

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

FACTS & FIGURES DOCUMENT

AI Index: ACT 30/052/2013
1 December 2013

Write for Rights

Some figures

2013

It is hoped that more than two million letters, faxes, emails, tweets, SMS messages and petition signatures will be written and sent by hundreds of thousands of people in more than 80 countries this year.

2012

More than 500,000 people in at least 77 countries took part in Write for Rights, Amnesty International's annual global letter-writing marathon.

Over 1.9 million actions were taken on behalf of 12 cases of individuals and communities at risk of human rights abuses. Those actions included letters, tweets, petition signatures and SMS messages.

2011

Thousands of people in 78 different countries took part in Write for Rights.

Activities generated 1,376,492 actions, including letters, signatures on petitions, emails and SMS actions. 2011 was the first year that the total number of actions surpassed one million. This represented a big increase to the previous years.

Some Write for Rights events happening around the world this year

- Youth activists from the village of Nabi Saleh, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, will meet with activists at Amnesty International Spain to talk about their struggle.
- Write for Rights concerts will be held in Portugal, Italy, France and Slovakia.
- More than 50 events and activities have been organised by activists across Australia.
- 10 cities across Brazil will host different activities, including a 24-hour letter-writing event in a main square in Rio de Janeiro.
- Ihar Tsikhanyuk, who campaigns on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) in Belarus issues, will travel to Amnesty International France to talk with activists about his demand for justice after he was beaten by police.
- In Burkina Faso, young people from Amnesty International's School Club will work with their teachers on some of the cases of Write for Rights.
- Activists at Amnesty International Chile will take to the streets to dance and to cycle for rights.
- Amnesty International activists in Nigeria will participate in Write for Rights events with members of the Badia East community who face forced evictions.
- Amnesty International activists will be present at Guinea's National Assembly where they will be encouraging MPs and citizens to Write for Rights.
- At Dublin's Christmas Market, Amnesty International Ireland will paint a colourful wall of graffiti.
- Amnesty International Mongolia will visit secondary schools to collect solidarity messages for Cambodian activist Yorm Bhopa.

- More than 160 Amnesty International local groups in the Netherlands will be organizing letter writing events, and the main office of the organization will host a 24-hour marathon.

Some achievements

- **Azerbaijan:** Jabbar Savalan, an activist imprisoned for comments he had posted on Facebook, was released after being one of the cases featured in Write for Rights 2011.
- **Gambia:** Femi Peters, an opposition politician considered a prisoner of conscience, was released from jail just days after the Write for Rights 2010 campaign.
- **China:** Authorities granted the human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng a visit from his family in January 2013 for the first time in nine months following the inclusion of this case in Write for Rights a month earlier. In 2012, Mao Hengfeng, another prisoner of conscience, was allowed to meet with her family for the first time since she was detained at a Re-Education Through Labour facility in Beijing. This happened after her case was featured in Write for Rights 2010.
- **Belarus:** Ales Bialiatski's colleagues told Amnesty International that following the campaign he had not been subjected to the harsh methods of punishment, such as solitary confinement, typically used for prisoners of conscience. He was one of the individuals whose case was featured in Write for Rights in 2012.
- **Guatemala:** Last year, the Vice President of Guatemala, Roxana Baldetti, publicly pledged action in support of the investigation into the rape and murder of teenager 11- Maria Isabel Franco, and more generally on the issue of violence against women in Guatemala. Maria Isabel's case was one of those included in last year's Write for Rights.
- **Mexico:** The Mexican government formally recognized their responsibility for the rape and abuse of the indigenous women Valentina Rosendo Cantú and Inés Fernández Ortega by Mexican soldiers in 2002. Their cases featured in the Write for Rights campaign 2011. Authorities provided protection to Father Alejandro Solalinde, a prominent migrants' rights defender subjected to threats and attacks, following Write for Rights 2010.
- **Romania:** The Mayor of Cluj presented upcoming plans to solve the situation of the town's Roma community, after their case was highlighted in Write for Rights 2012.

Words of gratitude and hope:

The people whose cases are featured in Write for Rights often respond to the action taken on their behalf. Here are some of their words:

"It feels good to be with my friends again. I feel good now that I can spend time with them and my family," said Jabbar Savalan, a prisoner of conscience pardoned and released in 2011 within days of Write for Rights' letters arriving in Azerbaijan.

"Following a letter writing marathon organized by Amnesty International and the international community's actions, [our] family was granted a second prison visit on 12 January," said Geng He, wife of imprisoned Chinese human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng. In Write for Rights 2012, 167,748 actions were taken for Gao.

"I want to tell Amnesty International activists that they would never know how much it has meant to us, [Write for Rights] came for us at the right time. We really needed this moral push, this feeling that other people care. For us, it was like therapy," said Samira Ahmed, member of the youth Sudanese activist group Girifna at the beginning of 2013. 188,803 actions were taken on their behalf during the last edition of Write for Rights.

"Love flows across the world, and friends from all over the world have brought me incredible strength. Words cannot express the gratitude I have towards everyone. Thank you!" said Chiou Ho-shun, an inmate on death row in Taiwan since 1989. 144,720 actions were taken for this Chinese prisoner of conscience in Write for Rights 2012.

"One thing that gives us hope is support and solidarity from regular people. People are the only impetus for change. [The] government will not improve or do anything unless there is pressure from people... The amount of messages I received [from Amnesty International members and activists] gives me a lot of hope despite all the challenges," said Azza Hilal Ahmad Suleiman, who was beaten by Egyptian soldiers.

"We, as a people, thank all those who have nursed this initiative. We are sure that this struggle on our behalf will yield fruit gradually. We are hopeful for the best. We are encouraged. In fact, it is this kind of support that is helping us live on," said Chief Baribor Koottee of the Bodo community in Nigeria, which was devastated by an oil spill in 2008 and whose case was featured in Write for Rights 2012.

"I received the best Christmas present in three years since the loss of my husband Juan Almonte, with all these cards, notes and Christmas postcards. Thanks for keeping Juan present, for making him known in the entire world. I would like to thank all the persons who took time and shared my pain," said Ana Montilla, wife of human rights activist Juan Almonte Herrera, "disappeared" in 2009 in the Dominican Republic. She received over 3,000 handwritten letters of support in December 2012.

"I have been covered with an avalanche of letters and postcards. Over New Year I kept reading the hundreds of letters and postcards. I can sincerely say I haven't missed out a single one of them. It was an indescribable New Year," said Ales Bialiatski, a human rights defender imprisoned in Belarus. 104,495 actions were taken for Ales in last year's Write for Rights.