



**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**



PROTECT THE PROTEST

WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2022 **ACTIVITY**



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF WRITING LETTERS THAT CHANGE LIVES

When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.

Some 20 years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon. Over the following years, the idea spread. Today, Write for Rights is the world's biggest human rights event.

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to close to 4.7 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2021, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. Together, these individuals have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, freeing them from torture, harassment or unjust imprisonment.

This year's campaign channels this support towards people targeted for their peaceful activism, views or personal characteristics to protect their right to protest and express themselves freely. This includes women human rights defenders, trans rights activists,

artists and peaceful protesters. These individuals have variously been beaten, jailed, shot at, harassed and intimidated. Through Write for Rights, they will receive individual messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. They and their families know that their situations are being brought to public attention and they are not forgotten. By acting in solidarity and ensuring that everyone – including those most discriminated against – can participate in protests equally without fear of violence, we can create a more just and equal world.

Alongside the letter-writing actions, Amnesty speaks to those who have the power to change these people's situations, such as politicians in their countries. Write for Rights also gives visibility to these injustices through public events, and garners international attention on social media.

Individuals and groups featured in the campaign in previous years report the difference that these actions make, and often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people care about them.

Often, there is a noticeable change in the treatment of these individuals, and of other people and groups in a similar situation, by the country's authorities. Charges may be dropped and people released from detention. People are treated more humanely, and new laws or regulations addressing the injustice are introduced.

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Amnesty Nigeria activists participate in Write for Rights 2021.

Read about the people we're fighting for:
[amnesty.org.au/w4r](https://www.amnesty.org.au/w4r)

Contact Amnesty International Australia at
supporter@amnesty.org.au

Tweet your support to
[@AmnestyOz](https://twitter.com/AmnestyOz) using the hashtag [#W4R22](https://twitter.com/hashtag/W4R22)

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of online or offline settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family or an activist group. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the context and group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity, delivering it in-person or online, and any limitations. When participants want to take action on a case, discuss whether it is safe for them to do so.

The activities are all based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the cases. This methodology allows participants to:

DEVELOP key competencies and skills

FORM their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

TAKE CONTROL of their learning, and shape discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns

HAVE THE SPACE required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes.

If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start
www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/

Amnesty International offers online human rights education courses, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights campaign**: [academy.amnesty.org/learn](https://www.amnesty.org/learn)

YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

REUNITED WITH HIS FAMILY

On 30 June 2021, human rights defender Germain Rukuki was released after serving more than four years in prison in Burundi. He had been arrested, prosecuted and convicted simply for his human rights work.

During Write for Rights 2020, supporters from around the world took more than 436,000 actions calling for Germain's freedom. Unable to leave the country following his release, Germain was finally reunited with his family in Belgium in February 2022. He said: "Write for Rights really does have a positive impact. [The] support has made me, Germain Rukuki, come out of prison even more committed to defending human rights."



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FREED FROM DEATH ROW

Magai Matiop Ngong from South Sudan was just a schoolboy when he was sentenced to death on 14 November 2017 for murder. Magai recounted how he told the judge the death was an accident and that he was only 15 years old at the time. Yet Magai was tried for capital murder without any access to a lawyer. Over 700,000 actions were taken for Magai during Write for Rights 2019. In March 2022 the High Court agreed that, because he had been a child at the time, he should be released. Magai is now safely out of the country and determined more than ever to help people like him.



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FREED

Bernardo Caal Xol, a teacher and father, worked tirelessly to defend communities affected by hydroelectric projects on the Cahabón river, in northern Guatemala. In November 2018 he was sentenced to more than seven years in prison on bogus charges aimed at preventing his human rights work. During Write for Rights 2021 over half a million actions were taken for Bernardo and, in March 2022, he was released.



© Simone Dalmasso

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 and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

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



Amnesty Switzerland activists participate in Write for Rights 2021.

© Amnesty International Switzerland



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 its adoption on 10 December 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.

© UN Photo

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

 <p>CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.</p>	<p>Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights</p> <p>Article 2 Non-discrimination</p> <p>Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person</p> <p>Article 4 Freedom from slavery</p> <p>Article 5 Freedom from torture</p>
 <p>LEGAL RIGHTS Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.</p>	<p>Article 6 All are protected by the law</p> <p>Article 7 All are equal before the law</p> <p>Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated</p> <p>Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile</p> <p>Article 10 Right to a fair trial</p> <p>Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty</p> <p>Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection</p>
 <p>SOCIAL RIGHTS Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.</p>	<p>Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life</p> <p>Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders</p> <p>Article 16 Right to marry and start a family</p> <p>Article 24 Right to rest and leisure</p> <p>Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education</p>
 <p>ECONOMIC RIGHTS Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.</p>	<p>Article 15 Right to a nationality</p> <p>Article 17 Right to own property and possessions</p> <p>Article 22 Right to social security</p> <p>Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union</p> <p>Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being</p>
 <p>POLITICAL RIGHTS Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion</p>	<p>Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief)</p> <p>Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information</p> <p>Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way</p> <p>Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country</p>
 <p>CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.</p>	<p>Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life</p> <p>Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized</p> <p>Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others</p> <p>Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!</p>

ACTIVITY

PROTECT THE PROTEST!

KEY CONCEPTS

- right to freedom of expression
- right to freedom of peaceful assembly
- human rights defenders and activists

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants are introduced to all the individuals in the 2022 Write for Rights campaign and match their at-risk human rights to those provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write letters and take action.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **learn** about the Write for Rights campaign;
- **familiarize** themselves with the individuals' stories that are featured this year;
- **explore** the rights contained in the UDHR and how these relate to protests;
- **take action** for human rights.

AGE: 12-15+

Please read the stories first to check they are appropriate for the participants.

TIME NEEDED

60 minutes – you may want additional time for the **Take Action** section.

MATERIALS

- **Handout:** Story cards and take action cards (pages 9-18)
- **Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** simplified version (page 5)
- **Background information** on the right to protest (page 19)
- Paper, pens and creative letter-writing materials
- Optional: Template letters from www.amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights-activist-resources-2022/
- Optional: Videos of the individuals featured in the stories, from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos

PREPARATION

- Print the handouts
- Read the background information on the right to protest (page 19)

MORE INFORMATION

- Take the Write for Rights short course at academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/145/write-for-rights-a-short-guide
- Take our Right to Protest short course at academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/201/the-right-to-protest
- Read Amnesty's briefing on the right to protest at amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT30/5856/2022/en/
- Download the booklet "Understanding your Human Rights" at amnesty.org.au/how-it-works/what-are-human-rights/

IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER

- The story of Joannah, Cecillia and Netsai from Zimbabwe includes references to sexual violence and specific practices of torture which can be disturbing and may cause participants to feel uncomfortable. Please check in with them during the activity to see how they are coping. Explain that if at any moment anyone wants to stop participating due to the subject matter, that is OK.
- In contexts where using the word *protest* is too controversial and might put participants at risk, you may want to replace it with an alternative such as *the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression*.
- More specific 60-minute activities for the individual stories from Russia, Paraguay, Bangladesh and Morocco can be found here: www.amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights-activist-resources-2022/

1. INTRODUCING THE STORIES

Divide the participants into small groups or pairs and give each group one of the **story cards** that you have selected to use. Explain that this activity will introduce some real people living in different countries.

Ask groups to read about the person (or people) on their card. They can discuss their ideas together. They should:

- **Draw up a list of what they think is wrong or unfair about what happened to this person or the way the person is being treated.**
- **Prepare to present their person to the rest of the group.**

After five minutes, invite everyone back to the group and ask each group to introduce their case to the others and list the injustices they have found.



OPTIONAL: If you have access to a world map, ask each group to mark the country in which their story took place. At the end, having located the stories and countries, ask the participants what stands out when looking at the world map and why it is important that we care about these cases and act upon them. Highlight that human rights violations can occur anywhere across the world and affect all of us. It is important to learn about our rights and to defend them and the rights of others.

2. PROTESTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

 25 MINUTES

Ask what the common themes are in these stories. If it does not come up from the answers, point out how they are all related to protests. Brainstorm what the word 'protest' means to the participants.

- What do participants think of when they hear the word protest?
- What is a protest?
- Why do people protest?
- What might be some negative and positive associations of protests?

You can use the **background information** (page 19) to explain the concept of peaceful protests. Explain that protests are linked to human rights in several ways. People have the right to peacefully express their views and to come together and collectively promote and defend their shared ideas. However, governments sometimes abuse their authority by stifling criticism and silencing peaceful opposition. They do this by criminalizing protests, punishing speech that is critical of the government and implementing unlawful measures that violate other human rights.

Hand out copies of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR) on page 5. Ask participants to go back to their smaller groups and identify any rights which may have been violated for the people from the story card. Give them 10 minutes to link the injustices they found to the rights in the UDHR. In plenary, ask participants to share what they found. Conclude by asking what they have learned from this activity.

Explain how human rights are interconnected and how violating the right to protest can also affect other human rights. For that reason, it is essential to protect the right to protest and in doing so protect other human rights.

If this is the first time that participants have been introduced to the UDHR, you should start by explaining what it is, using the information on page 4.

Alternatively, you can share the booklet "Understanding Your Human Rights" with all participants: [amnesty.org.au/how-it-works/what-are-human-rights/](https://www.amnesty.org.au/how-it-works/what-are-human-rights/)



Members of the Wasanii Sanaa youth organization in Kibera slum, Kenya, use action-packed theatre, poetry and dance to teach the community about human rights.

3. TAKE ACTION

 15 MINUTES

Explain that the people on the cards have all been included in Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign. Tell participants about the campaign and explain that Amnesty is calling on people to write letters both to the individuals affected, and to the officials responsible for upholding their human rights. An overview of the campaign is given on page 2.

Show participants the videos of the people featured in this year's campaign which can be found here: www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

WRITE A LETTER

Tell the participants that everyone's letters will be sent to the officials. Ask participants to choose one of the people whose cases they have learned about, and give them a copy of the **take action card** for that person.

Give everyone a piece of paper and allow time for them to write their letters. Explain that a personal message to the officials can have the most impact. Ask them to:

- Write something about themselves.
- Tell the official what shocks them about the case.
- Say why they think it is important that governments respect human rights.

If people wish to share their letters afterwards, provide an opportunity for them to do so.

Conclude by asking participants to use a few words to express their feelings at the end of the activity. Try to take contributions from everyone.

Please send all your letters back to Amnesty International Australia before **31 January 2023** at *Locked Bag 23, Broadway NSW 2007* and we'll post them to the target, include them in the handover in February 2023 and ensure that your solidarity messages are delivered!

SHOW SOLIDARITY

If you have time, you can also do some of the solidarity actions on the take action card.

Learn more about other activities in the Write for Rights campaign at amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights-activist-resources-2022/



Canal Pride Parade in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2018.

FACING PRISON FOR A FACEBOOK POST

SHAHNEWAZ CHOWDHURY 📍 BANGLADESH

A big cricket fan, Shahnewaz has been playing since childhood. He also has a passion for writing and uses the written word to speak out about the struggles faced by people in his region of Banshkhali, a low-lying coastal area in the south-east of Bangladesh, vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

A new coal-fired power plant in Shahnewaz's village was supposed to be a turning point in the region's development. But Shahnewaz was scared about the environmental destruction it would bring.

On 26 May 2021, the area was swept up by a storm. Heavy rainfall and strong winds pounded the village. Homes were destroyed. Worried about the impact of environmentally damaging projects like the new power plant, which he believed

contributed to an increase in tidal surges, Shahnewaz took to Facebook to raise his concerns. Encouraging young people to speak out, Shahnewaz wrote: "the youth of Banshkhali must resist injustice and support development through fearless writing."

The following day, the power plant company filed a case against Shahnewaz, accusing him of posting false information. On 28 May 2021, he was arrested by the police for his Facebook post under Bangladesh's oppressive Digital Security Act. He was detained in inhumane conditions for 80 days, without trial. Shahnewaz was granted bail on 16 August 2021, but if he's convicted, he faces many years in prison.



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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

STORY CARD

JAILED FOR ATTENDING HER FIRST PROTEST

DORGELESSE NGUESSAN 📍 CAMEROON

Dorgelesse has always dreamt of owning a thriving beauty institute. Two years ago, the single mother and hairdresser was just starting to expand her hairdressing business to include manicures.

On 22 September 2020, Dorgelesse's dream was shattered when she was arrested during a protest in Douala, Cameroon. It was her first ever protest. She had never been politically active before, but her concerns about the state of Cameroon's economy led her to join the demonstrations.

When the peaceful protest began, security forces fired rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters. As Dorgelesse turned into an alleyway, police followed her and fellow

protesters and blocked them in. They arrested her and took her to a police station, where she was held in a cell with 22 other people in terrible conditions.

On 29 September 2020, Dorgelesse was transferred to Douala Central Prison, where she still remains. She was charged with "insurrection, assembly, meetings and public demonstrations" and tried by a military court. She was sentenced to five years in prison on 7 December 2021.

Dorgelesse is the breadwinner of her family. Her 18-year-old son has sickle cell anaemia, and the family are struggling to pay for his medication. Dorgelesse is desperate to be reunited with them.



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

STORY CARD

TELL BANGLADESH TO DROP THE CHARGES TODAY

WRITE TO THE BANGLADESHI AUTHORITIES

Honourable Minister,

I call on you to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Shahnewaz Chowdhury, who is charged under Bangladesh's Digital Security Act (DSA) and if convicted faces up to a decade in prison just for expressing his views on Facebook.

The DSA is being weaponized by the government and powerful non-state actors to stifle dissent, and the least powerful are disproportionately targeted. I call on you to repeal or amend the DSA and other domestic laws in line with international human rights standards on the right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW SHAHNEWAZ HE'S NOT ALONE

Write him a message of friendship and support.



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

TAKE ACTION CARD

TELL CAMEROON TO FREE DORGELESSE TODAY

WRITE TO THE CAMEROONIAN AUTHORITIES

Your Excellency,

I am writing to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Dorgelesse Nguessan, who is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Dorgelesse was arrested in Douala, while attending her first ever protest. She had never been politically active, but her concerns about the state of Cameroon's economy led her to join the demonstrations.

Dorgelesse was found guilty of "insurrection, assembly, meetings and public demonstrations" and after an unfair trial by a military court she was sentenced to five years in prison. She must be freed and returned to her family, who rely on her as the main wage-earner.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW DORGELESSE YOU'RE WITH HER

Send Dorgelesse your message of solidarity and hope.



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

TAKE ACTION CARD

KILLED BY A TEAR GAS GRENADE

ZINEB REDOUANE 📍 FRANCE

Zineb Redouane, an 80-year-old woman who lived in Marseille, France, found joy in music and flowers. On the evening of 1 December 2018, Zineb was preparing dinner and chatting to her daughter on the phone in her fourth-floor apartment. In the streets below, people were protesting about poor living conditions in Marseille, after two residential buildings collapsed, killing eight people. Police officers were using tear gas to disperse the protesters.

Realizing that tear gas was entering through her open window, Zineb went to the window to close it. She noticed police officers in the street below. What happened next was truly awful. One of the police officers pointed a tear gas grenade launcher in Zineb's direction and fired. She was hit in the face by an MP7 tear gas grenade.

Zineb was taken to hospital with severe facial wounds and bleeding. She was suffocating because of the fractures in her jawbone and the collapse of the roof of her mouth. She needed surgery urgently, but it couldn't be completed because she went into cardiac arrest under the anaesthetic. Zineb went into cardiac arrest several more times and died.

Zineb was killed by the reckless use of a tear gas grenade. Nearly four years later, an investigation into her death is still ongoing, and no one has been charged or suspended over the killing. Zineb's family are still waiting for justice.



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LOCKED UP FOR 20 YEARS FOR DEMANDING CHANGE

NASSER ZEFZAFI 📍 MOROCCO / WESTERN SAHARA

Nasser Zefzafi was living a peaceful life with his family in the Rif region of northern Morocco, an area struggling with poor healthcare, education and employment opportunities. Its population has been marginalized by successive governments in Morocco.

Triggered by the death of a fishmonger who was crushed by a rubbish truck as he tried to recover fish confiscated by the authorities, in October 2016 peaceful protests began in Nasser's town. Millions of people marched peacefully to express their sadness and frustration. They had had enough. They were demanding change. The Hirak El-Rif movement was born, and Nasser, a firm believer in justice and equality, became a prominent figure in the movement.

In the months that followed, Moroccan security forces arrested hundreds of protesters. On 29 May 2017, Nasser was arrested for interrupting a sermon at a mosque and accusing the Imam (Islamic prayer leader) of acting as a mouthpiece for the authorities. Whilst in custody, police officers subjected Nasser to torture and other ill-treatment. On 27 June 2018, Nasser was sentenced to 20 years in prison, just for speaking out. He has been detained in prolonged solitary confinement since his arrest.

Forced to live in terrible conditions in prison, Nasser's health has deteriorated significantly. He's suffering from health conditions including respiratory and eyesight problems and nerve pain. The prison authorities have denied him the medical care he needs.



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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

STORY CARD

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR ZINEB NOW

WRITE TO THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES

Dear Prosecutor,

I am writing to demand full accountability for the death of Zineb Redouane, who was killed due to reckless use of tear gas grenades during a protest. All involved in her killing, including the police officer suspected of firing the grenade and his chain of command, must be held fully accountable.

I also call for the implementation of measures to ensure victims of unlawful use of force by police can obtain access to justice. Ensuring the end of impunity needs transparency through the publication of any complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions relating to the unlawful use of force by law enforcement officials.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW ZINEB'S FAMILY YOU'RE WITH THEM

Send them messages of solidarity and hope to help them stay strong in their battle for justice.



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

TAKE ACTION CARD

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TELL THE MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES TO FREE NASSER TODAY

WRITE TO THE MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES

Your Excellency,

I call on you to immediately and unconditionally release Nasser Zefzafi and quash his unfair conviction, as he is imprisoned for exercising his right to protest.

Nasser is being held in terrible conditions, causing his health to deteriorate significantly. He is suffering from health conditions including respiratory and eyesight problems and nerve pain.

The prison authorities have denied him the medical care he needs. Pending his release, please ensure that Nasser is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has access to adequate healthcare in prison.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW NASSER YOU'RE WITH HIM

Send him your messages of friendship and hope to help lift his spirits in prison.



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JAILED FOR REMEMBERING VICTIMS OF DEADLY CRACKDOWN

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CHOW HANG-TUNG 📍 HONG KONG

A brilliant student from a top university, Chow could have pursued all sorts of high-flying careers. Instead, she has dedicated her life to fearlessly protecting people's rights as a human rights lawyer and activist.

Chow was the vice-chairperson of the Hong Kong Alliance, which organized the world's biggest candlelight vigil commemorating victims of the Tiananmen crackdown. In 1989, hundreds – possibly thousands – of people were killed in the streets around Tiananmen Square, Beijing, as troops opened fire, killing protesters peacefully calling for economic and social reforms.

The Chinese government wants people to forget, but Chow has made it her mission to remember the victims.

In 2020 and 2021, Hong Kong authorities banned the vigil, citing public health

reasons in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 4 June 2021, Chow encouraged people on social media to commemorate the crackdown by lighting candles. She was arrested on that day for “advertising or publicizing unauthorized assembly”.

Chow is now serving 22 months in jail for peacefully remembering the victims of a horrific crackdown. She is also facing further imprisonment for allegedly endangering national security through her entirely peaceful actions. In the face of all this, Chow's bravery shines through. “To say I'm not afraid would be a lie, but I'm not so afraid I dare do nothing”, she says.



TORTURED AND UNJUSTLY JAILED FOR PROTESTING

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STORY CARD

VAHID AFKARI 📍 IRAN

Vahid Afkari comes from a close-knit family. He enjoyed reading, singing and dancing at home with his brothers, Habib and Navid.

In 2016, 2017 and 2018 Vahid, Navid and Habib peacefully joined protests in their home town of Shiraz about inequality and political repression. On 17 September 2018, Vahid and Navid were arrested at their home for protesting. Habib was arrested three months later.

The Iranian authorities held the three brothers in solitary confinement, tortured them, and forced them to “confess” to crimes they repeatedly said they did not commit. In a huge miscarriage of justice, the brothers were convicted on politically motivated charges stemming from their peaceful participation in protests. Vahid and Navid were also convicted after a baseless accusation involving the murder of a security official. The authorities unjustly sentenced

Navid to death, and Habib and Vahid to decades in prison and 74 lashes each.

The three brothers were moved to solitary confinement cells in September 2020. On 12 September 2020, Navid was executed in secret, without any warning to him, his family, or his lawyers. Navid's execution ignited outrage in Iran and throughout the world and led to escalated campaigning for Habib and Vahid. Habib was released from prison in March 2022, after spending 550 days in solitary confinement.

The authorities have been cruelly holding Vahid in solitary confinement since September 2020 and totally isolating him from other prisoners, to punish him for not bending to the authorities' demands to publicly make statements against people in Iran and around the world who have sought justice for his family.



ASK HONG KONG TO FREE CHOW TODAY

WRITE TO THE HONG KONG AUTHORITIES

Dear Secretary,

I call on you to immediately and unconditionally release human rights lawyer Chow Hang-tung and drop all charges against her, as she has been charged solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Chow is serving 22 months in jail for peacefully remembering the victims of the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989. She is also facing further wrongful imprisonment for allegedly endangering national security through her entirely peaceful actions.

Yours sincerely,

HELP KEEP CHOW'S SPIRIT STRONG

Send her your message of solidarity and hope. Draw pictures of cats and alpacas (Chow is a huge fan) to accompany your message.



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

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TAKE ACTION CARD

© Peter Parks/AFP/Getty Images

TELL IRAN TO FREE VAHID AFKARI

WRITE TO THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES

Dear Sir,

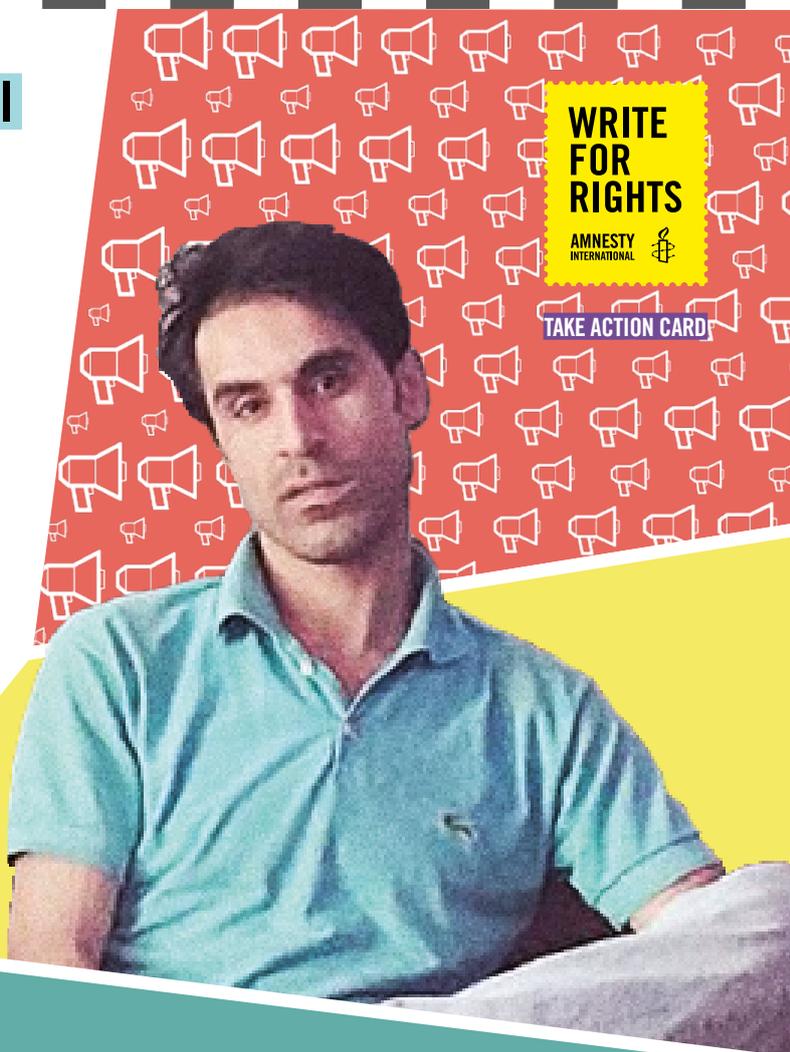
I urge you to release Vahid Afkari immediately as he is being arbitrarily detained for his peaceful participation in protests, quash his unjust convictions and sentences and drop all charges relating to the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

Vahid Afkari is being held in solitary confinement in Adelabad prison in Fars province and the large body of evidence proving his innocence is being ignored by the authorities. Pending his release, he must be held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners, with access to adequate healthcare – outside prison if necessary – and to his family.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW VAHID AFKARI THAT HE IS NOT ALONE

Send your messages of support to Vahid.



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

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DON'T TELL US WHO WE ARE

YREN ROTELA AND MARIANA SEPÚLVEDA ♀ PARAGUAY

Yren and Mariana want to live their lives freely and do things they love, like playing volleyball, dancing and going to the theatre. However, as trans women, Yren and Mariana are busy defending themselves against discrimination. They've been bullied, physically attacked and prevented from speaking out about the issues they face in their daily lives.

Trans people in Paraguay cannot legally change their names or obtain identity documents that match their gender identity, among other discriminatory practices. This means trans students cannot get school certificates in their chosen names, which makes finding a job difficult. This inequality has motivated Yren and Mariana to become activists, to demand change.

But protesting isn't easy for trans people in Paraguay. Paraguay is a very conservative country which treats trans people and the wider LGBTI community unfairly. It tries to make them invisible. Because of this, protests by trans groups are often banned, and in some cases demonstrations have been attacked.

Yren and Mariana have been fighting for years to change their legal names. If they could get documentation that matches who they are, it would mean the state had started to recognize their existence as trans women. As Yren says: "I came into the world to show who I am, not to be told who I am."



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SHE OPPOSED THE WAR NOW SHE FACES PRISON

ALEKSANDRA SKOCHILENKO ♀ RUSSIA

Aleksandra (or Sasha for short) fills her life with music and art. In better times, she loved playing the piano, guitar, mandolin and flute, and hosted jams for anyone who wanted to play together.

Troubled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Aleksandra took action on 31 March 2022. She replaced price tags in a local supermarket in Saint Petersburg with little paper labels containing information about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In the early morning of 11 April 2022, police arrested Aleksandra and charged her with "public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" – a new article of the criminal code hastily

introduced by the Russian government in March 2022 to try and stop Russian people criticizing the invasion of Ukraine. Dozens of people have already been detained under this new offence.

Aleksandra has been held in detention ever since, in terrible conditions. She has coeliac disease and has been forced to go hungry most of the time because the detention centre has not given her the gluten-free food she needs. Aleksandra has also been harassed by detention centre employees and her cellmates. If she is convicted, Aleksandra faces up to 10 years in prison.



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TELL PARAGUAY TO LEGALLY RECOGNIZE THE IDENTITY OF TRANS PEOPLE SO THEY CAN EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS

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WRITE TO THE PARAGUAYAN AUTHORITIES

Your Excellency,

I call on you to guarantee all means to legally recognize the identities of Yren Rotela and Mariana Sepúlveda, two transgender women. Denying them the right to legally change their names and obtain identity documents matching their gender identity is discriminatory. It impacts their ability to gain equal education, employment, housing, healthcare, and further exposes them to violence, harassment and stigma.

In Paraguay, trans activists are silenced and their protests are often banned or attacked. I call on you to guarantee legal frameworks to end this discriminatory practice. Without legal gender recognition, a transgender person's ability to live in dignity, equality and security, and with the rights and protections afforded to other members of society, is severely compromised.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW YREN AND MARIANA YOU'RE WITH THEM

Send your messages of friendship and hope to Yren and Mariana to continue in their fight.



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TELL RUSSIA TO FREE ALEKSANDRA NOW

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WRITE TO THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

Dear Prosecutor,

I call on you to ensure the release of Aleksandra Skochilenko, who is being detained for criticizing Russia's war against Ukraine. Everyone has a right to freely express their opinions, including Aleksandra. All charges against her must be dropped and she should immediately and unconditionally be released from prison.

I also call on you to ensure that, pending her release, Aleksandra is held in conditions that comply with international standards, and she has access to adequate healthcare as well as the food she needs in relation to her medical condition. Aleksandra must also be protected from harassment by detention centre employees and her cellmates.

Yours sincerely,

HELP KEEP ALEKSANDRA'S SPIRIT STRONG

Send her your message of solidarity and hope. Draw pictures of cats (Aleksandra has two called Lucy and Maude!) to accompany your message.



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© Aleksandra Skochilenko

ARTIST JAILED FOR PROTECTING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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LUIS MANUEL OTERO ALCÁNTARA 📍 CUBA

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara is a Black Cuban self-taught artist. He loves to paint, dance, and wear bright pink suits. His home in San Isidro, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Cuba's capital, Havana, is a haven for the community – an open house for people to meet and connect.

Frustrated by Decree 349, a law seeking to silence critical artists, Luis Manuel became a leader of the San Isidro Movement: a diverse group of artists, journalists and activists defending the right to freedom of expression whose members have been intimidated, surveilled and detained.

On 2 May 2021, state security officials took Luis Manuel from his home, where he had been on hunger strike protesting against the

confiscation of his artworks by the authorities. He was taken to hospital and denied access to the outside world. Upon his release a month later, security officials continued to watch his every move.

On 11 July 2021, Luis Manuel posted a video online, saying he would be taking part in one of the largest demonstrations Cuba had seen in decades. Luis Manuel was arrested before the protest took place and taken to Guanajay maximum security prison, where he remains. In June 2022, he was sentenced to five years in prison, after a trial behind closed doors. In prison, Luis Manuel's health is declining and he's not getting proper medical care.



ABDUCTED, BEATEN, SEXUALLY ASSAULTED AND JAILED FOR PROTESTING

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JOANAH MAMOMBE, NETSAI MAROVA AND CECILLIA CHIMBIRI 📍 ZIMBABWE

Joanah, Netsai and Cecilia are three women with a lot of things in common: they love playing board games, watching Netflix and are passionate about politics. Sadly, they now share horrific memories of a terrible and degrading attack.

On 13 May 2020, after leading an anti-government protest, Joanah, Netsai and Cecilia were arbitrarily arrested in Harare, taken to a police station and forced into an unmarked car. With hoods over their heads, they were driven out of the city. Scared for their lives, the women were thrown into a pit, beaten, sexually assaulted and forced to eat human excrement. They were found two days later, miles from Harare. Their clothes torn, covered in cuts and bruises, they were taken to hospital.

While still hospitalized, Joanah, Netsai and Cecilia were charged with criminal offences relating to the protest. Prison guards and police officers were at the hospital to prevent them from talking to journalists. After stating that they recognized some of their attackers, the women were re-arrested on 10 June 2020 and charged with faking their ordeal. They were detained until 26 June 2020, when they were given bail.

Joanah, Netsai and Cecilia's trial began in January 2022 and continues. To date, no one has been held accountable for their terrible trauma.



TELL CUBA TO IMMEDIATELY FREE LUIS MANUEL

WRITE TO THE CUBAN AUTHORITIES

Dear President,

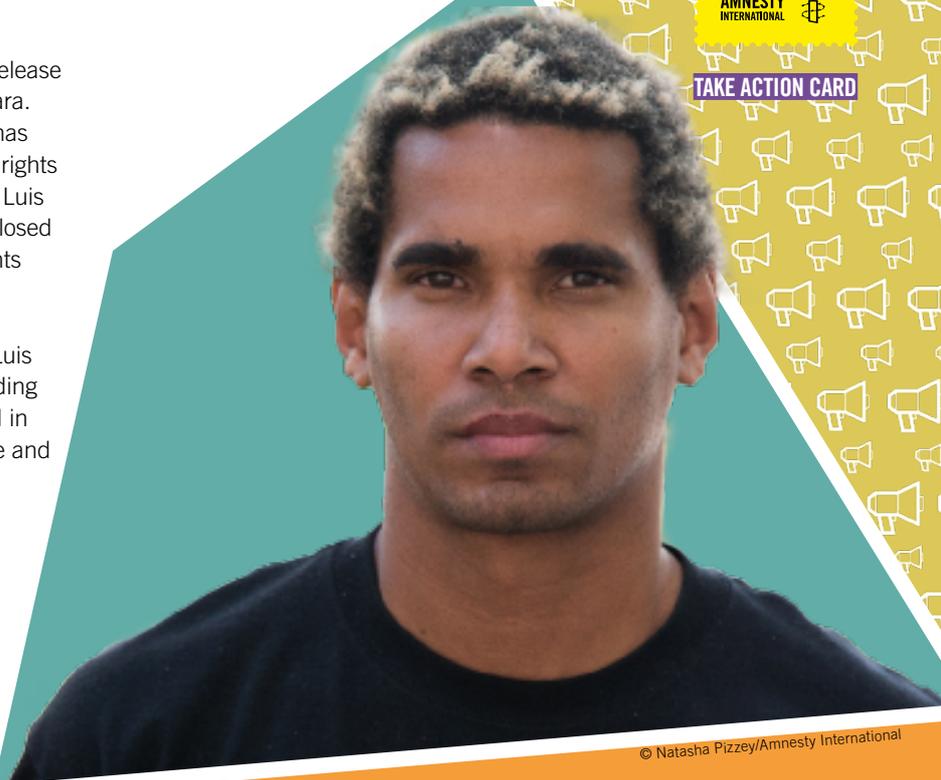
I call on you to immediately and unconditionally release prisoner of conscience Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara. All charges against him must be dropped, as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Luis Manuel's trial was unfair and took place behind closed doors without access for independent human rights monitors or journalists.

While being held in a maximum-security prison, Luis Manuel's health has reportedly deteriorated. Pending his release, please ensure that he is not ill-treated in detention, and has access to adequate healthcare and regular contact with his family and lawyers.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW LUIS MANUEL YOU'RE WITH HIM

Send your messages and artwork of friendship and hope, so Luis Manuel knows you are standing with him.



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DEMAND JUSTICE FOR JOANAH, NETSAI AND CECILLIA

WRITE TO THE ZIMBABWEAN AUTHORITIES

Your Excellency,

I call on you to immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Joana Mamombe, Netsai Marova and Cecillia Chimbiri, charged solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Joana, Netsai and Cecillia were arbitrarily arrested following a protest in Harare, taken to a police station, and forcibly driven out of the city to a place where they were beaten and sexually assaulted. While still hospitalized, they were charged with offences related to the protest and later charged with faking their ordeal. To date, no one has been held accountable.

Joana, Netsai and Cecillia have suffered continuous harassment since their arrest and must be protected.

Yours sincerely,

SHOW JOANAH, NETSAI AND CECILLIA THAT YOU BELIEVE IN THEM

Send them your message of solidarity and hope. Draw pictures of butterflies and flowers to accompany your message.



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

There is no human right officially recognized in international law called 'the right to protest'. You won't find the word 'protest' in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, that does not mean that it isn't protected by human rights. The right to protest is guaranteed by other human rights and freedoms, above all the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression. Most protests are assemblies (gatherings of people) to express opinions. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly protects the intentional and temporary gathering of individuals in a private or public space for a specific purpose. Such assemblies include: political demonstrations, marches, strike actions, sit-ins, vigils, rallies, street closures, pot-banging sessions, cultural or religious celebrations, virtual/digital protests and many more.

Peaceful protest is a dynamic and public way of exercising our human rights. Throughout history, protests have allowed individuals and groups to express dissent, opinions and ideas, expose injustice and abuse, and demand accountability from those in power, through collective mobilization, creativity and defiance. But protesters may be considered a menace to people in power, especially when the ideas or opinions expressed challenge the status quo and power dynamics. Instead of addressing pressing concerns and promoting dialogue to find solutions to injustice, abuses and discrimination, governments often respond by stigmatizing and cracking down on peaceful protesters.

People participating in protests do not all face the same barriers. Women, LGBTI people and gender non-conforming people face specific challenges to participation in protests and more generally in the civic space, as their rights are restricted by societies that use different types of violence, marginalization, social norms and sometimes even legislation to repress them and to maintain a status quo dominated by patriarchy and heteronormativity.

CRIMINALIZATION OF PROTESTERS

Peaceful protests often have an element of disruption, whether it is slowing or blocking traffic, making noise, or even trespassing on private spaces. Even if protests seem to have a disorderly, chaotic or disruptive manner, they should be allowed to go on if they remain peaceful. However, human rights defenders are facing a higher level of threat in the context of peaceful assemblies, both as organizers and participants. Tactics used to police demonstrations continue to be one of the main threats to the safe and free exercise of the right to peaceful assembly, with many governments using unlawful force, intimidation and arbitrary arrests against protesters.

When peaceful protesters are called criminals and troublemakers, or when they are charged with criminal offences and sued, for example for ruinous damages, or accused of very serious crimes such as terrorism or sedition, this not only silences individuals; it also delegitimizes specific groups of protesters and their causes. This process of stigmatization and criminalization of protesters is an attempt to stop them and others from joining in with their actions or sympathizing with their calls. Arresting, detaining and prosecuting peaceful protesters are also tactics used by governments to 'make an example' of them, and thus silence criticism and instil fear in the wider population to discourage them from joining further protests or direct actions.



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Top to bottom: International Women's Day in Mexico City, 2017; People from different backgrounds protesting in Poland in 2019 in solidarity with judges and prosecutors; Despite a violent crackdown on protests, these Sudanese women demonstrated in large numbers in 2019; Protesters dressed as police at a pro-democracy march in Hong Kong in 2014.

ABOUT

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 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.

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