



Neth Nahara – Angola

TikToker jailed for criticizing president

Ana da Silva Miguel, known as Neth Nahara, is a singer and social media influencer in Angola. In August 2023 Neth took to TikTok criticizing President João Lourenço. The next day Neth was arrested and subsequently tried, convicted and sentenced to six months in prison, later increased to two years. The Angolan authorities are using a controversial law criminalizing criticism of the president to silence critical voices.

For Ana da Silva Miguel, a 32-year-old singer and mother with two young children, life in Angola was frustrating and hard. How could a country with so much potential allow so many of its people to live in poverty? Fed up with the lack of schools, employment and opportunity, Ana took to TikTok, becoming “Neth Nahara” – social media influencer and commentator.

Neth shared stories of her life with her followers, good times and bad. She was bubbly, fun and unafraid to speak her truth. Neth encouraged women to seek out education and gain independence. She also bravely shared that she had HIV and gave advice on how to stay healthy.

On August 12, 2023, Neth went live on her TikTok channel, openly criticizing President João Lourenço. The very next day Neth was arrested at her home in Luanda, Angola’s capital. She was summarily tried, convicted and sentenced to six months in prison. On September 27, 2023, the sentence was increased to two years.

The Angolan authorities are using a controversial law (criminal code 333) to silence critical voices like Neth. The law was passed during the Covid-19 pandemic – a time when the Angolan people took to the streets to express their discontent with the president’s leadership – and makes “insulting” the president a crime.

For the first eight months Neth spent in arbitrary detention she was denied the daily medication needed to treat HIV. Only after repeated requests

from her lawyers, was she finally given the necessary medications. Neth Nahara and others like her are being detained and mistreated because they dare to speak out.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the president

Demand that Neth Nahara is immediately and unconditionally released, since her conviction and ongoing arbitrary detention stem solely from the peaceful exercise of her human rights, including the right to freedom of expression.

President of Angola
Palácio Presidencial
Cidade Alta
Rua 17 de Setembro
Luanda
Angola
E-mail: secretariageral@oapr.gov.ao

Salutation: Your Excellency

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in the US (there is no embassy in Canada)

Embassy of the Republic of Angola
2100-2108 16th Street NW
Washington DC 20009
United States of America
Email: info@angola.org

Send your letters and cards of hope to Neth

Help keep Neth’s spirits up and let her know she is not alone.

Ana da Silva Miguel (Neth Nahara)
Estabelecimento prisional feminino de Viana,
Vila de Viana
Avenida 11 de Novembro
Rua Nzinga Mbande
Luanda
Angola





Joel Paredes – Argentina

Blinded by rubber bullets at a peaceful protest

Joel Paredes is a 29-year-old father from Jujuy province, Argentina. On June 30, 2023, Joel attended a protest against changes to the province's constitution, including restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, measures that may cause damage to the environment, and risk violating Indigenous Peoples' land rights. Police fired rubber bullets at protesters. Joel was hit, permanently blinding him in the right eye, and leaving him with debilitating nerve pain. No one has been held accountable.

Twenty-nine-year-old ceramicist Joel Paredes lives in Humahuaca, a small town in Jujuy, a northern Argentine province. In June 2023 the local government pushed through changes to the province's constitution, including restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, as well as measures that may cause damage to the environment, and risk violating Indigenous Peoples' land rights. The changes were approved without consultation with Indigenous Peoples or the wider population.

Jujuy is a province rich in lithium, a metal known as "white gold" due to its worldwide demand for the creation of batteries. Argentine authorities want to expand lithium exports. But people who live on the land, like Joel and his family, have serious doubts.

Although not Indigenous himself, Joel sympathized greatly and was concerned for the future of his children who would grow up on the land. In support, on the evening of June 30, 2023, Joel joined a protest in Humahuaca square. Alongside hundreds of peaceful demonstrators, Joel played a "bombo" drum with his band while the City Council discussed the changes in a nearby building. For Joel: "Our musical instruments are our weapons."

In the early hours of July 1, the police arrived at the square and started recklessly firing rubber bullets into the crowd. Joel was hit in his right eye. The injury required surgery, but doctors could not save his sight,

and Joel is now permanently blind in his right eye. Joel is also left with debilitating nerve pain that impacts his daily life. No one has been held accountable for what happened to Joel and the other protesters.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the attorney general of the public prosecutor's office

Demand those found responsible for Joel Paredes's injuries and all other violations against protesters are brought to justice in accordance with international law and standards.

Attorney General of the Public Prosecutor's Office
Sarmiento 427
4600 San Salvador de Jujuy
Argentina
Email: stello@mpajujuy.gob.ar

Salutation: Dear Sir

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in Canada

Embassy of the Argentine Republic
81 Metcalfe Street, 7th Floor
Ottawa ON K1P 6K7
Email: ecana@cancilleria.gov.ar

Show Joel and his family that you support them in their fight for justice

Send your messages of support to show Joel and his family that they are not alone.

Joel Paredes
c/o Amnesty International Argentina
Santos Dumont 3429, 2nd Floor
1427 Buenos Aires
Argentina





Maryia Kalesnikava – Belarus

Political activist abducted and locked up for 11 years

Political activist Maryia Kalesnikava dared to challenge the repressive Belarus government. On September 7, 2020, Maryia was abducted by the Belarus authorities. She was taken to the border where she resisted deportation by tearing up her passport. She was detained and later sentenced to 11 years in prison on false charges. Maryia’s family haven’t heard from her for more than a year.

A professional musician, Maryia Kalesnikava has filled her life with music, art and people. She’s passionate about meeting people and learning from them, and dreams of a Belarus where everyone is respected and allowed to speak freely.

This led Maryia to become involved in the August 2020 presidential elections. She joined the campaign of independent candidate Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya alongside Veranika Tsapkala. The three women united after the leading male candidates had been jailed or fled. In a country where rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are severely restricted, this formidable trio called for change and offered hope to many.

It is widely believed the opposition won, but the election was rigged, and Alyaksandr Lukashenka returned for his sixth term. Following the election, Svyatlana and Veranika were forced into exile and Maryia emerged as the highest profile opposition figure. She stood at the front line of peaceful protests, confronting abusive police officers, and making a heart-shaped symbol with her hands in front of riot police.

On September 7, 2020, Maryia was abducted by the Belarus authorities. Dragged into a van by masked men, she was taken to the border, intimidated and pressured to leave the country. She escaped through the van’s window and tore up her passport to resist deportation. Maryia was arrested, detained and later sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges including “undermining national security” and “extremism”.

Maryia is imprisoned in appalling conditions, with limited access to the healthcare she needs and isolated from other inmates inside the prison. Maryia’s family and friends have not heard from her for over a year.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the minister of foreign affairs

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus
vul. Lenina 19
220030, Minsk
Republic of Belarus
Email: mail@mfa.gov.by

Salutation: Dear Minister

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in the US (there is no embassy in Canada)

Embassy of the Republic of Belarus
1619 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Washington DC 20009
United States of America
Email: usa@mfa.gov.by

Show Maryia that she is not alone

Send Maryia messages of hope and solidarity. Let her know you support her in her fight for human rights in Belarus. Include red hearts and musical notes in your messages.

Maryia Kalesnikava
Penal colony No. 4
vul. Antoshkina 3
246035, Homel
Republic of Belarus





Wet'suwet'en Nation Land Defenders – Canada

Fighting to protect their ancestral lands and our planet

The Wet'suwet'en Nation are deeply connected to their ancestral lands, but this is threatened by the construction of a fossil fuel pipeline through their territory. Their Hereditary Chiefs did not consent to this construction. Land defenders have been charged for blocking pipeline construction sites, even though these sites are on their ancestral lands. They could face prison and a criminal record.

“Our medicines, our berries, our food, the animals, our water, our culture, are all here since time immemorial. We are obligated to protect our ways of life for our babies unborn.”

These are the words of Sleydo', a member of the Indigenous Wet'suwet'en Nation, who lives on land inhabited by her ancestors for thousands of years.

In 2019, Coastal GasLink Pipeline Ltd (CGL) began constructing a fossil fuel pipeline through the Wet'suwet'en Nation's ancestral territory, without the consent of the Hereditary Chiefs and their clans. They never agreed to the pipeline and the Nation has the right to decide what development takes place on its territory.

Committed to protecting their ancestral lands and everyone's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Sleydo' and other land defenders began taking action to stop the pipeline construction. But their peaceful actions have been met with intimidation, harassment and criminalization.

In 2018, the British Columbia Supreme Court (BCSC) granted CGL an injunction to prevent any interference with pipeline construction. The police have enforced this injunction with four violent raids on Wet'suwet'en

territory, using weapons, helicopters and dogs. More than 75 land defenders have been arrested.

In November 2021, Sleydo' was arrested during one of these raids, with nearly 30 other defenders. Along with two other defenders, she was later found guilty of “criminal contempt” for allegedly disobeying the injunction order to stay away from pipeline construction sites, despite being on her ancestral territory. The land defenders have made an application to the BCSC stating that their human rights were violated by police during the raids. Their future depends on the outcome of the application. If unsuccessful, they face prison.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the premier of British Columbia

Demand that they stop the criminalization of Wet'suwet'en land defenders.

Premier of British Columbia
PO box 9041
STN Prov. Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E1
Email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Salutation: Dear Premier

Show the Wet'suwet'en Nation land defenders that you support them

Send your messages of support to show the Wet'suwet'en Nation land defenders that you support them in their fight to protect their ancestral lands.

Wet'suwet'en Nation
c/o Amnesty International Canada
312 Laurier Avenue East
Ottawa ON K1N 1H9
Canada





Oqba Hashad – Egypt

Detained & tortured for his brother's activism

Twenty-seven-year-old student Oqba Hashad has been held in pretrial detention in Egypt since May 2019, solely in retaliation for his brother Amr's human rights activism. Oqba was forcibly disappeared, tortured and denied the prosthetic leg he has used since a childhood accident – leaving him physically reliant on others. While he is held in terrible conditions without access to adequate healthcare, the Egyptian authorities have opened a new bogus case against him to justify his continued detention.

Twenty-seven-year-old Oqba Hashad was studying at university in Sadat City, north-west of Cairo, Egypt, when on May 20, 2019, life as he knew it came to an end. In a seemingly random raid, National Security Agency agents stormed Oqba's dorm, arresting all the students present, including Oqba. After a few days, the other students were released – except Oqba. Agents realized Oqba was the brother of Amr Hashad, a human rights activist who, after fleeing Egypt earlier that year, continued to denounce the country's human rights violations from exile.

For 77 days, Oqba's family had no idea where he was, and they feared for his safety. During this time, Oqba was tortured – including electric shocks to his genitals and to the stump of his right leg, which had been amputated following an accident when he was a child.

In August 2022, the prosthetic leg Oqba needs to move freely broke. For 16 months prison authorities denied him a replacement, and Oqba has become reliant on other prisoners for everyday tasks. On January 4, 2024, Oqba was finally given a new prosthesis, however, it does not fit and causes further injury when used. Officials are also denying him the medicines needed to care for his stump, increasing the risk of infection.

On February 20, 2024, a judge ordered Oqba's release, as he had been held in pretrial detention for longer than the two years permitted by Egyptian law.

To bypass this, prosecutors opened a new bogus case against him to justify his continued detention.

Oqba is being detained solely in retaliation for his brother's human rights work. Denied proper medical care and even a bed to sleep in, Oqba's psychological and physical health is gravely deteriorating.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the president

Demand Oqba Hashad's immediate and unconditional release, as his detention is related solely to his brother's human rights activism.

President of Egypt
Office of the President
Al-Ittihadiya Palace
Al Nadi, El-Montaza, Heliopolis
Cairo Governorate
4460210
Egypt
Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg

Salutation: Your Excellency

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in Canada

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
454 Laurier Avenue East
Ottawa ON K1N 6R3
Email: egyptembottawa@gmail.com

Show Oqba and his family that they are not alone

Send your support to Oqba and his family, share your messages of hope.

Oqba Hashad
c/o Amnesty International Tunis Regional Office
24 Avenue de la livre
Les Berges du lac 2
1053 Tunis
Tunisia





Manahel al-Otaibi – Saudi Arabia

Eleven years in prison for supporting women’s rights

Manahel al-Otaibi is a fitness instructor and a brave outspoken advocate for women’s rights in Saudi Arabia. In November 2022, she was arrested after posting to Snapchat photos of herself at a shopping mall. In the photos, she was not wearing the traditional long-sleeved loose robe known as an abaya. Manahel has been sentenced to 11 years in prison.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia’s authorities have claimed they are advancing women’s rights in the Kingdom. Thirty-year-old Manahel al-Otaibi believed these promises and felt freer to express her views and wear what she liked. Now, facing over a decade behind bars, these promises are utterly hollow.

Before her arrest, Manahel was a fitness instructor and a brave and outspoken advocate for women’s rights, using social media to call for greater freedoms for women in her country. Manahel was arrested on November 16, 2022, and charged with violating the Anti-Cyber Crime Law due to her tweets supporting women’s rights and posting to Snapchat photos of herself at a shopping mall, not wearing an abaya, a traditional loose-fitting long-sleeved robe.

Her case was referred to the country’s counter-terrorism court, the Specialized Criminal Court, notorious for its grossly unfair trials and harsh sentences. On January 9, 2024, Manahel was given an 11-year prison sentence for “terrorist offences” for her online expression, in a secret hearing the results of which were only revealed weeks later.

In November 2023, Manahel told her family she had been beaten by a fellow prisoner, and as a result she was cut off from the outside world, unable to communicate with anyone. In April 2024, Manahel was able to call her family for the first time in months, and sounding distressed, told them she was being held in solitary confinement and had again been brutally beaten, leaving her with a broken leg and no medical treatment.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the minister of justice

Demand that Manahel al-Otaibi is immediately and unconditionally released, and all charges against her are dropped.

Minister of Justice for Saudi Arabia
PO box 7775
11472
Riyadh
Saudi Arabia
Email: minister-office@moj.gov.sa

Salutation: Your Excellency

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in Canada

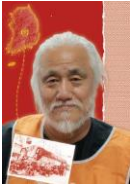
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
201 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1N 1K6
Email: caemb@mofa.gov.sa

Show Manahel she is not alone

Send your messages of support to Manahel and her family, let them know you care.

Manahel al-Otaibi
c/o Saudi Arabia Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom





Kyung Seok Park – South Korea

***‘I dream of a world where
no one is left behind’***

Kyung Seok Park is a dedicated disability rights activist. Holding peaceful protests on Seoul’s public transport systems, Kyung Seok Park has drawn attention to how hard it is for people with disabilities to easily access trains and subways safely – denying them the ability to travel to work, school, or to live independently. Kyung Seok Park’s activism has been met with police abuse, public smear campaigns and punitive litigation.

Before Kyung Seok Park developed paraplegia following a hang-gliding accident in August 1983, he never thought about the lives of people with disabilities. He was 22 years old and busy studying at university, playing guitar and having fun with friends. When Kyung Seok attempted to live as a person with a disability, he soon found daily life for people with disabilities in South Korea was unacceptably difficult, even dangerous. His life as an activist began.

Representing Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination (SADD), a disability rights movement, Kyung Seok focuses his activism on public transportation. Without measures to eliminate obstacles and barriers to access public transport, people with disabilities are cut off from being able to participate fully in all aspects of life – travelling to a job or school and living independently. Numerous wheelchair users in Seoul have been killed or injured when utilizing unsafe wheelchair lifts at train and subway stations.

Demanding an increase to the public budget for disability rights, in 2021 Kyung Seok and SADD activists began peaceful protests, during which many wheelchair users simultaneously boarded and disembarked subway trains during busy commuting hours. Authorities in Seoul have reacted negatively, including with violence. The protests have been repressed and activists forcibly dragged out of stations by police. Politicians have conducted smear campaigns, painting disability activists as a public nuisance. Seoul Metropolitan Government has filed multiple “blockade lawsuits” against peaceful protesters, further attempting to quash their activism.

Despite being almost strangled by police and Seoul Metro staff during a peaceful protest, and facing multiple lawsuits because of his activism, Kyung Seok continues to fight, declaring: “We refuse to wait any longer. We demand a world where no one is left behind.”

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the mayor of Seoul

Urge the mayor to ensure the right to freedom of peaceful assembly by stopping the use of unlawful force against Kyung Seok Park and SADD activists, dropping all litigation, and ending the media smear campaign so activists may keep campaigning for a world where people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of life.

Mayor of Seoul
6F, Seoul Metropolitan Government
110 Sejong-daero
Jung-gu
Seoul 04524
Republic of Korea
Email: seoulcity@seoul.go.kr

Salutation: Dear Mayor of Seoul

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in Canada

Embassy of the Republic of Korea
150 Boteler Street
Ottawa ON K1N 5A6
Email: canada@mofa.go.kr

Show Kyung Seok Park that you support his activism

Send your messages of strength and hope, show Kyung Seok Park and SADD activists that they are valued and respected.

Kyung Seok Park
c/o Solidarity Against
Disability Discrimination
5F, 25, Dongsung-gil
Jongno-gu
Seoul 03086
Republic of Korea





Şebnem Korur Fincancı – Türkiye

Harrassed for defending human rights

Forensic medicine expert and human rights defender Professor Şebnem Korur Fincancı has dedicated her life to eradicating torture and defending human rights. Trying to silence her, the Turkish authorities have subjected Şebnem to baseless criminal investigations. In 2023, she was convicted for allegedly “making propaganda for a terrorist organization” after she had called for an investigation into allegations that the Turkish military was using chemical weapons in Iraq. Şebnem is appealing against her conviction but could be imprisoned for almost two years if unsuccessful.

At home, Professor Şebnem Korur Fincancı enjoys spending time with her cats Simone and Ulula, cooking and listening to music. Beethoven is her favourite composer.

To the world, Şebnem is a forensic medicine expert, renowned for her work to eradicate torture. She has contributed to the development of a United Nations protocol on the investigation of torture, and a handbook on sexual violence for the World Health Organization. Until June 2024, she was the head of the Turkish Medical Association. Şebnem has also continually fought to protect the human rights of people in Türkiye, including their right to freedom of expression.

In a bid to silence her and stop her important work, for years the Turkish authorities have subjected Şebnem to baseless criminal investigations, detention and prosecutions. In January 2023, she was convicted for allegedly “making propaganda for a terrorist organization” after she had called for an investigation into allegations that the Turkish military was using chemical weapons in Iraq. Şebnem is appealing against her conviction but could be imprisoned for almost two years if her appeal is unsuccessful.

The government is cracking down on people’s freedom of expression and putting restrictions on the work of human rights defenders like Şebnem. But Şebnem refuses to give in to their intimidation. Undeterred by the hostility she faces, she says: “I have never had the habit of bowing to any authority to this day.”

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the minister of justice

Demand the authorities stop misusing the criminal justice system to harass Şebnem and refrain from bringing any other charges against her for defending human rights.

Minister of Justice
Kızılay
Milli Müdafı Cd. No: 5
06420 Çankaya
Ankara
Türkiye
Email: ozelkalem@adalet.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in Canada

Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye
197 Wurtemberg Street
Ottawa ON K1N 8L9
Email: embassy.ottawa@mfa.gov.tr

Show Şebnem that you support her

Send your messages of support to show Şebnem that you support her in her fight to protect people’s rights in Türkiye.

Prof. Şebnem Korur Fincancı
c/o Türk Tabipleri Birliđi
GMK Bulvarı
Şht. Danış Tunalıđıl Sk. No:
2/17-23
06570 Maltepe
Ankara
Türkiye





Dang Dinh Bach – Viet Nam

Jailed for protecting the environment and human rights

Environmental justice lawyer Dang Dinh Bach has dedicated his life to protecting people in Viet Nam from pollution and the impact of climate change. On June 24, 2021, Bach was arrested and jailed for alleged tax evasion, a tactic used by the Vietnamese authorities to silence environmental activists. He was sentenced to five years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

Environmental justice lawyer Dang Dinh Bach has dedicated his life to improving the health and livelihoods of people in Viet Nam and protecting them from the threats of pollution and climate change.

His organization, the Law and Policy of Sustainable Development Research Center (LPSD), was the first in Viet Nam to take legal action against the government and corporations for serious environmental and public health violations. The illegal disposal of pesticides and the increased risk of cancer caused by industrial pollution are just some of the issues they have fought against.

The organization's work is crucial. Through their public campaigns and training, they raise awareness and help communities understand their rights, empowering them to confront powerful economic and political interests to protect their social, economic and environmental well-being.

But on June 24, 2021, Bach was arrested. His newborn son was just two weeks old. Bach was put in prison. LPSD was forced to close. Bach was charged with "tax evasion" and later sentenced to five years in prison following a trial which United Nations experts considered unfair. The court refused to hear Bach's defence, and the prosecutor failed to disclose evidence. His wife was not allowed to attend her husband's "public" trials.

Since 2021, at least five environmental and climate justice advocates have been charged with tax evasion, a tactic used by the Vietnamese authorities to silence the growing movement of activists calling on the government to protect the environment.

Bach should be allowed to continue his work to support the communities he cares deeply about. Instead, he is locked up and forced to endure poor prison conditions. His health has deteriorated, and he has been harassed by prison officers. He has not seen his young son since his arrest.

TAKE ACTION:

Write to the president

Tell them to immediately and unconditionally release Dang Dinh Bach. Pending his release, Dang Dinh Bach must be protected from all forms of torture and other ill-treatment and be provided access to adequate healthcare.

President of Viet Nam, President's Office
No. 2, Hung Vuong Street
Ba Dinh District
Hanoi 11100
Viet Nam
Email: vpccp@chinhphu.vn

Salutation: Your Excellency

Send a copy of your letter to the embassy in Canada

Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
55 Mackay Street
Ottawa ON K1M 2B2
Email: info@vietnamembassy.ca

Keep Bach's hope alive

Let Bach know he is not alone by sending your messages and drawings of friendship and hope.

Dang Dinh Bach
Prison No. 6
R684+GPV, H15 Road
Thanh Chuong District
Nghe An Province 460000
Viet Nam

