

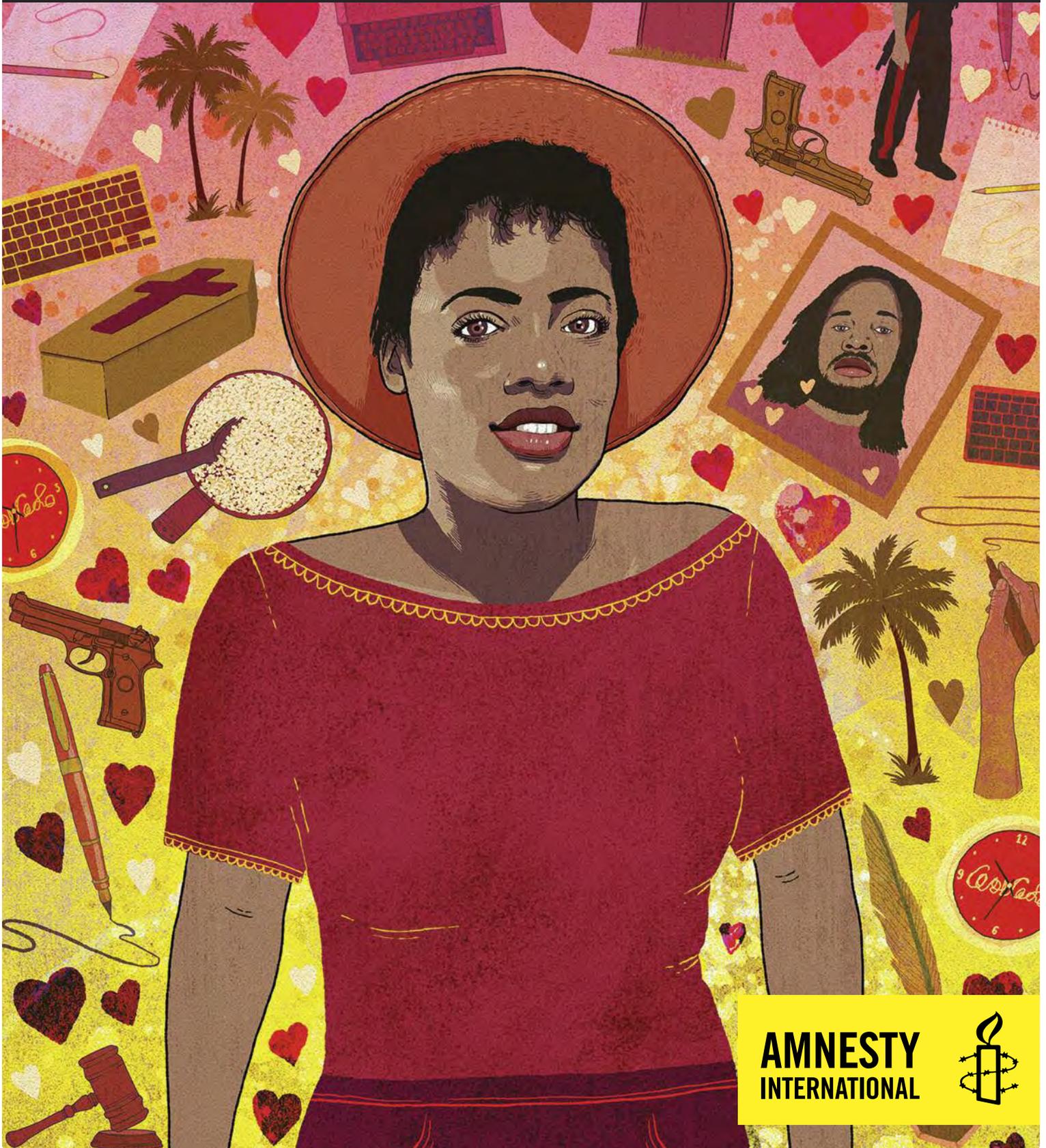
ESSENTIAL KIT  
FOR CHANGEMAKERS

TERM 4, 2017

Amnesty International Australia  
[www.amnesty.org.au](http://www.amnesty.org.au)

# Start Something

WRITE FOR RIGHTS



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**TERM 4 2017: WRITE FOR RIGHTS**

## Inside this kit:

Note from Naomi

Good news

What is Write for Rights?

Five tips for phenomenal letter writing

Write for Rights cases

Write for Rights for teachers

## More chances to start something coming up in 2018...

## Never miss an issue

Sign up to receive an email with new school resources at the start of each term and find previous resources at: [www.amnesty.org.au/student-resources](http://www.amnesty.org.au/student-resources)

## Like this resource? Tell us about it!

[youth@amnesty.org.au](mailto:youth@amnesty.org.au)

[@amnestyOz](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyOz)

[Facebook.com/amnestyOz](https://www.facebook.com/amnestyOz)



Cover: Shackelia Jackson in Jamaica, who is seeking justice after police killed her brother.  
© Rebecca Hendin

Amnesty International is an independent, global movement that campaigns courageously for human rights for everyone. We use our passion and commitment to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws and free people imprisoned just for voicing their opinion. We campaign, conduct research and raise money for our work. Our active members, such as school action groups, play a vital role in achieving our aims through writing letters, sending online actions, organising creative awareness-raising activities and fundraising in their communities.

Amnesty International acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which our offices are situated. We thank the elders past and present for their continued custodianship. This always has been and always will be Aboriginal land.

## Note from Naomi

Can you believe we're at Term 4 already?

In Term 1 we covered the latest in Indigenous rights, and got active on Amnesty's Community is Everything campaign. We stood up for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Term 2 and celebrated the amazing work of young human rights defenders around the world in Term 3.

Term 4 is all about Write for Rights! Write for Rights is a global Amnesty campaign to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are currently experiencing human rights violations. Amnesty supporters raise individual cases with governments and decision-makers who can change the situation. We also reach out to the person (or group of people) we are fighting for, so they know we support and stand alongside them.

The work you do this term is a big part of that!

Inside you'll find out more about some of the cases we'll be focusing on for 2017 – from Jamaica, Chad, Finland and China. There's also a case from Turkey that involves our friends and colleagues at Amnesty International Turkey.

Massive thanks for everything that you have done in 2017  
– have a great Term 4!

Cheers

**Naomi**

Youth Coordinator  
Amnesty International Australia



# Good news

## Companies respond to child labour report

Last term you heard about palm oil plantations in Indonesia where children as young as eight work in unsafe conditions. Wilmar, the world's biggest palm oil trader, has now shared their 12-month action plan to address the abuses we exposed in our report, and companies buying from Wilmar, such as Kellogg's, Nestlé and Colgate-Palmolive, have let us know that they are taking action and raising our concerns directly with Wilmar. And, your tweets to Ben & Jerry's ice cream, who buy from Wilmar, resulted in them removing palm oil from their products!

## Erkin Musaev released

Erkin Musaev is a former government official from Uzbekistan and UN employee, who was tortured and then wrongly imprisoned by the authorities. Erkin Musaev was sentenced to 20 years in jail in 2007 after a series of unfair trials – he was accused of spying and of misusing UN funds. His conviction was based on a confession he was forced to sign after security service officers threatened his family. Now free, he has written a letter offering his personal thanks to Amnesty activists:

“I want to express my great gratitude to all Amnesty International activists, as well as to all those who supported me and my family in a difficult time. My release is a great victory indeed, and your contribution to it is invaluable.”

## Thailand: Charges dropped against anti-torture reporters

In March the Thai military dropped their criminal case against an Amnesty International chairperson and two other human rights activists who were facing prosecution for 'computer crimes' after reporting on torture. Somchai Homla-or, Pornpen Khongkachonkiet and Anchana Heemmina are members of human rights organisations working to end torture in Thailand's southern provinces. Nearly 12,000 people in Australia emailed the Thai Prime Minister calling for the charges to be dropped. Somchai, Pornpen and Anchana are now safe, thanks to everyone who took action!

## Edward Snowden thanks you

In June 2013, Edward Snowden revealed evidence of global mass surveillance programs. We've since learned that the US and the UK have been monitoring the internet and phone activity of hundreds of millions of people across the world. For revealing this information, Edward Snowden faces decades in prison, accused of selling secrets to enemies of the US. With no guarantee of a fair trial in his home country, he is living in limbo in Russia.

Students wrote letters on behalf of Edward Snowden last year. Here he thanks all the people who have supported him:

“I want to thank you, humbly and with a full heart, for your unwavering advocacy and support. More than a million of you came together to say in one voice that the truth matters. My gratitude is beyond expression.

Though the powers of our day may keep me from home for a few more years, your support keeps me company during the fight. With each action, you are authoring a story of how ordinary people, good and gracious, come together in the United States and around the world to change our collective future. There is no honor greater than standing shoulder-to-shoulder with your generous spirit.”



Erkin Musaev © Private



Photo 62737: Somchai Homla-or  
© Cross Cultural Foundation



Edward Snowden © The Guardian,  
Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras



Letters and cards in support of Edward  
Snowden for Write for Rights 2016. © AI

# What is Write for Rights?

Across the world, people's freedom is under threat. Human rights defenders are locked up just for expressing their opinions. Protestors are tortured and wrongfully imprisoned.

But sometimes a letter can change someone's life. That's the premise of Write for Rights, Amnesty's global letter-writing campaign. Today, it's one of the world's biggest human rights events. Every December, Amnesty supporters across the globe write millions of letters for those whose basic human rights are being abused. And it's not just letters – we also send petitions, emails, Tweets, Facebook posts, photos, postcards and more.

Your letters, words and actions put pressure on decision-makers to take immediate action. With your help, governments are held to account. Prisoners of conscience are released. And more people are free to live their lives in safety.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN 2016?

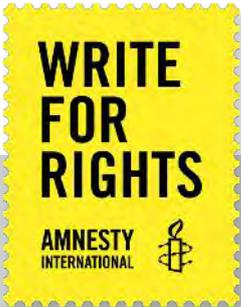
For last year's Write for Rights campaign Amnesty supporters around the world wrote an amazing **4,660,774** letters, emails, tweets and more. Among those messages were words of support from the people we were writing for.

"It brought me to tears to see all the letters that Amnesty International had collected," said Jewher Tohti, whose father Ilham remains in prison in China. "It makes me feel stronger when I know there are so many people who trust in me, my father, and my family."

US whistleblower Edward Snowden, who also featured in Write for Rights 2016, said: "I want to thank you, humbly and with a full heart, for your unwavering advocacy and support."



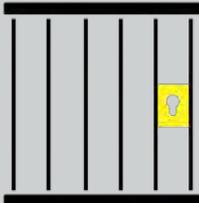
An Amnesty supporter in Togo writes a letter as part of the 2016 Write for Rights campaign. © AI Togo



### How it works:



Activists in more than 200 countries and territories write millions of letters, emails, tweets and petitions...



...for people who've been tortured, denied refuge, locked up for speaking out...



...and put pressure on governments, leaders and decision-makers...



...to make change happen – releasing activists, convicting torturers and changing abusive laws.

## But does it work ... really?

Yes! Absolutely. Every year, real change happens because of your letters and actions. People wrongfully imprisoned are released. Torturers are brought to justice. And people in prison are treated more humanely. Your words have changed lives.

Here are 3 success stories that prove Write for Rights really works:

### Uzbekistan

Muhammad Bekzhanov – one of the longest-imprisoned journalists in the world, was freed in February 2017 after spending 17 years behind bars. Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide wrote to demand his freedom.

### United States of America

Whistleblower Chelsea Manning walked free in May 2017, after her 35-year prison sentence was cut short by outgoing US President Barack Obama. More than a quarter of a million people wrote for her release.

### Peru

Criminal charges against Máxima Acuña a peasant farmer who is defying one of the world's biggest gold mining companies, were dropped in May 2017. More than 150,000 people had sent her solidarity messages.

*"Receiving your letters really comforted me when I was in prison. Thank you!"*

*"I wish I had the time and ability to thank each one of you for giving me a little bit of joy with each letter and card."*

*"Keep on supporting, helping, and not just me, ok?"*



Muhammad Bekzhanov © Private



Chelsea Manning © Private

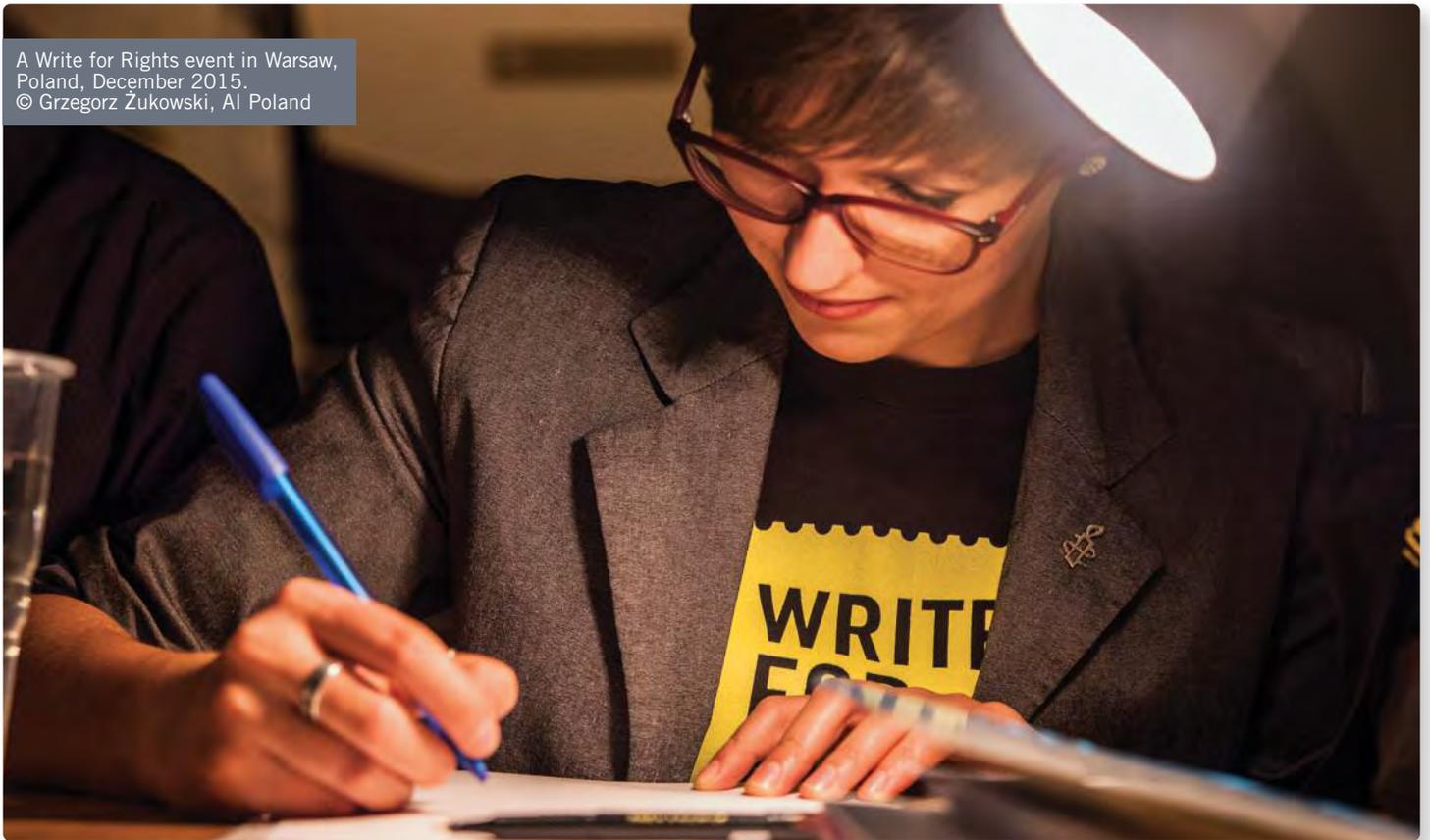


Máxima Acuña © AI



Letters for Adrián Vasquez Lagunes, a torture survivor from Mexico. © AI Mexico/Sergio Ortiz Borbolla

A Write for Rights event in Warsaw, Poland, December 2015.  
© Grzegorz Żukowski, AI Poland



# Five tips for phenomenal letter writing

On the next pages there are some people you can help by writing a letter to the authorities on their behalf. Before you get started, here's some top tips for writing an effective and persuasive letter!

**1**

## APPROACH

Always be polite. You want to stop human rights abuse by persuading the government involved to take immediate action. It is important to show respect for a country's legal processes and an understanding of its current difficulties. This will make it easier to point out how the human rights situation could be improved.

**2**

## FOCUS

Take care to follow Amnesty International's instructions on a case because it has carefully researched the situation and developed an appropriate and respectful course of action.

**3**

## EXPRESSION

Use plain language rather than technical terms. You will be more effective if you say that your concern for human rights is about equality and the principles of international law, not about the country's politics.

**4**

## CONNECTION

It is good to give them an idea of who and what you are. Tell them your age, your interests, a bit about the place you live. It will prove your letter is genuine and show the government that different people from across the world are watching their country. If you have a special interest or link with the country, it is good to mention this in your letter. For instance, you may have been on holiday there, or studied its history, or been a member of a local friendship association.

**5**

## LENGTH

Be brief. Sometimes a simple, one-line letter is adequate. Try to write one page at the most, as long letters are less likely to be read. To end your letter, you can say 'Yours truly' or 'Yours sincerely'. However, many people prefer to use the more formal 'Yours respectfully' or 'Yours faithfully'.

# Write for Rights cases:

## human rights defenders that need your help

**ACT NOW >>**

### THE FIVE CASES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES NEED YOUR HELP!

You can take action in two ways – firstly, by writing a letter to the authorities responsible for their situation and demanding change. Secondly, you can write to the person experiencing the human rights abuses, to let them know they are not alone.

Return your letters and messages to Amnesty by **31 January 2018** at the latest. You can drop them off at an Amnesty action centre or post to: Write for Rights, GPO Box 968, Hobart TAS 7001.

We'll mail them off in a big batch to the targets.

### KEEN TO DO MORE?

Once you've written your letters and cards and mailed them back to Amnesty, here's what else you can do to for Shackelia, Sakris, Ni Yulan, the Istanbul 10 and Mahadine.

- **Adopt a case** – get your class on board. Pick a case and ask everyone to write a letter. Ask your teacher to bring other classes on board so that each case in this pack has a class full of students taking action on their behalf. Make sure to follow up and collect all of the letters before the end of term.
- **Aim high** – set a target for how many letters you think you can get done, or challenge other class groups to see which class can write the most.
- **Share the stories** – getting the Write for Rights stories shared with as many people as possible is vital. Ask for the opportunity to talk about a case at a school assembly. Think about which assembly will have the most students, teachers and community there and get on the agenda for that one if you can.
- **Take it to the top** – make a time to talk to the Principal of your school about these cases and ask if they will write a letter as part of Write for Rights. Do some prep work so you can present your Principal with the details of your case, and a persuasive argument for why they should join you in taking action.
- **Check out other Write for Rights cases at [amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights](http://amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights)**

### WRITES FOR RIGHTS SCHOOLS PRIZES

Let us know what you or your school did this year for Write for Rights, and be in with a chance to win a neat human rights defender starter pack!

To enter simply send in an 'activism journal' describing what activities you did as part of Write for Rights to [youth@amnesty.org.au](mailto:youth@amnesty.org.au) by **1 December**. Include the following details: name of school, school address, and contact details of the student, teacher or parent coordinating the involvement.

#### Ideas to stand out:

- Schools which contribute the most letters will score highly, so think outside the box! Letters can be from school members, family and friends. Perhaps you could hold a lunchtime event to gather lots of letters?
- Be creative – diversity is key to standing out! Paint a message to send, write a poem, record a song or rap, hold a flash mob... and submit photos or even make a video with your entry.

Whatever your legendary minds create, make sure to document your achievements and submit a written summary by 1 December!

#### Prizes

- Your school team will be featured in Term 1 2018's *Start Something*
- A human rights defender starter pack for your team

Winners will be selected on 10 December to celebrate Human Rights Day. A winner will be selected from each state as well as a national best team!



© Rebecca Hendin

## Ni Yulan, China

Ni Yulan has braved years of violent harassment for standing up for those evicted from their homes. The former lawyer has supported scores of people forced from their homes by lucrative construction projects. She was among thousands whose dwellings were demolished in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

The government's response to her activism has been to harass her and her family, hoping to put an end to her work. They have repeatedly arrested her and, during detention, beat her so badly that she now uses a wheelchair. They have pursued her for nearly 20 years, putting her and her family under surveillance, threatening them, and evicting them from home after home.

In March 2016, the authorities refused her a passport to travel to the USA to accept an international prize celebrating her courage. In April 2017, men descended on her rented apartment, grabbed Ni Yulan, her husband and daughter, and threw them out of their home. After being forced to sleep on the streets, the couple now live in temporary housing within constant sight of the police. Still, Ni Yulan has no plans to stop helping people stand up for their rights. It's our turn to stand up for her.

### WRITE TO BEIJING

Tell the Director of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau to end the harassment of Ni Yulan and her family.

### Example letter

*Dear Director Wang Xiaohong, Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau (China)*

*I am very concerned for Ni Yulan and her family, who have been made homeless for defending housing rights in China.*

*I call on you to:*

- *stop the harassment and intimidation of Ni Yulan and her family, allowing them the right to adequate housing in Beijing.*
- *investigate their ongoing harassment, bringing those responsible to justice.*
- *lift the travel ban on Ni Yulan and enable her to travel abroad.*

*Yours sincerely*

### SHOW NI YULAN YOU'RE ON HER SIDE

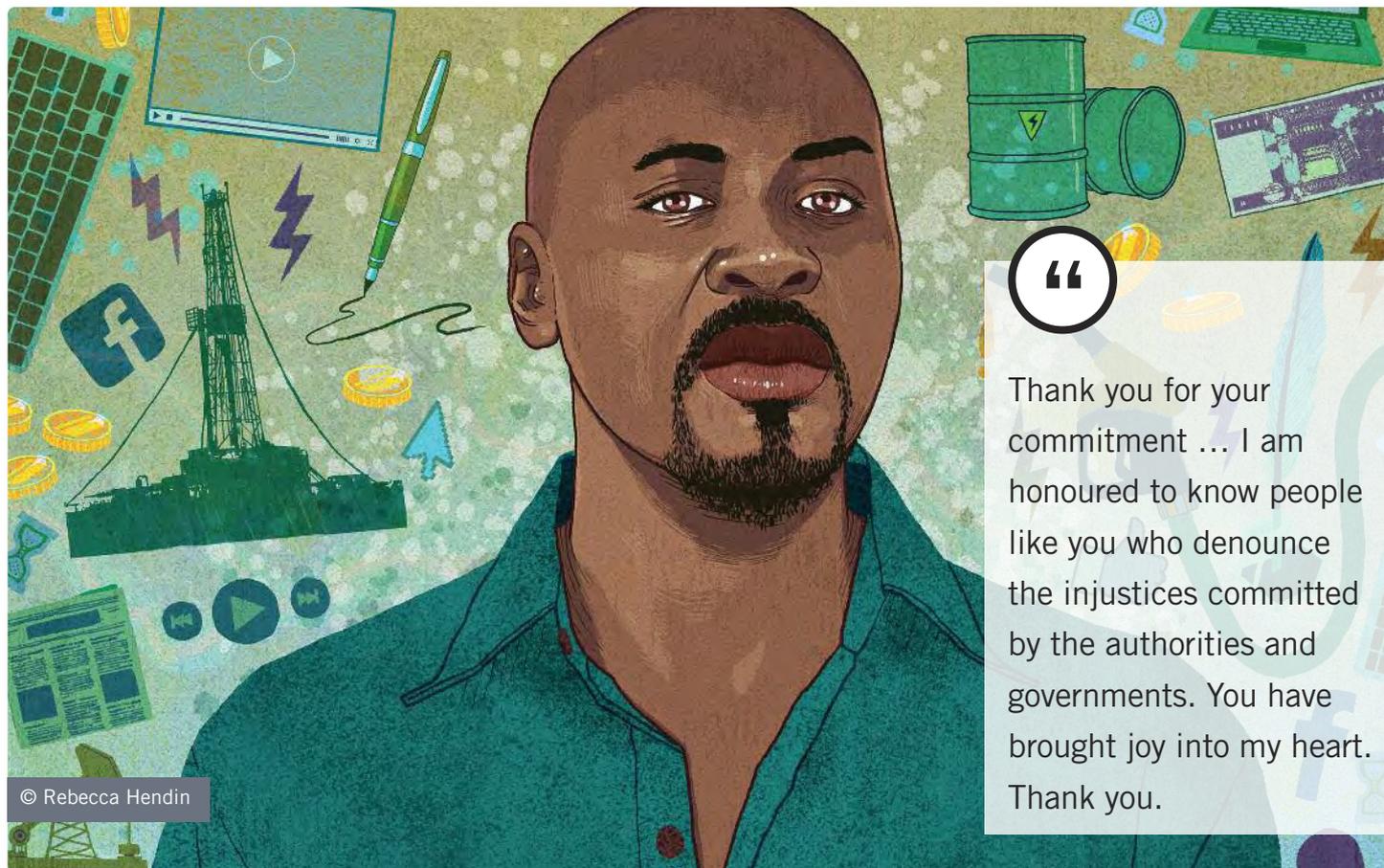
Make a card for Ni Yulan and tell her how brave she is and you support her. Her family is important to her, and she likes birds.

### Example message:

"You are so brave Ni Yulan – We stand by you!"

Or in Chinese: #倪玉兰，你真的很勇敢！我们会与您同心面对！





## Mahadine, Chad

He's an online activist and father of seven. In September 2016, Tadjadine Mahamat Babouri, commonly known as Mahadine, posted videos on Facebook. In them, he accused the Chadian government and people close to it of corruption and misusing public money. He also complained about the economic crisis gripping this oil-dependent nation which is suffering from falling oil prices worldwide.

Making and posting the videos was a bold thing to do in a country where speaking out like this carries serious consequences.

Within days, Mahadine was snatched from the street in broad daylight by a group of men believed to be intelligence officers. He says he was beaten, electrocuted and chained up for weeks, and moved from one prison to another. His wife and children were told nothing of his whereabouts and had to track him down themselves.

Mahadine now faces a life sentence, and faces charges including threatening national security. He is gravely ill, having caught tuberculosis in prison. He needs urgent medical attention. He should not have to spend the rest of his life locked up for courageously expressing his opinion.

### WRITE TO THE PRESIDENT OF CHAD

Tell the President to release Tadjadine Mahamat Babouri, known as Mahadine, without delay.

#### Example letter

*Your Excellency, President Idriss Deby Itno (Chad)*

*I am very concerned for Tadjadine Mahamat Babouri, commonly known as Mahadine, who is very ill and facing a life sentence for criticizing the Chadian government on Facebook.*

*I call on you to:*

- *immediately and unconditionally release Mahadine, as he has been detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.*
- *pending the release of Mahadine, he is transferred to the Am Sinene prison where he can receive adequate medical attention.*

*Yours sincerely*

### HELP KEEP MAHADINE'S SPIRITS UP

Make a card for Mahadine and write a message of support.



© Rebecca Hendin

## Shackelia Jackson, Jamaica

Shackelia Jackson will not give up. When her brother was gunned down by police in 2014, she made sure that Jamaica's independent investigators secured the crime scene.

The police had been pursuing a "Rastafarian-looking" suspect in a robbery, and Nakiea fitted that description. They found him in his small restaurant and shot him dead. Police killings of mainly young and mostly poor men is all too common in Jamaica, with some 2,000 killed in the past decade.

Shackelia was determined not to let Nakiea's story end there. She has battled a badly underfunded, sluggish court system to lead a bold fight for justice. In doing so, she has rallied dozens of families whose loved ones have been similarly killed, amplifying their cries for justice. The police have responded by raiding her community, timing the raids to coincide with court dates. They have also intimidated Shackelia and her family.

But Shackelia refuses to be silenced. She says their attempts only reinforce her belief in what's right. "I fight because I have no other choice," she says. "To stop would mean I am giving another police officer permission to kill another of my brothers."

### WRITE TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA

Tell the Prime Minister to protect Shackelia and ensure justice for all those killed by police.

#### Example letter

*The Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica*

*I am concerned for Shackelia Jackson and other families who have been harassed for standing up to police violence in Jamaica.*

*I call on you to:*

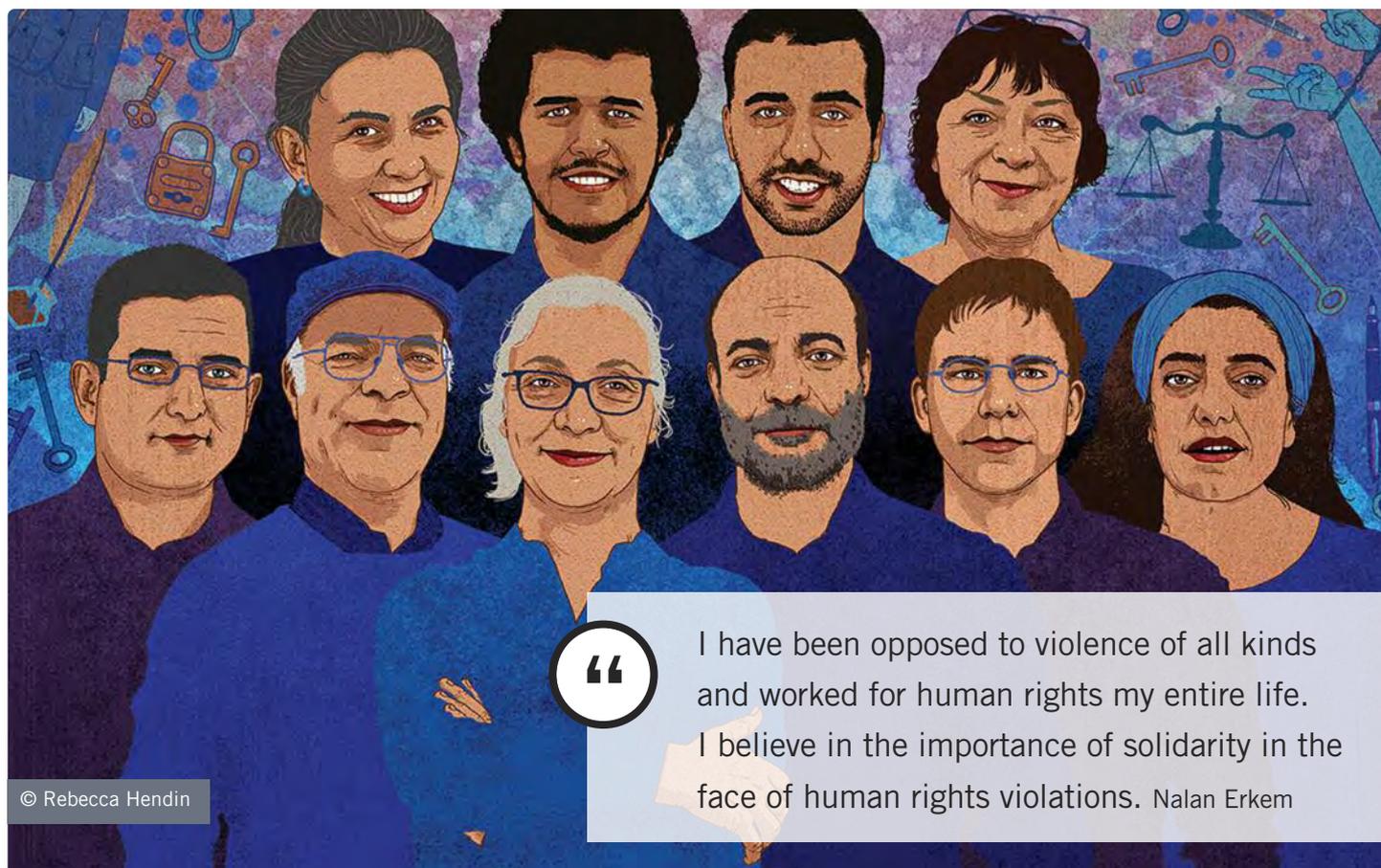
- *ensure Shackelia, her family, and other families are protected from police harassment.*
- *urgently reform the justice system to ensure justice for Shackelia and other relatives of people allegedly killed by the police.*

*I stand with Shackelia and other families in their pursuit of justice.*

*Yours sincerely*

#### Show Shackelia you're with her

Make a card for Shackelia. Tell her you are with her in her struggle for justice.



## The Istanbul 10, Turkey

It should have been an ordinary day for İdil Eser, head of Amnesty Turkey. She was attending a routine workshop for human rights activists in Istanbul in July 2017. Joining her was friend and fellow activist Özlem Dalkıran, founder of Amnesty Turkey, now with Avaaz and the Citizens' Assembly.

The third day of their workshop was about to start when police raided the building and detained them and eight others. The accusation? "Aiding a terrorist organization" – a preposterous allegation. The detention of the Istanbul 10 followed the arrest of Amnesty Turkey Chair Taner Kılıç, imprisoned since 9 June on the absurd charge of being a member of an "armed terrorist organization".

These detentions are the latest in a series of government efforts to silence its critics. Since the attempted coup of July 2016, over 150,000 people have been placed under criminal investigation.

The Istanbul 10 have dedicated their lives to defending the rights of others. They speak out for freedom, fighting for everyone in Turkey to be treated fairly. Every day that they are detained, the people they speak up for are left more vulnerable to the government's ongoing crackdown on freedoms.

### THE ISTANBUL 10 ARE:

- İdil Eser (Amnesty International)
- İlknur Üstün (Women's Coalition)
- Günel Kurşun (Human Rights Agenda Association)
- Nalan Erkem (Citizens Assembly)
- Nejat Taştan (Equal Rights Watch Association)

- Özlem Dalkıran (Citizens' Assembly)
- Şeyhmus Özbekli (lawyer)
- Veli Acu (Human Rights Agenda Association)
- Ali Gharavi (IT strategy consultant)
- Peter Steudtner (non-violence and wellbeing trainer)

### WRITE TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN TURKEY

Tell the Minister to stop the persecution of these rights defenders and unconditionally release them.

#### Example letter

*Dear Minister of Justice, Abdulhamit Gül (Turkey)*

*I am extremely concerned that Turkey has become a dangerous place for people who speak out for human rights.*

*In July, ten rights defenders were detained after a routine meeting: İdil Eser, Özlem Dalkıran, Şeyhmus Özbekli, Veli Acu, Nalan Erkem, Günel Kurşun, Ali Gharavi, Nejat Taştan, Peter Steudtner, and İlknur Üstün. This was following the arrest of Taner Kılıç in June.*

*I call on you stop persecuting and immediately release rights defenders.*

*Yours sincerely*

### SUPPORT İDİL

İdil will celebrate her birthday on October 14 – and she will be away from her family and friends. Make her a card for her birthday and write a message of hope and solidarity.

# Write for Rights for teachers

Are you a teacher? Here are some more ways you and your students can get the most out of Write for Rights in 2017.

## LESSON PLANS

For Write for Rights in 2017, Amnesty International has developed a series of lesson plans and class resources to help teachers deepen their students' understanding of the cases involved and encourage a strong and ongoing interest in human rights.

The lesson plans are themed into four categories:

- Speak Up
- The Right to Protest
- Power and Responsibility
- Locked Up

Each lesson plan includes background information on Write for Rights, a case and country profile, and a series of actions and activities for the classroom. We've included the first, Speak Up, at end of this *Start Something* issue. Access the other three lesson plans at [amnesty.org.au/high-school-resources](http://amnesty.org.au/high-school-resources)

## AMNESTY MOOC

What's a MOOC? It's a Massive Open Online Course, that is, an educational course that's available to anyone with internet access!

From 1 November, Amnesty International will present a MOOC titled Brave: human rights defenders, and it's available for approximately 5 weeks. It includes 15 hours of human rights content, videos and images, and exercises to complete online via a laptop or desktop computer. It's 'instructor-paced' with live moderating and peer-to-peer learning, and is available in English, Spanish, French and Arabic.

**To register to participate from 1 November, head to [amnesty.org.au/high-school-resources](http://amnesty.org.au/high-school-resources) and follow the link.**

Amnesty volunteers in Togo take part in Write for Rights in 2013. © AI Togo



## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice. Change oppressive laws... And free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.



*Demonstration outside the Turkish Embassy in London, UK. 12 July 2017.*

## WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign takes place annually around 10 December, which is Human Rights Day (commemorating the day when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948). Write for Rights aims to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises individual cases with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organizing protests and public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure.

A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As a result of the international call to action, public officials are bombarded with letters. Victims of torture, prisoners of conscience, and people facing the death penalty

or other human rights violations receive messages of solidarity from thousands of people in far-off corners of the globe. Those suffering the violations know that their cases are being brought to public attention. They know that they are not forgotten.

The results of similar campaigns in previous years have been striking. Individuals affected by the violations report the difference that these letters make, they express their gratitude to those who have written, and they often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people are concerned about their case.

Often there is a noticeable change by officials towards these individuals: charges are dropped, treatment becomes less harsh, and laws or regulations addressing the problem are introduced.



## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE 2016 CAMPAIGN

## FREED IN UZBEKISTAN

Muhammad Bekzhanov *[right]*, one of the longest-imprisoned journalists in the world, was freed in February 2017 after spending 17 years behind bars. Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide wrote to demand his freedom.

***“Receiving your letters really comforted me when I was in prison. Thank you!”***



## RELEASED IN THE USA

Whistleblower Chelsea Manning *[left]* walked free in May 2017, after her 35-year prison sentence was cut short by outgoing US President Barack Obama. More than a quarter of a million people wrote for her release.

***“I wish I had the time and ability to thank each one of you for giving me a little bit of joy with each letter and card.”***

## CHARGES DROPPED IN PERU

Criminal charges against Máxima Acuña *[right]*, a peasant farmer who is defying one of the world’s biggest gold mining companies, were dropped in May 2017. More than 150,000 people had sent her solidarity messages.

***“Keep on supporting, helping, and not just me, ok?”***



You can see more success stories at [amnesty.org/WriteForRights](https://www.amnesty.org/WriteForRights)

## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments or state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries that can be met only when practicalities allow.



## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

## DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN acknowledged that people who stood up for human rights were in need of support both from institutions and from individuals. In December 1998, the UN General Assembly adopted “The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms” – commonly known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. It defines a human rights defender and sets out the responsibilities of governments, civil society and individuals to support and defend them.

The Declaration is an international instrument for the protection of the right to defend human rights. It does not create new rights, but reaffirms existing rights that are instrumental to the defence of human rights. These include the rights to freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to access information relating to human rights, as well as the right to provide legal assistance and the freedom to develop and discuss new ideas in the area of human rights.

## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



### CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.

Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights

Article 2 Non-discrimination

Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person

Article 4 Freedom from slavery

Article 5 Freedom from torture



### LEGAL RIGHTS

Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.

Article 6 All are protected by the law

Article 7 All are equal before the law

Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated

Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile

Article 10 Right to a fair trial

Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty

Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection



### SOCIAL RIGHTS

Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.

Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life

Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders

Article 16 Right to marry and start a family

Article 24 Right to rest and leisure

Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education



### ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.

Article 15 Right to a nationality

Article 17 Right to own property and possessions

Article 22 Right to social security

Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union

Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being



### POLITICAL RIGHTS

Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion

Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief)

Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information

Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way

Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country



### CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS

Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life

Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized

Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others

Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!

## LESSON PLAN

# SPEAKING UP

### KEY CONCEPTS

- Human rights defenders
- Apathy
- Courage
- Right to housing
- Freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment
- Freedom of expression

### ABOUT THIS LESSON:

Students practise their skills of communication and persuasion using the case of a human rights defender in China.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students understand the commitment and courage of human rights defenders
- Students improve their communication skills
- Students know about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign, and are prepared to write a letter in support of one of the people the campaign is focusing on.

### PREPARATION AND RESOURCES:

Make copies of the information on Ni Yulan from page 10. You will need at least one copy for every two students

### TIME NEEDED:

45 minutes

AGE: 14+

## DISCUSSION:

### 'I DID NOT SPEAK UP...'

1. Read the class the short poem by Pastor Martin Niemoller on page 9.
2. Ask for brief reactions from students:
  - ▶ When do you think the poem was written?
  - ▶ What is it about? What was the author trying to say?
3. Give them some information about the poem (page 9). Then ask:
  - ▶ Why do we not always speak up when others are being oppressed, or having their human rights violated? What stops us?
  - ▶ Can you think of any examples of this happening, perhaps from your own lives?
  - ▶ Can you think of examples when you, or others, did speak up for others?
4. Give students some brief information about the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Explain that sometimes it is hard to speak up for rights, and those who do so need added protections to make sure they do not suffer themselves. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was introduced with this aim in mind. (See page 4 for further information.)

 15 MINUTES

## INTRODUCING WRITE FOR RIGHTS

 5 MINUTES

5. Give students some information about the Write for Rights campaign (page 2), and introduce Ni Yulan as one of the human rights defenders that Amnesty has selected for this year's campaign. Tell them that Amnesty is asking people around the world to "speak up" for Ni Yulan – just as she has been speaking up for other human beings.
6. Use the information from page 3 to tell students about some of the success stories in past Write for Rights campaigns. Explain that these successes are mainly a result of the very large number of people who spoke up – and wrote for rights. Tell them:

If all students in this class can write a letter, and persuade just one other person to write a letter – that will be around 50 letters to the Chinese authorities!

**Optional:**

You could show the video at [amnesty.org/WriteForRights](https://www.amnesty.org/WriteForRights), which features some success stories from previous campaigns

## ACTIVITY: PITCHING FOR RIGHTS

 20 MINUTES

7. Divide students into pairs and hand out the information about Ni Yulan. Tell students that each pair needs to write a short "pitch" to persuade one other person to write for Ni Yulan's rights.
8. After 15 minutes, bring the group back together and ask if some of the pairs would like to read out their pitch to others in the class.
9. Conclude the lesson by asking the class if they would be persuaded by the "pitches" of other students.

- ▶ Which arguments were most convincing, and why?
- ▶ Do you intend to try them out?

Encourage students to try out their pitch on as many people as possible. You could even have a small competition: who can persuade the largest number of people to write letters?

10. Arrange for a follow-up lesson during which students can write letters supporting Ni Yulan. Remind them that Amnesty is calling on people around the world to write two letters to help her:

- A personal letter of solidarity to Ni Yulan herself, so that she knows that people around the world support her in her struggle for justice.
- A letter of protest to the Director of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau.

You can find more information on addresses and recommended content below.

**Optional:**

You could also use the short video about Ni Yulan at [amnesty.org/WriteForRights](https://www.amnesty.org/WriteForRights)

**Optional:**

You could direct them to the website at [amnesty.org/WriteForRights](https://www.amnesty.org/WriteForRights) and encourage them to write for the rights of other human rights defenders in the campaign.

## WRITE FOR RIGHTS INSTRUCTIONS

# WRITE A LETTER — SAVE A LIFE

1. Encourage students to write to Ni Yulan expressing their solidarity, admiration or anything else they feel towards her. Ask them to think about what she might want to hear at this difficult time.

Since Ni Yulan has no permanent place of residence, messages of solidarity should be shared on social media with the hashtag #NiYulan.

2. Encourage them to write to Wang Xiaohong, the Director of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, at the following address:

*No.9 Dongdajie  
Qianmen, Dongchengqu  
Beijingshi 100740  
People's Republic of China*

You can give students the following guidelines to help them write their letters:

### MAKE YOUR LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR PERSONAL:

- ▶ Tell him something about yourself
- ▶ Tell him what shocks you about Ni Yulan's case
- ▶ Urge him to stop the harassment of Ni Yulan and her family and allow them to find adequate accommodation in Beijing.



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# ‘FIRST THEY CAME...’

*First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist*

*Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist*

*Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist*

*Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew*

*Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me*

### **Pastor Martin Niemoller** (1892–1984)

There are various versions of Pastor Niemoller’s poem, but all contain the essential idea of human apathy in the face of gross human rights violations, except when an individual is directly affected. The immediate context for the poem was the Nazi treatment of socialists, trade unionists, Jews and others.

Pastor Niemoller himself had somewhat contradictory beliefs, and even supported Hitler’s initial rise to power. However, he later withdrew his support and after opposing the regime, spent 1937 to 1945 in different concentration camps.

CASE CARD

# NI YULAN



In the run-up to the Beijing Olympic Games of 2008, entire sections of the city were razed to the ground in order to make way for new construction. Ni Yulan was a lawyer, and she offered legal advice and support to many of the residents who had lost their homes. She also watched her own home being demolished by the Chinese authorities just before the Games.

For many years now, Ni Yulan has stood up for human rights, notably by defending others against eviction. But she and her family have paid a heavy price. For nearly 20 years, Ni Yulan has been subjected to surveillance, harassment and restriction of movement by the Chinese authorities; she has been expelled from her home at least seven times, has served five and a half years in prison, and as a result of the torture she was subjected to while in detention, she now uses a wheelchair.

## THE LATEST EVICTION

In April 2017, groups of unidentified individuals entered Ni Yulan's apartment on three different occasions. They first broke all the water pipes and cut off the electricity and internet; then they removed the windows and doors from the apartment; and then, on the third visit, dragged Ni Yulan, her husband and daughter out of the apartment and forced them into two vans. The family were driven around the city for hours and then dumped far away from their apartment at around 1am.

When they returned to their home, they found that the lock of the main door had been changed. Since then, Ni Yulan and her husband have been forced to camp out, moving from place to place and relying on supporters to provide food and other necessities.

***“We will not yield to this pressure because we will not be able to survive in this world if we don’t defend our rights. Facing (state) violence, we have to exhaust all legal means to fight for our rights.”***

