THIS HOUSE STANDS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
COVER STORY
‘Even the rats in my house are worried’: People in Kenya’s slums are being kicked out of their homes with no warning. Find out why this is happening, and sign our petition to stop it. PAGE 4

THE DAY THE BULLDOZERS CAME
Forced evictions and demolitions are devastating thousands of lives in Nigeria. Earlier this year, it was the turn of the Badia East community in Lagos. PAGE 8

A CUNNING DEVIL
After the 1973 coup in Chile, Ambassador Frode Nilsen dined with the military dictatorship’s highest-ranking officers. Behind their backs he smuggled dissidents to Norway. Forty years later, he was reunited with one of them. PAGE 10

SILENCING IRAN’S UNIVERSITIES
The Iranian government is purging its universities of independent thought. Read more and send an appeal for Zia, a student serving 10 years after an unfair trial. PAGE 12

MY ACTIVISM: REVOLUTIONARY DAUGHTER
In our new column, Amnesty’s researcher on Afghanistan shares her story of how war and personal loss turned her into a human rights activist. PAGE 13

SRI LANKA: TELL THE TRUTH
Amnesty activists in New Zealand explain why they are pressing their government to hold Sri Lanka accountable for human rights abuses. PAGE 14

NO ROOM TO BREATHE
We look at how six new laws introduced by President Vladimir Putin are suffocating anything from snowball fights to gay rights. PAGE 16

‘IMAGINE BEING IN A CELL WAITING TO BE HANGED’
Selwyn Strachan spent 1,715 days on death row in Grenada. Discover how he became a passionate advocate for abolishing the death penalty, and sign our petition. PAGE 20
WelCome To Wire SEpTember/OCTober

Activism is infectious. When one person picks up the courage to take a stand, it inspires others to follow.

The coup in Chile on 11 September 1973, and the torture, disappearances, killings and repression that followed, shocked people worldwide into standing up for human rights.

One of them was a Norwegian diplomat, who quietly used his official powers to smuggle Chileans to safety, right under the nose of the military regime.

Forty years later, we brought him back together with a man he helped to escape Pinochet’s prisons. Once safe, this former prisoner passed on the favour. He joined Amnesty and has campaigned for human rights ever since. Read their inspiring story on page 10.

This WIRE also focuses on forced evictions in Africa (page 4-9). You can help stop this silent crisis: start by signing our petition. And send a letter for an individual at risk (page 22-23) It could change someone’s life, and inspire others to take a stand too.

Read Wire online and our LIVewire blogs at livewire.amnesty.org
Amnesty Norway – keeping the beat alive

Norwegian singer-songwriter Jarle Bernhoft has supported Amnesty’s campaign against the death penalty by recording a “ground beat” based on a human heart beat. People are invited to help keep the beat alive until the death penalty is no more, by uploading their own music, dance or video via Vine and Instagram.

Visit www.keepthebeatalive.no and share it on Twitter using #keepthebeatalive

New website for Chinese activists

Our brand new Chinese-language website is packed with fresh research, articles and blogs about our global activism and campaigns. Despite being blocked by China’s state censors, it will be an important source of human rights information for Chinese speakers worldwide.

Visit zh.amnesty.org

Forced evictions – five easy steps

Amnesty and human rights NGO Witness have collaborated on a short satirical video reminding governments what not to do when evicting people.

Watch it at bit.ly/end-FEs from 23 September. Also see our feature and photo story about forced evictions in Kenya (page 4) and Nigeria (page 9)

Thank you for making a difference!

A big THANK YOU to the almost 100,000 activists who signed our “Human rights here, Roma rights now” petition. We were proud to deliver it in June to the European Union Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding, in Brussels, Belgium. It called on the EU to end the widespread and systematic discrimination against Romani people across Europe.

Read our blog and watch our video at bit.ly/Roma-thank-you

Sierra Leone petition on free health care initiative

We presented a petition signed by more than 11,000 people in 135 countries to the President of Sierra Leone in April. It calls on his government to develop a legal framework for the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI). The aim is to combat corruption and mismanagement through better accountability, and to make sure women and girls can get compensation when their rights are violated.

Read more at bit.ly/FHCI-sierra-leone

(“Thank you for your support! Thanks to Amnesty International, more people are finding out about the problems in our country.” Lubou Kavalyoua, Belarus, June 2013. Her son, Ulad, who was executed in April 2011 after an unfair trial, was featured in WIRE March/April.)
Activists in Cairo’s iconic Tahrir Square rescued women from sexual attacks while the authorities did nothing. By Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Egypt researcher

While millions of protesters took to Egypt’s streets in June and July, many women and girls were sexually assaulted by mobs in and around Cairo’s Tahrir Square.

While the authorities did nothing, activists and volunteers from Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault (OpAntiSH) and Tahrir Bodyguard, another Egyptian anti-sexual harassment group, worked to rescue women from attacks. Their hotlines did not stop ringing into the early hours of the morning.

They were prepared, because this is not a new phenomenon. Testimony points to a horrific and now familiar chain of events: Tens if not hundreds of men surrounding their victims, tearing off their clothes and veils, unzipping trousers, groping breasts and backsides, and using sticks, blades and other weapons.

On 30 June, 46 violent sexual attacks against women were reported by OpAntiSH. Another 17 attacks were reported the next day, including against elderly women and girls as young as seven. We later established that 170 attacks were reported between 30 June and 3 July.

Intervening to stop attacks came at great personal risk. Many volunteers were beaten and assaulted. One reportedly suffered concussion after a heavy blow to the head, while others needed stitches.

Earlier this year, the Prime Minister quickly condemned similar attacks, promising new legislation. The National Council of Women sent a draft law on violence against women to the President and the Prime Minister in mid-June. But nothing seems to have changed.

And actions speak louder than words. In March, seven survivors of sexual assaults during Tahrir Square protests in November 2012 and January 2013 lodged a complaint with Egypt’s public prosecution. Investigations started, but have since stalled. Nobody has been held to account.

A lawyer working on the case told us that a prosecutor described the case as “not a priority” given the other more “serious crimes” he had to investigate.

This dismissive attitude only reinforces the deep-seated discrimination and attitudes that blame women for the attacks they suffer and put their lives at risk. Whatever happens next in Egypt, a long road lies ahead in the struggle for equality.

Read Diana’s LIVEWIRE blog at bit.ly/Egypt-assaults

Week of action for Juan Almonte

Juan Almonte Herrera disappeared on 28 September 2009 in the Dominican Republic. Four years on, his family still don’t know what happened to him. Join our solidarity action for him by taking a picture of yourself with a photo of Juan in your city and uploading it to Tumblr. We will add your images to our public exhibition in Santo Domingo on 28 September.

Visit http://where-is-juan-almonte.tumblr.com and take action with our appeal on page 22.

Letters

Want your views and comments to appear in The Agenda? Write to us at thewire@amnesty.org

World Habitat Day is 7 October 2013

By 2030, an additional three billion people – about 40% of the world’s population – will need housing.

This means 96,150 new affordable units will be needed every day, or 4,000 every hour.

Source: UN-Habitat

For more information, visit bit.ly/return-to-torture
KENYA

PEOPLE IN KENYA’S SLUMS ARE BEING KICKED OUT OF THEIR HOMES WITH NO WARNING, OR LIVE IN CONSTANT FEAR OF IT HAPPENING. WIRE LOOKS AT SOME OF THE REASONS WHY FORCED EVICTIONS HAPPEN, AND HOW WE CAN STEP UP THE PRESSURE TO STOP THEM.

‘EVEN THE RATS IN MY HOUSE ARE
WORRIED’

Caroline Allan had lived in City Carton, an informal settlement – or slum – in Nairobi, Kenya, for 30 years. She built a house and lived there with her five children and elderly brother. She worked as a tailor, sewing clothes for local people.

Around 4am on 10 May 2013, the family was rudely awakened by young men armed with crowbars, machetes and sledgehammers. “I just ran,” she later told Amnesty. “My brother was sick. When they came, he fell. I had to pick him up and run. I couldn’t save anything – they burned my sewing machine.”

Around 400 homes were destroyed over two days. Many residents later reported that the men demolished homes, looted and beat people. It all happened under the watch of around 170 police officers, who played an active role by cordoning off the area, firing live rounds and using tear gas to scare people off.

Many people sought refuge with friends and relatives. Those with nowhere else to go now live in shelters made from bamboo, plastic sheets and cardboard, along a nearby dirt track. They no longer have toilets, or affordable water, and risk being flooded when it rains.

Caroline and her neighbours had no official advance eviction notice, just rumours in a bar the night before. Today, they are getting organized to claim their rights, including compensation.

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Kenya’s Constitution recognizes the right to adequate housing. But forced evictions are still a common way to clear land in Nairobi. Without a law that clearly prohibits this, people across Kenya could face the same situation as Caroline and her neighbours.

An eviction is ‘forced’ and a human rights violation if it doesn’t follow due process. Human rights law includes specific safeguards, such as genuine consultation, exploring alternatives, and giving people adequate notice. Evictions shouldn’t take place at night or in bad weather, and nobody should be left homeless.

A woman sits among the rubble where City Carton used to be. Around 400 homes in this informal settlement in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi, were destroyed during a forced eviction on 10 May 2013, leaving people homeless and destitute.

‘EVEN THE RATS ARE WORRIED’

Infrastructure development is one major reason why forced evictions happen. Deep Sea is another Nairobi slum community with about 12,000 residents, in the upmarket Westlands area. It survives, despite many attempted evictions.

It is now under threat again because of Missing Links, an EU-funded project to link two major roads. One will run through Deep Sea, potentially evicting around 3,000 people.

We asked a man here if he is worried. “Worried?” he replied. “Even the rats in my house are worried. If we don’t have anything to eat, they won’t either.”

But Deep Sea is fighting back, joining a total 1,000 volunteers from Nairobi’s slums to form the Rapid Response Team. It works closely with Amnesty Kenya to challenge forced evictions and support people affected (see John Kamau’s story on page 6).

THOUSANDS OF SUPPORTIVE LETTERS

And people worldwide are standing with them. When Amnesty’s researchers recently met Nairobi’s County Governor, Dr Evans Kidero, he said his office had received thousands of protest letters and emails.

We believe those letters – sent in response to our Urgent Action about the City Carton eviction – were the very reason Governor Kidero agreed to meet us.

Dr Kidero said he had sent officials to investigate what happened, and find solutions for those made homeless. We plan to hold him to his word.

SLUMS AND FORCED EVICTIONS

- More than one billion people worldwide live in informal settlements, or slums.
- In African cities south of the Sahara, 75% of the population live in a slum.
- By 2025, more Africans will be living in a city or town than a village.
- Forced evictions constitute a gross violation of the right to adequate housing.

Sources: United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Habitat

END FORCED EVICTIONS

Amnesty is campaigning to end forced evictions globally. In Kenya, we are asking the authorities to give everyone from City Carton access to compensation for the violations they have suffered, as well as alternative adequate housing. We are also urging them to consult with Deep Sea residents and avoid evictions violating human rights.

Alongside our local partners we are also calling on Kenya’s new Cabinet Secretary for Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Charity Ngilu, to immediately introduce a law prohibiting forced evictions.

And on 7 October – UN World Habitat Day – we will remind governments that everyone has the right to adequate housing. We will publish fresh research focusing on City Carton and Deep Sea. Because these two communities represent a pattern of evictions happening across Kenya and all over Africa: see our photo story from Nigeria on pages 8-9.

ACT NOW

Help us stop forced evictions in Kenya. Sign our petition from 23 September and watch our slideshow at amnesty.org/endforcedevictions
John Kamau (pictured above) runs a small hotel business in the Deep Sea slum. He has six children. “I have joined a group in the village known as the Rapid Response Team. We exchange ideas on how to confront demolition of our dwellings, because these are matters that force us out of all villages in Nairobi.

“We do not run for rumours. We phone each other, we do networking in this village and others to search for the truth and establish how to start a campaign.

“We started seeing people walking and taking photographs. Some looked like surveyors. They did not go to our administration offices, nor were they accompanied by village elders or a chairman. So we thought that something must be happening without our knowledge. “We discovered that they had certain plans that would only succeed if we were not consulted.

“If demolition takes place here in Deep Sea, my family and I will be affected tremendously because I have no place to go to. My children will have to leave school and will then begin to misbehave, and this will be a problem, even for the government.

“We feel that we are not treated as human beings. We are treated as animals. I would like the authorities to formulate their strategies through the constitution, to treat us as Kenyan citizens and provide us with housing in good areas where we can live.”
What inspired activists in Mali to fight for the rights of Romani people in Europe?

What would you do if you were forced to leave your house? “I would feel very abandoned,” says a young man, looking straight into the camera.

He took part in a video produced by Amnesty Mali’s Youth Network to mark International Roma Day on 6 April. Amnesty activists also organized a big event in Mali’s capital, Bamako, alongside over 130 local organizations.

The aim was to create awareness about forced evictions of Romani people in EU countries. But what inspired activists here to defend the rights of people who live thousands of miles away?

After all, Mali has its own share of problems. In early 2012, an armed conflict broke out in the north, followed by a coup in the south. A national state of emergency was only lifted in July this year.

“International solidarity” is the simple answer from Fofana Salif, Amnesty Mali’s Campaign and Mobilization Coordinator. “There is a big similarity between what happens to Romani people in Europe and what happens in Mali,” he explains.

“By helping Romani people, community organizations here can also start to work on this issue locally.”

Amnesty Mali was established in 1991 and now has over 3,000 members. They have organized three big public events on Romani people’s rights since 2011.

“More than 2,000 people came to each event and we even got national TV coverage,” Fofana says. “When people here saw what happens to Romani people, they felt very sad and had to support them.”

“We also gave training to the press about what was happening in Europe. They couldn’t believe that segregation in schools was happening in a European country. And the big forced evictions in France – they thought it was unbelievable.”

This approach has had great results. Amnesty Mali contributed 1,113 signatures to Amnesty’s global Human Rights Here, Roma Rights Now petition, handed over to EU Commissioner Vivian Reding in July with around 94,500 signatures in total.

It is also making a difference locally: “We got a reply from our Prime Minister saying he would analyze the problem in Mali,” Fofana says. “The Minister of Justice encouraged everyone, including Romani people, to stand up for their rights.”

“And the Minister of Housing’s representative has acknowledged that what happens to Romani people also happens in Mali, and that we have solidarity.”

Watch Amnesty Mali’s video at bit.ly/Mali-solidarity
THE DAY THE BULLDOZERS CAME

‘THEY HAVE TURNED MY LIFE CRIPPLED, THEY HAVE TURNED IT ANTI-CLOCKWISE.’

FRIDAY OGUNYEMI

The people of Badia East will never forget the day the bulldozers came. On Saturday, 23 February 2013, they witnessed their homes and businesses in Lagos state, Nigeria, being demolished. They weren’t even allowed to collect their clothes and belongings.

At least 266 homes and businesses in this informal settlement, or slum, were completely wiped out. Around 2,237 households and 9,000 people were affected. The area was cleared for a new housing development project, unlikely to be affordable for those who lost their homes.

Large-scale evictions and demolitions have devastated thousands of lives in Nigeria. The authorities have usually failed to compensate people and provide alternative housing.

Amnesty is calling for all mass evictions to be stopped across Nigeria until the government puts in place a law banning forced evictions.

Paul’s wife was eight months’ pregnant with triplets when their home was destroyed on 23 February. Paul said she fainted with shock and delivered her babies early. She and their four sons now live with her parents and family, in one room. Her health is poor. Paul, a 38-year-old transporter, now sleeps under a bridge. “I go to see my wife and children sometimes, but going there without money, I am ashamed. If I had money, I would have rented an apartment because the babies too are missing me,” he said.

Above: Friday Ogunyemi in the shelter where he lives after his home was demolished. “I was chased out of my house with my five-year-old daughter and three-year-old son. The police said if we went back into the house they were going to shoot us. Before the demolition I owned a house which I built and another that I inherited from my father. I owned a public toilet, I had rooms with tenants. I used the rent to feed my children, for schooling. “They have turned my life crippled, they have turned it anti-clockwise. They are treating us as if we are not Nigerians. We are the ones who have been voting for them but they are now destroying the lives of the poor.”

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ACT NOW
Get campaign updates and find out more at facebook.com/ainigeria

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Left: Bimbo Osobe, aged 55, lost her home and livelihood on 23 February, and now sleeps outside under a mosquito net. She is campaigning to get compensation for everything the community lost. “There was no notice whatsoever. They came with sledgehammers and all the enforcement agents were armed. I had a house with tenants; I had two shops too where I sold drinks. You know when a woman loses her child, how she feels? That is how I can compare what happened that day. When it rains I stand and wait for the rain to stop, and after the rain stops I look for hot water or tea. My children are no longer with me; I sent three of them to the North and one to Agbara. I will not want my children to go through the stress I am going through.”

Below: A police officer wields a stick at residents during the demolition. Residents told Amnesty that heavily armed police officers supervised the demolition and beat up several people who tried to resist.

Bimbo Osobe and other Badia East residents speak to the media during a protest on 25 February 2013 outside the Lagos State Governor’s office.
Oslo, Norway, 25 June 2013: It is one of those moments when time seems to stop. A meeting between two men whose lives crossed dramatically almost four decades ago.

“You helped me escape from Chile,” says Victor Hormazabal, 67, softly shaking Frode Nilsen’s hand. The former diplomat, now almost 90 years old, fights back tears as he realizes Victor is one of the hundreds he helped escape General Augusto Pinochet’s torturers and executioners after the 1973 coup.

Known for his keen interest in each individual he helped, Frode is visibly troubled by the fact that he no longer remembers Victor’s particular case. But Victor remembers. Every detail of how Frode played a key role in saving his life.

Valdivia, Chile, November 1973: “What do you know about the weapons,” asks an angry voice. From behind his blindfold, Victor recognizes his torturer. It is the lieutenant who first interrogated him when he was arrested weeks ago. He empties six bullets from his revolver onto the table, puts one back and points the muzzle at Victor’s head.

“Where are the guns”, he asks again. “I don’t know”, Victor says. The 27 year-old chemist, a member of the Socialist Party and head of the local Hospital Workers Union branch, has no knowledge of alleged plans to kidnap the family members of military personnel, as leverage to access weapons and stage a counter coup.

The revolver clicks. No bullet. “Where are the weapons”, screams his torturer. “I don’t know,” Victor repeats. Click. No bullet. Four times the revolver clicks. But then his torturer suddenly stops.

“At first you are scared. Then you only think of survival. You reach a level where the body can take anything,” says Victor. He still has faint marks on his forehead where his torturers placed the electrodes.

Oslo, September 1973: “The Chileans are celebrating the coup like Norwegians celebrated 8 May 1945 [the day the Nazi occupation of Norway ended]”, reports the then Norwegian Ambassador to Chile, August Fleischer. He is relieved that heating oil is again available in the capital, Santiago.

Norwegian Prime Minister Trygve Bratteli, is furious. While other embassies have opened their
doors to refugees, Fleischer refuses. The situation is embarrassing for the Labour Government.

Seasoned diplomat Frode Nilsen is despatched to Chile as a special Asylum Envoy, instructed to assist politically persecuted people. Having spent three years in General Francisco Franco’s Spain, he speaks Spanish and has assisted dissidents before.

“I was given wide latitude,” recalls Frode, suggesting that he defied most diplomatic codes to get the job done. “I had our Minister of Foreign Affairs on my side, but I was careful not to risk deportation. If I had to leave the country, I could help no one. So I made sure I got to know the right people, those who made the decisions,” he explains.

He even dined with General Augusto Pinochet and his wife, Lucía Hiriart. During dinner he had the nerve to ask Pinochet directly to help him with a case. “Later, at a diplomatic function, Pinochet waved me over and said to those standing beside him: ‘Gentlemen, this is the man who wants to save the world’.”

“When my father talks to people, you feel he is there, just for you. You feel important. This is why people listened to him, how he got leverage with people in power”, says his daughter, Randi Elisabeth Nilsen.

“Each individual has value. This you should never forget,” says Frode. “I was a cunning devil,” he laughs.

Between November 1973 and September 1974, he had a quota of 100 refugees cleared to go to Norway. He thoroughly investigated each case brought to his attention by a network of contacts. “I chose those who needed our assistance the most,” explains Frode.

Through a combination of distracting and befriending the military guards at the embassy gates, he smuggled people in and out. Sometimes it was as simple as a car passing slowly enough through the embassy gates to allow people hiding outside to crouch down and run past it right under the guards’ noses, quietly making it to safety.

“My First Secretary was a mean back alley driver,” says Frode, explaining how they then got dissidents to the airport and onto Scandinavian Airlines flights bound for Oslo.

In 1975, Frode Nilsen returned to Chile as Ambassador, a post he also held from 1988-1992. He could then take advantage of a decree stating that selected political prisoners could be released if they secured a visa to another country.

Santiago Prison, 1975: “Some Norwegian friends of yours are really bugging me to get you out”, says the formal, impeccably dressed man sitting in front of Victor. “I don’t know anyone in Norway?” His mind is racing. Who is this Frode Nilsen who says he can help release him from prison? Where at times he has been forced to drink water from toilets and eat mouldy bread left behind in cells?

Victor’s “friends” were Oslo-based Amnesty group 6, which adopted him as “their” prisoner of conscience. The Bishop of Valdivia then received a letter asking if he could do something to save Victor from death row. After seven weeks’ anxious wait, his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and he could finally sleep again.

“I was sceptical, but I decided to trust Frode. He came across as sincerely interested in my case,” recalls Victor.

Twice, Pinochet rejected his request for a travel permit. Later, Victor was told that Mónica Madariaga – Chile’s then Minister of Justice, Pinochet’s cousin and the author of the infamous 1978 Amnesty Law that still protects many of the regime’s supporters from persecution – slipped his request in between a pile of letters, which Pinochet signed without closer scrutiny.

Frode confirms that Mónica Madariaga was one of his most valuable contacts. “I managed to convince her to help me,” he says. “The support I got from Amnesty was also invaluable. When I negotiated, it helped if my request was supported by Amnesty.”

In March 1977, Victor Hormazabal landed in Oslo. In his pocket he had the names of his Norwegian supporters, among them the leader of the Ljan Amnesty group in Oslo, Carl Halse. He helped Victor get a job at The Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, where he worked until he retired recently.

He remains an active member of Amnesty Norway.

Oslo, 1982: Victor can’t believe his eyes. The letter says that Ramona Albomoz de Carril, “his” prisoner of conscience from Argentina, has been released. His local Amnesty group has campaigned for years to free her. It feels good to give something back.
SAYED ZIAODDIN NABAVI, an engineering student known as Zia, is serving a 10-year prison sentence in Iran. His “crimes” would not be considered offences in most countries. But his story is typical for student activists caught in Iran’s repressive state machinery.

Zia was arrested in June 2009 after joining a mass protest following the disputed presidential election. He was beaten during interrogation and then convicted after a fundamentally unfair trial.

From jail, he wrote a poem addressed to the judge. One line reads: “The strange sentence, down to me you pass... out the door goes justice and fairness.”

NO SPACE LEFT FOR RESISTANCE
Efforts to suffocate dissent in higher education intensified after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected President in 2005. His government increasingly used draconian procedures allowing universities to suspend and expel students for their activism or beliefs.

His controversial re-election in 2009 prompted mass protests. Security forces raided universities and student dormitories across the country, killing at least seven students and conducting mass arrests. Scores of student publications and student groups were also banned.

Sahar Rezazadeh, a former University of Tehran student, summed it up: “There is no space left for resistance at the universities any more.”

ACADEMIC FREEDOM MUZZLED
The authorities are also targeting academics whose opinions are “suspect”. Universities have expelled, forcibly retired and intimidated dozens of academic staff. Many have been arrested and prosecuted.

This pattern has developed over the past three decades, with thousands of students barred or expelled. They belonged to minority communities, had become activists, or expressed “unacceptable” views.

Many are victims of the authorities’ determination to “Islamize” higher education. This policy has involved cutting courses, segregating male and female students, excluding women from certain subjects, and punishing, in particular, women who deviate from strict dress and behaviour codes.

TORTURED INTO ‘CONFESSIONING’
Many students have been tortured and convicted of vague “offences” that carry hefty punishments.

Ehsan Mansouri, a student at Tehran’s Amir Kabir University, was sentenced to 22 months in prison following his arrest in 2007. He reported being tortured for 13 days until he “confessed”. In court, he tried to complain to the judge:

“I told him I wanted to sue Intelligence because I had been tortured. He told me he would send me to solitary confinement if I disturbed the order of the court.”

Behareh Hedayat, a women’s rights activist and member of Iran’s largest national student body, is serving a 10-year sentence, including for “insulting the President” and “colluding to commit crimes against national security”.

In April 2012, an open letter expressed her sadness at being imprisoned: “You can see your life pass you by in front of your eyes.”
I was born in Herat, Afghanistan, shortly after the coup in July 1973. My father, who had been a governor in the Afghan government before the communist regime, called me ‘my revolutionary daughter’.

I remember my mother wearing mini-skirts and taking us to the cinema. My aunt was at university and travelled alone by bus between Kabul and Herat. Every Friday we’d have big picnics.

The Saur revolution in 1978 was the start of misery for Afghanistan. We hid in the basement but could hear the guns. The communists put my brothers in jail and twice came after my father.

In 1982, life got very difficult for my family. Schools were attacked, teachers shot dead, students poisoned. Many times my father would say his friends were ‘disappeared’, killed or had fled. There was always fear and for my father this was extremely difficult.

He moved us to Kabul when I was nine. But there he died of cancer. Our lives changed. My brother, aged 16, was forced into the military. My older brothers fled the country.

I managed to finish school and went to Kabul University to study journalism, but civil war broke out in 1992. The university became a battleground. The different Mujahideen factions were fighting for power and shelling civilian areas. Our home was hit by a rocket that killed my youngest brother. You could be a target for any reason or for no reason.

I married, had my daughter and then left for Pakistan. I got a job reporting on Afghanistan. In 2002 we returned to Kabul, after the Taliban regime had collapsed. It looked like a pile of ruins. The Taliban were gone, but people were still scared.

Amnesty International had just opened an office in Kabul. I applied and got a job. Then in 2008, I was offered the position of Afghanistan researcher with Amnesty in London so my husband and three children moved there.

I want to work for the International Criminal Court and make them consider Afghanistan for an investigation into war crimes so that the perpetrators from all regimes since 1978 are brought to justice. As long as we have these people walking around with power, nothing will be changed in Afghanistan.

This is an extract from “If I can be a voice”, an exhibition produced by the British Afghan Women’s Society (BAWS) and Amnesty International UK. Visit britishafghanwomen.org

Above: Horia in Tehran, Iran, during a visit to her sister who was living as a refugee there in 1991.
SRI LANKA

TELL THE TRUTH

AS SRI LANKA PREPARES TO HOST A MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH LEADERS, AMNESTY SUPPORTERS WORLDWIDE ARE PRESSING THEIR GOVERNMENTS TO CALL SRI LANKA TO ACCOUNT FOR PAST AND PRESENT ABUSES. HERE, ACTIVISTS FROM AMNESTY NEW ZEALAND EXPLAIN WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO THEM.

Louisa Palairet counts herself lucky that from the safety of her home in Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand, she can take action on behalf of others, without fear of persecution.

It's something she's been doing since she joined her local Amnesty International group in 1978. This year, the group has taken up the case of journalist and government critic Prageeth Eknaligoda, who disappeared on 24 January 2010.

"His wife Sandya is amazingly brave," said Louisa. "We can add our voices to hers and to many others from around the world, at no personal risk to ourselves."

Although outraged that a country with a human rights record like Sri Lanka’s has been allowed to host November’s meeting of Commonwealth leaders, Louisa believes we can use it to our advantage.

"Amnesty should see this as an opportunity – to take the question of human rights to the fore and stand up and make some noise," she said.

"We should be pestering the New Zealand government to put pressure on the government in Sri Lanka to tell the truth."

LUCKY ESCAPE

Nirupa George was four years old when she and her family left Sri Lanka in 1983, fleeing the pogrom that killed hundreds of Tamils and which many say marked the beginning of the country’s civil war. "We were lucky to escape and still be alive," said Nirupa.

She now lives in Auckland, where she has been working as a refugee lawyer for the past two years, but she continues to monitor events in Sri Lanka closely.

"We need to keep the conversation about Sri Lanka going. The minute that stops, the issue is lost."

One pressing concern is the approaching Commonwealth meeting, which she strongly believes shouldn’t be held in Sri Lanka because of past and current atrocities there.

"By governments agreeing to attend a meeting there, they are showing they are willing to turn a blind eye to those atrocities," she said.

"International governments need to take a stand, otherwise they’re sending a message that you can commit human rights abuses, war crimes, crimes against humanity – and get away with it."

It’s a point echoed by Rahwa Adhanom, a university student in Auckland, who came to New Zealand from Sudan with her Ethiopian family in 1998.

"It would be a great disservice to human rights if we were to see an event of this scale being hosted by a nation with a paralyzing history, and a government that continues to shrug its shoulders," she said.

"We will write to authorities in Sri Lanka and raise awareness of Prageeth’s story, for as long as it takes to get an honest answer."

Louisa Palairet

© Photograph Warren Buckland / Hawke’s Bay Today
LETTER TO THE QUEEN

For long-time Amnesty member Richard Green, it was a screening of Callum Macrae’s No Fire Zone in Auckland in June that spurred him to action. He was so outraged by the film, which documents abuses committed at the end of the war in Sri Lanka, that he immediately took up his pen.

“I knew that there’d been atrocities in Sri Lanka,” he said, “but the obvious attacks on civilians and hospitals is just horrific. No leader who is involved in such abuse should be allowed to get away with it.”

In his letters, Richard encouraged all leaders – including Commonwealth head Queen Elizabeth II – to watch the film and to demand a full, international and impartial inquiry into the crimes committed by both sides of the conflict.

He encourages everyone to do the same and pick up their pens to let their local politicians know that this is an issue that needs attention.

“I got home somewhat shattered after the film showing, and felt moved to dash off a letter to my local MP and leaders of all our political parties – I cut the Queen in on the action as well.”

Richard Green

“If Sri Lanka is able to host the Commonwealth meeting it would put a stain on the reputation of this historic summit”

Rahwa Adhanom

COMMON HUMANITY

Himali McInnes left Sri Lanka when she was just a year old. She has lived in New Zealand for the past 20 years while travelling periodically to Sri Lanka, and was working for the UN there as the war came to its brutal end.

Her main concern is that the Tamil community in Sri Lanka do not enjoy the same rights as she would as a member of the majority Sinhalese. “The Tamils have lived in Sri Lanka for 2,000 years – they are Sri Lankans and nothing less,” she said. “I worked in the north-east of the country and saw first hand the plight of many Tamil civilians,” she added. “I was often struck by our common humanity – the fact that we all want a better life for ourselves and our families.”

Like so many of the activists who spoke to us here, Himali’s hopes for Sri Lanka are clear: “It would be incredible one day to say that Sri Lanka is a country where ALL its citizens can be guaranteed their basic human rights, have the freedom to voice their concerns in public, be allowed to participate in the democratic election of its leaders, and expect transparency and justice from its government.”

The Commonwealth meeting could be one step towards that future if its leaders take a stand and urge Sri Lanka to come clean about the abuses that, so far, it has made great efforts to hide.

“The international community need to speak up, otherwise they’re sending the message that you can commit human rights violations and get away with it.”

Nirupa George
Waves of protests surrounded Vladimir Putin’s return to power as Russia’s President in March 2012. Since then, parliament has passed so many new laws restricting civil liberties that some people now call it the “mad printer”. WIRE takes a look at how six of these laws are suffocating people’s freedom to meet up and speak their minds.

**NO ROOM TO BREATHE**

Russia’s already harsh legislation on public assemblies was amended in June 2012. It was the first of several attacks on Russian civil liberties over the past year. The new law sharply increased the maximum penalty for violating these rules. Protesters can now be fined up to US$9,600. The authorities also introduced a new offence: “mass simultaneous presence and/or movement of people in public places”.

Some creative people later mocked it by filing official applications “to celebrate a birthday”. However ridiculous this new law seems, the police in St Petersburg have already used it to disperse young people having a snowball fight and a flash mob gathered for a pillow fight.

**LEGALIZING HOMOPHOBIA**

Another law signed by President Putin in June this year was described by Amnesty as homophobic. It bans individuals and organizations from “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors” and of “equal value in society between traditional and non-traditional sexual relations”.

Anyone, including foreigners, seen to be breaking this law could face fines of up to US$3,000. Foreign citizens risk arrest and deportation. Discrimination, harassment and attacks targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people has intensified in Russia recently, and peaceful LGBTI protests have been dispersed.

In July, four Dutch people were briefly detained under this law while filming interviews with lesbian and gay people.

**NO MORE SNOWBALL FIGHTS**

**ARBITRARY TREASON AND ESPIONAGE**

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**ARBITRARY TREASON AND ESPIONAGE**

The stigma of branding NGOs as “foreign agents” was reinforced by a new law on treason and espionage, introduced in November 2012. It defines treason very broadly and opens the door for the authorities to interpret it in arbitrary ways.

This risk of prosecution under this law is very real, given that senior officials, including President Putin himself, continue to allege that Russian human rights NGOs serve the interests of foreign governments.

**THE CHILLING THREAT OF PROSECUTION FOR LIBEL**

Many Russian officials are sensitive to criticism, often accusing their critics of defamation and libel. Both crimes carry heavy penalties. The previous President, Dmitry Medvedev, decriminalized libel, but President Putin reversed this decision shortly afterwards, in July 2012. It poses a chilling threat to people criticizing government officials, who can then choose to prosecute their critics for libel.

**NGOS AS “FOREIGN AGENTS”**

A law from July 2012 requires NGOs to register as “foreign agents” if they receive overseas funding and are involved in vaguely defined “political activities”. This stigmatizes NGOs and people who defend human rights.

If an NGO doesn’t register, it faces hefty fines, its work is suspended and its leaders could face prison.

Amnesty’s Moscow office was inspected in March, along with other international NGO offices. The most frequent targets are outspoken human rights NGOs that criticize the Russian authorities, but even fishing clubs and environmental organizations have received official warnings to register as “foreign agent”.

**‘BLASPHEMOUS’ PUSSY RIOT**

In March 2012, three members of the feminist punk band Pussy Riot were arrested for “hooliganism on the grounds of religious hatred” after performing a protest song in a Moscow cathedral. On 17 August they were sentenced to two years in prison.

Over 50,000 people in Russia signed an online letter of support for the women. But a public poll showed that most Russian people saw Pussy Riot’s performance as hooliganism and humiliation of a shrine.

But international human rights law is clear: freedom of expression extends even to peaceful self-expression that’s deemed offensive and distasteful.

In response to Pussy Riot, and as a deterrent to others, a new bill introduced in September 2012 criminalized “insult of religious beliefs and feelings, the abomination of religious and sacred objects, places of worship and religious rights”. It became law in June 2013.

One prosecution under this law might be against an artist, Artem Loskutov from Siberia, who depicted a Madonna and child wearing Pussy Riot-style balaclavas. If prosecuted and found guilty, he could face heavy fines, even prison.

ACT NOW

7 October is the start of Russia’s Winter Olympics torch rally, and President Putin’s birthday. Help us mark the occasion by signing our petition asking him to repeal these repressive laws and give people in Russia more room to breathe.

Visit bit.ly/room-to-breathe
THE ROCKY ROAD TO A SMALL REVOLUTION

ANNA KULIKOWSKA TELLS WIRE HOW ARGUMENTS AND SLEEPLESS NIGHTS HELPED AMNESTY POLAND FIND NEW WAYS OF INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS.

We started the Education for Human Dignity (E4HD) project in 2010 with many doubts. The goal was simple enough: to raise awareness and inspire young people to tackle the human rights abuses that cause poverty.

But we had to implement it using a new tool: participatory methodology. It sounded great, but seemed so confusing and so different from how we had run our human rights education projects so far.

At first we had doubts, arguments, even sleepless nights. It was like being told: “Leave the motorway and get on this dirt track instead.” We had to take a huge step back to the roots of education,
THE EDUCATION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY PROJECT

- engages young people in exploring how human rights violations drive people into poverty, and how activism and respect for human rights can help reduce poverty.
- uses participatory methodology as a relevant, sustainable and adaptable approach to human rights education.
- is based on three human rights education resources (available at http://goo.gl/EtHQ5) and an interactive learning platform: www.RespectMyRights.org
- has so far been implemented by Amnesty in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Poland, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- has trained 5,155 youth educators and involved 35,537 young people so far.

To find out more or get involved, email hre@amnesty.org

leave behind our old teaching habits and books, and start again based on individual human experiences.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Our work became focused on asking questions and finding a common language to guide young people through the poverty issue. We revised all our teaching materials and asked focus groups of young people in different countries their thoughts on dignity, poverty and human rights.

When we started to run local training sessions, we didn’t use a set program or materials. We were guided by participants’ experiences, knowledge and engagement. We weren’t trainers or teachers anymore, but facilitators trying to build bridges between people’s experiences in the global North and South.

The more we practised participatory methodology, the better we understood it. And it brought results. “Thanks to the workshops I have realized that if I want to change other people’s lives for the better, I have to be active in public life. And most importantly, I have to start with myself,” said Natalia, a pupil aged 15.

Mateusz, a teacher aged 29, told us that “the new method helped me bring back enthusiasm to my training sessions. I feel like I can start teaching in school again”.

An important part of the project was developing the RespectMyRights.org online platform. Inspired by social media, it is a great way for young people worldwide to connect, learn and take action.

INSPIRATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Building project partnerships was crucial, and we began co-operating closely with Amnesty colleagues in South Africa and Sierra Leone. Visits to Africa gave us a chance to see how participatory methodology can be used globally.

For example, we saw drama performances in slums about real poverty issues, such as access to education. By showing possible solutions based on human rights, these plays can inspire people to create change in their own communities. We were inspired too.

Above: Pupils campaign to stop forced evictions in Africa, linking hands to visually represent rooftops, Poland, March 2012.
Left: Human Rights Education drama workshop, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2011.
Right: “Education is a human right and human rights = less poverty”: Pupils in Poland take part in Global Education Week, November 2012.

A SMALL REVOLUTION

Three years on, the project has had a huge impact. 74 schools in Poland have implemented it, with 20,012 young participants, 542 school training sessions run in schools, 792 “multipliers” trained to educate their peers, and 224 events held.

The biggest achievement of all has been recognizing participatory methodology as an effective way to develop the whole of Amnesty. It is now mainstreamed across our other work, such as activism, planning and evaluation.

We can look back now and say the rocky road when we first started was worth it, because this way of working has revolutionized our approach to everything we do.
SURVIVING DEATH ROW

‘IMAGINE BEING IN A CELL WAITING TO BE HANGED’

SELWYN STRACHAN SPENT 1,715 DAYS ON DEATH ROW IN GRENADA, AND WAS FINALLY RELEASED IN 2009 AFTER 26 YEARS IN PRISON. HE TOLD WIRE HOW THIS EXPERIENCE MADE HIM A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR ABOLISHING THE DEATH PENALTY, AT HOME AND ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN.

Why do you oppose the death penalty?
Innocent lives could be taken away – and have been – through the death penalty.

I was on death row at Richmond Hill Prison in Grenada from 1986-1991. In December 1986, I was convicted on 11 counts of murder and sentenced to death by hanging, alongside 13 others, all of us former government and military officials. Amnesty described our trial as “manifestly and fundamentally unfair”. Imposing the death penalty was mandatory at the time, and our convictions were upheld on 12 July 1991.

I spent 1,715 days on death row, and the last 31 days were the most torturous. Within 72 hours of the 12 July decision, the prison authorities started preparing the gallows. The gallows were not far from our cells. Imagine being in a cell waiting to be hanged, and being able to hear the constant clanging of iron, as workers feverishly prepare the gallows.

During the final days, information reached us that the first five of our number would be prepared for the gallows. One of the five came to my cell to share a few parting words. I vividly recall saying to him, “Don’t give up, even at this last moment”. I was still convinced that some intervention would be made to stop our execution.

After a vigorous international campaign, which included Amnesty and others inside and outside Grenada, we were pardoned and sentenced to imprisonment for the rest of our natural lives, although this natural life sentence was unknown to Grenada’s laws.

What does the new Greater Caribbean for Life anti-death penalty network mean to you?
It has done a good job in difficult circumstances. Don’t forget that it operates in a region where all the English-speaking countries still retain the death penalty. Also, 27% of all homicides worldwide are committed here, despite us having just 8.5% of the world’s population.

The network (facebook.com/GCFLife) is an excellent forum for sharing information and ideas to advance abolition. Some very dedicated and staunch abolitionists are operating within it, for whom I have enormous respect – like Camelo Campus Cruz of the Puerto Rico Coalition Against the Death Penalty and Leela Ramdeen of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice in Trinidad and Tobago.

What particular concerns do you have about the death penalty in Grenada?
We seem to be standing still. Because although we have been an abolitionist country in practice for 35 years, we have not voted in favour of the UN Resolutions calling for a moratorium on implementing the death penalty. That is a contradiction of sorts.

We no longer have the mandatory death penalty [where people who commit certain crimes, like murder, have to be sentenced to death by law, regardless of any mitigating circumstances]. So we have the basis for moving towards ultimate abolition of the death penalty in Grenada. What we don’t have is the political will or adequate advocacy on the subject.
What are you doing to change people’s minds about the death penalty?
I have been making strenuous efforts to reach out to the media. This is a work in progress.

Public support is still strong for the death penalty here because the educational aspect of the campaign is not all there yet. This is key. But the inadequate social and economic conditions which Caribbean people must still live under play a fundamental role, too.

However, I believe the tide is slowly turning. Over the last 10 years, the courts have made landmark decisions, in the Pratt and Morgan case from Jamaica, and the Hughes & Spence case in Saint Lucia. Both cases restricted the use of the death penalty, although they didn’t abolish it. But it is a step in the right direction.

What difference has Amnesty’s past support for you, and the current campaign for abolishing the death penalty, made to your life and your activism?
Amnesty’s support for me has been tremendous, given the fact that I was imprisoned for 26 years, nearly five of which were spent on death row.

Amnesty never wavered in its relentless campaign against the death penalty in my case. Amnesty called for my freedom, and the freedom of my former death row inmates, since we had been incarcerated for years based on a trial which did not meet internationally accepted human rights standards. Amnesty’s role in helping to save my life contributed a great deal to my present day activism against the death penalty.

Do you have a message for people on death row, and the activists who are working to stop all executions worldwide?
Yes, my message is simple. To those of you on death row: keep the faith, don’t give up hope, the World Coalition against the Death Penalty (www.worldcoalition.org) is working to save your lives.

And to the activists working to stop executions worldwide: continue the great and courageous work. Continue the great sacrifice. And in so doing you will be contributing in a practical and meaningful way to this mighty slogan: STOP CRIMES, NOT LIVES!

THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

Death penalty laws are retained in all English-speaking Caribbean countries: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago)

Death sentences are imposed mostly for murder and carried out by hanging. Treason and terrorism are capital offences in some countries.

Grenada has not executed since 1978 and is considered abolitionist in practice.

For people convicted of murder in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago or treason in Barbados, the only sentence is death (a mandatory death sentence).

The region’s last execution was Charles Laplace’s hanging in Saint Kitts and Nevis in 2008.
Amnesty issues Worldwide Appeals on behalf of people who are at risk or have suffered human rights abuses. Each appeal includes everything you need to demand change or express your support.

Belarus

PAVEL SELYUN SENTENCED TO DEATH

Pavel Selyun, aged 23, was sentenced to death by the Hrodna Regional Court in Belarus on 12 June for the murder of his wife and her lover in August 2012. His lawyer has appealed against the sentence to the Supreme Court. The appeal will be heard on 17 September 2013. He is currently held in a detention centre for death row prisoners in the capital, Minsk.

A student at the Belarus State University, Pavel Selyun has no previous convictions. He has said that he committed the crimes in a state of emotion as a result of jealousy.

Belarus is the last country in Europe still carrying out executions: in 2012 it executed at least three men. To Amnesty International’s knowledge three death sentences have been pronounced so far in 2013. Prisoners on death row are told that they will be executed only moments before the sentence is carried out. They are shot in the back of the head; sometimes more than one bullet is needed. The body is not handed over to the family, who are often informed only afterwards, and the place of burial is kept secret, causing further distress to relatives.

Please write to President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in Belarusian, Russian, English or your own language, urging him to commute the death sentence of Pavel Selyun and the sentences of all death row prisoners in Belarus. Call on him to establish an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

Send appeals to:

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
ul.Karla Marksa, 38
Minsk 220016
Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10/ +375 17 222 38 72
Email: contact@president.gov.by
Salutation: Dear Mr President

Sri Lanka

RAGIHR MANOHARAN

JUSTICE FOR MURDERED STUDENTS

20-year-old Ragihar Manoharan was among five Tamil students (now known as “the Trinco Five”) killed by Sri Lankan security forces in Trincomalee on 2 January 2006.

The students had been chatting by the seafront when a grenade thrown at them from a passing auto rickshaw exploded, injuring at least three. Ten to 15 uniformed officers appeared, believed to be commandos from the Special Task Force (STF), a police counter-terrorism unit. The officers put the injured students into their jeep, beat them with rifle butts and then pushed them out onto the road where, according to a witness, they shot them dead.

The security forces initially claimed the five had been killed by the grenade. However, a post-mortem found that they had been shot at close range, three of them in the head.

Recent reports that 12 STF members have been arrested in relation to the killings are no guarantee of a meaningful investigation. The same 12 men were arrested in 2006 but soon released again, supposedly due to lack of evidence. High-ranking officers do not appear to be among those arrested, but to secure real accountability for the “Trinco Five” killings, Amnesty International expects that, where sufficient evidence exists, any persons suspected of command responsibility for the killings, however high their rank, will be put on trial.

Please write to the President of Sri Lanka, calling on him to ensure that an independent and effective investigation is carried out into the killing of Ragihar Manoharan and the other four students, and that those responsible are brought to justice. Remind him that the family of Ragihar Manoharan deserve to know the truth about what happened to their son. Send appeals to:

President Mahinda Rajapaksa
Presidential Secretariat
Colombo 1
Sri Lanka
Fax: 009 4 11 244 6 6 57
Email: prsec@presidentsoffice.lk / lalith@icta.lk
Salutation: His Excellency the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa

Write for Rights December 2013

Mother of four Miriam López deserves justice after she was tortured by Mexican soldiers. Grandmother Sultani Acibuca is facing prison for speaking out for peace in Turkey. 15-year-old Abubakar Umar Bunu remains in detention in Nigeria, even though a court ordered his release in January. They are just some of the individuals who need your support.

Will you join hundreds of thousands of people around the world and write a letter on their behalf? Will you send them a message of solidarity? To take part in Write for Rights between 6-16 December or to organize a letter writing event, contact your local Amnesty International office or watch out for further information in the next issue of WIRE.

Find your local office at amnesty.org

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ETHIOPIA
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRCO)

HUMAN RIGHTS WORK BLOCKED


In January 2009, the government passed the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP). The law, ostensibly aimed at regulating civil society, places excessive restrictions on the work, administration and funding of human rights organizations, including by prohibiting them from receiving more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources. This has had a devastating impact on human rights organizations.

As a result of the law, HRCO’s bank accounts were frozen in December 2009, costing the organisation about US$566,000 and forcing it to close nine of its twelve offices, losing more than 50 staff.

Under the CSP NGOs are also prohibited from spending more than 30% of their budget on ‘administrative costs’ which may be interpreted to include documenting human rights abuses, providing free legal aid, advocacy and other essential activities.

The law also established a Charities and Societies Agency with broad discretionary powers over NGOs, including compulsory disclosure of information, which could include testimonies of victims and witnesses of human rights violations, thereby placing them at further risk.

For many years the Ethiopian authorities have shown hostility to the work of HRCO. Staff members have been harassed, threatened, attacked and arrested.

Please write to the authorities, urging them to immediately unfreeze HRCO’s bank accounts, and to amend the CSP to remove the restrictions placed on human rights organizations in Ethiopia. Send appeals to:

Prime Minister Hailiemariam Desalegn
P.O. Box 1031
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
Fax: +251 11 155 20 20 / +251 11 551 4300 / +251 11 551 1244
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

IRAN
SAVED ZIAODDIN NABAVI

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE SERVING 10 YEARS

Student Sayed Ziaoddin Nabavi is serving a 10-year prison sentence in Karoun Prison, where conditions are poor, for various national security “crimes”. He is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association and is serving his sentence in ‘internal exile’ which means he is far away from his family home, making it difficult for them to visit him. He was reportedly beaten during interrogations and on arrival in prison.

A member of the Advocacy Council for the Right to Education, founded in 2009 by students barred from further study because of their political activities or faith, Sayed Ziaoddin Nabavi was arrested in June 2009 after participating in post-presidential election protests.

Parts of his sentence relate to his alleged links to banned organization, the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), possibly because he has relatives who have links with PMOI members. He denies all charges against him.

Sayed Ziaoddin Nabavi is now at risk of further imprisonment as he has been charged for an open letter he wrote about a death row inmate.

Please write to the Iranian authorities, calling on them to immediately and unconditionally release Sayed Ziaoddin Nabavi as he is a prisoner of conscience. Urge them to move him to a prison closer to home until his release and ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment. Call also for a thorough and impartial investigation into his allegations of ill-treatment in detention, and for those responsible to be brought to account. Send appeals to:

- Head of the Judiciary
- Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
- Edareh koll Ravabet Omoumi va Tashrifat
- Gheoh Gazzayeh
- Pelak 4, Bon Bast Aziizi 1
- Balatar az tagato Pastoor
- Khiyaban ValiAsr
- Tehran, Iran
- Email: info@dadiran.ir (Subject line: FAO Ayatollah Larijani)
- Salutation: Your Excellency

IRAQ
AHMAD ‘AMR ‘ABD AL-QADIR MUHAMMAD

TORTURED AND SENTENCED TO DEATH

Ahmad ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Qadir Muhammad, a Palestinian born in Iraq, was arrested on 21 July 2006 in Baghdad and held incommunicado for more than a year. According to information received by Amnesty International, he was tortured into “confessing” to membership of an armed group and planning to plant explosives. He was sentenced to death on 17 May 2011, under the 2005 Anti-Terrorism Law.

Ahmad ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Qadir Muhammad’s defence lawyers have said that eyewitnesses, including police officers, have given conflicting testimonies. The court’s verdict noted that he withdrew his self-incriminating “confession” in court and that, in August 2008, a Forensic Medical Institute examination had found scarring on his body.

However, in handing down the death sentence, the court explicitly included his withdrawn “confession” as evidence, ruling that it was reliable because it had been made at a date much closer to the time of the crime than his testimony before the court. No full and independent investigation is known to have been carried out on his allegations of torture.

Ahmad ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Qadir Muhammad’s death sentence was upheld by the Court of Cassation. He remains on death row in Camp Justice, Baghdad.

Please write to President Jalal Talabani, urging him to commute the death sentence imposed on Ahmad ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Qadir Muhammad without delay. Call for the allegations of his torture to be investigated promptly and thoroughly by an independent body, and for those responsible to be brought to justice. Call also for the authorities to grant Ahmad ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Qadir Muhammad a retrial in proceedings which meet fair trial standards, without recourse to the death penalty. Send appeals to:

- President of the Republic of Iraq
- Jalal Talabani
- Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma’aridh)
- Baghdad, Iraq
- Email: info@gpo.iq
- Salutation: Your Excellency

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
JUAN ALMONTE HERRERA

FATE REMAINS UNKNOWN

On 28 September 2009, Juan Almonte Herrera – a member of the Dominican Committee of Human Rights – was abducted by four armed men in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Eyewitnesses reportedly identified the armed men as officers from the national police anti-kidnapping department.

Following a court order for his release in early October, however, the police denied that Juan Almonte was in custody and declared him a fugitive, wanted in relation to a kidnapping case in Nagua.

In October 2009, two unidentified charred bodies were found in a car in Santo Domingo. One was identified as Juan Almonte by his sister. However, the authorities told the family that DNA test results were negative.

Four years on, Juan Almonte’s family and lawyers are no closer to learning the truth and are now bringing the case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. While determined to seek justice, they have yet to receive any official response regarding his disappearance, despite submitting three complaints to judicial authorities. Two other named suspects in the Nagua kidnapping case for which Juan Almonte was wanted died in police custody on 10 October 2009.

Please write, urging the authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Juan Almonte Herrera. If he is in custody, call for him to be released immediately or charged with a recognizably criminal offence. Otherwise, urge them to conduct a full, impartial and independent investigation into the enforced disappearance of Juan Almonte Herrera, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice. Send appeals to:

- Francisco Dominguez Brito
- Procurador General
- Procuraduría General de la República
- Ave. Jiménez Moya esq. Juan Ventura
- Simón, Palacio de Justicia
- Centro de los Héroes, Constanza,
- Maimón y Estero Hondo, Santo Domingo
- Dominican Republic
- Fax: +1 809-532-2584
- Email: info@gpr.gob.do
- Salutation: Señor Procurador General
- Dear Public Prosecutor
The Right to a Brighter Future

This is the century when we are meant to make poverty history. As talks start on what should replace the current Millennium Development Goals when they expire in 2015, we look at how one little girl’s life in Brazil might have changed since they were first agreed.

In 2000, a baby girl was born in Brazil, South America’s largest country. We have invented her to tell this story, but her experience mirrors the lives of millions of other children around the world. Let’s call her Maria.

As she lay in her mother’s arms at a run-down city hospital, world leaders toasted each other at the UN. For the first time in history, they had agreed specific Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for improving the lives of people living in poverty in areas such as health, education and gender equality. People like Maria and her mother, Rosa.

Rosa got pregnant at 15 with her first boyfriend, João. They hadn’t been taught much about contraception, and felt too embarrassed to ask.

But when the family was forcibly evicted, Maria’s little world was shattered. They left with what they could carry, with just a few hours’ warning before the bulldozers flattened their house to make way for a new road.

Since then, Maria has lived in many different places. She often feels thirsty, because they never have enough clean, running water. They have lost contact with friends and relatives, and often feel alone.

Maria enrolled in primary school, like most other children in Brazil, and loved learning. But it was difficult to stay there. Moving around meant starting over in new schools, which she didn’t like. She felt dirty because she couldn’t always wash, and worried about being bullied. And sometimes Rosa couldn’t afford Maria’s school uniform or materials.

Brazil’s minimum wage has doubled since Maria was born, but food prices have also risen sharply. Rosa struggles to support them, as João is no longer around.

Today, Maria is about to turn 13. She is interested in boys and thinking about getting a job. Rosa insists that education is Maria’s only hope of escaping poverty. Her chances of staying in school are improving: about half of Brazil’s 15-17 year olds now enrol in education – up from just 18% in 1992.

Rosa also worries that Maria won’t be able to make free choices about her own body. Millions of girls like her still don’t get any education about sex and
sexuality. Many go through unwanted pregnancies because they lack information and access to contraception, or because of sexual violence. Resorting to unsafe abortions puts their lives at risk.

And now a new Brazilian draft bill threatens to criminalize women and girls for having an abortion and prosecute medical professionals who perform them. If Congress approves the law, young women’s lives and futures will be at stake.

THE RIGHT TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE
As the world’s sixth largest economy, Brazil is now often seen as an international success story. Progress has been made, but it still has deep inequalities. Thirteen years after the MDGs were agreed, girls like Maria – many of whom are of African descent – are still some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

Brazil has joined some legally binding treaties to protect people’s economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to adequate housing, water, food, education and health. But so far, most ordinary people don’t know how to get justice.

And because Brazil has still not signed up to an international complaints mechanism (the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights), Brazilians can’t seek justice at the UN if their government violates their rights.

From now on, until the next summit of world leaders in 2015, we will be pushing for human rights to be at the heart of the so-called Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the new MDGs.

It’s up to us to remind world leaders that children like Maria have the right to a brighter future.

ACT NOW
Contact your local Amnesty office to find out what your government is doing, and visit our Facebook page for campaign updates at facebook.com/demanddignityglobal

GOOD NEWS & UPDATES

COMPENSATION FOR BHUPENDRA
Bhupendra Malla Thakuri, a Nepali migrant worker left disabled by a work-related injury suffered in Qatar, has returned home after winning compensation.

BEATRIZ THANKS SUPPORTERS AFTER RECEIVING LIFESAVING MEDICAL TREATMENT
Beatriz, a 22-year-old pregnant mother in El Salvador finally received the emergency medical treatment she needed in June after months of campaigning. Suffering from a number of health conditions, she would likely have died if she had carried her pregnancy to term. Additionally, the fetus had been identified as having a severe brain deformity and would not have survived more than a couple of hours after birth.

Her story attracted massive concern around the world and inspired campaigning by at least 23 sections, including an 80,000-signature petition, Twitter actions, a web action that collected over 3,500 signatures in under 24 hours and demonstrations outside a number of Salvadoran embassies. All of these actions put pressure on the authorities and brought Beatriz’ case to the wider world.

Here is Beatriz’ letter to everyone who supported her:

San Salvador, 10 June 2013

To my friends from the Colectivo Feminista and everywhere else, I want to thank you for having supported me all the way, and without you I think I wouldn’t have been able to stand being in the hospital.

I also want to thank you for all the actions you took for my life. This situation has been very difficult and without your support I wouldn’t have been able to get through it. I hope my example serves so that other women won’t have to go through what I suffered.

And I’m very happy because now I’m going to be with my son and with my family again.

Well, that’s all that I wanted to say, and with these words of thanks I will sign off,

Best wishes,
Beatriz

© Private
‘EACH INDIVIDUAL HAS VALUE. THIS YOU SHOULD NEVER FORGET.’

FORMER NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR TO CHILE, FRODE NILSEN, WHO HELPED HUNDREDS ESCAPE PINOCHET’S BRUTAL REGIME DURING THE 1970S. SEE PAGE 10.