WIRE

FOR PEOPLE PASSIONATE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS
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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

MEMORIES OF WAR

SYRIAN REFUGEES ON THE EDGE OF EUROPE

The Italian navy rescues 443 Syrians in the Mediterranean Sea, 12 June 2014. This is now one of the world's most dangerous routes for people hoping to reach Europe. By making their land borders almost impossible to cross, EU countries are forcing many refugees and migrants to risk their lives on overcrowded boats. At least 500 people drowned in the first half of 2014 alone. The real number will never be known.

Our S.O.S. Europe campaign calls on the EU to stop people suffering and dying to get to Europe, and to help countries such as Italy save more lives at sea.
Sign our petition at http://bit.ly/FortressEurope

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INSIDE WIRE

STORIES OF HOPE AND LONGING

New photographs give a rare glimpse into the lives of Syrians who have made it to Bulgaria. **PAGE 4**.

'A WITCH HUNT AGAINST POOR WOMEN'

Abortion is completely banned in El Salvador, and some women who miscarry end up in prison accused of murder. We spoke to a lawyer who defends their rights. **PAGE 8.**

A TEA PARTY WITH A DIFFERENCE

Why the kitchen table soon could become the only place people can speak freely in Russia. **PAGE 12.**

HOW DOES AMNESTY STOP TORTURE?

Our researchers give a snapshot of their work in three very different countries. **PAGE 14.**

'HER BELIEF IN HIM COULD CHANGE ANYTHING'

After 46 years on death row, Hakamada Iwao is home, thanks to sister Hideko and the hundreds of thousands who supported him worldwide. **PAGE 17.**

LONG JOURNEY TO JUSTICE

We celebrate a remarkable win for Nigerian activists, who recently got compensation after government forces shot at their peaceful protest. **PAGE 20.**

CAN WRITING A LETTER CHANGE A LIFE?

Yes – and here's how! **PAGE 24.**

ALSO IN WIRE

The dangers of defending human rights in the Gambia **(UP FRONT, PAGE 3);** Breaking taboos through education **(PAGE 10);** Worldwide Appeals **(PAGE 22).**

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***Cover image*: See page 5. ©Vesselina Nikolaeva**

EDITORIAL

'WHAT IF IT WAS ME?'

"What if it was me in that photo?" asks one young Amnesty activist looking at Vesselina Nikolaeva's images of Syrian refugees in Bulgaria (pages 4-7).

Her photos might inspire more questions: If you had to leave your country, what belongings would you try to take? What risks would you face on your journey? And what kind of life would you try to build until you could return home?

Having empathy with other people's situation moves us to do something about it. Right now, our S.O.S. Europe campaign is sending distress signals to the EU. Because along its outer borders, refugees and migrants are risking their lives on rickety boats in the open sea, being violently turned back, or getting stuck in limbo.

Please join our call on the EU to put people before borders and stop people suffering at its door. History shows that anyone, anywhere, could be forced to go on the run one day. A place to live a decent life before one day returning home would be all that we would hope for.

ABOUT WIRE

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AGENDA

GOOD NEWS & UPDATES

Great news for our #StopTorture campaign! People worldwide demonstrated in solidarity with torture victims on 26 June – International Day in Support of Victims of Torture – including these activists in Dublin, Ireland. Investigations have been opened in the cases of both Alfreda Disbarro in the Philippines and Ali Aarrass in Morocco (both featured in previous WIRE issues). The Philippines authorities announced their investigation after receiving a letter from two Amnesty members. The Moroccan authorities said their decision to investigate was directly linked to Amnesty's work on Ali Aarrass's case. We will be handing over your petition signatures for Claudia Medina in Mexico and Dilorom Abdukadirova from Uzbekistan soon.
Find out more at www.amnesty.org/stoptorture

GET READY TO WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Our yearly Write for Rights letter-writing campaign will kick off as usual in December. It's the world's largest human rights event, and brings together hundreds of thousands of people to protect 12 people and communities at risk of human rights abuses. Contact your local Amnesty office or email mobilization@amnesty.org to get involved, and look out for more details in the next issue of Wire. Meanwhile, turn to pages 24-25 to find out what's happened to the people featured in last year's campaign.

LI YAN'S DEATH SENTENCE OVERTURNED

Thanks to the 85,000 of you who kept the pressure up on the Chinese authorities, Li Yan is no longer facing a death sentence. Amnesty launched a petition and generated widespread news coverage of her plight.

In 2011, Li Yan was condemned to death for killing her husband after enduring months of abuse. He beat her, stubbed out cigarettes on her face, and hacked off one of her fingers. On 23 June, Li Yan's brother learned that the Supreme People's Court had overturned her death sentence in May. She now awaits a re-trial.

A MILLION VOICES FOR MERIAM

More than one million people worldwide supported our call for Meriam Yeyha Ibrahim (pictured above), a Sudanese Christian and mother of two, to be released. Meriam was charged with 'adultery' after her relatives allegedly reported her for marrying a Christian man – illegal for Muslim women under

© EPA/Telenews

Shari'a law. She was also charged with 'apostasy' for saying she was Christian while her father was Muslim.

She was sentenced to death by hanging for 'apostasy', and to flogging for 'adultery' on 15 May. She was eight months pregnant at the time and was forced to give birth in chains. Meriam was released on 23 June after her sentence was reversed.

Amnesty is urging Sudan's government to change the law so no one else will go through the same, and to take steps towards abolishing the death penalty and the punishment of flogging.

WHERE NEXT FOR AMNESTY?

Amnesty is launching a public consultation to inform our next global strategy (2016-2019). We want to hear from you.

Visit amnesty.org to fill in a short survey and help us shape the future.

SUPPORT SYRIA'S DISAPPEARED

Thousands of suspected government opponents have been arrested in Syria since protests broke out in February 2011. Many are still missing. Their families live in painful limbo, unsure where their loved ones are or what has happened to them. Others who were released after months in secret detention told Amnesty that they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

Please show your support for Syria's disappeared and their families by signing our petition. It runs from 30 August, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, until October. We plan to present the petition to the Syrian government, asking them to stop detaining people in secret, and release anyone who is still being held in this way.

Visit http://bit.ly/1gkyhz1

ALES BIALIATSKI IS FREE!

Ales Bialiatski (pictured right, centre), a Belarusian human rights activist featured in our Write for Rights 2013 campaign, has been released from prison after almost three years. Ales was surprised to be told of a general prisoner amnesty on 21 June and immediately put on a train to Minsk. His wife and a large crowd of supporters welcomed him home.

Ales, who believes Amnesty activists' campaigning led to his release, said: "The thing that made a real difference were the letters I got from ordinary people, and I want to say a special thank you to your activists for that."

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UP FRONT

NO MORE FEAR IN GAMBIA

François Patuel, Amnesty's West Africa Campaigner, reflects on the dangers and opportunities of fighting for human rights in Gambia.

© Amnesty International

There was one moment when I had that brilliant feeling of everything coming together. I found myself surrounded by chanting campaigners, shaking a huge banner in one hand, and shouting into my phone as I desperately tried to do a radio interview.

It was a crazy day, and that was one of the crazier moments. For months I'd been organizing a global day of action to raise awareness of how dangerous it is to be a human rights activist in the Gambia right now.

In the run-up, I was constantly speaking to activists from the Gambia. One man I spoke to was Imam Baba Leigh, who had suffered horrendous abuse – he told me security forces beat him up with batons and cables every night for 10 nights. They took him to a field and started to bury him in a hole, pretending it would be his execution.

But he was still able to joke about it with me: "I was kept in solitary confinement, but I became an expert in killing mosquitoes. And I made friends with all the bugs and spiders!"

Speaking with him was humbling. I can tell you his name because he's out of the country now, but there are many more I can't speak about. It's too dangerous.

Gambia is often overlooked by leaders – it has no oil, and no strategic interest. The tourists who go looking for beaches and wildlife probably have no idea about the human rights abuses. That's why it was so satisfying to get this small country on the global agenda.

I'm an activist at heart and, for me, the day summed up what Amnesty is all about: bringing thousands of people together to speak up for people who can't speak out for themselves.

In October 2014, the UN will review Gambia's human rights record. François will be voicing the concerns of the people he works with who can't do it themselves for security reasons, and will demand action from world leaders.

EMAIL US

We welcome your feedback and ideas! Write to us at thewire@amnesty.org

STORIES OF HOPE AND LONGING

These photographs give a rare glimpse into the lives of Syrians who have made it to Bulgaria. In the capital, Sofia, they wait to hear if they will be allowed to stay.

© Amnesty International

"This project is about people," says renowned Bulgarian photographer Vesselina Nikolaeva. "It aims to tell their stories by showing an object of importance they brought from home. But not everyone had an object to show, having left everything behind, or given everything to the smugglers. Everything. But not their face. And not their voice. The people in these photographs are refugees. But first they are people."

All photos © Vesselina Nikolaeva
Text: Cveta Stoeva, Nia Kiryakova, Yana Buhrer Tavanier

"My whole family is here. In Syria I was a farmer. I left everything there. I hope that some day things will get better, so I can go back."

Muhammad made this toy plane in 10 minutes: "I can't just sit and do nothing. In Syria you die from the bombs immediately. In Bulgaria this happens slowly – every day you die a little."

Every two hours or so Sana would climb up and stand on the windowsill for about 15 minutes, silently watching the city of Sofia in the distance. These moments of calm are in great contrast with her usual energetic and outgoing behaviour, even towards strangers.

"I sold everything to get money to flee far away from the war. The only thing I kept is the ring my husband gave me for our engagement."

"I am proud of my son, because he is very responsible. In Syria, every day after school he would come and help me with my work at the textile factory."

Anass shares this small room with five other young men at a refugee centre in Sofia: "Where there is heart, there is room," he says. He used to study Business Administration at university in Syria, and now dreams of continuing his education somewhere in western Europe.

These images were part of the exhibition Photos and Stories on Migration, which also featured images by renowned Greek photographer Giorgos Moutafis. The event took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, during Amnesty's third International Human Rights Action Camp in July.

Organized in partnership with Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, as part of Amnesty's S.O.S. Europe campaign, the camp brought together 80 Amnesty activists from 30 countries.

The photos aimed to look behind the labels of "migrant" and "refugee" by telling stories about individual people.

"I was quite impressed by the exhibition," said Patrick-Dominic Rougy, a student from Switzerland who attended Amnesty's activism camp. "I also felt a bit uncomfortable, because I imagined my face on the walls instead of theirs.

"I wondered what cruel twist of fate had brought them to this unfriendly and hostile place. I tried to imagine what feelings they had when they gave away their stories."

"Photos tell a story," said Djamila Denguir from France, who won a competition to take part in the camp. "You see that this is a human being, just like you and me. It could be us in that photo."

© Guiseppe Chiantera

The camp was organized to raise awareness about the situation for people fleeing poverty and conflict to reach Bulgaria. Strict border controls and sophisticated surveillance systems at the outer edges of the EU are making it harder and harder for refugees to reach safety in Europe.

The camp culminated with activists, refugees and locals creating a symbolic "border wall" in central Sofia, and transforming it into a memorial for the thousands of people who have died or been abused while seeking sanctuary in the EU (see photo above).

"I learned so much in such a short time," Patrick said about the camp. "I got to know so many good people who share the same ideals and are willing to walk in the same direction."

TAKE ACTION >>>

Tell the EU to put people before borders – sign our petition at http://bit.ly/FortressEurope

‘A WITCH HUNT AGAINST POOR WOMEN’

El Salvador is one of just a handful of countries in the world where abortion is completely banned. In some cases, women who miscarry end up behind bars, accused of homicide. Lawyer Dennis Muñoz Estanley (pictured below) has made it his duty to defend them.

When Isabel Cristina Quintanilla woke up in excruciating pain in a hospital bed in San Miguel, El Salvador, the first thing she noticed was the blue uniform of a police officer standing next to her.

Cristina was around 40 weeks pregnant when she lost consciousness and was found by her family, hemorrhaging and covered in blood. She was barely conscious when an officer began asking her questions in hospital. It was only then that she realized she had lost her pregnancy – and that she was being accused of murder.

Almost immediately, her story became national news. Cristina was sentenced in August 2005 to 30 years in prison for aggravated homicide.

The entire country pointed an accusing finger at the 19-year-old, who had a three-year-old son waiting for her at home. Law student Dennis Muñoz Estanley was struck by the young woman’s ordeal.

“When I heard Cristina’s story I was immediately shocked. A couple of years later a friend gave me the full judgement against her and told me she didn’t have a lawyer. I read the judgement and was very surprised anyone could be convicted even when the cause of death of the foetus was undetermined,” Dennis told Amnesty.

© Amnesty International

He found Cristina in a local women’s prison and offered to act as her lawyer. That was the beginning of a long and arduous two-year legal battle through courts and government offices. Cristina was eventually released in 2009 after her sentence was greatly reduced.

“I always thought she had been unfairly convicted and that she never should have been in prison in the first place. When she was released I was overwhelmed with happiness,” Dennis said.

The victory turned Dennis into a household name in the battle for women’s rights in El Salvador.

The work of the Citizen’s Group for the Decriminalization of Abortion, with whom Dennis works, is increasingly recognized for its determination to expose cases of other women – all of them from the poorest sectors of society – imprisoned in similar circumstances.

TABOOS

Abortion is banned in El Salvador in all circumstances, even if the foetus is unlikely to survive, if the life or health of the woman is at risk, or if the pregnancy is the result of rape.

In April 2014, the Citizen’s Group for the Decriminalization of Abortion launched a campaign to pardon 17 women who, like Cristina, were sentenced to lengthy prison terms in connection with pregnancy-related issues. They are serving sentences of up to 40 years, and their cases raise serious concerns about their right to a fair trial, among others.

Dennis became known globally after representing “Beatriz”, a woman who endured a painfully long battle with the authorities to allow her to have the medical treatment she needed to save her life.

Her pregnancy was endangering her life by exacerbating the severe illnesses she already had, including lupus and kidney problems. The foetus also lacked a large part of its brain and skull, and would not have survived for more than a few hours or days after birth. For almost two months the Salvadorean authorities refused to provide her with live-saving treatment, while Beatriz’s health deteriorated. In the end, they finally agreed to an early caesarean section.

Dennis now believes Beatriz’ ordeal helped lift the veil on some of the most taboo issues in the country.

“El Salvador is an extremely conservative country. Information is manipulated from a faith angle. Even if a woman is raped by 18 men she has to give birth because God decided it that way, they say.

“This is a witch hunt against poor women. The prosecutors and judges think women have to be heroes even though they might be dying – losing two litres of blood – they have to take care of their newborn, even if they are unconscious. They require a woman to conduct herself in a way that is completely unrealistic,” Dennis explained.

Since working on one of the most controversial issues in the country, Dennis has been forced to face critics in the media and on the streets who call him “abortion lawyer”.

In spite of criticism, he always tries to focus on the reasons why he does his job.

“I have a daughter, many female friends and work colleagues and I would not like any of them to face a situation like this so I’m very sensitive to the issue. I continue to work on it because I cannot tolerate the lack of justice women have to face.”

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© José Cabezas/AFP/Getty Images

***Above*: A mural at a women's community centre in Suchitoto, El Salvador.**
***Right*: A busy market in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador.**

FACTFILE

- Abortion has been banned in El Salvador in all cases since 1998. Under the previous 1973 Criminal Code, abortion was not a crime in cases of risk to a woman's life, rape, or serious foetal abnormality.

- Seven countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have banned abortion in all circumstances: Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Suriname.

- In May 2014, Chile announced plans to reform the law to allow abortion in cases of rape, where there is a risk to a woman's life or if the foetus is unlikely to survive.

FIND OUT MORE >>>

Look out for our new report on El Salvador, published in September as part of My Body My Rights, our campaign on sexual and reproductive rights:
www.amnesty.org/mybodymyrights

TAKE ACTION >>>

Join us on 28 September, the International Day of Action for the Decriminalization of Abortion:
www.facebook.com/amnestyglobal

WHEN SEX IS TABOO

How do you get young people talking about thorny issues like abortion when just mentioning sex can be taboo?

When it comes to talking about sex and reproduction, the doors can close quite quickly depending on where you are. In El Salvador for instance (see pages 8-9), changing people's views on abortion seems impossible: it's illegal and most people are against it. Around 95% of people surveyed there in 2012 opposed abortion for women who didn't feel ready to have a child.

Shifting public opinion in cases like this is hard, but not impossible – if you let people do the talking.

Since the launch in March of My Body My Rights (our campaign on sexual and reproductive rights), Amnesty has been working with youth activists on an activity called Speaking Out! It aims to improve their knowledge and skills so they can promote their own rights.

We've started what some may call awkward conversations about sex and reproduction with one goal in mind: to help young people make decisions about their own bodies and lives without fear of violence or jail.

CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

So far, we've taken Speaking Out! to youth activists in countries including Mali, Mexico, Morocco and Switzerland. Many said taking part challenged their own views on sex and relationships.

"Before the workshop I didn't really understand that I could decide for myself whether to marry," said Fanta Fomba, a youth group leader in Mali. "For me, all that depended on my parents. But now I know that I, too, am responsible for these decisions."

Hamounata Dao, a member of the same youth group, explained: "Here, sexual and reproductive rights are a taboo subject between parents and children. But from this activity, we learned that young

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girls have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, their health, how many children they want to have. It really changed my way of thinking, because here in Mali, we think that only the man can decide how many children a woman should have."

"Before the workshop I didn't really understand that I could decide for myself whether to marry."

Elsewhere the responses were similar. "The workshop made me aware of the fact that everyone should have the right to decide anything that has to do with their sexual life and sexual health," said Hassan El Boukri of Morocco.

TRAINEES BECOME TRAINERS

Speaking Out! is also a springboard for young people to become workshop leaders. They use their newfound skills to encourage discussion and understanding among their peers. Inspired by what they had learned, several participants were keen to spread the word.

"The workshop provided me with the chance to understand that I must find a way to reach new generations of young people," said law graduate Mariá Elena Mireles Cisneros from Mexico. "Incredible as it may seem, human rights are still taboo for many people my age."

Imane Abdeljebbar from Morocco and a "feminist at heart" jumped at the chance to take part and will soon be running her own training. "I learned to listen to people and not judge them, but instead help them overcome their social and cultural prejudices and inform them in a way that will not shock them," she said.

And Mohamed Maiga, a youth group leader in the Malian capital, Bamako, said that having improved his knowledge of sexual and reproductive rights, he looks forward to "train others who have little awareness of the subject".

We hope that all young people who take part in Speaking Out! will feel confident about creating the right environment for people to have these challenging conversations. Simply by talking to each other, young people can gain the confidence to change their own behaviour and attitudes towards sexuality and reproduction, and also those of the people around them. That way, they can build a community of empowered people who can defend their own rights.

***Left*: The first ever Speaking Out! workshop in Mexico City, March 2014.**

TAKE ACTION >>>

Speaking Out! is one of many dynamic and participatory activities in our new educational resource *Respect My Rights, Respect My Dignity – Sexual and reproductive rights are human rights*. It will be published in September.

FIND OUT MORE >>>

www.amnesty.org/mybodymyrights

A TEA PARTY WITH A DIFFERENCE

Kitchen table protest in Moscow, Russia, with tea and support from Amsterdam, Netherlands, June 2014.

© Denis Bochkarev/Karen Veldkamp/Amnesty International

"We decided to hold this symbolic protest to get people thinking about what freedom means to them," explains Maria Sereda from Amnesty Russia.

"In Soviet times, public protests were forbidden. Kitchens became the only places where people could talk freely without being afraid. It seems those times are back.

"Russia's new repressive laws make it nearly impossible to organize protests like this without risking heavy fines. You have to jump through a lot of hoops to get permission. And even then you can expect interference from the police or aggressive pro-government protesters.

"Almost all media are government controlled and the online space to say what you think is also shrinking drastically. But not everyone is aware that this is happening.

"People's responses to our alfresco breakfast varied greatly. Some stopped to take photos, asked questions or argued that they do have free speech in Russia. Others sat down for a cup of tea.

"If nothing changes, pretty soon our kitchens will once again be the only places where we can talk freely about politics, religion, human rights and art," Maria said.

FIND OUT MORE >>>

#SpeakOut for free expression in Russia in October: follow Amnesty Global on Facebook and @AmnestyOnline on Twitter to take part.

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HOW DOES AMNESTY STOP TORTURE?

To stop torture anywhere, you need a clear picture of when, why and how it happens. Three Amnesty researchers give a snapshot of how they craft careful strategies to fit the situation in three very different countries.

PERSEVERANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

There's a dark underbelly to the colourful festivals and palm-lined beaches which characterise the Philippines. Hazel Galang (pictured below), Amnesty's researcher, knows it well. "Growing up there gave me an awareness of the injustices around me. When I joined Amnesty, my main motivation was to contribute to positive changes in the lives of my fellow Filipinos."

Amnesty has worked to highlight torture in the country for over 30 years, with some notable successes: "Amnesty has helped shape public debate and lobbied for legal changes," Hazel says. Yet despite recent laws criminalizing torture, it remains rife.

© Amnesty International

Hazel knows this partly from speaking directly to victims, their families and lawyers. "People give us a lot of trust and goodwill and share very personal information: their ordeal – which is often the worst time of their life – their feelings; names of people that have hurt them; locations. I then normally find a relevant contact to help us verify the information and try to check with other sources."

She stresses the importance of also engaging with certain government officials: "We do formal interviews with civil servants and often offer anonymity. Building rapport is usually more effective than an aggressive approach. That would only make people defensive and then you won't get your information."

By speaking to a wide variety of people, Hazel discovered how police continue to torture people, particularly criminal suspects. Yet it was hugely under-reported. "The focus had been on the military torturing political activists. I realized that more people have contact with the police, and that more criminal suspects were therefore possibly being tortured."

So why, despite strong laws, is torture still so common? "Firstly, because it still goes unpunished," explains Hazel. "Not one person has been convicted of torture since the 2009 Anti-Torture Act came into force."

Secondly, people rarely report it. "Victims are usually from very disadvantaged backgrounds. Often they don't know that what happened to them was torture and therefore a crime. They don't know they have the right to justice or how to access it".

"To stop torture and achieve real, lasting change, we must make sure laws are implemented and people who break them held accountable. We can do that by engaging with people in government – it's important to keep in contact.

"Perseverance is also key; often it takes decades before we can move things in a country. We have to be in it for the long haul, and that requires creativity – finding new ways to drive change."

© REUTERS/Shamil Zhumatov

UNDER THE RADAR IN UZBEKISTAN

Developing good relationships with the authorities to stop torture might work well in the Philippines, but in an authoritarian state like Uzbekistan it is almost impossible. The country is effectively inaccessible to Amnesty.

To enter, you need an official invitation, which is rare. Doing independent research inside the country would also put those interviewed at risk.

"There are 28 million people in Uzbekistan, but only a handful of independent human rights activists working on torture," says Amnesty researcher Maisy Weicherding. "They live with the constant risk of repercussions from the authorities," she adds.

Few dare speak out for human rights in a country where up to 10,000 people have been jailed and tortured for their perceived political and religious views since 1993.

Many activists have been forced into exile. Even there they are monitored by the security services, and worry about putting their relatives at home at risk.

"Few people are brave enough to stand up," Maisy concludes. "We need to work together with them to build up confidence and expertise within the next generation."

To gather information on torture, the team had to think creatively. "We designed a questionnaire for local human rights workers, torture victims and their families, and people in exile." It was distributed carefully, given the security risks.

"Next, we had to get people out of the country for interviews. It was complicated – we worked closely with trusted partners and planned our strategy carefully.

"We decided on a country and city where it was safe to interview people who were at risk in Uzbekistan. We scheduled meetings and organized travel and accommodation. We were careful to protect the privacy of our interviewees: many wanted to remain anonymous. The risks are huge and everyone is fearful of reprisals."

Happily, the highly choreographed operation went well. "Just the fact that Amnesty is paying attention and listening means a lot to people," Maisy says. As the pressure to stop torture builds, the authorities will have to start listening too.

***Above*: A boy walks past an electoral poster of Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov, in the capital, Tashkent, December 2007. President Karimov has won four consecutive elections since the country gained independence in 1991, and there is no official political opposition.**

© REUTERS/Claudia Daut

'THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT COULD STOP TORTURE IN SIX MONTHS'

Rupert Knox, Amnesty's Mexico researcher for 12 years, thinks political will could put a quick stop to out-of-control torture in Mexico.

Torture is nothing new, but it has flourished there since 2006, when the government deployed the armed forces and police to combat drug cartels.

Patterns of torture slowly emerged as Amnesty met with victims, NGOs and local authorities. "Much of what we heard initially was off the record and anecdotal," Rupert explains, "but it helped us to build up a picture to develop our detailed research."

Local organizations have proved crucial to mapping a problem that is endemic. "We couldn't do it without the local human rights organizations we work with."

And now, as Amnesty's campaign gains momentum, Rupert thinks the terrain is shifting. Some government departments are more open and keen to engage. Investigations into torture are increasing – 900 took place in 2013 – although far too few result in charges: only four did so last year.

But in a recent ground-breaking ruling, the Supreme Court dismissed a case because a key confession had been extracted through torture.

"Now that parts of the judiciary are prepared to invalidate evidence resulting from torture, we have new pressure points. Evidence will collapse on appeal," Rupert adds.

But the Supreme Court is not all-powerful. Rupert believes that President Enrique Peña Nieto could achieve a lot by simply sending a convincing message that ending torture is a priority and that anyone involved with it will be held to account. This commitment has been made before, but never carried out.

All the more reason to keep up the pressure through our Stop Torture campaign.

***Above*: Police patrol the streets on a truck as a group of young people walk past in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, August 2010.**

TAKE ACTION >>>

Join our campaign at www.amnesty.org/stoptorture
Follow @AmnestyOnline and use #StopTorture on Twitter.

‘HER BELIEF IN HIM COULD CHANGE ANYTHING’

After 46 years on death row, Hakamada Iwao is back home, thanks to his sister, Hideko and the hundreds of thousands who supported him worldwide.

Hakamada Iwao has had his high-profile supporters. Celebrities – like British actor Jeremy Irons – have condemned the injustice of his death sentence.

They've decried the anguish he endured for over 40 years on death row where he woke each day wondering whether it would be his last. And on 27 March 2014, that day came. But instead of waking up and walking to his death, he walked out, free to return home for the first time in 48 years.

His release, although conditional, is a victory for the hundreds of thousands of people who supported him. And while celebrities may be Hakamada's best known supporters, they would never have known about him if not for one woman: his sister, Hideko.

When Hakamada, a professional boxer, was first accused of murder and arrested in 1966 (see timeline on page 19), Hideko was among the few who believed he was innocent.

“I was lonely and isolated in the first 10 years, without any support,” she recalls. “I was in disgrace. I could not even openly say that he was innocent.”

In 1968, Hakamada was sentenced to death after being beaten and threatened into confessing (see page 23). The Japanese media made him out to be a violent criminal because he was a boxer. Nevertheless, Hideko pressed on, slowly gathering support around her.

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***Right*: Hideko (left, holding flowers) and her brother Hakamada stand in a boxing ring as he receives the East Japan Boxing Association's honorary world champion boxing belt, May 2014.**

© Private

CAMPAIGNING BEGINS

Among those supporters was Yamazaki Toshiki. He heard about Hakamada in November 1981, and within a few months helped form a support group for him in Shimizu city, where Hakamada had been arrested.

"I have known Hideko since I first became involved," says Toshiki. "I was always amazed how strong she was mentally and physically. Her belief in him could change anything. I was only able to keep campaigning for him because of her."

When Hakamada was released, some seven boxes of letters, many from Amnesty supporters, went home with him.

Toshiki was one of the few people allowed to visit Hakamada after his death sentence was confirmed in 1980. But as Hakamada's mental health deteriorated, he began refusing visits, even from Hideko.

"Despite this, I continued my visits to the centre to let him know 'you are not alone and there are many supporters outside the centre'," says Toshiki. "I also sent cards, pictures and news articles about his case to him."

Later, Toshiki found out that Hakamada was not allowed to receive any letters. "I am very angry about these strict rules in which letters are not given to death row inmates," he says.

SOLIDARITY SPREADS WORLDWIDE

When Hakamada was released, some seven boxes of letters, many from Amnesty supporters, went home with him. Those letters were the product of years of campaigning and solidarity actions.

"Letters from all over the world arrived every day at the detention centre where Hakamada was held," explains Wakabayashi Hideki, Director of Amnesty Japan, which led Amnesty's campaign for Hakamada.

Amnesty members joined the campaign from the 1980s onwards. Members like Hans Erdt, from Germany, who first heard about Hakamada in 1999 and "wrote a lot of letters, petitions and publicity" over the years.

Another group that wrote a lot of letters – about 48,000 of them – was the Donostia/San Sebastian group in Spain. Iñaki Hernando Larrañaga, group co-ordinator, explains that they supported Hakamada because he was like an aitona – a grandfather, or respected elder – on death row.

"We considered what to do in an organized way," she says. "We had a network of 100 people willing to send letters to Japan and we used it. Every month they sent letters."

A MEASURED VICTORY

When Hakamada was released pending a re-trial in March, supporters around the world celebrated. "But this was tempered by the news that the prosecution had appealed against the decision of the District Court," says Gill from an Amnesty group in London, UK.

"I felt very sad that even though he is now released, nothing can make up for his long years in jail, under threat of execution."

Those long years – many of them spent in solitary confinement – have shattered Hakamada's mental health. "He thinks that he won the case and that he will not return to the detention centre," says Hideko.

"All he does now is repeatedly walk around the room and rest for a while, just like in detention. He does not watch TV or read papers. I think it will take him a long time to recover."

This patient understanding characterizes Hideko's activism for her brother. Now aged 81, this woman who devoted her life to securing her brother's release, accepts that he doesn't quite recognize her any more.

Still, her bond with him remains unbroken. "I rarely saw him over the last 15 years because he refused to meet," says Hideko. "But he is still my brother Iwao, even after 48 years of separation."

TAKE ACTION >>>

10 October is World Day against the Death Penalty. Let's help make sure Hakamada is really free once and for all – find out how on page 23.

FIND OUT MORE>>>

Read an interview with Hideki: http://bit.ly/hidekihakamada

www.amnesty.org/deathpenalty

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Clockwise from top left:

- Hakamada Iwao as a professional boxer. In 1989, he sent a message to Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, the black American boxer whose wrongful conviction for murder was made famous by Bob Dylan's song *Hurricane*. Hakamada wrote: "Like Mr Carter, I am determined to become the strongest world champion in a fight against a false charge."
- Members of the Donostia/San Sebastian group in Spain deliver petition signatures to the Japanese embassy, December 2011.
- Yamazaki Toshiki, a Hakamada supporter since the 1980s and one of the few people allowed to visit him in prison. The banner reads: "retrial beginning".
- Hakamada Iwao and Amnesty Japan's Director Hideki Wakabayashi, holding one of Hakamada's old boxing posters, May 2014.
- Birthday action for Hakamada Iwao, March 2013.
- Seven boxes of letters, the majority from Amnesty supporters, were finally given to Hakamada when he was released in March 2014.

HAKAMADA IWAO: 48 YEARS TO FREEDOM

10 March 1936	Born
August 1966	arrested, accused of murdering his boss and three others
11 September 1968	sentenced to death based on forced confession
May 1976	appeal against death sentence fails
November 1980	Supreme Court rejects second appeal, confirms death sentence; Hakamada placed in solitary confinement
January 1981	Amnesty begins monitoring his case
April 1981	Hakamada requests re-trial
August 1994	refuses limited visits from sister and three others; request for re-trial rejected by District Court
January 1995	included in Amnesty action calling for better conditions for death row inmates in Japan
April 1998	is one of Amnesty's Worldwide Appeal cases
1998-99	10,000 people sign petition demanding re-trial
August 2004	Tokyo High Court rejects request for re-trial
October 2007	diagnosed with "mental disability… due to the long-term stay in detention centre"
January 2008	diagnosed with prison psychosis, amounting to a "state of insanity"
December 2008	features in Write for Rights, Amnesty's global letter writing marathon
December 2012	features in Amnesty UK Write for Rights
January 2014	over 40,000 people worldwide sign Amnesty Japan's petition demanding a re-trial for Hakamada
27 March 2014	re-trial granted; Hakamada conditionally released, aged 78, after 48 years in jail.

LONG JOURNEY TO JUSTICE

© George Osodi/Amnesty International

"We have learnt what power there is when people come together to protect their rights and each other."

Fubara Samuel, activist from the Bundu Ama waterfront community in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

After a nearly five-year struggle, people from Nigeria's Bundu Ama waterfront community in Port Harcourt finally won a remarkable victory in June. A court ruled that the government had no justification for shooting at them during a peaceful protest against plans to demolish their homes. They were also awarded nearly US$70,000 in damages.

Here, two people involved from the start reflect on the campaign and explain why this remarkable win brought tears of joy to their eyes.

FUBARA SAMUEL, ACTIVIST

There are two days in my life that I will never forget. The first is 12 October 2009. I was with a group of peaceful protesters gunned down by security forces. The other is 10 June 2014, when – after a struggle which lasted nearly five years – an international human rights court gave us justice.

It all started one morning in Bundu Ama, a settlement in Port Harcourt. I stopped to join residents and supporters from across the city who had come together to protest against the painting of numbers on our homes, marking them for demolition.

About half an hour into the protest a convoy of trucks carrying security forces armed with automatic weapons, led by a vehicle-mounted cannon, charged at the crowd at high speed. They opened fire without warning.

People were shot from behind as they ran. I saw one man shot through the back, the bullet bursting through his chest. Soldiers followed trails of blood to where people hid. Bodies were seen piled onto a truck and driven away.

We were shot at for simply gathering and expressing our position on policies that would remove the roofs from over our heads. We were shot for exercising our right to assemble peacefully, to protest.

In the face of bullets and bulldozers, we were determined not to be silenced. In our struggle we found our voice and took the decision to be advocates, not victims. With the support of local and international organizations we started on our journey to justice.

With little faith in the national courts, we decided to take our case to the regional human rights court: the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The process was at times painfully slow. The government forced adjournment after adjournment, trying to wear us down. But we were patient.

I will always be grateful that we had our day in court and that the judge ruled in our favour. But just as important as the legal and moral victory is what the experience has taught us. We have learnt what power there is when people come together to protect their rights and each other.

The case is now closed, but another story and struggle has just begun. We will have to work just as hard to ensure the full and effective implementation of the judgement.

But beyond that, we want to work together, with our communities, with our government, with all those from across the city who want to make Port Harcourt a city for all its citizens: a human city.

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LUCY FREEMAN, AMNESTY CAMPAIGNER

I first visited Bundu Ama in December 2009, two months after soldiers opened fire on peaceful protesters there. Residents showed me the bullet holes in their walls and doors, the broken locks where security forces had broken down doors.

I interviewed the women who had led the protests, singing and dancing only to have tear gas sprayed in their faces. And I spoke to the people who had been at home or on their way to work when they were shot and their lives turned upside down.

I heard about their struggle to fight demolition, to recover from their injuries, and their determination that – this time – the government would not get away with it.

Over the years I have had the privilege of meeting with these people and the wider community several times. I have witnessed their strength and determination to demand their right to live free from forced evictions and to protest peacefully, and to get justice.

On the day justice finally came, and they won their case at the ECOWAS court, there was laughter – and the odd tear of joy – at Amnesty's offices. We all have the right to protect our rights. The people of Bundu Ama are an inspiration to us all.

***Left*: Schoolchildren walk past bullet holes left in 2009, when government forces fired at people protesting against their homes being demolished. Port Harcourt, Nigeria, April 2011.**
***Above:* Celebrating a remarkable win: "We have come a long way and achieved a great amount," says Joy Williams (centre), who was shot in the leg during the 2009 protest, aged 17.**

FIND OUT MORE >>>

www.chicoco.fm is a floating radio station being built by residents of Port Harcourt's waterfront communities with support from Amnesty International and CMAP.
www.cmapping.net
www.amnesty.org/endforcedevictions

WORLDWIDE APPEALS

WRITE A LETTER CHANGE A LIFE

A letter from you could help free a prisoner, stop an execution or help a bereaved family receive justice.

© Ihar Tsikhanyuk

BEATEN BY POLICE FOR BEING GAY

NAME: IHAR TSIKHANYUK
LOCATION: BELARUS

Ihar Tsikhanyuk was in hospital in Hrodna, west Belarus, with a stomach ulcer when, on 6 February 2013, two plain-clothes police officers came, asking him to go with them for questioning. At the police station, they asked Ihar – a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) rights activist – about the make of his mobile phone, car, and shoes.

When Ihar bent down to look at the make of his shoes the officers punched him in the chest and he fell to the floor. They asked him to stand up, and punched him again repeatedly. The two police officers then left and three other officers came in. They mocked Ihar for being gay and threatened him with more violence.

When the police returned him to hospital, Ihar asked medical staff to document his injuries but they refused, saying it was not part of their job.

The incident took place shortly after Ihar and other activists had attempted to officially register an organization, the Human Rights Centre Lambda, which actively supports the rights of LGBTI people in Belarus.

After Ihar complained officially about his treatment, the Prosecutor's office quickly informed him that there was not enough evidence to start an investigation. His appeal against this decision was rejected and the police officers responsible for beating Ihar have not been held to account.

Your message can help Ihar:
Please write, urging the General Prosecutor to investigate the ill-treatment and threats made by police officers at the October District police station in Hrodna, and hold those responsible to account.

Start your letter 'Dear General Prosecutor' and send it to:
Alyaksander Koniuk, Generalnaya Prokuratura, ul. Internatsionalnaya 22, 220030 Minsk, Belarus.

Email: info@prokuratura.gov.by
Fax: 00375 17 226 42 52 (please say "fax" clearly if someone answers)

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IMPRISONED FOR HIS JOURNALISM

NAME: ESKINDER NEGA
LOCATION: ETHIOPIA

Journalist Eskinder Nega was arrested in September 2011 after he wrote articles criticizing the Ethiopian government, and calling for freedom of expression and association to be respected.

He was charged with terrorism offences and declared guilty in June 2012. The following month Eskinder was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Eskinder has long been a thorn in the side of the Ethiopian authorities. His latest prosecution marks the eighth time that he has been arrested and prosecuted for his journalism. Both Eskinder and his wife, Serkalem, also a journalist, were detained between 2005 and 2007. Serkalem gave birth to their only child, Nafkot (pictured above with his father), while she was in prison.

A key part of the most recent evidence against Eskinder was an impassioned speech he gave at a public meeting shortly before his arrest. He talked of the need to struggle peacefully for reform, and expressed his hope that "this could be the year when Ethiopians will no more be imprisoned for their political convictions".

We believe that Eskinder is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful and legitimate activities as a journalist. His trial was marred by serious irregularities, including being denied access to his lawyer and to family members in the initial stages of his detention.

Since the start of 2014 – in violation of the Ethiopian Constitution – Eskinder has also faced increased restrictions on who can now visit him in prison.

Your message can help Eskinder:
Please write, urging the Prime Minister to drop all charges against Eskinder, and to release him immediately and unconditionally.

Start your letter 'Dear Prime Minister' and send it to:
Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, P.O. Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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VILLAGERS FACING VIOLENCE

NAME: THE PEOPLE OF NABI SALEH
LOCATION: ISRAEL/OPT

Nabi Saleh is a small village in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The 550 people living there face frequent and ongoing violent repression by the Israeli army.

The villagers have held weekly peaceful protests against Israel's military occupation since 2009. They also oppose the illegal Israeli settlement of Halamish, which has taken over most of their farmland. Despite court orders, the settlers have turned the village water spring into a tourist attraction, which Nabi Saleh residents are not allowed to use.

The Israeli army responds to the villagers' peaceful protests with excessive and unnecessary force. They fire live gunfire ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets and stun grenades, and throw tear gas canisters at people and property. So far they have killed two people, Mustafa and Rushdi Tamimi (their relative, Nariman, is pictured above), and injured hundreds, including children.

Israeli military investigations into killings of Palestinians in the OPT are generally not prompt, independent or impartial. In December 2013, the Israeli military closed its investigation into Mustafa and Rushdi's killing without holding anyone accountable. The Israeli army also intimidates Nabi Saleh's villagers by, for example, declaring the whole village a closed military zone, and carrying out night raids with soldiers searching people's homes and even arresting children.

Your message can help the people of Nabi Saleh:
Please call on Israel's Minister of Defence, Moshe Ya'alon, to ensure that the villagers are free from harassment and able to exercise their freedom of expression and assembly.

Start your letter 'Dear Minister' and send it to:
Moshe Ya'alon, Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence, 37 Kaplan Street, Hakirya, Tel Aviv 61909, Israel.

Email: minister@mod.gov.il, pniot@mod.gov.il, myaalon@knesset.gov.il
Fax: +972 3 691 6940, +972 3 696 275, +972 3 696 2757, +972 2 530 3367

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46 YEARS ON DEATH ROW

NAME: HAKAMADA IWAO
LOCATION: JAPAN

Hakamada was arrested over the deaths of a family of four in 1966. At the time he was a factory worker in his thirties, recently retired from his career as a boxing champion (see article on pages 17-19).

He was convicted and sentenced to death after an unfair trial, and remained on death row until March 2014 when the Shizuoka District Court ordered his release, suspended his death sentence and granted him a re-trial.

The prosecution appealed against this decision, and the Tokyo High Court will now decide whether Hakamada's re-trial can go ahead.

Hakamada confessed to the murder of his boss, his boss's wife, and their two children after 20 days of police interrogation without a lawyer present. He later retracted his confession and testified that the police had beaten and threatened him into confessing following daily, 12-hour-long interrogations. His confession nonetheless remained the basis of his conviction. Today, Hakamada is 78 years old and suffering from poor mental and physical health as a result of his many years in prison, most of which were spent in solitary confinement.

One of the original trial judges stated publicly in 2007 that he believed Hakamada was innocent. He said that during the trial he appealed to the other two judges to find him not guilty, but was outvoted. All of Hakamada's subsequent appeals and petitions for a re-trial were rejected until this year.

Your message can help Hakamada:
Please write, calling on the Prosecutor to drop the appeal against a re-trial, ensuring that Hakamada will receive a fair verdict.

Start your letter 'Dear Tokyo Superintendent Public Prosecutor' and send it to:
Kotaro ONO, Tokyo Public Prosecutors Office, 1-1-1 Kasumigaseki Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo-to 100-8904

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BEATEN, BURNED AND LEFT FOR DEAD

NAME: HAKAN YAMAN
LOCATION: TURKEY

Hakan Yaman, a minibus driver from Istanbul, was walking home from work on 3 June 2013 when he passed a public demonstration against police violence. Within moments he was caught up in a brutal attack by police officers:

"I was first sprayed by water cannon. Then I was hit in the stomach with a tear gas canister and I fell down. Around five police officers came over and began hitting me repeatedly on the head. One of them put a hard object into my eye and gouged my eye out.

"By then I was lying down, without moving. I heard one of them say 'this one is finished, let's completely finish him off'. They dragged me 10-20 metres and threw me onto a fire. They left and I dragged myself out of the fire."

According to his medical report, Hakan sustained serious injuries to his head and face. His nose, cheekbone, and the bones of his forehead and chin were broken. He lost one eye and has lost 80% of sight in the other. His skull was fractured from the top of his head all the way down to his jaw and his back sustained second-degree burns.

Hakan has since made a criminal complaint on grounds of attempted murder.

Your message can help Hakan:
Please write a letter calling for an end to any further delays in the criminal proceedings against the police officers involved. Please also ask when the investigation is expected to be completed and Hakan's attackers brought to justice.

Start your letter 'Dear Prosecutor' and send it to: Cengiz Turan, Cumhuriyet Savcısı, Memur Suçları Savcılığı, Istanbul Anadolu Adliyesi, Esentepe Mahallesi, E-5 Yanyol, Kartal İstanbul, Turkey.

Fax: +90 216 303 35 99

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SERVING 10 YEARS FOR HIS JOURNALISM

NAME: SALIDZHON ABDURAKHMANOV
LOCATION: UZBEKISTA

Salidzhon Abdurakhmanov, a 64-year-old independent journalist and human rights defender, is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence in Uzbekistan allegedly for possessing drugs with intent to sell. We believe the charges against him were fabricated and that he is a prisoner of conscience, convicted as punishment for peacefully expressing his critical views.

Salidzhon was detained on 7 June 2008 on suspicion of possessing illegal drugs. Traffic police who stopped his car, reportedly for a routine inspection, claimed they had found opium and marijuana hidden in the boot. Salidzhon categorically denies ever possessing drugs or using illegal substances.

His lawyer's request for forensic examinations to identify any fingerprints on the bag containing the drugs and the car where they were found was refused. Blood tests ordered by the police investigating his arrest confirmed that Salidzhon did not have any traces of drugs in his body.

The police also searched Salidzhon's home and office and confiscated his computer and written documents. Their search yielded no evidence of any illegal activities or criminal links. Nevertheless, Salidzhon was sentenced to 10 years in prison in October 2008. His health has deteriorated significantly since his arrest and he has not received adequate medical treatment. In 2013, Salidzhon was admitted to the prison hospital in Tashkent four times for treatment for stomach and bowel ulcers.

Your letter can help Salidzhon get released:
Please call on the Uzbekistani authorities to release Salidzhon Abdurakhmanov immediately and unconditionally. Please also urge them to stop harassing and imprisoning independent journalists and human rights defenders.

Start your letter 'Dear General Prosecutor' and send it to: Prosecutor General Rashidzhon Kodirov, Prosecutor General's Office of Uzbekistan, ul. Gulyamova 66, Tashkent 100047, Uzbekistan

Email: prokuratura@lawyer.uz

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CAN WRITING A LETTER CHANGE A LIFE?

Yes it can. With your help, last year's Write for Rights letter writing campaign led to the release of three prisoners, and many more people at risk of human rights abuses felt safer and more supported. Worldwide, people from 143 countries took 2.3 million actions – sending letters, writing appeals and signing petitions. Here's just a snapshot of the difference you made.

BOOSTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN HONDURAS

You sent more than 51,000 messages calling on the President of Honduras to protect a group of human rights activists from threats and intimidation. Campaigner Bertha Oliva said your messages helped to put pressure on the government: "We were able to see international support, which is so necessary for us to be able to continue our risky work."

RELEASED IN RUSSIA

Vladimir Akimenkov – who was detained alongside Artiom Saviolov and Mikhail Kosenko following a protest in Bolotnaya Square, Moscow – was released on 19 December 2013. After being sent for forcible psychiatric treatment in hospital, Mikhail is now able to continue treatment at home with his family. Mikhail's sister, Artiom's father and Vladmir all expressed their deep gratitude for your letters of support.

JUSTICE FOR JABEUR MEJRI IN TUNISIA

Jabeur was sentenced to seven-and-a-half years in prison for Facebook posts deemed "insulting to Islam". After more than 158,000 people petitioned the authorities, the blogger was released from prison. Sadly, following a confrontation with officials, he was arrested again. Despite this, Jabeur's sister Ines told us: "The letters make him feel remembered. They really helped lift his spirits."

FREEDOM FOR YORM BOPHA IN CAMBODIA

Yorm Bopha was imprisoned for three years on trumped-up charges after protesting against forced evictions in her community. She was released on bail in November 2013, and authorities received nearly 253,000 appeals from Amnesty supporters in 54 countries. She continues to campaign for her community: "I am very happy now I know we are not alone."

SUPPORTING DR TUN AUNG IN MYANMAR

You sent more than 120,000 messages to the Myanmar authorities calling for the release of Dr Tun Aung, who was serving a 17-year prison term after an unfair trial. Dr Tun has now been granted several reductions to his sentence, and a local NGO confirmed that he now has less than a year left to serve in prison.

PROTECTING OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS IN BAHRAIN

Thirteen prominent activists were sent to prison following anti-government protests in March 2011. Their families were touched by the widespread support for the men across so many countries. More than 123,000 of you sent messages to the Bahraini authorities, and the UN and European Parliament have both recognized the importance of the case.

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© Nicolas Axelrod/Getty Images

INSPIRING IHAR TSIKHANYUK IN BELARUS

Activist Ihar was beaten by police after he and friends tried to register their organization, which works on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues. More than 172,000 of you took action and helped to raise awareness of the challenges faced by the LGBTI community in Belarus. "When I feel I am left with no hope, I'll get a letter out and it will inspire me," said Ihar. "The confidence in myself returns!" You can still take action for Ihar: see page 22.

PRESSURE FOR ESKINDER NEGA, ETHIOPIA

Journalist Eskinder was sentenced to 18 years in prison after making speeches and writing articles which criticized the Ethiopian government. Eskinder's wife, Serkalem, was overwhelmed by your messages of support: "The regime will be forced to release him and other prisoners of conscience. That kind of pressure, they can't resist forever." You can still take action for Eskinder: see page 22.

MESSAGES FOR MIRIAM LOPEZ IN MEXICO

Miriam was kidnapped by soldiers, tortured and detained for months. She said that the thousands of letters, cards and Facebook messages she received are encouraging her to seek justice: "Thank you for supporting me, even though you don't know me. For the cards, for the lanterns, for everything – thank you."

ACTION FOR HAKAN YAMAN IN TURKEY

Hakan was severely beaten by police near his home after demonstrations in central Istanbul in June 2013. More than 96,000 of you took action, and his lawyer is certain that this pressure helped to progress the investigation into his case. "I love you all," said Hakan. "Thank you so much, it is so great that you are here." To write Hakan a letter, see page 23.

COMPENSATION FOR BADIA EAST COMMUNITY IN NIGERIA

More than 83,000 of you took action for the people of Badia East, after they were forced from their homes by the authorities. The government has now agreed to pay them compensation. "They never wanted to pay, but with your help and effort they agreed to give assistance to us," said community activist Bimbo Osobe.

SOLIDARITY WITH NABI SALEH IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Every week, the villagers of Nabi Saleh protest peacefully against an illegal Israeli settlement which has taken over their farmland. Though the situation remains unchanged, they said that your messages have helped to raise awareness of their struggle. One villager, Nariman Tamimi, said that the letters she received had made her cry with happiness. You can still take action for them: see page 22.

Photos, left to right: **Vladimir Akimenkov (right) at a rally supporting other political prisoners, February 2014; Yorm Bopha and friends celebrate her release in November 2013; just some of the letters sent to Ihar Tsikhanyuk.**

WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2014 >>>

This year, we need your support to protect another 12 people and communities at risk of human rights abuses – keep an eye out for more details in WIRE November/December.

‘The army should be able to distinguish from the air that what they are targeting are ambulances.’

DR BASHAR MURAD, PALESTINIAN RED CRESCENT SOCIETY, GAZA, AUGUST 2014.
#CIVILIANSUNDERFIRE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL