



COVID-19: CANADA'S RESPONSE DEMANDS HUMAN-RIGHTS OVERSIGHT

By Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty Canada's English branch, and Isabelle Langlois, Executive Director of the Francophone branch.



Healthcare workers stand outside a Toronto hospital on April 19 during a demonstration of appreciation towards healthcare and other essential workers.

The virus that causes COVID-19 attacks the rights to health and to life. And the crisis resulting from the pandemic has affected the rights to livelihood, housing, food, education, employment, and freedom of movement. Human-rights oversight must be at the heart of Canada's response to the pandemic. It is human-rights oversight that will ensure that no one is left behind.

The daily COVID-19 information flow is relentless, necessarily so. Statistics and predictions of infection and death rates, unemployment and economic impact are being updated daily. Concerns mount about the safety of health care workers facing shortages of protective equipment. Physical-distancing guidance gets stricter and stricter. Governments lay out their financial-relief measures, including programs to alleviate massive job losses, help small businesses and address heightened risks for Indigenous

communities, women and children at increased risk of violence in the home and other marginalized groups.

Amid all of this, though, we're not hearing much about human rights.

Human-rights commissioners have not been included in government briefings, and in countries around the world, human-rights analysis and statistics are not being shared.

But this pandemic is all about human rights. The virus attacks the rights to health and to life. The economic crisis imperils rights to livelihood, housing and food. The shutdowns undermine rights to education, employment and freedom of movement. Crucially, the disproportionate impact on communities that face entrenched marginalization goes to the core of essential human-rights obligations of gender equality and non-discrimination.

Many government measures do address some such concerns, even if not through clear human-rights frameworks. Some may ask, therefore, why does this matter? Shouldn't governments simply be trusted to act quickly, without constraints, to address a crisis unlike any in generations?

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AMNESTY SUPPORTERS SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH COLOMBIAN ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER

In November, Amnesty activists in Toronto showed their solidarity with threatened members of a movement called Ríos Vivos (Spanish for Living Rivers) and its spokesperson Isabel Zuleta (in the photograph Isabel is third from right in the front row). Isabel was in Canada to speak out about disastrous impacts of a Canadian-financed dam project on river-dependent communities, and violence against those who speak out. See page 11 for more about Isabel's work.

BRANCH FINANCIAL UPDATE

Fundraised revenue for 2019 amounted to \$14.160 million, significantly less than the amount of \$15.200 million which had originally been targeted in the budget for the year, resulting in a shortfall from budget for fundraised revenue of \$1.040 million. Income from other sources amounted to \$129 thousand, resulting in total revenue for the year of \$14.289 million.

Expenditures for the same period amounted to \$14.467 million, an amount which is significantly less than the budgeted amount of \$15.022 million. Due to efficiencies and realized savings, there were savings in 2019 with respect to a number of expenditure categories, and the shortfall at yearend was better than budgeted.

Table of Revenue & Expenditure (in 000s of dollars)

	Actual to December 31	Budget to December 31
Revenues		
Fundraised	14,160	15,200
Other	129	105
Subtotal	14,289	15,305
Expenditures	14,467	15,651
Net Deficit	(178)	(346)

There was a net deficit from operations for the year of \$178 thousand as compared to the budgeted net deficit of \$346 thousand. Trends in the 2019 budget have been taken into account in the course of establishing budgetary levels for 2020. It is important to note that the figures above are preliminary, and that there may be changes as a result of the external audit of the accounts which is scheduled to take place in March of 2020.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S VISION AND MISSION

Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights.

RECEIVING ACTIVIST MAGAZINE

To receive Activist magazine, phone **1-800-AMNESTY (1-800-266-3789)** and confirm you are a supporter. Published in print three times a year, Activist is free to all Amnesty supporters who request it. Change of address or problems receiving Activist? Contact Sue McNamara at our National Office by email at smcnamara@amnesty.ca

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COVID-19: CANADA'S RESPONSE DEMANDS HUMAN-RIGHTS OVERSIGHT



A child on a scooter passes a mural on a boarded-up window in Vancouver's Gastown on April 19.

(cover story continued)

There are many reasons why human-rights oversight must explicitly be at the heart of COVID-19 responses.

First, human rights can provide an overarching framework for COVID-19 responses, addressing what should and should not be done to ensure no one will be left behind, all in one package.

Human-rights principles inherently recognize that health is dependent on a range of social determinants and is of heightened concern for groups already facing discrimination, including sexism, ableism and racism. The protection of the right to health is inextricably linked to respect for all other rights.

Second, times of crisis are notorious for selling human rights short. Not only does that often lead to injustice, it often makes the crisis itself disproportionately worse for some. Too often, society picks up the pieces after a crisis, rather than taking rights on board throughout.

Third, oversight is not just about castigating wrongdoing. It helps anticipate what measures are needed to uphold human rights before harms deepen.

And fourth, given the unprecedented nature of this crisis, many of the institutions we count on to play a human-rights oversight role are suspended or scaled back, including courts, tribunals and commissions, as well as Parliament, legislative assemblies and municipal councils.

There is a vital global dimension to this. Around the world, we have already seen autocratic leaders use COVID-19 as a pretext for repression. Canada has, importantly, called on governments everywhere to recognize that “protecting public health and respecting human rights are not mutually exclusive.” Committing to human-rights oversight of our own COVID-19 response is a powerful way to put that into practice.

And instituting such oversight now readies us for the long-term work to come. This crisis has exposed long-standing political, social and economic frailties and inequities that are unsustainable. Even in crisis, we need to mobilize for transformative change.

Obviously, this is not a time for profound law reform or the creation of new institutions, none of which is possible in current circumstances and would not be done rapidly enough even if it was. But two immediate steps forward have been proposed by a group of 301 organizations and experts.

First, ensure Indigenous knowledge-keepers and existing human-rights commissions play a visible advisory role to the COVID-19 crisis committees that governments have established.

Second, quickly set up independent human-rights oversight committees, drawn broadly from affected communities and relevant experts, with a mandate to monitor, analyze and make recommendations regarding the human-rights impact of this crisis.

There is so much at stake and so much in play, evolving hourly. Keeping a careful eye on the human-rights dimensions of COVID-19 through strengthened oversight is essential to finding our way forward.

This article originally appeared in the Globe and Mail.

TAKE ACTION

- › For the latest updates on Amnesty International's work in response to the COVID-19 crisis, and to take action on human rights issues arising from the crisis, please visit [amnesty.ca/covid-19](https://www.amnesty.ca/covid-19)



On November 4, Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Canadian Council of Churches launched a challenge to the Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the US. Amnesty supporters were amongst those rallying outside the Federal Court building in Toronto.

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Amnesty supporters gathered in front of City Hall, Toronto, on December 2 to mark the 35th anniversary of the gas leak disaster in Bhopal, India. Survivors are continuing their struggle for justice.



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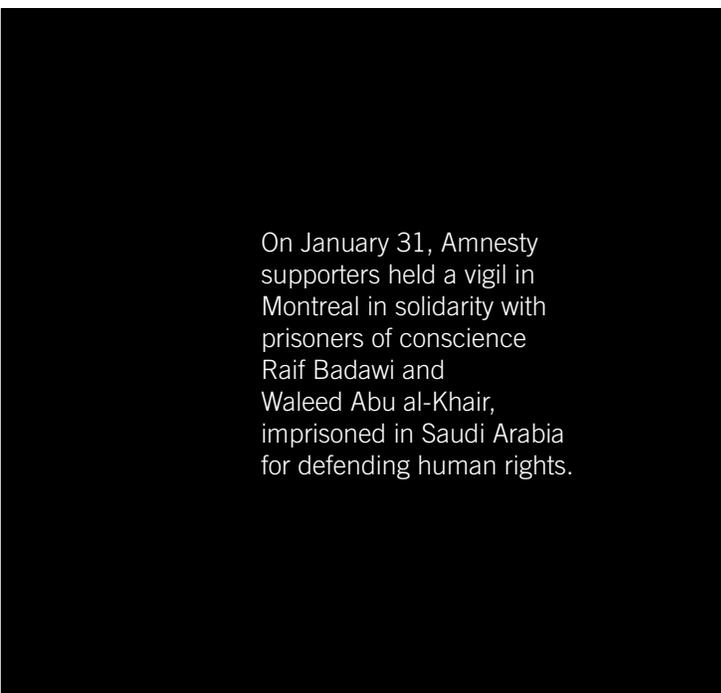
Amnesty supporters around the world marked December 10, International Human Rights Day, by holding Write for Rights letter-writing marathons. Amnesty supporters in Montreal held their Write for Rights event at the Centre for Sustainable Development.

© Eric Carrière/Amnistie internationale





The Write for Rights event held at Toronto's Centre for Social Innovation was one of the largest of many letter-writing events held in the city on or around December 10.



On January 31, Amnesty supporters held a vigil in Montreal in solidarity with prisoners of conscience Raif Badawi and Waleed Abu al-Khair, imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for defending human rights.



The Amnesty Group at York University, Toronto, held their Write for Rights event at the end of November.

DON'T SEE YOURSELF ON THESE PAGES?

If you attend or organize an Amnesty International event in your community, please share your photographs with other Amnesty members across Canada. Email high-resolution images with captions to members@amnesty.ca

Members of Amnesty's National Youth Action and Advisory Committee meeting in Toronto.

AMNESTY'S YOUTH LEADERS GROW HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN CANADA

By Serisha Iyar,
Amnesty International Youth Fellow

OVER THE PAST few years, Amnesty International Canada has re-committed to putting youth at the forefront of the movement.

To demonstrate this commitment, there was a concerted effort to bring together highly engaged youth members in the form of a committee that would work towards implementing the National Youth Strategy, Youth, Power, Action! As a result, the National Youth Action and Advisory Committee (NYAAC) was formed. Co-chaired by Roshni and Cassandra, the current cohort is represented by Maha, Aidan, Fatima, Anjali, and Almeera. Highlighting a diverse set of perspectives, together this team has identified innovative ways for Amnesty to engage with young people.

In autumn of 2019, NYAAC developed a year-long strategic plan during their annual face-to-face meeting that consisted of several youth-led and developed projects. These projects are to be implemented with the support of Amnesty's newly hired Youth Fellow. Adhering to the National Youth Strategy, the projects aim to cover the areas of campaigning, activism, communications, human rights education opportunities, and overall, improve youth engagement within Amnesty's work.

This year's projects include:

- › Board Buddies: the development of a strong partnership between NYAAC and the Board of Directors that integrates youth representation at the highest level of Amnesty's governance. Through mentorship, participation on sub-committees and the institutionalization of a youth Board position, this project aims to offer young people access to decision-making spaces with meaningful training and support as needed.

- › National Youth Portal: an accessible digital activism space where young activists from across the country can engage with one another as well as organize collectively around Amnesty's campaigns. This project allows for youth to not only network with others but also present their experiences as activists, share best practices by engaging in peer mentorship, and provide insight on the work being done nationally.
- › Regional Youth Conferences: opportunities for young people to learn from and engage with one another in-person. With goals of empowering youth through human rights education, and building capacity through skills training to partake more meaningfully in the human rights movement, this project will engage young supporters in an inspiring and impactful journey to becoming human rights defenders.

These curated by-youth, for-youth initiatives will help to build a sustainable presence for young people within the movement. With 2020 marking the latter end of the National Youth Strategy, Amnesty is grateful for the dedication, creativity, and passion NYAAC members have brought to their leadership positions and to the development of these important projects!

CURATED BY-YOUTH, FOR-YOUTH INITIATIVES WILL HELP TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE PRESENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

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BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS LOBBYIST WITH AMNESTY

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL needs your voice to send a strong message in support of human rights to our political leaders.

Amnesty International is launching a new lobbying and advocacy program. Amnesty activists and supporters across the country can join us to directly advocate with policymakers and decision makers to protect human rights in Canada and around the world.

Join our program to learn how to lobby on critical human rights issues. You can participate in national lobby days with others in your community and be ready to respond when we need you to contact decision makers, in-person or online, about emerging issues.

Your voice is essential to help us build a network of human rights lobbyists across the country to raise the profile of human rights issues and to win human rights victories.

TAKE ACTION

- › To learn more and to get involved, email lobby@amnesty.ca

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

Amnesty Canada’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on June 6, 2020. This will be a small meeting, held at the National Office in Ottawa, Ontario. The focus of the meeting will be on essential business of the organization. The next large AGM will be held in 2021. For more information, go to [amnesty.ca/agm](https://www.amnesty.ca/agm)

VOTE ONLINE IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS

Members will elect Amnesty Board Members using an online voting system. Only members can vote, nominate candidates, stand for election, and move or second nominations. To learn more about Amnesty membership and ensure you’re eligible to vote, go to [amnesty.ca/members](https://www.amnesty.ca/members)

All members will be notified of the AGM 60 days before the meeting. In order to vote at the AGM or in online elections, you must be a member by May 7, 2020 (30 days before the AGM)

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

- › Register to volunteer with Amnesty International at [amnesty.ca/volunteer](https://www.amnesty.ca/volunteer). The rewards of spending your time and energy volunteering are immensely satisfying. Amnesty provides training and support for all volunteer roles.
- › Amnesty 101 orientation is now available at [amnesty.ca/101](https://www.amnesty.ca/101). Whether you’re new to Amnesty or looking to refresh your knowledge, you’ll learn about human rights, Amnesty’s current priority campaigns, and how to get involved.



Idil Esser, former prisoner of conscience and director of Amnesty International Turkey, showing her strength at an Amnesty meeting in Switzerland.

HELP CREATE A WORLD IN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS LAST FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

Join us as a Human Rights Guardian by leaving a gift in your Will to human rights through Amnesty International.

Contact Hala Al-Madi at **613-744-7667 ext 223** or halmadi@amnesty.ca

2020: A YEAR OF CHANGE AND TRANSITION FOR AMNESTY CANADA

2020 WILL BE a year of exciting change and transition for our organization. The recruitment of our next Secretary General is well underway as we search to fill the shoes that will be left by Alex Neve after 20 years of dedicated human rights work.

Consultations with members on Amnesty's next global and national Strategic Goals will continue through the spring. Watch for our next survey and be sure to get in touch with haveyoursay@amnesty.ca to share your thoughts.

The Board and senior leadership are also renewing our commitment to organizational wellbeing and the inclusion of diverse voices in our work, including the further engagement of young people throughout the movement.

The Board's key priorities for 2020 include:

- › **Leadership Recruitment** and transition of our new Secretary General
- › Our Next **Strategic Goals** Consultation
- › Continuing our **Anti-Oppression** and **Wellbeing** work to ensure we are protecting our staff, members, and partners from harm while working with our organization
- › Financial and supporter **Growth** to strengthen our human rights impact
- › Engaging **Youth** in Amnesty Canada's governance and volunteer leadership structures

If you have any questions about these priorities or the work of the Board, please contact us at board@amnesty.ca.

JOIN AMNESTY CANADA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Are you looking for a new way to volunteer your time with Amnesty? Do you feel you can contribute to strong governance? Have you considered running to be a member of Amnesty Canada's Board of Directors? The call for nominations has gone out for this year's Board and Global Assembly Delegate election.

ABOUT THE BOARD

The Board of Directors oversees the operations and strategic direction of Amnesty Canada. Meetings are held four times per year, including the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Board Members also work with staff and volunteers on a range of committees outside of regular meetings (for example, the AGM Planning Committee, Nominations Committee, Audit and Finance Committee).

THE PROCESS

This year's election will take place on June 6 at the AGM. There are six positions up for election this year, including: two Director roles, Vice-Chair, Chair (one-year term), Treasurer, and 2021 Global Assembly Youth Delegate.

The deadline to submit nomination packages is May 7, 2020, and more details about the positions and the nominations process can be found at [amnesty.ca/nominations](https://www.amnesty.ca/nominations).

If you would like more information on the process or are considering running for one of these positions, please contact the Nominations Committee at nominations@amnesty.ca.



IN MEMORIAM: GARY OCKENDEN

In November of 2019, long-time Amnesty member and Board Vice-President Gary Ockenden passed away at his home in Nelson, BC. Gary supported Amnesty for more than

30 years and made countless contributions to the organization as an activist and member of the Board. Anyone who had the opportunity to work with Gary will have experienced the depth of his kindness and compassion and how much he cared for his family and the causes he supported. His presence will be sorely missed by many members of our movement and the other communities he served.

BEING A REFUGEE: FROM A JOURNEY OF STRUGGLE TO A JOURNEY OF SURVIVAL

Nazik Awad is a human rights defender who fled Sudan for Egypt, where she was registered as a refugee with the United Nations. But it was seven years before she was finally resettled in Canada. Her case featured in Write for Rights 2018.

Being a refugee is, for me, a matter of personal identity. Being a refugee is a statement of my struggle and the struggle of millions of other people around the world forced to leave their homes. Being a refugee is a reminder of the different global crises that drove us from our homes—conflicts, poverty, inequality, injustice, climate change, or sexual violence.

I was forced to flee my home in Sudan nine years ago because of my advocacy against human rights atrocities and genocidal crimes. After detention, court trials and death threats in Sudan, I went to Egypt to safeguard my life and to continue to advocate for justice and freedom in Sudan.

I arrived in Egypt in early 2012. But in 2014, the Egyptian government clamped down on human rights activists. For the next five years I was in hiding, moving from house to house many times. Threatened by Sudanese government agents, I was unable to obtain a Sudanese passport from Sudan’s embassy in Egypt. But I was at least able to get support from Amnesty International and other organizations protecting human rights defenders.

Without permission to work, refugees are forced to work illegally to support themselves. This situation increases the risk that employers will abuse them. This is especially true for women who often face sexual harassment at work as well as other kinds of violence and exploitation. Refugee children are forced to work

This photo of Nazik Awad was used in Amnesty’s 2018 Write for Rights campaign to protect her identity. As a refugee and a woman human rights defender in Egypt, Nazik faced enormous risks.

or drop out of school. Even if they manage to enroll in school, refugee children face racial discrimination and violence inside and outside schools.

Civil wars, brutal dictatorships, or climate change make it impossible for some refugees to return to their homeland. For these refugees, there is the long wait for resettlement in a third country. I waited seven years for resettlement, with years lost because of President Trump’s “Muslim ban”, which stalled my resettlement process.

Finally, I was lucky to be welcomed by a community in Kingston, Ontario. Local refugee resettlement groups in Canada play an important role in making refugees feel at home. But after defining myself as a “refugee” for eight long years, I found I was unable to remove the “refugee” tag even after I became a Canadian permanent resident. The refugee tag for me is a personal testimony of a journey of struggle and it has now taken on a new definition by becoming a “journey of survival”. Throughout my journey of struggle, the Amnesty community has been a lifeline of hope and solidarity.

This article was edited for length. Nazik’s complete article can be read at [amnesty.ca/nazik-awad](https://www.amnesty.ca/nazik-awad).

A man harvests salt in the Salinas Grandes in Argentina. Mining companies are keen to exploit the lithium brine that lies underneath the salt flats. The environmental and human rights impacts could be devastating.

© Diego Leanza/Amnistía Internacional Argentina

LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES: INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENTS MUST PROTECT RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENT

With increasing global demand for lithium for rechargeable batteries, lithium mining is endangering human rights and the environment. Tara Scurr, Amnesty's Business and Human Rights campaigner, reports on how the risks could outweigh the environmental benefits.

Do you dream of ditching your gas-powered car for an electric one? Or getting rid of a car altogether and trying an e-bike? If so, you are part of a growing movement of Canadians who are walking away from their traditional cars and embracing less-polluting modes of transportation.

Worldwide there are over four million battery-powered and plug-in electric vehicles on the road. Canada accounts for over 130,000 of those vehicles. People recognize the urgency of ending the widespread use of fossil fuels and states are following suit: the UK recently announced plans to ban the sale of gas-powered cars by 2035.

Global demand for electric vehicles is projected to overtake the sale of other types of electronics such as mobile phones. This has increased the need for the minerals used to make lithium-ion batteries, and mining companies are racing to secure reliable sources. It will come as little surprise to learn that communities affected by lithium exploration are sounding the alarm about the human rights harms they fear will result from eventual large-scale extraction of these minerals.



The majority of the planet's lithium reserves are found in brine—water which has a high concentration of salt. More than 70% is found in a single region: the so-called 'lithium triangle' in Chile, Bolivia and Argentina. Lithium in this region lies beneath some of the most beautiful places in the world, like the Salinas Grandes, recently voted one of the seven natural wonders of Argentina.

The Indigenous peoples who live in the Salinas Grandes and other salt flats have taken care of their lands for generations. This is one of the most arid regions of the planet where ecosystems are fragile. Extracting lithium here could irreparably damage the environment on which their livelihoods depend. Governments have obligations and companies have clear responsibilities to protect Indigenous peoples' rights and the environment. If we are to power our future in a manner that respects human rights, consumers of the end product—rechargeable batteries—must demand companies and governments live up to their obligations.

TAKE ACTION

- › Amnesty has published a new education series on lithium extraction and human rights in Argentina. Please go to [amnesty.ca/argentina-lithium](https://www.amnesty.ca/argentina-lithium) to learn more about what the Argentine government must do to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples and the environment.
- › For more information, please visit our blog at [amnesty.ca/ethical-batteries](https://www.amnesty.ca/ethical-batteries) or send an email to Tara Scurr at tscurr@amnesty.ca

COLOMBIAN DEFENDERS INSPIRE SOLIDARITY ON VISIT TO CANADA

“MOVING!” “Inspiring!” “So important!” Those were some of the words used by activists who had the opportunity to hear from four courageous Colombian human rights defenders during their visits to Canada at the end of 2019.

The defenders included Julia Figueroa and Andrea Nocove, members of an all-women collective of lawyers known by its acronym CCALCP, and Iván Madera, president of CREDHOS, a human rights organization in the Magdalena Medio region.

Their work increasingly focuses on defending environmental human rights, as authorities award mining and oil concessions, including to Canadian companies, without studies to evaluate the impact on drinking water, lands and health of nearby communities.

MORE THAN 700 COMMUNITY LEADERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS HAVE BEEN REPORTED KILLED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

“When communities voice concern, pamphlets appear threatening the leaders with death,” Iván Madera explained before a packed room at Amnesty’s Ottawa office.

“The people we work with are in constant danger,” added Andrea Nocove.

But so too are Andrea and her colleagues. Because of the risks they face, CREDHOS and CCALCP have requested the life-saving presence of Peace Brigades International accompaniers.

Across Colombia, the danger is growing. More than 700 community leaders and human rights defenders have been reported killed in the last three years alone and the bloodshed continues. Countless others are threatened with death unless they stop their legitimate efforts.



Colombian defenders Andrea Nocove, Julia Figueroa and Ivan Duque with Amnesty’s Colombia campaigner Kathy Price and Peace Brigades International’s Javier Garate.

Isabel Zuleta is one of the threatened, though she bravely refuses to be silenced. The environmentalist is president of the Association of Women Defenders of Water and Life and a spokesperson for the Rios Vivos (Living Rivers) Movement.

At Amnesty Saskatchewan’s Regional Forum on Business and Human Rights last November, Isabel moved many to tears as she showed images of the environmental devastation caused by a Canadian-financed dam project in the Cauca River basin, and the faces of fellow community leaders who were killed for speaking up in opposition.

“I am absolutely certain that I would not be alive today were it not for your solidarity,” Isabel told us, commenting on the advocacy of Amnesty International in support of Rios Vivos.

“Every letter, every public statement, every urgent action—you can’t imagine how important this is for us in Colombia.”

That message wasn’t lost on activists who heard Isabel’s presentations about the disastrous Hidroituango dam project and the need for policies to prevent non-repetition so other communities do not suffer like hers. Already teams have formed in Ottawa, Saskatoon, and Toronto to develop plans for follow up action.

TAKE ACTION

- › To get more involved, please contact Colombia campaigner Kathy Price at kprice@amnesty.ca
- › Go to page 15 to write a letter for defenders under attack in Colombia.

SURVEILLANCE GIANTS: HOW GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK THREATEN HUMAN RIGHTS

Facebook and Google’s surveillance of billions of people poses a systemic threat to human rights. Amnesty International is calling for a radical transformation of the tech giants’ core business model.

Google and Facebook dominate our modern lives—amassing unparalleled power over the digital world by harvesting and monetizing the personal data of billions of people. Their control of our digital lives undermines the very essence of privacy and is one of the defining human rights challenges of our era.

The tech giants offer their services without charging users a fee. Instead, individuals pay for the services with their intimate personal data, being constantly tracked across the web and in the physical world as well.

Google and Facebook’s platforms use algorithms that process huge volumes of data to infer incredibly detailed characteristics about people. Advertisers then pay Facebook and Google to target people with advertising or specific messages. The Cambridge Analytica scandal exposed how easily people’s data can be misused with the aim of manipulating and influencing them.

The extraction and analysis of people’s personal data on such an unprecedented scale is incompatible with every element of the right to privacy, including the freedom from intrusion into our private lives, the right to control information about ourselves, and the right to a space in which we can freely express our identities.

Facebook and Google have chosen a specific surveillance-business model that impacts on human



© Sebastien Thibault/agoodson.com

rights. Now governments must urgently overhaul this surveillance-based business model and protect us from corporate human rights abuses. Governments must enforce robust data protection laws and regulate Big Tech in line with human rights law.

The internet is a vital public space and it’s time to reclaim it for everyone rather than a few powerful unaccountable companies in Silicon Valley.

LEARN MORE

- › Amnesty’s report *Surveillance Giants* exposes how the surveillance-based business model of Facebook and Google is incompatible with the right to privacy and threatens freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of thought, and the right to equality and non-discrimination. Read the report at [amnesty.ca/surveillance-giants](https://www.amnesty.ca/surveillance-giants)

TORONTO: SIDEWALK LABS UPDATE

WHEN SIDEWALK LABS, Google’s sister company, announced plans to build a sensor-laden smart city on Toronto’s waterfront, almost a thousand Amnesty supporters sent messages to the Waterfront Toronto Board of Directors to demand that human rights come first in smart city assessments. In October 2019, the Waterfront Toronto Board issued a Request for Proposals

for a Human Rights Assessment on the project. While this is a positive development in highlighting the importance of human rights in any application of technology there are many questions that remain including: Is Google’s business model compatible with an equitable city that works for everyone, including marginalized groups, and how do we ensure meaningful consultation that addresses the concerns of rights holders in Toronto and beyond? Find out more at [amnesty.ca/smart-city](https://www.amnesty.ca/smart-city)

IT'S HIGH TIME CANADA PUT A STOP TO CORPORATE ABUSES

YOU ARE NOT ALONE if you are feeling outraged with Canada's unsatisfactory efforts to rein in human rights abuses by Canadian mining, oil and gas companies overseas. The latest disgrace is that the highly anticipated Ombudsperson for corporate responsibility, who was appointed in April 2019, has still not been given the powers necessary to do an effective job.

Meanwhile people around the world continue to suffer harms linked to Canadian companies. Human rights defenders face life-threatening risks just for standing up for their rights against powerful corporations. This must not continue.

The Government of Canada has acknowledged its obligation to prevent such abuses and ensure that people harmed by Canadian companies overseas have access to remedy. However, years after making these commitments, we are still waiting for real action.

Canadians from coast to coast are taking action to demand that the Canadian government rein in human rights abuses by Canadian companies overseas. You can make a difference by sending a letter.

TAKE ACTION

1. Write to Prime Minister Trudeau:
 - › Express dismay that the Canadian government has not followed through on its commitment to establish an Ombudsperson with the power to conduct effective investigations.
 - › Urge him to give the Ombudsperson the power to investigate companies that are accused of serious human rights abuses. This must include the power to compel documents and summon witnesses. Without the ability to conduct effective investigations, the Ombudsperson office will be powerless to stand up to big business.
 - › Send your letter, postage free, to the Prime Minister, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6. Or email justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca
2. Visit [amnesty.ca/openforjustice](https://www.amnesty.ca/openforjustice) in May for additional ways to take action during the Month of Action for Mining Justice.

“WHAT DO WE WANT? CLIMATE JUSTICE! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!”



Marinel Ubaldo survived the deadly Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines in 2013 and went on to become a leading youth activist, dedicated to ensuring governments around the world confront the climate crisis.

WE ARE FACING a climate emergency: forest fires, hurricanes, sea level rise, flooding, drought, extreme heat waves. People around the world are already experiencing the consequences of a warming planet, and it's going to get much worse.

TAKE ACTION

- › Students are standing up for their future and their rights. Let's support them! Until further notice all climate strikes will be online events. We encourage those who can to take part. Visit [fridaysforfuture.ca](https://www.fridaysforfuture.ca) for more information.
- › For more information about Amnesty Canada's work on climate justice, visit [amnesty.ca/climate](https://www.amnesty.ca/climate)



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SAUDI ARABIA: CALL FOR WALEED ABU AL-KHAIR TO BE FREED

WALEED ABU AL-KHAIR is a lawyer and human rights defender who has defended numerous victims of human rights violations, as well as other human rights defenders. He was the lawyer of Raif Badawi, a well-known Saudi Arabian blogger who was sentenced in July 2013 to seven years in prison and 600 lashes.

In 2014, Waleed Abu al-Khair was sentenced to 15 years in prison, followed by a 15-year travel ban and a fine of approximately US \$53,000 on charges which include “disobeying the ruler and seeking to remove his legitimacy”, “insulting the judiciary and questioning the integrity of judges”, and “harming the reputation of the state by communicating with international organizations”.

On January 9, 2020, Waleed Abu al-Khair was hospitalized after his health deteriorated due to his hunger strike. On February 6, Waleed ended his hunger strike after the Saudi authorities moved him from the maximum-security wing of the prison to his regular cell.

TAKE ACTION

Please write to King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud:

- › Call on him to release Waleed Abu al-Khair immediately and unconditionally and ensure that his conviction and sentence are quashed;
- › Urge him to ensure that pending release Waleed is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and allowed regular access to his family, and that he is provided with any medical attention he may require.

WRITE TO:

King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

SALUTATION: Your Majesty

WRITE ALSO TO:

Crown Prince, Deputy Premier, Minister of the Interior,
President of the Council of Economic and Development
Affairs and the Council of Political and Security Affairs
His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul
Aziz Al Saud
Ministry of the Interior
King Fahad Rd, al Olaya
Riyadh 12611
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

SALUTATION: Your Majesty

SEND A COPY TO:

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
201 Sussex Dr
Ottawa, ON K1N 1K6

JOIN THE URGENT ACTION NETWORK

When an individual is in immediate danger of a human rights violation, Amnesty International mobilizes a dedicated group of letter-writers—the Urgent Action Network—to take action quickly to protect them. To join the network and receive regular Urgent Actions, send an e-mail to urgentaction@amnesty.ca with “I want to join” in the subject line.

COLOMBIA: SPEAK UP FOR EARTH DEFENDERS



© Kamil Krawczak

ISABEL ZULETA is a leader of the Rios Vivos (Living Rivers) Movement. She speaks up tirelessly to defend the environment on which many people in her region depend for their survival.

Isabel's efforts to raise awareness about the harmful impacts of a big dam project on the Cauca River have led to death threats and attacks. Danger is ever present.

Hundreds of community leaders have been killed in Colombia in the past three years alone. At extreme risk are defenders of Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant and rural communities living in areas with abundant natural resources.

TAKE ACTION

Please write to Colombia's president:

- › Express your concern for the safety of Isabel Zuleta and all environmental human rights defenders in Colombia amid an escalation of killings, threats and attacks;
- › Call on him to ensure effective protection so that communities and their leaders are able to defend their rights and the environment without harm;
- › Also call for guarantees that all threats and attacks will be investigated so as to bring the perpetrators to justice.

WRITE TO:

Iván Duque Márquez
President of Colombia
c/ Minister of Interior
Carrera 8 No. 7-26,
Bogotá, Colombia

SALUTATION: Your Excellency

SEND A COPY TO:

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne
Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs
111 Wellington St
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

RUSSIA: HELP DEFEND YULIA TSVETKOVA



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RUSSIAN ACTIVIST and artist Yulia Tsvetkova is facing prosecution and harassment for defending women's and LGBTI rights. She has been under house arrest since November 22 under absurd charges of "production and dissemination of

pornography" for her drawings of the female body. She is facing up to six years in prison if convicted. Yulia Tsvetkova is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Yulia has also been targeted under the Code of Administrative Offences. On December 11, she was issued with a fine of 50,000 rubles (US\$ 780) for so-called "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors" on account of being the administrator of two LGBTI-themed online communities. She was fined, despite the fact that both online communities were marked "18+", as required by Russian law. Further administrative proceedings have been instigated against Yulia Tsvetkova for the same "offence".

TAKE ACTION

Please write to the Prosecutor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur:

- › Urge him to take all necessary steps to end Yulia Tsvetkova's prosecution, under both criminal and administrative charges, and to ensure her immediate and unconditional release.

WRITE TO:

Prosecutor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur
Boris Viktorovich Kononenko
Prosecutor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur
Krasnogvardeiskaya street, 34
Komsomolsk-on-Amur 681013
Russian Federation

EMAIL: kms@phk.hbr.ru

SALUTATION: Dear Prosecutor

SEND A COPY TO:

His Excellency Alexander Darchiey
Embassy of the Russian Federation
285 Charlotte St
Ottawa, ON K1N 8L5

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 

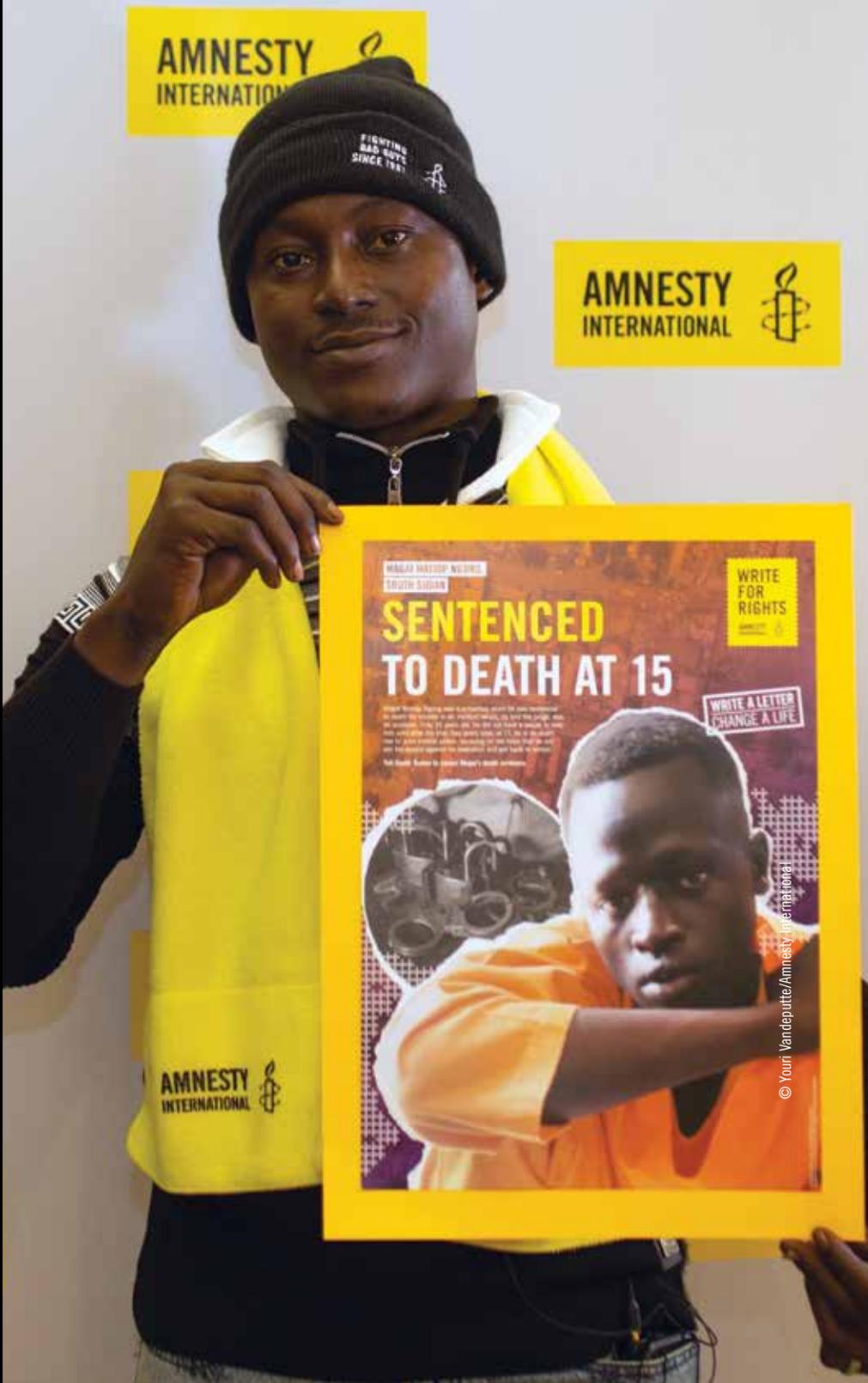
MOSES AKATUGBA WAS AT A WRITE FOR RIGHTS EVENT AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS, IN DECEMBER 2019.

Moses was supporting the case of Magai Matiop Ngong in South Sudan. Moses, like Magai, had been sentenced to death. Moses was 16 at the time; Magai a year younger. Moses was freed thanks to Amnesty supporters campaigning on his case. Now Moses in his turn is campaigning to save Magai's life.

Every December for the past 17 years, Amnesty supporters around the globe have written millions of letters for those whose basic human rights are being attacked, continuing a long tradition of writing letters to right some of the world's biggest wrongs. And it's not just letters—it's petitions, emails, Tweets, Facebook posts, photos, postcards.

Write for Rights 2019 prompted tens of thousands of people to pick up their pens. The global count of actions taken in December 2019 stands at 6.5 million. In Canada alone, there were more than 360 events and 60,000 letters written.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 



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WOMEN'S RIGHTS: CANADA MUST ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

Amnesty supporters in Toronto taking part in a march to celebrate International Women's Day. Amnesty is calling for the government to commit financial resources to implement bold policies, programs and initiatives that advance gender equality.

Despite the Trudeau government's stated desire to advance women's rights, there is still a long way to go. Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people still fear they will be the next to go missing. Women's shelters and sexual assault centres are insufficiently resourced and not always able to meet the needs of survivors. And Indigenous women still fear being coerced or forced into sterilization. Jackie Hansen, Amnesty's Gender Rights Campaigner, outlines what needs to happen now to advance women's rights and gender equality.

March 8 was International Women's Day, a time to celebrate advances in women's rights, as well as protest ongoing abuses experienced by women, girls, transgender, and non-binary people around the world.

Amnesty International marked the day by calling on Parliamentarians to take real, concrete actions that will make a positive and measurable difference in the lives of the most

marginalized women, girls, transgender, and non-binary people in Canada.

Canada's last Parliament kicked off with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau proclaiming himself a feminist and reaching gender parity in cabinet appointments. His government transformed Status of Women Canada into a full-fledged ministry called Women and Gender Equality Canada; mandated gender-based analysis on all cabinet decisions and the federal budget; held a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; developed a Feminist International Assistance Policy and the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan; and prioritized women's rights issues during its G7 presidency.

The taps were finally turned on to support cash-starved projects to end gender-based violence, support the realization of sexual and reproductive rights, and fund grassroots women's organizations and movements. And, to top it all off, then-Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland hosted the first ever Women Foreign Ministers Meeting and regularly spoke publicly of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy.

(continued on page 3)



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WOMEN'S RIGHTS: CANADA MUST ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY

A vigil to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, October 2008. In its first term, the Trudeau government established a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The National Inquiry's Calls for Justice must now be fully implemented.

(cover story continued)

These were happier times for women's rights advocates after many years of Canada dangerously backsliding on women's rights issues. For too long, Canada had failed to address gender inequalities, and initiatives spearheaded by Prime Minister Trudeau and his team, including Women and Gender Equality Minister Maryam Monsef, were long overdue and much needed.

Trudeau's first mandate was about putting in place the government machinery needed to address gender inequalities. It was about beginning to take steps forward in advancing women's rights. But what impact did the many laudable initiatives undertaken by the first Trudeau government have?

In December 2018, Trudeau's feminist government did not prevent a 30-year-old Indigenous woman in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, who was about to give birth, from being pressured by a doctor to sign a consent form for a tubal ligation.

It did not lower the rates of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people who went missing or were murdered from the rate pre-National Inquiry.

And it did not provide sexual assault centres experiencing a record number of calls in the wake of the #MeToo movement with the funding needed to meet demands.

Not all violations of women's rights could be prevented by one government in one mandate, but more can and must be done.

In his first mandate, Prime Minister Trudeau put in place the gender machinery and did the groundwork necessary to facilitate lasting change.

His second mandate must be about sustaining if not accelerating action. The political will to advance women's rights and gender equality must not wane. The financial resources to implement bold policies, programs and initiatives must be made available. This Parliament must be about making concrete and measurable actions

that will lead to results. And the results must be positive changes in the lives of women, girls, transgender, and non-binary people in Canada, with a focus on those who are most marginalized including Indigenous, Black, and other racialized women; women with disabilities; and people who are discriminated against for their sexual orientation, gender identity, or variations in sex characteristics.

Success must look like Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people not fearing they will be the next to go missing.

Success must look like frontline service providers like women's shelters and sexual assault centres being sufficiently resourced and easily able to meet the needs of survivors.

Success must look like Indigenous women being able to give birth in a facility of their choosing, with practitioners of their choosing, with no fear that they will be forced or coerced into sterilization.

Success must look like survivors of forced and coerced sterilization finally seeing justice.

It's often said that people are judged by their actions, not their intentions. Trudeau's lasting legacy must not be his desire to advance women's rights. His legacy must be that he truly succeeded in advancing women's rights and gender equality.

TAKE ACTION

- › International Women's Day has passed, but it's not too late to join us in calling on Minister of Women and Gender Equality Maryam Monsef to take action to end gender-based violence including sterilization without consent. Go to [amnesty.ca/iwd2020](https://www.amnesty.ca/iwd2020) to take action.