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## **GET UP, SIGN UP: HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED**

**Johannesburg** -- Getting world leaders and ordinary citizens alike to “sign up” to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in its 50th anniversary year is the focus of Amnesty International’s most ambitious global campaign ever

As the “Get Up, Sign Up” campaign starts on Human Rights Day -- 10 December -- Presidents, Prime Ministers, members of royal families, Nobel Laureates, celebrities from the arts and sports worlds and ordinary people will personally support the 30 articles set out in the declaration by signing a pledge book.

“The declaration was proclaimed as a response to the atrocities of the Second World War. It was a promise by governments to work towards a world without cruelty and injustice,” said Pierre Sane, Secretary General of Amnesty International

Yet almost 50 years later, the record of many governments is one of broken promises. Half the world’s governments still put “prisoners of conscience” in jail; a third of those governments torture their prisoners. Few governments have promoted the existence or the contents of the declaration.

“But we want to do more than point the finger at governments who have fallen short of their promises,” said Mr Sane. “We want to show that there is a groundswell of popular support for the rights in the declaration, that the public will not stand by for another 50 years of broken promises.”

During the campaign, Amnesty International members in more than 100 countries will::

- invite political leaders, business leaders, celebrities and members of the public to make their personal pledge to the principles contained in the declaration by signing the specially prepared “Get Up, Sign Up” pledge books. Each signatory will receive a copy of the UDHR and will be asked to take active steps on at least one of its articles.
- call upon the world’s government to fulfill their duty to disseminate the declaration, and will undertake its own massive education drive around the rights and freedoms in the declaration
- work on behalf of human rights defenders who have been the target of human rights violations because of their efforts to defend the rights in the UDHR. The Body Shop is working in cooperation with Amnesty International in highlighting human rights defenders, and will feature cases of individuals in their stores throughout 1998.

The cases of 28 human rights defenders from all regions of the world have been selected for action during the campaign -- people who have been harassed, jailed, or tortured for their campaigning work in defence of basic human rights.

Those individuals include journalists, religious leaders, lawyers, and other activists in the fields of women's, children's and gay/lesbian rights from countries such as Australia, Brazil, Myanmar, Nigeria, Russia, Sudan, Turkey, and Zimbabwe.

#### **Selected cases of human rights defenders:**

- Chechen Republic** - Nadezhda Chaykova, a journalist covering the armed conflict in the Chechen Republic, was warned to stop her investigations into misappropriation of funds by leaders of all sides in the conflict if she wanted to stay alive. At age 32, she was killed. Her body was found in March 1996 in a shallow grave near Grozny. According to the post-mortem, she had been blindfolded, severely beaten, and killed by a bullet in the back of her head.
- Mexico** - Leticia Moctezuma Vargas has campaigned to stop a government-sponsored project which would seriously damage the environment in the Tepoztlan community in the state of Morelos. As a result, she and her young daughters were beaten and received death threats.
- Nigeria** - Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti is a long time human rights activist in Nigeria and Chairman of the Campaign for Democracy. He and the vice-chairman of the Campaign were sentenced to 15-year prison terms for their human rights work on behalf of prisoners convicted in secret treason trials in 1995.
- Pakistan** - Zafaryab Ahmed is a journalist and human rights activist who has long opposed bonded labour. After writing about the case of a 10-year-old boy who had been sold into bonded labour in carpet factory, Zafarayab Ahmed was arrested and charged with sedition.
- Syria** - Aktham Nu'aysa and 16 other members of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria were arrested after issuing a leaflet in 1991 highlighting human rights violations and calling for reforms. He was held in incommunicado detention, tortured, unfairly tried and sentenced to nine years in jail. Six of those arrested remain in detention.

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