

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

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

Nearly 25 years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon to support individuals at risk of human rights violations. What started as a small event has since evolved into the world's largest human rights campaign: Write for Rights.

In 2001, 2,326 letters were written to people around the world. By 2024, that number had soared to more than 4.6 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions taken in more than 200 countries and territories. Across the globe, people have proven that geography is no barrier to solidarity, and that words have the power to inspire hope and spark change. In 2024 alone, almost 1 million people were engaged through human rights education activities like this one.

Together, our actions have helped transform the lives of more than 115 people over the years, by freeing 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 supports individuals at risk 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 demand justice for them. Through Write for Rights, they will receive thousands of personalized messages of solidarity from across the globe, reminding them that they, and their struggles, are not forgotten. And, by writing directly to the authorities, we can pressure those in power to help build a more just and equal world.

Year after year, individuals featured in the campaign tell us how deeply these actions matter. Many describe the strength they draw from knowing that so many people care and support them. Often, your letters lead to real change: charges are dropped, people are released from detention, and authorities introduce new laws or policies to protect human rights.

“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 settings: online or offline, in classrooms, community groups, families or activist networks. As a facilitator, adapt the activity to your group's context. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size and age range 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 in support of an individual at risk, discuss how to do so safely.

The activities are 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' and groups' stories. This helps participants to:

BUILD key competencies and skills

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

TAKE OWNERSHIP of their learning, and shape discussions around their interests, abilities and concerns

ENGAGE emotionally and develop values and personal commitment.



Petitions and postcards in support of Manahel Al-Otaibi during Write for Rights 2024.

Read about the people we're fighting for: amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: amnesty.org/en/countries/

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R25

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/

Amnesty International offers free online human rights education courses: academy.amnesty.org/learn and quizzes: <https://share.google/XbBVTsryhr9UNR4rq>

YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

RESETTLED IN SAFETY

In 2023, as a result of his human rights work, Rohingya activist Maung Sawyeddollah faced serious security risks at the refugee camp where he lived in Bangladesh. In August 2024, he was granted an exit visa from Bangladesh and a student visa to attend university in the USA, which is likely thanks to the huge publicity created by Write for Rights 2023.

“Through the campaign, I found myself receiving an outpouring of motivation, support, encouragement and solidarity from individuals and groups across the globe. The global community’s response was heartening, as people from diverse backgrounds united in the fight for justice and human rights”

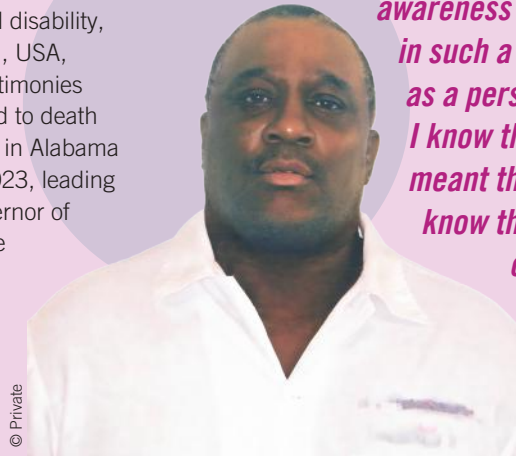
Maung Sawyeddollah



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SPARED FROM EXECUTION

Rocky Myers, a Black man with an intellectual disability, spent three decades on death row in Alabama, USA, for murder. Rocky was convicted following testimonies blighted by inconsistencies. He was sentenced to death against the jury’s wishes, a practice abolished in Alabama in 2017. Rocky featured in Write for Rights 2023, leading to a huge global campaign calling on the Governor of Alabama to grant him clemency and commute his death sentence. In February 2025, this was granted. Rocky’s fight for justice is not over as he remains under life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, but the threat of execution has ended.



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“Not only did this campaign bring awareness to his case, but it was done in such a way that honoured Rocky as a person, father and grandfather. I know the outpouring of support meant the world to Rocky, and to know that so many people felt called to action is truly inspiring”

Miriam Bankston, member of Rocky Myers’s legal team

FREED FROM PRISON

In September 2020, Dorgelesse Nguessan was arrested and later sentenced to five years in prison for taking part in peaceful demonstrations in Cameroon. Her story featured in Write for Rights 2022 and, in January 2025, Dorgelesse was released and reunited with her family.

“You reached out to us at the point when we most needed it. My son was sick, my mother was sick. My being in prison had had such an impact on my mum, she was weakened by it. This campaign gave her strength. It encouraged all of us. I don’t know how to thank Amnesty enough”

Dorgelesse Nguessan



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ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the 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, treating others fairly and having the ability to make choices about your own life. Human rights are universal – they belong to everyone, everywhere.

They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – each right is equally important and they are interconnected.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a powerful framework for national, regional and international legislation

designed to improve lives across the world. Human rights are laws for governments. Human rights are not optional privileges or luxuries to be granted only when convenient. They create binding obligations for governments and public officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all people, both within their borders and beyond.



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.




As its name suggests, the UDHR is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that it will 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 on the basis of its principles. These laws and agreements provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to demand that governments end the abuses experienced by the individuals featured in our Write for Rights campaign.



Amnesty activists in Togo during Write for Rights 2024.

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>

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.”

Above: Amnesty activists in Zimbabwe work on Pedro's case. Right: Ana Maria Santos Cruz, with a portrait of her son Pedro Henrique at the Passo Staircase, Salvador.



Ana Maria Santos Cruz
Brazil 📍



ABOUT

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people that 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 accountable for their actions. We investigate and expose abuses wherever they occur. By amplifying the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and act in solidarity with activists on the frontlines. We also support people to claim their rights through education and training.

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

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE PERSON,
IT MATTERS TO US ALL.**



Amnesty supporters and members take part in Write for Rights 2024 in the Netherlands.

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