



**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



GERMAIN RUKUKI, BURUNDI

**JAILED FOR
32 YEARS
FOR DEFENDING
HUMAN RIGHTS**

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign takes place annually around 10 December, which is Human Rights Day (commemorating the day when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948). Write for Rights aims to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises cases of individuals, groups and communities with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organizing public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure.

A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As a result of the international call to action, decision-makers are bombarded with letters. This year's cases cover people imprisoned for defending their rights and expressing their opinions, LGBTI activists targeted

for who they are, peaceful protestors beaten and shot at and environmental defenders harassed and intimidated or other human rights violations. They will receive messages of solidarity from thousands of people in far-off corners of the globe. Those suffering the violations and their families know that their cases are being brought to public attention. They know that they are not forgotten.

The results of similar campaigns in previous years have been striking. Individuals affected by the violations report the difference that these letters make, they express their gratitude to those who have written, and they often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people are concerned about their case.

Often there is a noticeable change by officials towards these individuals: charges are dropped, treatment becomes less harsh, and laws or regulations addressing the problem are introduced.

Read about the people we're fighting for:
www.amnesty.org/writeforrights

Contact the Amnesty team in your country:
www.amnesty.org/countries

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R20

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family group, an activist group, online or offline. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the needs and context of the group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity and any limitations. When participants take action on a case, discuss with them whether it is safe for them to do so – why or why not?

The activities are all based on participatory learning methods in which learners are not merely presented with information, they

explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the cases. This methodology is very important for the wider learning objectives because participants will:

- **develop** key competences and skills
- **have the opportunity** to form their own opinions, raise questions, and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented.
- **take control** of their learning, and shapes discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns.
- **have the space** required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes



Students and school teachers in Taiwan organized letter writing events with Amnesty International for the Write for Rights campaign 2019.
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If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start. This can be found at www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/

Amnesty International offers further human rights education courses on different human rights issues through **the Amnesty Academy**, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights Campaign**: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn>

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE 2019 CAMPAIGN

HOW YOUR WORDS HAVE CHANGED LIVES

JAIL SENTENCE REDUCED IN IRAN

In 2019, Yasaman Aryani was sentenced to 16 years in prison for handing out flowers to train passengers while unveiled. In February 2020, her sentence was substantially reduced, thanks in part to the more than 1.2 million messages written worldwide for her freedom. We won't stop until she's free.



"We are joining hands around the world to combat all the injustice."

Crystal Swain of Grassy Narrows



HEALTHCARE WIN FOR GRASSY NARROWS, CANADA

For decades, the Grassy Narrows Indigenous community have been suffering the effects of mercury poisoning in one of Canada's worst health crises. The youth of Grassy Narrows have been particularly affected, and have been at the forefront of the fight for a healthy future for their community. *After years of delay, a \$19.5 million (CDN) agreement to build a care facility was finally signed on 2 April 2020 – a victory for the people of Grassy Narrows.*

DEATH SENTENCE REVOKED IN SOUTH SUDAN

Magai Matiop Ngong was only 15 when he was sentenced to death. But thanks to the amazing support of people like you, his death sentence was cancelled in July 2020. People around the world took an incredible 765,000 actions, including letters and tweets, calling for Magai's life to be spared – and it worked.

**"Thank you so much.
I have no words.
You have no idea
how my heart is filled
with happiness."**

Magai Matiop Ngong



HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments or state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries that can be met only when practicalities allow.



Members of Amnesty International Togo joining in the Write for Rights campaign, 2019. Every year they mobilize people throughout the country to take part.

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HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.

Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights

Article 2 Non-discrimination

Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person

Article 4 Freedom from slavery

Article 5 Freedom from torture



LEGAL RIGHTS

Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.

Article 6 All are protected by the law

Article 7 All are equal before the law

Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated

Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile

Article 10 Right to a fair trial

Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty

Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection



SOCIAL RIGHTS

Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.

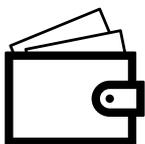
Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life

Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders

Article 16 Right to marry and start a family

Article 24 Right to rest and leisure

Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education



ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.

Article 15 Right to a nationality

Article 17 Right to own property and possessions

Article 22 Right to social security

Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union

Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being



POLITICAL RIGHTS

Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion

Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief)

Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information

Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way

Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country



CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS

Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life

Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized

Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others

Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!

ACTIVITY

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

FOLLOW COVID-19 MEASURES

Be sure to comply with public health advice in your area during the Covid-19 Pandemic and conduct your activity ensuring safety and any physical distance measures in place.

If you are doing the activity online:

- **Choose** a platform that provides participation and interaction while being secure.
- **Adapt** the activity to allow for relevant reflections and debriefing (in small groups)
- **Provide** technical support for participants to allow for good participation.

In light of Covid-19 and the various digital spaces in which schools and other groups now have to come together to continue their normal activities, Amnesty is developing additional material to support the delivery of these activities online. Check the **Write for Rights** webpage www.amnesty.org/writeforrights

KEY CONCEPTS

- Human rights defenders
- Right to liberty
- Freedom of association
- Right to a fair trial

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants reflect on a time in their lives where they stood up for justice and are inspired to take action for a human rights defender who is subject to a grossly unfair sentence

TIME NEEDED:

60 minutes

AGE: 14+

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants have reflected on their own previous action against injustice.
- Participants know about the human rights violations Germain Rukuki, a human rights defender in Burundi, is subject to.
- Participants know about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign and prepare to take action in support of one of the cases.

PREPARATION AND RESOURCES

- Paper/markers or creative craft material
- Copies of Germain's case card for all participants page 11
- Copies of UDHR summary page 5
- Copies of the table: human rights violations Germain has been subject to page 10
- Copies of the questions on page 7, Germain's story, for small group work

1 **STANDING UP TO INJUSTICE**

Hand out paper, markers or other creative craft material to all participants and explain that they can use this to write or draw during self-reflection. Read the following paragraph aloud and ask participants to use the time to reflect individually:

Focus on one time in your life where you spoke up about something that was unjust. What happened? Why did you speak up? Were there any consequences for you, positive or negative? How did it affect you in terms of your willingness to speak up about something again?

Give participants a couple of minutes to write, draw or create as they reflect on the questions.

Split participants into pairs, ask them to share one of their memories, thoughts or reflections and give them the following questions for discussion:

- **What did you learn from this exercise?**
- **Is it hard for you to stand up against injustice – why or why not?**
- **What would you need in order to speak out against injustice more often?**

Bring participants back together and collect some of the responses from the pairs.

 **5 MINUTES**

2 GERMAIN'S STORY

20 MINUTES

Explain to participants that they will be learning about a person in Burundi who is in jail for defending human rights. Germain is a human rights defender and has been detained because of this.

Hand out the case card for Germain and give participants a few minutes to read through it. Split participants into small groups to discuss the following questions:

- **How did it feel reading Germain's story?**
- **Are there any similarities or differences between experiences in your life and those of Germain's? What are they?**
- **What messages are Burundi authorities sending to other human rights defenders in the country by their treatment of Germain?**
- **As a follow-up question: what impact might it have if someone is made a scapegoat, or used to set an example, on other people who defend human rights?**

"Human rights defender" is a term used to describe people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights without advocating or using violence.

Bring participants back to plenary and ask them to share some of the responses from their small group discussion.

3 RELEVANT RIGHTS

10 MINUTES

Hand out a copy of the UDHR summary. If this is the first time participants have been introduced to the UDHR, you should focus on building a shared understanding of what it is first, using the information at the start of this activity.

Explain to participants that you will read through the articles in the UDHR summary (on page 5). Each time someone feels that Germain's (or his family's) human rights have been violated, they should stand up (or raise their hand). As participants are still learning about human rights and only have limited information about Germain's story, they may come to different conclusions about the rights involved, but this is ok.

Read through the articles, one by one, and give participants time to stand up or raise their hand. Ask a few to explain why they have stood up or raised their hand.

4 DISCUSSION

15 MINUTES

Hand out the table of relevant human rights violations Germain has been subject to (on page 10) and go through it together as a group using the following questions as a guide:

- **Are you surprised at the number of human rights violations Germain has been subject to?**
- **Do you think the charges against Germain are justified?**
- **What needs to happen in order to bring justice, truth and reparation for Germain and other human rights defenders?**

*If you have time you can share the 5 min introductory video on **Write for Rights** on the **Amnesty Academy** website <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/145/write-for-rights-a-short-guide>*

5 TAKE ACTION FOR GERMAIN RUKUKI

10 MINUTES

Explain to participants that Amnesty is calling on people around the world to take action on behalf of Germain. Share some of the success stories from previous Write for Rights Campaigns and explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to write letters to authorities and show solidarity for Germain.

If there isn't enough time for participants to take action immediately, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards, or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative.

WRITE A LETTER – SAVE A LIFE

Encourage the participants to write to the President of Burundi at the following address:

Evariste Ndayishimiye

President of the Republic

Ntare Rushatsi House

Bujumbura, Burundi.

Email: presidence@burundi.gov.bi

@GeneralNeva – Twitter, Facebook and

Instagram

Salutation: Dear Mr President

Participants can use the template letters in the letter writing toolkit which you can download on the **Write for Rights** web page at www.amnesty.org/writeforrights.

Or you can give them the following guidelines to write a more personal letter:

Tell the President something to make this a personal letter:

- Tell him something about yourself
- Tell him what shocks you about the case
- Ask him to release Germain immediately and unconditionally.
- Remind him that in his inaugural speech as President he made a commitment to respect human rights.

SHOW SOLIDARITY

Encourage participants to show solidarity with Germain and his wife Emelyne Mupfasoni directly. They can write letters and post online messages expressing their support or any encouraging words to Germain and/or his wife Emelyne. Explain to the participants that Germain was sentenced to 32 years in prison for doing his human rights work in Burundi. Your words will give comfort to Germain Rukuki for the injustices he has faced since his arrest in July 2017.

Ask them to send their messages of support to Germain or his wife Emelyne including the Kirundi words:

Komera Turikumwe!

It means: Stay strong, we are together!

Take pictures of your actions, post them on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram using the hashtags **#FreeGermainRukuki**, **#FreeDefenders** for your action to be captured on social media.

Messages for Germain or Emelyne can be sent to the Amnesty International office:

Amnesty International

Regional Office for East Africa,

the Horn and Great Lakes

c/o Burundi Team

Riverside Studios, Riverside Lane,

Off Riverside Drive

P.O Box 1527-00606

Nairobi – Kenya

Email: burunditeam@amnesty.org



Amnesty supporters campaigning for Human Rights Defenders in Nigeria as part of Write for Rights 2019.

SHRINKING SPACE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURUNDI

Civic space in Burundi has been under continuous attack since the start of the political crisis in April 2015, when the former and now late President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to stand for a third term in office. Civil society organizations were at the forefront of mass demonstrations against the decision, which many Burundians considered to be a violation of the 2005 Constitution and the 2000 Arusha Peace Accords, that ended years of civil war.

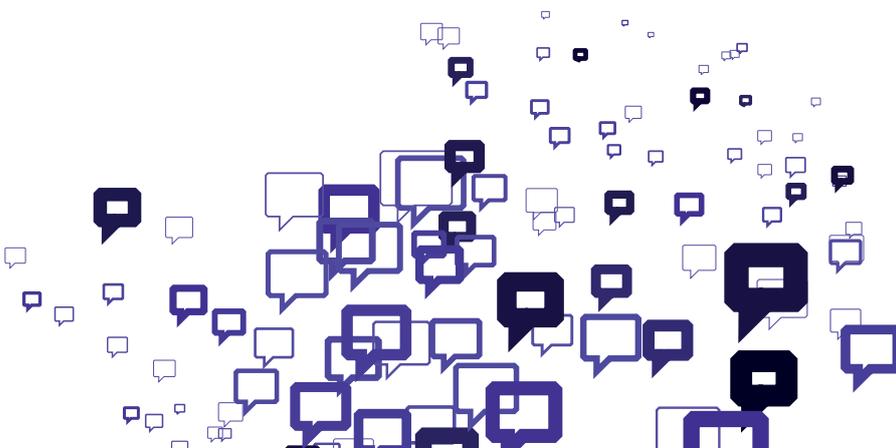
More than 400,000 Burundians have fled into exile in neighbouring countries, some as a direct result of the clampdown and others afraid of what might follow. Many human rights defenders, opposition leaders and journalists have fled Burundi and many of those that have remained have faced threats and reprisals, including arrests, prosecution on trumped-up charges, and suspected enforced disappearances.

In the lead up to the May 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections, the crackdown on government critics continued. Members of the main opposition party, the National Congress for Freedom (CNL), were repeatedly threatened, attacked and arrested, or even killed because of their political affiliation. The candidate of the ruling party, National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) was declared winner of the 20 May presidential election on 25 May. The party also holds a strong majority in the National Assembly as the result of the parliamentary election. However, the Catholic Church, which had one of the largest independent networks of observers, released a statement pointing out major irregularities and questioned whether the results announced reflected the people's choice in the polls.

The new President, Evariste Ndayishimiye, was sworn in on 18 June (before the planned handover ceremony in August of this year) after the death of President Nkurunziza, officially of a heart attack on 8 June. On 23 June, the new president appointed a prime minister who has been accused by many Burundian organizations to have played a major role in the crackdown of demonstrations and critics since April 2015.



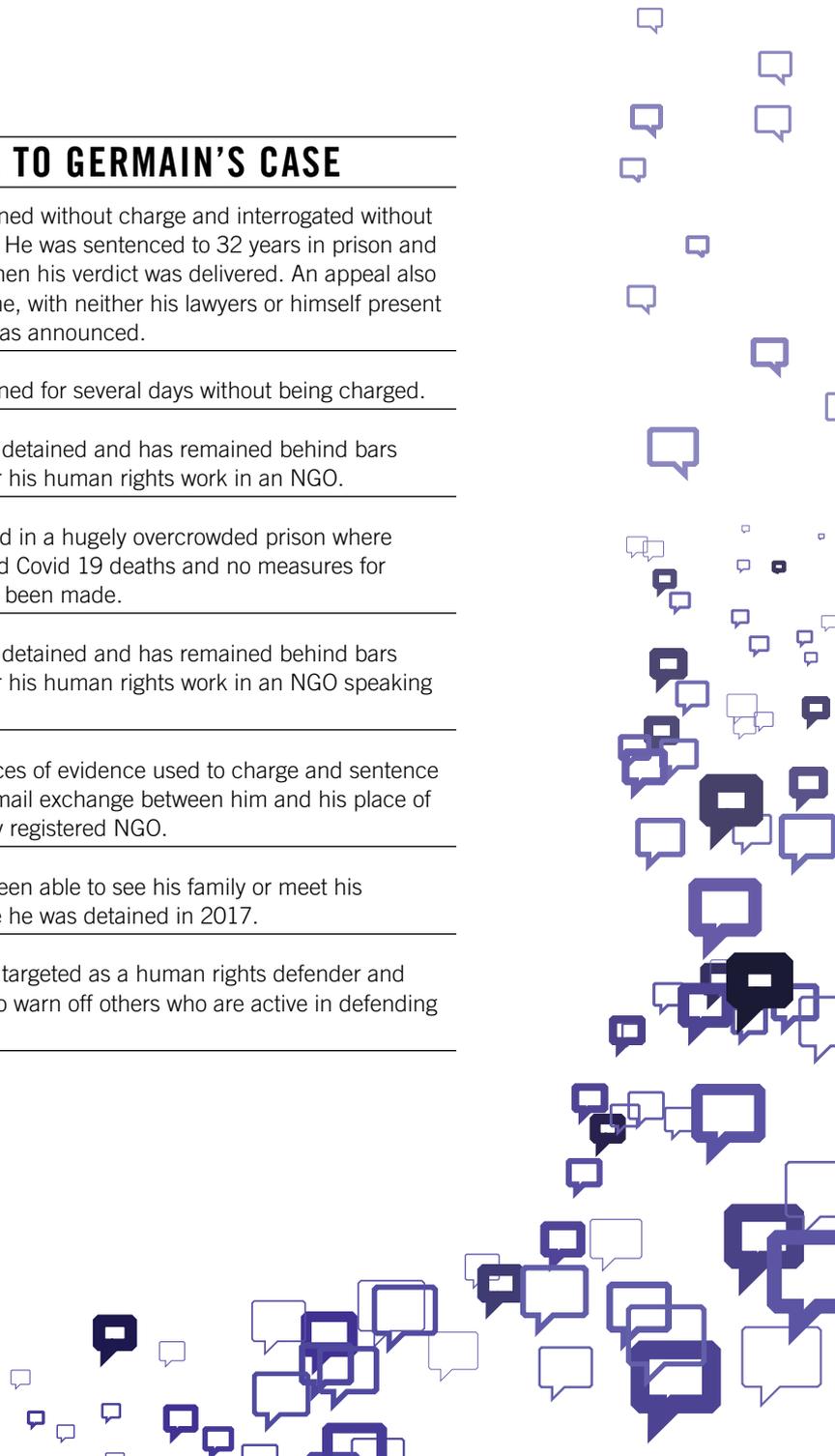
Amnesty supporters campaigning for Human Rights Defenders in Togo as part of Write for Rights 2018.



HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE CASE OF GERMAIN RUKUKI

FOR DISCUSSION

NAME OF HUMAN RIGHT	RELEVANCE TO GERMAIN'S CASE
Right to a fair trial	Germain was detained without charge and interrogated without access to a lawyer. He was sentenced to 32 years in prison and was not in court when his verdict was delivered. An appeal also resulted in the same, with neither his lawyers or himself present when the verdict was announced.
Right to security of person	Germain was detained for several days without being charged.
Right to liberty	Germain has been detained and has remained behind bars since July 2017 for his human rights work in an NGO.
Right to be free from ill treatment	Germain is detained in a hugely overcrowded prison where there are suspected Covid 19 deaths and no measures for decongestion have been made.
Right to freedom of expression	Germain has been detained and has remained behind bars since July 2017 for his human rights work in an NGO speaking out against torture.
Right to be presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a fair trial	One of the key pieces of evidence used to charge and sentence Germain was an email exchange between him and his place of work, then a legally registered NGO.
Right to private life	Germain has not been able to see his family or meet his youngest son since he was detained in 2017.
Right to be free from discrimination	Germain has been targeted as a human rights defender and used an example to warn off others who are active in defending human rights.



GERMAIN RUKUKI, BURUNDI

In better times, Germain Rukuki liked nothing more than playing with his sons, now aged seven and six. He also loved music, Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” being a favourite – an apt choice, as it would later turn out.

It was early one morning in July 2017 when Germain and his wife, Emelyne Mupfasoni, were woken by heavy footfall and banging on their door. Dozens of members of the security forces had piled into their compound. Emelyne was just weeks away from giving birth to their third child.

Officers interrogated the couple, both NGO workers, in their home. They arrested Germain, later transferring him to Ngozi prison, northern Burundi, where he remains to this day.

On 26 April 2018, Germain was found guilty of a slew of sham charges, including “rebellion” and “threatening State security”. His previous association with the NGO Action by Christians for Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi) was used against him. ACAT-Burundi had been shut down in 2016 for allegedly “tarnishing the image of the country”. But one of the prosecution’s pieces of “evidence” during the trial included an email Germain had written to them when they were still legal.

Germain was sentenced to 32 years in prison. He and his three-year-old son have never laid eyes on each other. “How long must my husband suffer this injustice?” asks Emelyne.

“How long must my husband suffer this injustice?”

Emelyne Mupfasoni



ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice. Change oppressive laws... And free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

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