



# WRITE FOR RIGHTS

*global report*

2021

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# WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2021 – SOME FACTS

In 2021 Write for Rights (W4R) was 20 years old. Beginning as grassroots activism in Poland, the campaign now sees over 70 Amnesty entities taking part and people in 120 countries around the world taking action either in person or online.

Covid-19 continued to impact campaigning for Write for Rights, with many countries still imposing strict rules around group gatherings. There was however light at the end of the tunnel for some national entities, who did manage to hold in person events. For those who couldn't, the innovations and 'outside the box' thinking continued, with creativity and technology helping make restrictions less restrictive!

As we rapidly head into planning for Write for Rights 2022, now is the time to reflect on what we all did together and the amazing ways we worked for positive human rights change in the lives of 10 individuals and communities at risk. Here are some facts about Write for Rights 2021:

At least....

**4,657,104** actions worldwide

Despite having the **SECOND LOWEST PICK-UP** by national entities, **MIKITA ZALATAROU'S** case was the **FOURTH MOST POPULAR WORLDWIDE!**

**38 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ENTITIES** reported **HIGHER NUMBERS OF ACTIONS** in 2021, **DESPITE** the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

**75%** of national entities **INCREASED THEIR SUPPORTER BASE** in 2021

**2021 SAW THE HIGHEST EVER NUMBER OF ACTIONS ON AMNESTY.ORG.**

# NUMBER OF ACTIONS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	COUNTRY	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ACTIONS
Ciham Ali	Eritrea	438,831
Imoleayo Michael	Nigeria	422,554
Wendy Galarza	Mexico	383,797
Bernado Caal Xol	Guatemala	511,741
Zhang Zhan	China	662,810
Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanakul	Thailand	359,491
Mikita Zalatarou	Belarus	469,593
Sphere NGO	Ukraine	308,706
Janna Jihad	OPT	557,271
Mohamed Baker	Egypt	311,314

These numbers are based on data reported by participating Amnesty International national entities as well as information collected on digital actions taken by individuals based in countries where Amnesty International does not have a presence.

Not all entities were able to share their data, and some were not able to collate accurate or complete numbers. There are likely many more actions taken around the world without us being able to track them. You will notice that the total number of actions for each of the 10 individuals and groups does not correspond with the global total of actions recorded for Write for Rights 2021. This is because the list above does not include actions that were recorded, but where entities were unable to differentiate which individuals or groups the actions were taken for.

## A Note on Language and Terminology

Please note that we do not use the word "case" when referring to a person featured in the campaign, as this would be dehumanizing. However, we do occasionally say "the case of (individual at risk's name)", to refer to the specific Write for Rights campaigning and associated outputs that we do with and for an individual or group, but it is not intended to be seen or used as a synonym for the person whose campaign we are talking about.

# HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

On the following pages you will find the impact assessments for each of the ten individuals and groups featured in the campaign. The assessments give a brief overview of the individual or group's story, and how they were came to be selected to be a part of the campaign, any changes to the situation of the individual or group, some information on the wider context of human rights issues happening in the countries/regions at the same time that may have had an impact, and lastly, how Amnesty International intends to keep up work with and for the individual or group featured after the close of the campaign.

Impact assessments are carried out in several ways, including interviews with the individuals and groups themselves or their representatives, with family members and local non-governmental organisations also working with them. In addition to this, country experts look at signs of impact from the authorities, such as big obvious changes to laws or official procedures, to more incremental changes such as differences in the treatment of the individual or group themselves. Since this assessment has been carried out shortly after the end of the campaign, we are still unable to see the full impact. For a full assessment of the impact, keep following the individuals or groups' casefiles on the Individuals at Risk Platform and keep an eye on the Write for Rights Podio space.

# CIHAM ALI – ERITREA



Ciham Ali is a young US-Eritrean national, born in Los Angeles in 1997, and raised in Eritrea. On 8 December 2012, when she was just 15 years of age, she was arrested by the Eritrean authorities while crossing the Eritrean-Sudanese border in an attempt to flee the country. Her father Ali Abdu, then foreign minister under President Isaias Afwerki, had gone into exile just as the military attempted a coup against the government. The rumour was that Ali Abdu had supported the coup, and so Ciham may have been arrested in retaliation.

More than nine years later, she remains secretly detained without ever having been tried or charged. Ciham has not had access to her family and lawyers since she was arrested. Her family does not even know where she is being held or her state of health.

Eritrea has a long history of enforced disappearances. Victims of enforced disappearance are people who have gone missing after being arrested, detained, abducted, or otherwise deprived of their liberty by state officials (or someone acting with state consent or acquiescence) who then deny having taken them, or refuse to say where they are. It is a crime under international law. Although Eritrea is not a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, it is bound by the prohibition on enforced disappearance under customary international law and other human rights treaties of which it is party, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Despite being a US national, the US government has not intervened on behalf of Ciham. Amnesty International believes that the complete silence and inactivity from the US government on behalf of their citizen has contributed to Ciham Ali's continued detention by the Eritrean authorities. It was felt that focusing the campaign to free Ciham on increasing pressure on the US government to intervene in her case could create positive change for Ciham. The Write for Rights campaign, with its massive reach and capacity for mobilisation, was perfect for Ciham's campaign.

Amnesty International has been campaigning for Ciham's release since 2018. The main contact has always been Ciham's uncle, who has been the main representative of the family, due to security issues. Ciham's case has been known amongst Eritrean campaigners for a long time, and Amnesty International's former campaigner for the Horn of Africa region, who started Ciham's campaign at Amnesty International, is Eritrean herself and worked closely with Eritrean civil society to start and run the campaign for Ciham's release.

Amnesty International members creatively incorporated Ciham's favourite colour, purple, into their activities. Seeing photos people posted of themselves wearing purple for Ciham's nine-year anniversary in prison, which happened during the W4R period, was heartening. A particular highlight was an activity from Amnesty International Belgium, who organized an action outside of the US embassy in Brussels. A group of high school students organized a fashion show in front of the embassy, laying out a purple carpet, with models showing off their purple clothes, and purple hair and face paint. The event was accompanied by songs by Green Day and Lady Gaga; some of Ciham's favorite artists. Some students were wearing signs, US flags and Eritrean flags. At one point during the fashion show students dressed as police officers appeared on the purple carpet and "arrested" someone, taking them away, symbolizing Ciham's story. After the show, students went on stage to speak about why Ciham's story touched them so much. Another student read aloud the words of Ciham's uncle. It was so touching to see the amount of effort these students' put into such an incredible action for Ciham. It is important to remember that these acts are not just to raise awareness and apply pressure on the target authorities, but to show solidarity with Ciham's loved ones who also are suffering because of her disappearance. These acts give them strength and hope.



Above: Students at a school in Togo take action for Ciham for Write for Rights 2021 © Amnesty International Togo

***"When I started campaigning for Ciham, her case was basically unknown, and it means so much to now see so many people across the world speak up for her. I know it is going to make a difference, not just in the campaign to free her, but to give strength to all her loved ones who are suffering every day that they are separated from her."*** - Vanessa Tsehaye - Horn of Africa Campaigner, Amnesty International

Amnesty International has yet to leverage US authorities support for Ciham but will shortly be launching an advocacy campaign in Washington DC. Almost 440,000 actions were taken for Ciham during the Write for Rights campaign, and this will support our advocacy efforts by showing the US that there is a whole movement behind our demands.

Amnesty International's national entities will deliver the petitions to their US embassies during April 2022; Ciham's birthday month.

The next big mobilisation moment in the campaign will be for the 10-year anniversary of Ciham's disappearance in December 2022, where protests will be organised outside Eritrean embassies all over the world. Eritrean embassies will be the target of this symbolic action, with the world's eyes on them during this heart-breaking anniversary.



Above: Students in Zimbabwe take action for Ciham during Write for Rights 2021 © Amnesty International Zimbabwe

# IMOLEAYO MICHAEL – NIGERIA





Imoleayo Michael is a 31-year-old computer programmer from Nigeria. In October 2020, he joined demonstrations against brutality, extortion, and killings by the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad of Nigeria Police (SARS). He promoted the protest on Facebook and Twitter using the viral hashtag #EndSARS.

Two weeks later, in the middle of the night, 20 armed men raided Imoleayo's home. They smashed his windows and pointed a gun at him. They locked his wife, elderly mother and seven-month-old son in a room and cut off the power supply to the streetlights surrounding his house. Imoleayo was locked in an underground cell for 41 days where he was handcuffed, blindfolded, and chained.

Imoleayo was released on bail in December 2020, but he is facing trumped-up charges of 'conspiracy with others to disturb public peace' and 'disturbing public peace'. The #EndSARS protests ended in a brutal crackdown by Nigerian security forces with protesters attacked, tortured, and killed. To this day, there has been no justice for the victims of the atrocity.

As part of its Write for Rights campaign, it was important for a global movement like Amnesty International to amplify the call to Nigerian authorities to drop all charges against Imoleayo Michael.

On 1 December 2020, Amnesty International Nigeria received a letter from Sterling Law Centre, a legal firm based in Abuja. The letter was a request for Amnesty International to support the campaign to free Imoleayo from unlawful detention by the State Secret Services. This followed a Sterling Law Centre solicitor's letter to the Defence Intelligence Agency, demanding the release of Imoleayo, to which the agency denied any knowledge of his arrest. The legal firm needed Amnesty International to leverage its influence to help secure Imoleayo's release. After due diligence meetings with the solicitors and Imoleayo's family, Amnesty International Nigeria began its campaign for the release of Imoleayo through the promotion of his case with local media and online, using the viral hashtag #FreeImoleayo. On 24 December 2020, the State Secret Services released Imoleayo from custody. He is currently on trial based on charges of 'conspiracy with others to disturb public peace' and 'disturbing public peace'. If convicted, Imoleayo could face up to three years in prison.

Since his case began, Amnesty International Nigeria has provided legal support for Imoleayo, in the form of a lawyer representing him free of charge. Also, on trial dates, Amnesty International Nigeria mobilize activists to attend the court sessions to monitor the trial.

During Write for Rights, thousands of people across the Amnesty International movement engaged with Imoleayo's case,

with thousands of cards, letters and solidarity messages received by post, others sent their messages of solidarity to his social media handles. There were several outstanding activities for Imoleayo's case. Amnesty International Zimbabwe sent handmade cards. Letters, postcards with messages of solidarity were received from Canada, UK, Japan, Germany, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, USA, Singapore, and China. In Nigeria, a supporter's group in Enugu state, south-west Nigeria, organized a football match to get people to sign letters to Nigeria's Attorney General to demand the withdrawal of charges against Imoleayo. Students of a tech-hub, who could easily relate to his case, organized a letter writing marathon in Cross River state, in southern Nigeria.

Most significantly, on 10 December 2021, International Human Rights Day, Imoleayo joined Amnesty International Nigeria and its supporters at a Write for Rights event held in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, where he signed petitions for other individuals and groups featured in 2021 Write for Rights.

Imoleayo told Amnesty International: ***"I sincerely appreciate all these letters; they mean a lot to me. I say a big thank you to you all. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I received thousands of your letters posted and online. I'm greatly inspired. Your letters really got me emotional as I keep reading and I am more inspired and encouraged to do more for humanity. Once again thank you for joining me in solidarity for freedom."***

During the campaign, Imoleayo's lawyer filed a "No Case Submission" before the magistrates' court. His lawyer demanded the case be dismissed, but the court overruled it. The overwhelming solidarity for Imoleayo's case demonstrated by Amnesty activists worldwide was significant. Consequently, the court reassigned the case to a new judge and to start the trail afresh



Above: Imoleayo Michael reads letters of support sent in response to Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign, February 2022, Abuja, Nigeria © ESOF CONTENT

Above: Imoleayo Michael reads letters of support sent in response to Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign, February 2022, Abuja, Nigeria 2022 © ESOF CONTENT

The Judicial Panel of Inquiry, established by the authorities to investigate the killing of protesters in Lagos and allegations

of SARS brutality, submitted their report to the Lagos state government. The report affirmed Amnesty International's findings regarding the crackdown on EndSARS protesters in Nigeria in October 2020. However, authorities undermined the credibility of the report claiming its findings are false.

Furthermore, on 13 January 2022, Nigerian authorities lifted the ban on Twitter after seven months. These developments have continued to keep the case of Imoleayo in the public eye, particularly in relation to the viral EndSARS protests.

On 16 February 2022, Amnesty International Nigeria delivered solidarity letters and signed postcards to Imoleayo. It was such a significant moment because he received the letters the day his trial started afresh, since the previous judge in charge of the case was transferred to another division.

According to Imoleayo, receiving the letters and messages of solidarity lifted his spirits and told him that he is not alone. His face lit up with smiles as he read out some of the messages. Amnesty International Nigeria recorded a short thank you video, which will be made available to the movement.

Amnesty International, through its country team in Nigeria, will continue campaigning and advocating for Imoleayo's case until the authorities withdraw the trumped-up charges against him. A strategy has been developed to engage the movement. A casefile, which will facilitate coordination of campaign actions and sharing of updates or new developments about the case, will be created on the Individuals at Risk Platform by April 2022. This will be done in collaboration with the Global Individuals at Risk team.

## WENDY GALARZA – MEXICO



Following the disappearance and murder of Bianca "Alexis" Alejandrina, on 9 November 2020 family members, friends and activists from feminist collectives organized a march from the hotel zone of Cancun to the Attorney General's Office and the Municipal Palace. During this demonstration there were various acts of direct action to various monuments and government buildings.

Wendy Galarza Herrera, a feminist activist, attended the demonstration with her boyfriend. When they got to the palace, Wendy described hearing the police fire their guns, first into the air, and then directly at demonstrators. Wendy and her

boyfriend tried to flee, but a group of municipal police stopped them. Wendy and her boyfriend were knocked to the ground and beaten, while insults were shouted at them. The police let them go, but in addition to the injuries from the beatings, Wendy was wounded with two bullet shots. Luckily, she survived.

Wendy filed a complaint against the police, but it took months for the prosecutor's office to admit that the evidence she presented against them was valid. To this day the perpetrators of the shootings have still not been brought to justice. But Wendy is not giving up and has formed a collective with other women and men who were assaulted during the same demonstration.

Amnesty International has observed how social protests led by women, demanding the eradication of gender violence, are almost always accompanied by police repression. This gender-based violence by police is a tactic, used to discourage women from taking the streets and making their voices heard. The police repression that took place on 9 November was documented Amnesty International's report Mexico: [The Age of Women](#), which details human rights violations against women protesting in the streets and is also part of the #GritoMonumento campaign.

Wendy's treatment is illustrative of the ways women who attend protests are often treated by authorities. Repressive tactics are used, often through sexual violence, to send a message of intimidation towards political dissidents. Making Wendy's story highly visible to an international audience was very important, as her situation is emblematic of a problem not only in Mexico, but also in Latin America as a whole. It is hoped that not only will Wendy's legal case be resolved in a positive way, but that any 'win' for Wendy might trigger change elsewhere.

During the protest where Wendy was shot, demonstrators documented the event with pictures and videos and posted them on social media in real-time. Amnesty International Mexico also documented the case and were able to contact various people who had been affected by police violence during the protest. A few days later, staff at Amnesty International's Americas Regional Office contacted Wendy directly.

Since then, Amnesty International staff have accompanied Wendy, and other survivors, on their path to justice, truth and reparation - working hand in hand with Wendy, other protestors, and their lawyer, who is helping them with the criminal complaints and the Mexican Commission for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights.

Because of the pandemic, many activities organized by Amnesty International Mexico in support of Wendy had to be held online. At an event with activists named "Peer to Peer Wednesdays", Wendy's case was announced as being a part of the Write for Rights campaign and sessions were facilitated with activists all over Mexico.



Wendy stands in front of a street art portrait of Bianca "Alexis" Alejandrina, who was murdered on 9 November 2020. Wendy was shot by police while attending a demonstration following Alexis' murder. © Maho Irigoyen/Amnesty International

Amnesty International Mexico participated in a fair at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where more than 100 students joined in writing messages of solidarity for the individuals and groups featured in Write for Rights 2021.

A local activist group organized an action at the esplanade of the Palace of Fine Arts in the downtown area of Mexico City, facilitating a paper butterfly workshop to write messages of support.

When Wendy visited Mexico City, an event with a local activist group was organized. The group, called "Leaves of Hope for Wendy", collected messages for her in the centre of Puebla city.

Excitingly, a new activist group was formed in Cancun with 20 members. They received training on organizing for action and immediately after held an event where they gathered signatures and messages of solidarity for the campaign. The activism group was formed by pupils from the school where Wendy is a teacher, so they are in close regular contact with her.

Human rights education workshops were also held in Mexico City with students from the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the National Polytechnic Institute. Workshops were also facilitated by Amnesty International activists in the northern part of Mexico, in a state called San Luis Potosi. In Michoacan (in the western part of Mexico), a workshop was facilitated with students and teaching staff from the Intercultural Indigenous University of Michoacan, where Wendy's story was shared, as well as the stories of other people featured in the campaign.

Wendy felt very grateful for the huge amount of activism and work by Amnesty International on her case. Having her be in close contact with Amnesty activists for the duration of the campaign greatly motivated them and gave them the energy to continue working on her case and to encourage others in their community to join in the defence of human rights in Mexico.

***"Amnesty International Mexico has given us the security to talk about what happened, because we felt the support of the whole movement. The love we received from the organization is tangible and represents something very important for us."*** - Wendy

A media conference publicizing a tour around Europe by Wendy and the Executive Director of Amnesty International Mexico, Edith Olivares Ferreto, was held on 6 December 2021. Wendy and Edith visited six European Amnesty International national entities, talking about Wendy's case and human rights in Mexico.

Since Amnesty International began working with Wendy, some positive developments have occurred. Amnesty International representatives were able to have meetings with high-level members of the authorities, including the President of the Municipality of Benito Juarez (Cancun), the Attorney General of Quintana Roo, the Executive Commissioner for Attention to Victims of Quintana Roo, the President of the Human Rights Commission of Quintana Roo, the Congress of the State of Quintana Roo, and Senators of the Congress of the Union. During these meetings the authorities made important commitments, such as fully repairing any damage that occurred during the protest and complying with recommendations issued by the State Human Rights Commission of Quintana Roo that a public apology is issued to the victims. Before Amnesty International's intervention, the victims had requested meetings with authorities, but they were ignored. It was only after Amnesty International requested the meetings that the authorities responded and meetings with victims and the authorities were held.

The authorities were informed that Wendy and Amnesty International Mexico's Executive Director would be touring Europe to visit various Amnesty International European national entities to raise awareness on the case. As a result, the authorities took steps to comply with the recommendations issued by the State Human Rights Commission of Quintana Roo, among them, that the municipal president of Benito Juárez (Cancún) should make a public apology. However, the apology was not given in accordance with human rights standards, as the opinion of the victims was not considered at any time.

It is likely that expediting the process for issuing a public apology was due to pressure exerted by Amnesty International



Above: Wendy takes part in the women's rights march in Paris on 20/11/21 during her Write for Rights European tour © Benjamin Girette / Hans Lucas

and the visibility of the case in the media. However, the response of the authorities was not adequate, so Amnesty International has increased its advocacy actions to raise the level of pressure. Among these actions, on 9 February 2022, an Amnesty delegation met with the Governor of Quintana Roo to expose the omissions of the authorities to attend to the victims adequately.

Wendy's tour around Europe was thoroughly covered by the European media thanks to the efforts of the respective press officers from the different national entities. Interviews were held with various media outlets interested in learning about Wendy's case, such as *Le Soir* and *Radio Air of Belgium*; *Radio France International*; Spanish television and *Radio Nacional de España*; the newspaper *Fréttablaidd* and the national television of Iceland. In addition, a media conference was held in France on 18 November 2021.

During 2021, 3,427 murders of women were registered in Mexico, of which only 887 were investigated as femicides. The State of Mexico, Jalisco and Veracruz registered the highest absolute numbers of femicide investigations; while Quintana Roo, Sonora and Sinaloa had the highest rates of femicide investigations per 100,000 women.



Left: An activist in Algeria shows solidarity with Wendy  
 © Amnesty International Algeria

On 17 November 2021, during a conference given by the President of Mexico, Cecilia Solis, a journalist and one of the victims of the shootings that took place on 9 November 2020, addressed the President and referred to Wendy's tour of Europe to highlight the repression of social protest. She added that they still had no access to justice:

*"I had the opportunity to be part of one of the most important international campaigns of the movement: "Write for Rights". There are no words to describe what I feel when I see that it is not only my case that is being made visible around the world, but also the stories of my fellow protesters who, like me, were repressed that night of the 9th November 2020. Thanks to Amnesty International for being present.*

*It is important to recognise that this police repression also brought us favourable things, one of them was the formation of a new family: The Committee of Victims of the 9th of November, and of course the accompaniment of Amnesty International Mexico in our case." - Wendy*

A delivery of petition signatures will take place in April 2022, during a planned mission to Cancun and Chetumal. These signatures have been collected nationally and internationally by the Write for Rights campaign and the campaign in which Wendy's case was originally made visible, #GritoMonumento. There will also be a full day of actions, including a human rights education workshop about protesting, a feminist rally, and a symbolic action outside the government palace in Chetumal.



Amnesty International Mexico will continue to work on Wendy's case, and with the gN Committee on advocacy actions.

Beyond the Write for Rights campaign, Amnesty International Mexico will continue to carry out advocacy actions to demand:

1. Access to justice for victims of violence at protests
2. The authorities' public acknowledgement of the importance of feminist protests
3. A commitment to install independent police oversight mechanisms.

Imoleayo shows solidarity with Wendy © Amnesty International Nigeria

## **BERNARDO CAAL XOL – GUATEMALA**





Bernardo Caal Xol is a Guatemalan teacher, father of two daughters, trade unionist and defender of the rights of the Maya Q'eqchi' Indigenous people, and of land, territory and the environment. He has been unjustly imprisoned for more than four years for defending the rights of communities affected by the construction of the Oxec I and II hydroelectric projects on the Cahabón river, in the region of Alta Verapaz, northern Guatemala. Despite the lack of factual evidence to support the charges, on 9 November 2018 the national Cobán court sentenced him to seven years and four months in prison for the crimes of aggravated robbery and aggravated illegal detention.

On 16 July 2020, Amnesty International named Bernardo Caal Xol a prisoner of conscience and launched a campaign for his immediate and unconditional release.

After the Court of Appeals rejected an appeal against the sentence, Bernardo and his lawyers filed a cassation appeal with the Supreme Court of Justice in September 2021. On 17 September, Q'eqchi' communities announced that the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court rejected the cassation appeal to review Bernardo's prison sentence. The Court found that there had been no violations to Bernardo's human rights in the previous court decisions, contrary to what the lawyers argued in the cassation appeal. As a last resort, Bernardo and his lawyers filed an amparo writ<sup>1</sup> against this decision, which has not yet been resolved.

Despite the extremely difficult context for human rights defenders in Guatemala, justice operators and NGOs, local and international pressure, including the Write for Rights campaign in 2021, have helped to amplify the visibility of Bernardo's case. **Finally, on 24 March 2022, Bernardo Caal Xol was released from the penitentiary centre of Cobán after more than four years.** The defender's lawyers reported that the judge had ordered his release for good behaviour the day before.

Bernardo told Amnesty International:

***"Amnesty International gave me hope of freedom and now I am free. I am now with my family, I am now with my daughters, I am now with my partner. My mother has already cried with happiness to see me free. Thanks to each one***

<sup>1</sup> Amparo is a court procedure (similar to, but broader than, habeas corpus). It can be used to challenge and obtain a remedy for alleged violations of a person's rights, for example, illegal detention, but also for the prevention of possible violations of human rights and other constitutional guarantees.

*of you, thanks to each one of you for spreading and sharing my letters.”*

Despite this positive outcome, Bernardo remains convicted of a crime he did not commit and thus the Guatemalan authorities continue to criminalize him for his work in defending human rights and the environment.<sup>2</sup> Bernardo’s case had previously been observed as part of Amnesty International’s monitoring of the human rights situation in Guatemala, and attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs), following the *We Defend the Land with Our Blood* report (2016). However, it was not until 2019 that Amnesty International was able to work on Bernardo’s case. Amnesty International representatives visited Bernardo in December that same year, with two Amnesty International delegates travelling to the jail in Cobán to speak with Bernardo. The delegation also met Bernardo’s partner, Isabel Matzir, and Bernardo’s sister, María, who accompanied the delegates to the river where the dam Bernardo and his people protested was located.



Bernardo hugs his daughters following his release from prison © Annie Matzir

Isabel Matzir participated in several events organized by Amnesty International’s national entities. In November 2021, Amnesty International Netherlands organized a meeting with students at a local school. They had the opportunity to ask Isabel questions about Bernardo and his fight. In February 2022, Amnesty International Portugal organized a public event to mark the end of Write for Rights 2021. At the event Isabel shared stories about Bernardo and the difficulties she and all her family have been facing due to Bernardo’s long-lasting incarceration. She also talked about the situation for HRDs in

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/guatemala-bernardo-caal-xol-should-never-have-spent-a-day-in-prison/>

Guatemala. Amnesty International Peru also organized an action in front of the Guatemalan embassy in Lima, which was shared on Bernardo's social media accounts.

Despite Bernardo's release, Amnesty International is still concerned about the elevated levels of attacks against HRDs and activists; particularly those involved in the fight against impunity and corruption, and those defending land, territory, and the environment. Criminalization (misuse of the criminal justice system) is quite a common tactic used against environmental human rights defenders and those who fight against impunity and corruption in Guatemala is.



An activist with Amnesty International Poland writes a letter to Bernardo at a writing event on 11 December 2021 in cafe and club "Pardon to tu" in Warsaw

La Unidad de Defensores y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala (UDEFEHUGUA)<sup>3</sup> recorded 839 attacks against HRDs from January to November 2021.<sup>4</sup> However, Guatemala has yet to adopt a public policy for the protection of human rights defenders, which was ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2014 in the judgment *Defensor de los Derechos Humanos et al. v. Guatemala*.<sup>5</sup> Guatemala is also one of the most dangerous countries in the world for defenders of land, territory, and the environment, according to the latest Global Witness report.<sup>6</sup>

In 2020, Guatemala had the fourth highest rate of killings of land and environmental defenders per capita globally. Despite this, Guatemala has yet to ratify the Escazú Agreement, the first environmental human rights treaty in Latin America and

<sup>3</sup> An NGO established in 2000 to help human rights defenders in Guatemala and throughout Central America

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/UDEFEGUA/status/1470902274637639687>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec\\_283\\_esp.pdf](https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_283_esp.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/last-line-defence/>

the Caribbean, which requires state parties to protect environmental defenders.<sup>7</sup>

Guatemalan authorities have pushed initiatives that restrict human rights advocacy, such as the controversial NGO Law (Decree 04-2020)<sup>8</sup>, which entered into force in June 2021. This new law jeopardizes the exercise of the rights to freedom of association and expression, and grants powers that could be used arbitrarily to limit the work of civil society organizations.

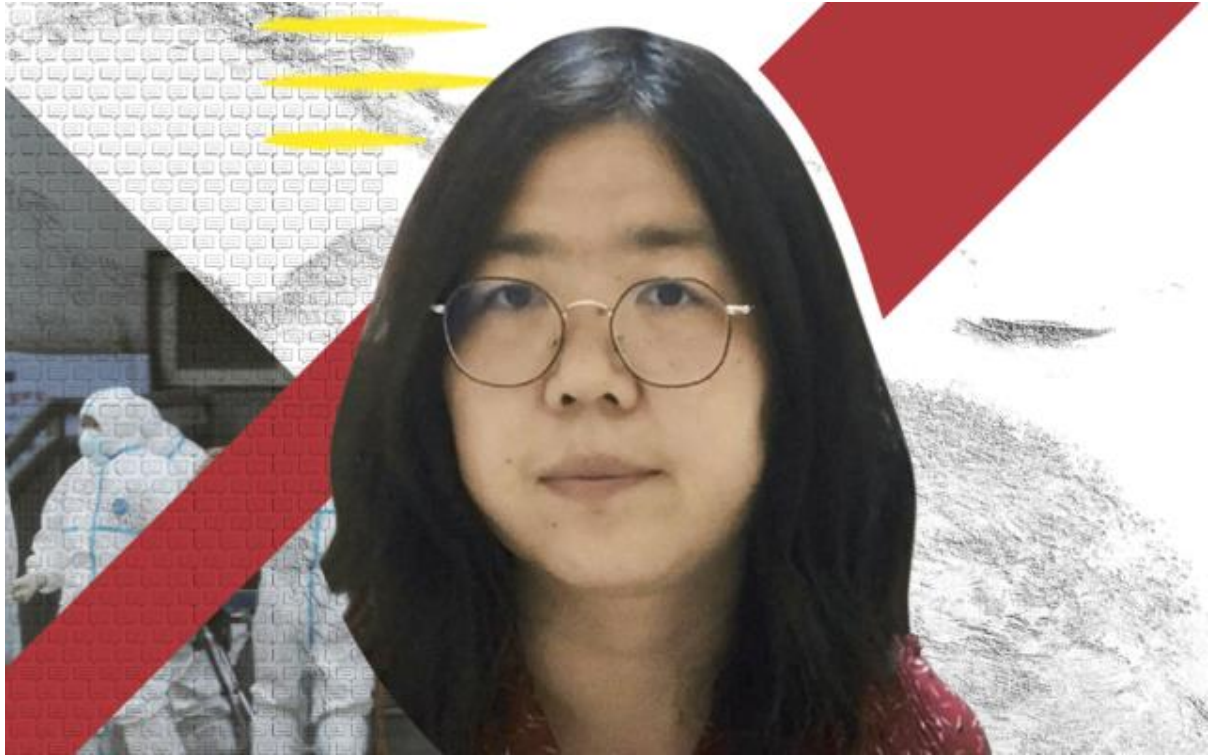
Due to the recent release of Bernardo, Amnesty International will readjust its plans to deliver letters and petitions. Since he is still unjustly condemned, further steps will be planned for the campaign to demand that national authorities stop criminalizing Bernardo's important work in defending human rights and the environment. Bernardo and his partner Isabel are very thankful for Amnesty International's support throughout the years, including the relentless international pressure and the work prior to Write for Rights 2021.

## ZHANG ZHAN – CHINA

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cepal.org/es/acuerdodeescazu>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.congreso.gob.gt/assets/uploads/info\\_legislativo/decretos/492a2-04-2020.pdf](https://www.congreso.gob.gt/assets/uploads/info_legislativo/decretos/492a2-04-2020.pdf)



Zhang Zhan is a citizen journalist and former lawyer who has been active in speaking out about politics and human rights issues in China. She risked everything to report on Covid-19 when it first appeared in Wuhan, China. In February 2020, she decided to travel to Wuhan as a citizen journalist to provide on-the-ground information about what was happening there. The former lawyer took to social media, reporting how government officials had detained independent reporters and harassed families of Covid-19 patients.

Zhang Zhan went missing in Wuhan in May 2020. It was subsequently revealed that she had been detained by police in Shanghai, more than 640 km away. In June 2020, she began a hunger strike to protest her detention. As punishment for her hunger strike, Zhang Zhan was forced to wear leg shackles and hand restraints 24 hours a day.

On 28 December 2020, Pudong New District People's Court sentenced Zhang Zhan to four years in prison on the charge of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". Zhang Zhan attended her trial in a wheelchair as her body was so weak. On the same day, Zhang Zhan told her lawyer that she would resume eating to avoid punishment from the detention authorities.

After being transferred to Shanghai Municipal Women's Prison, Zhang Zhan continued to carry out a partial hunger strike, eating only minimal amounts of food, such as biscuits or *mantou* (small, steamed buns) to assert her innocence and protest her sentence, despite the grave risk to her health.

During the period of Write for Rights 2021 campaign, Zhang Zhan health was in critical condition. She suffered from severe malnutrition and her weight dropped to less than 40kg. In a [video call](#) with her family, Zhang Zhan's condition seemed to have further weakened, she had no energy to walk and could not raise her head. Very concerning was the yellow colour of her skin, a sign of a potential life-threatening condition and there were very serious concerns that if she continued with her hunger strike, she would not live through the winter. The family subsequently submitted an application for bail on medical grounds.

On 28 January 2022, Zhang Zhan was able to speak to her mother, informing her that she had stopped the partial hunger strike. Zhang Zhan's mother noticed that her health may have slightly improved, being especially pleased that Zhang Zhan seemed to be able to walk without assistance.

The Chinese government has long been exercising extensive control over what Chinese citizens can see of the world and what they can say about it. At the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, numerous articles relating to the virus were censored, with social media posts, certain hashtags and demands for freedom of expression all quickly deleted or censored. Amnesty International continues to monitor the situation, especially the many reports of independent journalists and activists being harassed by authorities for sharing information about Covid-19 on social media.



Activists from Amnesty International Luxembourg protest outside the Chinese Embassy on 15 February 2022 © Patrizia Ciurlia

Amnesty International first became aware of Zhang Zhan's situation via a person from Zhang Zhan's Concern Group in December 2020. After receiving consent to work with Zhang Zhan, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action. Experience shows that mass mobilization is important for cases like Zhang Zhan's. Information shared with Amnesty International by detained individuals who were then released, shows that the actions of Amnesty International members had improved their conditions while in detention.

During this time, many organizations and states have spoken up and called on the Chinese authorities to release Zhang Zhan. This includes the [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#), the United State of America and the [UN Human Rights Experts](#) who repeatedly called the Chinese government to release Zhang Zhan. Amnesty International also joined Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in a [statement](#) to urge China to release Zhang Zhan.

Despite the global pandemic, supporters around the world took action for Zhang Zhan. Online activism enabled us to easily see what has been done around the world for Zhang Zhan. Offline events were also held, and information and pictures shared on social media. Zhang Zhan's Concern Group used #FreeZhangZhan / #ZhangZhan to track actions that were taken.

Contacts from Zhang Zhan's Concern Group and Zhang Zhan's lawyers have shared that they find it very touching that Amnesty International supporters are so persistent and have taken huge amounts of actions.

Via Amnesty's Chinese twitter handle, a live letter-writing event was organized. Supporters were encouraged to send their messages of solidarity for Zhang Zhan via Twitter, then cards were written using these messages during the live event. More than 2,600 people watched the online streaming and some left encouraging messages to Zhang Zhan during the event.

More than 660,000 actions were taken on behalf of Zhang Zhan during Write for Rights, including messages of solidarity and letters and petitions signatures calling for her release.

Amnesty International will continue to work on Zhang Zhan's case until she is released.

***"Thank you to all the friends who worked and supported Zhang Zhan's case. Those who wrote letters and cards to her and spoke out for her, every letter sent to Shanghai Municipal Pudong District Detention Centre and Shanghai Municipal Women's Prison, every card, every painting, every letter sent to various departments of the Chinese authorities, every***

*protest [action], every tweet and post on social media, every poster, every candle, every greeting, blessing and encouragement - I believe that Zhang Zhan felt it [all].*

*Thank you all for helping her through the most life-threatening part of her life. The support and solidarity from all over the world, the belief in justice, the pursuit of truth, [all] make this winter warm. Like Zhang Zhan, we are full of hope.”*  
- Zhang Zhan Concern Group



Activists from Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand take action for Zhang Zhan © AI Aotearoa New Zealand

# PANUSAYA "RUNG" SITHIJIRAWATTANAKUL – THAILAND



Amnesty International Thailand has been campaigning for rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly for the last three to four years. For the last two years there have been thousands of protests Thailand calling for justice in society. Issues such as inequality, the right to access justice, land rights, indigenous rights, the right to health, disability rights, children's rights, indigenous rights, LGBTI rights, women's rights, labour rights, and various political and social rights have been highlighted by tens perhaps hundreds of thousands of people in Thailand, demanding the government act in order to promote, protect and fulfil their obligations.

Panusaya, known as 'Rung', is one of many young pro-democracy leaders who has taken her activism to the streets to encourage and empower young people to question the current situation of their society, urging them to use their voice and raise their concerns with authorities. Rung and her friends have organised large gatherings around Thailand and created networks of people to protest. With her activism and the support of social movements, the authorities feel threatened and have described Rung and her friends as 'radicals', seeing her group's acts as unconstitutional and treasonous.

Rung is representative of many young voices in the country, especially those who are growing up under the current administration, that have been in power for the last eight years. She has faced many charges and has been detained twice. Judicial harassment, such as lengthy court cases, high numbers of charges, denial of bail and to access to lawyers and family have been used to deter her from her human rights activities. Rung also contracted Covid-19 while she was detained in prison. Rung and her friends have been under surveillance by the authorities and harassed by ultra-conservative/royalist groups both online and offline.

Since 2019, Amnesty International Thailand has worked with activists from the Ratsadon ('the people') campaign, of which Rung is part. The campaign calls for the right to access justice and the release of detained pro-democracy activists. The main target for the Ratsadon campaign is the Thai authorities. Alongside the voices of young people in Thailand, pressure from international community was deemed necessary. Rung's participation in Write for Rights 2021 was a strategic decision to raise awareness of the case in Thailand and to pressure the authorities using global attention.



Amnesty International first approached Rung about taking part in Write for Rights in May 2021. It was important that Rung be involved in the campaigning process as much as possible. Rung was able to comment on all strategies and materials created for the campaign. Being a part of Write for Rights meant that Rung was able to connect with media and journalists from around the world. Rung also spoke with Amnesty International national entities about her work, including Amnesty International Japan in October 2021. Rung joined as a speaker at the Global Activism Skillshare, also held in October 2021. In November 2021, 26,000 letters were handed to the Prime Minister's Office, collected from national entities who had already begun campaigning for Write for Rights.



Left: Rung reads some of the cards and letters she received as part of the Write for Rights campaign  
© Amnesty International

In February 2022, Rung was given some of the solidarity letters collected during the campaign. Rung was hugely appreciative of the letters and has told Amnesty International that being a part of the campaign from the beginning was very beneficial. She said that everyone was so active and that being a part of long-term plans has been great – she has posted many pictures of her activism on her Instagram account and social media. The most memorable event for Rung was the Pracharat Festival (October 2021), a public discussion on the impact of receiving solidarity letters with protest leaders, including Rung, who had been imprisoned; and Let Freedom Shine (26 February 22) at which Amnesty International Thailand handed over letters to Rung and where former prisoners shared experiences and hopes for the future. Rung reported that both events and the solidarity letters highlighted to her the support that Write for Rights gave her and others in a similar position, as well as the valuable

connections with and participation in a larger global community of individuals with shared values.

***"The number of the letters that I have received was beyond any of my expectations. For me, this is a successful campaign, just to see each individual letter sent to me, it makes me so happy that they know what is happening in Thailand, and what I am facing" - Rung***

The selection of Rung for the Write for Rights campaign was a strategic moment to call on the Thai government to free the pro-democracy leaders detained for their human rights work. Write for Rights brought about international pressure, which was especially important as it came at a time when local human rights movements are being severely suppressed. Seeing the international community mobilising for human rights in Thailand has meant local activists feel the international solidarity expressed with Thai people. In addition, human rights issues in Thailand are now more visible outside of Thailand because of Write for Rights. From interviews with Rung, she said that the campaign has given her hope to continue fighting. Amnesty International believes that the spotlight on Rung during the action may have contributed to the official decision to grant her release on bail in January 2022 and to increased momentum for calls on authorities to grant other political prisoners their right to release on bail.

Sadly Rung's case being a part of Write for Rights has added to the anti-Amnesty International movement in Thailand, where some ultra-conservative and royalist groups have been campaigning to throw Amnesty International out of the country. There has been excessive investigation into the organisations work, with attempts to pass laws that hinder the right to freedom of association. This adversely affected work on Write for Rights, especially towards the end of November to the end of December 2021. Many events had to be cancelled due to security risks to Amnesty International in Thailand and the possibility to aggravating anti-Amnesty International campaigns.

However, Rung has noticed a strong increase of human rights awareness and critical thinking when it comes to tough issues. Issues such as enforced disappearance, the death penalty, problems with the justice system, indigenous rights, gender and gender diversity, migrant and refugee rights are being discussed in public, though the problem is the authorities still ignoring these problems. Hopefully Amnesty International's campaign contributed towards this.

***"The postcards did not have many words in there, just simply said 'keep fighting, sending all the love, want you to be free again, see you outside. Some wrote quite long, some wrote very short, but I want to tell you, no matter how many words you have written, how many letters, every letter is very meaningful to those who are receiving it.'" - Rung***

Amnesty International will continue working to release those unfairly detained and charged for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.



Left: A child's drawing sent to Rung as part of the Write for Rights campaign in Slovenia  
© Amnesty International Slovenia

# UKRAINE

# SPHERE NGO –



Due to Russia’s war against Ukraine, Amnesty International has not been able to conduct a full impact assessment for Sphere NGO. However, Anna Sharyhina, co-founder of the LGBTI organization has shared this message:

***"Before Write for Rights we felt quite burned out, not only my colleagues and I, but I would say this was true for the whole community. We were thinking about our goals and the change we were supposed to make. After we travelled to Amnesty International offices in different countries and got all this support, we felt so charged and inspired that we launched an advocacy and a large media campaign. With all the plans and ideas we had, it makes it even more painful to realize that the war has broken out", says Anna.***

Anna emotionally shares details of her life in war- torn Kharkiv. She is staying in the city despite all the risks because she feels it her duty to help people in these difficult times. Their community centre has now been shut down, not only because it is too dangerous to work there, but also because public transport is no longer in operation in Kharkiv, therefore, it is impossible to reach the centre. The organization, however, keeps working. Anna and her colleagues are providing humanitarian aid and financial support to LGBTI community members that stayed in the city. However, help is also being provided to those who have escaped from the city. Anna and her team are helping citizens of Kharkiv to the best of their ability.

Anna says that every word of support and every message that condemns the Russian invasion and violations matter nowadays. It is something that helps her get up in the morning and keep going.



Right: Activists in Thailand stand in solidarity with members of the LGBTI group, Sphere. © Kan Sangtong

## MIKITA ZALATAROU –

# BELARUS



Mikita Zalatarou was just 16 when he was arrested after being caught up in crowds leaving a protest in Homel, Belarus. The teenager was held in solitary confinement and has reportedly been tortured.

According to Mikita’s dad, it all began in August 2020, when Mikita was waiting for a friend in the main square of Homel city, south-eastern Belarus. Nearby, people had been largely peacefully protesting the recent presidential election results when police moved in. Mikita’s father says that as the crowd began running, someone told Mikita to run, too – so he did.



The next day police officers came to Mikita’s door. They beat the 16-year-old, accusing him of throwing a Molotov cocktail towards two officers the night before. After they arrested Mikita, they beat him in custody with an electric shock truncheon. Officers

Above: Illustrations created for a blog about Mikita © Amnesty International

interrogated him without a lawyer or responsible adult present and kept him detained for six months before putting him on trial.

Despite a lack of sufficient evidence, Mikita was convicted of mass disorder and using illegal explosives. Video evidence did not show him taking part in violent actions. The judge sentenced Mikita to five years in a child educational prison colony. Since then, Mikita has spent a long time in solitary confinement and was reportedly tortured. He has not been getting the medical treatment he needs for his epilepsy.

Amnesty International first became aware of Mikita's case as part of reactive work responding to the human rights crisis in Belarus. On 9 August 2020, the presidential elections took place in Belarus. Persecutions against various members of the opposition had started well before the election. The results were widely disputed, and the incumbent president Alyaksandr Lukashenka claimed a landslide victory, while Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya emerged as a popular opposition candidate for protest voters.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to peacefully protest against the results and the authorities unleashed a violent crackdown on peaceful protesters and anyone expressing dissent. Riot police used unlawful force against peaceful protestors and more than 30,000 people were detained after being charged with administrative offences related to their participation in peaceful demonstrations.

Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in detention were widespread and the perpetrators are still enjoying complete impunity. Moreover, thousands have been prosecuted under criminal charges related to mass events and protests. Hundreds are sentenced to long prison sentences and include human rights defenders, activists and even children.

Developments on Mikita's case were monitored and highlighted in several high-level advocacy and campaigning meetings organized by Amnesty International and its partners. In April 2021, Amnesty published a detailed [research piece](#) describing Mikita's case and the human rights violations committed against him.



Above: An activist in Togo takes action for Mikita © Amnesty International Togo

Around the same time Mikita was nominated for Write for Rights 2021. The main contact for Mikita was his father Mikhail, who provided information about Mikita, shared the latest developments and participated in meetings whilst Write for Rights was in the planning phase.

Mikhail has been clear that public support for Mikita is important both to Mikita and his family, and all efforts and support from Amnesty International members are much appreciated.

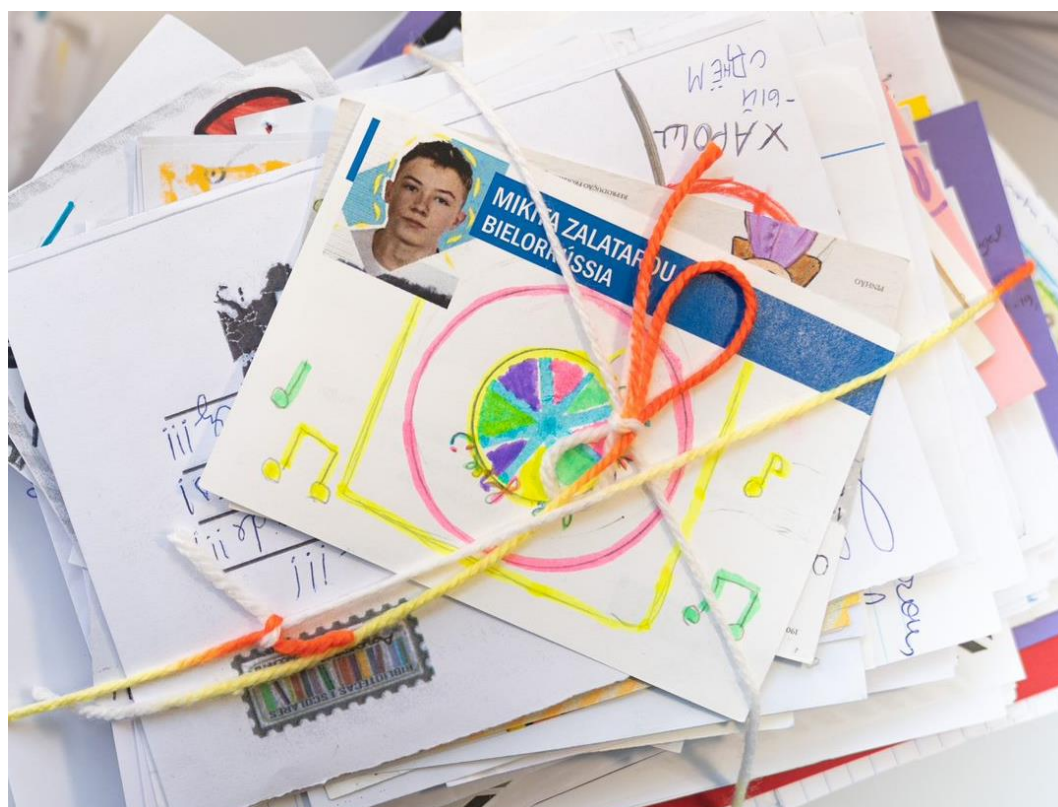
Very sadly, according to Amnesty International's information, no letters or postcards have managed to reach Mikita in detention so far and he still often receives punishments. It is particularly difficult to gather any information on Mikita's welfare because all his communication with the outside world, including his own family, is monitored and possibly censored.

***"I tell him to keep his head down, to learn, to study languages, English [for example]. I could send him books. But this is impossible: they are so busy there that they do not have a free minute,"*** – Mikhail, Mikita's father

All national entities were advised to deliver petitions to the Belarusian embassies in their countries, where possible, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belarus. People in countries without a national entity were asked to post their petitions to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belarus, or team up with a neighbouring country that has an Amnesty International entity.

Amnesty International will continue campaigning on Mikita's case long-term and an updated strategy is being developed now.

***'Thank you so much for all your amazing support, your letters, signatures and your solidarity actions. At the moment we have very little access to Mikita and sadly we have been informed that Mikita is not able to receive most, if not all, solidarity messages. However, he is aware that he was featured in the W4R campaign, and we hope that it has had a positive impact on his mental state and his overall situation. After all, knowing that you are not forgotten and that the world is behind you is a powerful thing, especially when you are behind bars. Thank you!'*** - Belarus team, Amnesty International Secretariat



Above: Letters and cards collected for Mikita in Portugal © Amnesty International Portugal

**JANNA JIHAD**

# – OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES



The village of Nabi Saleh near Ramallah has long been a focus of demonstrations and activism against Israel's military occupation and land appropriation for settlements. The neighbouring Israeli settlement of Halamish expropriated land from the village, including a water source. Since 2009, Israeli forces have repeatedly used excessive force in response to the protests and during search and arrests raids. Such actions have resulted in the arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals and have also caused the deaths of Palestinian residents of the village, leaving a devastating effect on young Palestinians, especially children, living in Nabi Saleh.

Fifteen-year-old Janna Jihad is a resident of Nabi Saleh and a leading young voice in the village. She has long called for the protection of children rights, and specifically, Palestinian children in the context of a brutal military occupation and system of apartheid. Janna has a massive public following and engages in local activism both in Nabi Saleh and with other communities in Palestine.

Although weekly demonstrations in Nabi Saleh stopped some years ago, the community faces weekly violence and control by Israeli authorities. The people of Nabi Saleh have repeatedly called on the international community to do more, and to stand in solidarity with them.

Amnesty International's global movement has been supporting Janna's call to end the discrimination of Palestinian children, standing in solidarity with Janna and her community and condemning the violent control Israeli authorities have on the lives of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Amnesty International has been campaigning with the community of Nabi Saleh since before 2009 and we have a strong relationship with Janna and her family.

Amnesty International asked Janna and her mother Nawal about potentially putting Janna forward as a part of Write for Rights, which they were very excited about. We discussed the scope of the global campaign and where and how we would ask Janna to help co-create it with us. We shared the case submission with Janna before sending it in and also worked on all of the public facing language with Janna and her mother to ensure they were happy with the text.

***"You have no idea how heart-warming it was receiving all of these supportive messages and videos on Janna's Facebook page. We have tons of videos of children, youth, and their parents sending us love and support from all [over] the world."***

***Little kids telling Janna how much of an inspiration she is to them, we were really touched by this. We haven't been active much on social media lately, this encouraged us to get back at it, and we will!"*** - Nawal, Janna's mother

Janna herself was Amnesty International's main point of contact, as well as her mother whenever there were decisions that needed her input. The working relationship was lovely and was a great way to further strengthen our relationship with the community. Most of the engagement took place over WhatsApp or via phone calls. The number of national entities working on Janna's campaign for Write for Rights has been extremely impressive, especially the range of entities taking action, including ones that do not normally do work on Israel/Palestine.

Five massive bags of solidarity letters for Janna have already been received, with the letters likely numbering in the thousands. These were shared with Janna in March 2022.



Above: Activists in Morocco takes action for Janna © Amnesty International Morocco

Of special importance were the webinars national entities held. These allowed activists and young people to speak and engage with Janna herself. This was a great intersectional moment for sharing space, solidarity, and ideas. The sharing of Janna's personal story with young people across the world was a very important moment for Janna who always thanked Amnesty International for allowing her case and the story of Palestinian children to be told far and wide.

There was not much movement on the human rights situation in the village, and especially regarding the call on Israeli authorities to end the discrimination against Palestinian children. Janna's case however was a great springboard to highlight the massive injustice that is taking place against Palestinians inside Israel/Palestine and served as an important campaign moment for Amnesty International's ongoing work on ending Israel's system of apartheid. Janna and the story of Nabi Saleh have been featured strongly in both the most recent report as well as public messaging in and around the campaign.

The Amnesty International movement did an incredible job at showing solidarity and support for Janna and her community.

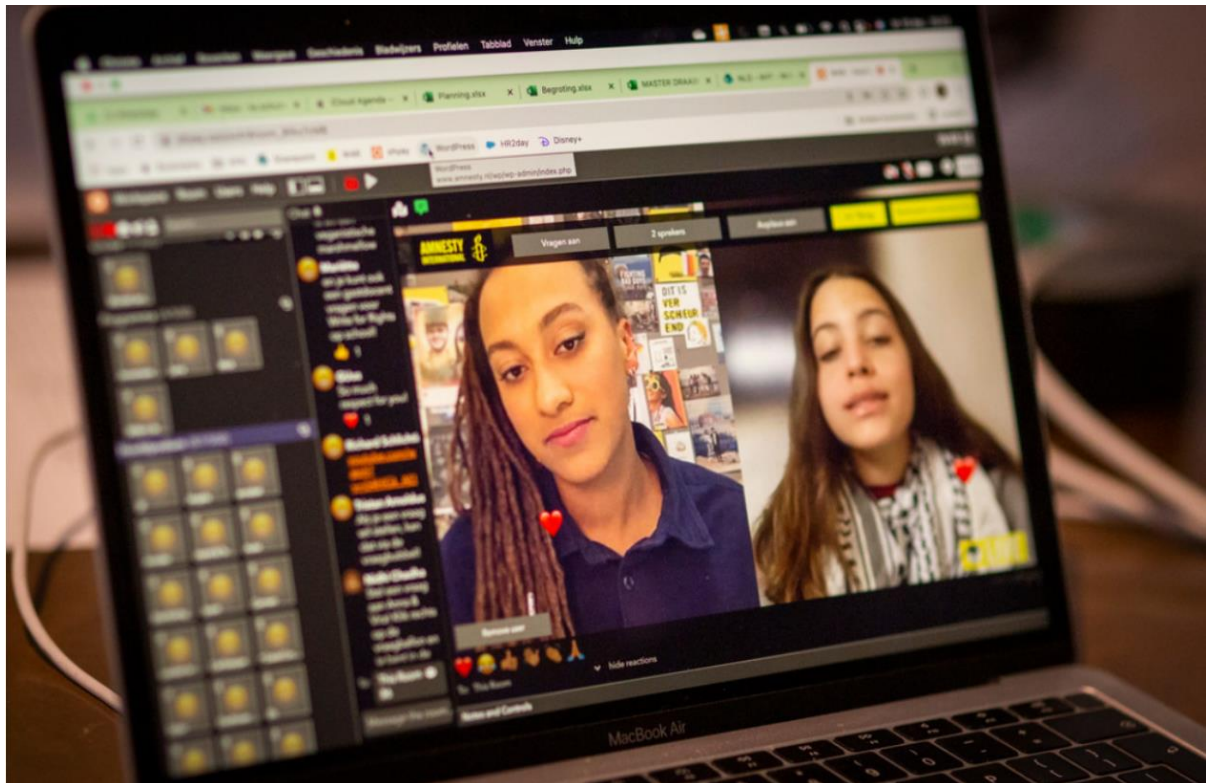


*"It was truly heart-warming, I've also been receiving tons of love and support on my Instagram account. Students sending me letters and videos from their classrooms, telling me that they know me, they know my story, they share it and send solidarity which is beyond anything I could describe.*

*I am really happy that our Palestinian story is reaching every corner of the world, especially with the younger generations, and this gives me so much hope for a better future. Having this much attention to our cause and spreading awareness is what I've aspired for as journalist and I'm beyond happy and grateful.*

*I'm thankful to each and every person who took the time to write to me and message me, my heart is full."* – Janna

We will continue to campaign on Janna's case, with some Amnesty International national entities continuing campaigning in conjunction the ongoing campaign to end Israel's apartheid.



Above: Janna takes part in a Webinar with other young activists © Amnesty International Netherlands

## MOHAMED BAKER – EGYPT



Mohamed Baker, also known as Baker, is a human rights lawyer and director of the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which he founded in 2014. He was arbitrarily arrested in September 2019 and held for 28 months without charge or trial over unfounded terrorism accusations. These accusations are related to three separate cases brought by the Supreme State Security Prosecution and Baker's name is now on the "terrorists list". Being on this list means among other things, a travel ban, an asset freeze and prohibition from engaging in political or civic work for five years. All this treatment is solely due to his human rights work. On 20 December 2021, the Emergency State Security Court sentenced him to four years in prison, after convicting him of spurious charges of "spreading false news" over their social media posts. On 18 January 2022, the Court of Cassation rejected the final appeal by Alaa Abdel Fattah, Mohamed Baker and 27 others against their arbitrary inclusion on the "terrorists list" in November 2020, without due process as part of Case No. 1781/2019.

He is held in a maximum-security prison, where he is subjected to cruel and inhuman conditions and discriminatory and punitive treatment by the authorities. Baker was chosen to be in Write for Rights because his situation has received little public attention or media coverage and has been campaigned on far less than that of other human rights workers detained arbitrarily in Egypt. This choice was also based on feedback provided from former detainees, relatives of those detained and human rights defenders. It is hoped that the greater visibility brought about by his inclusion in a global campaign would increase pressure on the authorities and lead to a positive impact. Particularly on the secondary objectives of improving his conditions of detention and protecting him from further torture and ill-treatment, and potentially even leading to his provisional release and removal from the "terrorists list".

Amnesty International knew Baker in his capacity as a human rights lawyer and Director of the Adalah Center. When he was arrested, Amnesty International decided to begin campaigning on his case by issuing an Urgent Action. The team working on Baker also engaged in producing multiple joint outputs with partner NGOs and social media messaging.

For security reasons, we asked national entities and supporters not to send solidarity letters to Egypt as it might lead to reprisals against Baker, his family and whoever receives the letters. Instead, we created a secure email address and ask them to take photos of the solidarity messages, letters and cards and send them by email. Baker's loved ones were happily surprised with the number of emails received.

They were particularly touched by the creative work made around cats, as Baker loves cats.

Campaigning by national entities and supporters from countries with no ties to Egypt and that are not historically the most

active on Egypt was also particularly appreciated.

During prison visits, Baker learned about the amount of support, the photos with cats, the creative work, and illustrations created for him, and this made him smile. Baker was very happy about the global mobilization.



Above: Activists from Morocco take action for Baker © Amnesty International Morocco

Baker's loved ones wanted to share this message:

***"We are very happy with the campaign and very thankful to every member who participated in it. And we are very fortunate that the campaign chose Baker. No matter how hard I try, I will not be able to express how we felt after receiving that amount of warmth and psychological support that the campaign provided us with. So many expressive***

*words in all languages. And the cards and publications on social media and pictures of people with their cats and photos of their cats. People's sketches and drawings of Baker, activities on the streets, even in small cities. Statements, campaigns, follow-up, news, and support, the video that Ahmed Gamal Ziada helped filming. We cannot thank you enough! There is no improvement, the situation is getting worse, but this is not related to the campaign."*



Some national entities reached out to the Egypt team to ask about delivering petitions and letters to the Egyptian authorities. It is recommended that petitions and letters be delivered to Egyptian embassies or diplomatic representatives in countries where the national entities are based. It is also recommended to plan an event around delivering them and taking photos to share with Egypt team and Write for Rights team.

In case there is no diplomatic presence in the country, please send to the nearest embassy, or to the Egyptian permanent mission in Geneva:

Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva  
Ambassador H.E. Mr. Ahmed Ihab Abdelahad GAMALELDIN  
261, Route de Lausanne  
1292 Chambesey  
Phone number : +41 22 731 65 30  
Fax Number: +41 22 738 44 15

Left: A pupil at a school in Togo signs a petition for Baker © Amnesty International Togo

Amnesty International will continue to work on Baker's case through Urgent Actions, advocacy, social media and engaging with partner NGOs in joint efforts to release Baker.

# ACTIVITIES AROUND THE WORLD

## ALGERIA

ACTIONS: 30,647

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that unfortunately Amnesty International Algeria could not do any big events with the general public, but that didn't stop them from doing everything they could online and doing some letter writing workshops to support the individuals and groups featured in Write for Rights 2021.

**AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND****ACTIONS: 17,222**

Above: Solidarity action with Anna and Vira from Sphere at Asia Pacific Webinar 10/11/2021 – Amnesty International Japan, New Zealand, Malaysia, Taiwan and Australia © Amnesty International

There were still many Covid-19 restrictions in Aotearoa New Zealand, making it difficult to have offline events. Because of this, most of the engagement with the campaign was online. Having diverse cases of individuals and groups helped to attract interest for the campaign.

**ARGENTINA****ACTIONS: 24,140**

The Write for Rights 2021 campaign in Argentina involved different strategies to get people involved through various actions. The focus was on the cases of individuals and groups that were most relevant to the entity's work agendas and that generated the most interest from our audiences. The emphasis was placed on digital and communication actions that achieve a greater reach compared to face-to-face actions.

On the campaigns side, they organized a face-to-face event, together with the entity's youth group, in a public space that brought together many young people. Human Rights education colleagues held virtual and face-to-face workshops in educational spaces, inviting young people and teachers to reflect on human rights through the campaign. The growth side analysed the performance of the cases of individuals and groups, created a microsite to direct people to sign, a digital activist pledge and its own audio-visual content. The communications colleagues worked on featuring the individuals and groups in the local media and in the entity's social networks through continuous dissemination and strategic alliances with local media.

Despite all these actions, they found it difficult to work on some cases of individuals and groups because they were far removed from the interests and concerns of their audiences. They also gathered signatures for a local case. This was the one that performed best and also allowed them to attract signatures for the global campaign.

**AUSTRALIA****ACTIONS: 274,341**

At Amnesty International Australia, Write for Rights 2021 was fully integrated across the organisation, and for the first time they were able to obtain over a quarter of a million actions, with a total of nearly 275,000 actions taken by 103,000 people, of whom 40,000 were new to Amnesty International. They also worked on six supplementary individuals at risk, gathering 50,000 actions. They trialled a "One Stop Shop" Action Page where supporters could sign all ten petitions with just one click,

generating 95,000 actions.

Zhang Zhan was featured in the end of year fundraising campaign, and the combined fundraising activities raised over \$283,000. Write for Rights proved very successful for lead generation activities with 51,000 actions being taken by new supporters across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest. Actions included petitions, robocalling and solidarity cards.

Activists held over 40 events, both offline and online. Highlights included projecting images of Rung, Janna and Zhang in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne on Human Rights Day, an interview with Wendy and a webinar with Ana and Vira from Sphere.

Meetings with embassies were held via video conference to advocate for the individuals featured in the campaign and to hand over actions.

There were 20 pieces of media coverage mentioning both Amnesty International and Zhang Zhan, with a cumulative reach of approximately 60 million people.



Above: An activist from Amnesty International Australia, dressed as a pencil, takes action for Zhang Zhan during Write for Rights 2021. © Amnesty International Australia

## AUSTRIA

**ACTIONS: 34,617**

Amnesty International Austria felt that they achieved overall good results with their campaign, despite the lockdown imposed at the time of their main action period. This meant that new events in cooperation with cinemas and book shops could not take place and offline activism was impacted. However, they hope to build on last year's work in preparation for Write for Rights 2022. Overall daily events and news (e.g., Covid-19, lockdown, possible vaccination mandates) overshadowed their output and impacted reach.

W4R continues to be a very important resource in their engagement with schools, teachers and young people. It is an

essential building block in the work of their activist groups and networks and supports fundraising efforts.

## **BELGIUM (FLEMISH)**

**ACTIONS: 86,392**

Once again because of the pandemic it was a far from ideal campaign for Amnesty International Belgium in 2021. The physical kick-off of the campaign had to be cancelled, only one week before it was supposed to happen. The national entity had invited Anna and Vira from Sphere, but again this could not happen. Smaller events could take place, but far less than in other years. On 3 February 2022, the letters and signatures collected during Write for Rights 2021 were delivered to the respective embassies. A video was produced by Amnesty Belgium Flanders as a wrap up and thank you for the campaign.



Above: Amnesty International Belgium (Flanders) staff load up a van with Write for Rights letters to be delivered to embassies in Belgium. Still taken from a wrap up video © Exstatic for Amnesty International Belgium

## **BELGIUM (FRENCH-SPEAKING)**

**ACTIONS: 108,314**

Once again, the Covid-19 crisis impacted the Write for Rights campaign for Amnesty International Belgium (French-speaking). Local volunteer activist groups that were organizing local letter-writing events for the general public were unable to organize them due to the measures imposed by the authorities. However, the public was able to take action via the kits that were distributed by the entity. These kits offered a formula that was quite appropriate in the circumstances: you write at home following explanations and models. Another way of taking action was to sign online petitions. A new formula was launched and was very successful: inviting people to a "World Tour" which offered 10 online sessions presenting the countries of the 10 individuals and groups featured and the human rights situation in these 10 countries.

The delivery of the letters to the Belgian embassies concerned was carried out together with the Flemish entity of Amnesty International Belgium and was the subject of a short video that served as a medium for thanking the people who took part in the 2021 letter writing marathon.

## **BENIN**

**ACTIONS: 130,337**

Amnesty International Benin's Write for Rights 2021 campaign ran from 27 November to 17 December 2021. Beforehand, a training was organized during the months of October and November to present the campaign to local groups and explain the various cases of individuals and groups selected. The campaign itself mobilized 42 Amnesty International groups throughout the country. This year the collection of petition signatures was done digitally on a platform thanks to a tablet and links that were made available to the local groups; a clean break with the old system of collecting signatures on paper. Equipped with their equipment, our members went to schools, public squares, and various other places to meet local



communities to explain the cases of individuals and groups featured in the campaign and obtain their signatures.

## **BRAZIL**

**ACTIONS: 12,534**

Amnesty International Brazil's Write for Rights campaign was launched in the first half of December. The launch was smaller than in previous years due to the prioritization of the publication of the report "Covid-19 and human rights in Brazil: paths and challenges for a fair recovery", launched on 10 December, Human Rights Day. Because of the increase in cases of the new variant of the Covid-19 in Brazil, the campaign was designed to be 100% online. The campaign narrative highlighted the 20 years of the global campaign, indicating the results achieved during this time, the stories of success, and the thousands of solidarity actions worldwide. Subsequently, the petitions had greater focus on social media channels. With regards to the entity's membership, they developed an engagement journey and relationship that enabled several forms of participation: petitions signatures, solidarity actions and the use of download of the HRE toolkit and courses on the Amnesty Academy.

## **BURKINA FASO**

**ACTIONS: 30,504**

The 2021 Write for Rights campaign in Burkina Faso took place in a complex security climate. Indeed, since 2016, like some countries in the region, Burkina Faso has been facing an unprecedented security crisis. Faced with these security challenges, Amnesty International Burkina Faso has been innovative in the implementation of activities that fall within the framework of the defence of victims of human rights violations. They have developed new strategies for mobilizing members and innovative techniques for collecting signatures on petitions. Mobilization strategies have been a major asset in the success of this campaign.



Above: Members and activists from Amnesty International Burkina Faso gather to campaign for Write for Rights.  
© Amnesty International Burkina Faso

Also, the capacity-building sessions for members and supporters enabled the entity to better equip them and mobilize them around the cases of the individuals and groups featured in the campaign. During this campaign, the emphasis was not only on symbolic actions to raise awareness and engage our audiences, but also on digital campaign strategies to convey the calls to action.

## **CANADA (ENGLISH-SPEAKING)**

**ACTIONS: 80,630**



Above: Members and activists from Amnesty International Canada (English speaking) gather outside the Embassy of Thailand to campaign for Rung. © Amnesty International Canada

Even though it was another challenging year, Amnesty International Canada members and supporters rose to the occasion and Write for Rights 2021 was a success. The entity again partnered with VICE media, offered a range of online and offline events, and ran another national virtual marathon on 10 December. Amnesty activists across the country organized 180 events, largely online, but also socially distanced in their communities. In 2021 the Section saw record numbers of letters and exceeded our letter-writing goal, in part because schools were able to have in-person events again.

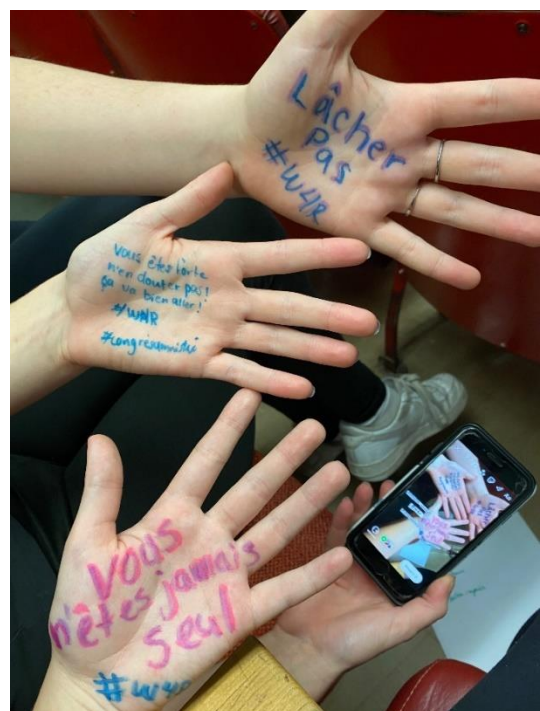
**ACTIONS: 35,761**

The events and initiatives of Amnesty International Canada (French-speaking) and their activist groups were adapted to the new health measures.

The number of participating schools was back up again this year.

However, several events were cancelled in January due to the health measures.

**CANADA (FRENCH-SPEAKING)**



Right: Members and activists from Amnesty International Canada (French speaking) write messages of solidarity on their hands to share via social media  
© Amnesty International Canada

**CHILE**

**ACTIONS: 356**

Amnesty International Chile campaigned for Janna, Wendy and Imoleayo. They also took on the case of a local person, that of Damary, a minor who was shot by the police during the social unrest and suffered eye trauma. They started to resume street activities, mainly HRE workshops, but a new outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic forced them to suspend face-to-face activities. The campaign has been disseminated through social networks, with little impact.

Among the highlights of the campaign, firstly they engaged in participatory work with activists, both for the selection of individuals and groups to be featured, as well as for the design, monitoring and implementation of the action plan. They also developed HRE materials and workshops specific to Damary's case, painted a mural on the corner of her house, and disseminated an opinion column written by the communications director. They also implemented a digital platform to

collect solidarity messages, as face-to-face activities have been suspended again due to the pandemic. This initiative was proposed and led by activists

The major difficulties are related to the pandemic, the weariness of digital activism, the difficulty of carrying out activities offline, and being a small entity.

**CÔTE D'IVOIRE**      **ACTIONS: 7,992**

Amnesty International Côte d'Ivoire's Write for Rights 2021 campaign began in on 25 November 2021, the International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, with a public awareness-raising activity on rape.

The women's committee and local groups of Amnesty International Côte d'Ivoire signed petitions in support of Zhang Zhan in China, Wendy Galarza in Mexico and Ciham Ali in Eritrea.

Subsequently, on 10 December 2021, an open day was organized to explain the celebration of the International Day of Human Rights with a film screening in tribute to former Amnesty International colleague Gaétan Mootoo, followed by debates, photo actions, petition signatures, and consultations on human rights. Finally, online actions were taken on Facebook and Twitter.



Above: A celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Côte d'Ivoire on 10 December © Amnesty International Côte d'Ivoire

**CZECH REPUBLIC**      **ACTIONS: 22,435**

2021 was a record year for the Czech Republic and Write for Rights. A total of 22,435 written or hand-signed letters were sent to the authorities or directly to individuals at risk and their loved ones.



Above: Activists and members from Amnesty International Czech Republic hold a candlelight event for Write for Rights 2021 © Anna Obrmajerová

**DENMARK**

**ACTIONS: 68,134**



As usual, Write for Rights was a very popular campaign in Denmark.

Left: Letters and postcards collected from Amnesty Denmark members and activists, for Anna and Vira from Sphere.  
© Amnesty International Denmark

**EAST & SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE**

The Amnesty International regional office in Nairobi supported Write for Rights 2021 events through Amnesty International Clubs in three cities in Democratic Republic of the Congo: Goma, Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. In Lubumbashi and Kinshasa,

115 individuals attended these events. At the time of submission, numbers of attendance for Goma were not available.

## **FAROE ISLANDS** ACTIONS: 1,317

Despite the high intensity of COVID-19 during the Write for Rights period, overall Amnesty International Faroe Islands were satisfied with how their campaign went.

## **FINLAND** ACTIONS: 43,700

In 2021, Amnesty International Finland campaigned to support nine of the individuals and groups featured in Write for Rights.

They focused on online activities and enhanced the possibility of writing solidarity messages on their campaign web site. An action tool kit was provided for activists and supporters, both as an online and a printed version, and they also organized online campaign trainings.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions affected their campaigning to some extent with regards to live events, but local groups were able to host local letter-writing gatherings.

They continued targeting supporters and new audiences through online petitions. Compared to 2020, the number of individual activists and supporters involved in their activism campaign increased.

In addition, comprehensive human rights education material was produced for secondary and upper secondary schools. A teachers' manual was provided both in Finnish and Swedish. Over 2,600 students from around 50 schools participated in the campaign.

## **FRANCE** ACTIONS: 632,000

Despite the COVID pandemic, it was a great year of the campaign for France, with at least 632,000 actions recorded. This was thanks to strong mobilization of very active groups, quality media partnerships and strong support from our supporters on social networks. Activists from the Section mobilized in public spaces in their cities, also providing human rights education in schools, high schools and universities. The



highlight of the campaign was a visit from Mexican feminist activist Wendy Galarza. She participated in advocacy meetings with public representatives of France, activist meetings in Marseille and Paris, and she accompanied the Section during the stop violence against women demonstration in Paris on 20 November.

Above: A demonstration organized by Amnesty International France, joined by Wendy Galarza, in November 2021 © Benjamin Girette / Hans Lucas.

## **GERMANY** ACTIONS: 376,540

Write for Rights in Germany was again strongly influenced by COVID-19. Many public actions were planned, but then could not be carried out because Christmas markets and other public events were cancelled. Nevertheless, they were able to continue to grow the number of actions taken by members. Alongside this, they focused again on online actions. For example, they carried out a Twitter storm for Zhang Zhan, which was trending in Germany and resulted in the Foreign Office starting work for her. Also, schools are becoming an increasingly important multiplier for the campaign in Germany. They were again able to contribute an impressive share to the entity's results.



Above: Students from Municipal High School in Erwitte, Germany take action for Write for Rights 2021 © Amnesty International Germany

#### **GHANA** ACTIONS: 1,940

For Amnesty International Ghana, Write for Rights 2021 was not very different from their 2020 campaign. Due to Covid -19 restrictions they were not able to hold physical Write for Rights events. Only few online actions were taken due to limited internet access and connectivity.

#### **GREECE** ACTIONS: 1,716

Write for Rights 2021 significantly mobilized Amnesty International Greece's activist networks, organizing actions showing solidarity with the individuals and groups featured in the campaign and calling for justice. Online and offline awareness-raising activities were carried out, including signing petitions and informing the public about human rights violations. To further understand the human rights violations that Janna, Wendy, Sphere, Bernardo and Baker face, Amnesty International Greece tried to approach these violations also through the lens of the ongoing campaigns that it is currently running, providing rich material regarding the situation in Israel/OPT, the struggle against gender-based violence, police violence and freedom of assembly. For this year's campaign, more than eight digital and offline actions took place, as well as an informative webinar, media work. They also promoted a theatrical play on climate rights and indigenous rights that highlighted the case of Bernardo and engaged more people to mobilize for justice.

#### **GUINEA** ACTIONS: 20,838

The Write for Rights 2021 campaign went well overall in Guinea. For the first time, they had a website dedicated to online petitions signatures thanks to the support of the West Africa Regional Office, with special thanks to Medoune. Despite the context of Covid-19, Amnesty International Guinea were able to organize a lot of public activities (a gala match, press table, conference, and cultural activities) and of course a lot of Human Rights Education activities.

#### **ICELAND** ACTIONS: 66,180

Write for Rights 2021 in Iceland took place both online and offline and advocated for all the 10 individuals and groups that featured in the campaign. Individuals and groups in over 13 places all over the country organised events and public libraries also took part. Furthermore, 25 colleges engaged in Write for Rights and several elementary schools. In total Amnesty Iceland collected 66.180 signatures.

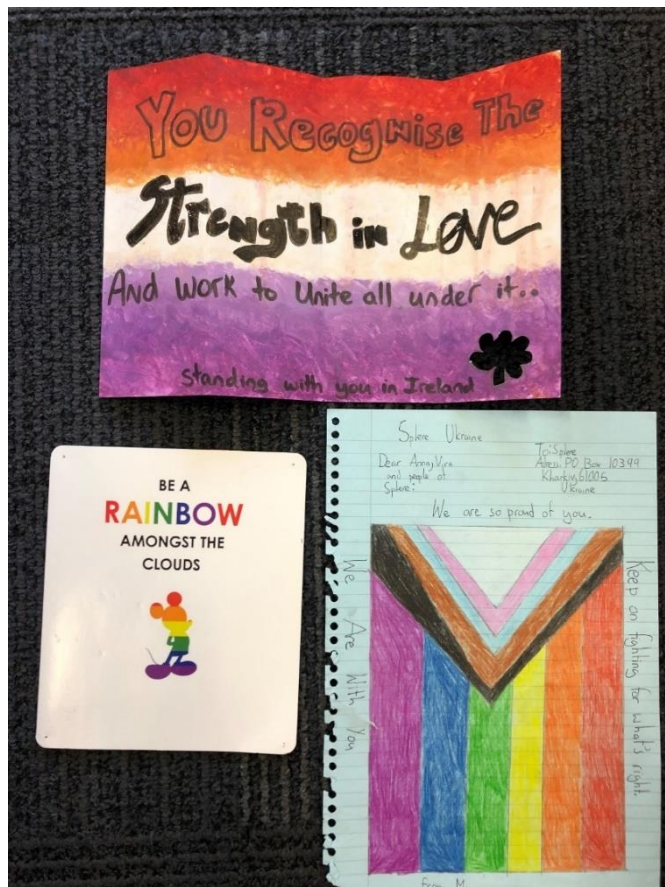
Several events were organised to raise awareness amongst the public. Many iconic buildings were lit up in Amnesty International's colour for several days, a large container was placed at a famous square in Reykjavik and the interior simulated prison conditions. An elevator in the largest shopping centre in Reykjavik was made to resemble prison conditions.

The highlight of Write for Rights was the visit of Wendy Galarza and Edith Olivares from Mexico. They both were guests of honour at a symposium that was held at the University of Iceland at the end of November and gave great many interviews to the Icelandic media.

**INDONESIA** ACTIONS: 248

Despite the ongoing pandemic and internet fatigue, Amnesty International Indonesia managed to successfully launched their online Write for Rights campaign. Through a collaboration with an international school, they also successfully engaged the student audiences and collected a significant amount of physical letters directed both to the targets and to the individuals and groups featured in the campaign.

**IRELAND** ACTIONS: 24,031



Amnesty International Ireland focused on digital campaigning for the 2021 campaign, due to Covid-19 restrictions and to ensure their work was inclusive of those who are vulnerable and unable to attend public events. They also narrowed their focus this year, with less actions being asked of their supporters and activists and a focus on the most straightforward and simple approaches, to mobilize as many people as possible. They also had a focus on youth activism, with webinars organized focusing on the cases of two of the individuals featured in the campaign.

Left: Activist letters and artwork for Sphere.  
© Amnesty International Ireland

**ITALY** ACTIONS: 222,725

Amnesty International Italy's 2021 Write for Rights campaign was their best in the last five years, in terms of signatures collected. They did a great job with the digital element of their campaign! Also, the public initiatives organized by their activists gained a lot of attention from the public and lots of petition signature. With great joy they met Wendy Galarza and Edith Olivares, director of Amnesty International Mexico, who promoted Write for Rights during their speaking tour in Italy. It was a great success!



Above: Amnesty International Italy event with women's rights defender Wendy Galarza and Edith Olivares, director of Amnesty International Mexico © Amnesty International Italy

## JAPAN

ACTIONS: 15,070



Write for Rights 2021 was a rather calm affair for Japan. Around 280 Amnesty International members gathered in various places throughout the country to write letters. However, students of one high school formed a new Amnesty club and they wrote an amazing 1,000 letters, meaning almost the whole school got involved, which was amazing!

Amnesty International Japan also held a webinar with Rung, before she was detained, and Amnesty International Japan are really thankful to her and Amnesty International Thailand for helping them make the event possible.

Left: Amnesty International Japan group event © Amnesty International Japan

## KOREA

ACTIONS: 15,309



In 2021, Amnesty International Korea's objective focused on raising awareness of Write for Rights among the Korean public and acquiring new supporters by strengthening brand and content.

In order to achieve this, Amnesty International Korea created a special microsite for W4R 2021 and carried out various activities such as video interviews with influencers, an offline exhibition and a screening event.

Other elements included media PR and digital promotion, podcast and radio advertisements, collaboration with local celebrities and influencers, creating promotional video content, an online letter-writing event, fundraising, and a LGBTI rights-related movie screening event for members and supporters.

Additionally, six local celebrities and influencers participated in W4R and encouraged people to sign petitions and write letters.

Through these activities, they acquired more than 4,000 new supporters in Korea.



Above: A 20<sup>th</sup> birthday cake for Write for Rights at a letter writing night held on 10 December, Human Rights Day  
© Amnesty International Korea

## **LUXEMBOURG**      **ACTIONS: 12,811**

The Write for Rights campaign was officially launched in Luxembourg on November 18 and closed on January 31. The number of people who took part in this campaign broke the national entity's record, both online and offline. Almost 13,000 actions were collected and at least 27 events, public and private, were organized by the activists.

Amnesty International Luxembourg created two interesting partnerships with the Luxembourg Post Office (they created a stamp, among other actions) and the National Languages School, where they engaged with students and teachers to write letters and solidarity cards in various languages. They also collaborated with a local artist to create a design for the postal cards to write solidarity actions.

On 10 December, they could not carry their traditional torchlight march, so replaced it with an online action. Almost 300 people took a selfie with a candle as a symbol of hope.

The campaign also achieved wide visibility in the traditional media and on social media.

In February 2022, they delivered the signatures and the letters for Zhang Zhan to the Chinese embassy in the shape of paper planes. They had previously asked for a meeting to the ambassador to deliver the petitions directly, but they did not receive any answer.



Above: After a meeting request with the Chinese Embassy in Luxembourg was denied, Amnesty activists and members delivered signatures and letters to Zhang Zhan via paper airplane! © Patrizia Ciurlia

## **MALAYSIA**

**ACTIONS: 1,043**

In 2021, Amnesty International hosted mostly online events, with some local groups running physical events. They had more success with boosting the campaign on social media than in previous years and managed to create more excitement in their school clubs.

## **MALI**

**ACTIONS: 6,153**

Amnesty International Mali created a Write for Rights specific website for 2021. They also partnered with around 30 schools and universities, setting up petition signing stands for students to take part. In addition, they seized opportunities for public mobilization to get petitions signed - first they organized a press conference to launch the campaign in Mali, held on 19 November. Several media outlets, human rights defenders, officials, and the National Human Rights Commission of Mali actively participated in the launch. As expected, Covid-19 affected their work slightly, nevertheless, they were able to collect 6,153 signatures online and offline and recruited hundreds of new supporters.

## **MEXICO**

**ACTIONS: 27,157**

Write for Rights 2021 was particularly special for Amnesty International Mexico because it featured the case of an individual from Mexico; that of Wendy Galarza, a teacher and feminist activist, who was victim of police brutality in a demonstration on 9 November 2020.

During the month of October, Amnesty International Mexico began their preparations for the launch of their Write for Rights 2021 campaign. They started with meetings on the different tactics that were going to use: growth, activism, advocacy, communication and human rights education. The campaign was launched on 19 November, and although the launch was partly overshadowed by their national gender violence campaign, during the month of December through social

media campaigns they managed to collect a massive amount of signatures, which brought them very close to the goal they had set themselves during the planning stage.

Despite the pandemic, they were also able to do some offline activism actions. They started a new activism group in the school where Wendy works as a teacher and plan to do more actions with them in the future.

## **MOLDOVA** ACTIONS: 28,445

Write for Rights is the campaign that members of Amnesty International Moldova anticipate the most. In 2020 Covid-19 restrictions meant that students did not have the opportunity to participate, so they were eager to get involved again in 2021. In Moldova the highest engagement rates for Write for Rights are young people who run offline campaigns in schools, and this year the Write for Rights campaign was able to take place in more than 30 schools.

## **MONGOLIA** ACTIONS: 3,604

Compared to 2021, Amnesty International Mongolia were able to organize more offline events. They organized face-to-face events at the three biggest universities in Mongolia and used postcards to collect signatures. They also organized a two-day offline event at the theatre where the biggest play of the year was taking place. The Section's youth activists and volunteers were in charge of planning and organizing parts of the events and they were provided with training to enable this. The Section collaborated with local working groups from remote areas such as Zavkhan province (805 km away) and Erdenet city (384 km away). Those groups organized offline letter writing events. Offline events were more effective in terms of reaching new supporters and promoting Amnesty's work. They collected 2,995 letters from offline events, which was 5 times higher than the online campaign.

## **MOROCCO** ACTIONS: 3,775



Above: Activists with Amnesty International Morocco take action for Baker and Janna © Amnesty International Morocco

For Write for Rights 2021, Amnesty International Morocco chose to work on the case of Mohamed Baker (Egypt) and Janna Jihad (OPT). This selection was due to the relevance of the themes in the local context and the potential for impact on human rights. The Section were able to organize a good number of online and face-to-face activities to mobilize as many of their members and supporters as possible. During these events, Amnesty International Morocco took care to provide Group leaders with the necessary knowledge and materials – including campaign training around Write for Rights objectives, how to create petitions, campaign posters and solidarity cards – so that participants could share their knowledge with the members of their groups. However, the health restrictions imposed by the Moroccan authorities limited the number of participants during the events, which limited the impact of these activities. The section integrated petitions into their website and implemented a digital communication strategy that enabled their social networks to be filled with regular attractive content about the campaign. They also used data collected online (members, supporters, media) to help with

their calls for action and mobilization.

**NEPAL** ACTIONS: 148,726

Write for Rights is a priority campaign of Amnesty International Nepal. The 2021 Write for Rights campaign gained a huge momentum with the signing of 146,885 offline petitions. The number of signatures gathered outnumbered the previous year's.

Amnesty International Nepal campaigned for six individuals featured in the global campaign and one local issue – custodial death. In the petition targeted to Nepal government, petitioners demanded a mandatory and fair investigation into deaths in custody.

Before the campaign was launched, Amnesty International Nepal carried out two preparatory workshops for its members, wherein they were oriented on the strategies for effectively carrying out the campaign activities. On top of that, the campaign was integrated with Human Rights Education, and this made it more popular amongst youths.

Despite challenges posed by Covid-19, the campaign was a huge success. It was also an opportunity for to mobilize our members and volunteers. Moreover, the campaign was well covered by national daily newspapers.

**NETHERLANDS** ACTIONS: 407,442

Write for Rights 2021 was successful overall, and the Section are very pleased with the engagement and results. Due to continuously changing Covid measures, it was not possible to organize offline events and it was therefore sometimes hard to keep volunteers motivated to get into action. But in the end, everyone got creative and managed to find ways to get organized. The Section produced 13,000 letter writing kits, containing everything a person would need to write letters and postcards for all 10 cases. Every kit was gone at the end of the campaign, together with all the extra materials people could use during their events. 44,920 children participated in a Write for Rights lesson in their classroom. At the head office of Amnesty International Netherlands, the canteen was turned into a webinar studio where they created an online interactive Amnesty world using the platform *OhYay*. People could meet each other, be inspired by interviews with activists and live performances and write together in online rooms. Anna and Vira from Sphere were at the office as special guests, which was very inspiring for everyone. A week after the *OhYay* event there were still people writing together in this online Write for Rights world! Even though the Section really hope to organize offline events next year, they are sure they will keep an online option to reach more people.



Left: The Amnesty International Netherlands offices in Amsterdam are lit up for Write for Rights © Amnesty International Netherlands

**NEW ZEALAND** Please see AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

**NIGERIA** ACTIONS: 12,356

Write for Rights 2021 in Nigeria was exciting. Amnesty International Nigeria supporters' network organized letter-writing marathon events in 17 states across the country with screenings of the videos of the individuals and groups, music, drama and spoken word performances at some of the events with 3,500 people joining. Imoleayo Michael, whose case was featured in the campaign, joined in the letter-writing marathon. It was great to have him join in taking solidarity action for others.

## **NORWAY**

**ACTIONS: 87,579**

Amnesty International Norway focused on four individuals (Janna, Mikita, Bernardo and Zhang Zhan) in their campaign. Lecturers from universities and schools chose one or two of them for their human rights education work. The feedback from the lecturers was very positive. The four individuals, as well as the themes they represented (indigenous people, the environment, the Israel-Palestine conflict, jailed journalist) appealed to the young audience. It was great to be able to have physical education lessons after two years of online work due to Covid-19 restrictions. However, some events did have to be cancelled due to Covid-19. Online there was good engagement on social media, with Mikita and Zhang Zhan receiving the most signatures (more than 21,000 signatures each).



Above: Activists from Amnesty International Norway hold a Write for Rights event © Amnesty International Norway

## **PARAGUAY**

**ACTIONS: 840**

Amnesty International Paraguay ran their Write for Rights campaign mostly in digital format due to the current situation of Covid-19. However, they also managed to carry out physical activities according to what the context of Covid-19 allowed them to do. People showed interest in joining and sharing the campaign in their spaces; it is an innovative campaign that inspires people to join the struggle for the defence of human rights.

## **PERU**

**ACTIONS: 4,537**

Despite the limitations of Covid-19, Amnesty International Peru ran their campaign on social media and with supporters and were able to organize a few face-to-face letter writing actions with their groups of activists.

## **PHILIPPINES**

**ACTIONS: 1,346**

Write for Rights has always inspired creativity and innovation from Amnesty International Philippines members and supporters. However, the Section faced the compounded challenge of an environment in the country that is unfriendly towards human rights, and the pandemic that limited their usual avenues for taking action and conducting advocacy work.

The familiar face-to-face action booths, workshops, and gatherings were almost too difficult to do, and practically impossible for some. The environments, spaces, and even communities that the Section have cultivated and sustained for their human rights advocacy became inaccessible and distant.

However, the Section and especially their members, pushed on. They took Write for Rights 2021 as an opportunity to explore new technologies and new ways of organizing. Many of their groups ventured out and built connections with partners and other organizations to organize small events, even under restraints. Others worked with communities of artists. The rest brought their advocacy online, posting their letters online, sharing petitions and turning their messages into online posts and tweets.

Unfortunately, there is a decrease in the average output of engagement Amnesty International Philippines get from Write for Rights. But the Section feel that they learned a lot and now have a more open perspective of how to expand their activism further with new ideas on how to share Write for Rights better next year.

**POLAND**                      **ACTIONS: 156,923**

As 2021 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Write for Rights, Amnesty International Poland decided to highlight that it all started in Poland. As it turned out, for many Polish people this was not only a big surprise, but also an empowering one. Knowing that a huge global action started with just a few friends having an idea made them realize even more the impact every action may have.

They celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary together with people who were among the creators and organizers of the very first Write for Rights, or “letter writing marathon” as it was then called.

In Poland, Write for Rights is an action welcomed by schools. As in the previous years, schools were the most numerous among organizers of the Write for Rights events. Though the pandemics and the restrictions connected with the spread of COVID-19 made the organization of events harder, numerous schools mobilized for action. Together we managed to collect more than 150,000 letters and signatures.

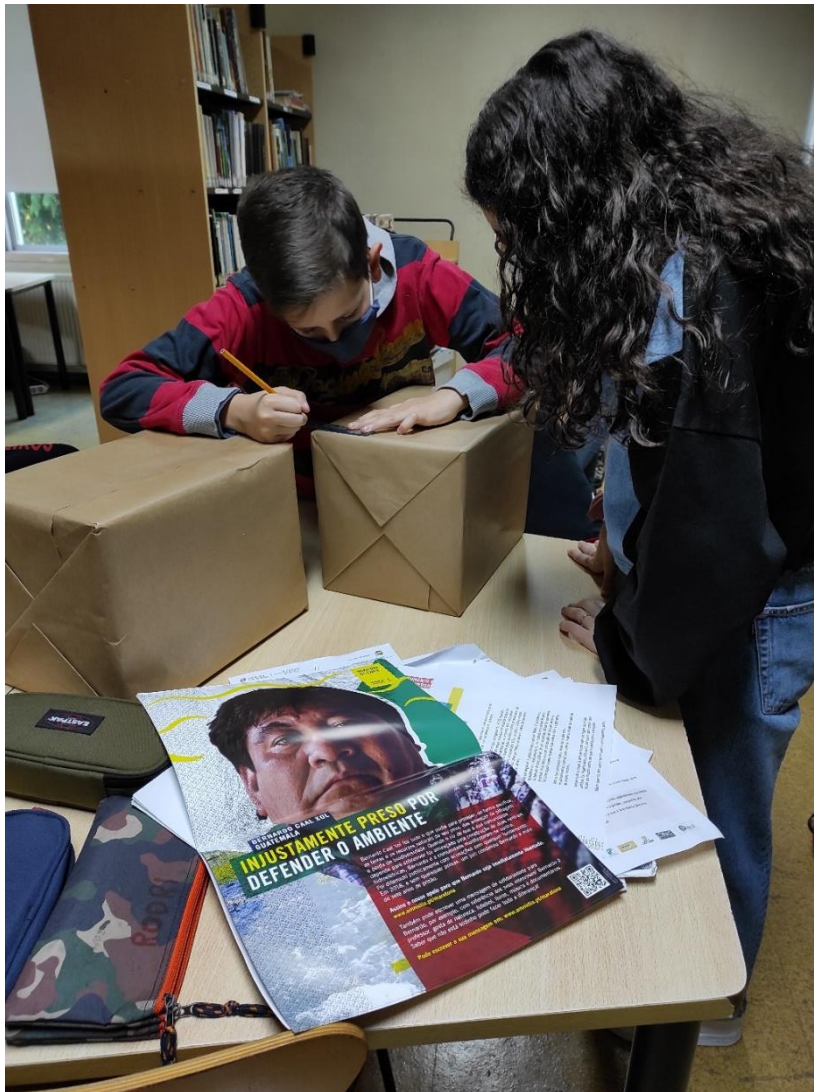


Above: A drawing for Bernardo by a young activist at an event in Warsaw © Amnesty International Poland

**PORTUGAL**

**ACTIONS: 128,991**

W4R 2021 was really positive for Amnesty International Portugal because they were able to organize and mobilize people with events and street actions. Their activities began in October, with an online event with Germain Rukuki, who was featured in the 2020 campaign, and the school community that gathered the highest number of signatures and letters in 2020. Also, to officially launch the campaign, Amnesty Portugal organized a projection of Write for Rights videos in the streets of Lisbon and onto embassy buildings, such as the US, Israel and China embassies, focusing on the individuals and groups that they were going to work with and asking people to join us. During November, December and January, the campaign followed the usual dynamics, focusing on online signatures, and with the involvement of the entire staff of the national entity. This involvement was crucial to support the logistics of having over 320 schools, nine local groups, one university, four external entities and 18 individuals organizing offline events, amongst other activities. Lastly, they did an action targeting journalists, to inspire them to talk about Write for Rights. They marked the end of the campaign on 10 February, with an event with Isabel Matzir, the partner of Bernardo Caal, and a human rights quiz.



Left: Young activists from Portugal pack up their letters for Write for Rights 2021  
© Amnesty International Portugal

**SENEGAL**

**ACTIONS: 2,394**

The Write for Rights 2021 campaign in Senegal took place exclusively online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. An online platform exclusively dedicated to this campaign was launched. The link to the platform was widely distributed. In addition to sharing it on Facebook and Twitter accounts, with videos and inviting followers to sign the petitions, emails were sent to members and supporters. About 50 volunteers committed themselves to collect signatures with their smartphones in high schools, universities, neighbourhoods, and villages.

**SLOVAKIA**

**ACTIONS: 10,343**

Amnesty International Slovakia found running the Write for Rights campaign in 2021 to be complicated. Most schools were closed for a long time, teachers and children had Covid, amongst other issues. People online were responsive to lead-generation campaigns, but the national entity did not manage to get many signatures. They collected a couple of messages of solidarity for Sphere and LGBTI rights' HRDs. People also appreciated the case of Bernardo, as climate change is a popular topic amongst Amnesty International Slovakia's supporters.

**SLOVENIA**                      **ACTIONS: 16,763**

Amnesty International Slovenia prepared and translated petitions for all 10 individuals and groups featured in the campaign, and also added two petitions for Slovenian groups. They promoted 12 petitions regularly on their social media platforms and in their newsletter. HRE was also part of their campaign activities, with 43 primary and secondary schools participating in the action.



Above: Artwork by school children in Slovenia for Write for Rights 2021 © Amnesty International Slovenia

**SOUTH AFRICA**                      **ACTIONS: 20,037**

The 2021 Write for Rights campaign was received very well by Amnesty International South Africa's offline audience. The entity worked closely with foot soldiers and community radio to broadcast the campaign and encourage people to take action.

**SPAIN**                                      **ACTIONS: 23,998**

Amnesty International Spain wanted to innovate when it came to their Write for Rights 2021 actions. They organized a challenge to promote online and offline actions on six cases of individuals and or groups.

The objective was to have a positive impact on the human rights in the six cases by getting as many participants on board



as possible, and also diversifying actions and the target audience.

For the first time, Amnesty International Spain asked their digital activist community to suggest hashtags for the campaign through the Telegram tool, which already has more than a thousand people registered, and among them #MyRightsYourRights was chosen through a vote in the tool itself.

On the entity's website a general introduction to the campaign was shared, along with a description of each case of individuals and groups, and its corresponding challenge, and a map with the events of local groups, as well as an invitation to continue participating.

## **SWEDEN** ACTIONS: 66,963

Amnesty International Sweden are happy with how the campaign went in 2021, regaining some of the results lost to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. They gained ground schools and online and hope to continue that work in the coming years.

## **SWITZERLAND** ACTIONS: 49,289

In Switzerland, 30 activist groups organized more than 40 events and wrote and collected more than 10,000 letters in Switzerland supporting five of the human rights defenders featured in the Write for Rights 2021. Amnesty International Switzerland also collected online signatures to support the five and promoted solidarity actions.



Above: Despite the cold and rain, people take action for Write for Rights 2021 in Switzerland  
© Amnesty International Switzerland

## **TAIWAN** ACTIONS: 163,924

More than 600 schools, 1,200 teachers and 107,900 students took part in Amnesty International Taiwan's Write for Rights campaign, while more than 180 people held their own Write for Rights parties, inviting friends and families to take actions with them. More than 3,600 people participated in these private letter writing parties. The Section held eight educational seminars to dedicated teachers to introduce the individual stories and moreover, encouraged them to design their own human rights programme for their students from different ages and backgrounds. they also held six letter writing events across Taiwan, in which almost 700 people participated. Two letter writing events were exclusively for children and parents, collaborating with a children's theatre to elaborate the stories of the Write for Rights individuals.



Left: Letter writing event in Taipei, November 2021  
© Amnesty International Taiwan

**THAILAND**

**ACTIONS: 10,313**

It was the first time that an individual or group from Thailand has been featured in Write for Rights, and this came at a very crucial time in Thailand. It helped by increasing engagement in Thailand, and the Write for Rights action converted to real public pressure towards the authorities. In addition, combining Amnesty International Thailand's current campaigns on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Assembly which are the main campaigns, has helped lift the effect of all campaigns.



Left: Activists from Thailand take action on 10 December 2021  
© Amnesty International Thailand

**TOGO**

**ACTIONS: 155,265**

The Write for Rights 2021 Campaign took place at Amnesty Togo on 3-15 December. The strategy adopted was to collect as many signatures as possible, but with COVID 19 public activities could not take place. The collection of signatures was therefore confined to colleges and high schools, where many students were able to sign the petitions. An action for Ciham Ali was held by young people. On Human Rights Day young people from the section held an event in a field, where they illuminated the sky with photos of the cases using paper lanterns.



Above: Young activists from Togo collect signatures for Write for Rights 2021 © Amnesty International Togo

**TURKEY**

**ACTIONS: 47,765**

Write for Rights 2021 was one of Amnesty International Turkey's biggest campaigns of the year. During the campaign, in which they focused on six cases of individuals and groups, they carried out offline activities with the participation of their activists, as well as online activities. Amnesty International Turkey was able to reach new activists and supporters and they also participated in a real marathon with our activists, to draw attention to the cases featured in the Write for Rights campaign. For solidarity with Sphere, they organized a photo event in front of Galata Tower, one of the most symbolic places in Istanbul. Continuing an event that they started in 2019, the Section decided to create a 'Write for Rights' forest, and this year their activists planted trees to show solidarity with Bernardo. Amnesty International Turkey had a press release for Janna and Mikita on World Children's Day, 20



Above: Activists from Amnesty International Turkey at a solidarity action for Sphere at the Galata Tower in Istanbul © Amnesty International Turkey

November. On 10 December, some local celebrities shared the national entity's social media posts about the campaign.

**UK**                      **ACTIONS: 98,730**

For their 2021 Write for Rights campaign, Amnesty International UK focused on four individuals and groups, (Janna, Baker, Sphere and Imoleayo), and prioritised working with Amnesty International colleagues, and where possible individuals directly, to determine what solidarity would be most meaningful for them. Activities delivered included projecting the rainbow flag onto the Ukrainian Consulate, Anna and Vira from Sphere NGO featuring on the Guilty Feminist Podcast, Chris Riddell (UK Children's Laureate) drew pictures of Baker's cats, UK tech influencers took action on Imoleayo's case and Janna took part in a webinar in conversation with a UK child journalist and activist.

**UKRAINE**                      **ACTIONS: Unknown**

*Please note that this entry was submitted before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Our hearts are with our colleagues in Ukraine during these devastating times:*

After a very restricted Write for Rights in 2020 (in terms of offline presence), the 2021 edition of the campaign in Ukraine was marked by the return of live events. Just like in pre-pandemic times, they were able to organise offline trainings for activists wanting to conduct W4R events in their communities across Ukraine. For the first time, the entity launched a competition among schools and universities across the country to take as many actions for the campaign as they could - and this proved a massive success. The Section had an official opening event in Kyiv which involved Anna and Vira from Sphere and held a closing event in Kharkiv, again in cooperation with Sphere. All of this resulted in the successful return of Write for Rights in Ukraine as a highly anticipated series of offline events.



Above: On 19 November, Amnesty International Ukraine launched W4R 2021 with a special event. Anna and Vira from Sphere were invited as guest speakers. 'Molodyi Teatr' theatrical group showed their performance about six W4R 2021 cases. © Kostyantyn Huzenko

**URUGUAY**                      **ACTIONS: 2,681**

Amnesty International Uruguay worked on the cases of three individuals. They were selected because the issues faced by

these individuals relate to those that the entity has been working on, freedom of expression, right to protest, police violence, and human rights defenders. Bernardo's case was selected for their campaign because he is from the same region and his case is linked to the environment, which generated empathy among activists. Rung's case was selected because she is a woman and a young person, which offered opportunities for engagement in Uruguay. Finally, the case of Imoleayo allowed Amnesty International Uruguay to generate content from their exchange with Amnesty International Nigeria, which also demonstrated the international solidarity between Amnesty International entities.

The entity also worked to raise public awareness of the Write for Rights campaign, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and collected more signatures than in 2020.

Amnesty International Uruguay's work was given visibility through the implementation of the W4R 2021 campaign and its relationship with local issues.

**USA**                      **ACTIONS: 102,673**

Amnesty International USA's 2021 Write for Rights was quite mixed this year between some in person events and virtual activities, because each state and local government had different COVID restrictions. Overall action numbers and participation were still substantially lower than pre-COVID times, but groups were very creative, and some had great events. As usual, USA Section does their grassroots work at the beginning, and then conducts most of its lobbying efforts, after the official Write for Rights season finishes.



Above: Amnesty International USA members and activists were very creative during Write for Rights 2021, when Covid restrictions meant that most activities needed to be online. Above a Zoom part involves some drumming! © Amnesty International USA

**VENEZUELA**                      **ACTIONS: 4,116**

There was a lot of receptivity from people in the online activities, since due to the pandemic it was not possible to hold

meetings or face-to-face activities. People in Venezuela feel moved by the human rights violations in the world.

**ZIMBABWE**

**ACTIONS: 3,825**

Amnesty International adopted the cases of Imoleayo Michael and Ciham Ali for its Write for Rights 2021 campaign. A workshop with young people from private and public schools, and young activists in Zimbabwe was held. Online and offline actions were taken, including creating handmade postcards, writing letters to the relevant authorities in America and Nigeria, photo actions, and signing online and offline petitions. The young people were excited when they received retweets from Imoleayo and online engagement with others. The participants had a candle-lighting moment to celebrate Amnesty International's 20 years of writing letters for human rights.



Above: Youth activists in Zimbabwe held events for Write for Rights 2021, taking action for Ciham Ali and Imoleayo Michael  
© Amnesty International Zimbabwe

# INNOVATIVE ACTIVISM

The COVID-19 pandemic both forced and inspired many entities to bring innovation to their campaigning activities, re-thinking the way they promote Write for Rights and organize and mobilize people in their countries to take action.

This innovative approach continued into 2021, with many entities incorporating exciting ideas into their campaigns, as highlighted below:

- Amnesty International South Africa worked with **community radio** to advertise the campaign, host community dialogues and encourage people to take action. The project worked very well, with community radio listeners calling in and wanting to learn more about the campaign and the movement so they could get involved.
- Determined to deliver petition signatures and letters for Zhang Zhan to the Chinese embassy after the ambassador didn't respond to their request for a meeting, Amnesty International Luxembourg decided to deliver them by turning them into **paper planes** and flying them over the gates of the embassy.

Some entities worked with **theatres** for the first time...

- Amnesty International Greece **worked with a theatre group** to promote the case of Bernardo and a play about indigenous rights.
- Similarly, Amnesty International Mongolia **collaborated with a local drama production**. Their young activists decorated a Write for Rights area at the theatre entrance and explained the stories of five individuals at risk before the play started. This allowed them to reach people of different ages, including young artists and actors.

**Social media** is proving increasingly important for many entities...

- Amnesty International Germany initiated a successful **Twitter storm** for Zhang Zhan together with some influential partner organizations like PEN, which is part of the worldwide association of writers.
- Many entities decided to prioritize videos for social media in order to increase the reach of their Write for Rights campaigns: Amnesty International Brazil created **reels for Instagram**; Amnesty International Korea produced **animation-style promotional videos**; Amnesty International Taiwan created videos for **Facebook and Google ads**; and Amnesty International Argentina engaged young audiences by making **TikTok videos** about Write for Rights.

More and more entities are shaking up the **format of their events**...

- Amnesty International Guinea decided to look beyond their usual school and university audiences. They organized a **football match** and held a Write for Rights **event on the beach!**
- Amnesty International Malaysia trialled a **calligraphy workshop**, where participants made a solidarity card and learned a new skill at the same time.
- Amnesty International Belgium (French-speaking) invited activists to an **online "World Tour"** which offered 10 online sessions, spread over five evenings in November, and presented a brief context of the human rights situations in the countries of the 10 individuals and groups featured in the campaign. This fuelled the mobilization of activists and attracted a new audience who were invited to take action by joining in the letter-writing marathon.
- Amnesty International Spain trialled a **"Write for Rights Challenge"** with which to engage people by proposing challenges for taking action, related to the individuals and groups featured in the campaign. Every two days different challenges were launched, with different formats, and through different channels.

**Working with artists** was a fruitful collaboration for these entities...

- Amnesty International Norway made **cartoons**, explaining the stories of each of the individuals and groups featured in the campaign in a very exciting way, for which they received very positive feedback.

- A mural artist worked with activists from Amnesty International Chile to create a **mural** in Santiago, for a local individual at risk who they featured in their Write for Rights campaign.
- Amnesty Philippines created a very inspiring **digital art exhibition**: The ART+Fact. Launched on Human Rights Day, the event brought together artists from different genres - music, literature, visual and performance art, into an online space that showcased artwork elaborating on the key issues featured in Write for Rights 2021. By clicking on a link, people could visit and virtually walk through the exhibit, learn more about the stories of Janna, Wendy, Rung, Bernardo, and Sphere, and sign online petitions.

Entities found **new ways to collect signatures and coordinate actions...**

- Amnesty International Algeria decided to use **Facebook Forms** to collect petition signatures. As a result, they saw the number of actions taken increase enormously. They plan to take this to the next level in 2022, with the development of a new mobile app for Write for Rights petitions.
- Developing a **website dedicated to Write for Rights** helped Amnesty International Thailand centralize all the information activists required to take action, including information on the individuals and groups, toolkits and success stories.
- Amnesty International Argentina, Benin and Togo all launched **Write for Rights microsites** for the first time, allowing them to collect petition signatures more easily. This proved extremely effective – Amnesty International Benin expected to gather 10,000 signatures, but actually got over 130,000!

This is just a snapshot of so many inspiring initiatives which Amnesty International entities took on for Write for Rights 2021, amongst many more. We look forward to seeing what entities have in store for Write for Rights 2022!