

WIRED

FOR PEOPLE PASSIONATE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014 VOLUME 44 ISSUE 001

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



MY BODY MY RIGHTS



INSIDE THIS WIRE



MY BODY MY RIGHTS

Join the conversation as we prepare to launch our new global campaign on sexual and reproductive rights. **PAGE 4**



REMEMBERING AMINA

When Amina Filali was forced to marry the man she said had raped her, she saw suicide as her only escape. Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui explains why Moroccan law allowed this to happen, and what we can do about it. **PAGE 6**



'I ADMIRE BEATRIZ – WHAT A STRONG WOMAN'

The story of Beatriz, who fought for her life in El Salvador and inspired a global campaign. **PAGE 9**



THE TRAGEDY THAT BROKE THE SILENCE

Jacqueline Healy, a lawyer and Amnesty activist, explains why she thinks abortion is a human rights issue. **PAGE 10**



OTHER STORIES IN WIRE: A SENSE OF HUMOUR REQUIRED

Russia's Museum of Power had a short and dramatic life span. See some of the art that so offended the authorities. **PAGE 16**



A GAME OF DRONES

We ask why Nabeela Bibi's grandmother was killed by a drone, and explain how Amnesty USA's youth activists are making sure her story isn't forgotten. **PAGE 18**



BEHIND THE GLITTERING FAÇADE

Few visitors to the United Arab Emirates realise that long prison sentences are being used to silence its citizens. **PAGE 20**



ALSO IN WIRE

A New Year's message from Amnesty's Secretary General, Salil Shetty (**PAGE 3**); breaking taboos in Burkina Faso (**PAGE 14**); smuggling the news into Turkmenistan (**PAGE 15**); write a letter, change a life (**PAGE 22**); life after a forced eviction in Papua New Guinea (**PAGE 24**).

COVER STORY

Many women in Nepal have a painful condition called uterine prolapse, but feel too embarrassed to talk about it. Now, some of them, like Rajkumari Devi (pictured) are determined to open up and find solutions. Find out more on **PAGE 12**

Getting WIRE

WIRE is available online at www.livewire.amnesty.org

You can subscribe to receive six printed copies of WIRE for £15/US\$24/€17 a year (or £35/US\$54/€41 for institutions). Amnesty International sections and structures can buy discounted copies. Email wire.subscribe@amnesty.org or call +44 (0)20 7413 5814/5507.

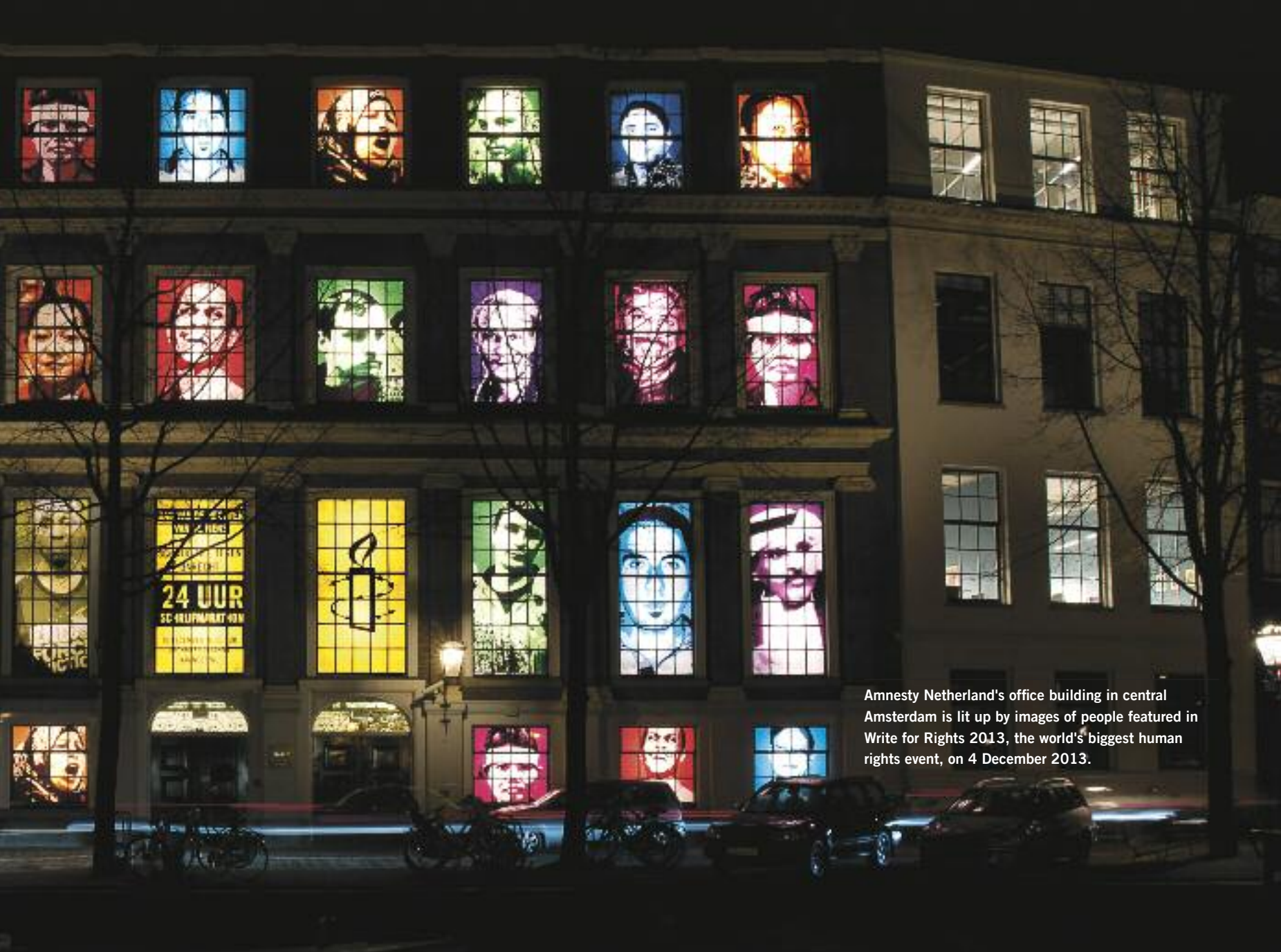
To join Amnesty International visit www.amnesty.org/en/join

First published in 2013 by Amnesty International Publications www.amnesty.org
© Amnesty International Ltd
Index: NWS 21/001/2014,
Volume 44, Issue 001
ISSN: 1472-443X
Printed by Banbury Litho, Banbury, United Kingdom, on 100gsm Cocoon
Preprint 100% Recycled paper.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publishers.

WIRE, Editorial Studio, Global Content Programme, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

Cover image: © Amnesty International



Amnesty Netherlands' office building in central Amsterdam is lit up by images of people featured in Write for Rights 2013, the world's biggest human rights event, on 4 December 2013.

EDITORIAL: NEW YEAR, NEW CONVERSATIONS

Even the most intimate areas of our lives touch on our human rights. In this issue of WIRE, read the compelling stories of women, men and children who have experienced this personally.

Discussing sexual and reproductive rights can be difficult: we hope you will accept the challenge. Please join our new global campaign, My Body My Rights. Because by daring to start new conversations, we can also begin to push for vital human rights change, together.

Also in WIRE, find out how people power is making a difference, and read our Secretary General Salil Shetty's New Year's message to activists (pages 2-3). See the art being censored in Russia, and tell President Putin to stop attacking freedom of expression before the Sochi Olympics start in February (page 16).

And keep writing for rights. People like Mohammed al-Roken, a lawyer imprisoned for 10 years in the United Arab Emirates (page 22), need our support. Amnesty's global Write for Rights campaign in December was a shining example of how thousands of voices calling for change can be very difficult to ignore. We'll update you on the amazing events and activism that took place worldwide in WIRE March/April.

Read WIRE online and our LIVEWIRE blog at www.livewire.amnesty.org

The Agenda

News about Amnesty International's work and campaigns

NEARLY 250,000 PEOPLE ASKED SRI LANKA TO TELL THE TRUTH

"Does anyone specifically have a question that's not on Sri Lanka or human rights?" This was how an exasperated Commonwealth spokesperson unwittingly summed up its Heads of Government Meeting in November. The heated media debate that surrounded it was fuelled largely by Amnesty's campaign to expose Sri Lanka's appalling human rights record. In the end, only 25 out of 53 government leaders attended – a historic low. And thanks to the almost 250,000 people who took action, Sri Lanka's next steps as Commonwealth chair will be watched very closely around the world.

ENDING FORCED EVICTIONS IN KENYA

"We are deeply touched, moved and inspired by the support from Amnesty International members across the globe. We cannot thank them enough," said Justus Nyang'aya, Director of Amnesty Kenya, after residents from 10 Nairobi slums and Amnesty activists handed over 83,000 signatures from 115 countries to Charity Ngilu, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Lands, Housing and Urban Development on 9 December 2013. The petition calls for a law to end all forced evictions. Charity Ngilu reiterated that no eviction should take place without due process, and suggested forming a residents' committee to liaise with the Ministry on developing the evictions and resettlement law.

Our campaign continues!

www.amnesty.org/endforcedevictions



"As intersex people, we are raised to believe that we are shameful and that we will never find another person going through the same. It is important to show the world that no body is shameful and that love knows no gender." Nthabiseng Mokoena, Advocacy Co-ordinator with activist group Transgender and Intersex Africa, based near Pretoria, South Africa. This image is part of a photo exhibition launched in Johannesburg in November 2013, aimed at celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex activists in Africa.

© Judi Bieber

MEXICO: MIGRANTS' PHOTOS GO TRAVELLING

Invisible Journeys, a photo exhibition showing Central American migrants travelling through Mexico towards the US border, will be displayed in the heart of Mexico City's historical old town until 19 January. This outdoor exhibition began in October as part of Amnesty's campaign for full investigations into all attacks on migrants and those defending their rights. The exhibition will soon travel on to key Mexican cities hosting migrants' shelters. It aims to support migrants and activists, and celebrate the important role shelters play in very challenging environments.

Visit <http://bit.ly/InvisibleJourneys>

TERRORISM CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST KURDISH GRANDMOTHER

The prosecution of Sultani Acibuca, a Kurdish grandmother facing six years in a Turkish prison for speaking out at peace rallies, has finally ended. We featured a story and appeal about Sultani in WIRE July/August. She got final confirmation in November 2013 that her conviction for belonging to a terrorist organization had been overturned. "A huge weight has been lifted from my shoulders," Sultani told us. "Had I been imprisoned, I would not have come out alive. Thank you for all your support."

DON'T LOOK AWAY

Another travelling photo exhibition – *Devoir de Regard*, curated by Amnesty's Belgian French-speaking section, has so far visited 20 Belgian towns and cities and attracted nearly 30,000 visitors. It invites people to open their eyes to decades of human rights violations suffered worldwide, and to take action with Amnesty. The exhibition is set to travel to more than 30 other towns during 2014.

Watch a Flickr photostream

<http://bit.ly/DevoirDeRegard>

For more information email

cgotovitch@amnesty.be

STAMP OUT TORTURE IN KAZAKHSTAN!

Roza Tuletaeva, a labour activist, reported being suspended by her hair, suffocated with a plastic bag and sexually humiliated by police in Zhaozen in December 2011. Convicted of "inciting social discord", she is still waiting for officials to investigate her allegations. Please call on the President of Kazakhstan to uphold justice for Roza and other torture victims by signing our petition by 7 March. We will deliver it in time for the spring holiday, Nauryz, which celebrates new beginnings.

www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/kazakhstan



Housing rights activist Yorm Bopha, whose story was featured in WIRE November/December 2013, celebrates her release on bail on 22 November:

"Thank you to Amnesty International's supporters! Your campaign has been successful, as my release shows! But my case is not over yet. Please keep pushing the Cambodian government to end the case against me. And please keep supporting me, my community and others in Cambodia! We can achieve the most success when we all work together!"



Up front

Armed with pens, keyboards and a passion for human rights

A New Year's message to activists from Salil Shetty, Amnesty International's Secretary General

As a new year begins, I'd like to celebrate some of the things we achieved together in 2013.

We are still counting the tweets, good old-fashioned letters, SMS messages and petition signatures, but it is already clear that hundreds of thousands of

people in up to 80 countries took part in our biggest global campaign event, Write for Rights, in December.

Armed with pens and keyboards, we challenged the authorities to release prisoners of conscience, tell the truth and set injustices right.

Time will tell what impact our actions will have. The wheels in the machinery of power can turn slowly. But it's important to remember that as soon as you send that email, that fax, that letter, it becomes part of something much bigger. When hundreds of messages start arriving at a prison, those in charge know we are watching them. And the person inside that cell knows that while they wait for the door to open, we wait with them.

The release of Yorm Bopha (pictured left) in November – imprisoned in Cambodia for defending her community's housing rights – was a huge encouragement for everyone who had appealed on her behalf. Bopha herself thanked Amnesty's supporters directly for campaigning alongside her. Our work goes on to make sure her sentence is quashed.

Activism can be a long game. The new Arms Trade Treaty agreed by world leaders last April illustrates this. It took 20 years of hard work and concerted action by the entire Amnesty movement and our key partners to get there. But we did it. Since then, 115 countries have signed up to it and more will follow. Our work to make sure the treaty creates real change in people's lives has already started.

As 2014 begins, many challenges lie ahead. Human rights continue to be violated on a large scale, from Syria to the Central African Republic. From bearing witness by documenting and mapping violations, to campaigning and lobbying for change, we are clear that injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere. There will be truth and justice. Until that day, our work goes on.

Thank you for being a part of Amnesty International – together, we are making a significant difference.

EMAIL US

We always welcome your feedback and ideas! Write to us at thewire@amnesty.org

MY BODY MY RIGHTS

Join the conversation as we prepare to launch our campaign on sexual and reproductive rights in March 2014.

When it comes to our bodies and relationships, our freest conversations tend to happen in our heads. Often, we keep these thoughts secret. Why?

This is the question that Amnesty International is asking in the lead-up to the launch of our new global campaign on sexual and reproductive rights on 6-8 March. We think it's a question worth asking, because the answer may well be surprising to a lot of us.

Think about it. Why do we keep silent about these types of thoughts? Perhaps it's because what we feel we can say openly is defined by the society we live in.

These social norms are controlled by our governments, our communities, even our families. When we challenge those norms, we feel guilty – even embarrassed. We fear being stigmatized, even jailed. And because of this, we keep silent.

Through the My Body My Rights campaign, we want to help break this silence. Because right now, many people don't even know that they have rights, much less how to claim them.

Decisions that are our right – like whether or when to have children – have become a matter for governments to control. Some governments also allow other people in our lives to make choices for us – like doctors, faith leaders or our parents. And some fail to meet their obligations to provide the information and services that people have a right to.

In Burkina Faso, women can be refused contraceptives at health clinics unless they are accompanied by their husbands. In Morocco, girls can be forced to marry their rapists to preserve family honour and “protect” the attacker from prosecution. Over 150,000 women travelled to the UK from Ireland for a termination between 1980 and 2012, because abortion there is illegal unless the woman's life is at serious risk. And in many countries, loving someone of the same gender – or simply dressing outside the social norm – is enough to land you in jail.

That these restrictions still exist tells us that there is much to do. A backlash against sexual and reproductive rights is brewing – driven by well-funded

and organized interest groups. At the highest levels, some governments are trying to roll back these rights, questioning the ideas of “reproductive rights” and “gender equality”, or branding the principle of “human rights for all” as Western. What's clear is that our rights to express our sexuality and make decisions over our own bodies are being challenged.

Over the next two years, Amnesty's My Body My Rights campaign will try to halt this trend, particularly in **Nepal, El Salvador, Burkina Faso, Ireland** and the **Maghreb** (Algeria, Morocco-Western Sahara, Tunisia). It will reach out to people around the world, encouraging them to break the silence that surrounds these issues as a first step to claiming their rights.

If we break the silence, then governments will have to step up and start protecting people's right to make decisions about their bodies and their lives. Until then, we will expose states that violate these rights, and we will demand change. Because sexual and reproductive rights are human rights. They belong to us all.

WHAT ARE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS?

You have the right to...

- Make decisions about your own health
- Ask for and get information about health services
- Decide if and when to have kids
- Choose whether or not to marry
- Access sexual and reproductive health care
- Live free from sexual violence

FIND OUT MORE >>>

Read on to find out more about our campaign. We're starting the conversation – join us at [#MyBodyMyRights](#) and www.amnesty.org/mybodymyrights

Amnesty activists tell us what My Body My Rights means to them...



© Private

“My Body My Rights means that nobody has the right to insult me, discriminate against me or be suspicious of me because of the way I dress or my physical appearance.”

Antonio Cámara López, Madrid, Spain



© Private

“It means my body belongs to me and I have full control of my body. Until women and girls can make reproductive choices on matters affecting their bodies and fully enjoy their rights, I’ll campaign for sexual and reproductive rights for all.”

Vongai V Chikwanda, Harare, Zimbabwe



© Private

“It means that I can make decisions on health issues, relationships, sex, pregnancy, marriage, family and so forth freely, well-informed and without coercion or violence.”

Klára, Prague, Czech Republic



© Private

“It means freedom – revolution from inside to outside.”

Nicolás Corizzo, Buenos Aires, Argentina



© Private

It means that I’m free to choose my partner.”

Mesmin Awoudja, Lomé, Togo



© Private

“It means that I have full rights over my body. I learned that men are taking control over women’s decisions regarding their body. So I want to campaign on sexual and reproductive rights to increase awareness among young girls and women in various villages.”

Amir Joshi, Kathmandu, Nepal



© Private

“It reminds me that we young people should fight for our rights. People in Hong Kong don’t know what sexual and reproductive rights are. Some think we can’t judge how to use our bodies, and that teaching us about sex will make us do ‘bad’ things. If we want to know more about sex, we become ‘bad’ girls... How come?!”

Lam Po Yee, Hong Kong



© Private

“It means that I don’t need someone else’s permission for the choices I make about my body and my life.”

Salima Bakkass, Morocco



REMEMBERING AMINA

When Amina Filali was forced to marry the man she said had raped her, she saw suicide as her only escape.



We can remember Amina by making sure laws that allow rapists to avoid prosecution by marrying their victims are abolished for ever, says Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director at Amnesty International (pictured above).



© AP Photo/Abdeljalil Bounhar

Amina Filali committed suicide by swallowing rat poison in March 2012. She was 16 years old. Her desperate act showed the depth of her pain and despair: she must have felt that nobody was there to help her.

We soon learned that Amina had been raped in her small Moroccan town, by a man she was then forced to marry. Imagine being married to your rapist, to be forced to see that person all the time – it would be devastating.

He married her because Moroccan law allows rapists to escape prosecution by marrying their victim, if she is aged under 18.

Amina's death caused an outcry in Morocco and throughout the region. What shocked people most was that this marriage was sanctioned by law, as well as by a judge who authorized it. It revealed that the state was complicit in covering up a rape. And instead of protecting her as the victim of a crime, the law victimized Amina a second time.

This kind of legislation doesn't just exist in Morocco, but also in Algeria and Tunisia.

SHAME IS A POWERFUL FORCE

This legal environment prevents women and girls from reporting rape. A victim is not considered as a survivor of a grave act of violence.

Amina's story resonated with another case in Tunisia, where a young woman complained to the police about being raped by two police officers, and ended up being charged herself for "indecentcy".

Women and girls who suffer sexual violence are seen as the problem. The accusation is always: what have you done to bring this on yourself? Unbelievably, in Morocco the punishment for rapists is also different

depending on whether the victim was a virgin or not.

In conservative societies, there is this misplaced idea that women and girls can bring their family into disrepute and that the value of a girl or a young woman lies in her virginity. People will try to hide a rape and might arrange a marriage as a way to prevent shame on the family.

It is as if the rape is not about violence against a girl or a woman, but about her worth. She could be seen as a family commodity in a culture where getting married and having children is presented as a woman's main goal in life. The underlying assumption of the law is that to get married, a woman must be a virgin. If she is raped, she is damaged goods.

In a patriarchal society, marrying a woman off to her rapist could also be seen as a way of protecting the victim, preserving her "honour". The underlying idea is that it's better to be married than to be an outcast.

SOCIETY IS READY FOR CHANGE

Amina's desperate act, and the outcry that followed, finally exposed this ugly reality. It can no longer be swept under the carpet: it needs to be confronted and the law brought into line with the society we live in.

Women's rights are often labelled by people in the region who oppose them as a Western concept. In fact, there seems to have been more pressure on Amina coming from her community than from her family. Remarkably, Amina's family stood with her and joined the street protests sparked by her death. They are not from the capital, and are not well educated.

This shows that Moroccan society is ready for change. But that doesn't mean that its leaders are. The Moroccan authorities quickly announced that

they would change the law that allowed Amina's rapist to marry her, but it hasn't happened yet. How many more Aminas have we had since her suicide?

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Rape is one of the most extreme forms of violence against women and girls. The state has a responsibility to make sure that the law, the police and the justice system are there to protect women.

And we have a responsibility to remember Amina. We can do that by making sure that no other woman or girl is forced to follow her tragic path. Rapists need to know that there is no way to escape prison. And victims need to be supported, rather than stigmatized.

Women and men across North Africa are fighting against discriminatory laws. International solidarity through Amnesty's forthcoming My Body My Rights campaign will be crucial for supporting their struggle.

For example, when reports emerged about forced "virginity tests" in Egypt, women were accused of lying, of trying to tarnish the image of the army. One woman told us that an Amnesty press release, publicly stating that she had been sexually assaulted, made her feel able to walk with her head held high again. Suddenly, she was seen as a survivor of an act of violence.

If we can push outdated laws and ideas of shame into the history books, we can prevent another story like Amina's.

Left: Zohra Filali holds a picture of her daughter, Amina, the week after she committed suicide. Amina took her own life by drinking rat poison in March 2012 after being forced to marry the man who allegedly raped her.



‘I ADMIRE BEATRIZ — WHAT A STRONG WOMAN’

Sara García (left)

Beatriz fought for her own life and inspired a global campaign.

When a woman named “Beatriz” stood up for her rights in April and May 2013 and demanded her human right to life, Amnesty’s supporters joined forces with local and international activists. Together we echoed her voice, again and again, until the authorities finally listened.

Aged 22 and from El Salvador, Beatriz suffers from severe illnesses, including lupus and kidney

problems. When she became pregnant, doctors told her that continuing her pregnancy could kill her. Her foetus was also anencephalic, lacking a large part of its brain and skull, and would not survive for more than a few hours after birth.

But doctors feared being prosecuted under El Salvador’s total abortion ban, and felt that their hands were tied by a law so extreme that only a handful of

countries worldwide have chosen to impose similar legislation. This is because such laws pose a serious risk to women and girls.

A 14-WEEK BATTLE

Sara García (pictured above), a Salvadoran human rights activist, supported Beatriz in hospital during the 14-week battle that followed. During that time Beatriz was separated from her one-year-old son, which added to her distress.

“I admire Beatriz – what a strong woman,” Sarah told us. “She had to deal with being between life and death, and at the same time face such hostility from the system. And despite this, she chose to carry on fighting for her life.

“Beatriz wanted the right to choose life. She wanted to share a future with her young son as she had hoped. No woman should have to endure this experience.”

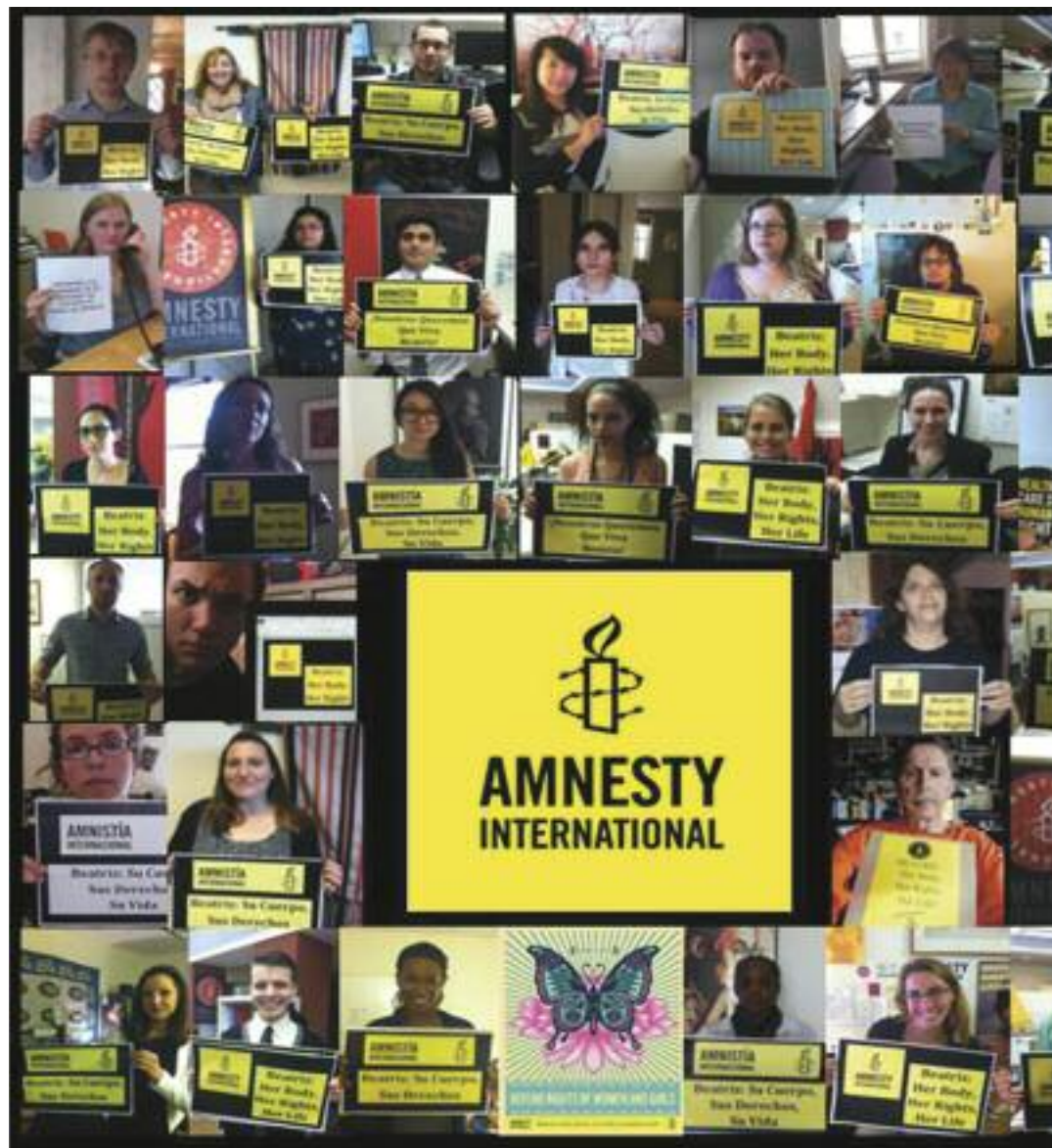
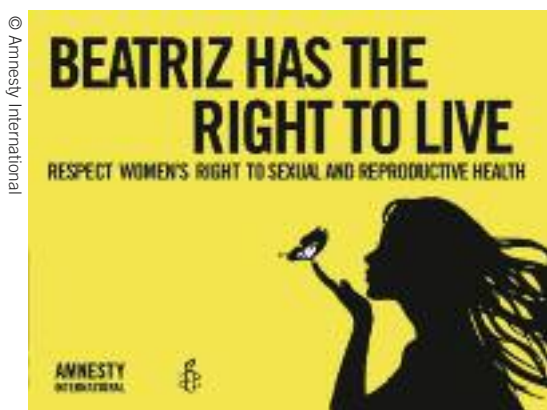
Meanwhile, support for her cause grew. Amnesty activists in 22 countries campaigned tirelessly on her behalf, sending over 170,000 signatures to the Salvadoran government. Experts from the UN and the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights demanded that the Salvadoran government provide Beatriz with the life-saving treatment she needed.

“It was intense,” Sara says, describing being in the midst of this global campaign. “The international solidarity strengthened what we were doing at a national level.”



Above: Sara García on air at the Radio de Todas in El Salvador. The station broadcasts daily on issues of sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women. <http://bit.ly/ColectivaFeminista>

Left: Amnesty Burkina Faso supporters take action for Beatriz, May 2013.



© Amnesty International

© Amnesty International

© Amnesty International

© Amnesty International

After Beatriz had campaigned for over two months to receive the treatment she needed to stay alive, she was finally granted a caesarean section in June 2013. As doctors had predicted, the foetus lived for just a few hours after birth.

NEVER AGAIN

After her harrowing ordeal, Beatriz thanked people worldwide for putting pressure on the authorities. "Without you I think I wouldn't have been able to stand being in hospital," she wrote in a letter. "I hope my example serves so that other women won't have to go through what I suffered." Back with her family, Beatriz regained strength. On 2 December 2013, she filed a case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. A key part of her demand is that the state should guarantee non-repetition: that what happened to her is never allowed to happen to someone else.

Beatriz is also seeking redress from the government for having violated her human rights, including her rights to life and health, and to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

STATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Through our My Body My Rights campaign, we will continue our campaigning to make sure that every woman and girl in El Salvador and anywhere else in the world has access to life and health-saving medical treatment when they need it. Extreme criminal laws, such as El Salvador's total abortion ban, are cruel. They have discrimination at their heart and must be repealed. As Sara put it, "It is not right that we women have to live like this. The criminalization of abortion is a form of state violence against women."

Top left: "My body is mine and I decide" says this protester's T-shirt. She took part in a protest outside El Salvador's Supreme Court of Justice in April 2013, calling for Beatriz to be granted legal access to a therapeutic abortion. Beatriz's life and health were in danger because of her pregnancy, and it was clear that her foetus would not survive.

Middle: The graffiti says: "The criminalization of abortion is state violence", and scribbled underneath is: "Use contraception". This photograph captures some of the country's ongoing debate about access to abortion services.

Above: Over 170,000 Amnesty activists, including these ones from USA and Canada, demanded that Beatriz's human rights were upheld. On 3 June the Salvadoran government finally provided Beatriz with an early caesarean section.

THE TRAGEDY THAT BROKE THE SILENCE

When Savita Halappanavar died after being denied an abortion in Ireland in 2012, it sparked global headlines and debates.



For Jacqueline Healy (pictured above), an Irish lawyer and activist, Savita's tragic case broke a long silence about access to abortion in the predominantly Catholic country. Jacqueline told **WIRE** why she hopes Amnesty's forthcoming **My Body My Rights** campaign will keep people talking about abortion as a human rights issue that goes to the heart of women's equality.

What happened to Savita?

Savita Halappanavar went into hospital with a threatened miscarriage in October 2012 and she and her husband Praveen asked for an abortion. It was denied, even though the foetus was unviable and the baby wasn't going to survive. As a result, she contracted sepsis and died a few days later.

Under our law at the time, to allow an abortion there had to be a real and substantial risk to the life of the mother. But there wasn't a legal definition of what that meant. At first there was only a risk to Savita's health, and the lack of clarity seems to have contributed her death. Savita's death definitely threw into focus the wider medical profession's confusion about when an abortion is lawful.

What effect did Savita's death have in Ireland?

It broke the silence around abortion. It was always the elephant in the room. You couldn't talk about it with your family and friends because they'd get annoyed with you for having pro-choice views and you'd get annoyed with them for having anti-choice views. It was only when Savita died that people started talking again about when abortion should be permissible.

Most felt that when a woman's life is at risk, her life should take precedence. It came out very strongly from people who were quite anti-abortion, and shifted many people from opposing abortion under any circumstances to saying yes in limited circumstances.

Why does this issue matter to you?

I've got a range of experiences working on women's equality. I'm a Women's Health and Human Rights worker for the National Women's Council of Ireland, and worked on a women's rights community project in South Africa for three years. I've also worked for many years with women who are undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers.



And I'm an Amnesty member. My most recent activism was to bring a motion to Amnesty Ireland's Annual General Meeting around abortion. I felt very strongly that we should be able to take part in the global My Body My Rights campaign on sexual and reproductive rights. Some people were very concerned about it, but in the end the majority supported our motion.

Why is access to abortion a human rights issue?

I see it as an integral part of the right to health. It is essential for family planning and touches on so many of women's rights – to privacy, to bodily integrity and the right to be free from inhuman and degrading treatment. It is also a life and death issue, especially if there is a serious risk to a woman's health.



© PETER MUIHLY/AFP/Getty Images

Left: Protesters in Ireland hold a candle-lit vigil for Savita Halappanavar, who died on 28 October 2012 after being refused a termination for an unviable pregnancy.

What difference can international solidarity through Amnesty's global My Body My Rights campaign make in Ireland?

International solidarity and pressure are very important. In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights adjudicated in a case about abortion for three women in *A, B and C v. Ireland*. It ruled that one woman's right to privacy had been violated, because there was no way to establish in law if her life was at real and substantial risk. Even if she could get that far, there was no legal avenue for her to exercise her constitutional right to an abortion. The Court also noted the significant "chilling effect" of Ireland's criminal penalty for unlawful abortion.

Ireland was asked by the Council of Europe to legislate so women and their doctors would know when they could access an abortion in life-threatening pregnancies. Nobody knew how to do it – there was such a lack of clarity. But absolutely nothing happened. And then Savita died.

When her case blew up in the media in worldwide, the Irish government finally announced that it would legislate. The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act became law in July 2013. So it's very important that we have those sorts of watchdogs.

Abortion is a very stigmatized and shameful thing in Ireland. Women feel like criminals because it is a criminal offence, punishable by up to life in prison now, and 14 years when the new law comes into force.

If the new campaign can challenge myths and misinformation and make people feel clearer about why this is a human rights issue, that in itself will be an important stepping stone.

I was a student in 1992, when the "X"-case became prominent news in Ireland. A 14-year-old girl was stopped from going to England to have an abortion after being raped by her friend's father, and became suicidal. Many people felt there was something seriously wrong if she was forced to carry on with the pregnancy. Although in the end she miscarried, our Supreme Court eventually gave her the right to terminate. This case established the right to an abortion where the mother's life is at risk. But this wasn't legislated for until July 2013.

Overall this is a core issue that goes to the heart of women's equality and non-discrimination. Many women who can't afford to travel to England for an abortion go through dangerous procedures to self-abort – trying to buy abortion pills over the

internet, for example. Others have to borrow, beg and steal to go. Or they can't travel, in the cases of asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants. I know some people resort to backstreet abortions, like in England years ago.

What role do men and the wider family play in this?

When a woman decides to have an abortion, there is often a man or a family behind it supporting her. Many men have been vocal in the media recently about fatal foetal abnormality – people who have had that diagnosis and still had to travel to England for a termination. Praveen, Savita's husband, has also talked openly about how her being denied a termination has affected him. Many of our politicians said they were profoundly affected by these stories. So this is also a societal issue that affects everybody.

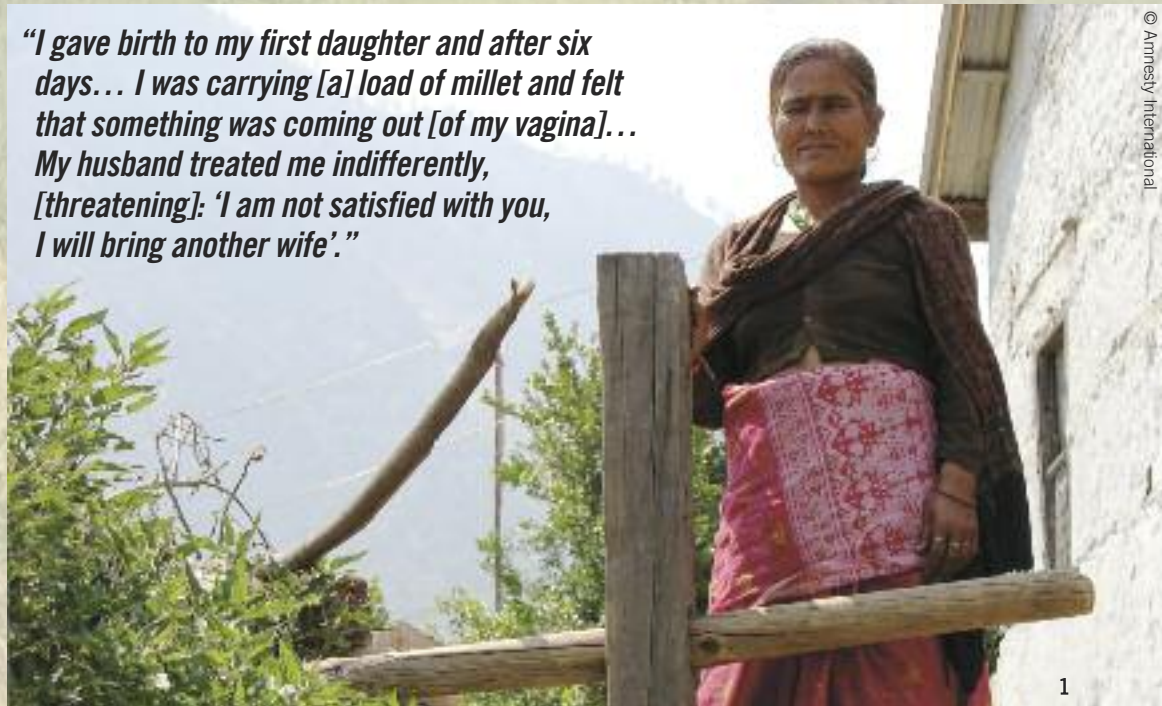
SPEAKING OUT – A FIRST STEP

Many women in Nepal carry a painful burden that they are too embarrassed to talk about. They live with it for years, in some cases because they don't know where to go for help. They are living with uterine prolapse, a debilitating condition in which the pelvic muscles give way, allowing the uterus to descend into the vagina.

The causes are many - having a lot of children within a short space of time, poor nutrition, and lifting heavy loads while pregnant. But underpinning these causes is pervasive discrimination against women in Nepali society, a reality that the government has failed to effectively address.

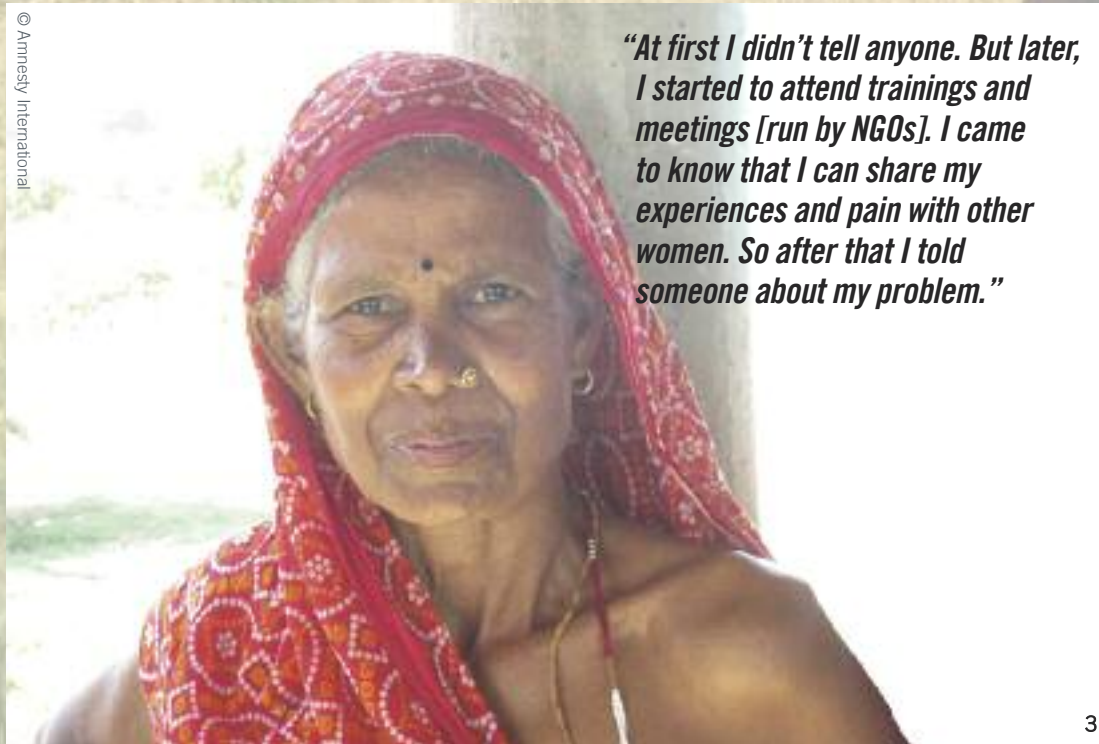
As the women featured here show, this failure results in women having little say in daily decisions about their bodies and sexuality – decisions which instead are controlled by the people around them.

“I gave birth to my first daughter and after six days... I was carrying [a] load of millet and felt that something was coming out [of my vagina]... My husband treated me indifferently, [threatening]: ‘I am not satisfied with you, I will bring another wife’.”



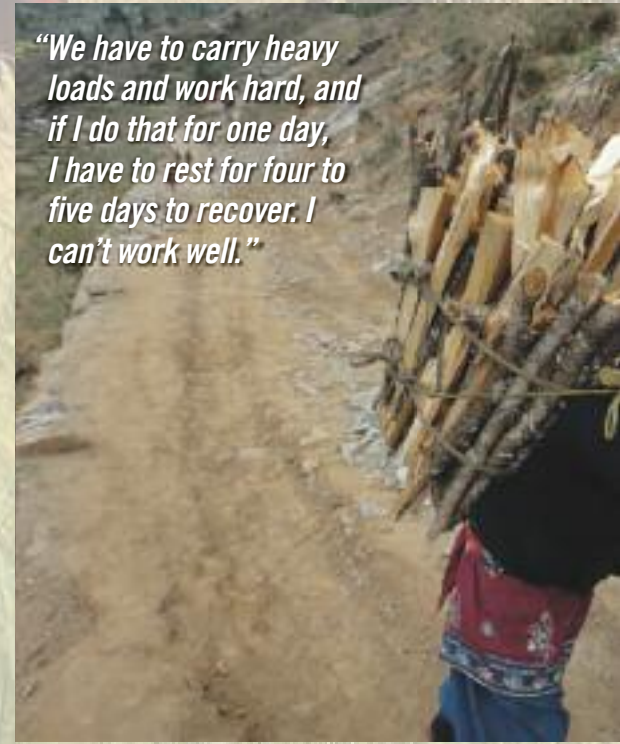
© Amnesty International

“At first I didn't tell anyone. But later, I started to attend trainings and meetings [run by NGOs]. I came to know that I can share my experiences and pain with other women. So after that I told someone about my problem.”



© Amnesty International

“We have to carry heavy loads and work hard, and if I do that for one day, I have to rest for four to five days to recover. I can't work well.”



3

TO TAKING CONTROL

“I prefer not to cause a scandal by reporting [violence] to the police. I have so many kids. I could only go to the police... if I leave my husband and kids.”

© Amnesty International



2

1. Kesar Kala Malla, aged 48, Mugu district, northwest Nepal, May 2013. Although a draft strategy to address uterine prolapse exists in Nepal, the government has not yet adopted it as policy.

2. Women agricultural workers in Mugu district, May 2013. Thirty-year-old Kopila, of Kailali district, shares an all too familiar experience. Domestic violence, including marital rape, is common in Nepal. Women who have uterine prolapse sometimes experience more violence because of their condition. Although there are laws against domestic violence and marital rape, many women are either unaware of them or feel powerless to complain.

3. Radha Sada, aged 50, Dhanusha district, May 2013. Married at 16, Radha Sada developed uterine prolapse after the birth of her first child. The stigma associated with the condition and the lack of information about it meant that she lived with the pain for decades before finally seeking help – by which point she was a grandmother.

4. A woman carries wood in Mugu district, May 2013. As Kesar Kala Malla points out, although some women know they should not carry heavy loads during or just after pregnancy, they have no choice because of family pressure or financial difficulty. Carrying heavy loads strains the pelvic muscles and can cause uterine prolapse. The government of Nepal is required to protect women from harmful work while they are pregnant.

5. Rajkumari Devi, aged 24 and living with uterine prolapse, Dhanusha district, May 2013. Poor nutrition can lead to weaker pelvic muscles, thus increasing the risk of uterine prolapse. Traditional practices in some families mean that younger women and girls eat last.

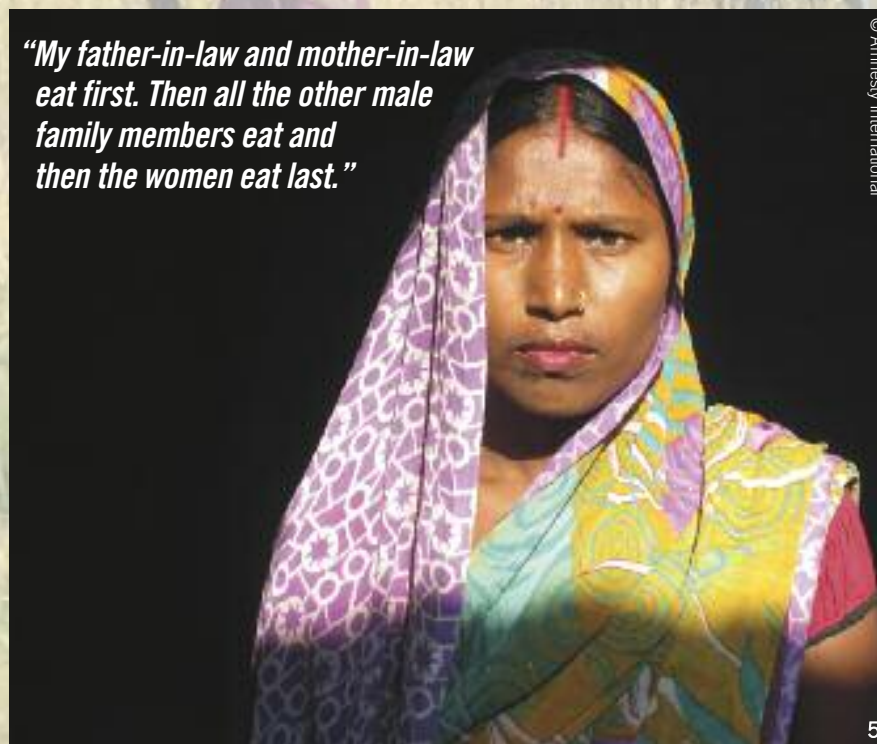
“My father-in-law and mother-in-law eat first. Then all the other male family members eat and then the women eat last.”

© Amnesty International



4

© Amnesty International



5

FIND OUT MORE >>>

Look out for our new report on uterine prolapse in Nepal in February. Find out more about our campaign at www.amnesty.org/mybodymyrights

BREAKING TABOOS

In Burkina Faso, many young people struggle to access contraception and other sexual health services. Talking openly about sex is taboo. The best way to challenge this is by spreading the word about sexual and reproductive rights among young people, says law student and youth activist Kando Séraphine (pictured below).



I became interested in the work that Amnesty is doing for sexual and reproductive rights through awareness-raising activities which Amnesty Burkina Faso carried out in November 2012 at my student halls of residence.

Sexual and reproductive rights belong to everyone. They guarantee us timely, free and confidential access to health services and to reliable information. They protect human dignity, physical integrity, and freedom of choice about your own body.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCIES

My friend was in high school when she got pregnant because she didn't have enough advice or information about sex before she became sexually active. Her partner was also young and immature. Her parents did nothing to support her. Instead,

they threw her out of their home because they believed that a woman who becomes pregnant outside of marriage no longer has the right to live with her family.

Because of this pressure and because she didn't feel ready to see the pregnancy through, the couple decided to have a clandestine abortion. Abortion was not legal in her case. After four failed attempts using very dangerous methods, my friend almost lost her life.

My friend now has a son who is almost two years old. She speaks of her experience without shame, because she wants to raise awareness. But this experience has had grave consequences for her: she's had to give up school and continues to be ostracized by her family.

BARRIERS TO INFORMATION

Young people mainly get information about sex from each other, as well as through associations and clubs which offer family planning services and fight against the spread of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

But the proportion of young people who have access to sexual and reproductive information is minimal. The number of services is insufficient so that they quickly become overwhelmed. Poverty also prevents some young people from seeking these services. Some don't even know they exist, or they don't trust them. Nevertheless, those who live in big cities, like [the capital] Ouagadougou, have much better access to sexual health information and services than those in rural parts.

Young people's sexual and reproductive rights are undermined in many ways in Burkina Faso – through

lack of access to health information and services, forced marriage, social pressures to marry, female genital mutilation, rape, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

SPREAD THE WORD, BREAK THE TABOO

To resolve these problems, you have to challenge the ignorance that surrounds the issue. We need to raise awareness – and make sure that those who already have information on sexual rights share it with others. We need to spread this information by word of mouth and equally, encourage young volunteers to help. They can become focal points for access to information in different locations – even rural ones. I also propose that the government includes sexuality and reproduction into school programmes

We need to reach out to parents and adults so that they feel comfortable talking about the subject with their children. And why not use social networks, too? We have to go into the places where there are young people – like schools, universities, markets – to spread the word.

FIND OUT MORE >>>

Amnesty in Burkina Faso is campaigning for access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for all. Find out more at bit.ly/BurkinaBlog.

For more information about My Body My Rights, see page 4 in this issue and visit www.amnesty.org/mybodymyrights

SMUGGLING THE NEWS

A journalist and activist who fled Turkmenistan told WIRE how he has managed to keep communicating with people inside the country, despite foreign media outlets being banned.

It's tough to be an activist in Turkmenistan. You never know what the authorities might do: beat you in the street, plant illegal drugs, weapons or poison on you, put you in jail. They pressurize your relatives and threaten them, spread rumours to present you as a traitor... Their creativity has no limits.

I experienced some of these things myself, and so did my family. Independent journalists, civil activists and human rights defenders are under constant pressure. That's why I left for a place where I can do my job without fear, and started my Alternative Turkmenistan News project.

I was already working on freedom of speech issues and writing articles for other news sources with a focus on Turkmenistan. I realized that these media outlets lack contact with audiences inside the country, because all external sources of Turkmen news are blocked. Only snippets of news slip through in telephone calls or emails from relatives studying or working overseas.

HUNGRY FOR INFORMATION

I wanted to fill this void, because I thought people in Turkmenistan are hungry for this information. They are often unaware of things happening inside the country that the authorities prefer to keep secret. Besides, I believe that knowledge and awareness make people more confident. Openness and glasnost can improve things.

In February 2010 I started sending out email compilations of articles published on websites that are banned in Turkmenistan. At first it was a Word document, and later I made it look more like a newsletter with some basic design.

My recipient list included around 300 people at first; now it is 10 times that. My audience includes people of different ages and social statuses: students, state employees, private entrepreneurs, local journalists and foreign diplomats.

People received my newsletters cautiously at first. Some unsubscribed immediately. After a year, people



© Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries

started to send me facts and photos, sharing their personal problems and issues at work, and seeking advice.

I put many of my sources in contact with international human rights organizations or lawyers, and shared their stories. I realized that many people lack basic knowledge about human rights and legal procedures. It's considered normal that the government isn't accountable to its own citizens.

They don't ask why they drink bad water, why they have winter power cuts, why they are forced by the authorities to hand-pick cotton every autumn, why thousands of their countrymen leave, why they must participate in enforced state celebrations, why it is nearly impossible to get a visa to visit Turkmenistan.

AN ERA OF MIGHT AND HAPPINESS?

The current government doesn't want people to think about any of this. So it spends millions on developing new mass media to promote its "Golden Age" policy, the "Great Revival", and now the era of "Might and Happiness", and on expanding the security services to prevent any "other" thinking.

I do my work because I believe that Turkmenistan and its citizens deserve a better life. I'm happy when my sources tell me my publication has helped to resolve their issues. I hear this more and more often. My sources are ordinary people who encounter

problems and want to solve them; they don't go looking for negative information. Just like me, they believe they deserve a better future.

I wish I had an automated and unlimited news delivery service to expand my pool of readers. My current Gmail account doesn't allow me to include new email addresses, and sending newsletters to 3,000 people takes a lot of time I could otherwise spend on communicating with sources, writing articles and reaching out to more people.

My news website will be launched in early 2014. Meanwhile, please visit my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/adalat.seeker

The writer prefers to be anonymous to avoid reprisals.

FIND OUT MORE >>>

Our new report, published in December, *Turkmenistan: An "Era of Happiness", or more of the same repression* gives an overview of Amnesty International's ongoing human rights concerns in Turkmenistan. Visit <http://bit.ly/EraOfHappiness>

A SENSE OF HUMOUR REQUIRED

‘Only art sanctioned by the authorities will be tolerated.’

Aleksandr Donskoy, owner of Russia’s Museum of Power



The Museum of Power in St Petersburg, Russia, had a short and dramatic life span. It opened on 16 August 2013 with the exhibition *Leaders*, by painter Konstantin Altunin, and shut down only 10 days later. Police and plainclothes officials raided it and seized four paintings, including *Travesty*, which shows President Vladimir Putin brushing Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s hair, both wearing women’s underwear.

The police said the satirical display had broken unspecified laws. They questioned the museum director, Tatiana Titova, and detained her again twice before the museum reopened on 5 September. It was closed down again a day later. This time the landlord had terminated the museum’s contract, allegedly after coming under pressure from the authorities.

“Because of restrictions on freedom of expression we can’t show works of art that we think the public should see,” said the museum’s owner, Aleksandr Donskoy. He also owns the nearby G-Spot erotic art museum, which was shut down temporarily in September 2013.

“Artists are being forced to flee and seek asylum abroad. I don’t see any future for myself because of the pressure the authorities are putting on us,” he continued. “Their actions are a clear signal that only art sanctioned by the authorities will be tolerated.”

The painter, Konstantin Altunin, is now applying for asylum in France. “Kings used to have jesters who were allowed to tell the truth,” he said. “It’s not always pleasant to hear the truth but it is necessary – it is the only way of ensuring freedom.”

This story is not unique in today’s Russia. The authorities are showing a distinct lack of humour as they clamp down on art and music they deem critical, not least in the run-up to the February 2014 Winter Olympics in the coastal city of Sochi.

TAKE ACTION >>>

Add your name to the more than 90,000 people who have already signed our petition asking President Putin to stop attacking freedom of expression in Russia. When it closes on 27 January 2014 we will hand the petition to the Russian President’s administration before the Winter Olympics begin. <http://bit.ly/room-to-breathe>



© Kirill Shlapakov

3



© Kirill Shlapakov

4



© Kirill Shlapakov

5

1. *Rainbow Miltonov* by Konstantin Altunin, who describes it as a reaction to St Petersburg's controversial law against "promoting sodomy, lesbianism, bisexuality and transgenderism to minors". The main man behind the legislation, St Petersburg politician Vitaly Milonov, visited the Museum of Power hours before it was raided.

2. *Vladimir Putin's Apparition to the People* by Konstantin Altunin, who explained: "This is a reference to *The Apparition of Christ to the People* by 19th century artist Alexandr Ivanov. It is an ironic depiction of someone who grabbed hold of power and is poisoned by it. All his PR stunts, like him riding a horse with a bare chest or catching a big fish, demonstrate this. A person must not become an icon in his own lifetime."

3. Police and Federal Security Service officers wait outside the Museum of Power while their colleagues are inside, unlawfully confiscating pictures and the museum's cash register and sealing the entrance. This was the first day of Russia's G20 summit, and happened just after St Petersburg politician Vitaly Milonov had visited.

4. The art group Voina (War) shows support for the Museum of Power by unfolding Konstantin Altunin's painting, *Putin Meeting his G20 Guests*, in central St Petersburg during the G20 summit in August 2013. Police officers quickly confiscated the painting and arrested the participants.

5. A police officer unlawfully confiscates the painting *Putin and Obama* by Vera Donskaya-Khilko from the G-spot museum of erotic art in St Petersburg, September 2013. The painting depicts both leaders as naked warriors surrounded by phallic symbols.

WHY WAS GRANDMOTHER MAMANA BIBI KILLED IN A US DRONE STRIKE?

THE SIMPLE ANSWER IS WE DON'T KNOW.

On 24 October 2012, Mamana Bibi was picking vegetables in her family's fields in Ghundi Kala village, northwest Pakistan, when she was blown apart before her grandchildren's eyes. The children had been playing nearby, and eight of them and a friend were badly injured in the drone attack, which had apparently targeted the 67-year-old grandmother.

Nabeela (pictured left), Mamana Bibi's granddaughter, recalled: "I was blown away by the explosion. It was very strong; it took me to the air and hit me to the ground." She later ventured to where her grandmother had been earlier that day. "I saw her shoes. We found her mutilated body a short time afterwards. It had been thrown quite a long distance away by the blast and it was in pieces. We collected as many different parts from the field as we could find and wrapped them in a cloth."

More than a year later, Mamana Bibi's family has yet to receive any acknowledgment from the US government that one of their drones killed her, let alone justice or compensation from them for her death.

It is hard to comprehend how Mamana Bibi could have been mistaken for an al-Qa'ida or Taliban insurgent. The near total secrecy surrounding the US drone programme frustrates any attempt at finding an answer to that question. It makes it impossible, too, to hold those responsible to account, or for victims and family members to receive justice and compensation.

The US drone programme has courted controversy ever since the first known drone strike in Pakistan in 2004. It continues to raise serious concerns that the USA is killing people outside the bounds of international law. Amnesty's major report on US drone strikes in Pakistan, "Will I be next?", uncovered evidence suggesting that children, men and women – including Mamana Bibi – were unlawfully killed or injured in attacks possibly amounting to war crimes or extrajudicial executions.

The burden is on the US government to explain how the killing of Mamana Bibi – and any others – could be justified. It must come clean about its drone programme, including the legal basis for drone strikes.

Pakistan, too, bears responsibility for failing to protect and enforce the rights of victims of drone strikes. While successive governments have publicly condemned such strikes on their territory, elements of the state may continue to collude in them. Pakistan has a duty to independently and impartially investigate drone strikes and ensure access to justice and reparations for victims of violations. Other states, like Australia, Germany and the UK, also stand accused of secretly assisting the US drone programme.

Meanwhile, Mamana Bibi's family must cope with the physical and psychological scars left by her killing. Her son, Rafeequl Rehman said: "My daughter [Asma], suddenly gets scared and tells me she is going to be killed. She is living in constant fear."

"I miss my grandmother," said seven-year-old Asma (pictured left). "She used to give us pocket money and took us with her wherever she went."

We cannot bring back Mamana Bibi to her grandchildren, but we can hold the US government to account.

TAKE ACTION >>>

Tweet the following: Why was grandmother Mamana Bibi killed in #Pakistan? Obama @WhiteHouse must answer www.amnestyusa.org/drones CC @SenFeinstein

A GAME OF DRONES

Last autumn, Amnesty USA's youth activists took their #GameOfDrones tour across the country to raise awareness about the US drone programme.

As we unpacked the model drone for our last action in Salt Lake City, Utah, it was hard to ignore the biting chill in the mountain air on the last week of the #GameOfDrones tour. While we were preoccupied with the tour, winter had come. We pushed on as the days grew shorter, and nights grew colder. We pushed on, knowing the power of the thousands now standing with us around the country, and knowing that 9-year-old Nabeela Bibi's call for justice for her grandmother, Mamana, must not be ignored.

Like Nabeela, my activism started at age nine. I was too young to join the protests decrying the Marcos regime's brutal crackdown on journalists and activists in my home country of the Philippines. But I watched my older friends and family march out to call for justice. In that moment, I realized that nobody is neutral and that my choice would always be to stand in solidarity with those who fight for human rights. Over the last eight weeks, I've had the privilege of sparking that awakening in others, and it is an opportunity I will always cherish.

From 27 September to 14 November 2013, the #GameOfDrones team travelled to eight campuses across the country to raise awareness, build the human rights movement, and call for investigations into the US drone programme. We covered over 6,000 miles to do outreach, host film screenings, facilitate activist trainings, and organize demonstrations to raise our voices for accountability and justice. We recruited over 100 new Amnesty members and activists, spoke with thousands of students and community members, and helped start



© Amnesty International / Flor Montero

or reinvigorate Amnesty groups. Those connections have driven the online presence of Amnesty USA youth, including growing visibility on social media, placing opinion pieces written by youth activists, and garnering over 150,000 page views for Amnesty USA's blog.

The #GameOfDrones Tour was and is all of the people we reached, and more. We are the young woman who said after a die-in, "For the first time, I feel like my actions can make a difference". We are the youth leaders in Texas spending whatever spare moments they have doing outreach on their campus. We are the students at the University of Cincinnati who stood up one by one, fists raised, tears in their eyes, as they affirmed their commitment to this fight.

Now more than ever, we have work to do. In October 2013, Nabeela Bibi travelled to Washington, DC, to tell Congress members how she saw her 67-year-old grandmother blown to pieces. She'd travelled over 7,000 miles, and only five Members of Congress showed up.

Congress may not be willing to hear Nabeela's heart-wrenching story, but Amnesty USA youth are making sure she isn't ignored. They are organizing actions, they are facilitating trainings, and they are co-ordinating protests. They will not be silent. Because of them, we are growing stronger every day, and because of them, we will win.

By Kalaya'an Mendoza, National Youth Program Coordinator for AIUSA



© Amnesty International / Flor Montero

Amnesty USA takes the #GameOfDrones bus tour to the University of Minnesota where students pose with a model drone (main image) and stage a die-in (above).

FIND OUT MORE >>>

For more on the #GameOfDrones tour visit www.amnestyusa.org/gameofdrones

BEHIND THE GLITTERING FACADE

Visitors to the United Arab Emirates rarely discover the stark realities hiding beneath its glossy surface: long prison sentences used to silence people calling for peaceful political reforms. An Amnesty International staff member reports from a recent visit.

It could be hard to believe that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a dark side. From the majestic Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, to the breath-taking height of the Burj Khalifa and the sparkling high-rise buildings of Dubai to the turquoise waters of Jumeirah Beach, it appears near-perfect.

But the country's brash modernity and timeless beauty belies a dark secret that its millions of tourists and foreign investors will rarely hear about.

After the uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa region, fear gripped the UAE. The authorities put even tighter limits on what people can

say or do. Anyone calling for peaceful political change can now expect to be branded as an "Islamist", arbitrarily arrested, charged under vaguely worded national security offences, and made into an outcast.

WHAT LANDS YOU IN JAIL

The "UAE94" mass trial is a dramatic example of this. On 2 July 2013, 69 of the 94 defendants – many of them human rights lawyers, judges, academics and student leaders – were sentenced to between seven and 15 years in prison on national security charges.

A number of those tried were members of al-Islah, (Reform and Social Guidance Association), a group engaged in peaceful religious and political debate since it was legally established in 1974.

Among those imprisoned is prominent human rights lawyer, Dr Mohammed al-Roken, featured in our Worldwide Appeals on page 22. He took on politically sensitive court cases against the government that no other lawyer would touch, according to one of the eight UAE94 defendants tried in absentia, Mohammed Saqer.

Other prominent prisoners include Mohammed al-Mansoori, Sheikh Dr Sultan Kayed Alqassimi, Hussain Ali al-Najjar Al-Hammadi and Saleh Mohammed al-Dhufairi.

Dubai Marina at dusk.

Amnesty believes that Mohammed al-Roken and several of the others convicted are prisoners of conscience. Our research shows that their trial was grossly unfair and rife with inconsistencies and mistakes.

Others have been imprisoned under a tough new law on cyber crimes, simply for tweeting about the UAE94 trial.

STRIPPED AND HOODED

During a recent visit to the UAE, the prisoners' relatives told me disturbing stories of their loved ones being stripped, forced to wear only a towel around their waists and hooded whenever they left their cells.

They told us about husbands, sons and brothers being taken away into secret detention and held without charge for months without access to a lawyer or their families.

During the mass trial itself, many defendants told the judge they had been tortured and ill-treated, including by being exposed to bright light 24 hours a day; their cells being deliberately overheated, beatings during long periods of solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, and hair being violently pulled from their beards and chests. One prisoner said he was hung upside down for so many hours he urinated on himself.

Their testimonies have so far been ignored. So have calls to investigate other credible allegations that statements used as evidence in court were extracted under torture.

FAMILIES HARASSED AND SILENCED

In Dubai, I noticed that most people were reluctant to talk about the trial. Those who did were very careful about what they said. Some asked us not to reveal their names. They fear reprisals, simply for talking to us.

The prisoners' families have repeatedly sought meetings and have written to public officials. But not even local media or domestic human rights groups are interested in what they have to say.

Instead, relatives have faced a campaign to silence them. They have been harassed, denied jobs, had their bank accounts frozen, and their telephones and movements monitored. At least one individual's friends have been asked by state security officials to pass on intelligence about them in return for money.

When we attended a public screening of a documentary in Dubai about the UAE94 trial, made by a new organization called the International Gulf organization (IGO), the human rights concerns documented by Amnesty International were not covered in the 40-minute video.

In the Q&A session afterwards, attended by a largely pro-government audience, we were not allowed to ask questions about the issues ignored in the video. Prisoners' family members were turned away at the door and, once again, denied a voice.

I felt frustrated. I can't begin to imagine how the families feel.

NOT FREE IN THE UAE

Mohammed al-Roken's imprisonment leaves only one UAE human rights lawyer brave enough to take on state security cases. He and his team are now also being harassed.

I have been told that all dissenting voices in the UAE have effectively been silenced. Amidst the glittering modernity here in Dubai, I fear that this sentiment is right. The international community must now be the voice of these prisoners and their families.

TAKE ACTION >>>

A message from you could help get Mohammed al-Roken released. All the information you need is on page 22-23



WORLDWIDE APPEALS

WRITE A LETTER CHANGE A LIFE

A letter from you could help free a prisoner, stop an execution or help a bereaved family receive justice.

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SILENCED

NAME: MOHAMMED AL-ROKEN
LOCATION: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Mohammed al-Roken is a prominent human rights lawyer in the UAE and long-standing Amnesty International supporter. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in July 2013 after a grossly unfair trial.

He was detained during a 2012 government crackdown on people calling for political reform in the UAE, including human rights defenders, judges, political activists, university professors and student leaders. He has acted as legal counsel in high-profile human rights cases in the UAE, and was defending several reform advocates stripped of their UAE citizenship when he was arrested.

Many of the 94 defendants in the ensuing mass trial in July 2013 reported being tortured and otherwise ill-treated in detention, including through prolonged solitary confinement, severe beatings, and sleep deprivation.

Mohammed al-Roken and 68 others – including his son-in-law – were sentenced to between seven and 15 years in prison for “plotting to overthrow the state” after an unfair trial marred by irregularities. His lawyer has only been permitted to visit him once since his sentencing.

Amnesty International considers Mohammed al-Roken a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his rights including his work as a defence lawyer representing his clients (find out more in our article on page 20).

Your letter can change his life: Please call for Mohammed al-Roken to be immediately and unconditionally released, for his conviction and prison sentence to be quashed; for him to be protected from torture or other ill-treatment, and given regular access to his lawyer and family.

Start your letter ‘Your Highness’ and send it to: His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Corniche Road, Abu Dhabi, POB 280, United Arab Emirates

Tel: +971 2 622 2228
Email: ihtimam@mopa.ae

STILL MISSING HÉCTOR

NAME: HÉCTOR RANGEL ORTIZ
LOCATION: MEXICO

Héctor Rangel Ortiz and two of his colleagues disappeared in Monclova, a city in Coahuila state, northern Mexico, on 10 November 2009. Héctor had travelled there as part of his job in the family business. He called home from a hotel, saying that the municipal police had stopped his colleagues and impounded their car, and that he was going to the police station to find out more. That was the last time anyone heard from the three men.

Héctor’s siblings, Brenda and Enrique, travelled to Monclova shortly afterwards to look for him. They soon fled the town, fearing for their lives after the police and state prosecutors warned them to stay away or the same thing would happen to them. Their family is still searching for Héctor, and have been harassed for demanding that the authorities establish where he is and bring those responsible for his disappearance to justice. The two other families are too scared to file complaints. Watch Brenda Rangel telling her own story at www.bit.ly/brendarangel

More than 26,000 people were officially listed in February 2013 as reported missing or disappeared in Mexico since 2006. Powerful criminal gangs are usually responsible, but public officials are also often involved. Overall the authorities have routinely failed to investigate.

Your letter could help bring about justice:

Please urge the Federal Attorney General to ensure that the Specialized Search Unit for Disappeared People establishes Héctor Rangel’s fate and whereabouts, investigates his disappearance fully and promptly (including leads implicating public officials), and brings those responsible to justice.

Start your letter ‘Dear Attorney General/ Estimado Señor Procurador’ and send to:

Federal Attorney General Jesús Murillo Karam, Procuraduría General de la República (PGR), Paseo de la reforma 211-213, Col. Cuauhtémoc, México, D.F., C.P. 06500

Fax: +52 55 5346 0908 (keep trying, ask for “fax”)
Email: ofproc@pgr.gob.mx

SERVING 18 YEARS FOR ATTENDING A PROTEST

NAME: DILOROM ABDUKADIROVA
LOCATION: UZBEKISTAN

Dilorom Abdukadirova, a 48-year-old mother of four, is serving an 18-year sentence in Uzbekistan. On 13 May 2005, she went with hundreds of other people to Babur Square in Andizhan, a town in south-eastern Uzbekistan. She hoped to voice her concern about the country’s economy. The authorities called the gathering an armed uprising and security forces opened fire on the mainly unarmed demonstrators.

Hundreds of people, including women and children, were killed. Terrified, Dilorom fled with around 500 other people on foot to nearby Kyrgyzstan, leaving her husband and children behind. After being moved on to a Romanian refugee camp, she was issued with an Australian refugee visa. She arrived there in February 2006, was recognized as a refugee and granted permanent residency. But Dilorom wanted to go home.

The Uzbekistani authorities assured Dilorom’s family that she could return safely, but detained her immediately upon arrival at the airport for four days in January 2010. She was detained again in March 2010, and faced several charges, including attempting to overthrow the constitutional order.

During the trial, which was unfair, Dilorom looked emaciated and had bruises on her face. We believe she is a prisoner of conscience, convicted to punish her for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.

Your letter can help Dilorom get released from prison:

Call on the Uzbekistani authorities to release Dilorom Abdukadirova immediately and unconditionally, to investigate promptly and impartially allegations that she was tortured in custody, and bring to justice any officials found responsible for torturing and ill-treating her.

Start your letter ‘Dear Prosecutor General’ and send it to:

Prosecutor General Rashidzhon Kodirov, Prosecutor General’s Office of Uzbekistan, ul. Gulyamova 66, Tashkent 700047, Uzbekistan

Tel: +998 71 133 39 17
Email: prokuratura@lawyer.uz





PHYSICIST SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS

NAME: Omid Kokabee
LOCATION: IRAN

Omid Kokabee was returning to his PhD studies in physics at the University of Texas, USA, after visiting family in Iran, when he was arrested at the airport on 30 January 2011.

After spending 15 months in pre-trial detention, Omid finally went on trial in May 2012 on charges of “contact with hostile countries” and receiving “illicit payments”. The payments referred to the University of Texas stipend for his studies. His televised trial, alongside 12 others, was unfair. No evidence against him was presented in court and he was not allowed to speak with his lawyer beforehand.

Omid was held in solitary confinement, interrogated for long periods and pressured to make “confessions”. He says he was made to write down details of people he had seen in embassies or at conferences; his interrogators then accused some of those people of being CIA operatives.

He achieved one of the highest scores for Iran’s university entrance exam and was selected among top students to meet with the country’s Supreme Leader. He has always been interested in science and undertook a double degree in Physics and Mechanical Engineering in Iran before pursuing post graduate studies in Spain and the USA.

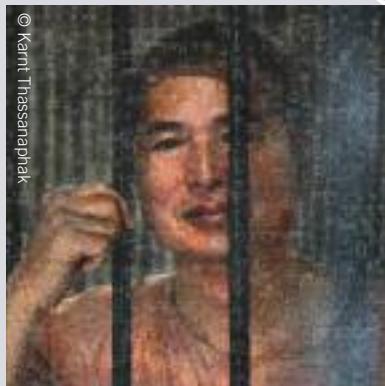
Amnesty International believes that Omid is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned because he refused to work for the Iranian military on nuclear-related projects, and for his legitimate scholarly ties with academic institutions outside Iran.

Your letter could help release him: Call on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Omid Kokabee, to quash his conviction and sentence, and grant him regular access to his lawyer.

Start your letter ‘Your Excellency’ and send it to: Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed ‘Ali Khamenei, Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid, Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info_leader@leader.ir

Twitter: @khamenei_ir



EDITOR SENTENCED FOR ‘INSULTING THE MONARCHY’

NAME: Somyot Prueksakasemsuk
LOCATION: THAILAND

Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, a father, labour rights activist and former political magazine editor, is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence for publishing two articles deemed insulting to the Thai monarchy.

Somyot was arrested at the Thailand-Cambodia border in April 2011, five days after he launched a petition calling for a parliamentary review of Thailand’s lese-majesty law. This law can punish anyone who defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, royal heir or regent with up to 15 years’ imprisonment.

On 22 July 2011, Somyot was himself charged with lese-majesty. His trial began in Bangkok in November 2011, and in January 2013 he was sentenced to five years’ in prison for each of the two articles he published. The court also reinstated a previously suspended one-year sentence for a separate case.

Somyot has been detained continuously since his arrest. He suffers from hypertension, gout and Hepatitis B, and is currently appealing against his sentence. Under Thai law he could be free pending the outcome of his appeal, but the authorities have turned down his 15 requests to be released on bail.

Write a letter and help change his life:

Please express your concern about Somyot Prueksakasemsuk’s imprisonment, and urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release him, dismiss the charges against him, and overturn his conviction. Please also urge the Royal Thai Government to protect people who are peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, and amend Article 112 of the Thailand Criminal Code to bring it in line with international human rights standards.

Start your letter ‘Dear Prime Minister’ and send it to: Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Government House, Pitsanulok Road, Dusit District, Bangkok 10300, Thailand

Fax: +66 2 288 4016 or +66 2 282 5131

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Y.Shinawatra



BLOGGER SENTENCED TO 16 YEARS IN PRISON

NAME: Tran Huynh Duy Thuc
LOCATION: VIET NAM

Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, 47, is an entrepreneur, blogger and human rights defender in Viet Nam. He was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment, followed by five years’ house arrest on release, in January 2010 for his writing and ideas about politics and economic, social and administrative reform. He is currently serving his sentence in harsh conditions at Xuan Moc prison camp in Ba Ria, Vung Tao province, in south-eastern Viet Nam.

Thuc was arrested on 24 May 2009 and initially accused of “stealing telephone lines” before being charged with “conducting propaganda against the state”. This was later changed to “attempting to overthrow the people’s administration”, for which he was convicted.

At his trial at Ho Chi Minh City People’s Court, Thuc stated that he had been tortured during pre-trial detention to try to make him confess. Witnesses said the judges deliberated for only 15 minutes before returning with the judgment. It took 45 minutes to read out, suggesting it had been prepared in advance. His conviction was upheld on appeal in May 2010.

Your letter could change Thuc’s life: Demand that Tran Huynh Duy Thuc is immediately and unconditionally released. He is a prisoner of conscience serving a long prison sentence, simply for peacefully expressing his views. Please seek assurances that, while detained, Thuc is treated according to the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, including by being allowed regular family visits and appropriate medical care.

Start your letter ‘Dear Minister’ and send it to: Minister of Public Security, Gen Tran Dai Quang, Ministry of Public Security, 44 Yet Kieu Street, Hoan Kiem District, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

Fax: +844 3942 0223

Online contact form: www.mps.gov.vn/web/guest/contact_english

A photograph of Joe Moses, a housing rights activist in Papua New Guinea, sitting at a desk in a makeshift office. He is wearing a dark polo shirt and a cap. On the desk in front of him are a computer monitor, keyboard, mouse, a green bottle, a rolled-up newspaper, and a stack of books. The background shows a green tarp and some hanging items.

'WE ARE A VIBRANT COMMUNITY'

Joe Moses, housing rights activist in Papua New Guinea, speaks to WIRE



© Vlad Sokhin

The Paga Hill informal settlement – home to around 3,000 people in Papua New Guinea’s capital Port Moresby – has been under threat of forced eviction since 2012. On 12 May 2012, while an appeal against the planned eviction was pending in court, armed police forced more than 100 people from their homes at gunpoint. Around 20 homes were destroyed. Like many others, community leader Joe Moses (pictured left), returned to the site of his demolished house and set up a tent, determined to remain in the place that he calls home. Here, he tells us why.

***“If they want to develop Paga, then the government and whoever the developer is, they have to come in and understand why people moved here, how many people are here, why people want to stay. They have to understand the basic rights of the people who are living in Paga today.*”**

***“But in this case, nothing of that sort is happening. They are going behind doors and making deals and thinking they can walk over us and this is not right.*”**

***“We’ve been here for so long. We’ve established small businesses. When they start moving us from one place to another, how are we going to start all over again? [Some people] live on the sea. That’s their lifestyle. They go and catch fish and sell them in the market. Some of us, we are living in a place where we can easily catch the bus, go to work; our kids can go to school. In terms of public transport, if we’re relocated then that’s a big problem.*”**

***“Paga is one of the best communities in Port Moresby in terms of settlement standards. It’s a viable community. Youths are participating in various programmes. We have yoga, we have church activities. We are a vibrant community.”*”**

FIND OUT MORE >>>

Find out what you can do to end forced evictions in Papua New Guinea at <http://bit.ly/PNGaction>. Look out for Amnesty’s briefing on this later in 2014.

**‘WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTEST IN THE NAME
OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM.’**

NELSON MANDELA
1918-2013
WWW.MANDELAMEMORIAL.COM

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

