

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/XbVTSryhr9UNR4rq>

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”

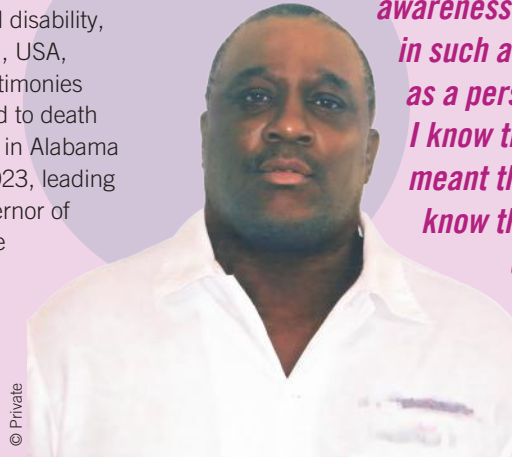
Maung Sawyeddollah



© Munir Uz Zaman/AFP via Getty Images

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.



© Private

“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



© Private

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

Preamble – Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Article 1 – All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2 – Everyone has the right to recognition as a person before the law. No one shall be subjected to discrimination of any kind, whether on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 3 – Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4 – No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery or the trade in slaves shall be prohibited in all its forms.

Article 5 – No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6 – Everyone has the right to recognition as a person before the law.

Article 7 – All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal treatment before the courts.

Article 8 – Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national or international institutions.

Article 9 – No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10 – Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations.

Article 11 – (1) Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. (2) In the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

Article 12 – No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13 – (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14 – (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15 – (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16 – (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation of race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights in marriage. (2) Marriage shall be based upon the free consent of the man and the woman. (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17 – Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

Article 18 – Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief.

Article 19 – Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without restriction and to receive and impart information and ideas without any interference by public authorities.

Article 20 – (1) Everyone has the right to peaceful assembly and to associate with others in the enjoyment of their common interests. (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21 – (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed through periodic and genuine elections which shall be by secret ballot and shall ensure the free expression of the will of the voters.

Article 22 – Everyone has the right to social security.

Article 23 – (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. (2) To those who work there shall be paid without discrimination a wage without distinction of sex. (3) Everyone has the right to a fair and favourable remuneration which shall include wages and benefits without distinction of sex.

Article 24 – Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25 – Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care, and to social security.

Article 26 – (1) Everyone has the right to education. (2) Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. (3) Elementary education shall be compulsory. (4) Technical and vocational education shall be made generally accessible and higher education shall be open to all on the basis of merit.

Article 27 – (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28 – The rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration are inalienable and shall be protected by the law.

Article 29 – (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject to limitations and restrictions determined by law. (3) These limitations and restrictions shall be such as to ensure that the rights and freedoms of others are not infringed.

Article 30 – Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as authorizing any state, group or individual to engage in any activity aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

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

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.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CANADA

Ottawa Office

312 Laurier Ave East
Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9
(Tel) +1 (613) 744-7667

Toronto Office

1992 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON M4S 1Z7
(Tel) +1 (416) 363-9933

Montréal Office

500-50, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest
Montréal, QC H2X 3V4
(Tel) +1 (514) 766-9766