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YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SPEAK OUT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Open a newspaper, turn on a television or radio and you are immediately struck by the cruelty that touches every corner of the world. In some countries groups of terrified women, men and children are targeted in armed conflicts. In others courageous individuals languish in jail for expressing their views.

Whoever you are, wherever you live, there is something you can do to prevent these gross violations of human rights from continuing.

Speak out for human rights. Demand that these violations stop. Make your voice heard by joining Amnesty International's network of more than a million activists around the globe.

WHAT IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL?

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights. Our work is based on careful research and on the standards agreed by the international community. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.

Amnesty International mobilizes volunteer activists — people who give freely of their time and energy in solidarity with the victims of human rights violations. We have members and supporters in more than 140 countries. We come from all walks of life, with widely different political and religious views, united by our determination to work for a world where everyone enjoys human rights.

WHAT DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DO?

Amnesty International works independently and impartially to promote respect for all the human rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International believes that human rights are interdependent and indivisible — all human rights should be enjoyed by all people at all times, and no one set of rights can be enjoyed at the expense of other rights.

Amnesty International contributes to building respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by taking action against violations of people's fundamental civil and political rights. The main focus of our campaigning is to:

* Free all prisoners of conscience

These are people detained for their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth or other status — who have not used or advocated violence

* Ensure fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners

* Abolish the death penalty, torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners

* End political killings and 'disappearances'

Amnesty International also:

* opposes abuses by armed political groups such as the detention of prisoners of conscience, hostage-taking, torture and unlawful killings, and encourages them to respect human rights

* assists asylum-seekers who are at risk of being returned to a country where they might suffer violations of their fundamental human rights

* works with other non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and regional intergovernmental organizations to further human rights

* seeks to ensure control of international military, security and police relations in order to protect human rights

* organizes human rights education and awareness raising programs

DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WORK?

We have a record of real achievement. We know this because the people we have been trying to help tell us that our pressure has had an effect. Sometimes governments are persuaded to change their laws

and practices. Sometimes our solidarity keeps hope alive. Hope is a precious weapon for prisoners battling to survive, relatives trying to obtain justice on behalf of their loved ones or human rights defenders working in dangerous and isolated circumstances.

HOW DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CARRY OUT ITS WORK?

Whenever Amnesty International establishes that action is needed to protect victims, it mobilizes its membership.

Amnesty International searches out the facts

Human rights violations are shameful — those who commit them try to keep their crimes hidden. We search out the facts. We send experts to talk with victims, observe trials, and interview local human rights activists and officials. We monitor thousands of media outlets and maintain contact with reliable sources of information all over the world.

Impartial and accurate reporting of facts is vital. The International Secretariat, in London, is the movement's research headquarters, with more than 300 paid staff and scores of volunteers from over 50 countries. Our research is carried out by expert staff, supported by specialists in a range of fields such as international law, media and technology.

Amnesty International alerts the world

Once we have gathered the facts, we confront governments with them. We publish detailed reports. We inform the news media. We publicize our concerns in leaflets, posters, advertisements, newsletters and websites.

Our members, supporters and staff around the world mobilize the public to put pressure on governments and others with influence to stop the abuses. We make it possible for anyone to send messages of concern directly to those who can change the situation.

Activities range from public demonstrations to letter-writing, from human rights education to fundraising concerts, from targeted appeals on behalf of a single individual to global campaigns on a specific country or issue, from approaches to local authorities to lobbying at inter-governmental organizations.

Amnesty International campaigns to change government attitudes and unjust laws. We feed a constant stream of information to the media, to governments and to the United Nations, urging them to take action.

Amnesty International protests directly

Amnesty International's worldwide network generates thousands of appeal letters on behalf of individuals and communities at risk.

If urgent action is needed to save lives, volunteers around the world are alerted, and letters, faxes and e-mails are sent within hours. When a large-scale human rights crisis occurs, our members are quickly mobilized in a global campaign.

Sometimes our members "adopt" specific individuals and issues — if necessary, for years — seeking freedom for prisoners of conscience or working to abolish the death penalty in specific countries.

Amnesty International also strives to strengthen the protection of human rights. We appeal to international organizations to intervene when a crisis appears likely to develop. We seek protection for refugees fleeing from persecution. We work with local human rights workers who are under threat of harassment or attack.

Amnesty International promotes human rights

Amnesty International supports programs that help people learn about human rights and how to defend them. We develop materials for use in schools and organize teacher training programs, and encourage training programs for government officials and security personnel. We urge governments to incorporate human rights into their education systems at all levels.

Amnesty International presses governments to ratify and abide by international human rights treaties, and to strengthen international human rights standards.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join

You can make a difference.

When you join Amnesty International, you become part of a worldwide movement. As an individual member, or as part of a local group or a specialist network, your individual voice will join with countless others to build pressure for change.

When you join Amnesty International, you join a democratic, self-governing movement. Major policy decisions are taken by an International Council made up of representatives from all the countries where Amnesty International members are organized into groups and national sections. They elect an International Executive Committee of volunteers which carries out their decisions and appoints the movement's Secretary General, who is also head of the International Secretariat.

Involve others

Let your friends, families, neighbours and co-workers know about your commitment to human rights. Let them know that each person, in his or her own way, can help shift the balance in favour of human rights. Raise human rights concerns with any organizations you may belong to.

Donate

A financial donation to Amnesty International is a vital act of support for human rights. To ensure its independence, Amnesty International does not seek or accept money from governments or political parties for its work in documenting and campaigning against human rights abuses. Instead, Amnesty International's funding depends on the contributions of its worldwide membership and on donations from the public.

For further details, please write to the address in the box, if there is one:

Or contact Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London:

1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom

Or visit the Amnesty International website: <http://www.amnesty.org>

captions

"I cannot tell you how wonderful it feels to be free again," wrote journalist Chris Anyanwu from Nigeria after her release in 1998. While in prison she received 11,000 letters and cards from Amnesty International members and supporters around the world. "Maybe you just sent one card – but all of these cards are like little drops of water that combine to create an avalanche of pressure."

After the horrors of the Second World War, the inter-national community declared that all human beings, wherever they live and whoever they are, have rights that must be respected in all circumstances. These rights were set out in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, proclaimed by the United Nations on 10 December 1948.

"Thank you. I am alive and free. I was in prison for 13 years and on death row for two years. Sometimes it was exhausting and sometimes lonely, but Amnesty International's work consoled and encouraged me." Kim Song-man, a South Korean prisoner of conscience released in 1998.

"Before this happened, when I prepared and wrote Urgent Action appeals, I used to try to imagine the value of letters to the victims of human rights abuses. But when we ended up behind bars ourselves we

directly experienced what a letter is worth.” After launching a campaign against human rights violations in China in 1996, many of Amnesty International’s staff in Nepal were jailed for three days. “Later, we found out that the prime minister’s office had been flooded with letters, faxes, telegrams and e-mails from people around the world demanding our release.” Anil Pant, Director of AI Nepal.

“At last I am free! Free after 10 months of detention in horrible conditions, which I could only endure with your constant moral support.” Pius Njawé, a prominent journalist and director of Cameroon’s longest established independent newspaper, was granted a presidential pardon in 1998, after 10 months in jail.

“I would like to point out that the activities undertaken on my behalf were really extraordinary. They have saved my life,” said Faraj Sarkouhi, an Iranian writer imprisoned and tortured for signing a petition calling for freedom of expression. “Even more important is the fact that the international public’s attention was directed towards the miserable situation of writers and of course of all the political prisoners in Iran.” He was released from prison in 1998 and eventually allowed to join his wife and children in Germany.

“It is truly a blessing to receive support through this whole death penalty ordeal.” Sixteen-year-old Shareef Cousin was sentenced to death in 1996 in the USA, although international law forbids the use of the death penalty against juvenile offenders. After three years on death row, the murder charges against him were dropped.

“This could not have been possible without the continued support from Amnesty International. I wish once again to thank you through this letter, even though I know it is not possible to express all my gratitude through a letter.” Mariam Azimi, a women’s activist from Afghanistan, took refuge in a church in Norway in 1996. After support from Amnesty International and others, she was granted leave to remain in Norway.