



Human Rights Friendly Schools

NEWS June – July 2013



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the June – July 2013 edition of Human Rights Friendly Schools News!

Amnesty International's Human Rights Friendly Schools project aims to empower young people and promote the active participation of all members of the school community to integrate human rights values and principles into all areas of school life. Amnesty International works in partnership with secondary schools around the world, supporting their journey to becoming Human Rights Friendly. This newsletter aims to share information, ideas and experiences across the International Human Rights Friendly Schools Network.

For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/projects-initiatives/rfsp>

or contact us at HumanRightsFriendlySchools@amnesty.org

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<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL32/004/2013/en>

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<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL32/002/2013/en>

2012

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL32/015/2012/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL32/014/2012/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL32/013/2012/en>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL32/012/2012/en>

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INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH WITH...

Rania El-Ampassy, Human Rights Education Coordinator at Amnesty International Greece

My name is Rania El-Ampassy. I am the Human Rights Education Coordinator at Amnesty International Greece and I have been working in human rights education for the past two and a half years.

Q: Where are you at currently with the Human Rights Friendly Schools Project?

The Human Rights Friendly Schools project is about to kick off in Greece for the first time! We have chosen to start the project with one school and we hope that this positive experience will get the ball rolling and encourage other schools to take up the project too. Amnesty International Greece already has a sizeable network of 500 schools. We work with teachers interested in human rights and Amnesty International's work in particular by organizing conferences and participatory workshops for students both in private and public schools. We now would like to partner with schools to integrate human rights in all key areas of school life.

Q: In what context will you be implementing the project?

Since we have not implemented the Human Rights Friendly Schools project before in Greece, there is quite a lot of work to be done and challenges we expect to face in a turbulent political and economic climate. With the escalation of human rights abuses in particular towards migrants, in combination with the rise of far right extremist party Golden Dawn, I believe there is a particular need for human rights education. Young people are currently recruited in schools by extremist parties while the economic uncertainty is playing a part in the rise of bullying in schools. Additionally, there are sizeable migrant populations in public Greek schools who are facing integration difficulties. These human rights issues can be debated and discussed by young people in the context of this project to increase young peoples' understanding and capacity to take action to promote and defend human rights.

Q: Tell us about the school you have chosen to participate in the project.

We are currently selecting our partner school. Our criteria includes that the school be public, located in Athens (the capital city of Greece), and already be part of the wider network of schools that Amnesty International Greece works with. It will be a school whose student population is very dynamic and enthusiastic about participating in extra curricular activities, such as Amnesty International's Letter Writing Marathon (see last page of this Newsletter for more information).

Q: What potential challenges do you foresee?

The most notable challenge would be the general learning environment. In Greece, human rights education is viewed as 'dangerous' and as a means of encouraging students to oppose authority. Political parties often poison the peaceful environments of schools and encourage a split between students from different backgrounds. We are hoping that our Human Rights Friendly School will not only become an inspirational role model, but also encourage the belief among other schools that human rights education is a right in itself!

We are currently translating the Human Rights Friendly Schools Guide, and will communicate it to the Greek Ministry of Education in order to encourage the integration of human rights education in schools throughout the country.

I recently attended the Human Rights Friendly Schools Workshop in Saly, Senegal in June 2013, which proved to be an inspirational and memorable experience! Not only did I meet the other Human Rights Friendly Schools coordinators and learn from their experiences, but I also realised that others, in other parts of the world face very similar challenges to us here in Greece. All in all, I look forward to starting the project here in Greece this coming school year, and I am sure that it will prove to be an inspirational experience!



Rania El-Ampassy at the 7th International Human Rights Education Forum in Saly, Senegal, June 2013 © Amnesty International

“We are hoping that the school will not only become an inspirational role model, but also encourage the belief among other schools that human rights education is a right in itself!”



STORY OF THE MONTH

My Body, My Rights Campaign expands through schools in South Africa!



Students of the Human Rights Friendly Schools Pretoria High School for Girls and Sacred Heart College in South Africa create origami flowers, June 2013 © Amnesty International South Africa

In its April-May 2013 issue, Human Rights Friendly Schools News featured Pretoria High School for Girls as they created an inspirational protest art installation of origami flowers to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive rights. Following the success of this, Pretoria High School for Girls partnered with Sacred Heart College in Gauteng Province, where students came together, shared flower-making skills and helped the students of Sacred Heart College create their own garden of protest art flowers as a visual symbol promoting sexual and reproductive rights.



Students of the Human Rights Friendly Schools Pretoria High School for Girls and Sacred Heart College South Africa create origami flowers, June 2013 © Amnesty International South Africa

The 'Sacred Iris Installation' was exhibited at Sacred Heart College's annual Arts Festival on 6 June 2013. Activists from Amnesty International South Africa and two teachers from Pretoria High School for Girls attended the event. Amnesty International South Africa explained that the protest art installation is part of Amnesty International's Human Rights Friendly Schools Project and will continue throughout their work on the global 'My Body, My Rights' campaign. The Human Rights Friendly Schools network was strengthened as teachers from Pretoria High School for Girls presented a letter encouraging students at Sacred Heart College to fight for human rights.

For more information, please contact Jabu Tugwana, Human Rights Education Officer at Amnesty International South Africa:
jabu.tugwana@amnesty.org.za



Origami flowers created by students of Pretoria High School for Girls and Sacred Heart College in South Africa, June 2013 © Amnesty International South Africa

NEWS

Story of activism in Czech Republic: 'Letters in the Streets'

The Human Rights Friendly Schools Vyšší odborná škola a Střední škola, s.r.o. in České Budějovice and Gymnázium Teplice took part in Amnesty International Czech Republic's event 'Letters in the Streets' in June 2013.



Human Rights Friendly Schools students outside their school Gymnázium Teplice ready to collect signatures in support of individuals who have been unjustly imprisoned, June 2013 © Amnesty International Czech Republic

As part of the Amnesty International campaign 'Three minutes are enough', youth activists of the school took action to support three individuals at risk who have been unjustly imprisoned: the Belarusian human rights defender Ales Běljackij; Kim Džung-Nam, the nephew of the North Korean human rights activist; and Soni Sodi, a teacher and activist from India. Prior to taking action, students participated in human rights education workshops, led by an experienced Amnesty International volunteer, discussing the nature of the campaign and the basics of activism on the streets.

The workshop encouraged and inspired students to head out onto the streets and collect signatures from people in support of those unjustly imprisoned people. As a result of this action, students collected a total of 139 signatures in České Budějovice in 4 hours and 499 in Teplice in 3 hours. In total **638 signatures were collected by Human Rights Friendly Schools in the Czech Republic in only a few hours!** These signatures and cards were then sent to the governments of the concerned countries, showing the public opinion mobilization to defend the rights of individuals unjustly imprisoned.

Students learned they can take action to defend and promote human rights and that taking action for human rights is simple. They are now eager to participate in more human rights campaigns.

For more information, please contact Jiri Bejcek, Human Rights Education Project Manager at Amnesty International, Czech Republic: jiri.bejcek@amnesty.cz

“Students were very successful; many groups were able to collect signatures to support individuals unjustly imprisoned”

Teacher of Gymnázium Teplice, Czech Republic

Paper airplanes to discuss human rights in Peru

The Human Rights Friendly School in Peru, Jose Antonio Encinas School, encourages students to discuss and debate human rights using their creative skills and imagination.

In June 2013, students reflected on the ways in which human rights are respected in different parts of the world. Students from Year 8 prepared an activity titled: 'Throw airplanes', asking other students to write on paper airplanes one statement about human rights. The participants would then catch the planes and initiate a debate based on the statements they uncovered. Students learned about their rights as individuals, as well as how these rights are protected around the world.

For more information, please contact Arnaldo Serna, Human Rights Education Coordinator at Amnesty International Peru: arnaldoserna@gmail.com

“This was a fun way of learning about human rights!”

Student, Jose Antonio Encinas School, Peru



Marching for a better school environment in South Africa

Amnesty International South Africa supports Equal Education's campaign for minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure (e.g. libraries, decent toilets, no mud schools) since 2009. Equal Education, one of Amnesty International's partners, led a march in Pretoria on 17 June 2013.

In a memorandum detailing their requests, participants urged the Minister of Education to provide minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure. Human rights education volunteers, multipliers and school groups from various regions of South Africa joined 1500 activists at the city square. Upon arrival, the memorandum was handed over to the authorities.

For more information, please contact Jabu Tugwana, Human Rights Education Officer at Amnesty International South Africa: jabu.tugwana@amnesty.org.za

“Amnesty International’s role in the march was critical as we work with schools to build a culture of human rights in all areas of school life, including the school environment.” Jabu Tugwana, HRE coordinator, Amnesty International South Africa



Students activists at a march to improve their school's physical environment in South Africa, June 2013
© Amnesty International South Africa

Hands up for Human Rights!

Amnesty International’s Human Rights Friendly Schools Coordinators met in Senegal in June 2013!

At the Human Rights Friendly Schools Workshop (28 June 2013 in Saly, Senegal), 36 Human Rights Education coordinators shared their experiences and learned from each other to strengthen the implementation of the Human Rights Friendly Schools project.



Human Rights Friendly Schools Workshop Group Photo, Saly, Senegal, 28 June 2013.
© Amnesty International

“I learned how this project can be adapted to all realities, using the best of each local context.”

Human Rights Education coordinator

TAKE ACTION

Join the Letter Writing Marathon 2013!

Your signature or letter can make a real difference to someone's life!

Write for Rights
Make a difference

Join hundreds of thousands of people around the world and take action for people facing human rights violations



At the heart of Amnesty International's work is the protection of individuals' rights – and the Letter Writing Marathon embodies this vision.

Every year, to celebrate Human Rights Day (10 December) hundreds of thousands of people around the world take part in Amnesty International's *Write for Rights* Letter Writing Marathon to demand that the rights of individuals are upheld. Last year, over 500,000 people in more than 80 countries took part in what was the world's largest human rights event, resulting in the delivery of almost 2 million actions for 12 cases.

Since 2009, Human Rights Friendly Schools around the world have taken part in this event by raising the

visibility in the schools of the human rights issues faced by those individuals whose stories are featured. Young people can learn about issues through the powerful stories of individuals, and use casesheets, videos, lanterns and other materials to find out more and take action.

In previous years school communities have organised events to discuss human rights violations and to highlight individual cases they felt were of particular concern. They have also invited former prisoners of conscience to share their story with the school community as well as the wider community. Twelve individual cases have now been selected for the upcoming Letter Writing Marathon 2013!

How have Human Rights Friendly Schools contributed to the Letter Writing Marathon in 2012?

- AI Bermuda collected 424 actions
- AI Czech Republic collected 11,590 actions. 75% of these came from schools. 99% of organisers said they would be willing to take part again.
- A total number of 2,641 letters were written by students in Ghana.
- Students in Morocco organised various activities in schools across the country, collecting 2,902 signatures and 637 letters.

Get in touch with your Amnesty International Office to find out how to participate in this global moment of action!



With the Letter Writing Marathon, schools can...

- ... take action to promote and defend human rights
- ... learn about individual cases and related global issues
- ... involve the wider community in human rights activities
- ... be part of a global moment of action for human rights
- ... connect with other schools and youth around the world through www.RespectMyRights.org

If you would like to **share your experiences** of the Human Rights Friendly Schools project or **news from your section** related to the project, please contact the IS Human Rights Education team

HumanRightsFriendlySchools@amnesty.org no later than **20 September 2013**, if you wish your entry to be published in the next edition of the Human Rights Friendly Schools News.

