

A portrait of Nasser Zefzafi, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a grey polo shirt. The portrait is set against a yellow background and is framed by a white circular border. The overall image has a collage-like feel with various background elements including a crowd, a red patterned area, and a street scene.

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

A background image of a street scene in Morocco, showing buildings, a car, and a cloudy sky. The image is in a muted, teal-like color.

TWENTY YEARS IN PRISON FOR SPEAKING OUT

NASSER ZEFZAFI  **MOROCCO**

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.

© Amnesty International Nigeria



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

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: <https://academy.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.

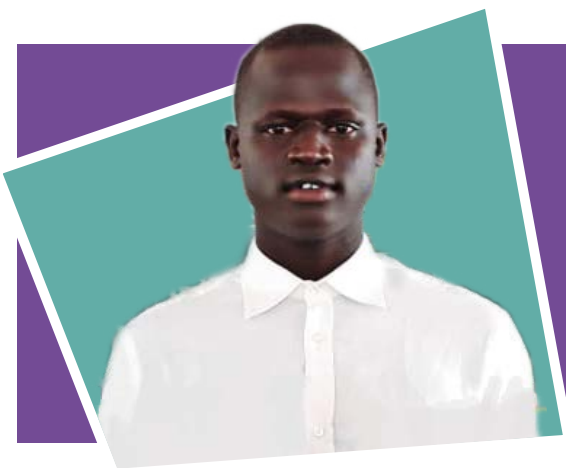
During Write for Rights 2020, supporters from around the world took more than 436,000 actions calling for Germain's freedom. Unable to leave the country following his release, Germain was finally reunited with his family in Belgium in February 2022. He said: "Write for Rights really does have a positive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



© Private

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 Dalmaso

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.

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!

ACTIVITY

ARBITRARY DETENTION
AND UNFAIR TRIAL

KEY CONCEPTS

- arbitrary detention
- unfair trial
- torture and other ill-treatment
- prolonged solitary confinement
- right to freedom of expression
- right to protest

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants will learn about freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to protest, through the real story of Nasser Zefzafi, a community leader and human rights defender in Morocco who has been sentenced to 20 years in prison for speaking out. As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write a letter to call for Nasser's immediate and unconditional release and to show solidarity with him.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **reflect** on their own previous action against injustice;
- **explore** the link between the commitment and courage of speaking out and the risks and possible human rights violations some people face because of it;
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign;
- **write** letters in support of and showing solidarity with Nasser.

AGE: 12+

TIME NEEDED

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

MATERIALS

- **Handout:** Nasser's story (page 11)
- **Handout:** Rights and narrative cards (page 9)
- **Background information** on protests and the right to a fair trial (page 10)
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** simplified version (page 5)
- Paper, markers, craft material, pens and envelopes (if sending letters)
- Optional: Template letters from www.amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights-activist-resources-2022/
- Optional: Video of Nasser from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

PREPARATION

- Print handouts, background information and copies of the UDHR for each participant/group.
- Cut out the narrative and rights cards (page 9).
- Read the background information on page 10 and Nasser's story on page 11.

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

- 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*.

1. HEY! I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY!

Hand out paper, markers or other creative craft material to all participants and explain that they can use this to write or draw during self-reflection. Read the following paragraph aloud and ask participants to use the time to reflect individually:

"Focus on one time in your life where you spoke up about something that was unjust. What happened? Why did you speak up? Were there any consequences for you, positive or negative? How did it affect you in terms of your willingness to speak up about something again in the future?"

Give participants a couple of minutes to write, draw or create as they reflect on the questions. Split participants into pairs, ask them to share one of their memories, thoughts or reflections and give them the following questions for discussion:

- **Is it hard for you to stand up against injustice – why or why not?**
- **What would you need in order to speak out against injustice more often?**
- **What did you learn from this exercise?**

Bring participants back together and collect some of the responses from the pairs.





25 MINUTES

2. IN PRISON FOR DEMANDING CHANGE: NASSER'S STORY

Hand out a copy of the **summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** from page 5. If this is the first time that participants have been introduced to human rights, you should focus on building a shared understanding of what it means first, using the information about the UDHR on page 4. Alternatively, you can share the booklet *Understanding Your Human Rights* with all participants: www.amnesty.org.au/how-it-works/what-are-human-rights/

Explain that participants will now learn about Nasser, a local community leader in northern Morocco. He is part of a movement that has been protesting peacefully to demand fairer treatment of their community – who speak Amazigh, which is different from the Arabic spoken across Morocco – as well as social-justice related demands, such as a better healthcare system, better infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, and improved opportunities for people to work in the region.

Divide the participants into groups of about four or five people, and give each group a copy of **Nasser's story** (page 11) and a set of **narrative cards** (page 9). Do not hand out the rights cards yet. Tell them to read through the story in their groups and make sure they understand what has happened. Give them about five minutes, then explain the task with the rights cards:

Each group will receive five cards representing different human rights from the UDHR.

Each of these rights cards should be matched to one of the narrative cards you already have, describing what has happened to Nasser.

BUT... you may find that some of your cards could be matched to more than one right. You need to choose one, so that you use up all of your cards.

Hand out the sets of rights cards and ask the participants to begin the matching task. After five minutes, bring the group back together. Check groups' responses to the task and make sure they have matched the rights correctly. Use the following questions to check their understanding and reflect on their experience:

- **How easy was it to match the rights to the narrative? What, if anything, was difficult?**
- **Are there any rights which you do not fully understand?**
- **What is your general impression about Nasser's story? Did anything surprise or shock you?**

Conclude by explaining that human rights are often described as being **"inalienable"**, **"indivisible"** and **"interdependent"**. **Inalienable** means that human rights cannot be taken away under any circumstances, including in wars or emergency situations. **Indivisible** means that all human rights are equally important. No one can decide that certain rights matter more than others. **Interdependent** means that when one right is abused, it has a negative impact on other rights, as Nasser's story shows. Similarly, when a certain right is realized, it contributes to other rights being fulfilled, which is why Amnesty is working for Nasser's release.



3. TAKE ACTION

 15 MINUTES

Explain about Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to demand justice for Nasser. Give examples from last year's campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be.

If there isn't enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative. Alternatively you can prepare printed letter templates available here: www.amnesty.org.au/write-for-rights-activist-resources-2022/

Show participants the video of Nasser which can be found here: www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to the Moroccan authorities addressing the letter to *Your Excellency*. Completed letters should be sent to Amnesty International Australia who will include them in their handover to the Moroccan authorities. Explain that a personal message to the officials can have the most impact. You can give the participants the following guidelines to help them write their letter:

- Tell the authorities something about yourself to make this a personal letter.
- Tell them what shocks you about the case of Nasser Zefzafi.
- Tell them why you think it is important that governments respect the right to freedom of expression.
- Tell them to **release Nasser Zefzafi immediately and unconditionally and quash his conviction.**

SHOW SOLIDARITY

Show Nasser you're with him. Send him your messages of friendship and hope to help lift his spirits in prison. Tell him a little bit about yourself and where you are from. Get creative and include some drawings! Then post your messages to Amnesty International Australia who will pass them on to Nasser.



Street view of Al Hoceima, Morocco, Nasser's hometown.



HANDOUT

RIGHTS CARDS AND NARRATIVE CARDS

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL



Nasser's trial was characterized by various violations of his right to a fair trial (sometimes referred to as 'due process') which is in place to guarantee the trial follows a just and fair procedure. Most importantly, the verdict was essentially based on "confessions" which Nasser told the court were extracted under torture or other ill-treatment. In response, the Court did not exclude them from the trial proceedings, in violation of international human rights law.



RIGHT TO LIBERTY



Nasser has remained behind bars since 2017. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison for his activities as a local community leader and human rights defender.



RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT



Police officers allegedly tortured Nasser while he was in custody, and he is forced to live in terrible conditions in prison. He has been held in prolonged solitary confinement, having no meaningful contact with other detainees for at least 22 hours a day for more than 15 days, which amounts to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.



RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY



In 2016, millions of people in Morocco marched peacefully to express sadness and frustration at the lack of socio-economic justice, spurred on by the death of a local fishmonger. They demanded better healthcare, improved infrastructure, an end to corruption, and improved employment opportunities in the region. Nasser became a prominent figure in the movement and used his voice to demand social justice and change for his community. Because of his engagement, he has been targeted and sent to prison by the Moroccan authorities.



RIGHT TO HEALTH



Because of the bad conditions in prison, Nasser's health has worsened and he has multiple health problems including breathing issues, nerve pain and problems with his eyesight. The prison authorities have denied him the healthcare that he needs.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

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.

When people engage in protests, whether individually or collectively, they are exercising a variety of rights which can include the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Without the ability to freely express opinions, public assemblies are simply mass gatherings of people without a message. And without the ability to freely assemble, people's opinions may lack the force of numbers to have their message properly heard.

Other rights are also essential in enabling people to protest peacefully, including the rights to life, privacy, freedom of association, freedom from torture and other ill-treatment or punishment, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, for example.

WHEN GOVERNMENTS CRACK DOWN ON PROTESTS

Instead of addressing pressing concerns and promoting dialogue to find solutions to injustice, abuses and discrimination, governments often respond to protests by stigmatizing and cracking down on peaceful protesters. It is common for states to try to impose restrictions on protests based on arguments around the protection of national security or public order. But respect for human rights is part of national security and public order, and the right to protest is protected under international human rights law.

There are further barriers to protest: people who face inequality and discrimination – whether based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, occupation, or social, economic, migratory or other status – are more likely to be affected by restrictions and repression, and less able to participate in protests. Yet, many advances in human rights around the world have been due to the courage of people who dared to fight for a more inclusive and equal society despite the risks and challenges they faced. It is therefore crucial that everyone is able to protest safely and without discrimination.

FAIR TRIAL – AN ESSENTIAL HUMAN RIGHT

The right to a fair trial is one of the universal guarantees recognized in the UDHR, adopted in 1948 by the world's governments. These human rights standards were written to take into account the rich diversity of legal procedures around the world. They set out the minimum guarantees that all systems should provide to ensure justice, respect for the rule of law and respect for the right to fair criminal proceedings. They apply to investigations, arrests and detention, as well as throughout the pretrial proceedings, trial, appeal, sentencing and punishment. A trial is fair only if the rights of the accused have been respected throughout the process.

Courts must be independent, impartial and competent in a manner that respects international standards of fairness. Whatever the crime, if people are subjected to unfair trials, justice is not served for the accused, the victim of the crime or the public. The criminal justice system itself loses credibility when people are tortured or otherwise ill-treated by law enforcement officials, when trials are manifestly unfair and when proceedings are tainted by discrimination. Unless human rights are upheld in the police station, the detention centre, the court and the prison cell, the government has failed in its duties and responsibilities.

The rights to which everyone is entitled during the trial proceedings include the right to equality before the law and the courts, the right to a public hearing, the right not to be compelled to testify or confess guilt, the exclusion of evidence resulting from torture or compulsion, the right not to be subjected to unlawful punishments, the right to appeal, and many others.

HANDOUT

NASSER'S STORY

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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© Mohamed Mouha CC

Top to bottom: Nasser Zefzafi gives a speech during a demonstration in the northern town of Al Hoceima;

Demonstration in Al Hoceima, May 2017.

"We are the kids of the poor and simple people, we went out to say no to marginalization and no to corruption"

Nasser Zefzafi



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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