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## **amnesty international handbook**

**amnesty international publications [candle]**

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Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights. The movement is organized to make it possible for ordinary people to speak up – to protest on behalf of other human beings who are at risk of abuse.

There are members of Amnesty International in more than 140 countries and territories around the world. This Amnesty International Handbook aims to provide them with a general guide to AI's policies, practices and working methods.

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## **Amnesty International Handbook**

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### **FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS**

AI – Amnesty International  
 ARABAI – Amnesty International Arabic Publishing  
 CAP – Country Action Program  
 CEDAW – UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
 EDAI – Editorial Amnistía Internacional  
 EFAI – Editions francophones d'Amnesty International  
 FGM – female genital mutilation  
 HRDs – human rights defenders  
 HRE – human rights education  
 ICC – International Criminal Court  
 ICCPR – International Convention on Civil and Political Rights  
 ICM – International Council Meeting  
 IEC – International Executive Committee  
 IGO – Intergovernmental organization  
 ILO – International Labor Organisation  
 IMF – International Monetary Fund  
 IS – International Secretariat  
 ISP – Integrated Strategic Plan  
 NGO – non-governmental organization  
 RAN – Regional Action Network  
 SCHIFM – Standing Committee on Human, Information and Financial Matters  
 SCM – Standing Committee on the Mandate  
 SCOD – Standing Committee on Organization and Development  
 SCRA – Standing Committee on Research and Action  
 UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
 UN – United Nations  
 UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
 VAW – violence against women

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### **PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

There are members of Amnesty International (AI) in more than 140 countries and territories around the world, united by their determination to work for human rights. This Amnesty International Handbook

is a basic reference manual which aims to provide a general guide to AI's policies and practices for all AI's members. It seeks to explain AI's position on human rights questions and how AI works.

This Handbook is a public document, which can be reproduced freely. Pages may be photocopied or downloaded from the AI's website, <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)>.

Most of the information in this Handbook is organized as an A to Z manual. We hope this will make it easier to find the information you seek. The Handbook starts with some brief introductions aimed primarily at those who are relatively new to AI, explaining what AI is, how it works and how you can play a part in it. Any word or phrase that appears in **bold** is explained and defined in the A-Z section. This is the eighth edition of the Amnesty International Handbook. As the AI movement changes and evolves constantly, this Handbook can never be definitive. In particular, there were major policy changes made at AI's 2001 International Council Meeting, the implications of which may not be fully reflected here. We would welcome any comments and suggestions on the content of this Handbook. Please send any such comments to the Publications Program at the International Secretariat in London. The explanations given in this Handbook do not replace AI's formal policy documents or the texts of its official decisions. To obtain these documents and texts, consult your section office or the International Secretariat in London.

For more information, or to obtain advice on a particular problem, please consult the appropriate body of AI. If there is an AI section or coordinating structure in your country, contact the section office or the appropriate coordinator. If they cannot answer your question, they will forward it to the International Secretariat.

If there is no one to contact in your country, contact the International Secretariat directly at:

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Website: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

BOX:

“We need organizations and people like you who will let the killers know that the entire world sees their actions... Don't be downhearted when no replies come back. Your action has a great effect, because murderers and violators are cowards, so cowardly that they do it hooded in darkness. They feel under siege when organizations like Amnesty International take action.”

Bertha Oliva de Nativi, human rights defender, whose husband “disappeared” in Honduras in 1981  
End box

## WHAT IS AI?

- AI is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights. Its members give freely of their time and energy in solidarity with the victims of human rights violations.

- AI is a campaigning organization. It researches, documents and reports on human rights abuses, but its work does not end there. AI members take practical, effective action to stop these abuses. AI is organized to make it possible for ordinary people to speak up – to protest on behalf of other human beings who are in danger.

- AI's work is built upon international solidarity. Its members come from many different cultures and backgrounds, with widely different beliefs, united by a determination to work for a world where everyone enjoys human rights.
- AI is committed to global coverage: to working for human rights everywhere. We work for diverse victims, under all kinds of governments, whether they are in the spotlight of media coverage or their suffering is ignored by the world at large.
- AI believes in effective action for the individual victim. Our research, our campaigning, our efforts to change laws and policies, our appeals and letters, are ultimately aimed at affecting the fate of real women, men and children. Even when dealing with atrocities on a massive scale, AI tries in its reports to cite individual victims and recount their experiences. These victims are not just statistics. They have names. They have dates of birth. They have histories. And each has a right to justice.
- AI is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion. It does not support or oppose any government or political system, nor does it necessarily support the views of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect. To ensure its independence, AI does not seek or accept money from governments or political parties for its work in documenting and campaigning against human rights abuses. Its funding depends on the contributions of its worldwide membership and fundraising activities.
- AI is a democratic, self-governing movement. It answers only to its own worldwide membership. All policy decisions are taken by elected bodies.
- AI forms a global community of human rights defenders who share the principles of international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

**BOX:**

“Your actions, combined with the chain of solidarity of activists all over the world, have led to my release... I do not know how to thank you... Without this chain of solidarity, I would still be in that regrettably well-known prison... I encourage you to continue working on behalf of the prisoners who, all over the world, are rotting in the jails of dictators... my greetings to all the Amnesty International activists who wrote to me, encouraging me to hold out. I can tell you that your letters were confiscated by the security police, and it is only since my release that I have been able to read some letters sent from the United States, which slipped through the net... my warmest thanks and sincerest gratitude.”  
 Prisoner of conscience Ngarléjy Yorongar le Moïban who was released on 5 February 1999 after eight months in detention in Chad  
 end box

**HOW AI STARTED**

More than four decades ago, two Portuguese students lifted their glasses and raised a toast to freedom. For that simple act, they were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. The story horrified British lawyer Peter Benenson, who decided to take action. Peter Benenson wrote to the British newspaper, *The Observer*, calling for an international campaign to protect “forgotten prisoners”. His idea was to get people to bombard authorities around the world with letters of protest. On 28 May 1961, the newspaper ran a full-length feature called *The Forgotten Prisoners*, which launched Peter Benenson's year-long campaign, *Appeal for Amnesty, 1961*. *The Forgotten Prisoners* called on people everywhere to protest – impartially and peacefully – against the imprisonment of men and women around the world for their political or religious beliefs. The

feature described these detainees as prisoners of conscience – thus coining a new phrase which would enter the vocabulary of world affairs.

The article received a tremendous response. Within a month, more than a thousand readers had sent letters of support and offers of practical help. They also sent details of the cases of many more prisoners of conscience.

Within six months, what had started as a brief publicity effort was being developed into a permanent, international movement. Within a year the new organization had sent delegations to four countries to make representations on behalf of prisoners and had taken up 210 cases. Its members had organized national bodies in seven countries.

The principles of impartiality and independence were established from the start. The emphasis was on the international protection of human rights: people worldwide would campaign for individuals anywhere in the world. As AI grew, its focus expanded to take in not just prisoners of conscience, but other victims of human rights abuses – such as torture, “disappearances” and the death penalty – throughout the world.

In 1977, the movement’s efforts were recognized through the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1978, it was honoured with a United Nations (UN) Human Rights Award.

Today AI mobilizes volunteer activists in every part of the world. AI has more than one million members and subscribers in over 140 countries and territories, united by a determination to work for a world where everyone enjoys human rights. There are thousands of local groups, youth and student groups and other specialist groups, as well as individual members and coordinators, in more than 100 countries and territories. There are nationally organized sections in more than 50 countries, and in more than 20 others, there are other coordinating structures. AI is a globally recognized and respected organization which sends delegations to meet governments and intergovernmental organizations such as the UN and takes part in international debate on human rights issues.

#### **BOX:**

“All the support and solidarity which you have shown us will continue to be of vital importance to guarantee the life and physical integrity of our kidnapped workmates... Your work and voice encourage us to feel that we are not alone, and that we are part of a great collective of men and women that work day by day to make Colombia a land of peace. All those calls, faxes, e-mails, all those resources and time spent on us, strengthen even more our commitment to help construct a better, just and peaceful Colombia. The life and physical integrity of our workmates, as with other Colombians who receive no attention in the media, depend in large part on this solidarity and accompaniment which you have shown us.”

A letter to AI from the Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), a non-governmental human rights organization, in Colombia. On 18 February 1999 Jorge Salazar and Jairo Bedoya, human rights workers with the IPC, were released after being held by paramilitary forces for three weeks. Their colleagues, Olga Rodas and Claudia Tamayo, had been released 10 days previously.

End box

## **HOW AI WORKS**

### **AI’s vision and mission**

AI’s vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

In pursuit of this vision, AI’s mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out the human rights which are fundamental to the dignity and development of every human being. These include political rights, such as freedom of opinion, expression and association; economic rights, such as the right to work and to an adequate standard of living; civil rights, such as equality before the law and the right to marriage; and social or

cultural rights, such as the right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community. It is the responsibility of every government of every state in the world to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all people in their territory. AI aims to put pressure on governments to accept and act on this responsibility.

AI holds that all human rights are interdependent and endorses and promotes all the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, AI cannot give the same attention to all abuses of human rights in its work, which is why it concentrates on ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination. The mandate decided on by its members determines the permissible boundaries of AI's research and action. Historically, the main focus of AI's campaigning has been to:

- free all prisoners of conscience;
- ensure a prompt and fair trial for all political prisoners;
- abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- end extrajudicial executions and "disappearances";
- fight impunity by working to ensure that perpetrators of such human rights abuses are brought to justice in accordance with international standards.

Over the years AI has expanded this mandate to encompass human rights abuses committed by non-governmental bodies and private individuals (non-state actors). AI opposes abuses by armed political groups (in control of territory or operating in opposition to governments), such as hostage-taking, torture and unlawful killings. AI opposes human rights abuses against civilians and non-combatants by both sides during armed conflict. AI has also targeted abuses in the home or community where governments have been complicit or have failed to take effective action. Female genital mutilation, abuses in the context of the trafficking in women and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people – where tolerated or condoned by the authorities – have all fallen within this category.

### **AI's work**

AI seeks to disclose human rights abuses accurately, quickly and persistently. It systematically and impartially researches the facts of individual cases and patterns of human rights abuses. These findings are publicized, and members, supporters and staff mobilize public pressure on governments and others, including armed political groups, intergovernmental organizations and companies, to stop the abuses. In addition to its work against specific abuses of human rights, AI urges all governments to observe the rule of law, and to ratify and implement human rights standards; it carries out a wide range of human rights educational activities; and it encourages intergovernmental organizations, individuals, and all organs of society to support and respect human rights.

AI's main activities are carrying out research into human rights abuses, publicizing them and campaigning to end them. AI activists campaign for change, such as the release of individual prisoners of conscience or for the commutation of a death sentence, for changes in the law and for changes in people's awareness of human rights. There is a wide range of types of action which AI members take:

- They make direct appeals to governments and others responsible for human rights abuses, calling for action on specific cases and changes in policy and practice.
- They lobby intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations to make human rights central to their programs, to set and implement human rights standards and to take action on specific issues and situations.
- They lobby their own governments to take action against human rights abuses in other countries and to amend their own legislation, policies and practices, in relation to human rights issues including refugee protection, and the export of arms and other military, security and police transfers.
- They put pressure on other actors, such as companies to promote and protect human rights.
- They work in cooperation with other non-governmental organizations such as community or rights groups or professional associations, such as doctors' or teachers' organizations and provide training and support for human rights activists.

- They provide support to victims and their families by giving relief assistance to individual prisoners of conscience and victims of torture.
- They support and organize human rights education programs that help people learn about human rights and how to defend them.
- They mobilize their communities by staging local, national and international events and giving information to the news media.

**BOX:**

“Your work is extremely important and significant. There were improvements in the way I was treated whenever there was a lot of pressure from human rights organizations, the international media and other governments.”

Chinese former prisoner of conscience Wei Jingsheng, talking to AI members following his release from prison in 1997

end box

**AI’s guiding principles**

All AI’s work is guided by the principles of international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

**International solidarity:** Human rights transcend national borders, and AI was founded in the belief that the protection of human rights is an international and not merely a national responsibility. AI members come from many cultures and backgrounds, but we work in solidarity with each other, with victims of human rights abuses, and with the worldwide human rights movement.

**Effective action for the individual victim:** Our research, our campaigning, our efforts to change laws and policies, our appeals and letters, are determined not by politics or ideology, but by what will help real women, men and children. AI started its campaign in 1961 with a newspaper article about two prisoners of conscience in Portugal. More than 40 years later, even when we are dealing with atrocities on a massive scale, we try in our reports to describe the fate of individual victims, to give the stories of their lives. We try to show the individual human suffering behind the headline statistics.

**Global coverage:** AI works for human rights for all everywhere. AI works for diverse victims, under all kinds of governments. AI does not make comparisons between countries or “rate” them, but addresses human rights abuses according to their level and seriousness.

**Universality and indivisibility:** Human rights are the same for all people regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, political or other opinion, national or social origin. We are all born free and equal in dignity and rights – human rights are universal. To live in dignity, human beings are entitled to freedom, security and decent standards of living – human rights are indivisible.

**Impartiality:** AI does not support or oppose any government or political system, nor the views of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect. All AI sections and groups work on a wide variety of different regions of the world, with differing political situations.

**Independence:** AI is independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion. It does not support or oppose any government or political system, nor does it necessarily support the views or the causes of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect. To ensure its independence, AI does not seek or accept money from governments or political parties for its work in documenting and campaigning against human rights abuses. Its funding depends on the contributions of its worldwide membership and fundraising activities.

By establishing and asserting our impartiality, we give weight to the central premise of AI’s work, that all people are entitled to the human rights described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By remaining both independent and impartial, AI deflects the argument governments often try to make that AI is criticizing them because of a political bias rather than because of their human rights record, and strengthens AI’s standing and the reliability of its research in the eyes of the international community.

**An international democratic organization**

AI is an international movement with members all over the world. In order to work together AI's activities are organized through the following basic structures:

- At a local level, AI members form groups of five or more, who work together on AI actions.
- At a national level, the work of AI members and groups is developed, supported and coordinated by sections or other coordinating structures.
- At an international level, the work of the sections, groups and members is developed and supported by the International Secretariat, AI's central office. It is at the International Secretariat that AI's research into human rights abuses is coordinated and where most of the campaigning actions undertaken by the worldwide membership are initiated.

AI is democratic and self-governing. That means that the members decide what issues AI should be working on, and how AI should work. This is achieved by the following decision-making process:

- Groups of AI members discuss issues and propose resolutions to the general meetings of their national section and governing bodies. Sections hold general meetings that debate policy proposals and vote on resolutions.
- The sections send the resolutions to the International Council. The International Council is AI's main governing body. It is made up of representatives from every section who meet every two years at the International Council Meeting (ICM). It alone has the power to amend the organization's Statute, determine overall policy and programs, and set the IS budget.
- During each ICM, the International Executive Committee (IEC) is elected to implement its decisions. The nine volunteer members of the IEC form AI's governing body between ICMs and provide general supervision of the work of the IS.
- The IEC appoints the movement's Secretary General, who runs the day-to-day affairs of AI, acts as its primary spokesperson and is chief executive officer of the IS.
- The IS implements the policies of the movement, collects and analyses information about human rights abuses, and advises sections, groups and members on their campaigning activities.

**BOX:**

"I have promised Amnesty International that I will never sign the death sentence for a fellow human being. ... Life is sacred. I believe a person can reform. I believe that forgiveness makes all of us better persons. In the cause of truth and justice, I invite all heads of state in Africa... to abolish the death sentence, to work for the removal of violence among our peoples and so to prepare a better future for our children."

Dr Bakili Muluzi, President of Malawi, 1998

End box

## **HOW EFFECTIVE IS AI?**

AI is based on the belief that individuals working together in international solidarity can bring about real change. In a world where those with power sometimes act with callous disregard for human suffering, this may seem hopelessly optimistic. However, while it is often difficult to prove direct links between AI's actions and improvements in the human rights situation, over the years AI has established a concrete record of achievement.

Since it began in 1961, AI has made appeals on behalf of thousands of individual victims of human rights abuses. Many of these people experienced an improvement in their situation. Some were released from prison, some were given shorter sentences, or received a fair trial, or were treated more humanely in detention or had a death sentence commuted, and so on.

Since the first Urgent Action appeal was issued in 1973 AI has initiated some 16,600 Urgent Actions on behalf of men, women and children in immediate danger. In about one third of new Urgent Action cases, AI learns of some improvement in the situation of the person or people named in the appeal. There are other ways in which AI has made a tangible contribution to human rights. AI has, together with other institutions, pressed the UN to set and improve international standards for the protection of



human rights. Since 1961 a whole body of international law has been established to protect people all over the world from abuses. AI can also take pride in its contribution towards establishing human rights as an issue that transcends national and partisan politics. Perhaps AI's most significant achievement has been in mobilizing public opinion to put human rights firmly on the international agenda.

Every AI action has specific goals. By evaluating how far we have been able to achieve them, we learn valuable lessons for the future. Sometimes results take years. Throughout the 1990s, AI members campaigned for the establishment of an International Criminal Court with jurisdiction over atrocities such as genocide and war crimes. Finally, in 1998, a statute establishing a permanent International Criminal Court was overwhelmingly adopted by delegates to a UN conference in Rome, Italy. AI members then joined more than 800 other non-governmental organizations in a worldwide campaign to persuade as many countries as possible to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court without delay.

Ultimately, all our research and campaigning is aimed at affecting the fate of individuals. Releases of prisoners of conscience are the most easily observable, but not the only, consequence of AI's work. Conditions within a prison may be improved; torture may be stopped or prevented; a death sentence may be commuted and the victims of human rights abuses may be given real hope by the knowledge that they have not been forgotten.

As an organization, AI does not claim credit when a prisoner is released, when clemency is granted or when a government's human rights record improves. Such changes are the result of many factors, not the least of which are the actions (often taken at considerable risk) of families and friends of the victims of human rights abuses. However, former prisoners, torture victims and others who have suffered human rights abuses often insist that international pressure secured their freedom and saved their lives. Every year, many people whose cases AI has taken up, their lawyers and families, thank us for our efforts on their behalf. Such messages of thanks and solidarity inspire AI members to keep working for human rights, and a handful of these, and other quotes and examples showing the positive effects of AI's work, are included throughout this handbook.

## HOW YOU CAN WORK WITH AI

AI is a membership organization that relies on the active participation of its members to achieve its goals. We encourage all people who support our objectives and principles to become members and take an active role in our campaigns.

### **Each voice makes a difference**

AI members can play a role in the organization's work in many ways, and can work either in groups or as individuals. Individual activists can support AI by:

- writing letters making direct appeals to the authorities on behalf of a prisoner of conscience or victim of other human rights abuses – Worldwide Appeal cases can be found in AI newsletters and on the website at <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)>;
- joining a network such as the Urgent Actions network;
- donating money to AI;
- distributing AI publications to local libraries and bookshops, and encouraging friends and family to join the organization;
- alerting their own political representative and local news media to AI's concerns.

### **BOX:**

“I was being kept naked in an underground cell. When the first 200 letters came, the guards gave me back my clothes. The next 200 letters came and the prison officers came to see me. When the next pile of letters arrived, the director got in touch with his superior. The letters kept coming, 3,000 of them, and the President called me to his office. He showed me an enormous box of letters he had received, and said: ‘How is it that a trade union leader like you has so many friends all over the world?’”

Union leader from the Dominican Republic  
on whose behalf AI campaigned, 1975  
end box

### **Working in a group**

Many members participate in AI by joining a group based in their community, whether this is their local neighbourhood, village or town or their workplace, school, college or place of worship. AI groups are official units of the organization, and some of its most important work is done at group level. AI groups meet regularly, usually around once a month, to plan and put into action the work they are going to do for AI. The meetings also give the opportunity for members to discuss AI issues, and may include guest speakers, such as former prisoners of conscience, videos or activities such as letter-writing.

### **AI groups:**

- work on specific Action Files assigned to the group, which usually involves making direct appeals either for an individual prisoner or group of prisoners, or on a thematic issue such as the death penalty;
- take action as part of a network such as a Regional Action Network (RAN);
- raise awareness of AI's campaigns and objectives and encourage people to join the organization through public demonstrations and symbolic events, media and publicity work, outreach and human rights education;
- raise money for AI through fundraising activities;
- take part in AI decision-making.

### **Direct appeals – the power of the written word**

Writing letters is a simple and effective way to put direct pressure on powerful officials. Sending direct appeals on individual cases was the first work of AI and remains a core part of AI campaigning.

Through its research, AI provides its members and groups with appeal cases on which to write letters. Groups can decide how many cases they wish to work on in a year and how they are going to organize their work. They may join the Urgent Action network, a Regional Action Network or a thematic network focusing on a specific kind of case, such as a medical or women's network. They may wish to take up an Action File, make direct appeals part of their work on a campaign or follow up some of the monthly Worldwide Appeals. AI encourages groups to spread their work across different regions and issues throughout the year.

As well as making direct appeals themselves, groups encourage others to take part by distributing leaflets with information for appeals or by asking members of the public to sign a petition or printed postcards containing an appeal.

### **How AI groups work with their section and coordinators**

As well as training groups when they form, sections provide local groups in their country with information on appeal cases and national and international campaigns. They assign Action Files, and support groups' campaigning activities by providing campaigning materials and guest speakers. Many sections have a human rights education program and produce material such as teaching kits for groups to use. They will also be able to give help and advice to groups on their outreach work. Most sections have a groups coordinator, who will be the first point of contact for groups within the section. Groups may also get advice and support on different aspects of their work, such as campaigning, outreach or media work from relevant coordinators in the section. In countries where there is no national section, groups are given information and support by the appropriate Regional Development Team at the IS.

BOX:

### **Hints and tips on letter-writing**

For your letters to make an impact, all you have to do is express your sincere concern about victims of human rights violations and end the letter with a plain request. In your letters,

- be polite – your goal is to help the victims, not to berate the officials;
- be informed: include enough details of the case to show that you know the facts;
- be impartial: avoid political comments;
- follow any specific instructions given by AI in each case, for example if AI has warned that the organization should not be mentioned. This is especially important when writing directly to the victim of human rights abuses or their family;
- limit the message to one side of a page if you can – a short letter is as effective as a long one;
- write clearly and simply in your own style and language, unless AI has suggested that letters are sent in a specific language.

In your letters you may also:

- say who you are, including your background and occupation. This shows the letter is genuine and that people from all walks of life are following events in the country concerned;
- give a short description of AI, stressing the worldwide nature of its work and its impartiality (unless you have been instructed not to mention AI);
- refer to the relevant articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or other international or national laws and standards. AI will provide you with this information;
- make a specific appeal, recommendation or request, and ask for a reply to your letter. AI will suggest appeals and recommendations to make.

#### **Who to write to**

AI will give you the names and addresses of the authority figures relevant to each case. If you cannot afford to post many letters abroad, you can send them to the target country's embassy in your own country, which will forward the letters to its home government.

Embassies may have staff who can translate correspondence for forwarding to home governments.

Even if you can provide a translation, it is a good idea to send the letter in your own language too. If you do send the letter direct, sending a copy to the embassy of the target government in your country will increase the pressure of the appeal.

There are no strict rules about how to address important officials in letters. AI appeals often suggest the best form of salutation to use. Here is a general guide:

- Heads of state, such as presidents: Your Excellency or Dear President (name)
- Kings, queens and other monarchs: Your Majesty
- Prime ministers, government ministers: Dear Prime Minister, Dear Minister
- Diplomats of ambassadorial rank: Your Excellency

All letters in English can be closed with Yours truly or Yours sincerely, or with the slightly more formal Yours respectfully and sincerely.

#### **Following up**

Keep copies of the letters that you send so you will be better able to respond if you get a reply. If this does happen, acknowledge it immediately as a matter of courtesy and send a copy to your country coordinator if there is one, section office or the IS. They may then suggest points you can make in your response. If you do not receive a reply from the government official within a reasonable time, send a polite query. However, do not be discouraged if you receive no reply. AI has seen striking examples of the effect of letter-writing even when the letters were never acknowledged.

End box

#### **Setting up an AI group**

If there are no AI groups in your community you may wish to set one up. New groups must have at least five members and undergo a training period of around six months undertaken by their country section or the IS. During this time, the members carry out a limited campaigning program while they concentrate on learning about AI and on building the group's resources. Once its members have demonstrated that they have the knowledge and the means to do consistent, effective campaigning, the group is accredited in the movement.

Each group should have a structure including a chairperson and a coordinator, a treasurer to handle the group's finances and a secretary to record decisions and keep a register of members. Groups might also have particular members responsible for fundraising, recruitment, media relations, Urgent Actions, Action Files, events and campaigns.

As official units of AI, all groups are expected to:

- observe the AI Statute (see Appendix 1);
- be committed to the entire AI mandate and strive to campaign across a range of mandate issues;
- observe the decisions of AI's elected governing bodies;
- report on their activities every six or 12 months to its country section or the IS;
- ensure political impartiality and independence in their campaigning;
- operate in an open and independent way;
- aim to attract members from the widest possible spectrum of society;
- train members in human rights and the work of AI;
- raise money to support their work and make contributions to the international movement.

Activists who wish to start an AI group should contact their section office or, in countries where there is no section, the appropriate Regional Development Team at the IS.

**BOX:**

“I cannot tell you how wonderful it feels to be free again and to be able to write you this note. It is something I have wanted to do since 1997 when I received my first batch of cards... generated through Amnesty's efforts. It is impossible to paint an accurate picture of [my] reactions as I sat in that tiny cell, the floor carpeted with cards and envelopes. It was deeply touching, greatly encouraging, and strengthening. Thereafter, I knew that I was not alone, and held on to the thought till the end... Maybe you just sent one card – but all of these cards are like little drops of water that combine to create an avalanche of pressure.”

Chris Anyanwu, Nigerian newspaper editor, following her release from prison in 1998. She was one of several human rights defenders sentenced to long prison terms in 1995 after secret and grossly unfair treason trials by a military tribunal.

End box

## **AI IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Faced by human rights atrocities and continuing conflicts, it is easy to forget how much has been achieved since the middle of the last century. The rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have inspired struggles which have changed the face of the world. They have motivated mass movements against discrimination on the grounds of race and gender which have transformed societies. They have become a rallying cry for a human rights movement which has grown beyond recognition and spread throughout the world. They have been elaborated upon and codified in international human rights treaties, as well as many national constitutions and laws. They have provided a principled foundation for UN and regional initiatives to address human rights problems, to secure peace, and to reduce poverty, combat illiteracy and safeguard health.

But for most people, the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are little more than a paper promise – a promise that has not been fulfilled for the 1.3 billion people who struggle to survive on less than US\$1 a day; for the 35,000 children who die of malnutrition and preventable diseases every day; for the billion adults, most of them women, who are illiterate; for the prisoners of conscience languishing in jails in every region of the world; for the victims of torture and ill-treatment in more than 150 countries; for the thousands of people sentenced to death or executed each year; for the tens of thousands unlawfully killed each year in conflicts fuelled by injustice, inequality and human rights abuses.

All of the human rights violations that AI has been combating for decades continue to blight people's lives around the planet. In some societies the prison gates have been opened and the prisoners of conscience freed. At least 11 former prisoners of conscience have gone on to become heads of state or government. In many societies, however, other forms of repression have emerged, including mass extrajudicial executions and "disappearances". Today, many of the victims for whom AI works suffer human rights abuses outside prison walls. They are people killed during armed conflicts, women who are maimed or killed because of violence in their home or community, victims of police brutality in the streets.

We are now living in a world where the end of the Cold War has revived ethnic and nationalist tensions on an unprecedented scale. Political upheavals and the unequal distribution of wealth are spurring mass migrations and exposing intolerance and racism in countries that proclaim themselves free and democratic.

AI was born at a time of widespread global radicalization and drew its strength from people determined to express solidarity with the victims of government repression. In the 1960s the peoples of Africa were struggling to free themselves from colonial domination, and people living under authoritarian regimes in Spain, Portugal or the USSR were fighting to assert their right to dissent. AI said, "let opinions flow freely", and we organized to unlock the cells of the dissenters.

When, in the 1970s and 1980s, military juntas used torture to break the opposition in Latin America, we campaigned to secure an international convention against torture and to close down the torture chambers. When political repression moved out of the prisons to the streets in the form of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, we took on these new violations. AI responded to the proliferation of armed conflicts in the 1990s and early 21st century by adjusting its mandate to address all the combatants, not just governments.

AI has enlarged its focus beyond freedom of opinion to encompass identity-based abuses – abuses based on discrimination. We work not only for people who are targeted because of what they think, but for those who are at risk because of who they are.

This is not a turn away from our roots; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a product of revulsion against the Holocaust – and genocide is the ultimate identity-based human rights violation.

#### BOX:

"Dear Friends

Let me tell you from the bottom of my heart how grateful I am to all of you who work in such a prestigious organization as Amnesty International which fights for the respect of life and of the universal rights of societies around the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to tell ... everyone at Amnesty International that thanks to your support on 3 March 2000, when I was being persecuted and my life was under threat, I am still alive today. I will never forget the people who supported me and my organization, COPA (Coordinating Body of Popular Organizations of the Aguan)...

Finally, I would like to urge you not to become discouraged in your work to help men and women who raise their voices in protest to support their people. Friends, it is people like you who are the most beautiful thing in this world, and I ask God to give you a long life, more wisdom and a heart full of love and solidarity towards the world.

To all the men and women who have supported me, I send my best wishes from the bottom of my heart.

Coronado Avila M."

Coronado Avila, a grassroots activists campaigning to defend the land rights of peasant farmers in Honduras, who had been receiving death threats. An Urgent Action was issued on 3 March 2000. In July 2001 Coronado Avila wrote to AI thanking all those who wrote appeals on his behalf.

End box

The years since the fall of the Berlin Wall have seen massive political, social and economic changes. The human rights movement has grown in strength and numbers, and consciousness of human rights is

undoubtedly greater than ever. Yet repression, poverty and war devastate the lives of much of humanity. The optimism of many in 1990 has been replaced by well-founded fears, and human rights activism is needed today more than ever.

Globalization – the spread of the free market economy, multi-party political systems and technological change – has led to greater freedom and prosperity for some, and growing destitution and despair for many. Global economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organization have come to dominate many national political and economic agendas. At the same time multinational corporations have intensified their concentration of wealth and power.

AI has not stood still in the face of the new human rights challenges arising from globalization. It has acknowledged the relative neglect of economic, social and cultural rights by the international human rights movement, and has taken steps to address these rights more directly in its own work. AI members reaffirmed in 1997 their determination to promote all human rights, including socio-economic rights, and decided to campaign for human rights within the business and financial sectors, and in the aid, trade and investment policies of governments and intergovernmental bodies. In 2001, they decided to intensify and develop this work further.

As AI's mandate has grown and evolved, the question has arisen – should the movement take action to oppose grave abuses of all human rights? It is already committed to promoting all human rights. This question will be examined in detail over the coming few years, before AI's members take a decision on the issue.

As AI evolves and adapts to the changing world, strategic thinking, creativity and energy will be at a premium. A major new challenge has been the breakdown in some countries of the established power structures which have traditionally been the targets of AI appeals. New technology and global media networks can quickly make these crises dominate public and political consciousness the world over. But this attention can be selective. Other crises, with all their human tragedies, can remain forgotten or be ignored.

AI today is one part of a large and dynamic movement that has succeeded in placing and keeping the struggle for human rights at centre stage. It has done so not in an abstract sense but by campaigning directly and often successfully on behalf of countless thousands of individuals around the world subjected to abuses of their human rights.

## A-Z OF TERMS

### Action

Action is the general word for many sorts of AI activities. AI action takes the following forms:

- Approaches to **intergovernmental organizations**
- **Action Files**
- **Campaigns**
- **Company** approaches
- **Crisis response** actions
- **Demonstrations** and **symbolic events**
- **Direct appeals** through **letter-writing** and **petitions**
- **Human rights education**
- Lobbying home governments
- **Media and publicity work**
- **Missions**
- **Outreach**
- **Regional Action Networks**
- **Urgent Actions**
- **Worldwide Appeals**

Actions can vary in length and size from short intensive bursts of activity, such as Urgent Actions or crisis response actions, to long-term campaigns involving several different types of pressure (such as direct appeals and publicity) and many AI sections and groups.

The **International Secretariat** and **sections** determine what course of action to take in response to human rights abuses in accordance with strategies agreed by AI members. Factors which are taken into account include:

- the urgency of the situation;
- the most effective timing and scale of any action;
- the government or other (such as armed opposition group) authorities, influential personalities, organizations and media which should be addressed within the country;
- the governments, intergovernmental organizations and others with influence or interests in the country concerned, including economic actors such as international corporations;
- the AI networks to be involved in the action;
- the resources available to AI.

### Action Files

Action Files are dossiers of information about a particular case or group of cases or an issue concerning human rights. These are assigned to **groups** as the basis for their campaigning activities.

Action Files may cover any aspect of AI's **mandate**. The group might be asked to "adopt" a **prisoner of conscience** (take up their case for **action**), press for information on a "**disappearance**" or make appeals on a particular issue such as the **death penalty** in a specific country. Groups assigned Action Files will receive background information, addresses for appeals, advice on strategy and tactics as well as guidelines on options for action. Groups are expected to draw on their own resources to carry out the action.

Action File assignments usually last for more than a year and could last much longer. This enables AI to maintain pressure on the target authorities over a long period and creates a high level of commitment and initiative from activists. Action Files are usually allocated to more than one group. For Action Files on a theme, as many as 40 groups may work together on the issues.

There are typically several hundred new Action Files issued annually, although the number varies each year. Approximately 1,000 AI groups are working on more than one Action File at any time.

### Annual report

The Amnesty International Report is a book published annually which contains an overview of AI's work throughout the previous year and a summary of AI's concerns worldwide, presented country by country. It is a basic reference document used by governments, **intergovernmental organizations**, **non-governmental organizations** and the news media. AI members use it for approaches to the **media**, for outreach and for building long-term community awareness of **human rights**. The report is available in various language editions from sections, the **International Secretariat** or through AI **websites**.

### ARABAI

AI's Arabic language program, currently managed by the International Secretariat in London, provides AI reports, documents and campaigning materials in Arabic for use by AI's Arabic-speaking membership. The program also runs an Arabic language website at <[www.amnesty-arabic.org](http://www.amnesty-arabic.org)> which makes Arabic language materials available to both AI members and a wider public. It is intended that ARABAI will in the longer term be established in the region as an autonomous **decentralized unit**.

### Arbitrary detention

According to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, no one may be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or imprisonment. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention describes deprivation of liberty as "arbitrary" in three kinds of cases:

- 1) Where there is no legal basis for detention. This includes those held without charge or trial or despite a judicial order for their release, or those still in prison after the expiry of their sentence.
- 2) An arrest or detention which is lawful under national standards may nonetheless be arbitrary under international standards, for example if the law under which the person is detained is vague, excessively broad, or is in violation of other fundamental standards such as the right to freedom of expression.
- 3) When violations of the **fair trial** rights of the detained person, such as the right to legal counsel, are sufficiently grave.

### **Armed conflict**

AI's mandate does not make an explicit distinction between the rights the organization seeks to protect in peacetime and in wartime. The **Statute** commits AI to promote all **human rights**, and to undertake research and action focused on preventing grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, regardless of the situation in which they occur. Thus, in armed conflict situations AI continues to oppose the **death penalty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, "disappearances", extrajudicial executions**, and the imprisonment of **prisoners of conscience**.

AI takes no position on armed conflict, military service (although see **Conscientious objection**) or conscription (except in the case of **child soldiers**). It does, however, oppose deliberate attacks on civilians and **indiscriminate attacks** in armed conflicts and urges all parties involved to respect standards set out in **international humanitarian law**. AI's policies on armed conflict are in accordance with, but not necessarily limited by, standards of international humanitarian law in addition to **international human rights standards**.

AI raises human rights concerns in relation to military interventions and peacekeeping operations by the UN and other **intergovernmental organizations**. AI holds governments and **companies** to account for arms transfers to armed forces and armed political groups which contribute to serious abuses (see **Military, security and police transfers**), and urges companies to speak out against human rights violations. AI campaigns for an end to the recruitment of child soldiers and for the protection of children in armed conflicts. AI has formalized its "**crisis response**" procedures so that the whole movement can react more rapidly and systematically to human rights crises – sudden upsurges of human rights abuses – which usually occur as a result of armed conflict.

AI's work on **impunity** has contributed to major developments in international law on bringing to justice those responsible for the most serious human rights violations, including war crimes, such as the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. AI also campaigns for the protection of people who have been **internally displaced** or become **refugees** as a result of armed conflict.

### **Armed humanitarian intervention**

External military intervention for the purposes of ending humanitarian or human rights crises. Such interventions may be initiated by or through the UN or other intergovernmental organizations, or by governments.

AI neither supports nor opposes armed humanitarian intervention. However, AI has criticized such forces when they have themselves been involved in human rights abuses. Examples include the UN forces in Somalia between 1992 and 1995 which killed and arbitrarily detained hundreds of Somali civilians, including children, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Kosovo. It has also deplored the selective response of the international community and its failure to take effective action on other serious human rights crises, for example the genocide in Rwanda, the killing of thousands of Kurdish civilians by Turkish security forces and the grave violations committed by Russian forces in Chechnya.

### **Armed political groups**



Armed political groups – sometimes also called non-governmental entities or armed opposition groups – are non-governmental groups that use armed force for political reasons.

AI opposes **torture**, hostage-taking, **unlawful killings**, and other grave abuses by armed political groups. (AI uses the term “abuses” for acts committed by armed political groups, reserving the term “violations” for acts committed by state forces in violation of their international legal obligations.) In opposing these abuses, the movement makes its protest known through its own **publications** and the **news media**. If **direct appeals** to such a group are felt to be effective, AI may make them, basing its position on the minimum standards set out in **international humanitarian law**, which apply to governments and opposition groups alike.

While AI may condemn an armed political group for committing an abuse, or take other actions, AI’s stand does not constitute recognition of any special legal status of such groups. Nor does AI’s criticism of them change AI’s focus on government responsibilities: governments have a legal responsibility to observe international human rights law and to protect those under their formal authority.

### **Asylum-seekers**

Asylum-seekers are people seeking protection abroad who have not yet been formally recognized as **refugees**.

AI seeks to ensure that all asylum-seekers have access to a fair and satisfactory asylum procedure. This is essential in order to ensure that people who would risk serious human rights abuses if returned to a particular country are identified as such and afforded protection. AI opposes the detention of asylum-seekers and refugees unless they have been charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or unless the authorities can demonstrate in each individual case that the detention is necessary, that it is on grounds prescribed by law, and that it is for one of the reasons which international standards recognize may be legitimate grounds for detaining asylum-seekers (to verify identity; to determine the elements on which an asylum claim is based; to deal with cases where the asylum-seeker has destroyed travel or identity documents or used fraudulent documents in order to mislead the authorities in the country of asylum; or to protect national security or public order).

AI calls for each asylum-seeker who is detained to be brought promptly before a judicial or similar body to determine whether his or her detention is lawful and in accordance with international standards. Detention of asylum-seekers can sometimes be called arbitrary (see **Arbitrary detention**). Many AI sections work on behalf of asylum-seekers and refugees in their country.

See also *Non-refoulement*.

### **Boycotts**

See **Companies** and **Sanctions**.

### **Businesses**

See **Companies**.

### **Campaigning Manual**

The *Amnesty International Campaigning Manual* (AI Index: ACT 10/002/2001) provides guiding principles for campaigning, as well as questions to be asked, useful tips, pitfalls to avoid, checklists, inspiring examples and sources of information. It is available either through sections or the **International Secretariat**.

### **Campaigns**

A campaign is an organized course of action to achieve change. Strategic campaigning requires choosing a specific course of action, on the basis of available information and resources, which will be most effective in achieving identified objectives.

AI is a campaigning organization. Its members mobilize public opinion to put pressure on governments and others with influence to stop human rights abuses, and to raise awareness about abuses. AI campaigning takes many forms of action including **direct appeals**, **media and publicity work**, public

**demonstrations, human rights education, home government approaches and company approaches.**

In AI usage, a “campaign” refers to a large-scale, coordinated effort by **sections, groups and networks** in many countries, using a broad spectrum of techniques around specific objectives. AI is developing a model of ongoing campaigns on a limited number of major themes or issues that capture most of the global human rights abuses within AI’s concern.

For more information on campaigning see the **Campaigning Manual**.

### **Children**

There is an emerging consensus in international law that a child is anyone under the age of 18.

Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as everyone under the age of 18, unless majority is attained earlier under national law. However, the age of majority as determined by states must not deviate greatly from international norms. Indeed the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has said that the reference to the age of majority in the Convention is to allow those under 18 some element of autonomy and choices on certain issues, while still having the protection of the Convention.

The development of AI’s work on children is a priority of the movement. Guided by the framework of the Children’s Convention, AI is developing its work on children around three key themes: children within the criminal justice system, children in **armed conflict** and children in the community and family. These areas combine AI’s traditional strengths with new fields of work and enable the movement to address abuses across a range of **economic, social and cultural rights**, as well as **civil and political rights**.

See also **Child soldiers**.

### **Child soldiers**

AI opposes the recruitment – whether voluntary or compulsory – and participation of children (people under the age of 18) in armed forces. It takes this position whether they are recruited by governments or **armed political groups**, believing that the participation of children in hostilities jeopardizes their physical and mental integrity.

In 1998 AI, together with other international **non-governmental organizations**, founded the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. The Coalition’s campaign played a key role in the adoption by the UN General Assembly in May 2000 of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. This raises from 15 to 18 years the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities, for compulsory recruitment by states and for any recruitment by non-governmental armed groups. AI campaigns for states to sign and ratify the Convention and Protocol. AI also opposes voluntary recruitment of people under 18 by governments and encourages them to make declarations endorsing 18 as the minimum age when voluntary recruitment will be permitted on ratification of the Protocol.

### **Civil and political rights**

The full range of human rights laid out in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** is often divided into two sets: civil and political rights, and **economic, social and cultural rights**. Civil and political rights are such rights as the right to equality before the law, fair trial, freedom of expression, movement, assembly and association, and the right to take part in the government of your country. They are given binding legal expression in a number of *international human rights instruments*, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UN Human Rights Committee was created to monitor state party compliance with the ICCPR and to call states to account for violations.

While AI has always recognized the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights, and has long worked to promote all human rights, the main focus of its research and campaigning work, as defined by the AI mandate, has traditionally been civil and political rights. However, in 2001 a new **mandate** was adopted by the movement at the **International Council Meeting** which expanded AI’s

remit to oppose all grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination.

### **Co-group**

See **Coordinators**.

### **Companies**

In recent years AI has developed its approaches to businesses in its work to promote **human rights** standards, encouraging practices which protect human rights. It also urges companies to speak out and take action to prevent human rights abuses in their fields of operation. For more information on making company approaches, see the **Campaigning Manual**.

An increasing area of AI's work also involves campaigning for change by those companies whose activities directly contribute to human rights abuses, including those involved in **military, security and police transfers** to countries where there are serious human rights abuses.

In selected cases, on the authority of the Secretary General, AI may support the boycott of a company, as part of a broad coalition of **non-governmental organizations**, when the company is involved in human rights abuses covered by the **mandate** of AI and previous efforts have not led to a change in the company's behaviour, provided AI's research can show evidence of human rights abuses committed by the company.

See also **Economic relations** and **Military, security and police transfers**.

### **Conscientious objection**

AI believes that every person has the right to refuse to perform military service on the grounds of conscience or profound personal conviction, without suffering any legal or physical penalty. Generally, anyone imprisoned for exercising this right will be considered to be a **prisoner of conscience**, provided that the person has not rejected an alternative non-military service that is not punitive or discriminatory in length or substance. AI urges that conscientious objectors should have the right to claim conscientious objector status at any time, both up to and after entering the armed forces, and that the right to perform alternative civilian services never be derogated from, including in times of war.

See also **Armed conflict**.

### **Coordination group**

See **Coordinators**.

### **Coordinators**

Coordinators are AI members or staff who provide campaigning advice, support and assistance on a particular country or region, theme, sector or technique.

Coordinators play a key role as links in AI's system of networks. They keep in close touch with **groups, section** offices and the **International Secretariat's (IS) research and action** teams.

A coordination group (or "co-group") involves a number of coordinators who join together in managing an area of a section's work.

Country coordinators and coordination groups specialize in particular countries or regions and are able to offer expert advice to both groups and the section on campaigning strategies for their areas. Often sections will have coordinators for each **Regional Action Network** in which they participate.

Many sections have also appointed national coordinators for areas of campaigning **outreach**. They make AI's approaches to the institutions for which they are responsible and coordinate parallel approaches by local AI activists to the community levels of the same institutions. For example, a trade union coordinator who has enlisted a union president to endorse an **AI petition** may also suggest that AI groups approach the union's local branches with the same appeal.

Campaign coordinators in sections and structures are responsible for coordinating major international campaigning actions in their countries. They play a vital role in adapting the materials produced

centrally by the IS to the needs of their own communities, communicating the message to their own audiences and mobilizing AI members, contacts and the wider public.

### **Core languages**

See **Decentralized units**.

### **Country Action Programs**

AI is developing a system of Country Action Programs (CAPs) consisting of activities by **sections** and the **International Secretariat** to prevent or oppose **human rights** abuses in a specific country (or countries). The CAPs will cover **action** on behalf of individuals as well as long-term issues and will be integrated with **campaigns** as appropriate. The current work on **Action Files, Regional Action Networks** and country actions will be integrated with the CAP.

### **Crimes against humanity**

Article 7 of the Rome Statute (see **International Criminal Court**) defines crimes against humanity as any of the following acts when knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population: murder; extermination; enslavement; **deportation** or forcible transfer of population; imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; **torture; rape**, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law; enforced disappearance of persons; the crime of apartheid; other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health. The Rome Statute affirms that crimes against humanity can be perpetrated in times of peace – there is no legal requirement for the attack on a civilian population to be linked with armed conflict, whether international or non-international in character. Crimes against humanity are subject to **universal jurisdiction**.

See **Genocide, War crimes**.

### **Crisis response**

A particular **human rights** crisis may arise in a country or area which demands an exceptionally high level of response from AI. In such a case, the Secretary General decides whether AI will go into “crisis response mode” which requires a reallocation of staffing, financial and campaigning resources. Current criteria defining such situations include:

- an upsurge of human rights abuses on a scale which is very serious in the context of that country or region;
- the risk of such an upsurge of human rights abuses;
- AI’s previously agreed action plans and resources are insufficient to respond effectively to the situation;
- the need to manage AI’s overall institutional response to the situation;
- the need to mobilize rapidly the capacity of a large part of the movement in order to respond effectively.

Once the decision is taken to enter crisis response mode, staff are drafted in to reinforce AI’s **research** and **campaigning** capacity and AI members around the world are mobilized to take special actions in response to the emergency. In recent years AI has activated its crisis response mode in connection with human rights violations in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone and after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA.

### **Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is part of a spectrum of practices which are clearly and unequivocally banned under international human rights law and also **international humanitarian laws** (for example Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949). Examples of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment include confinement in a dark cell, the use of manacles as a restraint and denial of basic needs to detainees. Moderate forms of physical abuse may also constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and certain forms of corporal punishment may also fall into this broad category.

**Torture** represents the most severe and deliberate end of the spectrum and it is not always possible to draw a clear line between the two abuses. AI opposes both torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

International law provides minimum guidance as to the exact parameters of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment does not provide a definition of the term. The UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment notes that the term should be interpreted broadly to offer the greatest possible protection against abuses.

### **Death in custody**

Deaths in custody may take place in prisons or other places of detention, both official or unofficial, or in hospitals or other places where detainees remain in the custody of law enforcement or military officers. In certain circumstances they may constitute **extrajudicial executions**. They may result from **torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**. Such ill-treatment includes inadequate nutrition, insanitary conditions of detention and medical neglect.

AI calls for prompt, effective, impartial and independent investigations into deaths in custody where there is evidence of torture or ill-treatment, possible extrajudicial execution or other human rights violations.

AI calls for safeguards to be adopted to ensure that detention does not become an opportunity for human rights violations. Examples of such safeguards include:

- ensuring all detainees are brought before a judicial authority promptly after being taken into custody;
- ending incommunicado detention and providing access to families, lawyers and doctors;
- enabling prisoners to lodge complaints about their treatment;
- ensuring that confessions or other evidence obtained through torture may never be invoked in legal proceedings.

### **Death penalty**

The use of the death penalty is the execution of a death sentence imposed by a court on a prisoner convicted of a crime for which this penalty is provided by law.

AI opposes the death penalty in all cases, without exception, as a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. It is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state in the name of justice and is the ultimate **cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment**.

There are other strong reasons for its abolition. In case of error it is irreversible and many innocent people have been executed; it is a punishment used disproportionately against the poor and members of racial and ethnic minorities; it is often used as a tool of political repression; and it has not been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

When AI began opposing executions there was no binding international instrument explicitly calling for the abolition of the death penalty. Since then three international treaties providing for abolition of the death penalty have been drafted. These are:

- Protocol No. 6 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms concerning the abolition of the death penalty, adopted by the Council of Europe in 1983;
- the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989;

· the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Right to Abolish the Death Penalty, adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States in 1990.

At the turn of the 20th century only three countries had permanently abolished the death penalty for all crimes. Now, 100 years later, more than half the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Over the past decade more than three countries a year on average have abolished the death penalty in law or, having abolished it for ordinary crimes, have gone on to abolish it for all crimes. This trend reflects the growing awareness that there are effective alternative punishments to the death penalty which do not require the killing of a human being by the state. AI opposes *refoulement* in cases where the individual involved may face the judicial death penalty. However, it does not seek to prevent criminals from being brought to justice: the object of its concern is only to avoid the imposition of the judicial death penalty. In appropriate cases, it would call on the returning government to obtain assurances from the government requesting extradition that the death penalty will not be imposed, and not to return the individual unless reliable and effective guarantees in this regard have been obtained.

See also *Non-refoulement*, **Racial discrimination** and **Extrajudicial executions**.

### **Decentralization/Deconcentration**

AI terminology uses “decentralized” to refer to structures or units of the organization which are independent of the **International Secretariat** (IS) and answerable directly to the **International Executive Committee** (IEC) via a board elected from their constituent **section** membership.

“Deconcentrated” is used to refer to structures or offices of the IS which are not London-based. At the beginning of 2002, there were two decentralized units, **EDAI** and **EFAI**, and deconcentrated offices in Beirut, Costa Rica, Geneva, Hong Kong, Kampala, New York and Paris.

### **Decentralized units**

AI works in four core languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and aims to produce most of its reports, documents and campaigning materials in all four languages to ensure full participation in both **campaigning** and **action** as well as internal decision-making by AI members using these languages.

There are two fully decentralized units, **EDAI** and **EFAI**, which cover Spanish and French needs, and an Arabic language program, **ARABAI**, currently managed by the **International Secretariat**.

### **Delegations**

AI representatives who attend meetings on behalf of the organization. These meetings might be with diplomats or officials of a government, in order for AI to present its **human rights** concerns and to hear the authorities’ direct response. They might also be with members of a **non-governmental organization** or **company**, to inform them of AI’s concerns and to ask for their support in protecting and promoting human rights.

Usually, embassy visits are planned and carried out by **section**-level representatives of AI. Groups that wish to send a delegation or take part in one should contact their section office or, where there is no section, the **International Secretariat**.

See also **Missions**.

### **Deliberate and arbitrary killings**

See **Unlawful killings**.

### **Demonstrations**

Street protests are an important campaigning technique at both national and group level. Sometimes they are spontaneous reactions to world events. More often they are planned parts of a **campaign**. Groups should inform their **section**, as well as other local groups, of their planned event so that the section can respond to any inquiries from the news media. Arrangements need to be made with the police and other authorities if permits are required by law. The event should be publicized widely in advance by such means as press releases, posters and flyers. Inviting local celebrities to play a part

helps gain media coverage. The event should be as attention-seeking as possible, with banners, action and colour.

For information and advice on how to plan a demonstration, see the **Campaigning manual**.

See also **Symbolic events**.

### **Deportation**

See **Forcible exile**.

### **Development**

Within AI, development can refer both to the development and building of AI membership in a particular country or region and to the combination of efforts with other **human rights** organizations to build the broader human rights movement.

The principal aim of AI development is to achieve a relevant, effective, sustainable and multicultural presence in all regions in the world. In order to achieve this, AI development programs provide training in organizational development skills such as planning, strategic thinking and evaluation, as well as general support and capacity building in such areas as internal democracy, board-staff relations and fundraising.

International development policy is determined by the membership through a **standing committee** of the **International Executive Committee**, the Standing Committee on Organization and Development. Project grants, program funding and other short-term financial transfers are available through the Section Development Committee.

Development support for sections designated by the International Executive Committee as a high priority for development, and for all “pre-section” membership structures, is undertaken by Regional Development Teams and the International Development Unit of the International Secretariat. Some Regional Development Officers are based close to the AI sections they are working with.

See also **Economic development assistance**.

### **Direct appeals**

AI came into being following a temporary letter-writing campaign in 1961, and making direct appeals to the authorities responsible for human rights violations remains a core part of AI’s work. **Groups** and members receive information on cases which require direct appeals, together with addresses to write to and suggestions for the content of appeals, through **Action Files**, **Regional Action Networks**, the **Urgent Action** network, **Worldwide Appeals** and in campaigning material such as pamphlets on specific themes or countries.

In certain circumstances, AI members write to prisoners themselves or their families. Making contact through direct correspondence often encourages groups and members to sustain their commitment for long periods.

AI aims to use all possible methods for raising concerns with the authorities directly and effectively, so where appropriate and available, e-mail addresses and fax numbers will be given, as well as postal addresses. Groups and sections also print postcards containing a brief appeal, which are distributed at meetings and events and signed and sent by activists and members of the public.

In some cases, the **International Secretariat** may send an inquiry or appeal direct to a government signed by the AI Secretary General. There may be insufficient information to publish an Urgent Action or press release. Alternatively, it may be thought that the authorities would respond more favourably to a low-key approach than to public or numerous appeals. Such a letter may also be sent in conjunction with publication of a press release, to ensure that AI’s concerns and appeals are formally made direct to the relevant official.

For more information on direct appeals see the **Campaigning manual**.

### **‘Disappearance’**

AI considers that a “disappearance” has occurred when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has been taken into custody by state agents, yet the authorities deny the victim is held, thus

concealing the victim's whereabouts and fate and placing the victim outside the protection of the law. The word is placed in inverted commas by AI to indicate that it does not accept official explanations that these people have simply vanished.

AI only uses the term "disappearance" for cases which fit this definition and involve government forces. When people have been abducted or taken captive by **armed political groups** not affiliated with the government, other descriptive language is used, such as "Several people are missing following abduction".

"Disappearances" and abductions cause a particular agony for relatives of the victims, unable to determine whether the victim is dead or alive, unable to go through bereavement and unable to resolve legal and practical matters such as pensions and inheritance. For them the "disappearance" continues without end.

AI opposes "disappearances" in all cases. This gross violation of fundamental human rights serves to disguise other abuses. Not only are the victims detained without charge or trial, but they are often at great risk of being tortured or killed while in the secret custody of state agents.

See also **Incommunicado detention** and **Extrajudicial execution**.

### **Discrimination**

Article 2 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** states that everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms laid out in the Declaration "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

The right to enjoy **human rights** without discrimination is one of the most fundamental principles underlying international human rights law, which appears in virtually every major human rights instrument. This reflects the fact that, very often, people are subjected to human rights abuses because of prejudice against them based on some identifying characteristic, such as race, religion or sex.

AI works against grave abuses of the right to freedom from discrimination. AI takes up the cases of many people who have suffered human rights abuses such as **torture, unfair trial, forcible exile** or the **death penalty** because of their identity, that is as a result of discrimination on grounds such as race, sex, **sexual orientation**, religion or ethnicity. Those who are imprisoned solely on such grounds are considered by AI to be **prisoners of conscience**.

AI calls on all states to take measures to prevent discrimination, not only by their own officials but also by private individuals or **non-state actors**. States can do this by ratifying international standards against discrimination, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women if they have not done so, and by ensuring that national legislation outlaws discrimination. Both these international standards and national laws against discrimination must be fully implemented.

See also **Indigenous peoples, Racial discrimination, Sexual orientation** and **Women**.

### **Displaced persons**

See **Internally displaced persons**.

### **Domestic violence**

See **Violence against women**.

### **Economic development assistance**

AI calls on donor governments to include **human rights** provisions in all their development programs and activities. They should ensure that development cooperation aims at the realization of human rights and does not itself lead to human rights abuses.

AI urges donors to design and implement projects aimed at groups discriminated against because of their identity, and calls for measures aimed at preventing human rights crises and rebuilding civil society when a crisis has ended.

AI calls on donors and lenders to be open, transparent and accountable in their development programs and lending policies, and to monitor the human rights impact of their projects.



### **Economic relations**

Economic interests are increasingly influencing and dominating political agendas, and all too often economic development is pursued without paying attention to **human rights**. AI believes that economic actors (**companies, international financial institutions**, international and regional economic forums and relevant **non-governmental organizations** and **intergovernmental organizations**) have to be made accountable and that they should ensure that their activities do not impair human rights.

AI is developing its program of **action** on economic relations and human rights to hold economic actors accountable for the human rights consequences of their activities. AI seeks to increase the number of economic actors agreeing and taking practical measures to protect and promote human rights.

AI's work with the economic sector covers a range of areas: companies, international financial institutions and **economic development assistance**.

### **Economic, social and cultural rights**

The full range of human rights laid out in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** is often divided into two sets: **civil and political rights**, and economic, social and cultural rights. Economic, social and cultural rights refer to rights such as the rights to work, health, education, housing and food. These are not merely a catalogue of good intentions by governments. They are human rights which flow directly from the legal obligations imposed by **international human rights standards**. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and standards set by specialized agencies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Economic, social and cultural rights are grounded in law as well as moral obligation. National jurisprudence in many countries – and trends to include these rights in constitutional reforms – shows that these rights can be realized through legal remedies. Furthermore, numerous international standards permit individuals and groups to present complaints about violations of economic, social and cultural rights to organizations such as the ILO, UNESCO and the regional African and Inter-American systems.

One of the lingering effects of the ideological debate during the years of the Cold War is the artificial distinction (still prevailing) between the two sets of rights. In recent years, the UN has reaffirmed the interdependence and indivisibility of all of the rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human beings need to be able to express their views and have clean water; women need to be free from domestic violence and have access to credit; children need to be protected against the death penalty and have access to education.

While AI has always recognized the interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights, and has long worked to promote all human rights, the main focus of its work, as defined by the AI **mandate**, has traditionally been civil and political rights. In 2001 a new mandate was adopted by the movement at the **International Council Meeting**. Under this mandate, AI now works to oppose abuses of economic, social and cultural rights when they constitute grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination.

### **EDAI**

*Editorial Amnistía Internacional* is the **decentralized unit** based in Madrid, Spain, which manages translation into Spanish and production and distribution of documents, reports and campaigning materials issued by the **International Secretariat** (IS). It also hosts an international Spanish website at <[www.edai.org](http://www.edai.org)>. Its membership comprises all AI Spanish-speaking **sections** and **groups**, which send delegates to a meeting once every two years to decide on priorities for translation and production. An elected Executive Committee reports to the **International Executive Committee**.

### **EFAI**

*Editions francophones d'Amnesty International* is the decentralized unit based in Paris, France, which manages translation into French and production and distribution of documents, reports and campaigning materials issued by the **International Secretariat**. It also hosts an international French website at <www.ifrance.com/EFAI>. Its membership comprises all AI French-speaking **sections**, which send delegates to a meeting every year to decide on priorities for translation and production; observers from French-speaking groups are invited to attend. An elected Board reports to the International Executive Committee.

### **Equipment for security or ‘crime control’**

AI calls for a complete ban on equipment whose sole use is for the infliction of torture or the death penalty, such as gallows and equipment for giving prisoners electric shocks. AI also calls for a ban on weapons and equipment whose use is inherently painful and therefore constitutes **cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment** such as stun belts, serrated thumb cuffs and leg irons.

### **European Union Association**

AI's European Union (EU) Association office, set up in Brussels by the organization's sections in the EU, seeks to influence the evolution of the EU's **human rights** mandate.

In 2000 the EU Association office organized a successful campaign to persuade European Union states to include, in a new Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, a right to asylum and prohibitions of *refoulement* and collective expulsion.

As part of AI's worldwide Campaign against Torture launched in October 2000, one of the EU Association's campaigning targets was the adoption by the EU of operational guidelines to prevent and eradicate **torture** in third countries.

### **Excessive use of force**

Use of force which is excessive or disproportionate to the legitimate objective to be achieved or to any threat posed in a particular situation. AI uses this term only in law enforcement situations, not in relation to **armed conflict**.

Sometimes law enforcement officers are obliged by the situation they face to use force. However, according to the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, they “may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty.” Furthermore, according to the 1990 UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, “intentional lethal use of firearms” is only to be made “when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life”. Governments should ensure that law enforcement officials use force only when strictly necessary and only to the minimum extent required under the circumstances.

AI opposes the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials which violates **international human rights standards** even if it does not result in **extrajudicial executions** or **torture** or ill-treatment. AI calls on governments to comply with international standards governing the conduct of law enforcement officials and the use of force and firearms. Lethal force should not be used except when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. When lethal force has been used, every incident should be investigated fully to determine whether excessive force was used and whether any resulting killing was lawful. Those found responsible for using excessive force or for unlawful killing should be brought to justice.

### **Executions**

See **Death penalty**.

### **Exile**

See **Forcible exile**.

### **Extrajudicial executions**

Extrajudicial executions are unlawful and deliberate killings carried out by order of a government or with its complicity or acquiescence.

Extrajudicial executions usually occur within a government's own territory and are carried out by regular military or police forces, by special units created to function without normal supervision, or by civilian agents working with government forces or with its complicity. Such government forces, units or agents are often called "death squads".

The victims may be political opponents of the government, criminal suspects or members of disadvantaged groups, such as street children or beggars. They are sometimes killed in custody, sometimes in their homes or on the street, in the course of military operations or at peaceful demonstrations. Sometimes extrajudicial executions are carried out across international borders: the work of assassins whose victims are selected targets, usually government opponents, living abroad. In 1989 the UN adopted the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions which, among other things, calls for investigations, prosecutions of alleged perpetrators and compensation for families in all cases of extrajudicial executions. AI opposes extrajudicial executions in all cases and calls on governments to implement a 14-Point Program for the Prevention of Extrajudicial Executions which AI adopted in 1992 as part of a worldwide campaign. In particular, AI calls for the prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigation of all reports of extrajudicial execution and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

See also **Unlawful killings**.

### **Fair trial**

The basic criteria for a fair trial are set out in **international human rights standards**. These criteria include the right for defendants:

- to be informed promptly of any charge against them;
- to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law;
- to be able to present a legal defence and to be assisted by legal counsel of their own choice;
- to be present at their own trial;
- to be able to cross-examine any witness against them;
- not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt;
- to be tried before an independent and impartial tribunal.

In many countries, prisoners are convicted in unfair trials that violate these internationally agreed standards. These trials may use secret hearings, prohibit lawyers from presenting the accused person's defence (or refuse the accused the chance to consult a lawyer), refuse to allow defence witnesses, deny the right of cross-examination or admit evidence extracted under duress or **torture**.

AI opposes the detention of **political prisoners** without a fair trial within a reasonable time. AI calls for fair trials within a reasonable time or release for all political prisoners – including those who are accused of having used or advocated violence. AI does not work for fair trials in most criminal cases, unless the accusation of having committed an "ordinary" crime is a pretext for political imprisonment. Fair trial standards, however, are highlighted in AI's campaigning against torture and the **death penalty**, without restriction to political cases.

For more information, see the Fair Trials Manual (AI Index: POL 30/02/98).

### **Female genital mutilation**

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the term used to describe the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia. The practice has been linked in some countries with rites of passage for **women** (although this is decreasingly so) and is sometimes seen as a means of controlling women and girls' sexuality. It is still extensively practised in many parts of the world.

FGM can have dire and lasting consequences for the physical and mental health of girls and women. The mutilation sometimes results in excessive bleeding, infection, transmission of diseases including HIV due to use of non-sterile instruments, trauma and pain, and often leads to difficulties in intercourse and childbirth. There are aspects of FGM that are analogous to torture particularly when governments are complicit in the practice or fail to exercise due diligence to stop it. FGM is opposed

by women's groups around the world as a violation of women's human rights. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women condemned FGM as a form of **violence against women** which must be prevented and punished.

AI calls on states to prohibit and take effective and appropriate action to eradicate FGM and to comply with their international obligations to protect girls and women from this abuse (as it does with other serious forms of violence against women), and on the international community to provide the resources to assist developing countries in this campaign. AI is sensitive to the debate among anti-FGM activists as to the most effective strategies towards its eradication. In August 2000, the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights affirmed that governments should mobilize public opinion "in particular through education, information and training, in order to achieve the total eradication of these practices".

### **Forcible exile**

Instances where governments force individuals to leave their own country or, if they are already outside their own country, prevent them from returning.

AI opposes forcible exile when it is imposed as a formal measure on people because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs or their ethnic origin, sex, colour or language, including in **mass expulsions** of populations during **armed conflicts**. In accordance with **international humanitarian law**, AI opposes deportation from territories under military occupation in all cases.

**Refugees** are covered by this policy in situations where after they have fled they later wish to return and the government prevents them from doing so.

### **Fundraising**

AI accepts no money from governments for **human rights campaigning** and case work (although government funding for **human rights education** may be accepted) and is financed by its members – through subscription fees – and supporters – through donations. If AI is to remain financially self-sufficient, fundraising is a vital part of the work of everyone in the movement.

A donation not only helps pay the costs of AI's campaigning – it is itself a crucial part of that campaigning. As well as raising money to support the organization's work, fundraising events such as benefit concerts help raise the profile of AI. Most public events or **demonstrations** organized by **sections** and **groups** can have a fundraising element, such as street collections or a stall selling AI T-shirts, badges and posters.

Fundraising can be a good way of involving other members of the community in AI's work. Local businesses may be willing to offer items or services for raffles or prizes in sporting events. Local celebrities might agree to make guest appearances, and artists or writers may donate works for auction. Musicians may play at a benefit concert, and schoolchildren could take part in a sponsored swim. Everyone has something to offer.

It is important to ensure that funds received by any part of the organization do not affect its integrity, make it dependent on any donor or limit its freedom of activity.

Further information on fundraising for groups and sections is available from the fundraising team at the **International Secretariat** and in Revised Proposed Guidelines for the Acceptance of Funds and Fundraising by Amnesty International (AI Index: ORG 72/05/99). For advice on fundraising ideas see the **Campaigning manual**.

### **Genocide**

Under the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the Genocide Convention), genocide means any of the following acts when they are carried out "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group": killing or causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting conditions of life on the group calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part, preventing births or forcibly transferring children to another group.

AI calls upon states to fulfil their obligations and exercise their powers under the Convention and other international standards, to prevent and punish genocide. The **International Criminal Court** will have jurisdiction over the crime of genocide which its Statute calls one of “the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole”. AI campaigns for all states to exercise **universal jurisdiction** in bringing to justice suspected perpetrators of genocide.

### **Group**

A basic unit of AI’s local structure and campaigning. The AI group is a number of committed activists (from five to more than 100) who meet regularly to carry out AI’s human rights campaigning. For more information on group activities and setting up a group, see pages 19 to 24.

### **Home government approaches**

AI **sections, groups** and members mobilize the support of their own political leaders. Politicians and senior government officials can bring their special influence to bear on target governments abroad particularly through UN or regional **intergovernmental organizations**, or to support the negotiation of **international human rights treaties** or standards.

AI members also lobby their own government on a range of domestic issues. This range has recently been expanded from legislation affecting **human rights, refugees** and **military, security and police transfers**, to include specific abuses of human rights within their own country in the context of an agreement between the section and the **International Executive Committee** (see “**Work on own country**”).

For information and advice on home government lobbying see the **Campaigning manual**.

### **House destruction**

The destruction or sealing of a house on government orders to prevent access totally or partially to the house or to render it uninhabitable. This is often done to punish a person who inhabits the house or who is related to its inhabitants (by extension also punishing these inhabitants) or in order to intimidate or terrorize the wider community.

AI opposes punitive house destruction as defined above. AI also opposes the policy of house destruction targeted against people because of their ethnic identities, which is sometimes based on a manipulation of planning mechanisms. Destruction of houses targeted against ethnic groups has taken place in the Israeli Occupied Territories, Myanmar, Turkey and former Yugoslavia. AI opposes legislation, instructions or orders which permit the application of such measures, as well as their application in actual cases.

### **Human rights**

The basis of human rights – such as respect for human life and human dignity – can be found in most religions and philosophies. The development of human rights has its roots in the struggle for freedom and equality everywhere in the world. Human rights do not have to be given, bought, earned or inherited. They belong to people simply because they are human – human rights are inherent to each individual.

Human rights are the same for all people regardless of race, sex, religion, ethnicity, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or other status. We are all born free and equal in dignity and rights – human rights are universal.

Human rights cannot be taken away – no one has the right to deprive another person of their rights. People still have human rights even when the laws of their country do not recognize them, or when their rights are being abused. Human rights are inalienable.

To live in dignity, human beings are entitled to freedom, security and decent standards of living – human rights are indivisible.

To protect their basic rights, people have demanded that governments affirm these rights in law. By affirming human rights in law, governments accept responsibility for the protection of human rights. Human rights standards, including those **international human rights standards** adopted by

governments, set out what governments must do for the people in their territory, and also what they must not do to them. It is this entrenchment of human rights in official codes – in both national and international codes of law – that gives AI the legal basis for its demands.

When the agents of a state fail to ensure the human rights laid out in international human rights standards, they commit human rights violations. Similar acts committed by **armed political groups** or other non-state actors constitute human rights abuses. (In AI's usage, when referring to both violations and abuses of human rights, the term abuses is used.)

See also **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**.

### **Human rights defenders**

People who promote and protect **human rights** by non-violent means. They may be journalists, lawyers, members of human rights organizations, including AI, or politicians who speak out against government repression. They may be friends and relatives of victims of human rights violations who have the courage to stand by their loved ones despite threats and intimidation. The constant vigilance and dedication of human rights defenders (HRDs) are often the only defence against injustice and the abuse of power. Many are at risk because of their efforts to protect the weak and hold the powerful to account.

AI takes **action** on behalf of such threatened HRDs, including by government lobbying, **media** work and networking. AI supports initiatives aimed at preventing persecution or threats as well as the building of **networks** of HRDs to protect those at risk. AI also supports the creation of mechanisms to protect them from repression so they may carry out their legitimate activities in accordance with UN principles. These principles include the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1999), also known as the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### **Human rights education**

Human rights education (HRE) is preventative human rights work promoting awareness and understanding of the full range of **human rights** and equipping people with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and skills necessary to respect and defend those rights. It is an integral part of AI's activities. AI sections in more than 50 countries have adopted a range of approaches to HRE. Work in the formal education sector includes lobbying governments to ensure human rights are incorporated into the curricula of schools, universities, military and police academies and the civil service. Work in the informal sector includes education programs for networks such as journalists, medical personnel, trade unions, women, community groups and many other types of activist groups.

In several countries, AI members work closely with relevant authorities, such as the Ministry of Education or the police, to provide advice on the content of curricula. A wide range of teaching materials has been developed, in a variety of languages. Some sections have HRE **coordinators** and an HRE **network** is coordinated by the **International Secretariat**. At the national and international level, AI works closely with **intergovernmental organizations** and **non-governmental organizations** which are also actively committed to HRE.

AI HRE programs have a number of essential components: they must be carefully planned with long-term goals (single activities can only be considered as human rights education if they are part of a series of activities with a common purpose); they must be consistent with the needs and culture of a country or location; they must use participatory learning methods such as role-play, drama, discussion groups and exercises that use case studies; they must teach skills such as communication, advocacy and problem-solving.

For information and advice on how to foster awareness of human rights, see the **Campaigning manual**.

### **Impunity**

Impunity literally means exemption from punishment. When used by AI and other **human rights** organizations it refers to the failure of the state to redress human rights abuses by bringing suspected perpetrators to justice in accordance with **international human rights standards** and to otherwise repair the harm suffered by victims.

Allowing perpetrators to commit abuses, however clearly prohibited by law, without consequences for themselves, perpetuates their crimes. By contrast, ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice sends a message throughout a society that abuses of human rights will not be tolerated, thereby helping to prevent future abuses. Impunity denies justice to the victims of human rights abuses, robbing them a second time of their rights. Impunity denies the victims and their relatives the right to have the truth established and acknowledged, the right to see justice done and the right to an effective remedy.

AI's campaigns against impunity have made a significant contribution to strengthening the international community's political will to bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights abuses. AI aims to ensure that human rights principles are embedded in the statutes establishing international criminal tribunals set up to try **war crimes** and **crimes against humanity**. AI played a leading role in the campaign for a permanent **International Criminal Court**, and in efforts to ensure the exercise of **universal jurisdiction** in the case of former Chilean president Augusto Pinochet.

AI opposes blanket amnesties for perpetrators of human rights abuses and believes that all suspected perpetrators of serious human rights abuses should be brought to justice in a court of law in accordance with international standards. This principle is just as important in post-conflict situations, following mass abuses. Only by clarifying the truth about what has happened, establishing accountability for human rights abuses, and bringing to justice those allegedly responsible can confidence in the justice system be restored and human rights be guaranteed, conditions essential for lasting and just peace.

### **Incommunicado detention**

Detention in which a detainee is denied access to people outside the place of detention, such as lawyers, doctors, family or friends, who could help them or find out what is happening to them and protect them from or publicize violations of their rights. Incommunicado detention is the context in which **torture**, ill-treatment and "**disappearances**" most frequently occur. Visits by lawyers, independent medical professionals and family provide the scrutiny of the detainee's health and conditions which may prevent such human rights violations.

Incommunicado detention is not the same as **solitary confinement**. A detainee denied access to the outside world may share a cell with, or have contact with, other detainees.

AI opposes incommunicado detention and calls on governments to ensure that all prisoners be brought before an independent judicial authority without delay after being taken into custody. Prisoners should have access to relatives, doctors and lawyers without delay and regularly thereafter.

### **Indigenous peoples**

Indigenous or aboriginal peoples are so called because they were living on their land before settlers came from elsewhere. They are the descendants – according to one definition – of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived, the arrivals later becoming dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means. There are an estimated 300 million indigenous people spread across the world. Among them are the Indians of the Americas (for example, the Mayas of Guatemala or the Aymaras of Bolivia), the Inuit and Aleutians of the circumpolar region, the Saami of northern Europe, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia, and the Maori of New Zealand. These and most other indigenous peoples have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics which are clearly distinct from those of the other segments of the national population.

In many regions indigenous people suffer from marginalization and **discrimination**, leading to a broad range of **human rights** abuses. In some countries, the state is directly involved in human rights violations against indigenous peoples. In others, indigenous communities suffer abuses by forces acting with the connivance of the government or by **non-state actors** because the authorities fail to investigate and bring those responsible to justice.

See also **Racial discrimination**.

### **Indiscriminate attacks**

Article 51 of Protocol I Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions classifies as “indiscriminate” both attacks by armed forces which are indiscriminate as to target and attacks which are disproportionate, and prohibits both. Attacks are described as indiscriminate as to target when they fail to take necessary measures required to distinguish between civilians and civilian objects (unlawful objects of attack) and combatants and military objectives (lawful targets). Attacks are described as disproportionate when although directed at a lawful target, the expected incidental loss of civilian life is excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

AI opposes indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks whether by government forces or by **armed political groups**. AI is guided by international humanitarian law in addressing this issue.

See also **Armed conflict, Indiscriminate weapons** and **Unlawful killings**.

### **Indiscriminate weapons**

AI opposes the manufacture, transfer and use worldwide of weapons of warfare which are inherently indiscriminate. AI supports the campaign for a worldwide ban on anti-personnel mines, and the **International Executive Committee** has the authority (after consultation with all sections) to call for bans on other weapons found to be indiscriminate.

Two types of conventional weapons have emerged as possible candidates for a ban: cluster bombs and depleted uranium weapons. In June 2000 AI called for cluster weapons not to be used in the vicinity of civilian concentrations, for independent investigations into the possible long-term health and environmental risks posed by the use of depleted uranium weapons, and for states to consider suspending the use of depleted uranium weapons pending the outcome of such investigations. In October 2001 AI called for a moratorium on the use of cluster bombs.

### **Integrated Strategic Plan**

The Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP) provides the strategic and budgetary framework for AI’s work; provides the basis for **section** and **International Secretariat (IS)** plans; sets goals against which to measure progress; acts as a statement of commitment from AI’s structures about what they will do in the period covered; and provides a basis for systematic evaluation of progress. The first two ISPs covered four-year periods, and were agreed by **International Council Meetings (ICMs)** in Ljubljana in 1995 (covering 1996-2000) and in Tróia in 1999 (covering 2000-2004).

The ICM in 2001 made a number of changes to AI’s mandate, expanding it to include a wider range of human rights abuses than previously. The original mandate definitions of the types of human rights abuses which AI would cover were replaced by a broader statement of AI’s vision, mission and core values (see **Statute**).

The work that AI does will now be defined not by its mandate but by the ISP. The ISP will be determined at meetings of the International Council and will cover a period of six years, setting out the priorities for AI’s research, action and promotion in that period.

The next ISP will cover the period 2004-2010 and will be discussed and approved by the movement at the ICM in 2003. It will be available in the four core languages – Arabic, English, French and Spanish – from the IS.

### **Intergovernmental organizations**

Organizations of states, which may be global such as the United Nations (UN), regional such as the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity), or based on some other criteria such as the Commonwealth or APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation).

AI encourages such organizations to develop **international human rights standards** and to strengthen the legal and practical machinery for ensuring that these standards are respected by governments. Whenever it is appropriate, AI also makes available to these organizations its **research** on different countries and cases.



The **International Secretariat** organizes formal representations to and relations with the UN, particularly its **human rights** bodies, as well as to regional intergovernmental organizations such as the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States. **AI sections** and members take part in this international lobbying process by making AI's concerns known to their countries' representatives to these bodies.

### **Internally displaced persons**

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998) defines the "internally displaced" as "...persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border". The Guiding Principles set out the key rights of the internally displaced: the right to freedom of movement within a state, including the right to flee (to other countries if necessary) from areas where their lives, security or freedom are threatened; the right not to be forcibly returned to such areas; the right to return to their homes should they wish to do so; and prohibitions on acts causing forcible displacement.

AI calls on governments and other authorities and groups to respect and ensure respect for these rights. AI opposes the forcible relocation of people to a particular area, with the requirement that they remain there, when such measure is adopted on account of their religion, ethnic origin, sex, colour or language. In pursuing this part of its **mandate** AI does not take up cases of individuals.

### **International Council**

The International Council is the main governing body of AI. It alone has authority to amend the movement's Statute. It is made up of representatives of all AI sections.

An International Council Meeting (ICM) is held every two years, on each occasion in a different country at the invitation of one of the movement's sections. The ICM involves around 500 people and lasts for about 10 days.

The primary functions of the International Council are described in the Statute of AI. They include focusing on strategy; setting AI's vision, mission and core values; determining AI's **Integrated Strategic Plan (ISP)** including its financial strategy; establishing systems and bodies of governance and delegation for the movement, electing members to those bodies (which include the **International Executive Committee (IEC)**), and holding those bodies and their members accountable; evaluating the movement's performance against its agreed strategies and plans; and holding sections, structures and other bodies accountable. These functions are fulfilled at the meetings when the International Council hears reports from the various bodies of the organization, debates and makes decisions on resolutions which are submitted by the IEC and by sections.

Because it determines AI's general policy direction and the ISP that provides the framework for the organization's work for the coming years, each ICM is a pivotal event in the history of the movement.

### **International Criminal Court**

AI's experience around the world indicates that **impunity** is the single most important factor leading to continued **human rights** abuses. In countries emerging from **armed conflict** and embarking on reconstruction and reconciliation, the need for justice is overwhelming. For this reason, AI has campaigned for many years, in coalition with over 800 other NGOs, for the establishment of a just, fair and independent International Criminal Court (ICC) with jurisdiction over **genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes**.

In July 1998, at a UN conference in Rome, 120 governments voted to adopt the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Statute establishes a permanent court once it has been ratified by 60 states.

AI continues to campaign for states to ratify the Statute so that the ICC can start delivering justice when national courts are unable or unwilling to do so.

### **International Executive Committee**

During the period between meetings of the **International Council**, the Council's decisions are implemented by the International Executive Committee (IEC), which takes overall responsibility for the conduct of AI's affairs. The IEC consists of nine members, eight of whom – including the International Treasurer – are elected by the International Council. The **International Secretariat** elects one member from its staff.

The IEC provides leadership and stewardship for the whole of AI worldwide. The principal functions of the IEC are also described in the **Statute** and include taking international decisions on behalf of AI; ensuring that AI has a sound financial policy; ensuring implementation of the **Integrated Strategic Plan**; ensuring compliance with the Statute; ensuring human resources development; and holding sections, structures and other bodies of AI accountable by presenting reports to the International Council.

The IEC meets several times a year and the minutes of its meetings are circulated to all **sections**. The IEC may establish such committees, including **standing committees** of AI members, or other structures or forums as it requires to support its work and provide advice on policy issues.

### **International financial institutions**

The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) were both established in 1944 at the intergovernmental conference of Bretton Woods. They are specialized UN agencies which are accountable to their member states and not to any UN body. Voting rights are weighted on the basis of the capital shares of a member country. As prosperous countries have invested more in the capital, they have a bigger share and hence a larger percentage of votes.

The World Bank and its affiliate, the International Development Association established in 1960, are the largest sources of international funding for development programs and projects. The IMF mainly grants large-scale financial assistance to states to solve short-term financial and currency problems, and monitors the overall economic stability and development of countries or regions. The World Bank's Articles of Agreement stipulate that "only economic considerations shall be relevant" when deciding on a program and prohibit interference in the political affairs of member states. The IMF's Articles of Agreement do not explicitly exclude human rights observance as a factor in consideration of programs, but its analyses are based primarily on economic factors.

In recent years, under pressure from human rights and environmental organizations, both institutions have paid more attention to social implications and good governance issues when considering programs. AI works with non-governmental organizations with expertise in the field of economic and social rights to urge international financial institutions to promote and protect human rights in their programs and policies.

See also **Economic development assistance** and **Economic relations**.

### **International human rights instruments**

International human rights instruments are intergovernmental agreements containing provisions on the promotion and protection of **human rights** and fundamental freedoms. They include legally binding treaties such as the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as non-treaty standards, such as declarations (including the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**), principles, guidelines and rules drawn up by intergovernmental organizations. AI's demands spring from and are supported by this body of law.

See also **International human rights mechanisms**, **International human rights standards** and **International human rights treaties**.

### **International human rights mechanisms**

Some international human rights mechanisms are systems set up under **international human rights treaties** to monitor the implementation of the **international human rights standards** accepted by states which are party to the treaty. For example, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is the mechanism which monitors how states implement the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Human rights mechanisms may also be bodies or representatives appointed by **intergovernmental organizations** to monitor and report on member states' human rights record, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on torture. They visit countries when possible to examine at first hand the human rights situation and they take up individual cases with governments.

AI provides information on a regular basis to these mechanisms and produces guidelines to assist those wishing to submit information to them.

See also **International human rights instruments, International human rights standards and International human rights treaties.**

### **International human rights standards**

International human rights standards constitute the code of conduct of governments around the world as defined by international human rights instruments.

Under the UN Charter, member states pledge to cooperate – internationally – to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone. This international responsibility for the protection of human rights is a basic assumption underpinning the work of AI. In its letters and appeals, AI points to international human rights standards and reminds governments of their obligation to uphold them. AI does not accept the argument, used by some governments when they find it convenient, that AI is “interfering in the internal affairs of states”. The protection of human rights is everybody's business.

See also **International human rights instruments, International human rights mechanisms and International human rights treaties.**

### **International human rights treaties**

International human rights treaties are legally binding agreements between states.

States decide whether to consent to be bound by such treaties. They affirmatively take on treaty obligations by one of two methods: accession (one stage) or signature and ratification (two stages).

When a state accedes to a treaty it gives its consent to be fully bound by the treaty, without having signed it at an earlier date. Signing a treaty means that the state expresses its intention at some future date to ratify the treaty and in the meantime to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the treaty, pending the final decision on whether to ratify. Ratifying a treaty means deciding to be fully bound by its provisions and has the same effect as accession.

The text of UN treaties and an up-to-date list of ratifications can be found at: <[www.unhchr.ch/](http://www.unhchr.ch/)>. In parallel with the international system, regional human rights instruments – and institutions for ensuring compliance with them – have been developed by the Council of Europe, the African Union and the Organization of American States.

See also **International human rights instruments, International human rights mechanisms, International human rights standards and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.**

### **International humanitarian law**

Also known as the “laws of war”, international humanitarian law comprises principles and rules that seek to mitigate the effects of war by limiting the means and methods of conducting military operations. The laws also oblige combatants to spare civilians and those who no longer actively participate in hostilities (including, for example, soldiers who have been wounded or have surrendered).

Many of these rules have been codified in international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their two Additional Protocols adopted in 1977.

AI's work on the action of governments is guided by both **international human rights standards** and international humanitarian law. Because **armed political groups** are not parties to **human rights** treaties, it is helpful for AI to refer to standards of international humanitarian law that are binding on all parties involved in hostilities in its work on abuses by these groups.

### **International Secretariat**

The professional heart of AI, with offices in London, Beirut, Costa Rica, Geneva, Hong Kong, Kampala, New York and Paris. Other International Secretariat (IS) staff, such as Regional Development Officers, are also based in the regions for which they are responsible.

The IS has more than 320 paid staff and scores of volunteers from over 50 countries. Research, development work and campaigning are carried out by expert staff supported by specialists in fields such as international law, media and technology. The IS initiates many of the campaigning actions organized by the worldwide membership.

### **Internet**

See **Websites**.

### **Landmines**

See **indiscriminate weapons**.

### **‘Laws of war’**

See **International humanitarian law**.

### **Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people**

See **Sexual orientation**.

### **Letter-writing**

See **Direct appeals**.

### **Lobbying**

See **Home government approaches**.

### **Mandate**

The mandate of AI sets out what work AI may undertake as a matter of principle, and the permissible boundaries of that work. Decisions on what areas of work are taken up within those boundaries are set out in the **Integrated Strategic Plan**.

AI’s mandate is democratically decided by AI’s members. It is guided by, but not limited to, **international human rights standards**.

AI’s mandate, as laid out in its **Statute**, is as follows:

“Amnesty International’s mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.”

AI’s mandate has expanded almost continuously for nearly 40 years, in the face of new human rights challenges. The formulation above, adopted in 2001, represents an expansion of the previous mandate, which stated that AI worked to promote all human rights, and took action against some of the gravest violations of people’s **civil and political rights**. These were often listed as: the imprisonment of **prisoners of conscience**; detention without trial or **unfair trials** of **political prisoners**; **the death penalty, torture** and other ill-treatment; **political killings** and “**disappearances**”; and abuses by **armed political groups** such as the detention of prisoners of conscience, hostage-taking, torture and unlawful killings.

The new mandate affirms the universality and indivisibility of all human rights by making no distinction between civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights, and allows AI to intensify its work on **economic, social, and cultural rights**.

The new mandate also recognizes the need for AI to effectively combat human rights abuses by a diverse range of **non-state actors** and for AI to be flexible, relevant, effective and responsive to changing circumstances. As AI’s mandate has grown and evolved, the question has arisen: should the

movement take action to oppose grave abuses of all human rights? This question will be examined in detail over the coming few years, before AI's members take a decision on the issue.

### **Mass expulsion**

AI opposes measures by governments and other parties to a conflict intended to force the mass expulsion of people from their country or territory, whether or not territorial boundaries are in dispute, solely on account of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or language, or of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs.

### **Media and publicity work**

Publicity has always been one of AI's most powerful means of raising awareness of its concerns, generating support for its work and putting pressure on governments that violate **human rights**. Every part of the organization plays a key role in ensuring that AI's message is published in newspapers and on the Internet, and broadcast on radio and television. Local groups are responsible for approaches to the news media in their community. **Sections** deal with their own national media outlets, and the **International Secretariat** handles contacts with international media.

A new International Media Strategy for AI was adopted by the **International Council Meeting** in 2001. It sets out a vision for media work in five key areas:

- coordinating and supplying media work for the movement which delivers organizational objectives;
- conducting media work at the international level;
- managing and refining the organization's profile, image and reach;
- undertaking national media work in countries where AI has no structured presence; and
- recognizing AI's role as a model of excellence for the global human rights movement.

For information and advice on dealing with the media and creating publicity see the **Campaigning manual**.

### **Military, security and police transfers**

AI opposes the transfer of military, security and police (MSP) equipment, weapons, skills or training by governments, **armed political groups** or **companies** where it can reasonably be assumed that they will contribute to human rights abuses.

AI supports the introduction of national, regional and international laws regulating, on human rights grounds, the trade or transfer of such equipment or skills. AI also campaigns to stop governments or armed political groups receiving equipment or training when there is reason to believe that it would be used to infringe human rights, and to hold supplying governments and companies accountable for their responsibility for such transfers.

The purpose of AI's work on MSP transfers is to:

- prevent transfers that can reasonably be assumed to contribute to human rights abuses;
- identify international involvement which contributes to human rights abuses and strengthen pressure for international action to prevent such abuses;
- apply pressure directly on those military, security or police forces responsible for committing human rights abuses.

AI's overall aim is to achieve effective international monitoring, regulation and control of MSP transfers.

See also **Sanctions** and "**Work on own country**".

### **Mission**

The **Statute** of AI, which was adopted by the 25th **International Council Meeting** in 2001, defines AI's mission as: "to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights."

AI also uses the term “mission” to describe an official AI visit to a country. (Within AI, “mission” does not have the meaning of a permanent office representing the organization, as it does within governments or **intergovernmental organizations**.) Such visits are usually organized by the **International Secretariat**. They may be carried out by AI staff or members or by people from outside the organization, travelling individually or as part of a **delegation**.

Frequently, missions are designed to gather information on AI’s human rights concerns – to carry out on-the-spot investigations and to interview victims and witnesses of human rights abuses, local human rights activists, officials, diplomats and others. AI may ask specialists to carry out investigations into specific cases – a lawyer to observe a trial or a pathologist to carry out a forensic examination, for example.

Other visits are for the purpose of discussion with government authorities. Some may be led by the Secretary General, by a member of the **International Executive Committee** or by an eminent person from outside AI. Such meetings provide AI with the opportunity for direct dialogue with governments, to receive official reactions to their concerns and to discuss the development of AI’s membership in the country concerned. The meetings may involve members of the local AI section.

AI visits countries openly and informs the authorities of its intentions to travel. However, while governments rarely refuse permission for AI to visit their country, in countries where authorization is required, they may fail to respond to visa applications or may make a visit impracticable by repeated delays.

Every year AI undertakes in the region of 100 to 150 missions.

### **Multiculturalism**

As a worldwide movement for **human rights**, AI aims to be truly multicultural, with members from all world regions, races, classes, educational backgrounds and language groups. AI recognizes that unless it can overcome any cultural limitations of its membership, there will be parallel limitations in the way the organization works, its methods, strategy, style and effectiveness.

In its work, international development and recruitment of members, staff and volunteers, AI aims to embody the principles of cultural diversity and equal opportunities: valuing diversity, ending **discrimination** and unnecessary conformity and taking positive steps to support people from groups which have been disadvantaged through past discrimination.

### **Networks**

An AI network usually consists of a number of AI members sharing an interest, identity or expertise which gives them a particular role to play in taking up **human rights** issues. For example, health professionals in the medical action network make appeals for prisoners in urgent need of medical treatment or on behalf of other medical professionals who are at risk of human rights abuses.

Journalists might work on freedom of expression issues or protest at the killing of journalists, while lawyers might work on **unfair trials**. The largest AI network is the worldwide **Urgent Action** network, whose members take rapid action at short notice to protect people whose life or physical security is at risk.

AI **sections** and the **International Secretariat** support such networks by informing them of relevant cases and **campaigns**, usually through network **coordinators**. There are over 20 international networks specializing in world regions (**Regional Action Networks**). Other longstanding networks include: campaign coordinators; **children**; **company** approaches; **death penalty**; **human rights education**; international training; journalists; lawyers; **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people**; medical action; rapid response; **refugee** coordinators; **military, security and police**; **women**; youth and students.

### **Newsletters**

The **International Secretariat** produces an AI newsletter, *the Wire*, 10 times a year which is distributed widely throughout the movement. It contains news stories on human rights issues around the world, information and updates on AI’s work and the Worldwide Appeals. This newsletter is

available in English, French and Arabic, on subscription and on the Internet at <www.amnesty.org>. A Spanish language newsletter is produced by **EDAI** in Madrid.

Many sections produce newsletters for their members, and there are also a number of specialist newsletters, such as regional development bulletins for members involved in AI development and C<sup>2</sup> for AI campaigners.

See also **Sections** and **Publications**.

### **Non-governmental entities**

See **Armed political groups**.

### **Non-governmental organizations**

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any organization that is not part of a state institution. The term is usually used in reference to voluntary, charitable or professional organizations, such as **human rights** organizations like AI, that make up civil society. AI often works and campaigns with other NGOs that share its broad goals. These may include human rights organizations, development or humanitarian organizations, solidarity groups, trade unions, church-based groups, arms control groups, political and **human rights education** (HRE) organizations, funding organizations and professional, educational and legal organizations. AI could not do its research and campaigning work without the major contribution of local, national and international NGOs.

AI cooperates with other NGOs where such cooperation contributes to more effective protection and promotion of human rights, increases the effectiveness of AI's work, helps strengthen the broad human rights movement and does not conflict with AI's political and financial independence, its impartiality, integrity or credibility.

Some of the ways in which AI can work with other organizations include HRE; issuing a joint press release on ratification of **international human rights instruments** or national legislative reform; jointly sponsoring an NGO Forum on a specific theme where the agenda is agreed upon and funding and organization are shared; or by sending open letters to governments signed by several NGOs.

Guidance for members on cooperative activities with other NGOs can be obtained from AI **sections**.

See also **Outreach**.

### ***Non-refoulement***

AI opposes any individual being forcibly returned to a country where he or she can reasonably be expected to suffer a **human rights** abuse which AI actively opposes in its work. AI considers that this principle of *non-refoulement*, set out in Article 33 of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and numerous other international instruments, is part of customary international law.

There is clear support in international human rights law, for example in Article 3 of the UN Convention against Torture, and in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, for taking the position that in cases where people risk **torture, extrajudicial execution** or **"disappearance"** the prohibition on *refoulement* is absolute.

AI takes the view that the prohibition on refoulement applies in all cases where these rights are threatened, regardless of whether it may be argued that the person concerned falls outside the scope of the protection afforded by the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, for example because they have been accused or convicted of crimes which would fall under Article 33(2) or one of the exclusion clauses of the Convention.

See also **Asylum-seekers, Death penalty** and **Refugees**.

### **Non-state actors**

In AI usage, the term refers to private individuals or groups, not acting as representatives of a government or an armed political group.

Under **international human rights standards**, governments have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all people in their territory. If a government fails in this obligation, it shares responsibility with those who commit the abuse. It was agreed at AI's **International Council Meeting** in 1997 to widen AI's responsibility for the protection of human rights and develop a more

comprehensive framework for addressing abuses by non-state actors. AI may take **action** when governments breach their duty to safeguard those in their territory from human rights abuses by non-state actors.

Such abuse must meet two criteria:

- it is analogous to violations that AI would oppose if perpetrated by a government (for example “honour killing”, infanticide, **female genital mutilation**, slavery, debt bondage and forced prostitution).
- there is clear evidence that the government has not fulfilled its obligations, under international law, to eradicate the abuse. Indicators of complicity or negligence include failure to punish or prevent the abuses; failure by officials to intervene (police standing by passively, for example); the absence of legal prohibition or other measures to eradicate the abuses; and failure to provide remedies or compensation to victims.

### **Outreach**

Outreach – inviting other organizations, individuals and sectors of society to work with AI and support its goals – is an important component of AI campaigning which all parts of AI, from the **International Secretariat** to local **groups**, engage in.

Outreach can increase the effectiveness of a campaign by:

- strengthening its message;
- demonstrating that AI’s concerns are shared by other organizations and individuals in the community;
- raising awareness of AI’s work and campaigns, thereby encouraging new membership and activism;
- building cooperative relationships with other **non-governmental organizations** (NGOs) in the broader human rights movement;
- assisting in **fundraising**.

Outreach is often targeted towards organizations of influential individuals – such as professional associations of doctors and lawyers – and organizations from particular sectors of the community such as women, youth and business. It can take the form of a single **action**, such as an approach to a youth organization on a specific concern, or the building of longer-term relationships with different professional sectors.

As a general rule, approaches for help and support from other groups or organizations are made by the equivalent level of AI. **Sections**, therefore, usually approach the national levels of other organizations while groups approach local, community and regional branches. Some organizations and groups may have particular interest in certain AI cases, for instance **women’s** groups may wish to work on appeals involving women. Others will have special expertise to offer. Teachers, for instance, could be involved in **human rights education** work.

For information and advice on outreach work see the *Campaigning manual*.

See also **Companies**.

### **Petition**

A petition is a brief statement of appeal signed by as many people as possible. AI groups and sections use petitions as a method of direct appeal and campaigning by circulating them at meetings, public events and demonstrations. Where possible, the signed petition is formally presented to an official or diplomatic representative of the target country.

### **Political killings**

See **Extrajudicial executions, Unlawful killings**.

### **Political prisoner**

In AI’s usage, any prisoner whose case has a significant political element. This may include the motivation of the prisoner’s acts, the acts in themselves or the motivation of the authorities in



imprisoning them. The term “political” is used by AI to refer to all aspects of human relations related to “politics”, that is the mechanisms of society and civil order. These include the principles, organization or conduct of government or public affairs; and the relation of all these to questions of language, ethnic origin, sex or religion, status or influence (among other factors). The global **women’s** movement and others have contested the meaning of the term “political”. For them, the term also refers to power relations within the community and the family, and actions to change or challenge gender relations in these spheres should be seen as political. AI’s growing work on women reflects this understanding.

In many countries, political prisoners are convicted in trials that violate internationally agreed standards. In other countries, political prisoners may be held for years, sometimes decades, without any trial or judicial hearing at all. AI demands that political prisoners receive a **fair trial** within a reasonable time, in accordance with the internationally recognized right of all prisoners to a fair and prompt trial or to be released. The term “political prisoner” includes both **prisoners of conscience** and those who have resorted to criminal violence (or have been accused of other ordinary crimes such as trespassing or destruction of property) for political motives. However, it is only for prisoners of conscience that AI demands immediate and unconditional release.

AI does not use the term “political prisoner” to convey any special status to the detainee or to indicate that the movement takes a position on their political goals. AI does not support or oppose the views of the people for whom it **campaigns** – nor does it take a position on the resort to arms in political conflicts.

In AI’s usage, here are some examples of political prisoners:

- a member or suspected member of an armed political group who has been charged with treason or “subversion”;
- a person accused or convicted of an ordinary crime committed in a political context, such as at a demonstration by a trade union or a peasants’ organization;
- a battered woman accused or convicted of murdering her husband, in states with discriminatory laws on self-defence;
- a person accused or convicted of an ordinary crime such as murder or robbery carried out for political motives, or refusing to pay taxes for ideological reasons.

Governments often say they have no political prisoners, only prisoners held under the normal criminal law. AI, however, describes cases like the examples given above as “political” and uses the terms “political trial” and “political imprisonment” when referring to them. By doing so AI does not necessarily oppose the imprisonment itself, except where it further maintains that the detainee is a prisoner of conscience.

AI not only works on behalf of individual political prisoners but also calls on governments to end systematic procedures which allow for prolonged political detention without legal safeguards.

### **Prison conditions**

In prisons all over the world, prisoners and detainees are held in conditions which threaten their health and lives, and which amount to **cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**. They may be deprived of adequate nutrition and medical care. They may not have enough ventilation, light or heating. They may have to take it in turns to lie down to sleep because their cells are so overcrowded. Their sanitary conditions may be abysmal and a serious hazard to health. The result in many countries is a high rate of mortality and serious illness in the prison population.

AI calls on governments to ensure that laws and practices conform with **international human rights standards**, in particular the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. AI takes **action**, often through its **Urgent Action** and Medical Action **networks**, for prisoners whose lives or health are at risk from harsh prison conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. AI calls for access by lawyers, doctors and family members to prisoners, and for the independent inspection of prisons and other detention facilities to ensure conditions meet international standards.

See also **Incommunicado detention** and **Solitary confinement**.

### **Prisoner of conscience**

A person imprisoned or otherwise physically restricted because of their political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth, **sexual orientation** or other status – who has not used violence or advocated violence or hatred.

No one knows for certain how many prisoners of conscience are locked up in the prison cells of the world. They are held by governments of countries with diverse political and social systems, and in some cases by **armed political groups**. What is certain is this: for each name that becomes news, there are many more that are unknown.

Some prisoners of conscience are prominent individuals, active and well known in public life. Many are artists, lawyers, politicians or trade unionists – people who challenge the official view. However, most prisoners of conscience are ordinary women, men and even children, from all walks of life, imprisoned because of who they are rather than for their political activism.

Some prisoners of conscience have acted in direct opposition to the entire system of government, while others have worked within the legal framework of a country's political system but have been imprisoned nonetheless. People can become prisoners of conscience for all sorts of reasons, for example:

- involvement in non-violent political activities, such as taking part in community development work;
- belonging to a minority group that is struggling for autonomy;
- insisting on observing religious practices of which the state does not approve;
- taking part in trade union activities such as strikes or demonstrations;
- on the pretext that they have committed a crime while in fact they have only criticized the authorities;
- writing newspaper articles that raise the alarm about human rights violations taking place within their own countries;
- refusing to perform military service on grounds of conscience (see **Conscientious objection**);
- resisting using a country's official language;
- because they happen to live in a certain village;
- because a family member is an outspoken opponent of the government;
- **women** physically restricted solely on grounds of their sex (as in Afghanistan under the *Taleban*);
- because of their real or perceived sexual identity or their involvement in same-sex relationships or activities.

AI insists that all prisoners of conscience be set free at once and without conditions. Under international law, governments have no right to hold these people. These detainees are held because of their beliefs or because of their identity, not for any crime they may have committed.

AI's definition of "prisoner of conscience" is detailed and specific. The decision as to whether a particular prisoner falls into this category often demands careful analysis of the facts. Staff at the **International Secretariat** (IS) are responsible for making this decision. They rely upon information gathered from many sources. The IS assesses the information in light of the movement's definition of prisoner of conscience. In difficult cases, the researchers may refer cases to an international group of volunteer AI members known as the Standing Committee on the Mandate.

See also **Discrimination**, **Relief** and **Political prisoner**.

### **Publications**

AI regularly produces reports, briefings, newsletters and campaigning material to inform its members and the outside world of its research and activities. Materials are issued in AI's **core languages**: Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Many items are made available in other languages as well.

All circulars issued by the **International Secretariat (IS)** to **sections**, coordination groups, or **groups** are marked either “Internal” or “Public”.

Internal documents are for circulation to AI members only. They contain recommendations for action and information for members. Under no circumstances should they be given to journalists, government officials, or other organizations, sent to contacts within the country concerned, or given to people who are not AI members. Letters from the IS – even if they do not contain confidential information – are internal documents and should not be circulated outside the membership. AI members are expected to treat information responsibly, remembering that it may have an impact on the personal safety of those for whom the movement works, as well as of its members. People may be placed at risk if sensitive material (contained in **Action Files**, for example) is not handled confidentially.

Sections will often adapt materials – such as the AI international newsletter, the Wire – for their own groups and members. They may translate key documents, publish articles in section bulletins and sometimes design and produce their own **newsletters**, leaflets, posters, displays, printed **petitions** and fundraising appeals. If they have the means, groups will create a similar array of campaigning materials. E-mail and the Internet (see **Website**) also keep members in touch and informed.

Regular publications include:

- the Amnesty International Report (AI’s **annual report**), international and national **newsletters**, book-length reports, papers and briefings on AI’s concerns in specific countries or analysing global themes or patterns of human rights abuses;
- Audio-visual material – films, videos, photographs, slides, sound recordings and audio-tapes illustrating AI’s general work as well as specific topics such as the **death penalty**;
- Bulletins in regions where AI membership or **human rights defenders networks** are being encouraged, which include news of membership or joint activities and might include current cases calling for **direct appeals**;
- Internal materials for AI members only, including organizational circulars sent out in a **weekly mailing** to sections, policy discussion documents and recommended **actions** for **campaigning** activities.

Documents representing the official output of the IS receive an individual index number. The AIDOC database contains information on all AI-indexed documents, in all AI’s core languages from 1985 to date. It also contains the full text of most documents from 1991 onwards. This database is constantly being enhanced and expanded and is available to sections. A version containing public documents is available on the IS website <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)>.

### **Racial discrimination**

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination defines racial discrimination as: “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”

As well as referring to discrimination in public life, the Convention requires states parties to “prohibit and bring to an end, by all appropriate means,... racial discrimination by any persons, group or organization”.

Racial **discrimination** persists in virtually every society and contributes to a broad pattern of further **human rights** abuses including **torture** and ill-treatment, **unfair trials** and **extrajudicial executions**. Racial discrimination is often compounded by discrimination based on other grounds, such as gender or age.

AI works against grave abuses of the right to freedom from racial discrimination. This work includes taking up the cases of **prisoners of conscience** imprisoned for reasons of race, descent, or national or ethnic origin and cases where discrimination is a factor in torture, ill-treatment, the **death penalty**, “**disappearances**”, unfair trials of **political prisoners**, extrajudicial executions and other human rights abuses.

AI intervenes when racial discrimination prevents redress for victims and perpetuates impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations, or hinders the right of those fleeing persecution to seek asylum. The organization opposes discriminatory legislation that facilitates these violations and calls for ratification and implementation by states of regional and **international human rights instruments** that prohibit all forms of discrimination.

See also **Indigenous peoples**.

### **Racism**

See **Racial discrimination**.

### **Rape**

Legal definitions of rape vary between different legal systems and there is no universally accepted international legal definition.

The **International Criminal Court Statute's** finalized draft text of the Elements of Crimes offers the following definition of rape:

1. The perpetrator invaded the body of a person by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body.

2. The invasion was committed by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.

Rape is a crime of violence, aggression and domination, which affects women disproportionately and is therefore an act of **violence against women**.

The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines **torture** as an act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person, for purposes such as obtaining information, punishment, intimidation or coercion, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, by or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official. Rape causes severe physical or mental suffering, is a deliberate act by the perpetrator and is carried out with the intention to intimidate, degrade or humiliate the victim.

International and regional human rights bodies have ruled that rape by officials always amounts to torture, and cannot be considered a "personal" or "private" act and therefore a common criminal act. In AI's view, rape of women by private individuals (**non-state actors**) who are not public officials constitutes torture for which the state is responsible if the state has not acted with due diligence to prevent, punish or redress the crime. For example, laws governing rape are often inadequate and many countries do not recognize and prohibit marital rape. In some countries a woman who alleges rape may herself be prosecuted for illicit sexual relations. Frequently, the rules of evidence make it very difficult for a woman to win a court case as the rules specify that the testimony of a woman who alleges she has been raped is inherently unreliable. Restrictions on women's movement and legal rights may further hamper access to justice. In many parts of the world, the police routinely fail to investigate abuses reported by women and the courts appear biased against women victims. AI holds states responsible when they fail to take measures to protect the fundamental human rights of women. States have a duty under international law to take positive measures to prohibit and prevent rape and to respond to instances of rape, regardless of where it takes place and whether the perpetrator is an agent of the state, a violent husband or a total stranger.

### **Refoulement**

See **Non-refoulement**.

### **Refugees**

The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who:

“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.” There are other, regional instruments, such as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which provide a broader definition of the term refugee.

AI sometimes uses the term “refugee” when referring to people who have fled their countries to escape persecution or serious human rights abuses, including those who have not been formally recognized as refugees.

In its work AI does not seek to define who is a refugee but rather to focus on the risk people face if returned. AI opposes the forcible return of an individual to countries where they can reasonably be expected to experience a human rights abuse which AI actively opposes in its work.

See also **Asylum-seekers, Non-refoulement, Relief** and “**Work on own country**”.

### **Regional Action Network**

Regional Action Networks (RANs) are **networks** of **AI groups** which take up human rights issues arising in particular regions of the world. For example, the Western Europe Regional Action Network (WERAN) consists of dozens of AI groups from across the world focusing on human rights violations in Western Europe.

Over time, RAN groups gain specialist understanding of human rights issues in the world region on which they focus. They are able to write informed and detailed letters rather than simple mass appeals and work quickly when requests for **action** are made by the **International Secretariat**. This enables AI to respond promptly to any human rights emergencies in a particular region, with action from members experienced in working on that region.

A RAN action is a specific **campaigning** project which normally lasts from two to six months, depending on the situation, the scope for activity and the level of available information. Since they are generally issued in response to current and changing developments, the flow of RAN actions can be irregular – although a RAN can expect from eight to 10 actions a year.

### **Relief**

Limited funds or goods provided by AI to victims of **human rights** abuses, or to their dependants, specifically to help them deal with the effects of the human rights abuses they have experienced.

AI provides relief to current and former **prisoners of conscience** and their dependants; victims of **torture** receiving medical treatment; families of people who have “**disappeared**”; people at risk of **extrajudicial execution** needing help to find safety abroad; and **refugees** who risk being returned to a situation of danger.

Requests for relief are considered on a case-by-case basis. Some of the needs which AI’s relief has met include rent for the family whose breadwinner is in prison; school fees; travel costs for prison visits; medicine or supplements to prison diet; basic needs such as clothes, blankets, toiletries or writing materials; legal aid to secure the release of a prisoner of conscience; readjustment of a released prisoner to life in the community and medical and psychiatric treatment for a victim of torture.

Decisions about relief are often sensitive and, in some cases, can put people at risk. Government authorities frequently disapprove of efforts to send money and materials to individuals. Groups should never publicize the recipients of relief, the amounts sent to them or the channels used, or disclose this information to anyone who is not directly involved. In exceptional circumstances, an **AI group or section** may publicize some information about a “good news” relief story for the purpose of increasing awareness of the relief program or of supporting fundraising projects for relief. The **International Secretariat** must be consulted in all such instances.

### **Research**

AI undertakes research in order to expose **human rights** abuses and ensure that AI’s **campaigns** are based on accurate and timely information.

Research teams at the **International Secretariat (IS)** focusing on particular countries investigate reports of human rights abuses within AI's **mandate**, cross-checking and corroborating information from a wide variety of sources and contacts. They receive information from prisoners and their families, lawyers, journalists, refugees, diplomats, religious bodies, community workers, and humanitarian and other human rights organizations. They monitor newspapers, websites and other media outlets. E-mails, telephone calls, letters, faxes and personal visitors also bring in vital information.

AI sends fact-finding **missions** – openly and after informing the authorities of their intention to visit – to assess situations on the spot. The delegates might interview prisoners, relatives, lawyers, witnesses to human rights violations and local human rights activists. They may also observe trials and meet government officials. Where AI is denied access to a country, research teams may have to rely on sources of information outside the country, including news media reports, **refugees** and diplomatic representatives abroad.

Before any statement or report is issued, its text is approved within the IS to ensure it is accurate, politically impartial and falls within AI's mandate. AI is often dealing with allegations rather than undisputed facts. It makes this plain and usually calls for an investigation of the allegations. If AI makes a mistake, it issues a correction.

AI's research is recognized as reliable and is widely consulted by governments, **intergovernmental organizations**, journalists, scholars and other human rights organizations and campaigning groups. At the 2001 **International Council Meeting** it was decided that a number of national sections should undertake pilot projects in which they would produce and use research and campaigning materials on specific issues in their own countries (see "**Work on own country**").

### Sanctions

AI takes no stand on the legitimacy of the introduction or maintenance of sanctions against governments or **armed political groups** in countries where **human rights** are abused unless AI can show that:

- such sanctions can be reasonably assumed to contribute to grave human rights abuses, in which case AI will argue for dropping or changing the sanctions; or
- such sanctions can be reasonably assumed to prevent, reduce or end grave human rights abuses, in which case AI will call for introducing or maintaining sanctions.

A key focus of AI's work on sanctions is calling for measures to prohibit military or economic relations which can be assumed to contribute directly to grave human rights abuses (see **Military, security and police transfers**). In no case will AI call for or support sanctions which are likely to result in grave human rights abuses or violations of **international humanitarian law**.

### Sections

A section is a national organizational structure, usually supported by an office, that coordinates and develops the **campaigning** of AI **groups** and members within a country.

Sections are key points of contact in AI's organization. Sections help the **International Secretariat (IS)** to communicate with local groups and members around the world. As with groups, sections vary in size, circumstances, structures and resources.

All sections working principally in English or non-**core languages** receive a weekly mailing from the IS, containing requests for action, reports, campaign materials as well as papers concerning internal and administrative matters. Sections working in the other core languages receive weekly mailings from **EDAI**, **EFAI** or the IS on behalf of **ARABAI**. Sections are also routinely updated on specific Action File cases or tasks allocated to them as well as urgent requests from the IS to organize immediate appeals on emergency concerns.

Sections may use materials provided by the **decentralized units** in core languages and may also translate reports into local languages. They may edit and illustrate selected press releases for publication in their newsletters and re-format requests for appeals to target special audiences, such as

young people. Sections assign both long-term and short-term tasks to the appropriate groups. They work to improve resources available for long-term campaigning, coordinate all national public events and **fundraising** drives as well as handling contacts with appropriate figures in the national **media**, government and relevant organizations. At the 2001 International Council Meeting it was decided that a number of national sections should undertake pilot projects in which they would produce and use research and campaigning materials on specific issues in their own countries (see “**Work on own country**”).

See also **Development, Coordinators and Regional Action Networks**.

### **Sexual orientation**

A person’s sexual and emotional attraction to people of the same gender (homosexual orientation), another gender (heterosexual orientation) or both genders (bisexual orientation). Sexual orientation is a fundamental aspect of the human personality. The rights to freely determine one’s sexual orientation and to express it without fear are therefore human rights in the fullest sense. Yet, despite governments’ obligations to protect the **human rights** of all people without discrimination, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people continue to be deprived of their basic rights to life, security and equality before the law.

AI works against grave abuses of the rights to freedom from **discrimination** on the grounds of sexual orientation. The AI LGBT networks and groups represent one of the most dynamic growth areas of AI activism.

In matters of sexuality, the terms people use and identify with can vary widely from culture to culture. AI uses the terms “lesbian”, “gay”, “bisexual” and “transgender” (people who identify psychologically with the opposite gender) because they are the English terms most commonly used in the international human rights discourse. However, this is in no way intended to ignore the diversity of other terms and identities, nor to deny the cultural connotations attached to these terms.

### **Solitary confinement**

Isolation of a prisoner or detainee. In some cases, long-term solitary confinement, or the reduced sensory stimulation which can result from solitary confinement, may amount to **cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment**. It can also have serious effects on the physical and mental health of prisoners and may facilitate torture.

Solitary confinement is not the same as **incommunicado detention**. A prisoner held in solitary confinement on their own in a cell may still have access to, for example, lawyers, family and independent medical care.

AI believes no prisoner should be confined long-term in conditions of isolation and reduced sensory stimulation, and that conditions of detention should conform with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and other **international human rights standards**. Solitary confinement should be completely prohibited for imprisoned **children**.

See also **Prison conditions**.

### **Standing committees**

The International Executive Committee (IEC) currently has four standing committees it can call on to help ensure the smooth running of AI internationally. The standing committees study, advise and decide on certain issues. They are:

- Standing Committee on the Mandate – covering the **mandate**, ranging from the interpretation of borderline cases to overall mandate review;
- Standing Committee on Research and Action – covering program activities, including **campaigning** strategy, public information programs, and evaluation of techniques and **actions**;
- Standing Committee on Organization and Development – covering organization, including **section** establishment and growth, and **fundraising**;
- Standing Committee on Human, Information and Financial Matters – covering finance, including auditing and financial control.

Each standing committee has seven members – usually volunteer activists. Committee members serve for up to three consecutive two-year terms of office and are appointed by the IEC on the basis of section nominations.

The **International Council** Meeting in 2001 made provision in the **Statute** for the IEC to establish such committees or other structures or forums as it deemed necessary to support its work. In time, the standing committees described above may be changed or replaced by other committees.

### **Statute**

AI's Statute, its formal statement of principles, governs AI's work and methods. It can only be amended by a two-thirds majority decision of the **International Council**. The Statute can be found in Appendix 1 of this handbook. It is also available on AI's **website**, <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)>, and from the **International Secretariat**.

### **Symbolic events**

AI stages dramatic events to capture public notice and help to get across the movement's message. To gain public attention, AI members use an array of theatrical means. These include vigils, **demonstrations**, poetry readings, rock concerts, fasts, special dinners, torchlight processions, street theatre, film festivals, poster displays, fine art exhibitions, moments of silence and extended readings of the names of victims.

The emotional impact of drama performances gives strength and encouragement to the activists who take part. At the same time, these events often support other **campaigning** techniques. For example, AI banners enhance direct pressure when they escort a **delegation** to an embassy visit; create publicity if the press is invited; mobilize non-members to take part; make home governments take notice and raise money for AI when a small donation is requested from members of the public.

For information and advice on how to plan a symbolic event see the **Campaigning manual**.

### **Teamwork**

AI is made up of hundreds of thousands of people working together for the same cause. Every member is part of a worldwide team, and every member is responsible for making sure that AI – while speaking in its many voices – sends a consistent message to the world. By communicating with each other, sharing information, coordinating activities and building good working relationships, AI members help to send clear, compelling and consistent messages to the world, and increase the movement's effectiveness.

### **Torture**

The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.”

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture and the UN Human Rights Committee have both stated that the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in international human rights instruments should apply to corporal punishment ordered as punishment for a crime.

Despite **international human rights standards** forbidding torture and ill-treatment, as well as repeated denials from governments, AI receives reports of torture or ill-treatment by state officials in more than 150 countries in all parts of the world. Torture is often an integral part of a government's security strategy, a component of the state's machinery for suppressing dissent. Torture is used to gain information, obtain a confession, punish, intimidate and terrorize. It degrades victims and dehumanizes the torturer.



The list of torture techniques used today includes archaic instruments such as whips, clubs and thumbscrews and modern technology including electricity, sophisticated methods of psychological assault and drugs to cause hallucinations, muscle spasms and paralysis. Victims are beaten, burned, **raped**, suffocated and subjected to mock executions.

International human rights standards not only regulate the conduct of states and set limits on the exercise of state power, they also require states to take action to prevent abuses of human rights by other actors. If a state fails in this obligation, it shares responsibility in the abuse.

When a **non-state actor** commits acts that are of the nature and severity envisaged by the concept of torture in international standards (for instance rape or certain forms of violence in the home or community), and there is clear evidence that the state has failed in its obligation to provide effective protection, AI considers that act to be torture for which the state is accountable.

AI condemns torture in all cases. When individuals are threatened with torture, AI acts urgently and on a global scale to try to help them (see **Urgent Actions**). The movement also lobbies governments to implement international standards against torture, particularly regarding universal jurisdiction for torture, and supports the medical and psychological rehabilitation of torture victims.

In 2000 AI intensified its continuing work against torture with the launch of a worldwide **campaign**, Take a step to stamp out torture. The campaign focused on three main themes: prevention, **impunity** and **discrimination**. The launch report included AI's 12-Point Program for the Prevention of Torture by Agents of the State.

### **Translation**

See **Decentralized units** and **Publications**.

### **Unfair trial**

See **Fair trial**.

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the most widely accepted statement on **human rights** in the world (see Appendix 2) and its values are the basis of AI's work. Its core message is the inherent value of every human being.

The UDHR has been the cornerstone of the UN's human rights work for more than five decades. The UDHR was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 to give people all over the world a basic measure of protection from the abuse of their human rights.

The 30 articles of the UDHR proclaim the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of all people. These include:

- the right to life, liberty, and security;
- equality before the law, a fair and public trial and the presumption of innocence;
- freedom of movement; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; and freedom of assembly and association;
- freedom from slavery; from **torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**; and from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;
- the right to a nationality, to marry, to own property;
- the right to take part in the government of their country;
- the right to work, to receive equal pay for equal work, to enjoy rest and leisure, to have an adequate standard of living and education, and to form and join trade unions;
- the right to seek asylum from persecution.

The UDHR helped establish that human rights are an international responsibility, not simply the internal affairs of states. It set out the principle that all human rights are universal and indivisible. This means that all human rights should be enjoyed by all people, at all times, and that no one set of rights can be enjoyed at the expense of other rights.

Even though it is the inspiration for most international human rights law, the UDHR is itself not a legally binding treaty, but a statement of principle. Nevertheless, the ideals it expresses have become so

firmly entrenched in international law that many of its provisions have acquired real force. Arguments have been developed for viewing the UDHR – in its entirety or in parts – as legally binding, either as a reflection of customary international law or as an authoritative interpretation of the UN Charter.

Under the Charter of the UN, member states pledge to promote observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the UDHR is an authoritative statement of those rights and freedoms. Many nations weave it into the fabric of their own constitutions and domestic laws. In their resolutions, the General Assembly and the human rights bodies of the UN repeatedly call for full implementation of and respect for the provisions of the UDHR.

The principles of the UDHR are given binding legal expression in the two covenants that spring from it: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The UN has implemented the principles of the UDHR in dozens of other standards, many of which have developed implementation mechanisms. Among these are:

- the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Convention against Torture);
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

See also **International human rights instruments**, **International human rights mechanisms**, **International human rights standards** and **International human rights treaties**.

### Universal jurisdiction

The most common form of jurisdiction is territorial, where the courts of one state exercise jurisdiction over people who are suspected of committing a crime in their territory. However, international law has long recognized that courts could exercise other forms of jurisdiction with respect to certain crimes, such as piracy and war crimes.

Today international law permits and, in some cases, requires states to exercise jurisdiction over people suspected of certain grave crimes under international law, no matter where these crimes occurred, even if they took place in the territory of another state, involved suspects or victims who are not nationals of their state or posed no direct threat to the state's own particular security interests. Such an exercise of jurisdiction is known as universal jurisdiction. AI calls on states to ensure that their national courts can exercise universal jurisdiction over crimes under international law, such as **war crimes**, **crimes against humanity**, **genocide** and **torture**.

### Unlawful detention

See **Arbitrary detention**.

### Unlawful killings (in situations of armed conflict and political violence)

Killings that are unlawful by international human rights or humanitarian standards (because they are an arbitrary deprivation of the right to life and violate fundamental principles of the laws of war), whether committed by, or on the authority of, armed forces under the control of a government or **armed political groups**. The term includes summary executions, assassination of civilians, and killings of civilians and other non-combatants resulting from direct, disproportionate or indiscriminate attacks in armed conflict or situations of political violence. AI opposes all such unlawful killings.

See also **Extrajudicial executions** and **International humanitarian law**.

### Urgent Actions

AI's Urgent Action scheme depends on the swift mobilization of a worldwide **network** of members ready to take rapid **action** at short notice to protect people whose lives or physical security are in danger. Urgent Actions are launched to save prisoners who are at risk of **torture**, of imminent execution or of "**disappearing**" in custody. Such appeals are also sent in cases where prisoners need immediate medical attention, if they have been tortured or if their prison conditions are life-threatening,

for example. Information on such cases that require urgent action is sent out by the **International Secretariat (IS)** to **section coordinators** who forward the information to groups and individuals within the network. They will send brief letters, faxes, e-mails and telegrams to the target authorities as quickly as possible. Urgent Actions are translated immediately into French and Spanish by **EFAI** and **EDAI** to ensure that networks working in these languages can participate in the appeals.

The IS issues more than 800 Urgent Actions and updates every year. Within 48 hours, each Urgent Action can generate hundreds of appeals. AI has evidence of three Urgent Actions (on the same country) producing 30,000 appeals in one week and one Urgent Action producing 20,000 appeals over a three-month period. In more than a third of cases, some improvement is reported: death sentences are commuted; “disappeared” prisoners “reappear”; arrests are acknowledged; detainees are released; seriously ill prisoners are given medical attention.

### **Violence against women**

According to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women “violence against women” means “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life... Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following: (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.”

AI has always **campaigned** against violent human rights violations by the state, such as torture (which includes **rape** by agents of the state and **rape in armed conflict**), **unlawful killing**, and “**disappearance**”. In recent years, AI has expanded its mandate to oppose severe forms of violence against women carried out by **non-state actors**, when the state fails to fulfil its obligation to provide effective protection to women.

**International human rights standards** clearly lay down the duty of states to ensure that no one is subjected to torture or ill-treatment, whether inflicted by an agent of the state or a private individual. States are obliged to take all possible measures to prevent and redress abuses, and to prosecute and punish abusers.

AI considers that acts of violence against women in the home or the community constitute torture for which the state is accountable when they are of the nature and severity envisaged by the concept of torture in international standards and the state has failed to fulfil its obligation to provide effective protection.

See also **Female genital mutilation**.

### **War crimes**

War crimes are serious violations of **international humanitarian law** committed in either international or non-international **armed conflict**.

The Rome Statute of the **International Criminal Court** defines war crimes in international conflicts as “grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions” (acts against people protected by the Geneva Conventions including wilful killing, **torture** and inhuman treatment, deprivation of the rights to fair and regular trial, hostage-taking and unlawful imprisonment); and “other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict, within the established framework of international law” (such as “intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population as such or against individual civilians not taking direct part in hostilities” and “attacking or bombarding, by whatever means, towns, villages, dwellings or buildings which are undefended and which are not military objectives”).

In the case of an armed conflict not of an international character, the Rome Statute defines war crimes as serious violations of Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions (acts against people taking no active part in the hostilities, including violence to life and person, cruel treatment and torture) and other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in armed conflicts not of an international character, within the established framework of international law (including **rape**, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and any other form of sexual violence).

### Website

Amnesty International Online <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)> is AI's international website in English. It contains more than 10,000 files and receives over six million hits a month. It provides access to a document library containing most AI reports and news releases published since 1996. It also contains all the latest news releases detailing AI's concerns about **human rights** stories around the world, information on the latest **campaigns** and appeals for **action**, special campaign pages, electronic versions of the Amnesty International Report (**annual report**), the monthly **newsletter**, the Wire, and other major publications. There is also a jobs page with details of vacancies at the **International Secretariat** and a Bazaar page with details of how to purchase AI **publications**. The site lists contact details for AI's offices around the world and provides links to hundreds of websites, both AI and non-AI, with a human rights theme. Some campaigns have a separate website, for example the campaign against torture at <[www.stoptorture.org](http://www.stoptorture.org)>, and some **networks** have a site, such as the health professionals network at <[www.web.amnesty.org/cmp/hponline.nsf](http://www.web.amnesty.org/cmp/hponline.nsf)>. There are also international AI sites in French <[www.ifrance.com/EFAI/](http://www.ifrance.com/EFAI/)>, Spanish <[www.edai.org/](http://www.edai.org/)> and Arabic <[www.amnesty-arabic.org/](http://www.amnesty-arabic.org/)>, which are managed by **EFAI**, **EDAI** and **ARABAI**. Many **sections** and some **groups** also have their own websites.

### Weekly mailing

A loose-leaf package of information including requests for **action**; reports and background documents; **campaign** materials; press releases; current **Urgent Action** appeals; and administrative papers, which goes to all **sections**, **International Executive Committee** members and a few other appropriate recipients. It contains internal and public information. It is issued in English but many of the papers are translated into the core languages and made available to the relevant language structures of the organization.

See also **Publications**.

### Women

AI affirms the principle that "women's rights are human rights" and has committed itself to support the struggle by women for their human rights all over the world. AI firmly believes that the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for women remains a key challenge for all states and for every individual.

Even though the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has had a tremendous impact on women's lives in the past 20 years, no state has yet realized fully the promises it contains for women. Women are particularly vulnerable during wartime to **rape** and other grave abuses. Women activists who stand up for their principles in the face of authority are often subjected to particularly vile forms of harassment. In many countries, the social structure itself discriminates against women, sometimes with a legal system that gives them fewer rights, treats their evidence as less valuable and metes out greater punishments to them than to men. Throughout the world, women are subjected to violence and **discrimination** by **non-state actors** in the home and community.

In 1995, AI launched an international **campaign** to highlight the issue of women's human rights in the lead-up to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. In the same year, AI, through the **International Council** Meeting, committed itself to making women's human rights a top priority. Each year AI issues an action on International Women's Day (8 March). Women human rights

defenders are on the forefront of the human rights movement in many countries in the world and during recent years AI has built strong partnerships and coalitions with the women's movement. See also **Female genital mutilation, Rape and Violence against women**.

### **'Work on own country'**

AI was founded in the belief that the protection of **human rights** is an international and not merely a national responsibility. To maintain the movement's independence and impartiality, and to offer security to members and structures, AI has traditionally maintained a policy defining the boundaries of the work that AI members and staff can carry out in relation to human rights abuses in their own country (known as the "Work on own country" rule).

The structure and the division of responsibilities between different parts of the movement are designed to ensure international consistency and cohesiveness. All AI **sections** and coordinating structures act as part of the international movement on the basis of materials provided or endorsed by its international bodies.

Over the years the "work on own country" policy has undergone a number of revisions. Until 2001, members could:

- mount national and local **human rights education** programs in schools, universities and within the community;
- lobby their governments to improve laws and policies relevant to human rights;
- campaign for abolition of the **death penalty** in their own country;
- campaign to persuade their government to ratify **international human rights treaties**;
- translate, stock and distribute AI's international reports on every country in the world – including their own;
- take steps to help prevent **asylum-seekers** and **refugees** being sent back to countries where they are likely to become victims of human rights violations;
- take a stand against the transfer of military, police and security equipment to countries where human rights violations are likely to be carried out (see **Military, security and police transfers**).

At the 2001 **International Council Meeting** it was decided that sections may work on specific abuses of human rights within their own country provided that:

- the section board in consultation with the section membership decides to do this in accordance with established democratic procedures within the section;
- the work that is agreed to be carried out is based on research and materials approved by the **International Secretariat**; and
- this work takes place within the parameters of the international country strategy, including the development strategy for that country, and within the context of a suitable agreement between the section and the **International Executive Committee (IEC)**.

Sections undertaking such work will also need to demonstrate that this work is being carried out alongside a substantial program of work on abuses in other countries. It was also decided that during a specified trial period, the IEC will select from interested sections a limited number to commission or produce research and campaigning materials dealing with specified issues in their own countries.

### **Worldwide Appeals**

Worldwide Appeals are cases concerning individual victims of human rights abuses on which AI members around the world take action.

Each Worldwide Appeals case is chosen from the thousands of individual victims known to AI because it is felt that their case will benefit from concentrated letter-writing and publicity.

Worldwide Appeals are featured in the AI **newsletter**, *the Wire*, which is translated and reprinted by sections and groups so that hundreds of thousands of people worldwide are alerted to the plight of these individuals and can make **direct appeals** and **campaign** on their behalf.

The Worldwide Appeals can also be found on the AI **websites** at <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)> in all **core languages**.

The Worldwide Appeals take the form of a summary of the individual's case history, often including a photograph; the name, title and address of a senior official in the target government; and the specific demands AI is making in that case. Updated information on each case is printed in *the Wire* and posted on <www.amnesty.org> as soon as it becomes available.

## **Appendix1: STATUTE OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

As amended by the 25th International Council, meeting in Dakar, Senegal, 17 to 25 August 2001

### **VISION AND MISSION**

1. Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

### **CORE VALUES**

2. Amnesty International forms a global community of human rights defenders with the principles of international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

### **METHODS**

3. Amnesty International addresses governments, intergovernmental organizations, armed political groups, companies and other non-state actors.

Amnesty International seeks to disclose human rights abuses accurately, quickly and persistently. It systematically and impartially researches the facts of individual cases and patterns of human rights abuses. These findings are publicized, and members, supporters and staff mobilize public pressure on governments and others to stop the abuses.

In addition to its work on specific abuses of human rights, Amnesty International urges all governments to observe the rule of law, and to ratify and implement human rights standards; it carries out a wide range of human rights educational activities; and it encourages intergovernmental organizations, individuals, and all organs of society to support and respect human rights.

### **INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PLAN**

4. There will be at all times for AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL an Integrated Strategic Plan covering a period of six years.

### **ORGANIZATION**

5. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is an organization based on worldwide voluntary membership and it shall consist of sections, affiliated groups and individual members.

6. Ultimate authority for the conduct of the affairs of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is vested in the International Council. The primary functions of the International Council are:

- (i) to focus on strategy;
- (ii) to set AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL's vision, mission and core values;
- (iii) to determine AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL's Integrated Strategic Plan including its financial strategy;
- (iv) to establish systems and bodies of governance and delegation for the movement, to elect members to those bodies, and to hold those bodies and their members accountable;
- (v) to evaluate the movement's performance against its agreed strategies and plans;

- (vi) to hold sections, structures and other bodies accountable.
7. There is an International Executive Committee. The primary role of the International Executive Committee is to provide leadership and stewardship for the whole of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL worldwide. The functions of the International Executive Committee are:
- (i) to take international decisions on behalf of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL;
- (ii) to ensure that there is a sound financial policy for AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL and that the financial policy is consistently implemented across the international organization;
- (iii) to ensure implementation of the Integrated Strategic Plan;
- (iv) to make any necessary adjustments to the Integrated Strategic Plan and other decisions of the International Council;
- (v) to ensure compliance with the Statute;
- (vi) to ensure human resources development;
- (vii) to hold sections, structures and other bodies of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL accountable for their functioning by presenting reports to the International Council;
- (viii) to perform the other functions conferred on it by the Statute.
8. The day-to-day affairs of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL shall be conducted by the International Secretariat headed by a Secretary General under the direction of the International Executive Committee.
9. The office of the International Secretariat shall be in London or such other place as the International Executive Committee shall decide and which is ratified by at least one half of the sections.
10. Responsibility for AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL work on abuses of human rights in any country or territory, including the collection and evaluation of information, and the sending of delegations, lies with the international governing bodies of the organization, and not with the section, groups or members in the country or territory concerned.

#### SECTIONS

11. A section of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL may be established in any country, state, territory or region with the consent of the International Executive Committee. In order to be recognized as such, a section shall:
- (a) prior to its recognition have demonstrated its ability to organize and maintain basic AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL activities,
- (b) consist of not less than two groups and 20 members,
- (c) submit its Statute to the International Executive Committee for approval,
- (d) pay such annual fee as may be determined by the International Council,
- (e) be registered as such with the International Secretariat on the decision of the International Executive Committee.

Sections shall take no action on matters that do not fall within the stated vision and mission of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. The International Secretariat shall maintain a register of sections. Sections shall act in accordance with the core values and methods of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, as well as any Integrated Strategic Plans, working rules and guidelines that are adopted from time to time by the International Council.

12. Groups of not less than five members may, on payment of an annual fee determined by the International Council, become affiliated to AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL or a section thereof. Any dispute as to whether a group should be or remain affiliated shall be decided by the International Executive Committee. An affiliated adoption group shall accept for adoption such prisoners as may from time to time be allotted to it by the International Secretariat, and shall adopt no others as long as it remains affiliated to AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. No group shall be allotted a prisoner of conscience detained in its own country. Each section shall maintain and make available to the International Secretariat a register of affiliated AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL groups. Groups in a country, state, territory or region without a section shall be registered with the International Secretariat.

Groups shall take no action on matters that do not fall within the stated vision and mission of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. Groups shall act in accordance with the core values and methods of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, as well as any Integrated Strategic Plans, working rules and guidelines that are adopted from time to time by the International Council.

#### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

13. Individuals residing in countries, states, territories or regions where there is no section may, on payment to the International Secretariat of an annual subscription fee determined by the International Executive Committee, become members of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL with the consent of the International Executive Committee. In countries where a section exists, individuals may become international members of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL with the consent of the section and of the International Executive Committee. The International Secretariat shall maintain a register of such members.

#### INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

14. The International Council shall consist of the members of the International Executive Committee and of representatives of sections and shall meet at intervals of not more than two years on a date fixed by the International Executive Committee. Only representatives of sections shall have the right to vote at the International Council.

15. All sections shall have the right to appoint one representative to the International Council and in addition may appoint representatives as follows:

10 – 49 groups:	1 representative
50 – 99 groups:	2 representatives
100 – 199 groups:	3 representatives
200 – 399 groups:	4 representatives
400 groups and over:	5 representatives

Sections consisting primarily of individual members rather than groups may as an alternative appoint additional representatives as follows:

500 – 2,499 members:	1 representative
2,500 members and over:	2 representatives

Only sections having paid in full their annual fee as assessed by the International Council for the two previous financial years shall vote at the International Council. This requirement may be waived in whole or in part by the International Council.

If a section has not provided its standardized financial report to the International Secretariat within three months of the final date for submission on each of the last two occasions such a report was required, the section is not entitled to vote at the International Council. This requirement may be waived in whole or in part by the International Council.

16. One representative of each group not forming part of a section may attend a meeting of the International Council as an observer and may speak thereat but shall not be entitled to vote.

17. A section unable to participate at an International Council may appoint a proxy or proxies to vote on its behalf and a section represented by a lesser number of persons than its entitlement under Article 15 hereof may authorize its representative or representatives to cast votes up to its maximum entitlement under Article 15 hereof.

18. Notice of the number of representatives proposing to attend an International Council, and of the appointment of proxies, shall be given to the International Secretariat not later than one month before the meeting of the International Council. This requirement may be waived by the International Executive Committee.

19. A quorum shall consist of the representatives or proxies of not less than one quarter of the sections entitled to be represented.

20. The Chairperson of the International Council and an alternate shall be elected by the preceding International Council. The Chairperson or, in his or her absence, the alternate, shall preside at the International Council. In the absence of the Chairperson and the alternate, the Chairperson of the



International Executive Committee or such other person as the International Executive Committee may appoint shall open the proceedings of the International Council which shall elect a Chairperson. Thereafter the elected Chairperson, or such other person as the Chairperson may appoint, shall preside at the International Council.

21. Except as otherwise provided in the Statute, the International Council shall make its decisions by a simple majority of the votes cast. In case of an equality of votes the Chairperson of the International Council shall have a casting vote.

22. The International Council shall be convened by the International Secretariat by notice to all sections and affiliated groups not later than 90 days before the date thereof.

23. The Chairperson of the International Executive Committee shall at the request of the Committee or of not less than one third of the sections call an extraordinary meeting of the International Council by giving not less than 21 days' notice in writing to all sections.

24. The International Council shall elect a Treasurer, who shall be a member of the International Executive Committee.

25. The agenda for the meetings of the International Council shall be prepared by the International Secretariat under the direction of the Chairperson of the International Executive Committee.

#### INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

26. (a) The International Executive Committee shall consist of the Treasurer, one member of the staff of the International Secretariat and seven regular members, who shall be members of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, or of a section, or of an affiliated group. The regular members and Treasurer shall be elected by the International Council. Not more than one member of any section or affiliated group or member of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL voluntarily resident in a country, state, territory or region may be elected as a regular member to the Committee, and once such member has received sufficient votes to be elected, any votes cast for other members of that section, affiliated group or country shall be disregarded.

(b) Members of the staff of the International Secretariat, paid and unpaid, shall have the right to elect one person from among the staff who has completed not less than two years' service to be a voting member of the International Executive Committee, elected by the staff, but not to represent staff. Such member shall hold office for one year and shall be eligible for re-election. The method of voting shall be subject to approval by the International Executive Committee on the proposal of the staff members.

27. The International Executive Committee shall meet not less than twice a year at a place to be decided by itself.

28. Members of the International Executive Committee, other than the member of staff elected under Article 26(b), shall hold office for a period of two years and shall be eligible for re-election for a maximum tenure of three consecutive terms.

29. The Committee may co-opt not more than two additional members who shall hold office until the close of the next meeting of the International Council; they shall be eligible to be re-co-opted once. Co-opted members shall not have the right to vote.

30. In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Committee, other than in respect of the member of staff elected under Article 26(b), it may co-opt a further member to fill the vacancy until the next meeting of the International Council, which shall elect such members as are necessary to replace retiring members and to fill the vacancy. In the event of a vacancy occurring on the Committee in respect of the member of staff elected under Article 26(b), the staff entitled to do so under that paragraph shall have the right to elect a successor to fill the unexpired term of office.

31. If a member of the Committee is unable to attend a meeting, such member may appoint an alternate.

32. The Committee shall each year appoint one of its members to act as Chairperson.

33. The Chairperson may, and at the request of the majority of the Committee shall, summon meetings of the Committee.

34. A quorum shall consist of not fewer than five members of the Committee or their alternates.

35. The agenda for meetings of the Committee shall be prepared by the International Secretariat under the direction of the Chairperson.

36. The Committee may make regulations for the conduct of the affairs of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL and for the procedure to be followed at the International Council, and may take such steps as it sees fit to establish and maintain a system of effective committees, including standing committees, intermediate structures, or other forums, in support of its functions.

#### INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

37. The International Executive Committee may appoint a Secretary General who shall be responsible under its direction for the conduct of the affairs of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL and for the implementation of the decisions of the International Council.

38. The Secretary General may appoint senior executive staff in close cooperation with the International Executive Committee, and may appoint all other staff as are necessary for the proper conduct of the affairs of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

39. In the case of the absence or illness of the Secretary General, or of a vacancy in the post of Secretary General, the Chairperson of the International Executive Committee shall, after consultation with the members of that Committee, appoint an Acting Secretary General to act until the next meeting of the Committee.

40. The Secretary General or Acting Secretary General and such members of the International Secretariat as may appear to the Chairperson of the International Executive Committee to be necessary shall attend meetings of the International Council and of the International Executive Committee and may speak thereat but shall not be entitled to vote.

#### TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

41. Membership of or affiliation to AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL may be terminated at any time by resignation in writing.

42. The International Executive Committee may impose sanctions (which may consist of a warning, intervention, temporary suspension or permanent exclusion or closure) on any section, affiliated group (Article 12), other structure, or member (Article 13) if in its opinion that section, affiliated group, other structure or member does not act within the spirit of the vision, mission, core values and methods set out in Articles 1, 2 and 3 or does not organize and maintain basic AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL activities, or does not observe any of the provisions of this Statute, and constitutes an immediate threat to the reputation, integrity or operation of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. None of these sanctions shall be imposed until the concerned section, affiliated group, other structure or member is informed in writing of the grounds of the sanctions. When closure of a section is the sanction under consideration, all other sections shall also be informed in the same manner before such an action is taken.

In the case of closure or permanent exclusion, the concerned section, affiliated group, other structure or member shall be provided with an opportunity to make its or such member's case to the International Executive Committee within six months before the sanction of closure or permanent exclusion is imposed. Once the International Executive Committee has decided to impose any sanction in respect of a section, affiliated group, other structure or member, the party concerned may appeal to the Membership Appeals Committee. This committee shall consist of five members and two alternate members who shall be elected by the International Council in the same manner and subject to the same conditions as provided for in Article 26(a) for the International Executive Committee. During any period of temporary suspension, or once closure or permanent exclusion has been agreed, a section, affiliated group, other structure or member may no longer represent or use the name of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL.

#### FINANCE

43. An auditor appointed by the International Council shall annually audit the accounts of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, which shall be prepared by the International Secretariat and presented to the International Executive Committee and the International Council.

44. No part of the income or property of AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL shall directly or indirectly be paid or transferred otherwise than for valuable and sufficient consideration to any of its members by way of dividend, gift, division, bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit.

#### AMENDMENTS OF STATUTE

45. The Statute may be amended by the International Council by a majority of not less than two thirds of the votes cast. Amendments may be submitted by the International Executive Committee or by a section. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the International Secretariat not less than nine months before the International Council meets, and presentation to the International Council shall be supported in writing by at least five sections. Proposed amendments shall be communicated by the International Secretariat to all sections and to members of the International Executive Committee.

## **Appendix 2: UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

### PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

#### Article I

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

#### Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

#### Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

#### Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

#### Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

#### Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

#### Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

#### Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

#### Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

#### Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

#### Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

#### Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.