts on social media denouncing the unjust practices of the Iranian government. His death sentence was overturned in June, but he still remains in prison and faces new false charges. Toomaj is a vocal supporter of the Woman Life Freedom protests. These protests began after 22-year-old Mahsa Zhina Amini was killed after she was arrested and beaten by Iranian authorities who were enforcing the country's abusive forced veiling laws. Through his music, Toomaj calls for freedom and an end to the violent repression of protestors. For too long, the Iranian government has been using the death penalty to instil fear in the Iranian population and tighten their grip on power. At least 853 people were executed in 2023, marking a 48% rise from 576 in 2022. This flagrant disregard for human rights cannot be allowed to go on.



We all have the right to live without fear and to the freedom to call for justice when we see injustice. See the action overleaf.

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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