



News from the Minehead Group



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Actions you can take this month:

- ✓ **Join us** on Thursday 13 February at 1430 at the Quaker Meeting House in Minehead for a **talk on Pakistan** and our **Group AGM**. Come and have your say about the future of the group.
- ✓ **Send a message** to the President of Egypt demanding the release of **Oqba Hashad**. In 2019, Oqba was wrongly arrested by Egypt's National Security Agency, simply because of his brother's human rights activism. While other students arrested alongside him were released, Oqba has been held in pre-trial detention for over five years, enduring unimaginable torture and denied essential medical care. His only crime is being related to someone who defends human rights. Despite a judge ordering his release, Egyptian prosecutors have kept him imprisoned. Follow this link to send a message: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/FreeOqba>
- ✓ **Read** Amnesty International's latest report **'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza'**. Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that Israeli authorities committed, and continue to commit prohibited acts under the Genocide Convention. Find the report at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/genocide-report-uk-2024>
- ✓ **Send a letter or card** to **BK16 prisoners** who are still on bail or in prison. Contact Cherry for an address if you would like to write. There is a one-channel UK address for all those on bail.

News from our group



In December we continued our work on the **2024 Write for Rights** Campaign with a card and letter signing session at the Quaker Meeting House. These letters and cards focused on the priority cases, but overall we wrote in response to all nine cases featured in the campaign. Many thanks to all who came to help, and to Peter Atherton who once again provided the stamps. Here's a photo of us.

We are holding our **AGM** on 13 February at the Quaker Meeting House. We will start the afternoon with a talk by Cherry on the human rights situation in **Pakistan**. After a break for tea and cake we will hold our AGM. As well as the usual reports by the chair and treasurer, we need to make some decisions about the **future of the group**. Our numbers are now so low that we have to decide whether to (a) try and continue as we are, (b) continue but in a different way, (c) seek a merger with another group or (d) close the group. We need your input so please come along if you can and bring your thoughts and ideas!

We were sad to learn that **Jean Humber** had died at the end of December. Jean and her late husband Peter were long-time Amnesty supporters. And Jean and her family organised our very successful annual quizzes for a number of years. Here's a photo of Jean with son-law Matt and daughter Ellen, all helping to run our quiz in March 2016.



Diary Dates

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

Thurs 13 Feb 2025
Group AGM at the QMH at 1430; talk on Pakistan and planning for the group's future.

Sat 8 March 2025
International Women's Day: event details tbc.

Saturday 22 March
South-West Regional Conference in Exeter.

16-20 June
Refugee Week

5-6 July
AIUK AGM & Conference at Birmingham University. Details on AIUK website.

Campaign News

Cherry was listening to the BBC World Service recently. In a programme about prisoners released last August in the Russia prisoner swap, the husband of one of the journalists who had been held by the Russian authorities emphasised how much his wife had appreciated the cards sent by well-wishers. He urged everyone to send cards to political prisoners as they are a real morale boost, especially if cards are bright and colourful.

Write for Rights (WfR): We recently heard some **good news** about a prisoner we'd written about in a previous WfR campaign - **Dorgelesse Nguessan** had been released after more than four years of arbitrary detention for attending a peaceful protest in Douala, **Cameroon**. Sadly, 38 of the 500 originally arrested at the peaceful protest in September 2021, still remain wrongly imprisoned.



Other **good news** was that in early January five people were released after more than a year of arbitrary imprisonment for criticising the **Angolan** government. These critics included Ana da Silva Miguel also known as **Neth Nahara**, who was arrested in August 2023 after broadcasting a video on TikTok criticising President João Lourenço. Neth featured in the 2024 WfR campaign.



India *Cherry writes:*

BK16: very good news just out is that Rona Wilson and Sudhir Dhvale of the BK16 prisoners have been granted bail and were to be released. There are now only 6 of the original 16 in jail: Surendra Gadling, Mahesh Raut, Ramesh Gaichor, Sagar Gorkhe, Jyoti Jagtap and Hany Babu. Of course, being out on bail does not mean freedom, and there are strict conditions attached, but at least they will be more comfortable.



Fortieth anniversary of the Bhopal gas disaster and still no justice for victims: Forty years ago, in December 1984, a gas leak from a pesticide plant in Bhopal resulted in the deaths of at least **22,000 people**.



About 40 tonnes of lethal Methyl Isocyanate gas from the pesticide plant in Bhopal, then owned by US-based Union Carbide Corporation, quickly killed thousands of people living in informal housing around the plant. More have since died prematurely as a result of exposure to the gas, with deaths continuing to occur today. More than **500,000** were injured or have suffered permanent harm through the inter-generational impact of gas exposure on reproductive health, and through water sources contaminated by chemicals left on the site. Thousands of tonnes of toxic

waste remain buried in and around the abandoned plant, leading to increasing water pollution, clearly indicative of the area being considered a 'sacrifice zone' – an area so severely contaminated that it has demonstrable and devastating consequences on the health of local inhabitants and no effort is made to clean it up. Amnesty says that the woefully inadequate and callous response towards victims and survivors of the Bhopal tragedy has been enabled by **environmental racism**.

FIFA World Cup Qatar Legacy Fund: AI has criticised FIFA and Qatar over the launch of this fund because, although it will provide money to protect workers and refugees in the future, it does nothing to help the families of the vast number of migrant workers who were exploited and died to make the 2022 World Cup possible.

China: In January, Susan went to a showing of the film *All Static and Noise* at the Exeter Phoenix organised by the Exeter Group. It was a very powerful and moving film in which members of the Uyghur diaspora talk about the situation in Xinjiang and the families they have left behind. Do see it if you get the chance.

Guantanamo Bay: Abdulmalik Bajabu was released before Christmas, and another detainee, Khalid Qasim, has finally been released after spending 22 years imprisoned without charge or trial. More good news!

How to contact the Minehead Amnesty International Local Group:

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