

July–September 2018

WIRE

TOGETHER AGAINST INJUSTICE



Finally free!

Poet and artist Liu Xia
allowed to leave China

Automated labour

How technology is changing
our right to work

Exposing the truth

Crisis response work on
the ground in Syria

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



WIRE

is Amnesty's global magazine – published four times a year – to inform, empower and inspire people worldwide to take injustice personally

GET IN TOUCH



www.amnesty.org/join



thewire@amnesty.org



+44 (0)20 7413 5500

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



www.facebook.com/AmnestyGlobal



@Amnesty



www.amnesty.org/en/wire-magazine

SUBSCRIBE



wire.subscribe@amnesty.org

Receive Wire every three months in Arabic, English, French or Spanish (£16/US\$25/€19 per year)

Published by the Publishing Team, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK. All rights reserved.
Index: NWS 21/8616/2018 ISSN: 1472-443X
Printed by Warners Midlands PLC, Lincolnshire, UK. Printed on 100% recycled paper



Cover illustration: A man in front of an image of Liu Xia, the Chinese poet and artist who has been under house arrest by the Chinese government since 2010
© Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images

WIRE CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 8 Automated labour**
Technology is changing our right to work
- 12 Literary solidarity**
Free Chinese poet Liu Xia from illegal house arrest
- 16 Evidence on the ground**
Our Crisis Response team's findings in Raqqa, Syria
- 22 Just window dressing?**
Steps towards reform in Uzbekistan
- 26 Cuts that hurt**
Austerity measures affect health care in Spain
- 31 #HereWeAre**
Stop online abuse of women on Twitter

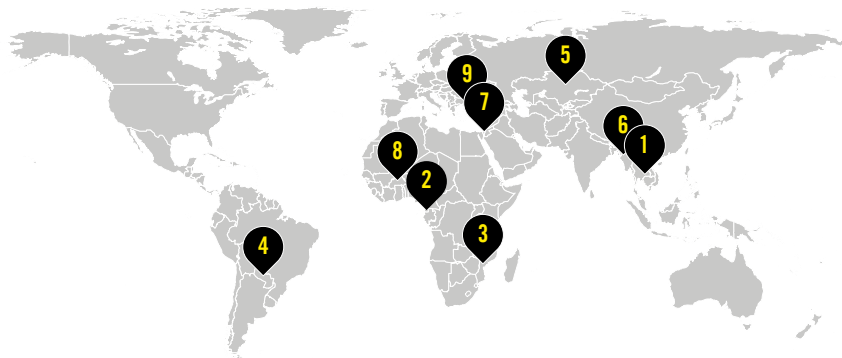


REGULARS

- 4 Amnesty around the world**
- 6 Behind the scenes**
- 7 Dates and editorial**
- 30 Tribute**



AMNESTY AROUND THE WORLD



1 ACTIVIST'S CONVICTION OVERTURNED

A migrant rights activist from the UK had his conviction for defamation overturned by the Bangkok South Criminal Court. Andy Hall was found guilty of criminal defamation in September 2016 for his work on a report on the abuse of migrant workers' rights in Thailand.

bit.ly/2JfTRPz



3 MINING ACTIVITIES SUSPENDED

On 22 May the Mozambican government suspended the mining activities of Chinese multinational mining company Haiyu Mozambique Mining Co. Lda in Nampula province. We exposed the company's irresponsible mining operations, which have likely put an entire coastal village of more than a thousand people at serious risk of being washed into the Indian Ocean.

bit.ly/2y70kFS

4 FREED FROM HOUSE ARREST

Lawyer Raúl Marín was released from house arrest on 30 May. He had been arrested in January 2016 in relation to his work defending the land rights of the Marquetalia settlement community in Paraguay. He was giving people advice on their right to decent housing.

bit.ly/2Jpfyc3

"I want to express my sincere thanks to the activists of Amnesty. Thanks to your support I've been released from house arrest after two years. If it weren't for your collaboration I would not have achieved it."

Raúl Marín

2 FREE TO TRAVEL



Ramón Esono Ebalé was issued with a passport on 23 May, two and a half months after being released from prison in Equatorial Guinea, where he spent almost six months on trumped-up counterfeiting charges. The cartoonist and activist was finally able to leave the country on 28 May to be reunited with his wife and daughter. He hadn't seen them since he was arrested and detained in September 2017 and questioned over cartoons criticizing President Teodoro Obiang and his government.

bit.ly/2kSBL7R



5 **BLOGGER RELEASED**

On 5 May, Ardak Ashym was released from the psychiatric facility where she had been detained since 31 March. The blogger and civil activist from Shymkent, in south Kazakhstan, was detained after posting remarks on social media that were critical of the government. We're calling for all charges against her to be dropped.

bit.ly/2s00b5Q

6 **THOUSANDS RELEASED**

More than 8,000 prisoners were released in Myanmar during a Presidential amnesty on 17 April. They included prisoner of conscience Lahpai Gam, arrested in 2012, and pastors Dumdaw Nawng Lat and Langjaw Gam Seng, who were detained in December 2016 shortly after helping to organize a visit by journalists to the site of an alleged military airstrike.

bit.ly/2Hsh9ft & bit.ly/2JkVE6I



7 **DEPORTATIONS HALTED**



The Israeli government stopped forcing people from Eritrea and Sudan who were applying for asylum to go to third countries. The announcement followed the release of 280 people seeking asylum who had been issued with deportation notices while detained in Holot detention centre, in the Negev/Naqab desert. They were released from detention in April following a High Court ruling, which also ordered the government to stop deporting them. The government has declared that Eritrean and Sudanese nationals seeking asylum will be encouraged to leave Israel "voluntarily".

bit.ly/2JhB0sD

8 **DEATH PENALTY ABOLISHED**

"While the country has been abolitionist in practice for many years, this parliamentary decision is a welcome move," said Amnesty's Yves Traoré, reacting to Burkina Faso's decision on 31 May to abolish the death penalty. "Once the new penal code comes into force, Burkina Faso will join a group of nations that have consigned this cruel punishment to history."

bit.ly/2sTMRx9

9 **STUDENTS DEFY PRIDE BAN**

On 11 May, hundreds of demonstrators marched peacefully on the campus of the Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) in Turkey's capital, Ankara. The annual student-organized Pride march went ahead despite the ban on all LGBTI events imposed by Ankara's governor in November 2017. ODTÜ LGBTI Solidarity thanked Amnesty activists for their support, and said: "We could not stay silent and resign ourselves to the ban. We had to oppose it, we had to march."

bit.ly/2xPBwDI



BEHIND THE SCENES

CHASING RAINBOWS



*LGBTI rights activists
at the Istanbul Pride
march on 1 July 2018,
Turkey*

On 1 July, the Istanbul LGBTI community celebrated Pride after it had been banned since 2015.

Lene Christensen, Regional Content Manager, was there to show solidarity and document the event.

There was no stopping this moment. Not even the hundreds of police officers present, heavily armed with dogs, tear gas and rubber bullets could prevent it. This year's Pride march was banned for the fourth year in a row, but literally at the last minute on the day, the organizers

were told they could gather in Mis Street, a tiny side street off the main avenue where the event used to take place.

Within minutes a couple of hundred people had come together, dancing and chanting. Madonna was on the speakers. Huge smiles and teary eyes

were all around. A large rainbow flag was lifted in the middle of the crowd. For a moment it was pure, unexpected magic.

The atmosphere was both joyous and intimidating: everyone knew that the gathering could turn from celebration to entrapment any minute. There were riot police blocking both ends of the street. We were surrounded by uniforms and weapons. Istanbul's LGBTI community knew the tear gas and rubber bullets were not just an empty threat; they have been used heavily in the last three years.

To leave no doubt: Tear gas was fired. We heard about people being knocked to the ground by police dogs. Eleven people were detained, but released in the evening.

Still, none of us present in Mis Street will ever forget those precious moments of joy and the strong feeling of companionship and pride. Yet again, people could express themselves publicly in broad daylight, if only for an hour. They showed that love and solidarity are much more powerful than intimidation and fear.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2017 IN NUMBERS

5,500,650+

actions were taken globally

208

countries and territories took part

18%

more actions compared to 2016

13%

of the total number of actions were taken in Taiwan

7 in 10

cases reported positive human rights change

DIARY DATES AND ANNIVERSARIES 2018

18
JULY

Nelson Mandela
International Day

30
JULY

International
Day of Friendship

30
JULY

World Day against
Trafficking in
Persons

9
AUGUST

International Day
of the world's
Indigenous Peoples

12
AUGUST

International
Youth Day

19
AUGUST

World
Humanitarian Day

23
AUGUST

International Day for
the Remembrance of
the Slave Trade and
its Abolition

30
AUGUST

International Day
of the Victims
of Enforced
Disappearances

5
SEPTEMBER

International
Day of Charity

15
SEPTEMBER

International
Day of Democracy

21
SEPTEMBER

International
Day of Peace

28
SEPTEMBER

International Day for
Universal Access to
Information

EDITORIAL

TEAM BRAVE

This year's World Cup in Russia is widely seen as an inspiring competition, at least on the pitch. Highly tipped teams have been overcome by dedicated opponents, underpinned by the fairness and transparency introduced by the "video assistant referee" replay system. When favourites like Germany lose against South Korea and Mexico, anything seems possible.

Away from the pitch and the glittering new stadiums old problems remain. LGBTI rights, minority rights, environmental rights, civil and political rights are under sustained attack in Russia. Privately, Russians themselves recognize this split, saying, "this is World Cup Russia, not real Russia."

But "real Russia" can change. Whatever team you follow, we are asking you to support our Team Brave – People fearlessly standing up for human rights across Russia. These 11 women and men defend the rights of their fellow citizens. They challenge torture and other abuses that take place in police stations, they fight so that people can breathe clean air, they are supporting victims of domestic violence, LGBTI people, sex workers and former prisoners.

For their fight, Team Brave is being penalized, they face physical attacks and the threat of fabricated charges that could lead to long sentences in solitary confinement if convicted. Despite the power of the opponents they face, Team Brave remain dedicated to creating a Russia in which human rights are respected and everyone can live in dignity. So, what can you do to support them?

Join the Team Brave fan club, go to:
bit.ly/2u36ML4 and #TeamBrave

THE WIRE TEAM

Editor: Deborah Odumuyiwa-Baker

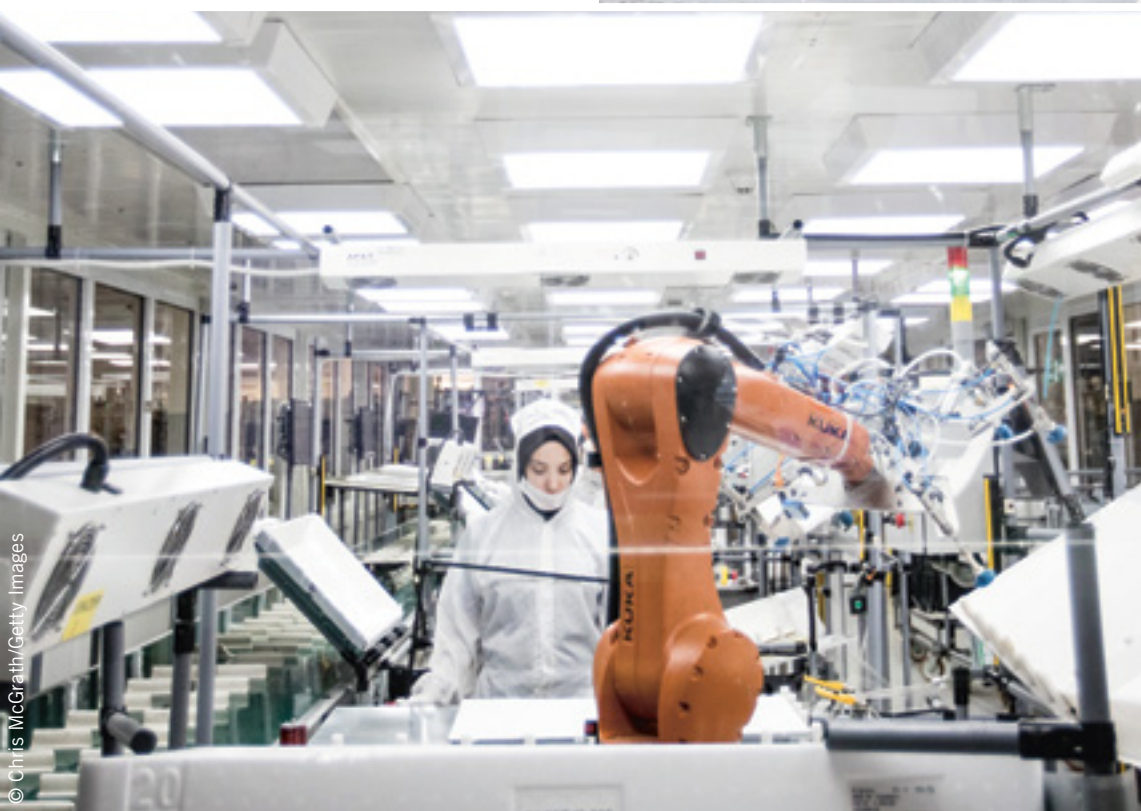
Contributors: Alex Neve, Cathy Palmer, Conor Fortune, Donatella Rovera, Eric Kwok, Makmid Kamara, Lene Christensen, Renata da Souza, Sanhita Ambast, Saphia Fleury, Svetlana Vorobyeva

Designer: Dina Silanteva

Photo editor: Richard Burton

FOCUS: TECHNOLOGY AND THE RIGHT TO WORK

AUTOMATED LABOUR



An employee works on a television production line in a Vestel City mega factory in Manisa, Turkey, 14 May 2018



Employees use the latest robotic technology to produce consumer goods at a Vestel City mega factory, Manisa, Turkey, 15 May 2018





Technology is set to take over in our working lives. Today, millions of workers across the world are managed by algorithms that schedule their shifts and monitor their performance, and entire industries are going through rapid disruption and fragmentation. This fourth industrial revolution will go even further: in the future, technology will replace many human workers. These developments bring huge opportunities for humanity to create safer and more efficient jobs. On its flip side are fast changes that societies need to prepare for to be able to adapt. What does the automation of the workplace mean for human rights? Makmid Kamara, Deputy Programme Director and Head of our Economic, Social and Cultural rights team, explains.

The automation of human labour is no longer a pipe dream, it's a reality that stares us in the face. Automation is the technological process or procedure by which certain tasks are performed without human assistance. Automation is also used to replace knowledge-based tasks or jobs by using technology, rather than merely replacing a manual process. Introducing automated labour increases efficiency and saves costs.

SILVER LINING

We acknowledge that technology has a positive potential to improve working conditions, among other things. In many countries across the world, workers don't have a safe and healthy workplace; they lack pensions, sick pay and maternity rights, and their employers turn a blind eye to sexual harassment. The 2013 Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh, for example, in which over 1,100 workers were killed when the building collapsed, shone a global spotlight on the grim conditions inside clothing factories. If handled correctly, automation could potentially help to improve working conditions for employees. But if not implemented with human rights in mind, it looks like technology could make many human workers redundant.

DISRUPTION AHEAD

The number of companies choosing to use robotics or artificial intelligence to perform what were previously human tasks is increasing. In April, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) projected that an estimated 66 million jobs in OECD countries are at risk of automation. This translates to the job of one in seven people across the 32 countries included in the study. Low-skilled workers and young people are most at risk.

The situation is even gloomier for developing countries. In Ethiopia, 85% of the working population could lose their jobs to automation by 2030, in Thailand it could be 72%, in Argentina 62% and in India 69%, predicted the OECD in 2015.

Millions of people are already losing their jobs and their right to work is being undermined. A broad range of professions are affected: assembly line factory workers, phone operators, receptionists, cashiers, bank accountants, pilots and bartenders. All these jobs are being automated at an unprecedented scale. Estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands of jobs, especially in the manufacturing, transport and mining industries, have gone. This trend will speed up and with it comes a huge risk of social and political upheaval.

DIGNIFIED LIFE

Enjoying financially rewarding and decent employment is a human right. Human rights law regards the right to work as essential not only to human survival, but to life and human dignity. The right to work does not necessarily guarantee that everyone will get the job they want, but international treaties command that governments do everything to aim for full employment.

With the growing impacts of economic and other financial crises which force governments around the world to adopt actions such as austerity measures, it's becoming more apparent that the right to work and a range of other human rights are linked with people's aspirations to live a dignified life. Technological unemployment is posing a serious threat to people being able to enjoy the right to an adequate standard of living. It's an issue that comes down to people's daily bread and butter worries.

OPTIMIZATION @ WORK

But it's not just the right to work that is under threat. More and more employers are using technology in ways that reduce their employees' rights at work. With new technological devices like the "electronic leash", employers can keep track of their employees' activities while at work, and worryingly, also when off duty.

Algorithmic management "optimizes" the workforce in a business sense, but it contributes to risky and oppressive working conditions for people; for example, coffee shop employees on zero-hour contracts who don't know whether they will have work until a few hours before a shift; and warehouse staff who are tracked for the distances they cover and for the time they take off for breaks. Additionally, surveillance equipment, key cards, and the increased monitoring of phone and internet use at work undermine employees' right to privacy. Employers using such technologies can also limit their staffs' right to engage in collective bargaining as laid out in international treaties. There has already been a global decline of labour unions, both in membership and influence. As more companies try to enforce lower pay regimes and weaker employment conditions, low-skilled and low-paid workers are first in line for losing their jobs.

LIMITING RISKS

We've recently launched our automated labour project to find out about the impact of technology on the right to and at work. Some of the questions we want to answer are: who benefits from increasing automation and who loses? What mechanisms could protect human rights while the workplace continues to evolve?

While we recognize that technology can be an instrument for positive change in the workplace, giving people flexibility and opportunities, we believe that without appropriate safeguards it can also make marginalization, inequality and insecurity worse, especially in developing countries where alternative work for people to take up is limited. States have now a unique opportunity to guide this change. They can adopt strategies that focus on the potential benefits of technological advancement by putting in place strategies to limit risks and help workers to adapt, particularly those most at risk of experiencing resulting human rights violations. We want to see a world where technology supports human rights in and outside the workplace.

READ MORE

Find out more about economic, social and cultural rights:
bit.ly/2KAU0mA



Workers in developing countries are particularly at risk of being replaced by automation. Assembly line workers in Brazzaville, the Republic of the Congo, 20 July 2015



Dangerous working conditions led to the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 24 April 2013, killing over 1,100 workers



© Zakir Hossain Chowdhury/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

RIGHT TO WORK

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

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23

© Federico Scoppa/FP/Getty



A photograph of a crowd of people, likely at a press conference or public gathering. In the foreground, several microphones are visible, including a blue one with a red logo and a black one. A woman in a white jacket is looking down. Other people in the background are wearing winter clothing like hats and scarves. A blue and white sign with Chinese characters is visible in the upper right.

CAMPAIGN: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN CHINA

LITERARY SOLIDARITY

FREE LIU XIA



Liu Xia talks to the media after the Beijing High Court told her husband, Nobel Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo, that his appeal against the conviction for "inciting subversion of state power" would not be overturned or shortened, Beijing, China, 11 February 2010



Chinese poet and artist Liu Xia is finally free! After being held under illegal house arrest by the Chinese government without charge for almost eight years, Liu Xia was finally allowed to leave China and she arrived in Berlin, Germany, on 10 July 2018. Such a successful story could not have been achieved without the long-term efforts of our members and supporters. In May, dozens of celebrated writers, poets and artists came together and called for the lifting of all restrictions on Liu Xia. Together with PEN America, we started a video campaign in which international writers and artists read excerpts of Liu Xia's poetry.



© Jarek Godlewski / Amnesty International

The show of literary solidarity followed news of Liu Xia's declining health, which she revealed in April during a harrowing seven-minute phone conversation with friend and exiled writer Liao Yiwu. During that call, Liu Xia said she was "prepared to die" if the Chinese government did not allow her to leave China.

Liu Xia is suffering from a heart condition and severe depression but the authorities barred her from travelling abroad to seek treatment until now.

Liu Xia had been under illegal house arrest since her late husband Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. Liu Xiaobo died of liver cancer in custody in July 2017 while serving an 11-year prison sentence for "inciting subversion of state power", and Liu Xia had been strictly monitored by state security agents ever since. Her closest friends could only reach her occasionally by phone.



People wait at Tegel Airport, Berlin, Germany, to welcome Liu Xia, 10 July 2018



Raising their voice for a locked-away poet. Demonstrators calling for Liu Xia to be free, Hong Kong, 7 March 2014

AWAKENED

by Liu Xia

When I woke up,
I was surrounded by darkness.
The bird in my palm screamed again.
then came the sounds of foot steps on the stairs.
The building was about to fall down.

I sat alone in bed,
hands gripped into fists
on my cold knees.
Screams gasped
between my fingers.

I had come to that moment in a dream
where a crisis is closing in.
Within the screaming, I could hear
the bird's breath.

But you were on the opposite side
of time, standing in the sunlight
watching a feather drift down
in the wind.

from "Empty Chairs" © 2015 Liu Xia and translations © Ming Di & Jennifer Stern, published by Graywolf Press and used with permission



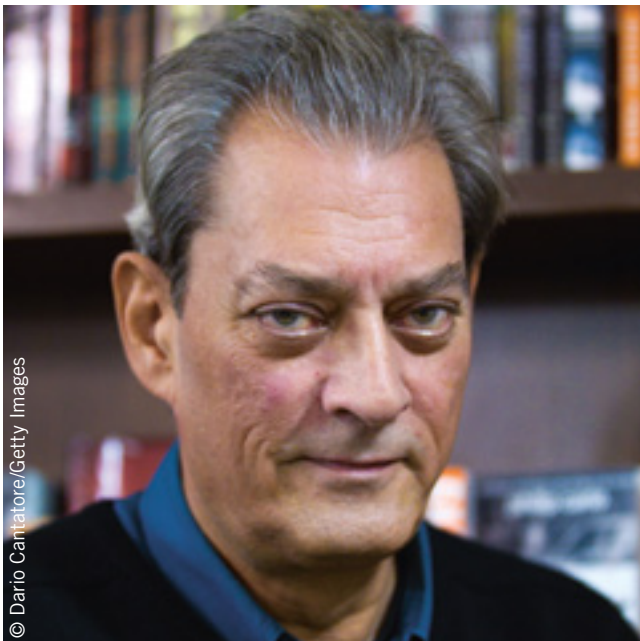
© Philippe Lopez/AFP/Getty Images

Moved by Liu Xia's heartbreaking situation and inspired by her poetry, writers and artists joined us and PEN America in the video campaign to pay tribute to Liu Xia as an accomplished poet and press for her freedom. The authors include Paul Auster (The New York Trilogy), J.M. Coetzee (winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature), Alice Sebold (The Lovely Bones), Khaled Hosseini (The Kite Runner), Rita Dove (winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry) and Ma Jian (Red Dust).

The videos celebrate some of Liu Xia's most powerful works while calling on the Chinese government to end its cruel campaign of retaliation against her over Liu Xiaobo's calls for political reform in China.

"Liu Xiaobo was one of the most courageous men in the world. He gave his life in the cause of freedom. And now his wife is carrying the torch, and we must support her in every way we can."

Paul Auster



"Liu Xia's courage, sacrifice and continued struggle for freedom of movement and expression move me deeply."

Rita Dove



Explaining why he chose to join in the campaign, author Khaled Hosseini said: "Artists who are free to speak must do so on behalf of other artists whose voices are being stifled."

PEN America and Amnesty shared the videos on social media. Within our global movement, at least 16 of our sections took part. Some of them invited famous national writers to record video messages to keep the momentum going. The participating artists also shared messages on their networks, taking Liu Xia's plight to new audiences. The campaign helped to build a new round of media coverage for Liu Xia and put increased pressure on the Chinese government.

FIND OUT MORE

#LiuXia bit.ly/2l0j9vJ



FOCUS: AMNESTY CRISIS RESPONSE

FINDING EVIDENCE OF WAR CRIMES IN THE RUBBLE

In a human rights crisis, the Amnesty Crisis Response team typically acts fast and goes to places where others dare not tread. It gets to the ground, meets people affected, documents and establishes what went on, sometimes while situations are still unfolding. We use these findings to build on our demands to hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable and to support survivors' demands for justice. Our Senior Crisis Response Adviser Donatella Rovera talks about how the team works and what they found during their latest field mission to Raqqa, Syria.



Amnesty Middle
East Researcher Ben
Walsby and Senior
Crisis Response
Adviser Donatella
Rovera at work
in Raqqa, Syria,
February 2018

Reflecting on the past year, the Crisis Response team is proud to have exposed some of the worst human rights abuses in real time. We gave individuals a voice by documenting the rights violations they survived and bringing their stories to the attention of the international community.

There were many situations for us to investigate in this period full of crisis and conflict: from President Duterte's murderous "war on drugs" that has taken thousands of lives in the Philippines, to the fierce battles to oust the so-called Islamic State (IS) from Syrian and Iraqi cities, to the killing fields of South Sudan where both government and the armed opposition use food as a weapon of war and have forced millions to flee their homes, to the Myanmar military's vicious ethnic cleansing campaign that drove more than 693,000 Rohingya people to flee into Bangladesh. The Crisis team has been on the ground documenting violations to begin the journey of holding perpetrators to account.

In all these situations, we worked tirelessly with colleagues in regional offices, law and policy experts and others, to gather evidence, verify details and expose the truth.

Our latest mission took place last February. Benjamin Walsby, a researcher from our regional office in Beirut, capital of Lebanon, and I went to the destroyed Syrian city of Raqqa,

the former self-proclaimed capital of the IS. We had been to the area last August to document the conduct of hostilities as the battle still raged between the US-led Coalition and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on one side, and IS on the other.

On our February return trip, we found a destroyed city, a level of devastation worse than anything I've seen in decades of researching in war zones. Despite the US-led Coalition's insistence that it had gone to great lengths to minimize civilian casualties during the offensive, its relentless aerial bombardment and notoriously inaccurate artillery strikes killed many civilians in possible violation of international humanitarian law.

We published our findings on 5 June in the report 'War of annihilation': Devastating toll on civilians, Raqqa – Syria, in which we documented in detail the emblematic and harrowing cases of four families who lost many of their loved ones as well as their homes and livelihoods in Coalition attacks (see page 20).

Every day in Raqqa we met family after family who had endured the same ordeal during the Coalition's four-month military operation. They told us how they had tried to keep safe, desperately running away from the frontlines, only to be bombed in the places where they had sought refuge.

As part of our field investigation, we visited 42 locations of strikes and interviewed 112 civilians, including witnesses





Residents of Raqqa have not much left apart from stories of loss. Senior Adviser Donatella Rovera from the Crisis team notes down survivors' accounts in Raqqa, Syria, February 2018



Most of Raqqa is left in ruins. The Crisis team passed through this destroyed neighbourhood in February 2018



“In five months they [US Marines] fired 30,000 artillery rounds on ISIS targets... They fired more rounds in five months in Raqqa, Syria, than any other Marine or Army battalion since the Vietnam War... Every minute of every hour we were putting some kind of fire on ISIS in Raqqa, whether it was mortars, artillery, rockets, Hellfires, armed drones, you name it”.

Army Sergeant Major John Wayne Troxell

and survivors. At some of the sites, we found remnants of the munitions which had struck those houses. We also analyzed satellite imagery and reviewed other publicly available material. And we talked to medical and humanitarian personnel, members of the military and security forces, international military and security experts, journalists working in and around Raqqa and others.

Just hours after we published our report, the Coalition issued a statement rejecting our findings. This shows that our target audience were paying attention and do actually care about how our work makes them look – whatever they say in their public bluster. They’ve repeatedly insisted that “there has never been a more precise air campaign in the history of armed conflict”. But this is not the reality we found on the ground in Raqqa: hundreds of civilians were killed by their aerial bombardment, including a total of 79 in the four families featured in our report alone.

Our investigation provides prima facie evidence that Coalition forces failed to take all feasible precautions to minimize harming civilians and, in some instances launched strikes which appear to have violated international law because they were likely to cause excessive civilian harm or failed to distinguish between military targets and civilians. Disproportionate attacks and indiscriminate attacks that kill or injure civilians constitute war crimes.

We’re now urging the governments of all Coalition members involved to provide answers as to where and when air strikes took place and what measures had been taken to assess and avoid civilian casualties. The victims of the military operation in Raqqa must get justice.

TAKE ACTION
bit.ly/2MvrPxL

NOWHERE TO RUN – THE BADRAN FAMILY

The residents of Raqqa, Syria, were trapped as fighting raged on their streets while a constant barrage of Coalition air bombardments and artillery strikes rocked the city day and night. Danger was everywhere. With IS mines and snipers blocking escape routes out of the city, civilians desperately ran from place to place in search of safety. Some were killed in their homes, some in the very places where they had sought shelter, and others as they tried to flee Raqqa. The Badran family was one of them; this is their story.

Rasha and Abdulwahab Badran told us how the battle raged and frontlines shifted around them. Thirty-nine members of their family, from three generations, and 10 neighbours were killed in three separate strikes as they fled from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

They had not followed their relatives who fled early on in the conflict because they didn't think the situation would become so bad. Rasha explained to us: "We thought the forces who came to evict Daesh [Islamic State (IS)] would know their business and would target Daesh and leave the civilians alone.

We were naïve. By the time we realized how dangerous it had become everywhere, it was too late; we were trapped."

Rasha and Abdulwahab, in their mid and late 20s, were the proud parents of a one-year-old girl called Tulip. Tulip, their only child, was among those killed in the strikes.

"We lived in a six-floor building but on the first floor so we thought we would be safe. But then two days before Eid at about 9pm or 10pm at least three artillery shells landed in the street outside our building. We ran away and found shelter in a building near the Mara'i bakery. It was a four-storey building



The ruins of the destroyed house where 28 members of the Badran family and five neighbours were killed in a Coalition strike on 20 August 2017



Remembering. Some of the members of the Badran family. 39 of them, from three generations, lost their lives in separate air strikes in Raqqa, Syria

© Amnesty International



© Amnesty International

“I don’t understand why they bombed us. Didn’t the surveillance planes see that we were civilian families?”

Rasha Badran, air strikes survivor

and we stayed on the first floor. We spent Eid there but a couple of days later the building was hit... and four of our relatives were injured, two men and two women. So we fled again, but by then, we had our injured relatives with us and we needed to find medical care for them and our movement was more restricted – as it was difficult for them to move.”

This time the family went a few streets towards the north-east, into the centre of Raqqa. They only stayed for four days, however, because IS had begun rounding up civilians from the streets to the south of the main thoroughfare (23 February

Street) and forcing them to move further west, back towards al-Fardous, Harat al-Badu and Nazlet al-Shehade. Rasha said:

“We went to Sharia al-Mansour and we took shelter in a two-storey house but after four days there Daesh forced us to move towards al-Fardous and Harat al-Badu neighbourhoods. So we went to Nazlet al-Shehade.”

“On 18 July, we fled from there because the fighting was getting closer. As we were fleeing nine of our relatives were killed in two bombardments – five of them in one of the houses just as they were about to leave and four others in the car. We had just left along with the rest of the women and children while the men were still at the house preparing to leave when the house and the car were bombed.”

After weeks of hiding and fleeing, Rasha and her husband finally managed to reach safety. They had lost their baby and 38 other family members in the ordeal.

You can read Rasha’s full account of her family’s tragic story here: bit.ly/2yvehPZ

IS THIS JUST WINDOW DRESSING?

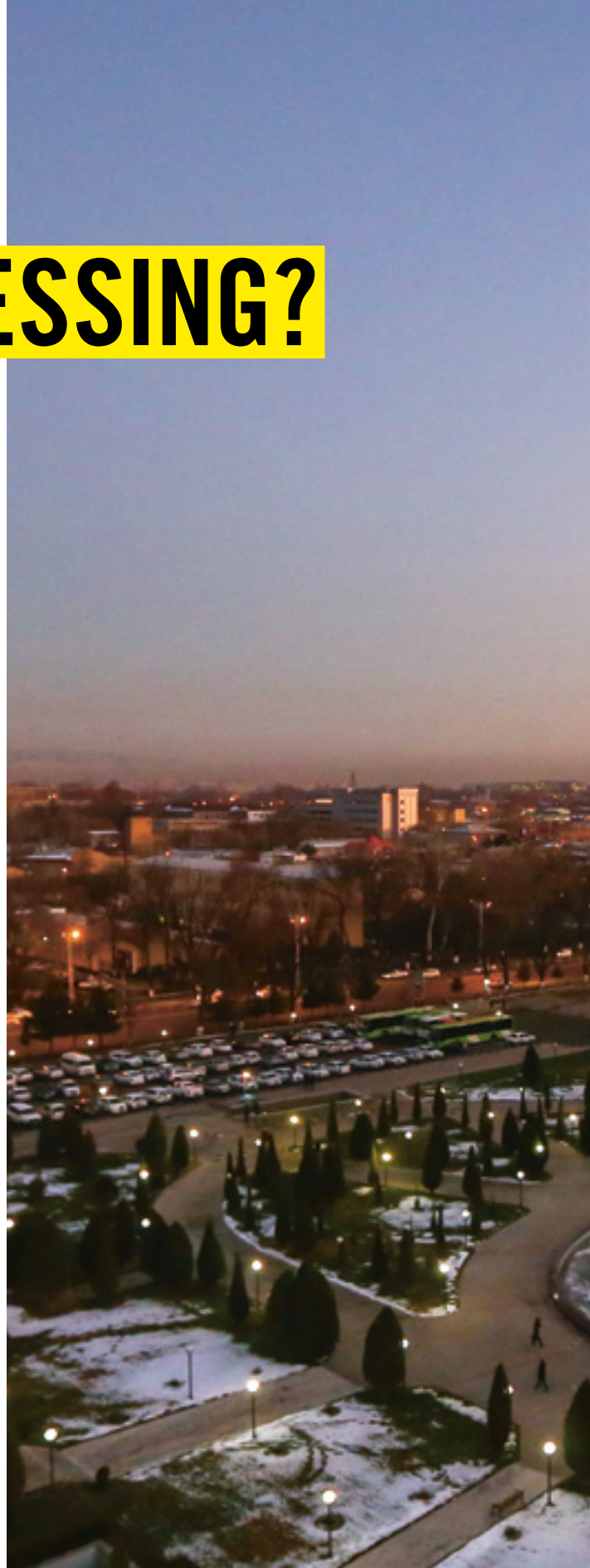
At last, this May, for the first time since 2004, Amnesty staff could travel to Uzbekistan for an official visit. Marie Struthers, Director, and Denis Krivosheev, Deputy Director of our Eastern Europe and Central Asia regional office, and Svetlana Vorobyeva, Central Asia Campaigner, met government officials and civil society representatives to talk about our human rights concerns. Svetlana tells us why there is reason to be hopeful for genuine reforms in Uzbekistan.

It's rewarding to watch positive change. For 14 years, we've been monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan – from a distance because the authorities didn't respond to repeated requests by us to visit the Central Asian country. We've been calling on the authorities to respect international human rights standards and we've been campaigning for many individuals whose rights have been violated in Uzbekistan, among them journalists, human rights defenders, former officials and victims of torture and their families.

In July 2017, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov announced that international human rights organizations were welcome to visit Uzbekistan. We took up the invitation and the Embassy of Uzbekistan in London, UK, helped us making our visit possible. We travelled there at short notice from 22-25 May. "We were glad that the Uzbekistani authorities wanted to renew dialogue with the international human rights community. It was a good opportunity to discuss our current and past human rights concerns", said Marie Struthers.



Uzbekistan has been opening up and promising reforms. The National Bank of Uzbekistan building in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 3 December 2016





We received a warm welcome from the authorities and our agenda was packed with high-level meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Supreme Court, the Ombudsperson, and the National Human Rights Centre, among many other government ministries and agencies. During our meetings, the authorities insisted that the reform rhetoric was not just “window-dressing” but that they were genuinely committed to improving the human rights situation and to ensuring the “comfortable life of individuals” in their country. Some of them recognized mistakes made in the past and said they needed to improve their international reputation which is linked with allegations of widespread and pervasive torture and imprisonment of human rights defenders, among other gross human rights violations.

During our visit, we also met well-known human rights defenders, activists and former prisoners that we had

campaigned for. It was very emotional to meet journalist Muhammad Bekzhanov, who spent more than 17 years in prison, and Erkin Musaev, who spent 11 years behind bars. Both men were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in trials that flagrantly violated international fair trial standards. Both men claimed that they were subjected to torture.

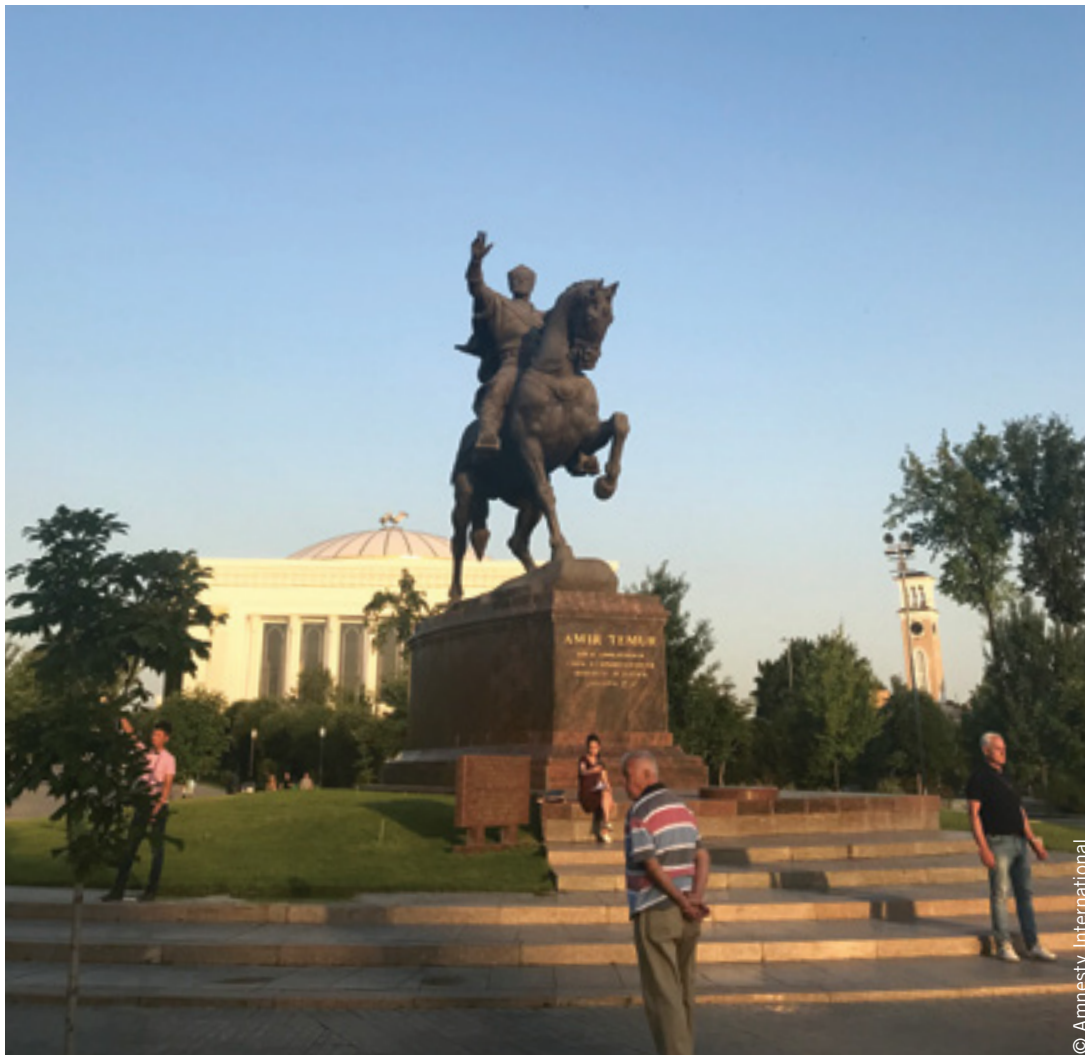
There was never a shortage of obvious human rights violations to cover in Uzbekistan. After 27 years in power, President Karimov died on 2 September 2016. Arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment defined the criminal justice system during his presidency. These were the tools the Uzbekistani authorities used to silence dissent and maintain their grip on power. Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoev was elected President on 4 December 2016, but as he was a member of the ruling elite, we had little hope that his leadership would bring any real improvement to the human rights situation.



Erkin Musaev, a former political prisoner, with Amnesty staff in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, May 2018



Time to change legacies. Uzbekistan takes first steps to address its past human rights record. Amir Timur Square in the centre of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, May 2018



© Amnesty International



them. They include mechanisms for the rehabilitation of all those prosecuted on politically motivated charges, and for impartial and effective investigations of previous human rights abuses”, said Marie Struthers.

It was a cause for celebration to meet the recently released Muhammad Bekzhanov, Dilmurod Sayyid and Erkin Musaev in Tashkent. But we should not forget that none of the allegations of their torture have ever been investigated and nor has any person ever been held accountable for all the human rights violations that these three courageous men have suffered over the years.

We want all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in Uzbekistan to be investigated effectively, and those responsible to be brought to justice. By doing this, the authorities can prove their lasting and genuine commitment to upholding international human rights obligations and to improving conditions for all its people.

FIND OUT MORE
bit.ly/2MDE0gW

But the new President has been surprising many. Under his leadership, several prisoners serving long sentences on politically motivated charges were released, some early, including two prisoners of conscience, Salidzhon Abdurakhmanov and Azam Farmonov. In February 2017, the President approved an action strategy on long-awaited judicial reform and we hope that the implementation of the strategy will proceed successfully.

Since then, the country has been opening up to international human rights mechanisms, including hosting an unprecedented visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in May 2017, and a two-week mission by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in October.

The opening of the country is part of other positive developments. In November 2017, President Mirzioiev issued a decree which explicitly prohibits the use of torture to obtain confessions and their admission as evidence in court. Then, in his 2017 end-of-year address before Parliament, the President emphasized strengthening democracy, the rule of law, and justice. He was celebrated for his speech by many, including some of his critics and those sceptical of his reforms.

And we have seen signs that things are really changing for people in Uzbekistan. On 3 February, journalist and human rights activist Dilmurod Saidov (Sayyid) was released from prison early. In his first interview after his release, Dilmurod told journalists that he had been subjected to psychological and physical torture in prison.

“We hope that the officials in the capital Tashkent will consider the list of recommendations that we handed over to



*Amnesty staff
 visiting human
 rights defender
 Surat Ikramov in his
 house in Tashkent,
 Uzbekistan, May 2018*



FOCUS: AUSTERITY AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

CUTS THAT HURT



Austerity measures impact human rights. In Spain, they've had a particularly negative impact on the right to health. Ten years ago, in 2008, the Spanish economy officially entered recession and the government responded by reducing public expenditure, including on the public health system. Many people now struggle to access adequate health care. The impact of austerity measures, combined with how they were developed and implemented, mean that Spain is in violation of the right to health. What does this do to people's lives? Sanhita Ambast, a Researcher on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, explains.



"I cannot live with the pain, I need to take my medicines. Either I take my medicines, or I kill myself [because of the pain] ... so if I have to starve myself, I do it, because I must buy medicines."

Man using the public health system



“We have all suffered because of the cuts: nurses, doctors, patients, families, everyone.”

Nurse talking to Amnesty

In our recent report on the impact of austerity measures on human rights in Spain, we found that austerity cuts reduced the accessibility, affordability and quality of health care in the country. People with lower incomes, and especially those with chronic health conditions, people with disabilities, older persons, and people accessing mental health care were disproportionately affected. At its lowest, in 2013, total public health expenditure was around €8,950 million (12.7%) lower than in 2009.

As part of the austerity measures, the government has shifted certain health costs on to individuals, including by introducing and increasing co-payments and reducing the number of medicines paid for by the public health system. In interviews, people told us about the increased costs of

health care and how they struggle to cover them. The number of people on waiting lists and the waiting times for elective surgeries have also increased. Waiting times have almost doubled since the beginning of the economic crisis: in 2010, patients waited 65 days on average; in 2016, they waited 115 days. This has consequences for people's lives.

Elena (not her real name), aged 44, is one of the people affected by the austerity measures. She has a range of health conditions. Recently, she was treated for breast cancer and previously, she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (swelling and stiffness in the joints), spondylitis (inflammation of the joints of the backbone) and Crohn's disease (chronic inflammation of the intestines). In March 2017, her doctor put her on the waiting list for surgery to treat the symptoms of her Crohn's disease, saying Elena would get surgery within three to four months. When we spoke with her seven months later, she was still waiting.

Meanwhile, Elena had been prescribed medication to relieve her symptoms. They cost about €60 a month. Elena doesn't work and lives off a small pension linked to her disability; she worries about paying for her medicines. “I take less than what the doctor prescribed me... I try to use less... to make them last longer”, she said. As a consequence, she's often in discomfort.

"If I had more money, I'd go to the private system," said Elena. "What's happening, it is shocking", she added.

Elena's story is only one of several we heard from people struggling with the impact of higher costs and longer waiting times for health care in Spain.

But cuts to public spending cannot mean cuts to human rights. Spain has the responsibility to make sure that health care is affordable, accessible and of good quality for everyone. It has ratified a range of international and regional human rights law treaties that require it to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health. Spain has an immediate obligation to take deliberate, concrete and targeted steps to make the full realization of the right to health possible.

"As a professional, I felt powerless. I felt I was asked to solve issues that I had no control over, like economics."

Doctor talking to Amnesty

And there are guidelines available. Austerity measures often worsen the ability for people to enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to health is one of these. Given these risks, human rights monitoring bodies have put in place advice for how states should develop and implement austerity measures so that they're in line with their economic, social and cultural rights obligations. Our research found that Spain's actions were inconsistent with these guidelines.

This is why we've launched a campaign asking the Spanish government to urgently reform certain provisions of the Royal Decree Law 16/2012, the instrument through which it introduced many austerity measures in the health sector. We also ask the government to carry out a human rights impact assessment to evaluate how austerity measures have affected the right to health in Spain. And we want them to focus on allocating more money to the public health sector.

Economic crises are not an excuse to ignore human rights. Spanish authorities must take urgent steps to reverse harmful results of their austerity measures.

FIND OUT MORE

bit.ly/2JSiaPY

Go to our Spanish campaign page: bit.ly/2JNZ55B



Health care workers demonstrating against privatization of the public health care system and cuts on World Health Day, Madrid, Spain, 7 April 2016



Medical workers at a protest against government austerity measures, Madrid, Spain, 17 March 2013



© Dani Pozo/AFP/Getty Images



Gaëtan Mootoo, Amnesty International's West Africa researcher for 32 years, died in Paris on 26 May 2018. Below is a tribute from his friend and colleague Alex Neve, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada (English Branch).



Gaëtan Mootoo speaking with people in Nahibly camp for internally displaced persons, Côte d'Ivoire, September 2012

Across the Amnesty International family, throughout West Africa and everywhere in the global human rights community our hearts are broken and we weep at the sorrowful news that our dear colleague and very special friend, Gaëtan Mootoo has left us, after more than three decades of being at the heart of Amnesty's work throughout Francophone West Africa.

Over the span of 12 years, I had the honour and deep good fortune to carry out eight research missions to four different countries with Gaëtan, often in the midst or immediate aftermath of terrible armed conflict and atrocities. Over that time we became exceptionally close, and I certainly learned a great deal from a man who embodied the very essence of what it is to bring humanity and respect to our human rights research and advocacy.

Gaëtan touched the lives of individuals, families and communities – they are a multitude far too numerous to even begin to count. He never forgot any of their names

and stories, or their hopes and dreams. On one mission he painstakingly tracked down a young woman, displaced in Côte d'Ivoire, who months earlier had shared with him her love for Shakespeare when he interviewed her about a brutal attack on her family's compound. He brought her a gilded copy of *Much Ado About Nothing* and we searched for her until he could hand it over.

I give thanks for a man who was an inspiring mentor; a human rights champion extraordinaire who has touched thousands of lives and been at the heart of enormous victories for freedom, safety and justice; a beautiful and gentle soul and a very dear friend.

His legacy flourishes in places large and small, and in hearts and lives too many to count. We embrace you dearest Gaëtan with the love and comfort that was your embrace for us all.

Peace.

When online abuse happens

it happens
on Twitter.

Jessica Valenti
@JessicaValenti

Mar 5 2018

#HereWeAre ♀, still watching as
Twitter does little to nothing about
the rampant misogyny & racism that
infects this space

Twitter
@Twitter

We stand with women around the world to make their voices heard and their presence known. To bring them front and center, today and every day. Join us as we say #HereWeAre

Show this thread

**‘BE NOT AFRAID OF
GROWING SLOWLY,
BE AFRAID ONLY OF
STANDING STILL’**

Chinese proverb