INDIGENOUS RIGHTS
THROUGH THEIR OWN EYES, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The Yakye Axa and Sawhoyamaxa communities have been living by a highway in Paraguay for over 10 years. Despite court rulings in their favour they are still waiting for their land claims to be resolved.

The communities have been documenting their stories and their struggle for justice. To find out more, go to www.amnesty.org/rightsjourney

We Are living by the side of the road because we have no land. Our children play on the road; they have nowhere else to go. They could easily be run over by the lorries that speed up and down the road.”

Milciades Aponte

We have no water tanks with clean drinking water. That is why we have to drink water from the streams. The water is brown.”

Aparicio Martinez

At last the children have something to eat again – an armadillo.”

Édgar Benítez

This Indigenous man and his son... He has no work... The boy is growing up by the side of the road. He is happy to be with his dad.”

Nicolás Gómez

GETTING WIRE

Would you like know more about Amnesty International’s campaigns or use the WIRE for your own activism?

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‘I WANT TO SHOUT TO THE WORLD’
Two people fight enforced disappearances in the Philippines by telling their story and giving a voice to other victims. Read more and take action on PAGE 2.

LETTER FROM MEXICO: THE INVISIBLES
WIRE goes behind the scenes of a new documentary depicting the lives of irregular migrants in Mexico. PAGE 8

GAZA CONFLICT: TIME FOR JUSTICE
Two years on, the international community needs to take action to pursue justice for the victims. Find out what you can do on PAGE 12.

Q&A
Ali Agab and Abdel Monim Elgak, human rights defenders from Sudan, talk about their work, the challenges ahead and what keeps them going. PAGE 18

ACT NOW
WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2010
Join Amnesty International’s annual letter-writing marathon. Read the stories of 10 individuals and communities that need your support in fighting for their rights.
SEE OUR INSERT

GIRLS SPEAK OUT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN NICARAGUA
The government ignores widespread rape and other sexual abuse and denies the survivors their rights to protection, justice and reparation. PAGE 14

WHAT ELSE?
Mark Human Rights Day (see CENTREFOLD). Take action to stop the clampdown on human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan and call for an end to administrative detention in Egypt. PAGE 7
ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN THE PHILIPPINES

I WANT TO SHO THE TO THE
Concepcion Empeño is a primary-school headteacher. Raymond Manalo is a farmer. They are both victims of enforced disappearances in the Philippines: her daughter was abducted by the military; he escaped after months of detention and torture. They want you to hear their stories.

It’s been five years since Concepcion Empeño last saw or heard from her daughter Karen. She has been told by eyewitnesses that early one morning in January 2006 uniformed men with assault rifles dragged her daughter and a friend out of the house they were staying in. The armed men tore the women’s shirts and used the cloth to blindfold them. With their hands tied behind their backs, the two young women were forced into a jeep and driven off in the direction of a military camp several kilometres away. A neighbouring farmer who tried to intervene was also taken away.

Karen Empeño, aged 22 at the time of her disappearance, and Sherlyn Cadapan, then aged 29, were staying with a local family in Bulacan province, near the capital Manila. Karen was researching the living conditions in peasant farmer communities for her sociology degree at the University of the Philippines. Both women were student activists. “In my country”, says Concepcion, “If you are an activist or you go to a protest, you are an enemy of the state.”

With only these fragments of information, Concepcion Empeño and Erlinda Cadapan, Sherlyn’s mother, looked for their daughters in military camps and in morgues. They gave interviews to the media, hoping to put pressure on the abductors to release Sherlyn and Karen. It did not work.

Raymond Manalo, aged 29, survived to tell his story – he is one of the few abductees who have. Raymond and his brother Reynaldo were taken from his family home by armed men in February 2006. The Philippines security forces accused the brothers of being members of the NPA – an accusation which they have denied.

During detention, Raymond and Reynaldo were repeatedly tortured by their military jailers. “We lived like their slaves”, Raymond says, “I still have..."
The brothers had already been moved several times from one secret detention place to another when they were taken to an officer’s farm in Pangasinan province, northern Philippines. During this time they attempted to gain the trust of their captors by claiming they wanted to become soldiers themselves. One day, 18 months after he was taken from his home, the soldiers guarding Raymond fell asleep, drunk. He woke his brother: “It was time to leave and make our escape… My brother and I fled and made it to the highway. As luck would have it, just as we got out a bus went past. We flagged it down and got on.”

Since his escape, Raymond has spoken out not only of his own nightmare but has described seeing other detainees. Among them were Karen and Sherlyn. “I saw a woman in chains. She said she was Sherlyn Cadapan, and that she had been abducted in Bulacan. We also met Karen Empeño.” Raymond says he witnessed their torture:

“I heard a woman screaming pleading for mercy. That got me worried. I couldn’t do anything so I just pretended to be asleep but I was awake the whole time. One of the guards woke me up and ordered me to make food for them. I left the hut and went to the kitchen where I saw Sherlyn Cadapan. She was stripped almost naked. She was hanging upside down. They were hitting her in the stomach. They poured water over her and played with her genitals. They inserted a piece of wood there and kept on poking it. I saw Karen rolled up near Sherlyn. She was also almost naked. Her skin was covered in cigarette burns.

The next day they ordered me to wash bloodied clothes. I washed women’s underwear covered in blood. They asked my brother Reynaldo to rinse out buckets of girls’ urine. The urine was mixed with blood too. When we were brought back to camp Karen and Sherlyn were gone. I never saw them again.”

Raymond’s account shattered Concepcion’s hope that her daughter would be unharmed. “The only hope I have left is that she is still alive”, she says. “Even after more than four years of searching, above anything else, this remains in my heart that my daughter will be coming at any time and is still alive.”

**FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE**

Three years after his escape, Raymond Manalo is still trying to get justice. “I’m very angry because I was abused and I don’t even understand why. I have found the strength to speak out because I want justice for the abuses I experienced, and for those suffered by others who have disappeared.” His attempts to file a criminal case against the soldiers who abducted and
tortured him have been delayed or dismissed by the courts. In the meantime, he lives in fear. “I am free, but I am not really free. The soldiers can take me again any time, all they need to do is take off their uniforms and do it anonymously.”

Concepcion Empeño too is now dedicated to doing what she can to give a voice to Karen and other victims of enforced disappearances in the Philippines.

“From a simple mother and elementary school principal I became a spokesperson for my missing daughter”, she says. “I learned to speak in front of the media and found myself addressing rallies and marching together with other families of the disappeared and killed.” She is now the vice-chairperson of Desaparecidos, a group made up of the families of those who have been forcibly disappeared.

“I want to shout to the world about the human rights violations taking place in the Philippines,” says Concepcion. “My husband and I did not tire, we are still not tired. It only pushed us further and made us pick up where Karen left off and made us the parents Karen would be proud of.”
Roma still treated like waste in Romania

Fotis Filippou, Amnesty International campaigner

“We recently visited Romania, where we met a Romani community living behind a sewage treatment plant in Miercurea Ciuc, central Romania. More than six years after they were forcibly evicted from their homes, around 75 Romani people, including families with children, are living in unsanitary conditions in metal cabins and shacks. Back then they were told that the move would be temporary, but it is starting to feel very permanent.”

To read more and add your comments, go to snipr.com/1f981f

Russian demonstrators vow to continue the fight for freedom of assembly

Friederike Behr, Amnesty International researcher

After 18 months of excuses, the Moscow authorities finally gave permission for a “31st Day” demonstration on Sunday in support of the right to freedom of assembly. The demonstration organizers had been trying since May 2009 to get permission to hold a 6pm demonstration on the 31st day of any possible month in Moscow’s Triumphalnaya Square, in support of Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, which guarantees the right to peaceful assembly. There was a massive police presence at the demonstration, and according to media reports the police detained 28 people.

To read more and add your comments, go to snipr.com/1f90tp

Calling on Nigeria to investigate Bundu shootings

Kathryn Achilles, Amnesty International campaigner

Yesterday, in Nigeria’s capital city Lagos, we launched our report, Port Harcourt demolitions: excessive use of force against demonstrators, which details how, on 12 October 2009, police and security officers opened fire on a group of people in the informal waterfront community of Bundu, who were peacefully protesting against plans to forcibly evict them and demolish their homes.

To read more and add your comments, go to http://snipr.com/1f9cf7
CLAMPDOWN ON RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOLLOWS KYRGYZSTAN VIOLENCE

Human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan are at risk of persecution as the country’s authorities try to silence eyewitness accounts of the large-scale arson, looting and violent attacks on mainly Uzbek-populated districts in south Kyrgyzstan in June 2010.

The authorities allegedly failed to intervene to prevent violence and may have colluded in human rights abuses. They are now targeting human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society leaders who have attempted to document the events and their aftermath. Hundreds of Uzbek men have been detained on allegations of having organized or participated in the violence. According to reports, many detainees have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated in custody; some are denied medical care and are unable to access their lawyers and families.

Human rights defender Azimzhan Askarov (pictured right) was convicted of involvement in the murder of a policeman. He was severely beaten in detention. The authorities targeted Azimzhan because he had documented killings and arson attacks on mostly Uzbek homes. On 16 September 2010, Azimzhan was jailed for life after a blatantly unfair trial. His property has been confiscated.

Amnesty International considers Azimzhan Askarov a prisoner of conscience.

Human rights defenders and lawyers working on some of these detention cases have been physically and verbally attacked by the public, sometimes in the presence of police and court officials who have done little or nothing to stop the attacks.

ACT NOW

Please call on the authorities to release Azimzhan Askarov immediately and unconditionally and to ensure that human rights defenders and lawyers are able to carry out their legitimate work without fear of harassment, obstruction, violence or detention.

Write to:
President Roza Otunbaeva
Dom Prawdelstva
Bishkek 720003, Kyrgyzstan
Fax: +996 312 62 50 12
Email: admin@kyrgyz-el.kg

For updates on Azimzhan Askarov, go to snipr.com/1i4erh

EGYPT: DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE

“I am treated worse than a convicted criminal”, says Mohamed El Sharkawi (pictured), who has been held in administrative detention in Egypt for the last 15 years. He is one of thousands of people who have been held for years in Egypt’s prisons without being charged or tried, often despite court orders for their release. Many have suffered for decades.

Under a 29-year state of emergency, anyone merely suspected of threatening public order and security can be held in administrative detention – without charge or trial – by an order of the Minister of the Interior. This corrosive system has undermined Egypt’s judicial process, and has been used to silence government critics and muzzle political dissent. Administrative detention has also been used against people suspected of ordinary crimes to bypass the criminal justice system.

Action is needed now to end administrative detention once and for all.

ACT NOW

Please call on the President to lift the state of emergency and abolish administrative detention. Call on the Minister of the Interior to free prisoners of conscience, as well as administrative detainees with court orders for their release, and to promptly charge and fairly try others.

Muhammad Hosni Mubarak
President,
Abdeen Palace, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20 22 390 1998/795 8016
Habib Ibrahim El Adly
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +20 22 796 0682
Both salutations: Your Excellency
The idea for the film *The Invisibles* came about after several research trips to southern Mexico to document the human rights abuse of thousands of irregular migrants who travel through Mexico every year. We had spent hours interviewing migrants who told us what was happening to people on the way to the USA: How they were being preyed on by criminal gangs and sometimes by public officials and how the gangs were killing, raping and kidnapping migrants. The stories were horrifying, but the people we spoke to were determined to reach the USA.

It was clear from these early research trips that we had to shine a light on their stories and highlight the Mexican government’s obligations to prevent and punish abuses. Mexico’s biggest film star, actor Gael García Bernal, was an obvious person to approach for help; he had recently produced a fictional film on migrants in Mexico called *Sin Nombre*, so we knew he would already be engaged with the issue. It took very little convincing to get Gael on board.

So a few months later, I was back in Mexico, making a film with him and a crew of five. We filmed for five days, following the migrants’ trail north. We began on the Suchiate river between Guatemala and Mexico. The film crew crossed the river on makeshift rafts alongside migrants who were on the first leg of their long journey to the USA. In Tapachula, Chiapas state in Mexico, a 16-year-old grave digger at the local cemetery showed us the unmarked graves where migrants were buried. He walked around the cemetery, pointing with his machete at passages between graves: Two were buried in this passage, three over there, another three over there. He said he hated burying migrants because their bodies didn’t come in proper coffins like Mexicans’.

Many of the migrants travel towards Mexico’s northern border on a network of freight trains. On our drive north from Chiapas to the neighbouring state of Oaxaca, we saw one of these trains – hundreds of migrants were sitting on the roofs of the carriages. We filmed them from the back of our pick-up truck, and they waved at us with excitement. We were all
heading to the same place, a migrant shelter on the route north in the town of Ciudad Ixtepec. It would take the migrants 11 hours to get there; it took us only two.

In a hospital in Ciudad Ixtepec we met a man who had been travelling on the train we had just filmed. He told us that he was pushed off the train in the middle of the night. He was injured and the doctors were planning to amputate two of his fingers. We lent the man our mobile phone and he called his family to let them know what had happened; he asked the person on the other side not to say anything to his mother.

Migrants are at risk of violence at any moment of their journey. Staff who run the shelters believe that six out of 10 women are sexually assaulted on the journey. Most of the women know they face grave risk but it does not stop them from making the journey. They want a better future for their children and are willing to take enormous risks for the sake of their families. “My son always wanted a [toy] motorbike, just a small one,” one woman told us. “And I said, look my love, when I get to the States I’ll buy you one. Well, I won’t buy him the bike with my first pay packet, but I made a promise and I’m going to keep it.”

We heard so many tragic stories during filming, but there was still a feeling of optimism and hope. Everyone involved in the making of The Invisibles – the migrants, the staff at the shelters and the crew, knew that the film would bring us one step closer to gaining justice for the thousands of irregular migrants travelling through Mexico.

The film is now ready, but it needs an audience and public support. You can watch The Invisibles and take action at snipr.com/1I446I Please help spread the word by sharing the link as widely as you can.

International Migrants Day is on 18 December.

Main photo: A still image from the film. © Marc Silver
Right: Researching and filming The Invisibles, Mexico, 2009-2010.
Top to bottom: © Amnesty International (first, second and sixth images) © Paulina Gutierrez (seventh image).
All other images © Marc Silver.
UNITE FOR YOUR RIGHTS
For 22 days in 2008-09, the Israeli army attacked Gaza from the air and the ground. These attacks killed and injured hundreds of civilians, destroyed medical facilities, civilian homes and businesses and UN buildings. It caused catastrophic damage to the infrastructure of the densely populated Gaza Strip. Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas, indiscriminately fired hundreds of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel, killing three civilians, injuring dozens of others and damaging property.

The fighting was not an isolated event. In the enduring conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, both Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups have committed serious violations of international law. Those responsible have usually enjoyed impunity for their crimes. The failure to prosecute perpetrators has denied justice to the victims.

OPPORTUNITY FOR JUSTICE
In September 2009, a UN fact-finding mission led by Justice Richard Goldstone issued a report documenting violations committed by both sides during the fighting two years ago. The report recommended that the Israeli authorities and the de facto Hamas administration should be given six months to investigate the crimes domestically. If they failed to do so, international justice solutions should be adopted. The report’s findings and recommendations, which had been echoed by Amnesty International’s own research in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, were endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly.

Amnesty International monitored the domestic processes conducted by both sides. In October 2010, it concluded that neither side has conducted genuine investigations and prosecutions of the crimes identified in the Goldstone report. Amnesty International’s findings were supported by a Committee of Independent Experts, which highlighted the domestic failures in a report to the Human Rights Council.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) does not have immediate jurisdiction to prosecute crimes committed in Gaza or southern Israel. This is because neither Israel nor the Palestinian Authority has ratified the Rome Statute – the founding treaty of the ICC.

However, in January 2009, the Palestinian Authority issued a declaration seeking to provide the ICC with jurisdiction over crimes committed on the territory of Palestine since 1 July 2002. This would appear to cover all crimes committed during the fighting, including rockets fired from Gaza into southern Israel.

Amnesty International calls on the ICC to determine whether an investigation can proceed on the basis of the declaration. If the answer is yes, the ICC Prosecutor should open an investigation without delay. If the answer is no, then another solution must be found in order to deliver international justice – for example, the UN Security Council can refer the situation to the ICC.

Amnesty International also calls on the national authorities of other countries to seek to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during
the fighting by exercising the principle of universal jurisdiction – the same principle under which former Chilean President Augusto Pinochet was arrested in London, UK, in 1998.

Despite the clear failings of the domestic authorities, neither the UN Human Rights Council nor the General Assembly has demanded international justice for the victims in Gaza and southern Israel. Instead of taking action to pursue justice for the victims, the Human Rights Council decided in October 2010 to extend the mandate of the Committee of Independent Experts for just six months. By failing to act, the Council has ignored the rights of the victims.

ACT NOW

The next session of the Human Rights Council is in March 2011. Please help to ensure that at the session, the Council takes concrete steps to pursue justice for all victims of the conflict.

Please write to your minister of foreign affairs urging him/her to support a Human Rights Council resolution in March that will:

- Recognize and condemn the failure of the investigations conducted by Israel and the Hamas de facto administration to comply with international standards;
- Call on states to investigate and prosecute crimes committed during the conflict before their national courts by exercising universal jurisdiction;
- Ensure that the UN General Assembly considers the findings of the Committee of Independent Experts. The resolution should also request UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to place the report before the UN Security Council. Amnesty International will continue to lobby governments to support international justice solutions at the UN.

18 January 2011 is the second anniversary of the end of the conflict. Amnesty International members will mark the day in public events demanding justice for the victims. Contact your local Amnesty International office or group to find out how you can participate in this Day of Action. For ongoing updates on the campaign, go to www.amnesty.org/en/international-justice
GIRLS SPEAK OUT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN NICARAGUA
Rape and other sexual abuse are widespread in Nicaragua, and the majority of victims are young women and girls. More than two thirds of all rapes reported between 1998 and 2008 were committed against girls under the age of 17; almost half involved girls aged 14 or under.

In spite of overwhelming evidence of the scale and seriousness of the problem, the Nicaraguan government is still not treating this hidden human rights emergency with the urgency it warrants. There is no national government plan to prevent sexual violence against girls, to protect young victims, or to ensure that they receive justice and reparation. Instead, spaces for dialogue between the government and women’s and children’s human rights defenders working on the issue have been closed down by the current administration.

Information is difficult to find if you are at risk or suffering sexual violence. Many girls are trapped in abusive situations with no clear way out. The stigma associated with sexual crimes means that it is often the survivor – not the abuser – who is blamed. There have been no nationwide public awareness campaigns by the government to change social attitudes, and many young survivors of rape or sexual abuse who speak out are rejected by their families and communities. Many more never take that risk.

Linda was 10 when she was sexually abused by an evangelical priest. When she found the courage to speak out about the abuse, the first reaction she encountered was one of disbelief: “People said things to me, and as he [the abuser] was an evangelical priest, no one believed me. Instead, they said ‘Why are you saying these things?’ This reaction hurts me even now.”
FAILED BY THE SYSTEM

For girls who are able to speak out, the struggle for justice can be a traumatic one. Failures and lack of resources in the justice system mean that attackers often walk away free and cases collapse due to procedural errors.

The establishment of specialized Police Stations for Women and Children is a welcome advance, but there are not enough to cover the whole country. Many are under-resourced, so that police officers do not even have enough money to pay for fuel to travel and investigate suspected cases of sexual violence. While some committed officers work hard to cover the shortfall in resources, in other cases survivors and their carers have reported insensitive behaviour from under-trained police officers.

When 12-year-old Alejandra went to report that she had been raped, police officers did not believe her: “The police told me to stop crying, that there was no reason for me to cry, that what I was saying was not true. I felt very bad when the police said I was lying, because I would never lie about things like this.”

Survivors of rape or sexual abuse whose cases get as far as prosecution often abandon the case because the legal process is either too expensive or too traumatic. Sometimes hearings are cancelled repeatedly, forcing the survivor to go through the ordeal of preparing for a court appearance time after time. In some cases, alleged abusers are released on bail without adequate checks or supervision, putting girls at risk of retaliatory attacks.

Young survivors of rape or sexual abuse get little or no government support to rebuild their lives. The lucky ones find psychological and legal help at independent women’s and girls’ centres or refuges, but this is not enough to guarantee assistance to all those who need it. Shelters for survivors of domestic abuse and rape in Nicaragua are scarce, particularly those which are specifically for children. There are 10 shelters run by NGOs that receive no financial or other support from the Nicaraguan authorities – and there is also no government financial support for the non-residential women’s and girls’ centres which do so much to fill the gaps in state provision. Connie, who was abused by her father from the age of 9 to 14, described the importance of the support she receives from a women’s and girls’ centre: “Here I have found peace, I have found friends, very special friends, I have managed to come a bit out of the dark place I was in.”

NO SUPPORT, NO CHOICE

As well as the psychological scars, some rape survivors face the additional trauma of finding that they have been made pregnant. For young rape survivors who choose to carry the pregnancy to term, there is little or no state support to help care for the baby or enable girls to return to education or work and pursue the plans they had for the future. For other survivors, the idea of giving birth to a child as the result of rape is unbearable. For some young rape survivors, such pregnancies can also endanger their lives or health. However, a 2008 law that criminalizes all forms of abortion, even for girls pregnant as a result of rape, has left them with little choice. For a girl who has already been denied control over her own body by the rapist, the current law is unbearably harsh and inhumane.
The government has an obligation to prevent sexual violence against girls in Nicaragua. Young survivors of rape and sexual abuse have a right to protection, justice and reparation. The government must take urgent steps to make sure that rape is not the event that defines the rest of a girl’s life. Above all, the authorities need to listen to young rape survivors. “Their words have power!” says a director of a centre working with girls and women survivors of violence in Managua. “This is the message girls must receive, they must feel, they must know, that their words have power.”

Note: All names have been changed to protect the identities of young survivors of sexual violence.

Previous pages: Survivors of sexual violence with their carers and support staff at a women’s centre, Nicaragua, March 2010.
Above right: Schoolgirls in León, October 2008. Most rape survivors are aged 14 or under.
Above left: Woman and child in Managua, March 2010. The issue of sexual violence lags far behind ante-natal health care and education on the government agenda.

ACT NOW

Please call on President Daniel Ortega Saavedra to listen to the voices of young survivors of sexual violence and to develop, fully resource and implement an integrated national plan to tackle this hidden human rights emergency. The plan should include measures to prevent sexual violence, protect survivors, and ensure justice and reparation so that perpetrators are held to account and young victims of sexual violence can rebuild their hopes and dreams.

Rehabilitation measures must include repealing the law which criminalizes all forms of abortion, so that young survivors pregnant as a result of rape can make their own informed decisions over how to manage the consequences of rape without the threat of imprisonment.

Please write to:
Daniel Ortega Saavedra
Presidente de la República de Nicaragua
Reparto El Carmen
Costado Oeste del Parque El Carmen
Managua
Nicaragua
What sparked your interest in human rights?

**MONIM:** I first learned about human rights through my involvement in the student movements at university. During my final year at the University of Khartoum, human rights violations against students were taking place, and one of my colleagues was arrested. The next day we found his body on the street.

**ALI:** In secondary school I joined a small group of students, the Democratic Front, calling for students’ rights. That was when I started to know about rights and defending people, and speaking on behalf of your colleagues and your own people. I continued with the Democratic Front at university. In those days, many of our colleagues were arrested and tortured. The atmosphere at the university was very hostile. So when I graduated from the faculty of law, I started to defend people and then I joined the Sudanese Human Rights Defenders Group, the first human rights organization in Sudan. In 2000 I trained in human rights at the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies in Gambia.

What are the main challenges in the struggle against human rights abuses in Sudan?

**MONIM:** I will point to three major challenges. One is wars and conflicts that are basically started and fuelled by the central government, whether in South Sudan, Darfur, eastern Sudan or in the far north. This is one of the main challenges – bringing real and genuine peace.

**ALI:** As a lawyer working in human rights, I think the main challenge is the culture of impunity and how strongly it is maintained in Sudan. The judiciary is not independent and the attorneys working in the Ministry of Justice are not independent and the police are not working as an independent neutral body. The security forces are not defending or supporting or helping the Sudanese people. They are just working as the people who have to defend and maintain the position of the NCP (National Congress Party, the ruling party). It is very difficult to achieve justice in Sudan.

If you could change one thing about the situation in Sudan, what would it be?

**MONIM:** I would change the culture of racism, discrimination and marginalization that is encouraged by the government of Sudan. The Sudanese people continue to pay the price for this in their daily lives through various conflicts within the country.

**ALI:** An end to more than 20 years of one-party rule that excludes Sudanese people from power. With real democracy and stronger civil society the Sudanese people could at least start going in the right way towards peace and security.
they will be held accountable, my clients at least felt that someone cared and gave them hope. When it gets hard, I always remember my clients.

Do you have a message for our readers?
MONIM: I want to thank Amnesty International activists and members for their support during my detention. [See right for details]

ALI: I have seen for myself that the victims in Darfur and other areas of Sudan really appreciate and understand the work done by Amnesty International. So keep your activism on behalf of people who are not able to make their voice heard. Please remember that justice may be delayed, but one day it will be achieved. The way may be long but people have to fight for justice.

How does your work impact on your life?
MONIM: The effects of my work on my life are both positive and negative. My work has enriched and enlarged my vision of the world. And at the same time, one of the negative things is being away from my original social environment twice – living in exile in the 1990s and currently living in involuntary exile.

ALI: Being a human rights lawyer and human rights defender in Sudan is always risky. But I always feel proud of my work, defending people and doing my best at least to give a voice to those people who are vulnerable.

What keeps you motivated when times are hard?
MONIM: When it gets hard I become even more motivated. Hard times are the time to be motivated, creative and innovative.

ALI: My clients always used to come to me after being abused by security forces, the police, or rebel forces. They felt down and hated being Sudanese. But by doing my best to bring their perpetrators to justice, and by demanding that

Abdel Monim Elgak is an outspoken advocate on justice, accountability and human rights violations in Sudan. Amnesty International campaigned on his behalf when in 2008 he was detained and tortured by the National Intelligence and Security Services. He later fled northern Sudan. Monim and his colleagues have filed a complaint with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights against the Sudanese authorities over their treatment in detention.

Ali Agab is a prominent Sudanese human rights lawyer who worked at the Khartoum Centre for Human Rights and Environmental Development. After the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against President Omar Al Bashir, the authorities closed down the Centre and Ali sought asylum in the UK. He currently works with the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies.
CAMPAIGN CONTINUES FOR MORDECHAI VANUNU

In our August/September issue, we published a World Wide Appeal calling for the release of prisoner of conscience Mordechai Vanunu (pictured). He was released on 8 August, two weeks before the expiry of his sentence. The following day, he thanked Amnesty International for its support during his imprisonment.

At the time of writing, the Israeli Supreme Court is considering his petition calling for the ongoing arbitrary restrictions imposed on him to be annulled and lifted. These restrictions include a ban on him from leaving Israel and from communicating with foreigners – breaches of which could lead to his further imprisonment. Amnesty International continues to campaign on his behalf.

For more information, go to snipr.com/1d2s4e

RIGHT TO WATER NOW LEGALLY BINDING

On 30 September 2010, the UN Human Rights Council affirmed for the first time that the human right to water and sanitation is legally binding.

The Council stated that the right to water and sanitation is derived from the right to adequate standard of living, which is recognized in several international treaties. In 2002, the committee of experts appointed by the UN to monitor the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated that this treaty implicitly includes the right to water. However, some states, such as Canada and the USA, vocally rejected this right and blocked efforts by states to recognize this right at the international level.

Since then, civil society groups in many parts of the world have been campaigning for recognition of the right to water and sanitation. Failing to recognize this right is unconscionable. An estimated 1.5 million children under the age of five die due to diarrhoea. Eighty-eight per cent of these deaths are due to lack of access to clean water and sanitation. Many people living in slums and informal settlements are denied, or have limited access to, water and sanitation. Some are left with no option but to defecate in the open, or into a bucket or a plastic bag. Lack of access to water and sanitation affects women and girls far worse than men, thereby increasing gender inequality.

Amnesty International, together with other civil society groups, actively lobbied governments, and this helped to overcome opposition to recognizing this right. In total, 178 countries from all regions of the world have now recognized the right to water and sanitation at least once in an international resolution or declaration.

To read more and add your comments, go to snipr.com/1f8yv6

Right: Performance artists and Amnesty International activists deliver 26,000 signatures to the Ministry of Health in Lima, Peru. The petition protested the high rate of maternal mortality in the country.
WHETHER IN A HIGH-PROFILE CONFLICT OR A FORGOTTEN CORNER OF THE GLOBE, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS FOR JUSTICE, FREEDOM AND DIGNITY FOR ALL AND SEEKS TO GALVANIZE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Activists around the world have shown that it is possible to resist the dangerous forces that are undermining human rights. Be part of this movement. Combat those who peddle fear and hate.

- Join Amnesty International and become part of a worldwide movement campaigning for an end to human rights violations. Help us make a difference.
- Make a donation to support Amnesty International’s work.

Together we can make our voices heard.

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Please return this form to the Amnesty International office in your country.
For Amnesty International offices worldwide:
www.amnesty.org/en/worldwide-sites
If there is not an Amnesty International office in your country, please return this form to:
Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom
‘KEEP ACTING ON BEHALF OF THOSE UNABLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN VOICES HEARD’

ALI AGAB
More than six years after they were forcibly evicted from their homes, around 75 Roma are living in insanitary conditions in metal cabins and shacks next to a sewage plant. They were told that the move was temporary, but the local authorities have not told them of any plan to relocate them to adequate housing.

In 2004, around 100 Roma were forcibly evicted from their municipal-owned home in the town of Miercurea Ciuc, central Romania, where they had been living since the 1970s. The authorities had done no repairs to the property for many years and told the families that they were being evicted for their own safety and that the building was to be demolished. Most of the families were resettled on the outskirts of the town behind a sewage treatment plant. No attempt was made by the authorities to discuss possible alternatives to the eviction, or alternative relocation sites.

Now living on the fringes of the city, the families are socially excluded and their living conditions are inhumane. The stench of human excreta permeates the air. The metal cabins are overcrowded and provide no protection from heat and rain and the sanitation facilities are woefully inadequate, with only four toilet cubicles for 75 people and one tap for drinking water.

Please write to the Mayor of Miercurea Ciuc, expressing concern that the local authorities forcibly evicted the Roma from their homes in 2004 without complying with international safeguards on evictions, and moved them to a site where living conditions are inhumane. Call on him to ensure that a genuine consultation with the Romani families is carried out, and to identify a relocation site and alternative housing that comply with the requirements of international and regional human rights law and standards. Send appeals to:

Mayor Ráduły Róbert Kálmán
Vár tér 1. 530110, Miercurea Ciuc
Harghita county
Romania
Fax: +40 266 371 165
Email: radulyrobert@szereda.ro
Salutation: Dear Mayor

More than six years after they were forcibly evicted from their homes, around 75 Roma are living in insanitary conditions in metal cabins and shacks next to a sewage plant. They were told that the move was temporary, but the local authorities have not told them of any plan to relocate them to adequate housing.

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Email: radulyrobert@szereda.ro
Salutation: Dear Mayor
Zelimkhan Murdalov, a 26-year-old student, has not been seen since 2001, when he was detained in Chechnya in the Russian Federation. His family have made tireless efforts to find him and have been harassed and intimidated for doing so. His mother and sister have left the country for their own safety.

Zelimkhan Murdalov was detained on 2 January 2001 in the Oktiabrsksii district of the Chechen capital, Grozny, on suspicion of possessing illegal drugs. Members of his family went to the police station several times but were refused entry. On 5 January, police staff claimed that he had been released that morning.

On 29 March 2005, the Oktiabrsksii District Court found that Lieutenant Sergei Lapin had punched, kicked and beaten Zelimkhan Murdalov with a rubber baton over several hours in the Oktiabrsksii district police station. Zelimkhan Murdalov was also given electric shocks. Witnesses told the court that he could hardly stand and lost consciousness several times. His arm was broken, his ear torn, he was concussed and suffered life-threatening head injuries. The court also found that police officers took him away in a car the following day.

Sergei Lapin is serving a prison sentence of 10 years and 6 months for his involvement in the torture of Zelimkhan Murdalov. However, no one has been found guilty of his enforced disappearance. A commander and a lower-ranking officer also identified as being involved in Zelimkhan Murdalov’s torture and enforced disappearance were placed on the federal wanted list in February 2006. So far there has been no progress in establishing their whereabouts.

Mao Hengfeng has been repeatedly detained for her work defending women’s reproductive rights and victims of forced evictions in China. She is currently serving 18 months in a “Re-education Through Labour” (RTL) camp in Anhui province. She has been tortured many times.

In July 2010, at an administrative appeal against her punishment, Mao Hengfeng testified that she has often been beaten while in the camp. She has said that the camp’s officers had instructed other inmates to attack her. On one occasion they hit her on the head twice with a chair, leaving a scar over her right eyelid. In another attack, they lifted her up, pulled her arms and legs, bent her lower back and threw her on the floor, causing pain to her lower back, waist and kidneys.

Mao Hengfeng was assigned to RTL for “disturbing social order”, after protesting outside Beijing Municipal Intermediate People’s Court on 25 December 2009, in support of human rights activist Liu Xiaobo, who had been on trial that day.

Mao Hengfeng has been detained repeatedly since 2004, and her family have often been prevented from visiting her. They have since found out that it was at these times that she was being tortured.

Saber Ragoubi was sentenced to death in Tunisia after being convicted of national security- and terrorism-related charges. His trial was unfair and he was convicted on the basis of a “confession” he said he was forced to make under torture.

Saber Ragoubi was arrested in December 2006 along with 29 other men near the town of Soliman, some 40km south of Tunis. All 30 were charged with terrorism-related offences, including conspiracy to overthrow the government and belonging to a terrorist organization. The men denied all the charges, but were found guilty after an unfair trial. Saber Ragoubi was the only one to be sentenced to death.

Saber Ragoubi’s death sentence was upheld by a higher court in 2008. Tunisia has not carried out any executions since 1991, but prisoners remain on death row in dire conditions. Saber Ragoubi is held in solitary confinement. He is not allowed visits from his family or to receive correspondence. His father told Amnesty International “I am not allowed to see my son… I would like to visit him to see how he is.” He also said that being denied news about his son was agonizing.

Please write, calling on the authorities to establish what happened to Zelimkhan Murdalov and to keep his family informed of the progress of any investigation. Urge them to take all necessary steps to establish the whereabouts of the two officers identified as being involved in Zelimkhan Murdalov’s torture and enforced disappearance and bring them to justice. Send appeals to:

President of the Russian Federation
Dmitry Anatolievich Medvedev
ul. Ilyinka, 23
103132 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 910 2134
Salutation: Dear President Medvedev

Please write, calling on the President to commute Saber Ragoubi’s death sentence and ensure that he is treated humanely in prison and allowed to receive visits from his family. Urge him to order a retrial for Saber Ragoubi and all the men convicted with him. The trial must be fair and disregard any evidence said to be obtained under torture and other ill-treatment. Send appeals to:

President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali
Palais Présidentiel
Tunis
Tunisia
Fax: + 216 71 744 721 / 731 009
Salutation: Your Excellency

Please write, calling on the authorities to release Mao Hengfeng immediately and unconditionally. Urge that a full and impartial investigation is carried out into all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and that those responsible are brought to justice. Send appeals to:

Director of Anhui Provincial Department of Justice
SUN Jianxin Tingzhang
Anhuisheng Sifating
335 Huaihenu
Hefei Huitiku 230061
Anhuisheng
People’s Republic of China
Fax: +86 551 2215000
Email: yinbenming@126.com
Salutation: Dear Director

Please do not rely on email alone but use all channels to ensure your message is received.
Labour activist Su Su Nway is serving an eight-and-a-half-year sentence in a remote prison far from her family. According to a recent report in the exile media of Myanmar, she has suffered from malaria and gout during 2010. She has a congenital heart condition and high blood pressure, made worse by conditions in prison, where she cannot get proper medical care. A member of the opposition National League for Democracy, she was convicted under laws that the Guatemalan authorities have provided Norma Cruz, her family and her office with police protection, the threats continue and nobody has yet been brought to justice.

One man has been charged with making two of the death threats sent in 2009, but has since been released on bail. The Public Prosecutor’s Office has not reported any progress in the investigation into the remaining death threats against Norma Cruz, her relatives and members of Survivors’ Foundation. Although the Guatemalan authorities have provided Norma Cruz, her family and her office with police protection, the threats continue and nobody has yet been brought to justice.

Threats have been sent by text message and by phone, both to her mobile phone and to the office of Survivors’ Foundation. One man has been charged with making two of the death threats sent in 2009, but has since been released on bail. The Public Prosecutor’s Office has not reported any progress in the investigation into the remaining death threats against Norma Cruz, her relatives and members of Survivors’ Foundation. Although the Guatemalan authorities have provided Norma Cruz, her family and her office with police protection, the threats continue and nobody has yet been brought to justice.

Please write, calling on the Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor’s Office to carry out a swift, full and impartial investigation into the death threats against human rights defender Norma Cruz, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice. Send appeals to:

- Interim Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor’s Office/Fiscal General y Jefa del Ministerio Público Lic. María Encarnación Mejía de Contreras
- Fiscal General de la República y Jefa del Ministerio Público
- 15ª Avenida 15-16, Zona 1, Barrio Gerona
- Ciudad de Guatemala
- Guatemala
- Fax: +502 2411 9124
- Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Estimada Sra. Fiscal General

Khady Bassène was given a death certificate for her husband, dated March 1999, four months before he disappeared. Khady Bassène was now in poor health and too weak to work. She lives rent-free in the house of a distant relative but they have said that she cannot live there much longer. She has nowhere else to go. She wants to receive financial reparation for her husband’s disappearance so she can be financially independent.

Please write, calling on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to release Su Su Nway immediately and unconditionally. Ask that, while she remains in prison, she is given prompt and adequate medical care, moved to a prison close to her family home in Yangon, and given regular access to her family and to lawyers of her choosing. Urge him to ensure that Su Su Nway is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Send appeals to:

- Nyan Win
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Bldg. (19)
- Naypyitaw
- Myanmar
- Salutation: Dear Minister

Please write to the Minister of Justice, calling for an investigation into the death of Jean Diandy to be reopened and the suspected perpetrators brought to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards. Urge that Khady Bassène be allowed to seek reparation for the enforced disappearance of her husband, including financial compensation. Send appeals to:

Sen Excellence Monsieur Cheikh Tidjane Sy, Ministre de la Justice
Building administratif BP 4030
Dakar, Senegal
Fax: +221 33 823 27 27

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- 15ª Avenida 15-16, Zona 1, Barrio Gerona
- Ciudad de Guatemala
- Guatemala
- Fax: +502 2411 9124
- Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Estimada Sra. Fiscal General
Walid Yunis Ahmad has been detained without charge or trial for more than 10 years. He was arrested on 6 February 2000 in Erbil, capital of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq, by the Asayish, the Kurdish security police. For the next three years his family did not know whether he was dead or alive. During his enforced disappearance, Walid Yunis Ahmad was tortured. He is currently held at the Asayish Gishti headquarters in Erbil and is one of thousands who have been detained for years without charge or trial in prisons across Iraq.

Walid Yunis Ahmad belongs to the minority Turkmen ethnic group in Iraq. Before his arrest he was working for a local radio and TV station apparently affiliated to the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan, an Islamist opposition party. He had attended a meeting of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan and afterwards was given a lift in a car that was stopped and searched by police. They allegedly found some explosive material and arrested Walid Yunis Ahmad, who denied any knowledge of the explosives.

The Kurdish authorities say that they cannot prosecute Walid Yunis Ahmad as the anti-terrorism law was introduced six years after his detention. He is therefore being held indefinitely without any prospect of being charged or tried. Amnesty International visited Walid Yunis Ahmad in prison in June 2010. He said that the campaigning by Amnesty International on his behalf has had an extremely positive effect, helping him to keep alive his hopes that he may one day be released.

Father Alejandro Solalinde Guerra is a Catholic priest who has dedicated his life to providing a place of safety for migrants, away from the criminal gangs and local officials who exploit and abuse them. Because of his work, he has been continuously threatened and intimidated by local gangs and officials. His life is at risk. Father Alejandro Solalinde is the co-ordinator of the Catholic Pastoral Care Centre for Migrants in Southwestern Mexico (Pastoral de Movilidad Humana Pacifico Sur del Episcopado Mexicano) and director of a migrants’ shelter that was set up to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants who get injured or need help. This solidarity with migrants has led to attacks and harassment from xenophobic members of local communities, often encouraged by criminal gangs and local officials. Father Solalinde has frequently been threatened and intimidated, and the authorities have done little to protect him, or investigate the threats against him.

On 24 June 2008, a group of about 50 residents of Ciudad Ixtepec, the city where Father Solalinde works, broke into the migrants’ shelter. The group, led by municipal officials, including the mayor and 14 municipal police, threatened to set the building on fire if it was not shut down within 48 hours. The authorities did not investigate the break-in and threat from the municipal officials, and although the residents did not carry their threats, the incident increased fears for the safety of Father Solalinde and the migrants at his shelter. Since 2008 Father Solalinde has faced frequent intimidation. Local media often report false stories, blaming the shelter for housing migrants who are suspected of committing criminal offences.

Femi Peters, Campaign Manager for the opposition United Democratic Party, was arrested during a peaceful demonstration in Serekunda, Gambia, on 25 October 2009. He is currently serving a one-year sentence in poor conditions. He suffers from diabetes and malaria and there are fears that his health is deteriorating.

The police refused to allow the demonstration on the grounds of threats to national security and fear of violent protests. Femi Peters was charged with “control of procession and control of use of loud speakers in public” without permission from the Office of the Inspector General of Police, as required under the Public Order Act.

After a trial that lasted several months, Femi Peters was convicted and sentenced on 1 April 2010 to a mandatory jail term of one year and a fine of 10,000 dalasi (US$363). As he was on bail before the trial, he is expected to complete his sentence around March 2011. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release. In October 2010, after two appeals, the Court upheld the ruling, meaning that the appeal process has come to an end. His family fear that he may not be receiving adequate treatment for the diabetes and malaria and have also told Amnesty International that they have not been allowed to visit him.

Please write, calling for Walid Yunis Ahmad to be released immediately and unconditionally, or charged with a recognizable criminal offence and given a prompt and fair trial. Urge that all long-term detainees are given fair trials or released without delay. Call for the conditions of detention to be brought into full conformity with relevant international standards and for allegations of torture or other ill-treatment to be investigated. Send appeals to:

| His Excellency |
| Dr Barham Salih |
| Prime Minister |
| Kurdistan Regional Government |
| Erbil |
| Iraq |

Salutation: Your Excellency

Please write to the federal Minister of the Interior in Mexico, urging him to provide Father Solalinde and his team with effective protection, in accordance with their wishes, to enable them to carry out their human rights work without fear of reprisal. Send appeals to:

| Lic. José Francisco Blake Mora |
| Secretaría de Gobernación |
| Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez |
| Delegación Cuauhtémoc |
| Mexico DF, CP 06600 |
| Mexico |

Please write, stating that Amnesty International considers Femi Peters to be a prisoner of conscience and calling for his immediate and unconditional release. Urge that he receives adequate and ongoing medical treatment, and that he be allowed regular access to his family and other visitors. Call on the Gambian authorities to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly. Send appeals to:

| Hon. Edward Gomez |
| Attorney General and Minister of Justice |
| Department of State for Justice |
| Marina Parade |
| Banjul |
| Gambia |