


YOUR WORDS CHANGE LIVES

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL 



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

1. SCHRIJF EEN BRIEF

2. STUUR EEN KAART

VERVOLG

Human Rights
Education
Activity



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

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

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

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to nearly 6 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2023, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. In 2023 alone, more than 1.4 million people were engaged through human rights education activities. Together, our actions have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, by releasing activists from detention, securing justice for those whose rights have been abused and protecting people who advocate for change.

This year's campaign once again includes people from around the world. They are connected because their human rights have been violated simply for who they are or because they exercised their rights. Together, we can fight for them to receive justice. Through Write for Rights, each of the individuals will receive personalized messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. The awareness that their situations are gaining public attention offers reassurance to them and their families that they are not forgotten. And, by writing directly to the authorities to demand that they end the injustice, we can create a more just and equal world.

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

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

“From the bottom of my heart, this campaign has kept me alive, it's what has stopped them from killing me because they know that you are there.”

Jani Silva, environmental defender, 2021

BEFORE YOU START

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

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

DEVELOP key competencies and skills

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

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

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



Letter writing with friends in Czechia for Write for Rights 2023.

© Valerie Mirić

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

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: [amnesty.org/countries](https://www.amnesty.org/countries)

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R24

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

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

YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ACQUITTED

Rita Karasartova is a human rights defender and an expert in civic governance. For more than a decade she has dedicated her life to providing independent legal advice, helping people whose rights had been violated by a corrupt and unreliable legal system. Alongside 26 others, Rita was arrested for opposing a new border agreement giving control of a freshwater reservoir to Uzbekistan. Charged with attempting to “violently overthrow the government”, which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years’ imprisonment, Rita and at least 21 other defendants were acquitted on 14 June 2024.

“I would like to express my huge, huge gratitude... Your timely actions – these letters, petitions, signatures, and the huge number of letters that went to the court, that went to the prosecutor’s office – it was all very powerful. In fact, it was very empowering to us all... Of course, the acquittal was totally unexpected. I don’t even know how to process it in my head. We had been playing with all sorts of scenarios, different outcomes in our heads, but we didn’t think we would all be acquitted!... I thank you all.”

Rita Karasartova
from Kyrgyzstan



© Private

“I feel so relieved, and I thank you for the amazing Write for Rights campaign. I am forever indebted. It is like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Reading all the letters and cards made me feel so loved and appreciated.”

Cecillia Chimhiri from Zimbabwe



OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS FREED

Opposition activists Cecillia Chimhiri, Joana Mamombe and Netsai Marova were abducted, tortured and imprisoned after attending a protest in Zimbabwe. They were charged with “communicating falsehoods” and “obstructing the course of justice”. Netsai fled Zimbabwe following the attack. After being featured in Write for Rights 2022, Cecillia and Joana were acquitted by the High Court.



© Amnesty International Togo



Amnesty supporters in the Netherlands (far left) and Togo (left) at events for Write For Rights 2023.

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

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



Write for Rights event in Benin in 2023.



© UN Photo

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed to be bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world to abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up based on its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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

ACTIVITY

HUMAN RIGHTS: EMPATHY IN ACTION

KEY CONCEPTS

- Shrinking civic space
- Rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly
- Human rights defenders

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants will learn about the people featured in the 2024 Write for Rights campaign. They will explore how shrinking civic space and restrictions on freedom of expression and other human rights have affected these individuals and groups. As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write letters and take other actions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **understand** that the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are essential to advocate for social change.
- **recognize** how government policies and repression restrict civic space and the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.
- **develop** empathy for individuals and groups whose human rights are being violated for their participation in public life.
- **write** letters in support of and showing solidarity with people whose rights are at risk.

AGE: 13+

TIME NEEDED

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

MATERIALS

- **Handout: Story cards** (pages 13-21)
- **Handout: Take action cards** (pages 14-22)
- **World map** (page 12)
- **Background information** (page 11)
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** simplified version (page 5)
- **Paper, pens and envelopes** (if sending letters)
- **A large, open space** (a classroom or any outdoor space)
- **String, tape or chalk** to mark boundaries
- Optional: Template letters from www.amnesty.org/writeforrights/
- Optional: "Write for Rights: Take action" video from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos

PREPARATION

- Print the handouts and copies of the simplified UDHR for each participant/group.
- Cut out the world map.
- Prepare the game space before the activity (see step one).
- Read the background information on page 11 and the story cards.

MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about human rights including the right to freedom of expression at the Amnesty Academy: www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/online-courses/

PRECAUTIONS

Some of the cases featured in this activity include concepts that might be triggering or upsetting for participants, such as police violence, discrimination and exclusion. Familiarize yourself thoroughly with the content and anticipate potential areas of sensitivity. Prior to the activity, inform participants about the topics to be discussed and provide them with the option to change groups to work on a different case, or to step out if they feel uncomfortable at any point. Regularly check in with your participants during the activity. During and after the activity, allow participants to express their feelings and thoughts about the topics discussed. This can help them process any strong emotions they might have experienced.

1. EXPLORING SHRINKING SPACE

Before the activity begins, set up an area indoors or outdoors. Use chalk, string or tape to mark out three rings or circles on the ground: a small circle, a medium circle and a large circle. It is important that in the medium and small circles it is increasingly difficult for the participants to move. In the smallest circle it should be almost impossible for anyone to move at all.

Introduce the game: Explain to the participants that civic space is a place where people can talk, meet and share ideas freely. However, certain rules or actions make this space smaller, limiting these freedoms.

Explain the rules: Tell the participants that they will play a game to see how different actions either make the space bigger (giving more freedom) or smaller (restricting freedom).

Show the participants the three rings or circles. Explain that you will read out different actions, and based on whether the action limits or expands their freedom, they will move to a different circle.





- If the action limits their freedom, they move to a smaller circle.
- If the action expands their freedom, they move to a larger circle.
- Encourage them to walk, talk and even dance in the circles as they move.

Start the game: Let the participants walk, talk or dance freely within the largest circle for about a minute. Then, read out the actions one by one. After each action, ask the participants, “Does this give you more or less freedom?”

Based on their answer, they should move to the appropriate circle. Give them another minute to walk, talk or dance in the circle before reading the next action.

Actions to read out:

- You cannot use social media to express what you like or do not like.
- You are no longer allowed to meet your friends after 5pm.
- You are encouraged to join organizations that help others.
- You cannot speak out when you see or hear something that you feel is unjust.
- You are free to protest peacefully for change.
- You cannot meet in groups of more than two people.

After reading the actions, stop the game and ask participants how it felt when the space got smaller.

- When was it harder to move or do things you wanted to do?
- How did you feel when you had more freedom to move ?
- How did you feel when you had less freedom to move?
- What did you do?

Facilitators should be mindful of any participants with disabilities and adapt the activity and instructions accordingly.

2. DISCUSSION



Explain that civic space includes activities like protests, meetings, online discussions and even writing letters to leaders. When we say “shrinking civic space”, we mean that those with power are making it harder for people to do these things. Imagine if your school started making rules to prevent you talking about certain things or starting a club to help others. That would be shrinking your space to do the things that matter to you. In some countries, this happens when the government doesn’t want people to question them or demand change. They might make it illegal to protest, shut down websites where people share ideas, or even arrest people just for speaking up. This is a big problem because it means that people can’t speak up for their rights or the rights of others, and it becomes harder to make the world a fair and just place.

Ask participants:

- How does the game represent real-life rules and laws?
- How can these rules and laws affect people’s freedoms?

Explain that we will now explore what has happened to some people and groups whose governments have repressed and violated their rights.

Conclude the discussion by saying that it is important to keep civic space open and that everyone can help protect it.



3. STORIES OF COURAGE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Explain that the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association (the right to come together publicly or privately in groups for a common purpose) are connected. Together, these human right principles are fundamental for people to voice their opinions, share information and join together to peacefully advocate for change and take collective action. This includes peaceful protests, but it can take other forms as well.

Tell the group that they will now analyse stories of people or groups whose human rights are being violated precisely because they exercised their rights to express themselves and advocate for change. The stories illustrate how these individuals have faced intimidation, silencing or persecution by their governments. Emphasize that governments around the world often create and use laws to restrict civic space and criminalize activists, human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, lawyers, and ordinary citizens.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders are individuals who take non-violent actions to defend and promote human rights. They may work individually or with others. Their activities might focus on a specific area of human rights or on the rights of a specific group. However, they must accept the universality of human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This means they cannot deny some human rights or take actions that undermine the rights of others. A person will not be considered to be a human rights defender if they engage in or support hatred, discrimination or violence.

Divide participants into small groups, assigning each group one of the stories you have selected from pages 13-22. Provide each group with a copy of the relevant story card and a copy of the simplified UDHR from page 5. Have the groups read their story card and discuss it by addressing the following questions:

- Who is this story about? What are the main issues in this story?
- How does this story relate to freedom of expression, human rights defenders, and/or shrinking civic space?
- Which human rights are being violated?
- Who do you think is responsible for these human rights violations?

If this is the first time that participants are introduced to the UDHR, you should focus on building a shared understanding of what it is first, using the information starting on page 4.



After about 15 minutes, invite everyone back together and ask each group to briefly introduce their story card to the others and list the injustices they have found. Debrief by asking:

- Upon hearing about these stories, is there anything that surprises or shocks you?
- Are there similarities between some of the stories?

OPTIONAL: Use the world map on page 12 to locate the case that each group is working on. Ask the participants what stands out when looking at the world map and why it is important that we care about these people and act to uphold their rights. Highlight that human rights violations can happen in any country and in any region in the world, no matter whether the country is rich or poor, at war or in crisis, or seemingly peaceful and safe. Human rights are not just about ‘other’ people; they are about everyone, everywhere. This is why it is important to learn about our rights and to defend them and the rights of others.

4. TAKE ACTION

Tell participants about Amnesty International’s Write for Rights campaign and explain that Amnesty International is calling on people to write letters to the individuals affected and to the authorities responsible for protecting, respecting and fulfilling their human rights. You can give examples from last year’s campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be, or watch the “Write for Rights: Take action” video from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos

If there isn’t enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative.



If you have time, you can show participants the videos of the people featured in this year’s campaign at www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos

Amnesty members hold up images of people featured in Write for Rights 2023, at the General Assembly of Amnesty International Morocco in Rabat, January 2024





WRITE A LETTER

Ask participants to choose one of the people whose stories they have learned about and give them a copy of the take action card for that person. Tell the participants that their letters will be sent to the authorities responsible for protecting that person's human rights.

Give everyone letter-writing materials and allow time for them to write their letters. Explain that a personal message to the officials can have the most impact. Ask them to:

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

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

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

SHOW SOLIDARITY

If you have time, you can also do some of the solidarity actions on the **take action cards**. The solidarity letters are often a great source of support and strength for the people whose human rights are being violated.

Amnesty supporters take action during Write for Rights 2023 in the Netherlands and Zimbabwe.



© Anne Harbers (left), © Amnesty International Zimbabwe (right)



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

ARTICLE 19 OF THE UDHR

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) protects the right to freedom of expression. Freedom of expression guarantees your right to hold your own opinions and to express them freely, without government interference. This includes the right to express views through public protests or through written materials, media broadcasts, the internet and works of art. This right is regarded as a very important element in any society. We need a free flow of ideas to ensure that different opinions are taken into account and different ideas are aired. The right to freedom of expression enhances transparency and accountability. Our right to seek, receive and share information and ideas, without fear or unlawful interference, is crucial for our education and development as individuals, to help our communities, to access justice and to enjoy all our other rights.

Yet the conditions necessary for debate – such as civic engagement and political participation, transparency and access to trustworthy information – have been increasingly eroded. Not everyone is safe when expressing their opinion, especially when it concerns the political situation in their country. The threats to freedom of expression are greatest when the ideas or opinions being expressed challenge the status quo and the position of people in power. Around the world there is a growing number of laws and other repressive measures intended to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Those who raise their voice or criticize the authorities risk being silenced, harassed and criminalized through the misuse of criminal, civil and administrative laws. Authorities discourage protest with the threat of violence, arbitrary detention and multiple violations of the right to a fair trial. Governments around the world routinely imprison people – or worse – for speaking out, even though almost every country’s constitution refers to the value of ‘free speech’.

THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Peaceful protest is a dynamic and public way of exercising our human rights. Throughout history, protests have allowed individuals and groups to express dissent, opinions and ideas, expose injustice and abuse, and demand accountability from those in power.

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

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



WORLD MAP

The individuals in this year's Write for Rights campaign come from nine different countries around the world. By taking part in the campaign, you can show that geography is no barrier to solidarity.



**WET'SUWET'EN NATION
LAND DEFENDERS
CANADA**



**OQBA HASHAD
EGYPT**



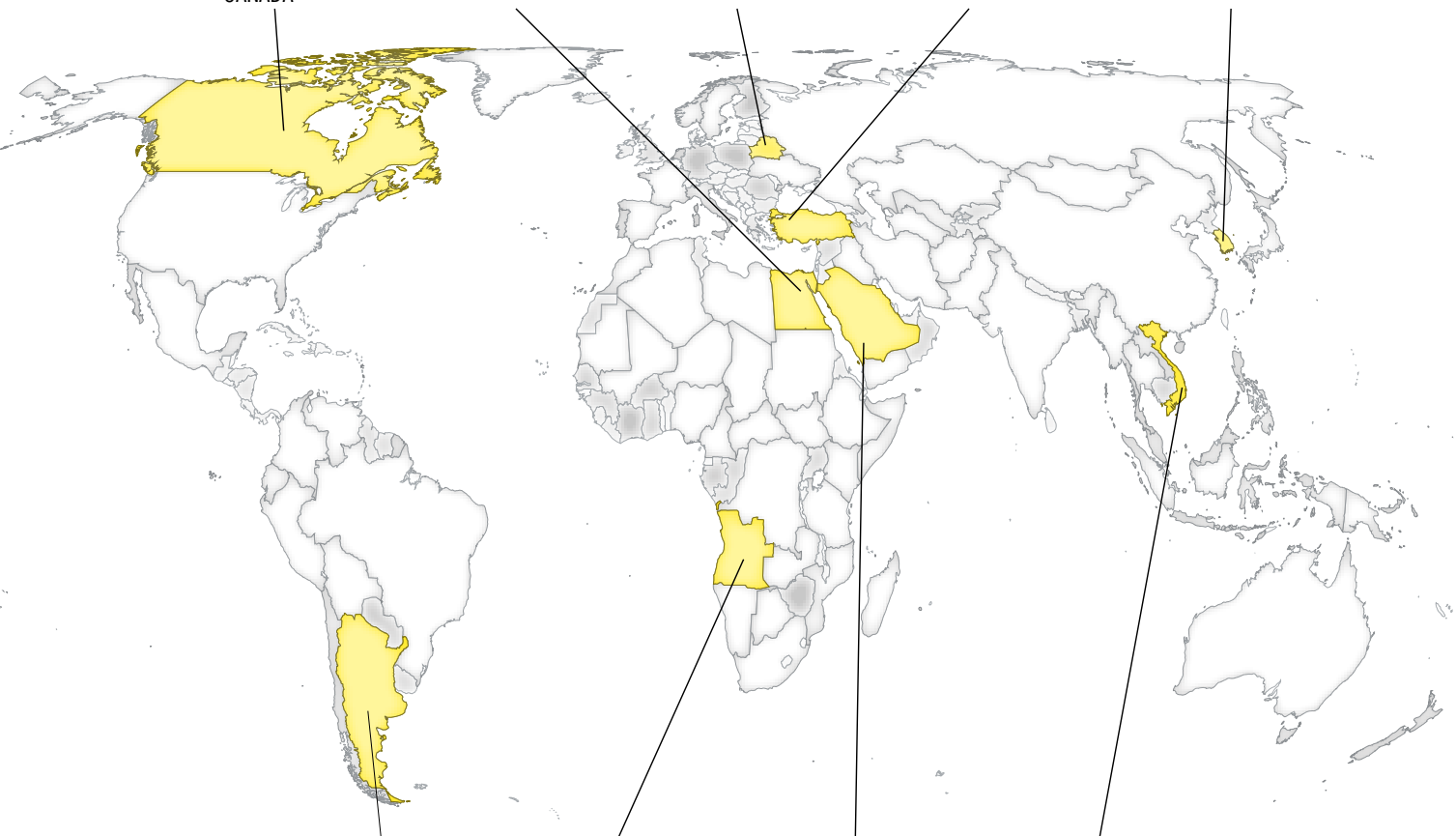
**MARYIA KALESNIKAVA
BELARUS**



**ŞEBNEM KORUR FINCANCI
TÜRKİYE**



**KYUNG SEOK PARK
SOUTH KOREA**



**JOEL PAREDES
ARGENTINA**



**NETH NAHARA
ANGOLA**



**MANAHEL AL-OTAIBI
SAUDI ARABIA**



**DANG DINH BACH
VIET NAM**



READ OUR STORIES

The people featured in this year's campaign are from all around the world – from a TikToker in Angola to a women's rights defender in Saudi Arabia, all these amazing people are connected because their human rights have been violated.

SUPPORT US – WRITE A LETTER!

You're here to learn about human rights and also because you want to make a real difference. Through these actions, you will learn how your voice can positively affect people's lives. Whether you do this with a group of friends, classmates, your family or by yourself, the words you write will change lives.

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STORY CARDS

NETH NAHARA

Angola 

TIKTOKER JAILED FOR CRITICIZING PRESIDENT

For Ana da Silva Miguel, a 32-year-old singer and mother of 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. She was bubbly, fun and unafraid to speak her truth. Neth encouraged women to seek an education and gain independence. She also bravely shared that she had HIV and gave advice on how to stay healthy.

On 12 August 2023, Neth went live on her TikTok channel, openly criticizing President João Lourenço. The next day, Neth was arrested. She was summarily

tried, convicted and sentenced to six months in prison. On 27 September 2023 the sentence was increased to two years.

The Angolan authorities are using a controversial law (Article 333 of the Penal Code) to silence critical voices like Neth's. The law makes “insulting” the president a crime.

For the first eight months that Neth spent in arbitrary detention she was denied the daily medication needed to treat HIV. Neth Nahara and others like her are being detained and mistreated because they dare to speak out.

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STORY CARD



Write for Rights 2023 in Côte d'Ivoire.
© Astrid Chitou/Amnesty International

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR NETH

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

Email: secretariageral@oapr.gov.ao
Facebook: www.facebook.com/cdajoalourenco
X: [@jlprdeangola](https://twitter.com/jlprdeangola)

Hashtags: #FreeNethNahara #NethLivre
#W4R24 #ProtectTheProtest

Salutation: Your Excellency

SHOW NETH THAT YOU SUPPORT HER

Help keep Neth's spirits up; let her know she is not alone. Send her your letters and cards of hope.

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 

‘MY CHILDREN DESERVE A FUTURE, I FOUGHT FOR IT’

Joel Paredes is a 29-year-old ceramicist living in Jujuy province in northern Argentina. In June 2023 the local government made changes to Jujuy’s constitution including restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly as well as introducing measures that may damage the environment and risk violating Indigenous Peoples’ land rights.

The changes were approved without consulting with Indigenous Peoples or the wider population.

Jujuy is a province rich in lithium, a metal known as “white gold”.

Argentina’s authorities want to expand lithium exports. But people who live on the land, like Joel and his family, have serious concerns.

Although not Indigenous himself, Joel sympathized greatly and was concerned for the future of his children who would grow up on the land. Joel joined an evening protest alongside hundreds of other peaceful demonstrators, where he played a drum with his band. For Joel: “Our musical instruments are our weapons.”

In the early hours, the police arrived at the protest 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 and has debilitating nerve pain. No one has been held accountable for what happened to Joel and the other protesters.

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MARYIA KALESNIKAVA

Belarus 

ABDUCTED AND JAILED FOR DEMANDING CHANGE

A professional musician, Maryia Kalesnikava has filled her life with music, art and people. She 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. In a country where freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are severely restricted, the three women 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 as president. 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.

On 7 September 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 false charges.

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.

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STORY CARD



DEMAND JUSTICE FOR JOEL

WRITE TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Demand that 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: slello@mpajujuy.gov.ar
X: [@MpaJujuy](https://twitter.com/MpaJujuy)
Instagram: [@mpajujuy](https://www.instagram.com/mpajujuy)

Hashtags: #justiciaparaJoel
#justiceforJoel #W4R24
#ProtectTheProtest

Salutation: Dear Sir

SHOW JOEL AND HIS FAMILY THAT YOU SUPPORT THEM

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

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TAKE ACTION



TELL BELARUS TO IMMEDIATELY RELEASE MARYIA

WRITE TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Demand that Maryia Kalesnikava is immediately and unconditionally released from prison, and that her unjust conviction is overturned.

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
X: [@BelarusMFA](https://twitter.com/BelarusMFA)
Instagram: [@belarusmfa](https://www.instagram.com/belarusmfa)

Hashtags: #FreeKalesnikava #W4R24
#ProtectTheProtest

Salutation: Dear Minister

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

Instagram: [@kalesnikava](https://www.instagram.com/kalesnikava)
X: [@by_kalesnikava](https://twitter.com/by_kalesnikava)
Facebook: www.facebook.com/maria.kalesnikava/

Hashtags: #FreeKalesnikava #W4R24
#ProtectTheProtest

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TAKE ACTION



FIGHTING TO PROTECT THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS

“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 granted CGL an injunction to prevent 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, alongside nearly 30 other land defenders. Along with two other defenders, she was later found guilty of “criminal contempt”. They now face prison and a criminal record.

© Amnesty International (Photo: Alii McCracken)



WRITE FOR RIGHTS



STORY CARD



TORTURED FOR HIS BROTHER'S ACTIVISM

Student Oqba Hashad's life changed on 20 May 2019 when National Security Agency agents stormed his university dorm. They arrested all the students present. After a few days, the other students were released – except Oqba. The agents realized that Oqba was the brother of human rights activist Amr Hashad. After fleeing Egypt earlier that year, Amr had continued to denounce Egypt'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, Oqba's prosthetic leg broke. For 16 months, prison authorities denied him a replacement and Oqba became reliant on other prisoners for everyday tasks. A new prosthesis given to him on 4 January 2024 does not fit and causes further injury when used. Officials are also denying him the medicines he needs.

On 20 February 2024, a judge ordered Oqba's release. 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.

© Private



WRITE FOR RIGHTS



STORY CARD

STOP CRIMINALIZING LAND DEFENDERS

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
Canada

Email: premier@gov.bc.ca
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bcndp/
X: @bcndp
Instagram: @bcndp
Hashtags: #WetsuwetenStrong
#AllOutforWedzinkwa #W4R24

Salutation: Dear Premier

SHOW THE 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

X: @Gidimten
Instagram: @yintah_access
Website: yintahaccess.com

Hashtags: #WetsuwetenStrong
#AllOutforWedzinkwa #W4R24

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TELL EGYPT TO RELEASE OQBA

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
Facebook: www.facebook.com/AlSisiOfficial
X: @AlSisiOfficial

Hashtags: #FreeOqba #W4R24

Salutation: Your Excellency

SHOW OQBA HE IS 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

X: @FreeOqba
Hashtags: #FreeOqba #W4R24

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TAKE ACTION



MANAHEL AL-OTAIBI

Saudi Arabia 

IMPRISONED FOR SUPPORTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In recent years, Saudi Arabia's authorities have claimed they are advancing women's rights in the Kingdom. 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 16 November 2022 and charged with violating the Anti-Cyber Crime Law for her tweets supporting women's rights and for posting to Snapchat photos of herself at a shopping mall, not wearing an *abaya*, a traditional 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. In a secret hearing on 9 January 2024, Manahel was given an 11-year prison sentence for "terrorist offences" for her online expression.

In November 2023, Manahel told her family she had been beaten by a fellow prisoner. 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.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 

STORY CARD



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KYUNG SEOK PARK

South Korea 

'WE DEMAND A WORLD WHERE NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND'

Kyung Seok Park developed paraplegia following a hang-gliding accident in 1983. 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), Kyung Seok focuses his activism on public transportation. Barriers to accessing public transport mean that people with disabilities cannot participate fully in all aspects of life – travelling to work or school and living independently. Numerous wheelchair users in Seoul have been killed or injured when using 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 the capital, Seoul, have reacted negatively, including with violence, with police forcibly dragging activists out of stations. Politicians have characterized disability activists as a public nuisance. Seoul Metropolitan Government has filed lawsuits against peaceful protesters to quash their activism.

Despite 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."

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

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STORY CARD



© Amnesty International (Photo: Yoon Ra)

DEMAND SAUDI ARABIA FREES MANAHEL

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 and
1950@moj.gov.sa
X: @MojKsa

Hashtags: #FreeManahel #W4R24

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

X: @ManahelAl_otibi

Hashtags: #FreeManahel #W4R24

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DEMAND THAT KYUNG SEOK'S RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

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 that activists can 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
Facebook: www.facebook.com/seoul.kr
X: @seoulmania
Instagram: @seoul_official

Hashtags: #RidingSeoulMetroWithPark
#LeaveNoOneBehind #W4R24
#ProtectTheProtest

SHOW KYUNG SEOK 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

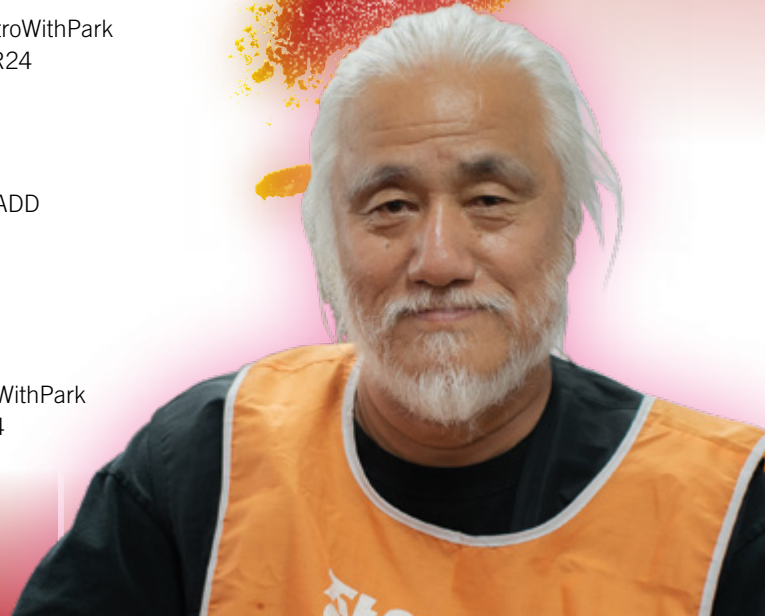
Instagram: @sadd420
X: @sadd0420S

Hashtags: #RidingSeoulMetroWithPark
#LeaveNoOneBehind #W4R24
#ProtectTheProtest

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ŞEBNEM KORUR FİNCANCI

Türkiye 

CONVICTED FOR DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

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. 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.”



© Private

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 

STORY CARD

DANG DINH BACH

Viet Nam 

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER UNFAIRLY JAILED

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 pollution and climate change.

His organization 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 against which it has fought.

The organization’s work is crucial. Through its public campaigns and training, it raises 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.

In June 2021, Bach was arrested and detained. His newborn son was just two weeks old. His organization was forced to close. Bach was charged with “tax evasion” and sentenced to five years in prison following an unfair trial.

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 in poor conditions. His health has deteriorated, and he has been harassed by prison officers. He has not seen his young son since his arrest.



© Private

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

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STORY CARD

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR ŞEBNEM

WRITE TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE

Demand that the authorities stop misusing the criminal justice system to harass Şebnem Korur Fincancı 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
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bmyilmaztunc/
X: [@yilmaztunc](https://twitter.com/yilmaztunc)
Instagram: [@yilmaztunc](https://www.instagram.com/yilmaztunc)

Salutation: Dear Minister

Hashtags: #ŞebnemKorurFincancı
#W4R24

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 Birliği
GMK Bulvarı
Şht. Danış Tunalıgil Sk. No: 2/17-23
06570 Maltepe
Ankara, Türkiye

X: [@SKorurFincanci](https://twitter.com/SKorurFincanci)

Hashtags: #ŞebnemKorurFincancı
#W4R24

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TAKE ACTION



TELL VIET NAM TO RELEASE BACH

WRITE TO THE PRESIDENT

Tell the president 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 given 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
X: [@MOFAVietNam](https://twitter.com/MOFAVietNam)

Hashtags: #FreeBach #W4R24

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

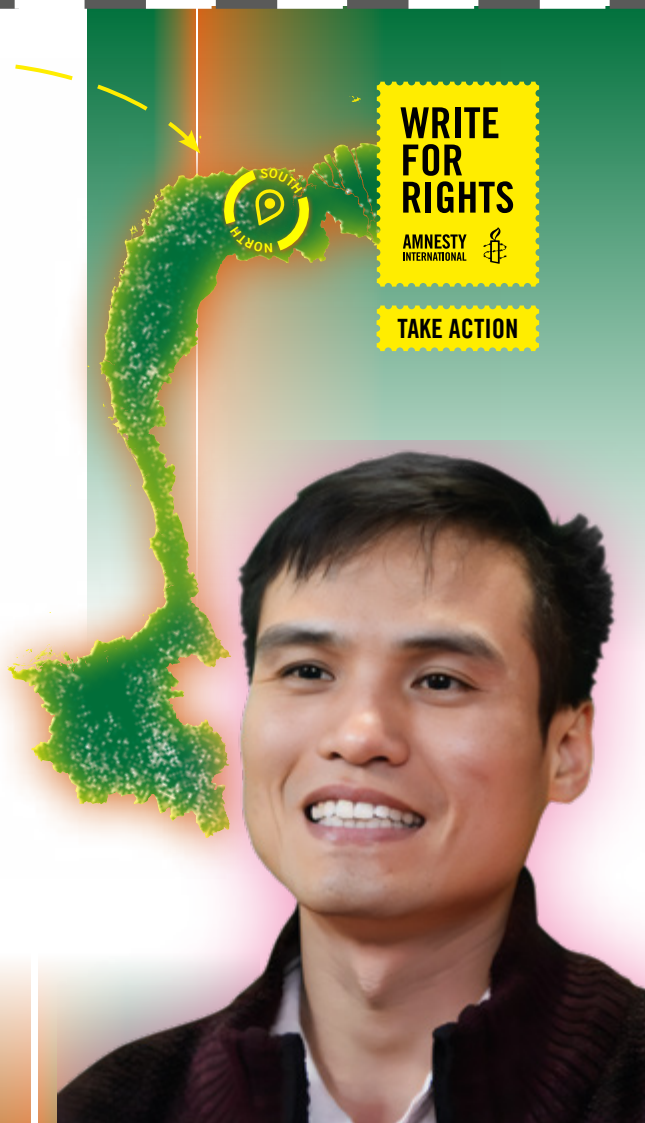
Facebook: www.facebook.com/dang.d.bach

Hashtags: #StandWithBach #FreeBach
#W4R24

WRITE
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WHY DOES SOLIDARITY MATTER?

You might think that writing to somebody you don't know can't make a difference, or that they won't want to hear from you. But, when you're locked up or in fear for your life, or you're desperately seeking justice for a loved one, having somebody tell you that they believe in you matters a lot. They may feel anxious and alone, and your words can bring comfort and hope to them.

Through the solidarity she received in 2023, Ana Maria Santos Cruz felt the embrace of a global community. It helped her to keep hope alive after the death of her son, Pedro Henrique. Pedro was an activist and an advocate of racial justice and human rights. He was murdered in 2018.

Ana Maria has bravely sought the truth about her son's death, calling on the authorities in Brazil to conduct a thorough investigation and trial. When she received thousands of letters of support from around the world, she felt more able to cope with her grief and with the ongoing threats against her. She said:

"I always say that Pedro taught me a lot, including how to be a tireless fighter for justice. It was also Pedro who connected me with Amnesty International, as he was a supporter of the movement. He used to say to me, joking, that Amnesty International would one day take him to countries of Africa, to Jamaica and other places to do human rights work. Who would imagine that he was right?"

After his murder, through the Write for Rights campaign, Pedro Henrique and I were, in a way, taken to different countries through this story of the fight for justice. I'm very happy and feel strengthened by this wave of solidarity, which comforts my heart."



© Amnesty International (Photo: Gabriel Yjalade)



© Amnesty International Zimbabwe

From the top: Ana Maria Santos Cruz; Amnesty activists in Zimbabwe work on Pedro's case.

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

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First published in 2024
by Amnesty International Ltd
Peter Benenson House,
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW, UK

Index: POL 32/8289/2024
Original language: English

All images © Amnesty International
unless otherwise stated.

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