

# YOUR WORDS CHANGE LIVES

**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**WRITE FOR RIGHTS  
TEACHERS' GUIDE**





# WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



## WELCOME TO THE WRITE FOR RIGHTS TEACHERS' GUIDE

We are thrilled to have you, and your students join Write for Rights, the world's largest letter-writing campaign.

Classrooms are more than just spaces for academic learning—they are places where young people can discover their voice and power to make a difference. By bringing Write for Rights into your school, you are educating students about important human rights issues and empowering them to take action.

This Guide was created to support you in making your Write for Rights activities as impactful and engaging as possible. Inside, you will find ready-to-use Write for Rights lesson plans, tips for aligning the campaign with your curriculum, and insights from other educators and students who have been part of this movement.

Thank you for inspiring the next generation of human rights defenders. Together we can make a difference!

With light and hope,

**Aileen & Lysanne**

The Write for Rights Team

*We want to thank the students and educators who generously shared their knowledge, experiences, and insights with us. This Guide would not have been possible without their support:*

- Samaaya Gupta
- Aarya Gupta
- Natalie Khallouf
- Maureen Peats
- Gillian Doyle
- Liz Sproat
- Laura McCarron
- Suzanne Walford
- Patrick Forbes
- Mike Coleman
- Bob Woosnam



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- 4 WRITE FOR RIGHTS: WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES**
- 5 WORDS ARE POWERFUL**
- 6 EMPOWER YOUR STUDENTS WHILE MEETING CURRICULUM GOALS**
- 7 MAKE LEARNING FUN WITH THE WRITE FOR RIGHTS CHALLENGE**
- 8 CREATIVE SOLIDARITY**  
The Tree of Peace
- 9 CREATIVE SOLIDARITY**  
Mura Kalmel Sipa: Together We Unite
- 10 EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO HOST A WRITE FOR RIGHTS EVENT**
- 12 WRITE FOR RIGHTS IN ACTION**  
From Awareness to Action
- 13 WRITE FOR RIGHTS IN ACTION**  
Building Community through Advocacy
- 14 WRITE FOR RIGHTS IN ACTION**  
Walking Together in Justice
- 15 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

## WRITE FOR RIGHTS

# WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

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. In Canada 125,000 actions were taken and more than 210 events organized nationwide. Many of these actions and events were taken by students all across the country! In Canada alone, the Write for Rights campaign received 118 media mentions, with a potential reach of more than 36 million people.

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.

*Write for Rights had a profound impact on our classmates. Reading about real cases, processing that knowledge, and then taking the time to write letters gave them new perspectives on what other people, outside their world, face. Many students had never encountered stories like these before, and knowing they could support sparked a sense of purpose and inspiration.*

**Samaaya Gupta**

Write for Rights Student Organizer

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.





# WORDS ARE POWERFUL

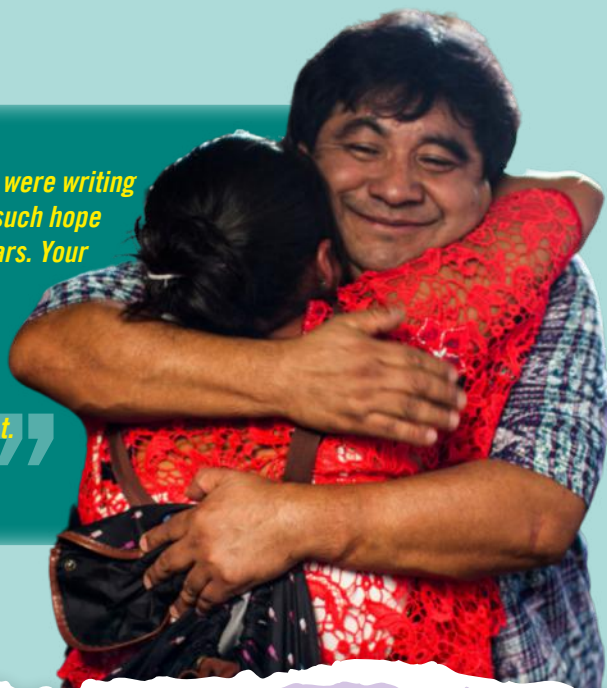
Together, our actions have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, by releasing activists from detention, securing justice for those whose rights have been abused and protecting people who advocate for change.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FREE

Bernardo Caal Xol, a teacher and father, worked tirelessly to defend communities affected by hydroelectric projects on the Cahabón river, in northern Guatemala. In November 2018 he was sentenced to more than seven years in prison on bogus charges aimed at preventing his human rights work. During Write for Rights 2021, more than half a million actions were taken for Bernardo and, in March 2022, he was released from prison.

*“Knowing that so many people in Canada were writing letters to call for my freedom gave me such hope when I was feeling I would die behind bars. Your messages of solidarity raised my spirits so I could continue to resist. I ask you to write now for others who really need our support, as I once did. The truth is that your letters can have a huge impact.”*

**Bernardo Caal Xol**  
Guatemala



*“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**  
Zimbabwe



## ZIMBABWEAN OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS FREED

Opposition activists Cecillia Chimhiri, Joanah Mamombe and Netsai Marova were abducted, tortured and imprisoned after attending a protest. They are charged with “communicating falsehoods” and “obstructing the course of justice”. Following Write for Rights 2022, and thousands of letters, petitions and messages of support, on 4 July 2023 Cecillia and Joanah were acquitted by the High Court.

# EMPOWER YOUR STUDENTS WHILE MEETING CURRICULUM GOALS

Students in more than 200 countries play an important role in Write for Rights every year, infusing the campaign with their energy, creativity, and passion for justice. Through participation, students evolve into global citizens, witnessing how every action they take contributes to meaningful change.

**Aligned with the Canadian provincial curriculums, Write for Rights makes it easy to integrate human rights education into your teaching.** Through this campaign, your students will engage with real-world issues like social justice, social responsibility, and global citizenship, helping them develop critical thinking, empathy, and advocacy skills.

*“Write for Rights is one of my favorite projects! I think all schools should participate as long as it's not time-consuming for students. It helps them become global citizens and it makes a difference for kids to see themselves as changemakers.”*

**Maureen Peats**  
Educator from Breslau Public School

Here are some of the ways that Write for Rights fits into the curriculum:

- [Write for Rights and Ontario's Curriculum](#)
- [Write for Rights and British Columbia's Curriculum](#)



## ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS WITH READY-TO-USE WRITE FOR RIGHTS LESSON PLANS

The Write for Rights team has you covered with ready-made lesson plans that help students deepen their understanding of human rights and prepare them to take action. The activities are all based on participatory learning methods where learners can explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the stories in each activity.

- [Human Rights Empathy in Action: Write for Right 2024 General Activity](#)
- [Wet'suwet'en Nation land defenders & the Rights of Indigenous People](#)
- [Neth Nahara & the Right to Freedom of Expression](#)
- [Maryia Kalesnikava & the Rights to Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly](#)
- [Professor Şebnem Korur Fincancı & Human Rights Defenders](#)
- [Manahel al-Otaibi & the Rights of Women and Girls](#)





# MAKE LEARNING FUN WITH THE WRITE FOR RIGHTS CHALLENGE!



7

The Write for Rights Student Challenge is a fun and impactful way for students to learn about human rights while competing for amazing prizes. Students can participate individually or as a class, with four challenge categories:



**MOST LETTERS  
WRITTEN**



**MOST CREATIVE  
SOLIDARITY PIECE**



**MOST PETITION  
SIGNATURES**



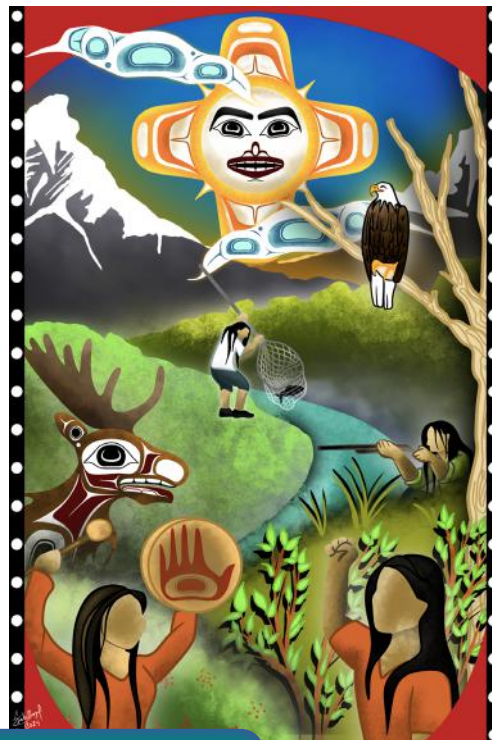
**BEST TIK TOK  
ENGAGEMENT**

Winners will get a cash prize of \$200 for their school to support future social justice events and activities! It's a perfect opportunity to spark creativity, critical thinking, and meaningful action in your classroom.

## LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP TO TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE TODAY!

Are your students interested in the 'Most Creative Solidarity Piece' challenge? Flip the pages to see some inspirational ways Amnesty members have used their creativity to show solidarity with individuals whose rights have been wronged.

**TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE**



*This artwork was created by Satsi Naziel,  
an artist from the Wet'suwet'en Nation.*

## SUPPORT STUDENTS TO EARN VOLUNTEER HOURS WHILE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By organizing events, writing letters, and participating in the Write for Rights campaign, students can fulfill their mandatory volunteer hours required by many Canadian provinces for high school graduation!

Amnesty International Canada can provide an official certificate detailing your students' contributions and hours, or we're happy to sign off on your school's volunteer hours forms.

**Email us** with the student's name and the number of hours they contributed, and we'll gladly provide an authorized certificate.



**activism@amnesty.ca**

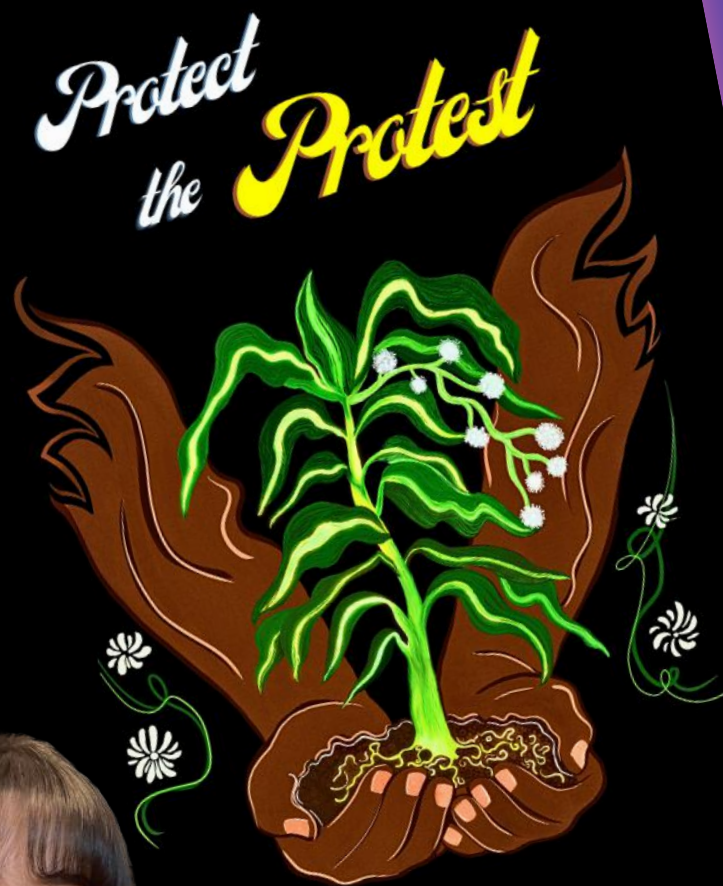
# THE TREE OF PEACE

BY RACHEL LIM

Rachel Lim created this design in solidarity with Dorgelesse Nguessan. Dorgelesse Nguessan, a single mother and hairdresser from Cameroon, was arrested while attending a peaceful protest demanding a better future for her family and her country. She was sentenced to five years in prison.

*“The Tree of Peace’ is an illustration dedicated to Dorgelesse Nguessan. I drew inspiration from the imagery of her arrest, whereby she was seen holding a Tree of Peace (a type of corn plant, *Dracaena fragrans*). This plant is a cultural symbol in Western Cameroon that brings peace and wards off evil. As an activist who values the power of social movements and resistance through peaceful demonstrations and symbolic art, this case resonates with me deeply. No one should be criminalized for exercising their right to freely protest against corruption.”*

Rachel Lim  
Artist





# MURA KALMEL SIPA: TOGETHER WE UNITE

BY ERICA LUO



Erica Luo created these artistic pieces in solidarity with Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul. Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul's ancestors have lived on islands of the Torres Strait in Australia for thousands of years. Their whole way of life – which as Indigenous Peoples is deeply connected to land, sea and sky – is threatened because of climate change.

*“Uncle Pabai and Uncle Paul's case is a testament to the beauty of Mother Nature's conservation as a protection for its people, the cultures that thrive in tandem, and the future generations that come after. The king tides that flood Torres Strait is not an isolated incident, but one that sets the precedent for the impact of climate change on every community. The fight against climate change must be a collective action, not only led by those directly affected, but requires the power of unity between the people and governments to achieve the solution that will allow everyone to thrive.”*

Erica Luo  
Artist

# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO HOST A WRITE FOR RIGHTS EVENT



Display the **nine case sheets** of the individuals and communities whose human rights have been violated. By engaging with these, students can write informed letters to the appropriate authorities and share heartfelt messages of solidarity with the Individuals at Risk.

## CASE SHEETS

*The Write for Rights team developed these resources to help educators and students interact with the campaign in an interactive and accessible way.*



Engaging **videos** that explain Write for Rights, highlight the cases, and showcase the campaign's powerful impact.



An adaptable PowerPoint presentation that includes an overview of Write for Rights, the impact of the campaign and case descriptions.



### Looking to sharpen your students' critical thinking skills?

Assign different cases to student groups. After watching the video and reading the case sheet, each group can present their case to the class, explaining which Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being violated and why.



## SAMPLE LETTERS

Provide the nine sample letters to support students in letter writing. These templates show how to write impactful letters by demonstrating proper structure, and including the key information needed for advocacy. Students can copy or rewrite them in their own words to make the message more personal.



### *Students and educators we interviewed tailored their letter-writing sessions to suit their students' interests and needs.*

- Natalie Khallouf, a student leader from Thornlea Secondary School, created sample letters for each case and invited classmates to sign those that resonated with them.
- Samaaya and Aarya Gupta, student organizers from Woodlands Secondary, encouraged participants to write one deeply personal letter for a case they felt connected to.
- Gillian Doyle, an educator from Fieldcrest Elementary School, awarded students bonus points for writing letters in different languages.
- Maureen Peats, an educator from Breslau Public School, engaged students in a geography game to identify the locations of the Individuals at Risk, and used word searches to familiarize her students with the case sheet language.





# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO HOST A WRITE FOR RIGHTS EVENT



## PETITIONS

Petitions offer quick and accessible ways for students to participate, especially those with limited time or capacity. Write for Rights has **print** and **electronic petitions** available for whatever suits your students' needs.



When we spoke to Elizabeth Sproat, a Canadian educator who works at an alternative school, she found that petitions worked well for her students, as they provided accessible and meaningful ways for them to engage.



### *Inspire your students to take Write for Rights beyond the classroom!*

Encourage students to collect signatures from family and friends, building their advocacy skills and witnessing firsthand how they can influence others and spark meaningful change. As a bonus, students who collect the most signatures can win an **exciting prize!**



## GET YOUR FREE CLASSROOM PACKAGE

**Register your event** to receive a free Classroom Package with Write for Rights resources and merchandise like student planners, t-shirts, pens, stickers, and more!



Students we spoke to shared that having Write for Rights merchandise helped draw more people to their events. Some even played music to create a lively atmosphere, while others raffled off t-shirts and other branded materials, making the event even more engaging for high school students.

# WRITE FOR RIGHTS IN ACTION

During our conversations with students and educators, we were deeply inspired by the diverse and thoughtful ways they brought Write for Rights to life in their schools. We're excited to share some of their incredible initiatives to spark ideas and motivate you on your Write for Rights journey.

## FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

**Write for Rights Campaign Helps Identify and Address Gaps in Human Rights Education**

In 2022, Natalie Khallouf, who was 15 years old at the time and founder of her school Amnesty group, led in organizing a Write for Rights event in her school library. The event was a resounding success, generating 350+ petition signatures and 450+ letters! However, during the event, the organizers noticed a trend: many students hesitated to sign a petition that supported the rights of trans people.

*“Even one person shows up and learns something, it makes such a difference and makes me so happy. It's a lot of work but incredibly rewarding—I truly love it.”*

**Natalie Khallouf**  
Thornlea Secondary School

Recognizing the need for awareness, the next year, the Amnesty group collaborated with their school's Gender Sexuality Alliance Club and focused on educating students about 2SLGBTQIA+ rights. They organized campaigns and held discussions, advocating for spaces where everyone could embrace their true selves without discrimination.

Over time, Natalie reported seeing a positive shift, as more students became more informed and accepting of gender-diverse people. The Amnesty Group even grew from 10 to 80+ members in one year—making it one of the biggest groups in their school!

The success of the Write for Rights events didn't end there! Natalie spoke of how organizing these events helped her develop life-long skills. She strengthened her advocacy abilities, mastered the art and importance of delegation, and became comfortable explaining complex topics and educating her peers on sensitive issues.





# WRITE FOR RIGHTS IN ACTION

## BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH ADVOCACY

### Creating Safe Spaces with Write for Rights

Inspired to make a difference, twin sisters, Samaaya and Aarya Gupta started an Amnesty Group at their school, Woodlands Secondary High School in 2022. As their first initiative, they organized a Write for Rights event. To get started, they secured a teacher sponsor, registered their group on Amnesty's website, and assembled an executive committee to help plan, promote and carry out the event.

Over a six-week period, the team dedicated between six and eight hours each preparing for the event. They had determined that promotion was key to the success of the event. The first thing they did was to create an Amnesty Woodlands social media account to raise awareness of the Write for Rights campaign. They posted interactive content, including videos and social media posts highlighting the stories of people whose human rights were at risk. To boost interest and excitement, they also incorporated a countdown-to-the-event-date feature in their social media posts.

In addition to these digital efforts, they designed and distributed posters all over the school and coordinated with teachers, encouraging them to participate in the letter-writing activity. The event was featured daily in morning announcements, for nine consecutive days.

*Yes, you can make change alone, but when you do it with others, the more powerful it becomes. Through Write for Rights, we were able to form a community at our school, creating a space where people felt safe to share experiences that are not usually discussed on a regular day. It required vulnerability, and it felt meaningful to be part of these conversations.*

**Aarya Gupta**  
Woodlands Secondary High School

Each executive member was responsible for bringing at least five people to the event, a word-of-mouth tactic that proved successful. On the day of the event, they decorated the space with Write for Rights (W4Rs) merchandize, played music to create a welcoming environment, and offered delicious winter-themed snacks as an incentive for all those who participated. In the beginning of their event, they presented the Write for Rights cases, explained how to write letters, and encouraged participants to take action for the cases they felt most connected to. This approach led to a heartfelt, open environment where students shared personal stories and wrote meaningful letters, spending 30-40 minutes on each. Their event was an incredible success, with students writing over 200 letters!

Samaaya and Aarya have since graduated from Woodlands Secondary School and are pursuing their bachelor's degrees. They plan to continue Write for Rights events at their University while also exploring other ways to exercise their power for social change.

Samaaya and Aarya's journey highlights how advocacy that begins in the classroom can inspire change far beyond its walls.



# WRITE FOR RIGHTS IN ACTION

## WALKING TOGETHER IN JUSTICE

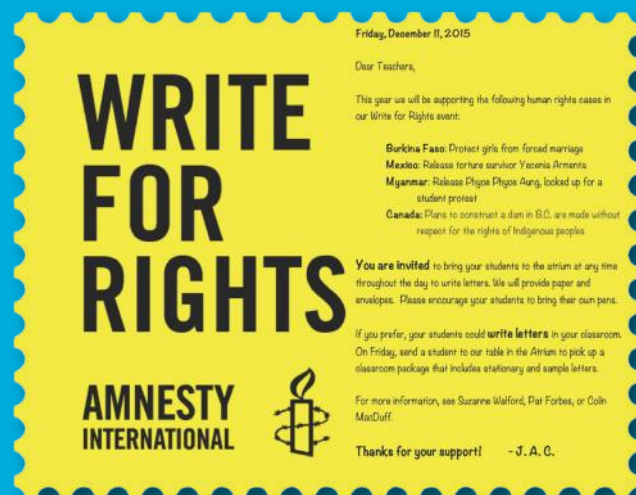
### Catholic Teachings and Write for Rights in Harmony

St. John Catholic High School in Perth, Ontario, is a great example of how Catholic schools can fully embrace the Write for Rights campaign to align with their values and teachings. For almost 25 years, the school has organized Write for Events, led by the student-run Justice Action Committee (JAC). The annual event inspires impressive participation generating 400 to 600 letters each year, with engagement from the majority of classes.

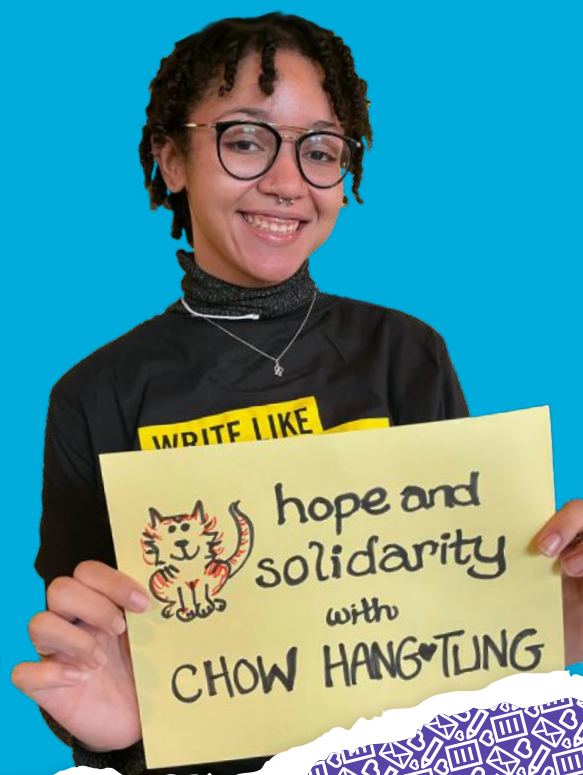
Every year, the JAC selects four cases to champion. The members visit classrooms to promote the campaign, share powerful success stories from previous years, and provide sample letters to guide participants.

On the event day, the school's atrium transforms into a vibrant advocacy hub, where students gather for letter-writing sessions while some classes take materials back for in-class participation.

Teachers at St. John appreciate how seamlessly Write for Rights integrates with a Catholic Social Teachings, such as promoting solidarity, economic justice, human dignity and the common good. They also found that the campaign complements the curriculum, particularly in senior-level law and religion classes, offering students a real-world application of critical concepts.



St. John Catholic High School's longstanding commitment demonstrates the unique role Catholic schools can play in Write for Rights, combining faith, education, and action to empower students and foster meaningful global change.





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some additional tools to support you in bringing Write for Rights into your classroom and empowering your students to take action!

- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Write for Rights Event Poster](#)
- [Address Labels](#)
- [Letter Writing Toolkit](#)
- [Wet'suwet'en Mobile Phone Wallpaper \(Created by Satsi\)](#)
- [Wet'suwet'en Poster \(Created by Satsi\)](#)



## AS A BONUS...

The students and educators we interviewed made some incredible resources that we had to share! Feel free to adapt and localize them to fit your classroom needs.

- [Classroom Activity: Applying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to Real-life Scenarios](#)
- [Write for Rights Pre-Event Checklist \(Created by St John's Catholic School\)](#)
- [Write for Rights Event Production Schedule \(Created by St John's Catholic School\)](#)
- [Write for Rights Reporting Form \(Created by Group 82\)](#)
- [Poster with QR Code for Students to take Online Actions \(Created by St John's Catholic School\)](#)
- [Write for Rights Invitation Letter \(Created by St John's Catholic School\)](#)
- [Write for Rights Presentation \(Created by St John's Catholic High School\)](#)



# Thank you!

**We can't wait to see the incredible impact this campaign will have, and we're grateful to have you as part of this movement for change.**



Please scan the QR code on the left to report your actions. Reporting helps Amnesty track the impact of the Write for Rights campaign.





# 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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