



Hideko Hakamada spent 58 years fighting to prove her brother's innocence. © KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/Getty Images

Meet the 92-year-old campaigner who saved her brother from execution

Hideko Hakamada's brother, Iwao, was sentenced to death for murder in Japan in 1968. Following his trial, he spent nearly five decades on death row while Hideko campaigned tirelessly for his release. Year after year, decade after decade, Hideko never gave up in the struggle to prove her brother's innocence.

"I was so focused on Iwao that I had no regard for anything else," Hideko told Amnesty International.

"I felt that I had to help my brother who was suffering. I was fighting for him because I thought it was only natural that he should be acquitted because he was innocent."

Iwao had been convicted of murder largely based on a forced "confession" following 20 days of relentless interrogation by the police. He described how the police had threatened and beaten him.

Finally, in September 2024, Iwao was acquitted after a retrial. A court ruled that the evidence used against him was fabricated. After enduring almost half a century of wrongful imprisonment and a further 10 years waiting for a retrial, the court's

acquittal recognized the profound injustice Iwao had endured for most of his life. The verdict has brought an end to the lengthy fight to clear his name by his inspiring sister.

Hideko worked alongside Amnesty International on her brother's case and she is very thankful to Amnesty members for their support.

"We have been fighting for 58 years," Hideko recently said. "I would like to express my gratitude to everyone for their support!"

Hideko described her feelings when the court acquitted her brother: "When the judge said that the defendant is not guilty in court, the judge's voice sounded divine. I was so moved and happy that I burst into tears. I couldn't stop crying."



© YUICHI YAMAZAKI/AFP/Getty Images

GOOD NEWS



Left to right: Adolfo Campos, Hermenegildo Victor José, Gilson Morreira, Abraão Pedro Santos. © Private

ANGOLA

“I told myself Amnesty International will release me from prison and here we are, we are free!”

On January 6, 2025, four activists in Angola were released from detention following a presidential pardon. Adolfo Campos, Abraão Pedro Santos, Gilson Morreira, and Hermenegildo Victor José were all arrested in September 2023. They were tried, convicted and given prison sentences for “disobedience and resisting orders”—simply for attempting to join a solidarity demonstration.

In a message to Amnesty International following his release, Abraão Pedro Santos said: “Every time my wife went to prison to visit me, she would always come with a message from Amnesty International. Every time Amnesty would send a message to me through my wife, I felt very motivated, and I understood I wasn’t alone. I told myself sooner or later Amnesty International will release me from prison and here we are, we are free!”



Dorgelesse was arrested while attending her first ever protest. © Private

CAMEROON

Dorgelesse Nguessan freed after four years

Dorgelesse Nguessan is finally free! She was released in January after more than four years in detention in Cameroon solely for peacefully exercising her human rights.

Dorgelesse was arrested in September 2020 at her first ever protest which she attended because she was concerned about Cameroon’s economy. A hairdresser and single mother, she was charged with “insurrection” and then sentenced to five years in prison. In January 2025, the Court of Appeal reduced her sentence.

Dorgelesse’s case was featured in Amnesty’s 2022 Write for Rights campaign and her family received relief support from Amnesty International during her detention. Many Amnesty supporters may also recall receiving an appeal about Dorgelesse’s case a few months ago. Although Dorgelesse is now reunited with her loved ones, other people are still being unjustly detained and Amnesty is calling on the Cameroonian authorities to release them all immediately.



© Daniel Ceng/Anadolu/Getty Images

PHILIPPINES

Duterte’s ICC appearance is a symbolic moment for victims of “war on drugs”

On March 11, former Philippine President, Rodrigo Duterte, was arrested on a warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Duterte was immediately taken to The Hague, Netherlands, where the ICC will prosecute him for murder

as a crime against humanity related to the “war on drugs” from 2011 to 2019.

Over many years, Amnesty International has conducted multiple investigations into extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations by police and government officials in the Philippines. The Philippine government has acknowledged at least 6,600 killings at the hands of police. Amnesty has found that these acts reach the threshold of crimes against humanity.

Rodrigo Duterte’s arrest and appearance at the ICC gives hope to the families of victims and human rights defenders who have for years fought tirelessly for justice despite grave risks to their lives and safety.

SAUDI ARABIA

Salma al-Shehab's ordeal in prison is finally over

Salma al-Shehab was freed in Saudi Arabia in February after spending more than four years in prison on bogus terrorism charges.

Salma was arrested in January 2021 for tweeting and retweeting posts from Saudi women's rights activists on X. At one point, her prison sentence was 34 years—just for supporting women's rights. At the time of her arrest, Salma was 32 years old. She was a PhD student at Leeds University, UK, and mother of two.

"While today is a day to celebrate Salma's release, it's also an opportunity to reflect on the many others serving similarly lengthy sentences in Saudi Arabia for their online activities," said Dana Ahmed, Amnesty's Middle East Researcher. "We urge the Saudi authorities to immediately release them and end their relentless crackdown on the right to freedom of expression once and for all."



A protest in Washington DC in support of Salma al-Shehab and others unjustly detained in Saudi Arabia. © Arab Rights and Research Council

EL SALVADOR

Historic verdict is a victory for reproductive justice

On December 20, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights condemned the Salvadoran state in the case of Beatriz versus El Salvador. In 2013, the Salvadoran authorities prevented Beatriz from terminating her pregnancy despite the pregnancy endangering her health and there being no possibility that her fetus could survive. Eventually, after two months, an early caesarean section was permitted to stop Beatriz from dying. Hundreds of thousands of Amnesty supporters mobilized in 2013 to support Beatriz.

Beatriz tragically died in a traffic accident in 2017, but her family and supporters continued the campaign for justice. Now, at last, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has determined that El Salvador violated Beatriz's rights to health, judicial protection, private life, and personal integrity. The court's verdict provides a stronger legal foundation for reproductive health protection throughout Latin America.



Beatriz's family and supporters celebrate the ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. © MARVIN RECINOS/AFP/Getty Images

TÜRKİYE

Acquittal of Saturday Mothers brings seven-year ordeal to an end

Almost seven years after the Saturday Mothers' 700th peaceful vigil was violently broken up by riot police in Istanbul, 45 people standing trial for participating in the vigil were finally acquitted in March. Although their ordeal is finally over, they should never have been charged in the first place.



The Saturday Mothers held their 1000th vigil in 2024. © Huseyin Ozdemir/dia images/Getty Images

The Saturday Mothers are a powerful symbol of the importance of peaceful protest. They are mothers, relatives and their supporters, who have been holding peaceful weekly vigils in Istanbul since 1995, gathering each

Saturday to protest the enforced disappearance of their relatives and to demand truth and justice. However, in 1988, police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse a peaceful gathering of hundreds of people, some in their 80s.

Amnesty members have long supported the Saturday Mothers and have been calling on the Turkish authorities to respect the protesters' right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

NEWS UPDATES



Protesting the Chinese government's human rights violations against Uyghurs. © Amnesty International

THAILAND

You spoke out against deportations of refugees to China

On February 27, the Thai government deported 40 Uyghur refugees to China in violation of Thailand's international human rights obligations.

Following this alarming development, Amnesty International quickly issued an Urgent Action appeal on behalf of five other Uyghur refugees imprisoned in Bangkok, who were also at risk of forcible return to China. The five men had travelled to Thailand in 2014 after fleeing persecution, discrimination, and other grave human rights violations in the Xinjiang Region of northwestern China. Amnesty activists wrote to the Thai authorities calling for the five Uyghur men to have their asylum claims properly and fairly assessed.

Amnesty International has documented massive and systematic abuses by the government of China against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslims living in Xinjiang, including in internment camps, where over a million people have been arbitrarily detained.



Over a million Haitian children live in areas impacted by gangs. © Louis Guerinault/Anadolu/Getty Images

HAITI

You're demanding protection for Haiti's children

Following in-depth investigations in Haiti, Amnesty International recently released a report exposing the devastating impact of gang violence on Haitian children.

Violence by armed gangs in Haiti has been escalating since 2021 when President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated. Gangs now control most of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and over a million children currently live in areas impacted by gangs. Beyond physical harm, children are also affected psychologically, losing the opportunity to play, learn, and grow in safety. Amnesty's researchers describe the violence as nothing short of an attack on childhood.

Amnesty is calling on the Haitian government and the international community to protect children by preventing their recruitment and use by gangs, and to provide children with access to education and healthcare, and ensure justice for survivors and accountability for perpetrators.



Rwandan-backed M23 fighters in Goma, DRC, following their takeover of the city. © ALEXIS HUGUET/AFP/Getty Images

DRC

You're calling for an immediate end to human rights atrocities

Human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have long been a priority for Amnesty International. Conflict in the country has been ongoing since the 1990s, with much of the worst fighting taking place in the eastern regions

bordering South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. In recent years, Amnesty researchers have been in the DRC conducting in-depth investigations and Amnesty's Crisis Evidence Lab has been analysing a massive amount of data.

In January 2025, Rwandan-backed M23 fighters declared they had captured Goma, the DRC's third-largest city, which is home to nearly two million people. Over 3,000 people were killed in the fighting while many others fled to safety. There were reports of extrajudicial executions, summary killings and sexual violence. The crisis in DRC is escalating and Amnesty is pressing the regional and international community to take urgent action to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access.

USA

You're demanding an end to mass deportations

Within hours of his inauguration in January, US President Donald Trump launched a mass deportation campaign targeting millions of migrants and people seeking safety in the United States. His administration plans mass arrests, mass detention, and mass removals of longstanding community members as well as recently arrived people.

Amnesty International supporters mobilized to oppose the president's plans. Thousands of people added their names to a petition urging President Trump to respect the human rights of immigrants and people seeking safety and to end his mass deportation campaign. Amnesty will be delivering the petition to the U.S. embassy in Ottawa.

Under international law, the US government must ensure that it does not place immigrants and people seeking safety at increased risk of human rights abuses. Amnesty will hold President Trump and his government accountable if they fail to fulfil their human rights



A demonstration in Florida against President Trump's immigration policies. © Joe Raedle/Getty Images

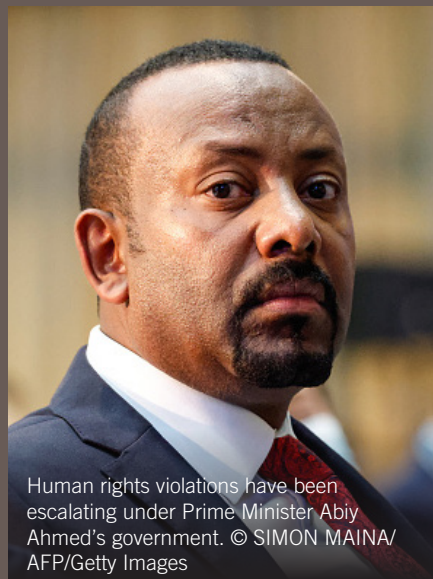
ETHIOPIA

You're helping expose a crackdown on human rights

Amnesty International has been drawing attention to the alarming deterioration in human rights in Ethiopia. In September 2024, Ethiopia's army and security forces arbitrarily rounded up thousands of people across Amhara region and brought them to mass detention centres. Members of the judiciary, including judges, as well as prosecutors and academics were among the people targeted.

Then, in November, the authorities suspended three prominent human rights organizations—the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia, the Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy, and Lawyers for Human Rights. The authorities made vague allegations of “lack of political neutrality” and “engaging against the national interest”.

“Such allegations have long been used by the Ethiopian authorities as tools to suppress civil society organizations,” said Tigere Chagutah, Amnesty's Regional Director for East and Southern Africa.



Human rights violations have been escalating under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government. © SIMON MAINA/AFP/Getty Images

IRAN

You're supporting women's rights activists under attack

In March, the Iranian authorities arrested four Kurdish women's rights activists—Leila Pashaei, Baran Saedi, Sohaila Motaei, and Soma Mohammadrezaei. The women were detained for participating in events to mark International Women's Day on March 8. They are being held in solitary confinement and have been interrogated without their lawyers.



From left to right: Baran Saedi, Soma Mohammadrezaei, Leila Pashaei, and Sohaila Motaei. © Private

The women's arrests come amid an intensified human rights crackdown in Iran. Women's rights activists and journalists have been interrogated, and women singers have been arrested for performing without the mandatory hijab. In February, the authorities sentenced women's rights

activist Sharifeh Mohammadi to death, solely because of her human rights activities.

The Iranian authorities are trying to crush the country's women's rights movement. The suppression and intimidation must stop. Amnesty International is calling on other countries to use their leverage to press the Iranian authorities to stop harassing women's rights activists and immediately release those arbitrarily detained.

CANADA

BC court finds RCMP violated Indigenous land defenders' Charter rights

On February 18, a judge in British Columbia ruled that RCMP officers violated the Charter rights of land defenders Sleydo' (Molly Wickham), Shaylynn Sampson, and Corey "Jayohcee" Jocko.

While opposing the construction of the massive Coastal GasLink pipeline through the unceded, ancestral territory of the Wet'suwet'en, the land defenders were subjected to racist



and violent treatment during a highly militarized police raid. They were charged with criminal contempt for allegedly disobeying an injunction order to stay away from pipeline construction sites.

Amnesty International has strongly condemned the criminalization of land defenders who opposed the pipeline. Construction began without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs. The three land defenders were one of the cases in Write for Rights 2024, Amnesty's global letter-writing campaign.

Disappointingly, the judge upheld the convictions of the three land defenders but said he would consider reduced sentences. If they receive sentences depriving them of their liberty, Amnesty will designate them prisoners of conscience.

REVEALED: SYSTEMIC ABUSE IN CANADA'S TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM

In January 2025, Amnesty International published a report exposing the alarming truth behind Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program, a scheme that allows employers to hire migrant workers, primarily for low-paid jobs, across sectors such as agriculture, caregiving, and hospitality.

Amnesty's report, *"Canada has destroyed me": Labour exploitation of Migrant Workers in Canada*, was released after an in-depth investigation lasting more than a year. Researchers spoke with workers from many countries including Guatemala, Mexico, Jamaica, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Indonesia.

Gabrielle, a Jamaican national who worked on a berry farm, told Amnesty that supervisors directed racial slurs at the workers to make them work faster. One day, her employers took her to a neighbouring farm to work on apple trees. Gabrielle had to scale a tall ladder on muddy soil and climb



into the trees to reach the top. After her ladder slipped, Gabrielle fell and the ladder landed on top of her. Gabrielle was severely injured, in deep pain, and unable to work. Her employer booked her a flight back to Jamaica.

Migrant workers are promised opportunities and good working conditions in Canada. Yet, many find a different reality. They are forced to work long hours without rest, are underpaid, and suffer physical and psychological abuse. Their visas are tied to one employer, making it difficult for them to change jobs or report abuses.

"Exploitation, discrimination, and abuse are integral features of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program," said Ketty Nivyabandi, Amnesty Canada's Secretary General.

Ketty called on the Canadian government to urgently implement reforms to align the program with Canada's human rights obligations.

MARGARET JOHN: AN EXTRAORDINARY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST



© Paul Thompson/Amnesty International

"Words cannot do justice to Margaret's dedication and perseverance"—Chee Soon Juan, Singaporean politician and former political prisoner

university in Bangor, Wales, Margaret met her husband, Brian, and in 1968 they moved to Hamilton, where they made their home and raised a family.

Margaret and Brian joined their local Amnesty community group after they became outraged by the human rights violations taking place during General Pinochet's military coup in Chile in 1973. These were the founding years of Amnesty International Canada, and it was volunteer activists like Margaret and Brian who, through their hard work and commitment, helped build Amnesty Canada into the leading human rights organization that it is today.

Within a few years of joining Amnesty, Margaret took on a senior volunteer role, becoming a country coordinator specializing in human rights campaigning for Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. Being a country coordinator is one of the most demanding and impactful volunteer activism positions within Amnesty. It was

a role that Margaret dedicated herself to for more than four decades.

Anyone who met Margaret was left with a lasting impression of her boundless energy and positive outlook. She was unwavering in her pursuit of justice—Margaret would never lose hope and never give up on a cause. Chee Soon Juan, Singaporean opposition politician and former political prisoner, said of Margaret: "Words cannot do justice to her dedication and perseverance. She is indeed one in a million."

For many years, Margaret was a leading voice in promoting legacy giving to Amnesty International. She encouraged other human rights supporters to consider leaving a legacy gift to Amnesty—as she had herself. "Leaving a gift in my will is one more way to help Amnesty's work go on," Margaret said. "I can think of no better way of ensuring justice and dignity for future generations."



For half a century, Margaret worked tirelessly to make the world a better place

The world lost a wonderful human being and one of its most tireless and inspiring human rights activists on January 29, 2025, when Margaret John passed away peacefully in Hamilton, Ontario.

Margaret was a passionate supporter of Amnesty International who dedicated much of her life to human rights and justice. She was born Margaret Gregson in 1936 in Manchester, England. While at

LEAVING A LEGACY GIFT TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

If you are thinking about leaving a gift in your will, Amnesty International's legacy gift planner Jessica Brodribb would be happy to talk to you to answer any questions you may have. You may use the coupon enclosed with this newsletter to let us know whether you have already left a gift in your will, or if you would like to receive a free information brochure on legacy giving.

You may contact Jessica at 613-744-7667, ext. 212 or jbrodribb@amnesty.ca



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR!

In December 2024, thousands of Amnesty supporters across Canada joined more than 1 million people worldwide in speaking out for human rights. They were all participating in Write for Rights, Amnesty's global letter-writing marathon. Participants wrote letters, sent emails, and signed petitions. People wrote with friends while others wrote on their own. Events were held at schools, workplaces, faith groups, and homes. The Write for Rights 2024 cases featured people from around the world—from a TikTok star in Angola to a women's rights defender in Saudi Arabia to Wet'suwet'en land defenders in Canada. Here, we're sharing just a few photos from the thousands of Write for Rights events held internationally.

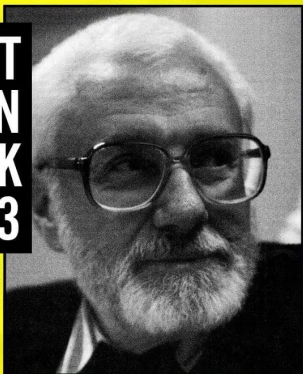


PROF LUIS BASILIO ROSSI

Brazilian Labour Rights Organiser and First Urgent Action Network Case in 1973

FIRST URGENT ACTION NETWORK CASE IN 1973

"I knew that my case had become public, I knew they could no longer kill me. Then the pressure on me decreased and conditions improved."



 URGENT ACTION NETWORK

AMNESTY.CA

The Urgent Action Network: By becoming a member, you can help protect people at imminent risk

Amnesty campaigns for human rights in many ways, but when safety is a concern of the individual at risk, the best way to ensure their protection is the Urgent Action Network. Volunteers use letters, emails, and social media posts to urge authorities around the

world to protect individuals and communities at risk of imminent human rights violations.

Over the past five decades, the Urgent Action Network has become one of Amnesty's most effective campaign tools. Worldwide, more than 500,000 volunteers worldwide are standing by to take action. Want to join them? It takes just a moment to sign up at amnesty.ca/what-you-can-do/urgent-action-network. As a member of the Urgent Action Network, you'll become a lifeline for those in immediate danger of human rights abuses.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



Thank you for your loyal support.
It makes Amnesty International's work possible!

1-800-AMNESTY (1-800-266-3789) | [AMNESTY.CA](https://amnesty.ca)