

WIRE

FOR PEOPLE PASSIONATE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012 VOLUME 42 ISSUE 006

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF WRITING FOR RIGHTS A GRASSROOTS IDEA THAT WENT VIRAL



INSIDE THIS WIRE



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF WRITING FOR RIGHTS

Cover image: A Write for Rights participant in South Korea, 2010. Find out how a romantic encounter sparked the world's largest human rights event, and join in Write for Rights 2012. **PAGES 4-7**



THE AGENDA

Campaign news and diary dates, plus our **UP FRONT** column on racist attacks in Greece. **PAGES 2-3**



'PEOPLE LOVE TO LOOK AT FACES'

How Amnesty International tells stories using photographs. **PAGE 8**



'I WANT TO LOOK BACK AND SEE HATE GONE'

After several brutal murders, activists in a South African township are challenging local attitudes to sexual minorities. **PAGE 12**



FIGHTING BACK

A video of Azza Hilal Suleiman's vicious beating by Egyptian police went viral during the 2011 uprising. She spoke to us in Cairo. **PAGE 14**



'I WANT TO CREATE CHANGE'

Sringatin's story: an Indonesian domestic worker in Hong Kong who became a trade union activist. **PAGES 16-17**



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

With governments set to agree a global Arms Trade Treaty next year, we need to keep up the pressure. **PAGE 19**



THE POWER OF PUSSY RIOT

How three Russian punk rockers inspired thousands to protest wearing colourful balaclavas. **PAGE 21**

WORLDWIDE APPEALS
READ, SHARE, ACT – SEE INSERT

ALSO IN THIS WIRE

PULL OUT our poster (**PAGES 10-11**), **SIGN** and send our postcards (**INSERT**), **READ** Out in the cold in Afghanistan (**PAGE 13**), **Armed with anger** (**PAGE 15**), and Mali – divided and ruled by fear (**PAGE 18**).

Getting WIRE

WIRE is available online at www.amnesty.org/en/stay-informed/enewsletters/the-wire

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

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

First published in 2012 by Amnesty International Publications www.amnesty.org
© Amnesty International Ltd
Index: NWS 21/006/2012
ISSN: 1472-443X
Printed by Banbury Litho, Banbury, United Kingdom, on 100gsm Cocoon Preprint 100% Recycled paper.

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

WIRE, Editorial and Publishing Programme, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

Cover image: © Amnesty International

A flash mob on Italy's Lampedusa island in July. Activists called on EU authorities to protect migrants and asylum-seekers who arrive in overcrowded boats, instead of leaving them to die on Europe's doorstep. Holding signs saying "Italy-Libya deal = shame", they also criticized Italy for co-operating with Libya on migration control.

[Find out more at whenyoudontexist.eu](http://whenyoudontexist.eu)

© Amnesty International/Judith Quax



This WIRE celebrates small, powerful things: Simple ideas that inspire huge global campaigns. Individuals who stand their ground in the face of the powerful. Activists who protest to distant governments on behalf of people they've never met.

Celebrate International Human Rights Day on 10 December with us by writing for rights. See our Worldwide Appeals in the middle insert, sign and send our postcards, and visit [amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk](https://www.amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk) between 7-16 December.



The Agenda

News about Amnesty International's work and campaigns

Remembering Guatemala's conflict

When General Efraín Ríos Montt seized power in Guatemala in 1982, his scorched-earth campaign left a trail of massacres and disappearances. Today, three decades on, the former president is on trial for genocide.

Acclaimed photographer Jean-Marie Simon witnessed first-hand the terrible events of those years. Her photos document human rights abuses and ordinary life during the height of the conflict.

See her work below and at bit.ly/jm_simon

9 December is International Human Rights Defenders Day

Human rights defenders continually put themselves at serious risk to protect other people's rights. Join our call for states to protect them effectively and recognize the vital role they play. Read our latest report on defenders in the Americas at bit.ly/hrds_americas

Take action for **Láisa Santos Sampaio**, one of the many people featured in the report, by signing and sending the postcard in our middle insert.

16 days of activism to end gender-based violence

Women and girls are at particular risk of sexual violence in conflict zones. This year, Amnesty's 16 Days of Activism will focus on holding perpetrators to account for sexual and gender-based abuses committed in conflict situations. The campaign runs from 25 November – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – to 10 December. Local and international organizations around the world will be getting involved.

Join them! Read the article on p.15 and visit amnesty.org/16days

“The conditions and length of imprisonment in California's isolation units are simply shocking”

Angela Wright, Amnesty's US Researcher

New online platform for human rights education

Amnesty has launched a new online platform for young people to learn about and take action on human rights. It's part of a range of learning resources produced by the Education for Human Dignity project, looking at key human rights issues, including poverty and housing rights. Find out more and add your voice to the campaign at respectmyrights.org

Learn about Amnesty's human rights education work at bit.ly/e4hd_news

An estimated **25,000** prisoners are held in isolation across the **USA**

(Urban Institute, 2004 and US Department of Justice, 2005)

More than **3,000** prisoners in **California** are held in high security isolation units, known as Security Housing Units

78 people in California's Pelican Bay prison have been held in isolation for more than **20 years**. Their cells measure less than **8m²**

Find out more at bit.ly/usa_prisons



Mourners at the graveside of a man who was executed by firing squad under General Ríos Montt's Special Tribunal Court, General Cemetery, Guatemala City, 1983.





© Jorn van Eck

Maung Thura, also called Zarganar, is arguably Myanmar's most popular comedian and satirist. A fierce critic of the Burmese military government, he was banned indefinitely from performing publicly in 2006, sentenced to 59 years in prison in 2009, and then released in a prisoner amnesty last year.

The toxic truth – reporting on Trafigura

Toxic waste owned by oil trading company Trafigura was dumped at various sites around the city of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in 2006. Tens of thousands of residents experienced health issues as a result. This story of corporate crime, government failure and human rights abuses is told in detail in a new report by Amnesty International and Greenpeace Netherlands.

Find out more at bit.ly/toxic-truth

Amnesty unlocks the truth on renditions

Amnesty continues to expose European government complicity in US-led secret detentions and “renditions”. A new website details EU states’ involvement in secret transfers of people suspected of links to terrorism. Most of them were held without charge or trial, sometimes for years. Such transfers violate international law and often involve prisoners being subjected to multiple human rights violations, including torture and other ill-treatment.

Visit unlockthetruth.org

‘Children of the Jaguar’ documentary wins two awards

“Los Descendientes del Jaguar” (Children of the Jaguar) – featured in the May/June issue of WIRE – has won ‘best documentary’ in National Geographic’s All Roads Film Project, and another award at the 11th Indigenous Cinema Festival in Colombia. The film chronicles the courtroom triumph of the Amazon’s Sarayaku people over Ecuador, following the government’s failure to consult with them about oil exploration on their land.

Visit bit.ly/sarayaku-filmprize and read our feature at bit.ly/wire-mayjune12

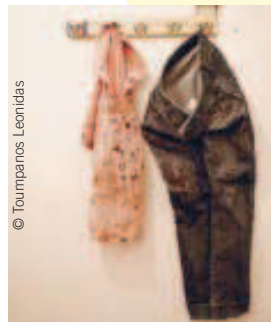
In January 2012, Chad had **45 operational prisons, housing 4,831 prisoners – more than double the intended maximum number of 2,080. Most of the prisons we visited were operating at four times their intended capacity**

Find out more at bit.ly/chad-prisons

Up front

Greece: Racist attacks on the rise

By GIORGOS KOSMOPOULOS, Europe and Central Asia Campaigner



© Toumpanos Leonidas

Asylum-seeker Michael's blood-stained jeans and t-shirt after he was attacked in Athens, August 2012

Social tensions are running high in Greece, where many have been hard hit by European economic turmoil, mass unemployment and government austerity measures.

In the capital, Athens, some are targeting their frustration and anger at foreigners. Attacks on migrants and asylum-seekers by extreme right-wing groups are increasing, leaving many afraid to walk the streets at night.

One 32-year-old asylum-seeker I spoke to – let's call him “Michael”, as he prefers to be anonymous – described how somebody had blocked his way while he walked home from

work a few weeks earlier: “Before I realized what was happening, I was beaten on the head with a brick six times,” he said. Michael needed stitches afterwards, and is now so worried about being out on his own that his work colleagues walk him home every evening.

We also visited “Ali”, a young Afghani man, who was living his wife, “Aisha”, and their 18-month-old daughter in a room measuring just 2m². “We have to pay 100 euros a month for this,” he said, as he poured me a glass of water and turned on the fan in the 40°C heat.

Ali says he arrived in Greece in 2009 and had no problems until last August, when he was attacked by four people in the centre of Athens. “They said something to me in Greek which I didn't understand. I was beaten and left unconscious. When I recovered I also found my wallet was missing. I'm afraid to go out now, and can't provide for my family anymore.”

“I don't want him to go out alone,” Aisha said. “What will happen to our baby if they kill him next time, or if the police take him away? I'm also scared, but I have to get us food somehow,” she says.

The young Iraqi man who was stabbed to death on 12 August was a tragic example of exactly the kind of racist attack that makes Ali and many others live in fear. Amnesty International is calling on the Greek authorities to prevent racist and xenophobic attacks and fully investigate those that occur.

It had been a long and difficult day. It had never crossed my mind that in a city like Athens – my city – people should have to hide away at home for fear of being attacked in the street.

“Sweep operations by the police, attacks and high crime rates have made life very difficult here,” said my interpreter, who is also a migrant. He asked if I could drive him home. “It's late,” he said. “I'd better be careful these days.”

LETTERS

Want your views and comments to appear in The Agenda? Write to us at yourwire@amnesty.org

ROMANTIC ROOTS

How a spontaneous, grassroots idea grew into a global force for change. **GRZEGORZ ZUKOWSKI** from Amnesty Poland spoke to Senior Editor **KRISTIN HULAAS SUNDE**.

Mighty oaks from small acorns grow, somebody wise once said. Today, Write for Rights – also known as the Letter Writing Marathon – is the world’s largest human rights event. It started small 11 years ago, when a boy met a girl with a bright idea at a festival in Poland.

In 2011, hundreds of thousands of activists in 78 countries wrote over 1.3 million appeal letters during the event. Their letters have power – to open cell doors, to shine a light on people whose work or words have put them in danger, to remind the world of human rights abuses that would otherwise be forgotten.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of this amazing concept going global, I spoke to Grzegorz Zukowski from Amnesty Poland about how it all started.

“A local Amnesty group co-ordinator in Warsaw, Witek Hebanowski, was organizing an event at a festival,” Grzegorz explains. “A very attractive girl called Joanna came up to him. She’d just been to Africa, where she said they organized 24-hour events, writing protest letters to governments.”

“Witek really wanted to see her again, so he asked her to come along to his local Amnesty group meeting. They decided to write Urgent Action appeals for 24 hours from 12 noon on Saturday, and then count how many letters they’d written.”



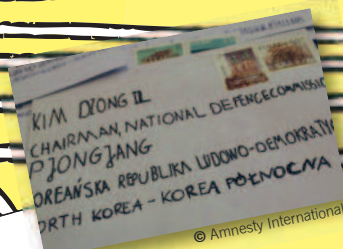
© Amnesty International (photo: Bartosz Pawbit)



© Amnesty International



© Amnesty International



© Amnesty International

"They emailed their idea to all the other Polish groups, and it turned into something much bigger, bringing together activists across the country," explains Grzegorz. And then their idea went viral.

"They emailed Amnesty offices across the world," he continues. "People started sending back pictures of themselves writing letters – by Niagara Falls, in Japan, in Mongolia. It was a spontaneous, grassroots initiative that grew and grew."

Every December since, Write for Rights – now the marathon's official name – has inspired thousands of people to write letters to distant governments on behalf of people they've never met.

It is a huge event for Amnesty offices worldwide. Some still do it Polish-style, over a hectic, sleepless 24 hours. Many prefer a more gentle marathon, run over several days and weeks, allowing people to write letters when it fits their schedule.

Amnesty Poland still does the classic 24-hour marathon – now described as the country's biggest human rights event. "Even the smallest places should be open all night," says Grzegorz, "so people can come in from the street, even when everyone else is asleep. Surprisingly many come for our free Sunday breakfast".

Publicity is key: "We try to get well-known people involved – actors, journalists, politicians, and our many former prisoners of conscience who are still friends of ours," says Grzegorz. "With 8,000 members and supporters, they achieved a remarkable 160,000 letters written in 2011."

And it still has real grassroots appeal: "The main power behind the marathon are the local communities and groups," Grzegorz says. "The school groups write more letters than anyone else. Our record is held by Bircza, a small town with only 1,000 inhabitants. Last year they wrote 13,000 letters."

"Bircza shows how important personal relationships are in organizing these events. The local school groups are the main organizers, so pupils, teachers, parents, their friends, even the local authorities get involved. A priest in another town asked his congregation to write letters. All this makes other people and the national media start talking about it, and the news spreads."

"I think it has such a strong appeal because it is so simple and so engaging," Grzegorz continues. "The stories of the people they are writing to, or for, are very important. Many would never hear these stories otherwise – they just aren't interested. But once a year they have an opportunity to open their minds to what's going on in the world."

So what happened to Witek and Joanna, the couple who met at the festival? "I wish I could tell you that they're married now, but I can't," Grzegorz says. "And we never found out if an African group did a letter writing marathon first."

But their idea has lasted the distance, inspiring thousands of people every year to pick up a pen to show the world that human rights matter.

DO IT YOURSELF: TOP TIPS FOR ORGANIZING A LETTER WRITING MARATHON EVENT

- Find a good venue – cafés, clubs, theatres, cinemas, schools, your home even, or set up a partnership with a cultural institution or festival to organize it.
- Get plenty of paper, envelopes, stamps and pencils – try asking local businesses to sponsor you. Sending many letters to the same address in one package can be much cheaper.
- Good stories will get the media interested – use the Write for Rights appeal cases, or invite well-known people to write an appeal letter, then publicize it widely.
- Co-ordinate your event with others by creating a communication platform, such as a blog, to share stories, photos and films about the event.
- If you're doing it over 24 hours, don't fall asleep – human rights defenders never sleep ... or at least ask your friends to wake you up for breakfast.

By Grzegorz Zukowski from Amnesty Poland



© Amnesty International



© Amnesty International (photo: Grzegorz Zukowski)

WRITE A LETTER, CHANGE A LIFE

This year's Write for Rights features 12 people and communities. Six of them appear in our World Wide Appeals (see the middle insert). The other six are featured on these pages. You can take action on all 12 cases between 7-16 December at amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk

GAO ZHISHENG, one of China's most respected human rights lawyers, is in prison in northwest China. State media reported last year that he had been imprisoned after violating the conditions of his suspended sentence. He has been persecuted since 2006 for "inciting subversion" as a result of his human rights work. He has been kept under house arrest, tortured and humiliated, and has "disappeared" twice for long periods.

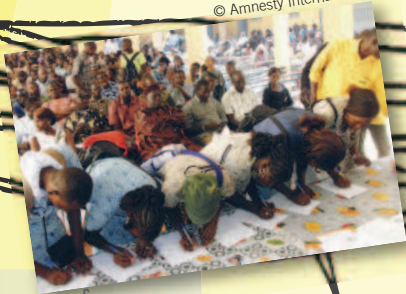
THIRTY-SIX MOSTLY ROMA FAMILIES are still homeless after they were forcibly evicted from Cluj-Napoca, Romania's second largest town, on 17 December 2010. Seven families are staying with relatives, while the remaining 29 live in improvised homes without water, sanitation or electricity, in constant fear of another eviction.

JUAN ALMONTE is still missing. A member of the Dominican Committee of Human Rights, he disappeared on his way to work on 28 September 2009 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, after witnesses saw him being detained by police officers. His relatives and lawyers have reported being watched and followed. Three years on, the authorities have failed to fully investigate his fate, and nobody has been brought to justice.

HUSSAIN SALEM MOHAMMED ALMERFEDI has been held without charge or trial in Guantánamo Bay, the US naval base in Cuba, since 2003. He was arrested in Iran in December 2001 and handed over to US authorities on allegations that he had helped foreign fighters to infiltrate Afghanistan from Iran. US federal judges ordered his release in 2010, ruling that he was unlawfully detained. But the Court of Appeals overturned this ruling and the US Supreme Court has refused to hear his case since.

AZZA HILAL SULEIMAN is still recovering from a vicious attack for which no-one has yet been brought to justice. During a protest on 17 December 2011, near Tahrir Square, Egypt, she intervened after seeing a group of soldiers beating and removing a young woman's clothes. Azza was knocked to the ground and severely beaten, even after she lost consciousness, and left with a fractured skull and memory problems. She is now suing the military – find out more on page 14 in this issue of WIRE.

© Amnesty International



© Amnesty International (photo: Panithan Kitsaku)



© Laurent HINI





'MY GOAL IS TO LIVE IN PEACE'

This year's Write for Rights campaign features a peaceful youth movement in Sudan whose name means "we're fed up".

Girifna was started in 2009 by university students and others who wanted to challenge the corruption and policies of Sudan's ruling National Congress Party. Since then, Girifna activists have been relentlessly harassed by security forces. Dozens have been detained, tortured and ill-treated, and many have been forced to leave the country. We spoke to Mai Shatta, a Girifna member, about being a young female activist in Sudan:

"I was born at a time of war, and the fighting and killing has continued until now. We don't have any time for justice or peace in Sudan. Every day as you wake up you find yourself hearing about war, whether in Darfur, in the Nuba Mountains, or in Blue Nile.

"It's very difficult for women to be activists in Sudan because of Shari'a law, family and social pressure. In 2006 I studied at a private university and there was a lot of violence against people from southern Sudan and from Darfur. So we decided to make a small group to support these people in non-violent ways.

"After I joined Girifna in 2009, the security services started to put me under pressure because I was trying to help activists who were in detention.

"I organized workshops to train youth activists and university students in peaceful techniques to resist violence. A week later, on 1 July, I was arrested with my mother. I spent 42 days in jail without being charged. The security services interrogated me and even asked me to work for them as an informant, which I refused. They called me bad names and took my glasses away. I was detained in dreadful conditions and now I have problems with my eyes and kidney.

"When they arrested me, they came with 10 gunmen and five cars – even at home I don't feel safe now. My goal is to put this regime down and live in peace."

Sudan is ruled by President Omar al-Bashir, who came to power in a coup in 1989. He is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and genocide in the Darfur conflict. The regime severely restricts people's political freedom through media censorship, widespread arrests and ill-treatment, and excessive force against peaceful demonstrations.

Amnesty International calls on the Sudanese government to:

- end torture and ill-treatment and stop the harassment of peaceful activists;
- investigate allegations of torture and ill-treatment, hold the culprits to account and provide compensation for the victims;
- reform the 2010 National Security Act, which gives broad powers to the National Security Service and shields it from scrutiny by the judiciary.

ACT NOW

Support Girifna by writing an appeal during Write for Rights from 7-16 December. Visit amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk

Write for Rights
Make a difference

THE FACTS

Started by Amnesty Poland in 2001, it spread to 21 countries in 2002. Now called Write for Rights, it takes place worldwide around Human Rights Day on 10th December.

Last year, activists in 78 countries sent an amazing 1.3 million appeals.

People either write to the authorities, asking them to act on a particular person's case, or to a community, an individual or their family to show that they are not alone.

Other activities range from debates, concerts and readings in cafés, theatres and bookstores, to screenings at film festivals, demonstrations, projecting people's images onto buildings and even lighting up Niagara Falls.

This year, the marathon takes place from 7-16 December on behalf of 12 individuals, groups and communities.

To find out more, see our Worldwide Appeals middle insert, visit amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk from the beginning of December, or contact your local Amnesty office.

Pages 4-7: Write for Rights events in Bahrain, Burkina Faso, France, Lebanon, Poland, Mali and Thailand.



'PEOPLE LOVE TO LOOK AT

How does Amnesty International use photos to communicate about human rights? WAYNE MINTER, Audiovisual Resources Manager, explains.

A CLASSIC HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE

One image that has stuck with me is Paula Allen's photo of 78-year-old Gil Won Ok leading a group of elderly women, some of whom can't stand. Holding a huge microphone, she faces the Japanese embassy in Seoul, demanding justice for women who were forced to become "comfort women" – sexual slaves of the Japanese army during World War II.

It is a classic human rights image, showing a committed individual with a strong, expressive face, and conveying a feeling that something important is happening.

And it contradicts stereotypes: Some of the women in the photo are over 90 years old. Many had been ostracized in their communities. They fought with great dedication and dignity against a tradition that perceived women as invisible and voiceless, and against a powerful and distant government.

This photo brought their struggle to a Western audience, resulting in more support for their cause. It also broadened people's understanding of our campaign to stop violence against women. On a plain documentary level it was important simply to record their struggle while we still could.

MORE THAN WORDS

Images are important for grabbing people's attention and getting them to do something, whether it's buying a soft drink or changing the world.

Portraits are particularly powerful. People love to look at faces, as a glance at any magazine rack will show. A person's face puts the "human" into human rights and creates a personal connection. Amnesty realized this when we started to include portrait photos regularly on Urgent Actions in the 1980s.

This continues today with techniques like the Million Faces for the Arms Trade Treaty campaign, the Letter Writing Marathon case "stamps", and asking people to upload self-portraits – or "selfies" – on social media as part of an online campaign.

More generally, strong images can communicate the reality of somebody's situation and inspire others to support them in ways that words often can't capture.

Amnesty's photo archive isn't full of horrific images. We have many more individual portraits than graphic or disturbing pictures. Usually the stories of what has happened to these people are disturbing enough. Graphic or shocking images can make people turn away instead of inspiring them to get involved.

© Nicola Ivanovski



© Paula Allen



GETTING THE SHOT

How we commission photographers depends on each project. If we need someone to travel to Nicaragua with an Amnesty researcher to interview girls about sexual violence, we'll look for a Spanish-speaking woman. She'll need to know the region, understand human rights, be able to build trust and take creative photos, sometimes while concealing people's identity. This narrows things down before we even start looking at people's work and availability.

We sometimes use images and videos taken by "citizen journalists", particularly from countries we don't have access to. This material can seem very powerful. But it is often difficult or impossible to find out if it really is authentic, who holds the rights, and if the people in the picture consented. Clarifying this can turn out to be too time-consuming and expensive.

REDUCING RISK

We work hard to avoid putting the people we portray at risk. We are increasingly making sure they themselves can decide how and where they are pictured. We train our research teams and professional photographers to get informed consent, often by showing people examples of how their photo

will be used or published. If we have any serious doubts about somebody's security or consent, we won't publish the image.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE FUTURE

We're increasingly harnessing new technologies, for example through interactive mapping. We've used satellite images to document abuses regularly since 2004, particularly when a government won't allow us access. They reveal otherwise hidden truths, such as the number of houses bulldozed after forced evictions from slums in Chad, the expansion of North Korea's secret prison camps, and the effect and extent of oil pollution over time in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

The invention of the 35mm film camera, the rise of international air travel and huge press empires shaped the role of photojournalists in the last century. Today, digital technology, internet distribution and communication are dramatically changing the way we acquire, use and control audiovisual media.

This revolution shows no signs of slowing down. It challenges us daily to use images more creatively and effectively, honestly and ethically, to promote human rights, document abuses and ultimately stop violations from happening at all.

Above left: This panoramic photograph was originally taken as a 360 degree, cylindrical image. It will form part of our global campaign to stop threatened forced evictions in Kenya. Many people in slums live in constant fear of their homes being destroyed, without consultation, alternative housing or compensation. The 360 degree image will be posted online alongside sound clips, a photo slideshow and footage, giving viewers a rare glimpse of people's everyday lives in slums like this one, and their hopes and dreams for the future.

Above: A classic human rights image: Gil Won Ok (78) and other Korean former 'Comfort Women' protesting outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, 2005.



© Amnesty International (Photo: Bartosz Pawlik)





PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Celebrating 10 years of

Write for Rights
Make a difference

the world's largest
human rights event

Get involved between

7-16 December at

amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk

'I WANT TO LOOK BACK AND SEE HATE GONE'

BONTLE KHALO, an activist in a South African township, works on the front line to change local attitudes to sexual minorities following several brutal murders. She spoke to Senior Editor **ADI DRORI-AVRAHAM**.



Bontle Khalo is optimistic. Why else would she leave her job at the city of Johannesburg municipality to volunteer for a small organization in KwaThema township? "I had to think about whether I wanted to leave the comfort of that job to work for nothing," she says. "I chose to do this. I'm hoping that one day the hard work that we do will be rewarded."

Bontle and two other full-time volunteers at the Ekurhuleni Pride Organizing Committee (EPOC), are working from her home in KwaThema, in the Ekurhuleni area east of Johannesburg, to increase public understanding of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Their work is funded through donations. "The people we speak to are not exposed to the media. We let them know more about what it means to be a young gay or lesbian person,

that we are normal human beings and part of society."

EPOC's work really is a matter of life or death. Bontle started the organization with others in 2009, soon after Eudy Simelane, a local lesbian woman, was murdered.

"Before, I wouldn't say I was an activist. I didn't know much about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues. I just knew I was a lesbian woman, but it ended there." Reeling from the murder, Bontle and her friends got together. "We were just talking about what we could do," she recalls. "Most of us moved to KwaThema because compared to other townships it was a very safe place for LGBTI people to be."

Despite South Africa's progressive constitutional legislation to protect LGBTI rights, many people in

Top left: Many of EPOC's 500 members from local townships took part in this year's Ekurhuleni Pride march on 22 September.

Bottom left: EPOC members Bontle Khalo, Simon Dzanibe and Ntsupe Mohapi in their office, holding a banner asking for justice for Noxolo Nogwaza, a lesbian woman who was murdered in the township last year.

townships are still targeted in vicious attacks, she says. "The reality is that, if you are a black lesbian or gay person living in a township, it's still not safe." Discrimination against them is also rife.

In many ways, KwaThema was different. The township has been home to a thriving LGBTI community since the 1970s, Bontle explains. And the murders shook the local community to the core. "We didn't know that things like that could happen here, where LGBTI people felt free to be open and outspoken. It was never something that we really experienced here. KwaThema is a very close community, where you know almost everybody. It is a safe environment; there isn't a lot of crime here."

So what changed? Why were Eudy and Girly Nkosi, another lesbian woman who was murdered in 2009, targeted? "They were activists, very out, and very well known," Bontle says. "My personal feeling is that a lot of men did not agree with the notion that women were in relationships with each other and so vocal about it."

"In the early 70s, the LGBTI movement in KwaThema was headed by gay men. I don't think most people had a problem with gay men. But when lesbian women started to come out more and more, some men didn't feel comfortable with that."

In April last year, Noxolo Nogwaza, a 24-year-old lesbian woman, was also raped and murdered. Noxolo was an active member of EPOC. "It was heartbreaking, knowing that this had happened again," Bontle says. "A woman so brutally murdered, raped and assaulted, there was a lot of anger and hatred behind that."

More than a year on, Noxolo's killers are still out there. "The police are not doing enough", says Bontle, but EPOC continues to fight for justice. She is also concerned about how victims of attacks are treated by individual police officers. "If an obviously lesbian woman goes [to the police] after being attacked, the officers can make a mockery of her situation. You can almost feel like you are to blame for what happened to you." Transgender people who go to clinics, she says, also don't get the help they deserve.

One day, Bontle says, she wants to look back and see hate gone. Until then, EPOC will continue to visit schools, clinics and raise awareness in local communities. Many KwaThema locals are already on their side. "We are aware there is a lot of change that needs to be done", she says. "But I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

Visit ekurhulenipride.co.za to find out more about EPOC and how to support their work.



Last winter, at least 22 children froze to death in Kabul's slums. Afghanistan's half a million displaced people are now facing another cold season under plastic sheeting, waiting for the government to help them.

When Amnesty visited Amina and her family in Kabul's Kart-e Parwan slum in February 2012, they were living in a shelter fashioned from mud, some poles and plastic sheeting. Snow blew inside in great gusts, and the floor was little more than plastic laid over wet and icy ground.

Everything was damp and cold: The two thin mattresses, the blankets, their clothes. Suspended like ornaments from the tent's central pole overhead were food containers, a blanket and some cured meat.

Amina, her husband and five children had fled the fighting between NATO-led forces and the Taliban in eastern Afghanistan. Their experience is common, but government assistance for displaced people like her is poor. Thousands are now wondering whether they will survive another winter.

SLUM LIFE

Displaced people take refuge in Afghanistan's major cities wherever they can, often building basic shelters on empty lots. In Kabul alone, around 35,000 displaced people are living in slums that have sprung up in the last few years.

Conditions in these communities are abysmal. Rainwater easily seeps in through mud walls and plastic sheeting. Residents from buildings nearby use the land as rubbish dumps. It's not easy to stay healthy here. Just getting enough water to drink, cook and clean with is a daily challenge.

Fatima, who lives in Kabul's Chaman-e-Babrak slum, doesn't know which problem she'd tell the Afghan government about if she got the chance: "School, employment, not having proper housing, food, health – when my children get sick and I have to pay for the doctor and medicines – it's everything," she said.

Lack of health care is a particularly serious problem for displaced families. Hospitals and clinics are far away,

Khalil, 65, his wife and six children all live in one room in a dilapidated warehouse building in Kabul, Afghanistan.

and travelling there is too expensive. So are medicines. Marzia, a 40-year-old woman living in Minarets camp in Herat, said that four of her children had died because she couldn't afford the medication they needed.

DELIBERATELY IGNORED

As conflict has intensified in Afghanistan, the number of displaced people has swollen to around half a million. Yet, on our many visits, officials have spoken dismissively of these communities or simply denied their existence. Many still brand displaced people living in urban areas "economic migrants", as if this means the authorities are not responsible for their care.

In fact, Afghanistan has international legal obligations to protect internally displaced people and their rights, including to adequate shelter, food, water and access to health care.

To date, the state's official line has been that displaced people will go home. This ignores the fact that most simply can't go back safely in the foreseeable future. Government authorities have also discouraged long-term aid, leaving people like Amina with only temporary help, if any.

Last winter, at least 100 people died of cold and illness in Kabul's slums. The government can't let this happen again. It must provide emergency aid to help displaced communities protect themselves against the severe cold. And it must allocate enough money and other resources to make its draft policy on displaced people a reality.

Only then will it have a better chance of preventing more deaths of displaced people during this and future winters.

Watch *Fleeing war, finding misery* at tinyurl.com/fleeing-war



FIGHTING BACK

Footage of Egyptian soldiers mercilessly beating a “red-hooded woman” during a protest went viral last year. Today, AZZA HILAL SULEIMAN is suing the military. She told Senior Editor CLARE FERMONT her story.

Azza Hilal Suleiman became known internationally last year as the “red-hooded woman”. Video footage showed her helping another woman whose underwear was exposed as Egyptian soldiers dragged and beat her during a demonstration. Then Azza too was attacked, so viciously that she almost lost her life.

I spoke to Azza at her home in Cairo about her life-changing experiences since the Egyptian uprising began.

This vibrant 49-year-old woman was brought up in a military family – her father, two uncles and two brothers are all army generals. She led a pretty conventional life until the “25 January Revolution” turned her life upside-down.

“I was so innocent,” she said. “I went to the Day of Anger demonstration on 28 January 2011 by bus. I saw the

demonstration, so asked the driver to stop. As we walked, our numbers kept growing. I was very happy.”

She soon witnessed the security forces using unprecedented violence against protesters, gunning people down and beating them. She was overwhelmed by the fog of tear gas.

“But we all had great courage,” she said. “I kept pushing past the riot police, who seemed smaller than me. I tried to save a young boy carrying his shopping who had been grabbed by the riot police.”

The fearlessness and anger she felt that day has never left her.

She joined another protest on 17 December 2011, near Cairo’s Cabinet Offices. That’s when she saw troops assaulting the young woman, exposing her underwear. She threw herself



Left: This graffiti on a Cairo street shows a woman saying “no to harassment”.

Above: Azza Hilal Suliman at home in Cairo, September 2012.

Abbaseya, Cairo, by “thugs” she says the army used “to do its dirty work”.

“It was this that made me take up the battle for justice for the many crimes committed by the military,” she said, “much more than my own case”.

She submitted a complaint about her assault to the public prosecution, but nothing happened. She is determined to get justice, and vows to take her case before international bodies if necessary.

Like other women activists I interviewed in Cairo, Azza was far more interested in talking about getting justice for others, rather than for herself. She wants justice for the Coptic Christians killed in Cairo, on 9 October 2011. And for all those killed and injured during the uprising – and since then.

Does she remain optimistic, I asked. “Of course,” she said. “It was depressing before the revolution. There was so much injustice and so many things imposed on you. I used to despair and think there was no escape. Now I am full of hope.”

Her words still resonate: “Don’t give up on your rights. You only have rights if you fight for them. And the more we support each other, the stronger we are and the more we will achieve.”

ACT NOW

Azza is one of 12 cases in this year’s Write for Rights letter writing marathon. Please send an appeal on her behalf by visiting amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk between 7-16 December. You can watch footage of the army’s attack on Azza here (it shows graphic violence and is disturbing): bit.ly/QJjW3i

ARMED WITH ANGER

LAUNCHING 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE FROM 25 NOVEMBER –10 DECEMBER 2012

“For two months I was tied to three other women. There was a distance of half a meter between us so we could do chores. We all had to go to the toilet and wash together. At night all four of us were raped.”

Choi-Gap-Soon, a South Korean woman now aged 86, who was enslaved by the Japanese military as a “comfort woman” for 12 years from the age of 14.

In northern Mali, women and girls have been robbed, beaten and raped by members of armed groups. During Egypt’s popular uprising, female protesters were targeted by the armed forces, including with sexual violence such as forced ‘virginity testing’. In Colombia’s internal conflict, members of the security forces, the guerrillas and paramilitaries have long subjected women to sexual abuse.

Worldwide, throughout history, the lives of women and girls have been devastated by sexual violence during armed conflicts. They are targeted simply because of their gender. Militarism creates a culture of fear where violence is used to settle disputes and advance people’s political and economic interests. State personnel are often among the perpetrators.

Often, by the time an armed conflict is formally over, militarism is already entrenched. This condemns women and girls to continue living with violence.

This year, Amnesty members around the world will be campaigning to end these abuses. Our 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence run from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) until 10 December (International Human Rights Day).

During the campaign, we will call on the Indonesian authorities to commit to ensuring justice, truth and comprehensive reparations for victims and survivors of sexual violence during the conflict in Aceh.

We will pressure the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs to unequivocally apologize to the survivors of Japan’s military sexual slavery system and provide them with reparations, as recommended in the United Nations’ Universal Periodic Review.

We will call on Egypt’s Minister of the Interior to stop women and girls being subjected to sexual and gender-based violence during protests and detention.

And Amnesty activists will gather outside their parliaments, calling for decisive action to end impunity for conflict-related sexual violence in Colombia. We will also remind states that a provision on gender-based violence must be maintained and strengthened in the future Arms Trade Treaty.

ACT NOW

Join our campaign to end to gender-based violence everywhere. Visit amnesty.org/16days to get involved and find out more.

over the woman to protect her. Then, she too was attacked by soldiers, and her ruthless beating was captured on video.

The next thing Azza remembers is waking up in hospital. She had a fractured skull and her swollen face left her barely recognizable. She had been in a coma for a week and doctors told her family to prepare for the worst.

“At the beginning, the pain was so bad that I would wake up screaming, and I fainted a lot. But lots of friends and relatives helped me.”

One of those friends was a man who soon became her fiancé. “He really supported me, and we held the same views on the revolution and justice,” she smiled, “so I melted with love for him.”

On 2 May 2012 he was shot dead at a sit-in at the Ministry of Defence in

'I WANT TO CREATE CHANGE'

© Amnesty International



Hundreds of thousands of Indonesian women have left their homes and families to make a living as domestic workers abroad – cleaning, cooking and looking after children and the elderly. Many end up badly paid, isolated and vulnerable to abuse.

To mark International Migrants Day on 18 December, WIRE spoke to SRINGATIN (left), who was 22 when she came to Hong Kong as a domestic worker. Ten years on, she is an active member of the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), fighting to improve women's lives and working conditions.

HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED WITH THE INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS UNION?

"My second job was much better. I still worked 7am-10pm but I got every Sunday and public holiday off. Many Indonesian domestic workers gather in Victoria Park on Sundays, and that's where I first came across IMWU. I started out playing guitar with them and then became confident enough to join and learn about labour rights. I soon realised that long hours, lack of statutory days off and wage-related problems are common."

WHY DID YOU LEAVE INDONESIA?

"My family didn't want me to go – they wanted me to study at university and get a job as an accountant. But studying isn't cheap, and I didn't earn enough doing room service in a hotel."

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF HONG KONG?

"There were so many people, walking so quickly that it made me dizzy. People just ignored each other, thinking only of themselves. It felt very cold. But now Indonesia seems too slow for me when I go back!"

WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST DIFFICULT WHEN YOU ARRIVED?

"I worked from 7am-10pm with just one day off a month in my first job, and I was underpaid. I tried to find out how to complain, but people told me it would be very hard and to be careful. If I complained I might not get another job in Hong Kong. So I kept silent.

"I couldn't leave the house because I worried that my employer would report me to the agency and that I would lose my job. I wouldn't have known what to do or where to go. It was hard – I kept thinking about going back to Indonesia."

WHAT OTHER ISSUES DO DOMESTIC WORKERS FACE?

"The lack of choice – we can only work as domestics not in other professions. Under Hong Kong immigration law, migrant domestic workers have to live with their employer. If I had the choice I'd prefer to live out."



© Amnesty International

HOW DOES THE UNION HELP WORKERS LIKE YOU?

"We help women challenge their employers and agencies by giving them information about their rights and the law. We also provide moral support and act as interpreters for workers who have disputes at the Labour Department – employers can bring a lawyer, an agency representative and others to support them. The Labour Officer seems to be on the employer's side and not the worker's. They can make migrant workers feel that they are in the wrong – it's hard to convince them that they have a legitimate claim."

WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED?

"I know the conditions Indonesian women live under. I want to make myself useful before I die and help create change for Indonesian women."

WILL YOU RETURN TO INDONESIA?

"Yes, but I need to prepare myself first, because here in Hong Kong I'm part of a community. When I go back I'll feel alone. My dream is to have a community café. Young Indonesians don't have many things to do, so I want to create a place where they can drink coffee, read books, write and expand their minds."

Background photo: Migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong enjoy one statutory day off every week. Many Indonesian workers meet their friends, eat and have fun in Victoria Park in Causeway Bay. Trade unions activists also set up stalls and hold events in the park, like the one pictured.

THE FACTS

Almost half of Hong Kong's 300,000 migrant domestic workers are from Indonesia.

Hong Kong law requires migrant domestic workers to live with their employer. But the law does not oblige employers to provide them with a private bedroom.

Eighty-five per cent of Indonesian domestic workers pay most or all of their first seven months' salary in agency fees. [Source: IMWU survey, 2011]

The isolated nature of their work puts migrant domestic workers at high risk of abuse. Many become trapped in exploitative working conditions because they fear losing their job while still owing employment agency fees.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

WITH GOVERNMENTS SET TO AGREE A NEW ARMS TRADE TREATY NEXT YEAR, WE NEED TO PUSH FOR THE STRONGEST RULES POSSIBLE, SAYS BRIAN WOOD, AMNESTY'S MANAGER FOR ARMS CONTROL, SECURITY TRADE AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

For almost 20 years, since 1993, we have invested our time, energy and creativity into fundamentally changing the rules for how arms – guns, jet fighters, ammunition – are traded worldwide.

Alongside our partners, we have shown the world that a global Arms Trade Treaty can help protect human beings. Growing up in Africa, I witnessed how weapons in the wrong hands can destroy people, communities, and whole countries.

Today, we are months away from securing a new global deal that can stop weapons reaching those who abuse human rights.

As we prepare for the final leg of this long campaign, we have a lot to be proud of. We are making history against enormous odds. We have faced up to the arms companies and broken down the iron wall that has stood between human rights and arms control issues in

the UN system for decades. And we have pushed this issue to the top of many countries' political agendas.

In July, the overwhelming majority of states supported a draft treaty text with rules to protect human rights and covering most arms. This was a huge achievement. We can now get the text adopted in 2013, either at the proposed UN conference in March, or in a later General Assembly vote.

Supportive states still want to hammer out technical issues, such as potential loopholes regarding the transit of arms shipments. The sceptics will try to undermine the human rights rules in the final treaty. We need to keep up the pressure to win.

This issue goes to the heart of national security and big power politics. Together, the permanent UN Security Council states – Britain, France, China, Russia and the USA – plus Germany, control over 80 per

cent of the global arms market. The USA, by far the largest trader, will have the biggest say. The current draft text represents their compromises with other large arms traders and political blocs, including the European Union (EU) and most of the African Union.

Under the current draft, states must refuse arms transfers if there is an overriding risk that they would be used for human rights violations or war crimes.

States will also have to work much closer together to interpret common rules, and report annually. If they do so in good faith, much of today's irresponsible arms trading will become illegal and easier to spot.

Once the treaty is adopted, we'll need 65 ratifications to bring it into force. With 27 potential ratifications in the EU alone, this is achievable. The new treaty regime could begin as early as 2014. Then it's up to states to put their commitments into action.

MALI: DIVIDED AND RULED BY FEAR

‘The hearing lasted less than 10 minutes. Then they said I was guilty and that they would cut off my right hand.’

© Amnesty International

Mali is known for its culture and beauty. It is home to Timbuktu, an ancient centre of learning for Islamic scholars, and hosts the famous annual celebration of arts and music, the Festival au Désert.

But today, this once-stable West African country is facing its worst crisis since independence in 1960. Twenty years of peaceful political change came to a catastrophic end with a military coup in March 2012. Today, the country is left fragile and divided.

Northern Mali was taken over by armed groups a week after the military coup. In the past months, stories have increasingly emerged of amputations, stonings and other horrific abuses by armed Islamist groups after summary hearings.

The groups are trying to force “new behaviours” on the local population based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Sexual violence against women and young girls is rife, as is recruiting and using child soldiers.



Alhader Ag Almahmoud, who had his right hand amputated by an armed Islamist group in August 2012.

AMPUTATION FOR “THEFT”

At the end of a “hearing” which lasted for just 10 minutes, Alhader Ag Almahmoud was found guilty and sentenced to amputation of his right hand under Shari’a law. The 30-year-old ethnic Tuareg and cattle farmer, from Ansongo in northern Mali, was accused of stealing cattle in August 2012.

“The chief [of the armed group] took my right forearm and tied it up with a bicycle inner tube like a garrotte,” said Alhader Ag Almahmoud. “He said ‘Allah-Akbar’ before cutting my wrist. He tried to avoid the bones of my hand, reaching the joints only.”

“Then they locked me in a cell for eight days, and after that a nurse came to give medical care. Before my hand was amputated, the owner of the stolen cattle came to declare that they had been found.” This is not an isolated incident.

COUP AND COUNTER-COUP

In southern Mali, the coup unleashed a wave of violence. After army officers overthrew the democratically elected President Touré in March, an attempted counter-coup took place on 30 April in the capital, Bamako. Disappearances, extrajudicial executions and torture, all committed with complete impunity, spiralled out of control.

Somali children look up at a government soldier carrying a belt of machine gun ammunition during his patrol along the Indian Ocean coastline in Burgabo, Somalia, December 2011.

The treaty won’t be a panacea. Unscrupulous governments will try to bend and ignore the new rules. We need to keep working on critical issues, including new technology such as sea and air drones and laser weapons. And the treaty does not cover domestic gun sales.

But when it comes into force, the new treaty will be the starting shot for a new global process that can be strengthened as it develops. We will be following it every step of the way. Our next challenge will be making sure the new treaty is implemented globally, so it really protects people on the ground.

One prisoner told Amnesty International: “Soldiers took 10 prisoners at random. Taking turns, the guards tied a rope around their necks, then one of them put his shoe on the rope and pressed hard to strangle them.”

We are calling on the armed Islamist groups to stop using any form of corporal punishment, and to end violence against women and girls. We are also calling on all armed groups, including self-defence militias, to stop recruiting and using child soldiers.

ACT NOW

Join us in calling on the President of Mali to:

- stop arbitrarily arresting and harassing opponents
- protect all civilians

Write to:

H.E. Dioncounda Traore

Palais Présidentiel de Koulouba

Bamako, Mali

GOOD NEWS & UPDATES

PETITIONING MYANMAR TO FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS

More than 68,400 Amnesty International members have signed a petition urging the authorities in Myanmar to release all remaining prisoners of conscience there. Three prisoners named on the petition were subsequently released in amnesties on 3 July and 17 September.

The petition also called on the government to set up a mechanism to establish the true reason for each prisoner's arrest. It will be sent to Myanmar's Minister of Home Affairs and Amnesty offices will deliver copies to their countries' foreign affairs ministries. Members from Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Taiwan, the UK and the USA took part.

Human rights activist and prisoner of conscience U Myint Aye, aged 61, was added to a petition update but remains behind bars. Look out for our postcard action calling for his release.

ENDING TORTURE IN TAJIKISTAN

The Tajikistan authorities are beginning to respond positively to national and international campaigns to end the widespread practice of torture by law enforcement and security officers in the country.

In September, a police officer was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for ill-treating a 17-year-old boy. This is the first time an official has been charged with the crime of torture since the Article on Torture was introduced into Tajikistan's Criminal Code in March 2012, bringing it in line with international legal standards. In another first for Tajikistan, the victim was awarded compensation to cover his medical treatment costs.

You can help to keep the campaign going by writing to the Tajikistani President, Emomali Rahmon. Urge him to adopt the recommendations in our briefing: *No justice, no protection – Torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officials in Tajikistan*.

Read the briefing at: bit.ly/tajikistan_torture

FREED GAMBIAN PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RETURNS HOME

Prisoner of conscience Dr Amadou Scattered Janneh has been released from prison in Gambia, following a pardon by President Jammeh on 17 September 2012.

Dr Janneh and three other men were arrested on 7 June 2011 for printing and distributing T-shirts featuring the slogan, 'End to Dictatorship Now'. In January, they were found guilty of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour. Their arrests and convictions were a clear violation of their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association and Amnesty International campaigned for their immediate and unconditional release. Dr Janneh's case was also featured in worldwide appeals in the July-August WIRE.

Dr Janneh, who has American citizenship, has returned to his family in the USA. After his release, he said "I am grateful to Amnesty International; your work gave us the strength to survive the ordeal. Anytime we heard about Amnesty International on the radio, we knew we would not be forgotten."

© Amnesty International (Photo: Grzegorz Zukowski)



THE POWER OF PUSSY RIOT

Three Russian feminist punks who sparked a global uproar

“Your political passion has united people of different languages, cultures, and ways of life. Thank you for this miracle,” wrote Nadezhda Tolokonnikova from the feminist punk band Pussy Riot, in a recent letter from prison.

Nadezhda and two other women, Maria Alekhina and Ekaterina Samutsevich, were arrested in March 2012 for singing their protest song *Virgin Mary, Redeem us of Putin*, in Moscow’s main Orthodox cathedral the month before.

Their case sparked a global debate about freedom of expression in Russia. Thousands of people called for their release, signed petitions and demonstrated in the streets wearing the band’s signature colourful balaclavas. Amnesty activists worldwide, including in Thailand and Paraguay, joined in.

Artists, musicians, actors and film directors, both in Russia and globally, have also called for the women to be released immediately. They echoed Amnesty’s stance that the state was prosecuting the women for a legitimate – if potentially offensive – protest, and that their trial violated their right to freedom of expression.

The women were sentenced to two years in jail for “hooliganism on the grounds of religious hatred” in August. Their lawyer, Nikolai Polozov, still thinks the campaign supporting Pussy Riot was a success: “The fact that the girls got two years and not three [as the prosecution requested] or seven [the maximum sentence] shows that your work has brought results,” he said.

Their appeal led to Ekaterina’s conditional release on 10 October. It is a partial victory: her sentence has been suspended, but her band mates remain in prison.

Their case is just one example of how the space for freedom of expression in Russia is shrinking. Keeping this issue under the international spotlight gives Pussy Riot and others in Russia the strength to carry on fighting for their rights.

Nadezhda, Maria and Ekaterina asked us to thank people for all their support: “We are all making history now,” Nadezhda said. “Putin’s system will find it harder and harder to control this – we are all already winning.”

ACT NOW

Sign and send our postcard to ask President Putin to free Pussy Riot (see insert) and to respect people’s right to freedom of expression in Russia.



Clockwise from left: Free Pussy Riot demonstrations in Paraguay, Norway, Thailand, Poland, the UK, the USA and France.

**‘THE MORE
WE SUPPORT
EACH OTHER,
THE STRONGER
WE ARE’**

AZZA HILAL SULEIMAN, EGYPT
PAGE 14

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



CHIOU HO-SHUN

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

TAIWAN AT RISK OF EXECUTION

©Amnesty International



Chiou Ho-shun has been on death row in Taiwan since 1989. He could be executed at any time.

He was arrested in 1988 along with 11 other people in connection with two murders. All 12 say they were held incommunicado for the first four months of detention, and were tortured into confessing. Chiou Ho-shun says he was blindfolded, tied up and forced to sit on ice, electrocuted and had pepper water poured into his mouth and nose. These interrogations lasted up to 10 hours at a time, with five or six people beating him. As a result, the hearing in his left ear has been severely impaired and he suffers from migraines.

Following an unfair trial, his 11 co-defendants were given prison sentences. Only Chiou Ho-shun received a death sentence. In 1994, two public prosecutors and 10 police officers handling the case were convicted of

extracting confessions through torture. No material evidence linking Chiou Ho-shun or his co-defendants to the crimes has ever been produced.

Following an unsuccessful appeal in 2011, Chiou Ho-shun asked the court: "I haven't killed anyone. Why don't judges have the courage to find me not guilty?"

Show solidarity with Chiou Ho-shun

Chiou Ho-shun would like to receive postcards from people around the world, showing pictures of where they live. Write to:

Chiou Ho-shun
Taipei Detention Center
No. 2 Li-de Road
Tucheng District
New Taipei County
Taiwan (ROC)

Write to the President

Ask him to stop the execution of Chiou Ho-shun. Urge him to ensure Chiou Ho-shun receives a fair re-trial. Call on him to suspend all executions and death sentences as a step towards abolishing the death penalty in Taiwan.

Ma Ying-jeou
President of Republic of China
Office of the President
No. 122, Sec. 1
Chongqing S. Road
Zhongzheng District
Taipei City 10048
Taiwan (ROC)

Fax: +886 223832941 or +886 223719268
Start your letter: Your Excellency

ALES BIALIATSKI

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

BELARUS IMPRISONED AFTER UNFAIR TRIAL

©Amnesty International



Ales Bialiatski is a prominent human rights defender in Belarus and the chairman of the organization Human Rights Centre Viasna. He was arrested on 4 August 2011 and imprisoned on 24 November 2011 for four and a half years. Amnesty International believes that his imprisonment is intended to prevent him working to defend human rights and considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Ales Bialiatski was imprisoned for using his personal bank accounts in Lithuania and Poland to support his organization's human rights work in Belarus. The Belarusian authorities have refused to register Human Rights Centre Viasna since 2003. As a result, the organization is barred from opening a bank account in its name in Belarus, so it had no choice but to use bank accounts in neighbouring countries to fund its human rights work.

Ales Bialiatski did not receive a fair trial. Some of the evidence presented was unauthenticated or anonymous. The questioning of some witnesses did not relate to the charges, but instead to the human rights activities of Ales Bialiatski and the witnesses themselves.

Show solidarity with Ales Bialiatski

Write a letter or send a non-religious card to Ales Bialiatski in prison.

Ales Bialiatski
Penal colony No. 2
1 Sikorsky Street, Babruisk
213800 Mahiliou Region
Belarus

Suggested messages for Ales Bialiatski:

I am thinking of you: Я думаю пра цябе

I am wishing you well: Я жадаю табе добра

Write to the President of Belarus

Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Ales Bialiatski and for all charges against him to be dropped. State that Amnesty International considers Ales Bialiatski to be a prisoner of conscience.

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka
ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk
Belarus
Fax: +375 172260610
or +375 172223872
Email: contact@president.gov.by
Start your letter: Dear President

BODO COMMUNITY

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

NIGERIA OIL SPILLS DEVASTATE COMMUNITY

©Amnesty International



For several hundred years, the people of Bodo in the Niger Delta have made a living from fishing and farming. This serene way of life suddenly changed on 28 August 2008, when a breach in a Shell oil pipeline caused thousands of barrels of oil to spill into the local creek. The land and water around Bodo was soon polluted with oil. The spill continued until 7 November.

In December 2008, a second spill began, lasting for 10 weeks. Both spills were caused by equipment failure. The oil destroyed people's livelihoods and devastated the environment. Fish in the creek died or moved away from the pollution. No proper clean up has taken place; the land and water remain polluted and unproductive. The damage to fisheries and farming has resulted in food shortages and rising food prices in Bodo. A

third spill, in June 2012, deepened concerns that Shell's pipeline is old and prone to leaks.

Many people in Bodo have been pushed deeper into poverty as a consequence of the oil spills. Meanwhile, the contaminated soil, water and air are putting their health at risk.

Show solidarity with the Bodo community

Take a photo of yourself holding a sign saying either: "We support the Bodo community" or "Clean up the Bodo oil spills". Write your message in English.

Post your photo at:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/medianaija/>

Write to President Goodluck Jonathan

Ask him to monitor the pollution in Bodo and its effects on the local community, and ensure

that a clean-up operation takes place. Urge him to publicly commit to transparency and access to information for all aspects of the clean-up, and to ensure that the affected communities are fully compensated for their losses. Ask him to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and publicly report on Shell's compliance with environmental legislation and regulations in the Niger Delta.

President Goodluck Jonathan
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Office of the President
Nigerian Presidential Complex, Aso Rock
Abuja
Federal Capital Territory
Nigeria

Start your letter: Your Excellency

GUATEMALA MOTHER FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE

©Amnesty International

María Isabel Franco was 15 years old when she was raped and brutally killed. Since María's death in December 2001, her mother Rosa has been fighting for justice, despite receiving death threats from unknown people on several occasions. She has also faced indifference from the authorities.

The Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman published a report in 2007 saying that María's case was handled poorly and that the authorities showed a lack of interest in investigating it. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has recently admitted María's case, increasing the pressure on the Guatemalan authorities to act.



Show solidarity with Rosa Franco

Write a letter or send a card to Rosa Franco to say that you support her ongoing fight for justice for her daughter, María Isabel. Write to:

Rosa Franco
c/o Central America Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW
UK

Write to the Vice President of Guatemala

Welcome her pre-election commitment to tackle violence against women. Ask what steps the Guatemalan authorities are taking to ensure that the killers of María Isabel Franco are brought to justice. Ask what steps are being taken to address the high rate of violence against women and girls in Guatemala, and the low rate of prosecution for these crimes.

Roxana Baldetti
Vice President of the Republic
6ta. Ave. 4-19, zona 1
Guatemala City
Guatemala

Start your letter: Dear Vice President

NARGES MOHAMMADI

IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST IMPRISONED

©Amnesty International

Human rights activist Narges Mohammadi has been sentenced to six years' imprisonment. She was the Executive Chairperson of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders in Tehran. The Iranian authorities forcibly closed the Centre in 2008, and several of its members have been harassed, arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

Narges Mohammadi is the mother of young twins, Ali and Kiana. Her most recent imprisonment began on 22 April 2012. Her pre-existing health problems worsened when she began serving her sentence, and on 31 July 2012 she was granted temporary leave and hospitalized to obtain medical treatment, including for seizures and temporary loss of vision.

In 2011, she was convicted of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national

security" and for "spreading propaganda against the system" – charges connected with her human rights work. Narges Mohammadi has been banned from travelling abroad since 2009, when the Iranian authorities confiscated her passport.

Write to Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Narges Mohammadi. Call on the authorities to ensure that she continues to receive full and unrestricted access to her family, a lawyer of her choice and all necessary medical care. Call for an end to the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in Iran, including members of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders,

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

and urge that the Centre for Human Rights Defenders be allowed to reopen.

Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran
Iran

Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Twitter: @khamenei_ir

Start your letter: Your Excellency

THE PEOPLE OF TAWARGHA

LIBYA FORCED OUT AND LIVING IN FEAR

©Amnesty International

In August 2011, the Libyan town of Tawargha was attacked by militia fighters from nearby Misratah. The fighters forced Tawargha's 30,000 inhabitants to flee, burned the town and destroyed its infrastructure. They were seeking revenge because they believed that Tawarghas had supported government forces during the Libyan uprising and committed war crimes and other human rights violations.

Today Tawargha is uninhabitable and has become a ghost town. Its former inhabitants are scattered across Libya. They live in poorly resourced camps, in constant fear of ongoing attacks by militias. When a Tawargha camp in Tripoli was attacked on 6 February 2012, gunmen killed seven Tawarghas, including three children and an elderly woman.

The Tawarghas don't feel safe anywhere. The Misratah militias have hunted down and detained hundreds of Tawarghas from camps, homes, checkpoints and even hospitals. Torture in detention is widespread and routine; some Tawarghas have been tortured to death.

The Misratah militias have vowed that the people of Tawargha will never be allowed to return. They have raided the town again and again to destroy homes and infrastructure to stop people from coming back. They have raised mounds of sand to block access to the town and even erased the town's name on road signs. Tawargha is being wiped off the map.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Write to the Minister of Interior in Libya

Ask the Minister to ensure that all those who have been forcibly displaced from Tawargha are allowed to return promptly to their homes. Urge the Minister to ensure that the Tawarghas' safety is guaranteed, and that those responsible for attacks on the people of Tawargha are brought to justice.

Fax your letter to: +21 8214 803645 and +21 8214 442997

Please also send your letter via the Diplomatic Representative for Libya in your country. You can find the local address for the Libyan Embassy online or in the telephone directory.

Start your letter: Your Excellency



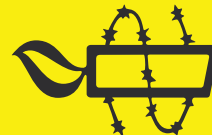
**WILL YOU
HELP THEM
SURVIVE THE
WINTER?**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



**JOIN US FOR 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TO
END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

25 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER 2012



FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED,
VISIT AMNESTY.ORG/16DAYS

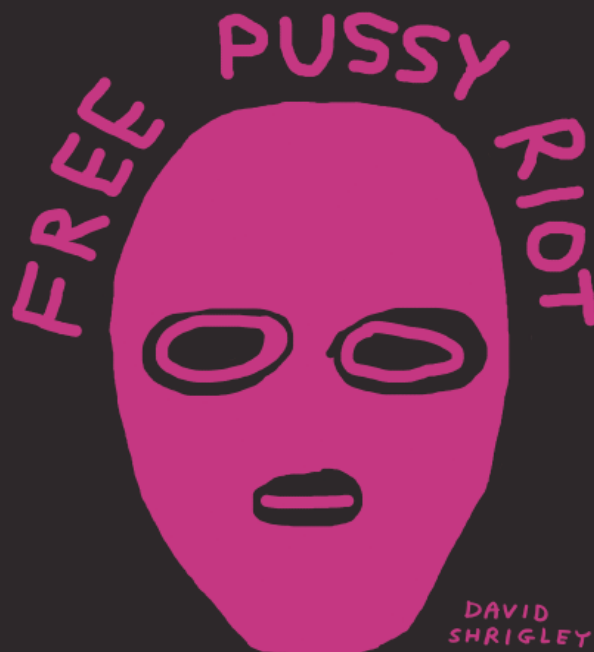


**HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE AMERICAS
"I HAVE BEEN SENTENCED
TO DEATH."**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



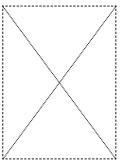
**SPEAKING OUT
IS NOT A CRIME**



DAVID
SHRIGLEY

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**





**H.E President Hamid Karzai
Gul Khana Palace
Presidential Palace
Kabul
Afghanistan**

Image: Thousands of Afghanistan's internally displaced people are living in freezing conditions on the brink of starvation. © Amnesty International
Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK. amnesty.org

Index: ZLSA/18/10/1111



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

Dear President Karzai

At least half a million people have been displaced in Afghanistan, most of them by the current armed conflict. They live in dire conditions on the brink of starvation in camps and city slums.

With little resources, they build makeshift dwellings from mud and plastic sheeting. These offer little protection from snow and ice. At least 100 people, mostly children, died from the cold or illness in Kabul's slums last winter.

Your government has a legal duty to protect these people. I urge you to work with donor partners and humanitarian agencies to provide internally displaced people with emergency aid to help protect them against the winter cold. I also urge you to finalize a national policy on internally displaced people by close of 2012 and allocate adequate resources to implement it.

Yours sincerely

Name: _____

Country: _____

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



"WE SHOULD NEVER LET FEAR OVERCOME COURAGE."

Laisa Santos Sampaio

Dear Minister José Eduardo Cardozo,

Laisa Santos Sampaio, a schoolteacher and environmental activist from the Praia Alta Piranheira settlement, Pará state, is being repeatedly threatened and fears for her life. Two members of her immediate family were killed in 2011 following similar threats and shots have been fired close to her house.

She is one of scores of human rights defenders working across the Amazon to defend the forest's ecosystem, communities and livelihoods in the face of intimidation and violence, while illegal loggers, charcoal producers, ranchers and land grabbers operate with impunity.

Please act immediately to ensure that Laisa receives adequate protection and that all threats against her are thoroughly investigated. I also urge you to address the entrenched criminality that lies behind this violence, and protect communities at risk.

Yours sincerely,

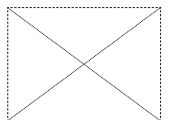
Name: _____

Address: _____

Index: AMR 19/014/2012

Image: Brazilian activist Laisa Santos Sampaio
© Esther Gillingham/CAFOD
Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK. amnesty.org

**Sr. Ministro de Justiça,
José Eduardo Martins Cardozo
Esplanada dos Ministérios,
Bloco "T" 70.064-900 - Brasília/DF
Brazil**



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Dear President Putin,

Three members of the feminist punk band Pussy Riot were sentenced to two years' imprisonment for performing a protest song in Moscow's Christ the Saviour Cathedral. Although Ekaterina Samutsevich was conditionally released on appeal on 10 October, her two band mates, Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova remain in prison.

Even if the song shocked or offended some people, it caused minimum disruption and was a peaceful expression of the band's political beliefs. The three members of Pussy Riot should not have been imprisoned for this.

Freedom of expression is one of the human rights enshrined in the Russian Constitution. I call on you, as its Guarantor, to ensure that Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova are released immediately and unconditionally, and that Ekaterina Samutsevich's criminal conviction is quashed.

Yours sincerely,

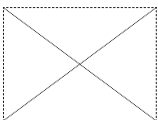
Name: _____

Country: _____

Index: EUR 46/036/2012

Image: © David Stringley
Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK. amnesty.org

**Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin
President of the Russian Federation
ul. Ilyinka, 23
103132 Moscow
Russian Federation**



**THIS YEAR, AMNESTY MEMBERS
AROUND THE WORLD WILL BE
CAMPAIGNING TO END CONFLICT-
RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND
ABUSES**

**25 NOVEMBER – 10 DECEMBER 2012
FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED.
VISIT AMNESTY.ORG/16DAYS**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

