



**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



JANI SILVA, COLOMBIA

**THREATENED
FOR PROMOTING
A HEALTHY
ENVIRONMENT**

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign takes place annually around 10 December, which is Human Rights Day (commemorating the day when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948). Write for Rights aims to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises cases of individuals, groups and communities with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organizing public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure.

A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As a result of the international call to action, decision-makers are bombarded with letters. This year's cases cover people imprisoned for defending their rights and expressing their opinions, LGBTI activists targeted

for who they are, peaceful protestors beaten and shot at and environmental defenders harassed and intimidated or other human rights violations. They will receive messages of solidarity from thousands of people in far-off corners of the globe. Those suffering the violations and their families know that their cases are being brought to public attention. They know that they are not forgotten.

The results of similar campaigns in previous years have been striking. Individuals affected by the violations report the difference that these letters make, they express their gratitude to those who have written, and they often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people are concerned about their case.

Often there is a noticeable change by officials towards these individuals: charges are dropped, treatment becomes less harsh, and laws or regulations addressing the problem are introduced.

Read about the people we're fighting for:
www.amnesty.org/writeforrights

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

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R20

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family group, an activist group, online or offline. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the needs and context of the 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 and any limitations. When participants take action on a case, discuss with them whether it is safe for them to do so – why or why not?

The activities are all based on participatory learning methods in which learners are not merely presented with information, they

explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the cases. This methodology is very important for the wider learning objectives because participants will:

- **develop** key competences and skills
- **have the opportunity** to form their own opinions, raise questions, and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented.
- **take control** of their learning, and shapes discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns.
- **have the space** required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes



Students and school teachers in Taiwan organized letter writing events with Amnesty International for the Write for Rights campaign 2019.
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If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start. This can be found at www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/

Amnesty International offers further human rights education courses on different human rights issues through **the Amnesty Academy**, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights Campaign**: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn>

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE 2019 CAMPAIGN

HOW YOUR WORDS HAVE CHANGED LIVES

JAIL SENTENCE REDUCED IN IRAN

In 2019, Yasaman Aryani was sentenced to 16 years in prison for handing out flowers to train passengers while unveiled. In February 2020, her sentence was substantially reduced, thanks in part to the more than 1.2 million messages written worldwide for her freedom. We won't stop until she's free.



"We are joining hands around the world to combat all the injustice."

Crystal Swain of Grassy Narrows



HEALTHCARE WIN FOR GRASSY NARROWS, CANADA

For decades, the Grassy Narrows Indigenous community have been suffering the effects of mercury poisoning in one of Canada's worst health crises. The youth of Grassy Narrows have been particularly affected, and have been at the forefront of the fight for a healthy future for their community. *After years of delay, a \$19.5 million (CDN) agreement to build a care facility was finally signed on 2 April 2020 – a victory for the people of Grassy Narrows.*

DEATH SENTENCE REVOKED IN SOUTH SUDAN

Magai Matiop Ngong was only 15 when he was sentenced to death. But thanks to the amazing support of people like you, his death sentence was cancelled in July 2020. People around the world took an incredible 765,000 actions, including letters and tweets, calling for Magai's life to be spared – and it worked.

**"Thank you so much.
I have no words.
You have no idea
how my heart is filled
with happiness."**

Magai Matiop Ngong



HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

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 or state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

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



Members of Amnesty International Togo joining in the Write for Rights campaign, 2019. Every year they mobilize people throughout the country to take part.

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HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

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 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are 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 that they 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. 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.

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.

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



LEGAL RIGHTS

Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.

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

Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty

Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection



SOCIAL RIGHTS

Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.

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

Article 24 Right to rest and leisure

Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education



ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.

Article 15 Right to a nationality

Article 17 Right to own property and possessions

Article 22 Right to social security

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



POLITICAL RIGHTS

Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion

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

Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country



CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS

Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

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!

ACTIVITY

THREATENED FOR PROMOTING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

FOLLOW COVID-19 MEASURES

Be sure to comply with public health advice in your area during the Covid-19 Pandemic and conduct your activity ensuring safety and any physical distance measures in place.

If you are doing the activity online:

- **Choose** a platform that provides participation and interaction while being secure.
- **Adapt** the activity to allow for relevant reflections and debriefing (in small groups)
- **Provide** technical support for participants to allow for good participation.

In light of Covid-19 and the various digital spaces in which schools and other groups now have to come together to continue their normal activities, Amnesty is developing additional material to support the delivery of these activities online. Check the **Write for Rights** webpage www.amnesty.org/writeforrights

KEY CONCEPTS

- Woman human rights defenders
- Environmental rights
- Armed groups
- Business and human rights

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants identify and analyse the connection between environmental protection and the protection of human rights
- Participants identify which human rights are at stake for Environmental Rights Defenders
- Participants know about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign and prepare to take action in support of one of the cases

TIME NEEDED:

60-80 minutes

AGE: 14+

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Students are inspired to take action for Jani Silva and the environment after reflecting on their own activism and learning about the relationship between the environment and human rights.

PREPARATION AND RESOURCES

- Paper and markers
- Copies of the **Zooming in on Bees Card** page 10
- Copies of **Jani's Letter** page 11
- Copies of summary **UDHR** page 5
- OPTIONAL Video of Jani: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKyyUEL4Lzc&list=PLY-Ff1wOwAZJBjzu6LgpEtR3aeiC-qrj6&index=3>

1 WARM UP

Welcome participants by asking them to draw themselves in relation to nature and the environment. They might want to think about drawing a snapshot of a specific experience that illustrates this relationship, for instance, drawing their memory of a day camping, a day at the beach, a walk in the woods, et cetera. Invite them to think about the different elements and the resources that we enjoy and that we need to survive that nature provides us with. Ask a few participants to show their drawings to the group and explain briefly what they have drawn.

 5 MINUTES

2 BEES AND ECOSYSTEMS

After this small warm-up, divide the group into smaller groups and hand them the Zooming in on Bees Card. Have them read the card and discuss the following questions in their groups:

- **What benefits do bees provide to our ecosystems and to our lives in general?**
- **What might happen if this animal goes extinct?**
- **Would it have consequences for the rest of the ecosystems that we live in?**

 10 MINUTES

In plenary, ask the groups to debrief. What would the world look like if bees went extinct?

3 THE ECOSYSTEM AND ME

 **10-15 MINUTES**

Refer back to the drawings of themselves from the warm-up. How are the treasures of the Amazon, the water, the trees and the animals related to the air that you breathe, the water that you drink and the other items that you drew? What would the world, or your life, look like if you no longer had access to the resources you drew at the beginning of the lesson?

If participants are unfamiliar with the concept of human rights, dedicate a couple of minutes to discussing this using the UDHR on page 5 and the background information on page 12.

Ask participants to take a few moments to think about their human rights in relation to the environment, biodiversity and the Amazon. What human rights are at risk? Some questions that could help you start the conversation are:

- **Which human rights would be violated if you did not have access to clean water?**
- **Which human rights would be at risk if you did not have clean air?**

4 JANI'S STORY

 **25 MINUTES**

Explain to participants that they will now be reflecting on something different – no longer the animals and natural resources of the Amazon, but on one human being who lives there.

Split participants into pairs / smaller groups and hand each group a copy of the letter that Jani wrote for them. Ask them to discuss the following questions:

- **What do you like about Jani and her story?**
- **Have you ever taken action to make sure your environment was clean and healthy? This could be as big as attending a demonstration or as small as picking up some litter from the streets. Why/why not?**
- **What responsibility do we have as a global community to ensure a healthy and safe environment for everyone? Why?**

Ask participants to pause their discussions as you read out some more information about Jani Silva. If you have enough time, show them [the video of Jani](#) and/or read the text below.

JANI'S STORY (CONTINUED – READ OUT LOUD)

Jani Silva is an environmental defender who fights for the conservation of the Amazon ecosystem. She is a brave woman; she is the voice of hundreds of peasant farmers (campesinos) in the Putumayo region of Colombia who are silenced and threatened by armed groups, the military, drug traffickers and multinational companies, all of whom fight over their territory, rich in natural resources with a strategic geographical position. She says:

“*Because I defend my territory, people have put a price on my head to kill me. For opposing extractive operations by oil companies and defending a healthy environment I have received threats, I was displaced from my home, and there is an ongoing plan to kill me. To be a human rights defender in Colombia implies losing peace of mind, losing moments with your family, it implies rejection and living at risk. But you can't let fear win, we must defend our lives and our rights.”*

When there are threats against our territory, there are threats not only against us but against the whole world, because we hold the water, the trees and the earth that allow us all to exist. All ecosystems are important, together they form a whole ecosystem that defends life in the world. Natural resources and the environment belong to everyone. Everybody breathes the oxygen produced by our forests and wetlands. That is why I think we all need to be defenders of the environment; we need to be aware that what we have is very important for everyone's life.”

Next, hand out a copy of the UDHR. Invite them to reflect on Jani's story and to use this material to answer the following questions:

- **What are the dangers that people who defend our ecosystems face?**
- **How is the environment related to human rights?**
- **Are Jani's human rights being violated? If so, which of her human rights might be violated?**
- **Who is violating Jani's rights? Who should be protecting her human rights?**

Bring participants back to plenary sharing some of the responses from the discussions they had with their groups.

5 DEBRIEFING

10 MINUTES

Debrief the session with the group by sharing that in Colombia, human rights defenders face a high level of harassment, repression, threats, criminalization, and killings. Selective digital surveillance, death threats, and physical surveillance are some of the tactics used to try to silence Jani Silva. These tactics aim to obstruct Jani's ability to report human rights violations, advocate for change, and defend our rights and our natural resources. The Colombian state must protect Jani Silva as she defends human rights, speaks up when peasant farmers face injustice and as she fights for our natural resources and stands up for a safe environment.

Invite participants to reflect on the following questions and to write down their answers in their notebook / on a post-it:

- **Why should we be concerned with Jani's case?**
- **What can be done to help Jani achieve justice?**

After inviting some participants to share what they have written down, conclude the debrief by explaining that Amnesty International calls upon people from all over the world to write letters to Jani expressing their solidarity and to the Colombian government to let them know that we are watching and that we will not tolerate more attacks against Jani Silva.



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WRITE A LETTER – SAVE A LIFE

Share some of the success stories from previous Write for Rights Campaigns and explain that Amnesty International is encouraging people to take the following actions.

- ✓ If there isn't enough time for participants to take action within the session, they can plan to do so afterwards or in a follow up session. Allow them to be creative with how they demand justice and show solidarity.

- Encourage them to write to the President of Colombia, Iván Duque, at the following address:

President of Colombia, Iván Duque
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26 Bogotá, Colombia
Email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co
Twitter: [@IvanDuque](https://twitter.com/IvanDuque)
Salutation: Dear President Duque

Participants can use the template letters in the letter writing toolkit which you can download on the Write for Rights web page at <https://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights>.

Or you can give them the following guidelines to write a more personal letter:

Tell the President something to make this a personal letter:

- Tell him something about yourself
- Tell him what shocks you about the case
- Tell him why it is important to protect Jani Silva
- Tell him to protect Jani Silva and those who protect our environment.

SHOW SOLIDARITY

Encourage participants to send messages of hope and solidarity to Jani to tell her that you support her in her fight for justice. Be creative! Include a drawing related to the Amazon, or of your favourite animal, flower, or plants.

Share your name, where are you from and why you support her. Jani and other members of ADISPA are very interested in hearing what you have learned from their work for human rights and from their work with the environment.

If you want to add something in Spanish to your letter, here are some ideas:

- **“Mucha fuerza Jani. La lucha sigue y estoy contigo” (Lots of strength Jani. The fight continues and I’m with you)**
- **“Gracias por defender nuestros recursos naturales” (Thank you for defending our natural resources)**
- **“Compañeros/as de ADISPA, sé que su lucha es fundamental para la supervivencia de nuestros recursos naturales. ¡Sigán luchando, estamos con ustedes!” (Friends of ADISPA, I know that your fight is fundamental for the survival of our natural resources. Keep fighting, we are with you!**

Address:

Oficina Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
Carrera 37ª #25B – 42
Bogotá – Colombia

Example letter:

Greetings from (Country and City).

Many thanks for taking care of _____.
Today I learned _____. I know your fight is fundamental for our existence and for the survival of our natural resources. Keep fighting, we are with you!

I send you strength and solidarity.

ZOOMING IN ON BEES

WHO ARE THE ANCIENT INHABITANTS OF THE AMAZON?

Native stingless bees have existed for millions of years in the Amazon. Peasant farmer and Indigenous communities have called them by different names over time: Indigenous Bees, Stingless Bees, or Bees of America, amongst others. What makes these bees unique is that they have no sting. In Colombia there are approximately 120 different species of stingless bees which play a very important role in sustaining biodiversity.



WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT FOR THE AMAZON AND FOR OUR NATURAL RESOURCES?

Due to the fact that they have coexisted for thousands of years with the native flora of the Amazon region, stingless bees have developed a strong symbiotic relationship with the types of plants that serve to provide food to wild animals and humans who live in the Amazon.

Bees are important because they pollinate much of the native vegetation of the Amazon and the crops that are important for food production for human consumption. When bees pollinate crops, they significantly increase the production and quality of fruits and hence of crops. This is then reflected in an improvement in the diet and economy of farmers and Indigenous people.

Bees are the most recognized insect for the role they play in the pollination of the ecosystem. They produce wax, honey and pollen of high nutritional and therapeutic value, which is consumed by Indigenous people and farmers and contributes to food sovereignty and autonomy. In addition, native stingless bees are seed dispersers, that is, they carry seeds in their corbicula, or pollen basket. By pollinating the native flora, wild seed production is also improved. These seeds are of vital importance for the reproduction of the flora and the maintenance and health of the forests, as they will give birth to new generations of trees, which capture carbon, produce oxygen and regulate the water cycle, and produce resources such as wood fibers, fruits, and medicine. If bees go extinct in the Amazon, this will greatly affect carbon levels and oxygen production and thus accelerate the harmful effects of climate change. In addition, wetlands, rivers, and streams would dry up and many species of animals that live there would die, as well as populations of people who depend on the forest for their livelihood.

The vegetation that the bees pollinate not only serves for human use but also feeds the wildlife, and therefore bees are vital insects for the balance and health of the ecosystems. It is impossible to imagine bees without native forests and native forests without bees.



Stingless bee © Leticia Smania Donanzan



JANI'S LETTER

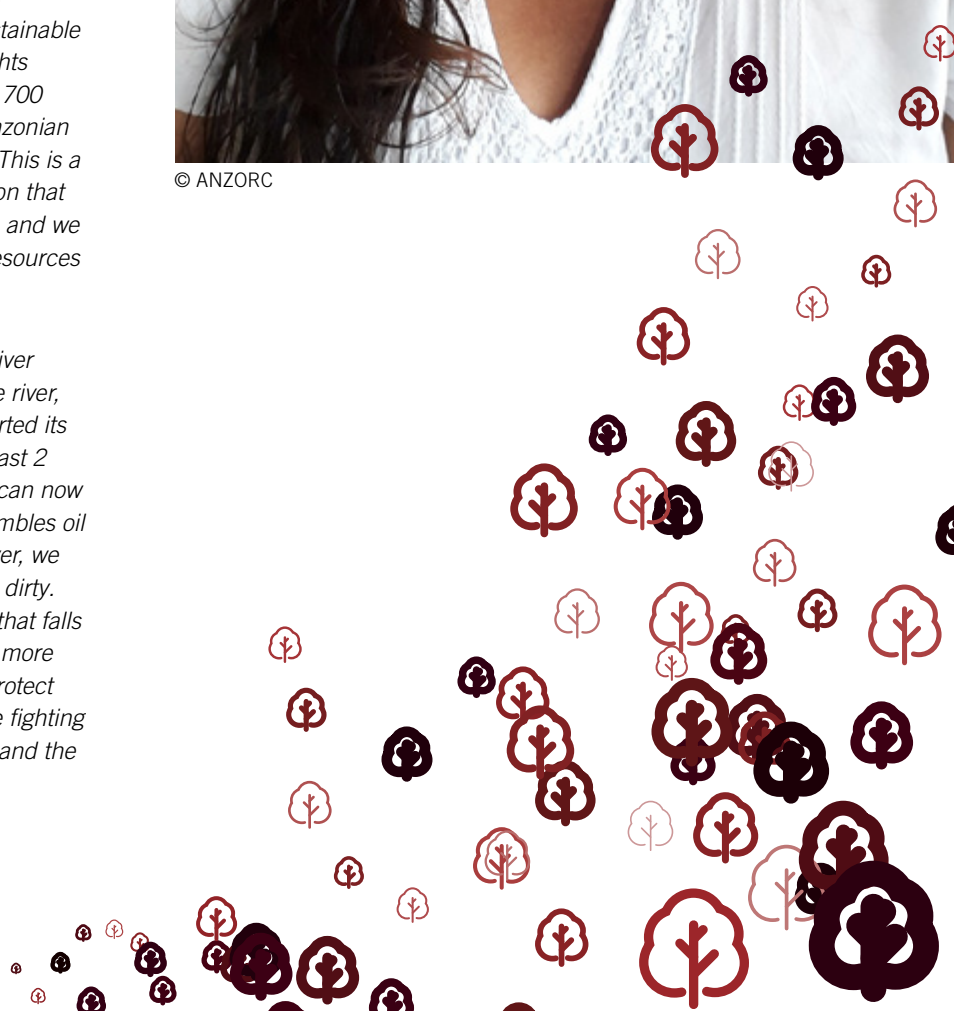
“My name is Jani Silva, I am 57 years old, and I was born in Colombia. I grew up in nature, in the Amazon forest and among the Amazon rivers. When I was 16 years old, I fell in love with working with and for the communities in the territory. I have been appointed by the communities in the region to defend them. I do not have a university degree; I am not a lawyer. Through a lot of hard work, I finished my high school degree in 1998. When the community first elected me, I was in high school like many of you are right now. I have spent my whole life fighting for the conservation of the Amazon ecosystem[s], and the life that the ecosystems are home to: human life, animal life, and natural resources. I promoted reforestation initiatives, the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement and denounced the socio-environmental effects of oil operations.

In 2008, my friends and I founded a grassroots organisation called ADISPA that focuses on sustainable development. This organization defends the rights and the environment of 700 families, around 1,700 men, women, and children who live in the Amazonian Pearl Peasant Farmer Reserve Zone (ZRCPA). This is a fundamental ecosystem in the Amazonian region that contains our oxygen and our natural resources, and we fight to stop the contamination of our natural resources by the oil company.

When I was a child, I could take a bath in the river and the whole community drank water from the river, the water was clean. Since the oil company started its operations in our territory there have been at least 2 instances of contamination in our territory. We can now observe the existence of a dark liquid that resembles oil in our waters, we can no longer bathe in the river, we can no longer drink our own water, our water is dirty. We just wait for the rain so we can drink water that falls from the sky. We do not want this to expand to more communities, to more people, we are here to protect our environment, our water, our oxygen. We are fighting to stop any kind of expansion of oil companies and the exploitation of oil in our territory.”



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WHO/WHAT ARE TERRITORY, LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS DEFENDERS?

Environmental human rights defenders are people who speak up to protect rights associated with the environment, land and territory. They are often community leaders or advocates who seek to protect the rights and the well-being of their communities, particularly by protecting their homes, air, water, land, territory and forests from destruction or contamination. Many of them are involved in claiming collective rights related to the recognition and protection of the territory of Indigenous Peoples, and Afro-descendant and campesino communities. While their stories are often told in local contexts, about how they are campaigning to protect their families and loved ones, their work concerns us all because it also has huge global significance. Take for example the Amazon rainforest -the lungs of the Earth- which for hundreds of years have been safeguarded by Indigenous Peoples who are on the frontline of the battle to save it from deforestation. The territory includes both the ancestral lands where communities have lived and the natural resources found on these lands. The culture, way of life and worldview of these communities is intimately linked to the territory.

ARE ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK IN COLOMBIA?

Colombia is currently the country in Latin America with the highest number of human rights defenders killed and the second most dangerous in the world to carry out this activity. The UN reported that from January to May 2020, 51 human rights defenders have been killed in Colombia. The signing of the Peace Agreement on 24 November 2016 between the Colombian Government and the armed group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP) has not succeeded in reversing this trend. On the contrary, the reduction in the general homicide rate contrasts with the increase in killings of human rights defenders in the country.

Human rights defenders, in particular those defending rights linked to land, territory and the environment, have continued to be the targets of a large number of attacks and threats because of their work. The risks they face are directly related to the structural causes of the armed conflict, such as disputes over land and natural resources, economic interest and social control.

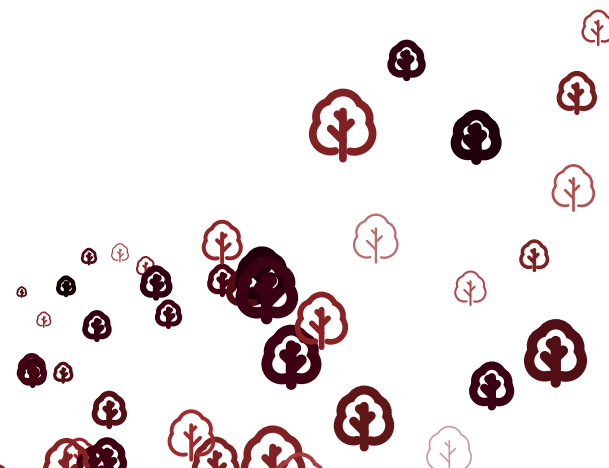
In response to COVID-19, the Colombian government has implemented preventive measures to avoid the spread of the pandemic, among them "social distancing" and the closure of schools and businesses considered "non-essential". Because of the restrictions imposed by the Colombian government, the people who defend our rights, our water, our oxygen and our food are now



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facing greater risks and are even more unprotected. Since President Iván Duque declared a national quarantine on March 24, at least 69 people who defend human rights, including social leaders, have been killed, and at least 14 people have been killed in Puerto Asis where Jani Silva lives.

WHY IS THE PUTUMAYO REGION IMPORTANT FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE EARTH?

Putumayo is in the south of Colombia and is part of the Colombian Amazon region. It is considered a strategic area as it is home to the most complex ecosystems of the Colombian Amazon and is where the Andean and Amazonian fauna and flora mix. Putumayo has gas and oil deposits and is also the starting place of several water sources. Its hydrobiological resources provide the greatest variety of fish in the continental areas of the country and help to generate many food products. In addition, the area is home to extensive biodiversity: plant and animal species developing exclusively in Putumayo. The Amazon is one of the most important biomes on the planet working to contain the effects of climate change around the planet.

WHAT ABOUT CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Under the UN Guiding Principles, companies have a responsibility to respect all internationally recognized human rights wherever they operate in the world.

The responsibility to respect human rights requires companies to “avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities and address such impacts when they occur”. If a company identifies that it may cause or contribute to human rights abuses, and that it cannot prevent these abuses, the only possible course of action is not to undertake the relevant activity. Under the UN Guiding Principles, companies should also “enable the remediation of any adverse human rights impacts they cause or to which they contribute”.

Governments are obliged to protect people from human rights abuses, including abuses committed by companies. All companies must be regulated to prevent the pursuit of profit at the expense of human rights.

Amnesty International is calling for:

- **Prevention:** all companies should be required by law to take steps to identify, prevent and address human rights abuses (known as due diligence).
- **Accountability:** companies must be held to account for abuses they commit.
- **Reparation:** people whose rights have been abused by companies must be able to access justice and effective remedy.
- **Protection of rights beyond borders:** companies operate across borders, so the law must also operate across borders to protect people’s rights.



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WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE AT STAKE?

The communities in the Amazon suffer human rights abuses at the hands of the extractive sector seeking the scarce and valuable resources that can be found in the area. Traditional livelihoods are destroyed as land is contaminated and water supplies polluted because of their business operations.

The rights of these communities are protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and subsequent declarations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Due to her efforts to defend the environment and the human rights of the communities in the Amazon territory, Jani's human rights are violated. There are several important elements to consider in relation to this:

- **The role of the state:** The state has the ultimate responsibility to protect human rights defenders (HRDs), to prevent and effectively address allegations of human rights violations and abuses committed against them and related to their work as HRDs, and to ensure that they can carry out their work in a safe and enabling environment.
- **Non-state actors:** Private economic interests—such as transnational corporations or major landowners—have an increasingly recognized impact on the economic and social rights of people from the community in which they are based. In this case, the authorities are failing to intervene while unidentified individuals, suspected of acting on behalf of private economic interests, have attacked human rights defenders such as Jani.
- Human rights violations against HRDs are often committed by authorities and can involve a wide variety of tactics. **Harassment and intimidation** of human rights defenders is a common practice that often goes unreported. HRDs are monitored or shadowed and have their telephone lines cut or tapped. Their travel and identity documents are confiscated, their offices and/or homes are the subjects of attacks and unauthorized searches. Defenders might fall victim to **defamation campaigns** and certain **administrative policies and legislation** are sometimes applied under the guise of 'security' that heavily restrict the space and environment in which human rights defenders can operate. Finally, death threats are used widely by both state and non-state actors as a means of threatening and intimidating human rights defenders to stop their work. The lack of effective police or judicial response to **killings and death threats** creates a climate of impunity that encourages and perpetuates these violations. These amount to violations and restrictions on HRDs' freedom of movement, expression, association and assembly, and even their right to life.

In terms of the wider context, Jani and other environmental defenders defend all our rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. There are several human rights obligations that are affected or at stake on a global level because of the political and economic decisions taken in the Amazon. **The right to health, the right to water, to food, to sanitation, and ultimately the right to life.** The interdependence of human rights suggests that violations of certain rights promotes violation of other rights. Defending the environment, the communities' and Indigenous Peoples' rights to their territory and protection of the resources in the Amazon is related to global issues of biodiversity, climate change, business and human rights and the survival of humankind in the Amazon and beyond.



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JANI SILVA, COLOMBIA

Born in the heart of the Colombian Amazon, Jani Silva has dedicated her life to defending the trees and land that are everyone's lifeblood. From the age of 16, she's been standing with the *campesino* farmers of Putumayo, a region nestled in the south of the country and brimming with unique biodiversity.

Jani co-founded the Association for the Integral and Sustainable Development of the Amazonian Pearl (ADISPA) in 2008. Through it, she protects the environment and rights of those living in the Amazonian Pearl, a *campesino* reserve in Putumayo.

Her work placed her at loggerheads with the Ecopetrol oil company, which won a license to operate in areas overlapping with the reserve in 2006. In 2009 the license was transferred to the Amerisur oil company. Since then, at least two oil spills have poisoned the water sources that local communities depend on.

Defending the territory has had terrifying consequences for Jani. She's been followed, intimidated by unknown aggressors, and threatened with death. COVID-19 has made matters worse, confining activists to their homes and limiting their protection.

Still, Jani remains undaunted. "Because I defend my territory, people have put a gun to my head to kill me", she says. "However, I stay ... because ... we cannot run away or let ourselves be won over by fear."



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"When there are threats against our territory, there are threats not only against us but against the whole world, because we hold the water, the trees and the earth that allow us all to exist" Jani Silva



ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

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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