

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

CHALLENGE
INJUSTICE.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA

IMPACT REPORT

Shining a light on human rights abuses all over the world



2023

WHO WE ARE

Around the world, Amnesty International challenges injustice, defends people and communities under attack, advocates for governments and others to respect human rights, and raises awareness of the international standards that protect us all.

In 1961, one man, outraged by injustices he saw, made an appeal to others to unite with him in common action. British lawyer Peter Benenson penned the article 'The Forgotten Prisoners' for the UK's Observer newspaper in response to two Portuguese students jailed simply for raising a toast to freedom, describing his disgust at the global trend of people being imprisoned, tortured or executed for their political views or religious orientation. Benenson had an idea, a hope, to solve this problem. In doing so, he gave life to the vision of collective action that defines Amnesty International's work today.

Human rights remain under attack around the globe even now, but hope still exists. With a powerful legacy of over 60 years of human rights advocacy and campaigning, Amnesty's movement has made a significant difference to so many causes, demonstrating transformational change is possible through every proven human rights win.

Decades of human rights advocacy and impact has shown that, together, we have the power to challenge injustice and create real, lasting change. Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to protecting sexual and reproductive rights, standing for indigenous rights and combating discrimination, and defending refugees and migrants' rights. Through our detailed research and determined campaigning, we fight abuses of human rights worldwide. We bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and continue to free people jailed just for voicing their opinion.

Amnesty International is a global movement of ten million people standing up for justice, freedom and equality. We shine a light on great wrongs by exposing the facts others try to suppress. Amnesty's vital work is funded by people just like you.

Amnesty is the world's largest and most respected human rights organisation. Information obtained by our fearless researchers allow us to campaign against abuses of human rights around the world. We lobby governments, and the powerful, to make sure they keep their promises and respect international law. Through education and training we help people claim their rights, and by telling people's powerful stories, we mobilise millions around the world to campaign for change. Our voices are powerful enough to change the world. With your every action and contribution, we move closer to a world where human rights are enjoyed and respected by all.

Together, we have the power to challenge injustice and create real, lasting change. In Australia, Amnesty works closely with Indigenous communities and people seeking asylum to fight discrimination, unfair detention, and to demand safety and a fair justice system for all. We also have a very active women's and LGBTQIA+ activist network campaigning on important gender and sexuality issues. We put pressure on the Australian Government to adopt laws that respect the human rights of all our citizens and to meet international human rights obligations.

Our movement changes lives. We celebrate the small wins, and the big moments, because we know that every step our world takes away from injustice, is a step closer to a world in which human rights are enjoyed equally and by all. When human rights are denied, we won't be silent, and with you by our side, we are unstoppable.

WHAT WE DO

MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL DIRECTOR

I am immensely proud of the impact the Amnesty International movement made together in 2023. Yet, despite these wins, it was a challenging year overall for human rights. The strength of a truly global movement is not just in celebration at times of success, but also in solidarity and support in the moments of deepest hurt and fear. The Amnesty movement came together like no other in the face of such challenges this past year.

While First Nations communities overwhelmingly voted in support of The Voice, the overall result is not what we had hoped and campaigned for, we remain committed to supporting Indigenous Justice and building a brighter future for First Nations Peoples. Led by our Indigenous Rights team, the Amnesty movement helped raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10-years-old in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Tasmania, plus a commitment from Victoria, to help stop the over-representation of Indigenous youth in the criminal and justice systems.

After decades of refugee campaigning, together, we helped raise the humanitarian intake to 20,000, the highest number in a decade, and saw an end to the cruel and inhumane Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) programs benefitting more than 19,000 people. We also continued our consistent work campaigning for individuals at risk to free prisoners of conscience, protect human rights defenders, and support individuals and communities who are at risk of having their human rights violated.

The crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel saw over 1,200 Israelis killed, hundreds kidnapped, and over two million people in Gaza facing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Amnesty's crisis team has been on the ground since 7 October, researching, monitoring and documenting war crimes by Hamas, armed groups and Israel, which have consequently been used by the international community to help bring perpetrators to account. As a result of our campaigning, the Australian Government shifted its position to call for a ceasefire and demand humanitarian aid access ahead of the UN General Assembly vote on 13 December. Then, on 18 December, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling for humanitarian aid. This global crisis response is a clear example of the people-powered impact of the Amnesty movement and how we can stand together to protect and defend human rights. We will continue to respond to this crisis by demanding a ceasefire, humanitarian aid access, release of civilian hostages, and an ICC investigation to ensure the protection of civilians in Gaza and Israel.

Thank you again for all of your incredible support. We are privileged to count you as a part of our global Amnesty International movement. While we still have so much to achieve for Indigenous Rights, Refugees Rights, the Human Rights Act, Protect the Protest, LGBTQIA+ Rights, Individuals at Risk, and our Crisis Response work, with you by our side, I am confident that we can enact change and continue to shine a light in the world's darkest places.

In solidarity,



Sam Klintworth
National Director, Amnesty International Australia



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From standing for Indigenous Justice to on-the-ground investigations during crises, combating discrimination and defending refugees and migrants' rights, your generous support has fuelled our work and determination to create a more just and compassionate world. We could not achieve what we have this past year without your support.

Sam Klintworth, National Director, Amnesty International Australia

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Our work is only possible because of the ongoing support from people like you, a growing community of millions of like-minded individuals from all over the world who believe in these efforts to challenge injustice wherever we find it.

Mario Santos, Board Chair, Amnesty International Australia



MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Human rights work is challenging work. With worsening refugee crises unfolding in Palestine, Ukraine, Myanmar, Afghanistan and elsewhere, children as young as ten being incarcerated in Australia, and widespread discrimination against individuals and communities just for being who they are, Amnesty's vision of a world in which all human beings enjoy all human rights continues to guide our work.

Indigenous youth justice has been an important Amnesty campaign area for a long time led by a strong Indigenous Rights team, and this past year was no exception. We live in a country where children can still be incarcerated and people continue to die in custody, but we saw some encouraging progress in 2023. The Government's decision to fund justice reinvestment programs and the first jurisdictions committing to raise the age of criminal responsibility will result in more children growing up in their communities, where they belong. We all benefit when our children are looked after and held accountable by those who know them best. Our work is not done, but these are steps in the right direction.

Working for the rights of people fleeing violence, torture and discrimination to seek safety in Australia remains an important part of our work too. After decades of documenting human rights abuses against refugees, mobilising our supporters, and advocating at the highest levels of government, we finally saw in 2023 changes to visa and detention conditions that improved the lives of literally thousands of refugees and their families. We will continue to push the Government to uphold the rights of people seeking safety in Australia.

You will see in this report more detail on the above and on our work to challenge injustice in other human rights areas such as climate justice, an Australian Human Rights Act, LGBTQIA+ rights, individuals at risk, and crisis response. What we do to challenge injustice in those areas, and many more, is more important than ever. How we do it is also critical. The Board that I chair is determined to ensure that our EPIC values (Empowerment, Persistence, Integrity and Courage) inform our decisions in the best interests of Amnesty, and the individuals and communities we work with for the advancement of their rights.

Amnesty's model of documenting human rights violations wherever they occur, mobilising our movement locally and globally, and then advocating with government and decision-makers, has been proven to work time and again. But, it only works because of the ongoing support from people like you, a growing community of millions of like-minded individuals from all over the world who believe in our work to challenge injustice wherever we find it. We couldn't do it without you and, for that, I will always be grateful.

In solidarity,

Mario Santos
Board Chair, Amnesty International Australia

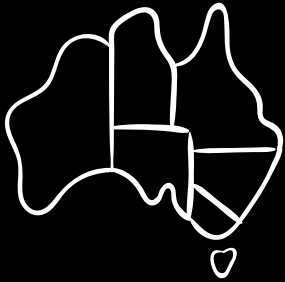


2023 BY THE NUMBERS

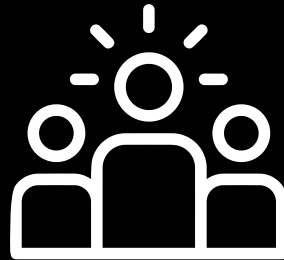
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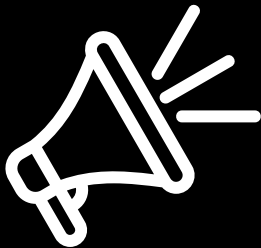
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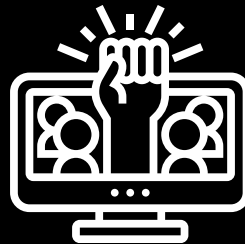
72 ACTION GROUPS
AND NETWORKS



4,303
MEMBERS



6,165
ACTIVISTS



413,459
ACTIONS TAKEN



66,665
DONORS

INDIGENOUS JUSTICE AIMS:

- Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 nationwide.
- Expose watch house conditions and end solitary confinement for children in prison.
- Fund Justice Reinvestment programs to prevent contact with the justice system.
- End deaths in custody and hold the Government to account for these tragedies.
- Combat the pervasive and insidious systemic discrimination First Nations Peoples experience in every facet of life.



Invasion Day Rally in Naarm/Melbourne, 26 January 2023. Photo by MJ Hilhorst.

STANDING FOR INDIGENOUS JUSTICE

Amnesty has been fighting for Indigenous Justice for decades under the guidance of Uncle Rodney Dillon, Indigenous Rights Advisor. This year the Amnesty team also expanded to include Kacey Teerman and Rachael McPhail, both powerhouse campaigners for Indigenous Rights in Australia. Amnesty's First Nations Rights work complements the huge amount of human rights advocacy that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations are doing across the country, and we will not stop until we raise the age of criminal responsibility, end deaths in custody, expose the truth of prison and watch house conditions, and the pervasive and insidious systemic discrimination First Nations Peoples experience in every facet of life.

While First Nations communities overwhelmingly voted to enshrine a Voice to Parliament in the 2023 Referendum, the outcome of the Voice was not what we had hoped and worked so tirelessly towards in 2023. This result was a stark reminder that our work is far from over, and we must continue our efforts to educate, engage, and build consensus within our society. Despite this, 2023 saw a number of developments in our Indigenous Rights campaigning, and together with First Nations People and Indigenous communities, we have made great strides towards ending the incarceration of children as young as 10 - including at least three states and territories officially committing to raising the age of criminal detention. In May 2023, following a campaign by activists and organisations including Amnesty, the ACT tabled legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12-years-old, and eventually to 14 in July 2025. Since then, both Tasmania and Victoria have also officially committed to raising the age of criminal detention. The Northern Territory has similarly passed legislation to raise the age to 12, and these laws have thankfully come into effect as of August 2023.

That same campaigning pressure saw the Albanese Government commit to its Federal Election promise to fund justice reinvestment and First Nations-led, evidence-based diversion programs that are proven to keep kids out of prison. Amnesty supporters made this happen and the Federal Government announced \$81.5 million towards the initiative. Unlike harmful punitive approaches, diversion programs are community-led and designed to divert kids away from the criminal justice system by providing culturally appropriate support to break the cycle of incarceration.

Now, across Australia, more children will be able to grow up safe, supported and connected to community, instead of being introduced and reintroduced to the criminal justice system. Your support has been instrumental in these heartening developments, and your continued involvement is essential as we work towards a more just and equal society.

“Tasmania's announcement sets a precedent that we hope will resonate across all states and territories, emphasising that children deserve the opportunity to thrive within their communities rather than enduring trauma within the criminal justice system. It's time for a collective commitment to nurturing our youth, allowing them to grow and flourish unencumbered by the burdens of an unforgiving system.”



Kacey Teerman
Indigenous Rights
Campaigner

“Your support throughout 2023 has been instrumental, and your continued involvement is essential as we work towards a more just and equal society. We draw strength from the shared commitment of people like you, and we remain hopeful for a brighter future. Together, we can and will make a difference.”



Uncle Rodney Dillon
Indigenous Rights
Advisor

A child on their traditional homelands on Utopia in central Northern Territory, Australia. Photo by April Pyle.

A national day of action took place in September 2023 across Australia in support of a YES vote in the Referendum to include First Nations Peoples in the Constitution. Photo by Matt Landy.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT AIMS:

- Campaign for the Federal Government to develop a new National Human Rights Framework that prioritises protecting human rights in domestic law across the country.
- Ensure the Albanese Government takes immediate action to legislate a Human Rights Act.
- Prevent human rights abuses by forcing the Government to consider human rights when passing all laws, making decisions about policies, and delivering services.
- Provide an avenue for remedies and for people to take action and challenge injustice when their rights are abused.



CAMPAIGNING FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Amnesty International believes every Australian should have the same fundamental human rights in law. Everyone's human rights are important. They should be protected and defensible. Australia doesn't have a Human Rights Act that protects human rights in law and is actually the only liberal democracy in the world without one. While we continue to campaign for one, this year we also came a step closer to protecting individual's freedom in Australian law like the right to protest, LGBTQIA+ and women's rights. With a Human Rights Act, we will be able to create better lives for ourselves, our communities, and for those around us.



People take to the water as they continue to blockade access to the world's largest coal port in protest for climate action at Horseshoe Beach on November 26, 2023 in Newcastle/Muloobinba, Australia. Photo by Roni Bintang/Getty Images.

This year, thousands of Amnesty supporters made submissions to a Government inquiry considering whether Parliament should legislate a federal Human Rights Act, and protect our rights in law. From Mudgee to Darwin, and everywhere in between, Amnesty activists and supporters told the Government why they need the to legislate an Act. In August, we spoke to Labor and Union members about why Australia needs a Human Rights Act, and what an Act would mean for workers. A few days later, the Labor conference amended the Labor Party Platform to include a call to consider a human rights charter. Similarly this year, Amnesty welcomed the Human Rights Commission's launch of its proposal for a Human Rights Act for Australia. This is a significant step closer to an Australia where people's human rights are protected in our laws.

Throughout history, protest has been a powerful tool for change and an individual's right to freedom of expression. Today, powerful people, in Australia and around the world, are cracking down on our right to protest. While communities across the country have come together in massive marches for climate justice, Invasion Day, the YES vote, and Palestinian solidarity, Australian State Governments continue to implement draconian laws to hinder such expression. We must continue to fight for these freedoms and a Human Rights Act will be instrumental for this.

In fact, we are starting to see the effect of this positive activism in regards to the collection of strict anti-protest laws rushed through a number of State's Parliament in the past year. In a step forward in December, the NSW Supreme Court overturned parts of these laws that criminalised activities that cause partial closures or redirections around ports and train stations, ruling they were constitutionally invalid, in the latest win for freedom of expression in Australia.

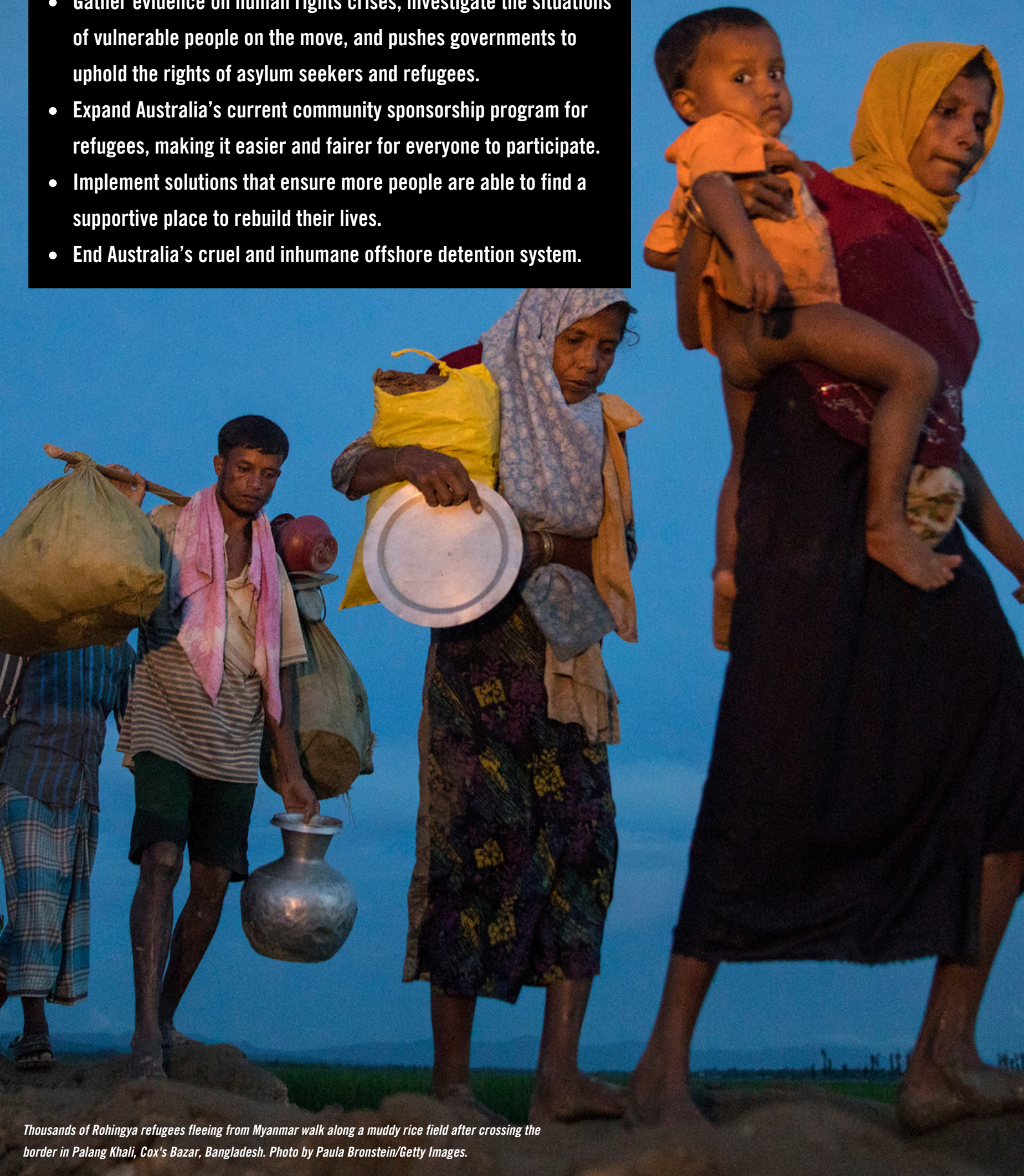
“The Human Rights Commission has done the heavy lifting in devising a proposed model for a federal Human Rights Act after a lengthy consultation period. We already know most Australians want one, so having a framework is an important step to ensure the Albanese Government legislates an Act.”



Nikita White
Human Rights
Campaigner

REFUGEE RIGHTS AIMS:

- Raise Australia's refugee and humanitarian intake so more people can rebuild their lives in safety.
- Gather evidence on human rights crises, investigate the situations of vulnerable people on the move, and pushes governments to uphold the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Expand Australia's current community sponsorship program for refugees, making it easier and fairer for everyone to participate.
- Implement solutions that ensure more people are able to find a supportive place to rebuild their lives.
- End Australia's cruel and inhumane offshore detention system.



Thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing from Myanmar walk along a muddy rice field after crossing the border in Palang Khali, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo by Paula Bronstein/Getty Images.

DEFENDING REFUGEE RIGHTS

Right now, there is a global refugee crisis that is deepening every day. Around the world there are currently 100 million displaced individuals. In countries such as Palestine, Ukraine, Myanmar and Afghanistan, people are fleeing because their lives are under threat, but there is hope on the horizon. Amnesty works to support asylum seekers and refugees, including campaigning for the Australian Government to raise the refugee and humanitarian intake, implement solutions that help more people find a safe place to live, and to end offshore detention. We gather evidence on human rights crises, investigate the situations of vulnerable people on the move, and together our international Amnesty movement pushes governments to uphold the rights of asylum seekers and refugees across the world.

Thanks to the relentless efforts of Amnesty supporters and other partner organisations, we are finally seeing positive change for those seeking safety in Australia. In February 2023, following years of campaigning, the Australian Government finally announced that it would end Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs). Now, more than 19,000 people, who have lived in limbo for as long as 10 years under the cruel and unnecessary system of temporary protection visas, can become permanent residents and reunite with their families.

At the forefront of this achievement was Zaki Haidari, Amnesty Refugee Rights Campaigner. Zaki fled his home in Afghanistan in 2011, after his family was accused of helping foreign forces by the Taliban. Facing death threats, he left his family behind and became a refugee. After a long and dangerous journey looking for a safe country to call home, he finally made it to Australia; but he was not welcomed. Australia's cruel refugee policy meant that for years he lived in limbo. Unable to become a permanent resident, living on temporary visas, he was unable to bring his family to Australia with him. After 10 years of tireless campaigning alongside Amnesty, Zaki helped to abolish the temporary visas that held him back. Most importantly, now that he is living and working as a permanent resident, he was able to bring his family to safety too.

Amnesty has also been tirelessly calling on the Australian Government for a community-led solution for refugees that really works. Last year we celebrated the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP), an alternative approach to the settlement of refugees, marking its first year of operation with all 250+ refugee participants reporting they feel welcomed in their local communities.

After years of campaigning to end offshore processing, the last refugee held by Australia on Nauru was evacuated in June. But it's far from being over. The Australian Government says it remains committed to offshore processing as a policy. Australia has also accepted New Zealand's long-standing offer to resettle refugees detained offshore, after persistent pressure from Amnesty and other groups. The number of people trapped offshore has now decreased from 600 to around 130, thanks in no small part to people like yourself who are willing to stand up and challenge injustice.

Furthermore, we saw a long-awaited triumph for human rights in this space as indefinite detention for asylum seekers and refugees has finally ended in a ruling by The Australian High Court. The landmark decision, that indefinite immigration detention is unlawful and unconstitutional, is a significant overturning of policy which allowed governments to detain individuals for years, without any genuine prospect of removal from the country. As a result of the 8 November ruling, 141 individuals were thankfully released. Progress like this comes about through the ongoing work of awareness raising and political campaigning. We must continue to be relentless in our fight to champion justice for refugees and those seeking asylum.

Thank you for supporting Amnesty, in particular by giving refugees like me a voice in the fight for our human rights. I've lived in Australia for a decade, and only in the last few years have I been given the freedom to work and to build a life for myself here.



Zaki Haidari
Refugee Rights
Campaigner

Amnesty International Australia Refugee Rights Campaigner Zaki Haidari is reunited with his family at the Sydney airport after 10 years apart. Photo by Pablo Barnes.

Cox's Bazar Research Mission

In October, Amnesty Australia staff Dr Graham Thom, Refugee Coordinator, Ry Atkinson, Strategic Campaigner, Pablo Barnes, Videographer, along with Refugee Advocate Craig Foster, travelled to Bangladesh on a research mission to gather research, stories and greater insight on the situation facing nearly one million Rohingya refugees in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. The Rohingya remain a stateless people for whom returning to Myanmar is not currently safe under a brutal military junta. However, in Cox's Bazar Rohingya are still barred from pursuing livelihoods, and international aid is reducing to levels that are below the basic needs of human beings.

Millions of Rohingya refugees have fled into Bangladesh as a result of violence in the Rakhine state as security forces try to push the minority Muslim group out of Myanmar. Photo by Allison Joyce/Getty Images.

“Driving through the camps, it just goes on and on. 27 square kilometres. Tiny, temporary bamboo and tarpaulin shelters that leak in the rain. When it's dry, inside these structures the heat is oppressive. 200,000 families. 500,000 kids, many born in Cox's Bazar, facing the prospect of a lifetime here. Incredible human potential, wasting away with malnutrition and disease.”



Craig Foster
Refugee Rights
Advocate

To date, nearly one million Rohingya women, men and children have fled into neighbouring Bangladesh, where they have brought with them accounts of killings, torture, rape and burning of entire villages by the Myanmar security forces, often accompanied by local vigilantes. The UN has described the situation as a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing”, while Amnesty has also concluded the military's actions amount to crimes against humanity.

At the Global Refugee Forum in December 2022, Amnesty welcomed Australia's pledge of an additional \$235 million to support displaced Rohingya and communities in need in Myanmar and Bangladesh. However, it remains the case that the 2023 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya in Bangladesh was less than 50% funded, and the same issues will continue to arise unless there is drastic change. Officially, the Rohingya have no working rights and no way to supplement their food rations, making them completely dependent on aid. Countries like Australia need to continue to support Bangladesh in a way that enables Rohingya people to live full and meaningful lives while they await more durable solutions.

Australia has historically been a key contributor to these international efforts, ensuring vital support for Rohingya refugees and further demonstrating the longstanding collaboration between Australia, Bangladesh and the Rohingya people. This must not only continue, but it must increase and expand. Amnesty will also continue to call for and work towards advocating for access to expanded education and livelihood opportunities.

This also includes campaigning for the Government to show leadership regarding the Rohingya closer to home, including committing to increasing the Refugee and Humanitarian Program to 40,000 places per annum (30,000 under the Government program and 10,000 under community sponsorship), with the vast majority under being visa subclass 200 (UNHCR referred) refugees. Amnesty will continue to campaign for the Government to establish a targeted quota for Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, while taking a leading role in resettling Rohingya refugees out of Bangladesh, and further reform Australia's Community Sponsorship Program so that it is in addition to Australia's regular Humanitarian Program.



Inside the Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh where refugees gather to carry on their daily life. Photo by Fabeha Monir.

“ Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I can never forget what you have done for me, you have given a new life to me and my daughters. I will never stop praying for you. I still can't believe we are in Australia. ”

Gul Ahsen Zaigham*

*Names have been changed to protect individual identities.





Casework and Campaign Support Team

The Casework & Campaign Support program at Amnesty are quick to react and respond to requests for assistance from refugees, people seeking asylum, people in detention, Indigenous Peoples, individuals at risk, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Through the program's active case management across different streams, Amnesty staff, campaigners and volunteers endeavour to provide proactive resettlement solutions for asylum seekers and refugees, people in detention and others in vulnerable situations. This includes defending human rights for all through research, advocacy, case escalations, and collaborating internally and externally with the worldwide Amnesty movement to further amplify impact for all.

The Casework & Campaign Support team's ultimate goal encapsulates Amnesty's vision to advance human rights by increasing resettlement, releasing the incarcerated, building safe pathways for refugees, shining a light on human rights abuse, and playing its part in building a diverse movement with people with lived experience at the heart of it. Despite the innate challenges in this space, the team have together delivered exceptional human rights impact, with the most prominent cases this year involving women at risk, human rights defenders, along with more than 400 Afghan cases, that have all been assisted through the program.

Since December 2021, the Casework & Campaign Support team at Amnesty have been amplifying our human rights work and impact by forming key collaborations with LGBTQIA+ organisations, Amnesty International chapters, the Global Relief Fund, and better aligning themselves with the Amnesty International Secretariat and its team. On the home front through Amnesty's work and participation, the Casework & Campaign Support team have continued to support the Refugee Advisor and these advocacy efforts in forming more collaborative networks within the sector, government and internationally.

The team has achieved incredible human rights impact this past year through casework and the five active programs at Amnesty. They involve casework (refugee rights, individuals at risk, Indigenous rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, people in detention), casework administration (providing application assistance to individuals and families), case escalations, crisis response referrals, campaign support and research (supporting campaign plans, research and policy analysis), and advocacy (working with the Refugee Advisor in advocating on key issues, policies and cases, plus external collaborations).

In 2023, the Casework & Campaign Support team were involved in the assistance of people from more than 25 regions across the world, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Palestine, Sudan, and Nauru. This includes 800 refugee rights cases, 191 human rights cases, 25 Detention Cases, 420 escalation cases, and being instrumental in the arrival of 30 to 40 individuals in Australia since March. In total, the team supported an incredible 1,166 people fleeing persecution, war and terror, particularly focusing on Afghans in Iran and Pakistan, LGBTQIA+ people in the Middle East and Africa, and the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar.



LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS AIMS:

- Campaign for Governments to stop using criminal law to control people's sexuality, identity, and reproductive rights.
- Ensure everyone is empowered to make their own decisions about their bodies and how they live their lives without interference from others.
- Call on all governments, including Australia, to prohibit all forms of discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ people, including conversion practices and sexual orientation change efforts.

PROTECTING LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS

We all have the right to be treated equally, no matter our sexual orientation or gender identity. Amnesty has been working with a strong LGBTQIA+ activist network campaigning on sexuality issues, as well as transgender and intersex rights, in partnership with organisations campaigning for similar equal rights for years. However, despite recent wins for equality around the world, in many countries – including Australia – the right to express our sexuality is still being challenged. Here in Australia, Amnesty continues to call on Governments to stop using criminal law to control sexuality, and ultimately prohibit all forms of discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ communities including conversion practices and sexual orientation change efforts.

LGBTQIA+ refugees living in the Kakuma refugee camp, Northern Kenya. 23 February, 2023. Photo by Amnesty International.



Alongside our dedicated activists around the world, Amnesty works for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual peoples' rights. Through research, activism and campaigning we help ensure that all people can live in dignity, safety and freedom, and this year we have seen many successes as a result of this campaigning. In February 2023, Taiwan announced it would recognise same-sex marriages between its citizens and their foreign partners, even if a partner's home country doesn't allow it. It also passed legislation for equal adoption rights for same-sex couples. Amnesty Taiwan has been working closely with local groups to campaign and secure these LGBTQIA+ rights, and they are major steps in the move towards equality after Taiwan became the first country in Asia to legalise same-sex marriage in 2019.

Also in February, transgender people in Finland were finally able to have their gender legally recognised without being forced to undergo sterilisation and psychiatric assessment. This win is a result of more than a decade of campaigning by Amnesty, the transgender community and civil society groups. It is a testament to the commitment of activists who have fought long and hard – often in the face of toxic rhetoric – to see this change. Similarly, more than 347,000 people worldwide signed Amnesty's petition to show Finland that the world was watching. Then in March 2023, Iranian activist Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani, was thankfully released on bail after serving more than a year behind bars, after she was sentenced to death for speaking out in support of LGBTQIA+ rights on social media and a BBC documentary. 46,000 Amnesty supporters rallied for her justice, calling on Iranian authorities for her immediate release.

Closer to home, Queensland has finally allowed identity documents to reflect people's gender, when in June 2023, the state passed new laws that remove barriers to updating birth certificates. The newly passed laws mean transgender, non-binary and gender diverse people will no longer be forced to undergo invasive "sex reassignment surgery" before being able to correct their gender identity documents. These reforms mean the identity documents of trans and gender-diverse Queenslanders finally reflect their gender – something that should be the case for every human being. It's incredible news for Amnesty Australia's Queensland LGBTQIA+ network as the historic win came off the back of tireless campaigning within QLD and across the country, to ensure trans and gender diverse Queenslanders can be recognised for who they are.

Other wins for LGBTQIA+ Rights in Australia this year include the ACT becoming the first place in Australia to end unnecessary medical procedures on intersex people without their consent, marking a turning point for intersex rights. After failing to count LGBTQIA+ people properly in the last census, the Australian Bureau of Statistics also issued a statement of regret to our communities and established an LGBTQIA+ advisory body to consult on the questions for the next Census. This year the LGBTQIA+ Equality Bills were also introduced into NSW Parliament - a chance to improve the lives of our community in NSW for generations to come. A ban on conversion practices in NSW is now within reach, with a promise from the NSW Government that it will be prioritised early in the new year.

CLIMATE JUSTICE AIMS:

- Stop the global temperature rising by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero, with richer countries taking on more responsibility ensuring that by 2030 global emissions are half as much as they were in 2010.
- Stop using fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) as quickly as possible.
- Ensure that climate action is done in a way that does not violate anyone's human rights, and reduces rather than increases inequality.
- Everyone, particularly those affected by climate change or the transition to a fossil-free economy, must be properly informed about what is happening and is able to participate in decisions about their futures.



DEMANDING CLIMATE JUSTICE

Human rights are intimately linked with climate change because of its devastating effect on not just the environment, but our own wellbeing. In addition to threatening our very existence, climate change is having harmful impacts on our rights to life, health, food, water, housing and livelihoods. The longer governments wait to take meaningful action, the harder the problem becomes to solve, and the greater the risk that emissions will be reduced through means that increase inequality rather than reduce it.

This year for the first time, Amnesty included an Australian case as part of our flagship Write for Rights campaign. Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul are community leaders from the Guda Maluyilgal Nation at the northernmost part of Australia in the Torres Strait and they have turned to the Federal Court to argue that the Australian Government has failed to take serious climate action. For thousands of years, Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul's Indigenous ancestors have lived on the islands. Now, because of climate change, their way of life, traditional knowledge systems, cultural practices, and spiritual connections that have been passed down from generation to generation could be broken forever.

Last November, Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul were in Naarm (Melbourne) at the Federal Court, arguing that the Australian Government is taking insufficient action to prevent harm from climate change, resulting in the destruction of their lands and culture. The Australian Government currently states that by 2030 it will reduce emissions 43% below 2005 levels. This is not enough to save the Torres Strait Islands. Leading climate scientists on the Climate Targets Panel calculate Australia's greenhouse emissions need to be reduced by 74% by 2030. While the trial still has a way to go, we need the Australian Government to take immediate climate action now in order to save the Torres Strait and the rest of Australia from the catastrophic effects of climate change.

Other successes we saw in the climate justice space this year include after tireless advocacy by students from the Pacific, supported by thousands of Amnesty activists and other civil society organisations, Australia became one of 132 countries to co-sponsor Vanuatu's initiative to take climate change to the International Court of Justice in March 2023. This has been a landmark moment in the fight for climate justice as it means the court will give a legal opinion on the obligations of governments to protect the human rights of present and future generations against the effects of climate change.

In 2023, the Australian Government also announced that it is re-joining the UN-led Green Climate Fund, reversing the former Government's decision to withdraw in 2018. The Fund, to be contributed by wealthy countries, will support climate mitigation and adaptation projects in less wealthy countries. Amnesty's advocacy ask to the Australian Government is to "Increase Australia's contribution to global climate finance to less-wealthy countries for mitigation and adaptation measures to reach the 100 billion USD annual goal this year." This \$100 billion a year was a climate finance commitment by wealthy countries set in 2009, which has not been met. The Green Climate Fund is one of the key channels in meeting that \$100 billion global target.

Uncle Pabai (left) and Uncle Paul (right) at the community hearings of the Federal Court. Photo by Ruby Mitchell, Grata Fund.



“Climate change is already here: storm surges are getting worse and the seasons have changed. If we become climate refugees, we will lose everything: our homes, community, culture, stories, and identity. We can keep our stories and tell our stories but we won't be connected to Country because Country will disappear.”

Uncle Paul Kabai



Amnesty Netherlands supporters and members take part in Write for Rights events at the organisations Amsterdam office, December 2023. Photo by Anne Harbers.

DEFENDING INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

For decades Amnesty has campaigned for individuals at risk to free prisoners of conscience, protect human rights defenders, and support individuals and communities who are at risk of having their human rights violated. To date we have helped release thousands of courageous and brave people across the world. Last year, people from more than 200 countries and territories took action – writing letters, signing petitions and much more – urging governments to uphold justice and right wrongs. The past year alone, seven people's lives have also been forever changed because of your actions. Together, our voices are powerful enough to challenge injustice and change the world.

Vietnamese-Australian retired baker and human rights defender, Chau Van Kham, was finally unconditionally released from a Vietnamese prison and arrived safely back in Sydney on 11 July, after four years into a 12 year prison sentence. The former prisoner of conscience - who was imprisoned for his peaceful human rights work - was greeted at the airport by his wife, his family lawyer, and government officials. Mr Chau had been detained by the Vietnamese government since January 2019 and sentenced to 12 years in prison for "terrorist activities" after he met with a friend and fellow pro-democracy activist during a visit to Vietnam.

The only evidence for this charge presented by the Vietnamese authorities during the trial was his membership with Viet Tan, a pro-democracy organisation that the Vietnamese Government lists as a "terrorist group". In Australia, we added Mr Chau to Amnesty's Write for Rights global campaign in 2021 and 2022. We've campaigned tirelessly for his release since his detention, lobbying the Australian and Vietnamese Governments, raising awareness in the media, and sending postcards of solidarity to the prison where Mr Chau was detained. Amnesty supporters took thousands and thousands of actions to secure Mr Chau's release.

“ My family and I would like to say thank you to Amnesty and all people who signed the petition in support of me, raising your voice for my case and bringing me back to my family and Australia. Thank you very much - Cám ơn em. ”

Chau Van Kham

Human rights lawyer Mohamed Baker was arrested by Egyptian authorities for defending human rights for Egypt's most marginalised community. Over 300,000 actions taken by Amnesty supporters like you contributed to his freedom in 2023 after a presidential pardon and 45 months of arbitrary detention. After his release, Mohamed said that he will never forget Amnesty standing by him.

Zimbabwean activists Cecillia Chimbiri and Joanah Mamombe have been acquitted after being accused of 'faking' the traumatic abduction by police that they survived. Hundreds of thousands of Amnesty supporters took action to support them. Cecillia and Joanah were arrested, abducted and tortured by police in 2020 following a peaceful protest about the Government's failure to provide social protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. We can celebrate this incredible win thanks to your support during our Write for Rights campaign last year which generated over half a million letters, petitions and messages globally.

Aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele, who had been unjustly imprisoned in Iran since February 2022, was released in May also. Vandecasteele was sentenced to 40 years in prison and 74 lashes after he was convicted of espionage in a closed-door trial. During his time in detention, Olivier was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. We are so glad to see him now free, reunited with his friends and family. With your support, we will continue to campaign to ensure the Iranian authorities are held accountable for their human rights abuses, including the act of hostage-taking.

Journalist Shamsuzzaman Shams was arrested for writing about the high cost of living in a newspaper article in Bangladesh. He was charged under the country's Digital Security Act, which is frequently used to silence dissent and target critical voices, including journalists who publish online. In April 2023, Shams' bail application was successful and he has since been released from prison.

Images: Chau Van Kham greeted at the airport by his wife, his family's lawyer, and government officials, human rights lawyer Mohamed Baker (right), activists Cecillia Chimbiri and Joanah Mamombe, aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele, and Journalist Shamsuzzaman Shams.



CRISIS RESPONSE AIMS:

- Amnesty is calling for an immediate ceasefire in the OPT/Israel by all parties to end civilian suffering and unlawful attacks, including indiscriminate, disproportionate, and direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects.
- Israel to immediately allow unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid into the occupied Gaza Strip and to lift its 17-year illegal blockade on Gaza, and grant immediate access to independent investigators.
- The international community to impose a comprehensive arms embargo on all parties to the conflict given that serious violations amounting to crimes under international law are being committed.
- Hamas and all other armed groups in the area to release unconditionally and immediately all civilian hostages, and to treat all those being held captive humanely, including by providing medical treatment, pending their release.
- Israel to release all Palestinians who are currently arbitrarily detained.
- The root causes of the conflict to be addressed, including through dismantling Israel's system of apartheid against all Palestinians.
- The International Criminal Court's ongoing investigation into the situation of Palestine to proceed and to receive full support and all necessary resources.



Dozens of Palestinian children and family members attend a candlelight vigil to condemn the killing of children and civilians, which is held over the rubble of homes destroyed by Israeli military strike. Photo by Marcus Yam/The Los Angeles Times.

CRISIS RESPONSE: OCCUPIED

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES & ISRAEL

We may not know when a crisis will occur, but when it does, Amnesty’s crisis team is ready to collect evidence of human rights abuses that will help end the abuse and bring perpetrators to justice. Whether it’s the current conflict between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, or the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria, we’re ready to help people at risk of human rights abuses and bring about long-lasting change. Our teams are constantly researching, monitoring, and documenting human rights abuses in crises.

When violence suddenly escalated in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, Amnesty was ready to take action to protect civilians. While supporters took to the streets to call for a sustained and meaningful ceasefire, your ongoing support enabled our experts to research, monitor, and document human rights abuses in our Crisis Evidence Lab to expose crimes under international law so that perpetrators can be held accountable. Amnesty has been on the ground in Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel since 7 October, researching, monitoring, and documenting the human rights violations unfolding in real time.

Amnesty has called for an immediate ceasefire by all parties to put an end to unlawful attacks and protect all civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. A ceasefire would prevent further civilian loss of life and alleviate the immeasurable suffering caused by the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

Because of this pressure, late last year, in a monumental shift in position, Australia joined 152 nations in supporting the UN General Assembly resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, humanitarian aid access and the release of civilian hostages. The Government heeded our collective calls because Australians, in their thousands, relentlessly called for a ceasefire.

Every day we continue to campaign for a world where everyone, everywhere can exercise equal rights and fundamental freedoms. Thanks to Amnesty supporters like you, our collective impact continues to change lives. With your support we will be able to continue work on this issue and reiterate our calls to those in power, including to ensure immediate and unimpeded access to humanitarian aid for people in Gaza and an unhindered investigation by the International Criminal Court to bring perpetrators to justice.



“ I have been so moved by the number of people who have emailed and called asking how they can help. This means more than you know. Thank you for always standing alongside civilians in danger to defend their rights and challenge injustice. Our movement is stronger because of people like you. ”



Mohamed Duar
Occupied Palestinian Territories/Israel Spokesperson

Amnesty International Australia, along with Save The Children, Oxfam Australia and APHEDA, joined the Global Day of Action calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza with projections over iconic landmarks across the country. Photo by Daniela Benavides.



THANK YOU

When innocent civilians become casualties of conflict, we collect evidence and expose human rights abuses for the world to see. When activists, journalists, doctors and others are jailed for telling the truth, we mobilise our global movement to free them. When political leaders crackdown on dissent and restrict information, we speak out for all those who can't.

This work is only possible because of our caring, courageous and generous donors - the people who make Amnesty International a powerful force for transformative change.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to defend human rights.

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Front Page: Amnesty Togo members, activists and supporters participate in the launch of the global 2023 Write for Rights campaign in Togo. Photo by Arnold Edoh and Julien Sowu. This Page: Palestinian children at home reading books by candle light due to electricity shortages in Gaza City after the Israeli Government moved to reduce electricity supplies to the Hamas-run enclave. Photo by Thomas Coex/AFP/Getty Images.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

**CHALLENGE
INJUSTICE.**