

# BRAVE

People across the world are risking everything to stand up for others. They are human rights defenders.

# CHALLENGE



## About the Brave Challenge

The Brave Challenge includes 3 steps to support young people on a journey from exploration and learning, to action.

1. **EXPLORE** the theme of Bravery and human rights
2. **LEARN** about the Brave campaign and human rights defenders
3. **ACT & ASK** to be Brave for human rights

**“I believe in the importance of young people standing up for human rights no matter where we are in the world! We can all do something, we all have the power to make the world a better place!” Eimear**

## Who is a human rights defender?

Anyone can be a human rights defender (HRD). A HRD promotes and defends human rights, believes in the universality of human rights (human rights for everyone), and they do not discriminate against anyone. HRDs come from all walks of life. They are teachers, student leaders, journalists, factory workers, lawyers and so many others. You and members of your family could be HRDs. It's what BRAVE rights defenders do rather than their profession. BRAVE is an ordinary person with a heart. BRAVE is speaking out for others. BRAVE is standing up against injustice. Any of us could be a human rights defender and decide to fight injustice.

Human rights defenders have the power to create positive change around the globe. But human rights defenders need your support. Some countries want to stop and silence them. They face being attacked, harassed, tortured, jailed, smeared, stigmatised and even killed – just for daring to speak out for what's right.

## Amnesty International's Brave Campaign

We want a world where people can speak out for what's right without being attacked, threatened, jailed and more. Countries need to put laws in place to keep human rights defenders safe and allow free speech. They need to release people who have been locked up just for challenging injustice. Without human rights defender's courage and bravery, our world would be less fair, less just and less equal. We must stand with human rights defenders worldwide – and do all we can to keep them safe from harm. The Brave Challenge includes case studies and suggested actions to support young people to stand in solidarity with those who are brave, and be brave by doing so.



# BRAVE STEP 1: EXPLORE

## Brave Campaign Definitions

### Universality of human rights

Rights cannot be prioritised (all rights are equally important). They are all indivisible (one depends on another).

### Human rights violations

When people are denied their human rights.

### Smear

To damage the reputation of (someone) by making false accusations or telling lies.

### Stigmatise

To treat someone or something unfairly, for example, making them feel ashamed or disgraced when they haven't done anything wrong.

### Campaign

Working with others to make a positive change, by organising different actions to pressure people with the power to make the necessary changes.

### Solidarity

To show support for another person and act with them as equals. Actions include writing letters or postcards to people experiencing human rights violations, and working alongside people who are affected by human rights issues in Ireland.

## Explore the theme of Bravery

The activities below are suggested as a way for young people to explore the theme of Bravery and to identify connections to their lives and the wider world. Choose one or all of these activities to support them to gain understanding, and prepare to begin the next steps, 'Learn' and 'Act & Ask', of the Brave Challenge.

### What is Bravery? Ask a young person to read:

Bravery is what we feel when we stand up for what is right for ourselves and others. We have opportunities in our everyday lives to be brave and to make a difference. We are often brave when we try something new and when we step into the unknown. For some of us being brave might be using our voice aloud in class or performing on stage. For others, being proud of who we are might be an act of courage. Some of the kindest acts of Bravery are when we stand up for others – our friends, our neighbours and those whose voices are being silenced. Around the world many people's rights aren't being upheld and they are suffering. We, as global citizens, have a responsibility to stand up for human rights and to be a voice for those who are not heard.



**“As young people time is on our side. The earlier we start the longer we have to fight the good fight. We fight it for ourselves but also for all those who can't fight, who have had their voices silenced.”**  
**Jensen**



## Activity 1: Brave Brainstorm Student Handout

### Time

20 minutes

### Materials

Sheets of A3 paper and pens or markers

### Method

Divide into groups of two or three and draw concentric circles on a sheet of paper, and title each circle as explained in the diagram below.

**Bravery:** Think of all the words or actions that come to mind when you hear the word 'BRAVE'. Discuss in your group and write the words outside of the circles around the edges of the brainstorm sheet.

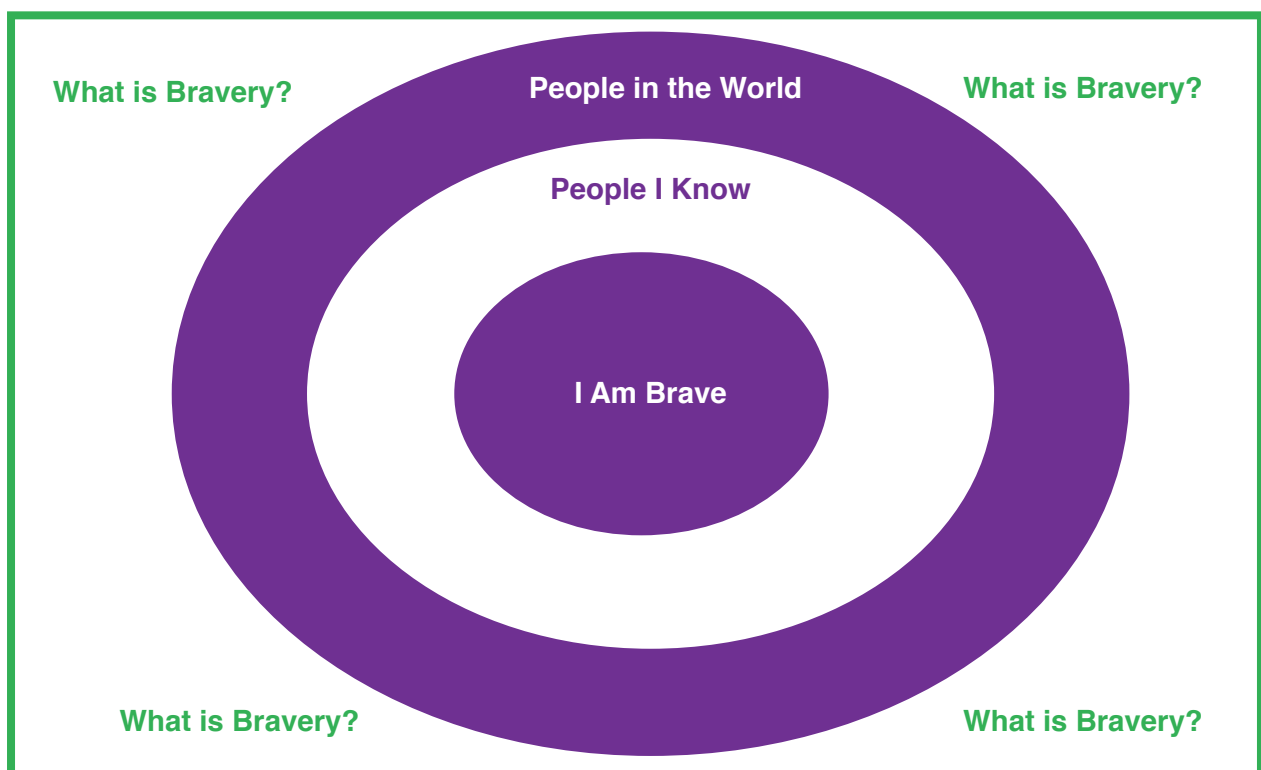
**I Am Brave:** How are you BRAVE in your daily life? For example when you stand up for yourself and for others for fairness and equality. Can you identify something BRAVE you have done? How did you feel after you did a BRAVE act? Discuss with your group and write answers in the centre circle.

**Brave People I Know:** Think about other people in your lives who you think are BRAVE, for example friends, family, and people in your school or community. Who is the bravest person you know? What makes them brave? Discuss in your group and include answers in the second circle.

**Brave People in the World:** Think about people you know of in Ireland or the wider world who are BRAVE and stand up for rights. These could be people who defend women's, children's, disability, or ethnic minority rights for example, or musicians or sports people who use their public personas to defend and promote human rights. Write answers in the third circle.

**Feedback:** If there is time all groups feedback to the wider group, or alternatively two groups nominate themselves to share their learning.

**We can all be BRAVE in our lives, and we can take inspiration from others who stand up for their rights and all of our rights!**



## Activity 2: Walking Debate Facilitator Guide

### Time

20 minutes

### Materials

'Agree' and 'Disagree' printed on A4

### Method

Everyone stands for this activity. One side of the room is labelled 'Agree', the opposite side 'Disagree'. Explain that they can stand anywhere in between these two sides of the room depending on how strongly they agree or disagree with statements you read out. They also have the choice to stand in the middle if they are unsure. Suggested statements are provided below. Encourage participants to explain why they have chosen to agree or disagree with statements you read out. They can change their position while other students are sharing their opinions if they feel influenced.

#### Statements

I think everyone in my class can be brave.

I like when others stand up for me.

I enjoy standing up for those who don't have a loud voice.

People who don't feel listened to need to be braver.

We learn how to be brave in school.

We learn how to be brave from our friends and family.

We could do more as a class to stand up for others.

We could do more as a country to stand up for the rights of others.

It is easy to be brave.

I stand up for myself and others even when it is difficult to do so.

We can feel brave in some situations and not in others.

You can feel scared and be brave at the same time.

Heroes stand up for the rights of other people.

Our world needs more brave people.



**"I think young people should be brave and stand up for human rights because human rights are everyone's rights, regardless of age. Standing up for human rights is standing up for ourselves and showing compassion to others." Sophia**



### Activity 3: Brave BINGO Student Handout

**Time**

20 minutes

**Materials**

A Brave Bingo sheet for everyone

**Method**

You have 10 minutes to go around the classroom and find people who can answer the questions that are on the Bingo sheet below – you need to find a different person to answer each question. In return, you must answer one question from the other person's sheet. The person who completes their Bingo sheet in the fastest time is the winner and shouts Bingo!

As a group discuss what you learned in this activity, and how you can use this learning to take action as part of the Brave Challenge.

#### Brave Bingo Sheet

A famous person who is known for defending/protecting human rights.	A song that makes you think of a human rights issue.	Name one human right.
A document that lists human rights.	A country in which human rights are abused.	An example of a human right.
An example of an action for human rights.	A film that explores human rights issues.	An action by someone in this class who was Brave and stood up for human rights.
An organisation that promotes or fights for human rights.	An example of a human rights violation in Ireland.	An example of a human rights campaign or movement.

**“Being involved in Amnesty International has always been something which has been special to me and it's been amazing to be a part of the difference even though I may only be playing a small part.” Mark**





# BRAVE STEP 2: LEARN

## 312 PEOPLE KILLED

in 2017 for defending human rights, up from 281 in 2016 (source [www.frontlinedefenders.org](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org))

**75% OF KILLINGS** of human rights defenders in 2016 were in the Americas

**22 COUNTRIES** saw people killed for peacefully standing up for human rights in 2016

**3500 HRDs KILLED** since the 1998 Declaration of Human Rights Defenders was created

In 1998 the world committed to the Declaration of Human Rights Defenders to ensure that they and their work would be respected and protected. Yet today BRAVE rights defenders are facing increasing attacks. Governments, armed groups, companies, groups advocating hate and discrimination, and others in power are doing all they can to shut them up and close their work down. BRAVE rights defenders are being portrayed as criminals, terrorists, unpatriotic, corrupt or even “foreign agents”. Then the attack goes further – smearing reputations, locking people up, targeting their families and even using violence to silence dissent.

## Who are we asking you to stand up for?

### Arash Sadeghi - Iran



Arash is a young human rights defender in Iran who peacefully protested against the death penalty, acted in solidarity with others unjustly imprisoned, and raised awareness of mass executions in Iran in the 1980s. He has been imprisoned multiple times, along with his wife Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, and is being denied adequate medical treatment for a bone tumour. Arash is in prison today in Tehran for his work defending rights - he is a prisoner of conscience.

### Azza Soliman - Egypt

Azza is a lawyer, a long-standing women’s rights defender, and the co-founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance. She has been arrested several times, and harassed by the Egyptian authorities and the media for defending women’s rights. Today, Azza is facing three unjust charges, is banned from travel, and has had her assets frozen. She is facing imprisonment for her activities as a BRAVE rights defender.



### Watch a video about Azza:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUtBxeajiXI&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUtBxeajiXI&t=8s)



## Vitalina Koval – Ukraine



Vitalina is a determined LGBTI human rights defender. She has been attacked and threatened for her work defending human rights. In March 2017, Vitalina took part in the International Women's Day March. She was attacked by a dozen young men, who charged at her and other protesters – tearing up their posters and shouting threats. Vitalina went to the police but they never got back to her. She has been central to the LGBTI community in Ukraine and has helped set up a community centre as a safe space for LGBTI people within the growing hostility of the country. In 2018, she was attacked again and red paint was thrown on her causing chemical burns.

### Watch a video about Vitalina:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8Xelik-EVs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8Xelik-EVs)

## Role Play Activity Facilitator Guide

### Time

20 minutes

### Materials

A printed copy of each of the handouts

### Method

Invite 3 young people to nominate themselves to step into the shoes of a human rights defender for the duration of the activity. Explain they will be given a handout with information on their story, actions they have taken, the consequences of these actions, and important messages they have for others. Give them a few minutes to read the handout and then ask them to stand in 3 different locations in the room. Everyone else can stand up and walk around, taking time to talk to each human rights defender and ask them the questions below, which correspond with the titles on the role play handouts. These questions can be written on a board.

### Questions for students to ask the human rights defenders:

- What is your story?
- What actions have you taken for human rights?
- What were the consequences for you and others?
- Do you have a message for us?

After 10 minutes ask everyone to sit down and for the 3 volunteers to come to the top of the class. They can now exit their roles and give feedback on what they learned and experienced during the activity.

### Suggested questions:

- What part of your story stood out for you?
- Did anything surprise you? Did you learn anything new?
- What were you feeling during the activity? Why?
- What action(s) do you think we can take to be BRAVE with these human rights defenders?

Explain that the next step is to explore how we can act with and for these human rights defenders as part of the Brave Challenge, and ask others to act with us.



## Role Play Handout: Arash Sadeghi

Step into the shoes of a human rights defender, learn about their story, and what we can do as part of the Brave Challenge to stand with them.



### Arash's Story

I am 31 year old human rights defender in prison in Iran. My wife, Golrokh, my friends and I protest peacefully against the death penalty, and other human rights abuses in our country. The authorities try to silence us, but we know we must be brave and stand up for human rights. I was studying Philosophy in a University in Tehran, the capital, however I am banned from continuing my studies due to my activism.

### BRAVE Actions for Human Rights

I organise and participate in protests and demonstrations calling attention to human rights abuses such as the death penalty. I have to act within a repressive environment, where I am accused by the authorities of 'threatening national security', and 'defying Islam'. I share information with others to raise awareness of what is happening in my country, including giving media interviews, and expressing my solidarity with prisoners of conscience. I want the world to know how repressive it is in Iran so I communicate with Amnesty International and other human rights groups outside of Iran. I went on hunger strike in 2016 for 71 days when my wife was unjustly imprisoned and only ended my strike when she was released.

### Consequences for Arash Sadeghi and HRDs

I have been a target of government harassment for a number of years and have been in and out of prison since 2009. I am currently in a prison called Evin in Tehran, serving two separate prison sentences totalling 19 years. When I was arrested in 2014 along with my wife Golrokh I was held in solitary confinement for 6 months, where I was repeatedly tortured. These torture allegations were never investigated and when I told the judge he laughed at me saying, "everyone says that". We did not have a fair trial and I wasn't allowed to choose my own lawyer. I have become ill while in prison and have been diagnosed with a bone tumour. I am being denied the medical tests and treatment that I need. I was convicted of charges including 'spreading propaganda against the system', and 'spreading lies'.

### Message from Arash

"I need to emphasize that the main reason and motivation for my hunger strike was not simply to demand the release of an innocent person, but to demand a human right. It was a protest against the unjust and totalitarian security establishment and against the violation of human rights and the rights of citizens...The issue is not only my wife Golrokh as an individual and as my wife. She is the symbol of all the girls, women and even men in this country whose basic human rights are being violated and have become innocent victims."





## Role Play Handout: Azza Soliman

Step into the shoes of a human rights defender, learn about their story, and what we can do as part of the Brave Challenge to stand with them.



### Azza's Story

My name is Azza Soliman and I am a lawyer and a long-standing women's rights defender in Egypt.

### BRAVE Actions for Human Rights

In 1995, I co-founded the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance in a working class neighborhood in greater Cairo, to provide legal aid, support and combat illiteracy for women, especially victims of domestic abuse and rape. In 2010, I also co-founded Lawyers for Peace and Justice, which provides legal assistance for victims of human rights violations.

### Consequences for Azza Soliman and HRDs

I was arrested several times and harassed by the Egyptian authorities but also by the media for defending women's rights, and I am now under the threat of being detained again for the same reasons. I was first arrested in 1988 and Amnesty was the first organization to report on my case. Today, I am facing three trumped up charges. I am also banned from travel and my assets have been frozen. I have been targeted by security forces and pro-government media through smear campaigns and constant harassment. Several TV anchors and newspapers showed photos of me and labelled me as an enemy of Egypt. I have also been under surveillance by Egyptian security for several years. Egyptian authorities have been launching a crackdown on HRDs and civil society in Egypt since 2011.

### Message from Azza

"The regime in Egypt is against human rights defenders and women's rights defenders. All my life, I had a dream for my country: Women not to be beaten, not to be harassed at work. I defend women against domestic violence, persecution and discrimination. Media propaganda is used to intimidate me, ruining my reputation and calling on people to attack me in public places. I'm under threat and pursued by security forces. I have no regrets. I am proud of my work. And if I could go back in time, I'd do it all again, even more."



## Role Play Handout: Vitalina Koval



Step into the shoes of a human rights defender, learn about their story, and what we can do as part of the Brave Challenge to stand with them.

### Vitalina's Story

My name is Vitalina Koval, I am 28 years old and I'm from a town called Uzhgorod in the Ukraine. I am an LGBTI activist and a women's rights defender. In 2016 I started to work at Gay Alliance Ukraine as the coordinator of a community centre for LGBTI people in Uzhgorod, and I also joined Amnesty International as a local activist. I was very active in organising art and culture events in the city and ran an advertising agency, but recently I have been dedicating my time to helping the LGBTI community in my town. We hold regular weekly meetings to discuss relevant issues and give each other support.

### BRAVE Actions for Human Rights

I take part in protests and demonstrations to speak out about violence and for women's and LGBTI rights. I create posters and slogans along with other activists and use social media to send a strong message about recognising and protecting the rights of LGBTI people. I hold planning and support meetings with other activists and people affected by human rights violations.

### Consequences for Vitalina Koval and HRDs

In 2017 I was one of the participants in the International Women's Day demonstration, when about a dozen young men charged at us, tearing our posters, and shouting threats. After the incident, I filed a police complaint. I have not received an answer from the police. In 2018, I organised a demonstration against violence and for women's and LGBTI rights, again for International Women's Day. On the day of the demonstration a group of six people approached me and other protesters, shouted insults and threw red paint on me. I felt my eyes burning and went to the hospital where doctors diagnosed me with chemical burns and prescribed treatment. When I went to the local police station to file a complaint the people who attacked me were there and the police officer asked me for my home address loudly in front of them, which made me feel unsafe and insecure. After the protest we were threatened with further violence on our social media pages. On 12 March, two of the activists who participated in the 8 March demonstration told me they were followed to their homes and beaten up. Fearing for my safety, I decided to leave Uzhgorod for a few days. I have since returned and continue to organise demonstrations and openly support the LGBTI community.

### Messages from Vitalina

"I felt upset and sad that our system works like this. The police have no sense of justice."

"There are many people in the LGBTI community in Ukraine who are afraid. I wish that they weren't feeling under direct threat".

"When I was organising art and culture events before, I never had to think about security. Now, I always have to consider it".



## Online Learning

Before educating others about Arash, Azza, and Vitalina, young people are encouraged to know as much as they can about human rights and Brave rights defenders. We know people are more likely to defend and promote their own and other's rights when they know about them. As part of the Brave Challenge we encourage young people to enroll, undertake and promote any of the following free online courses:

**<https://academy.amnesty.org>**

- Introduction to Human Rights – 15 minutes
- Guide to Human Rights Defenders – 20 minutes

People who are keen to learn more can commit to a month-long course here:

**<https://www.edx.org/course/humanrights-defenders>**

- Enroll and undertake the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Human Rights Defenders, 4-5 hours for 4 weeks.

### Prepare to Act & Ask - Tips for Young People

Here are some more ways to get ready for the next step of the Brave Challenge:

- Talk about the cases in class or at your group meeting.
- Work out what it is about these people that inspires you and your group.
- Ask why you care about these people and why you want to defend them?
- Brainstorm any natural links to your school and community, i.e., a shared language, knowledge of the region/food/culture of Iran, Egypt or Ukraine, or a particular knowledge of the rights our defenders are championing.



**“I think for young people to realise the privilege they have is very important. The simple rights we take for granted others fight for each day, so that’s why I believe we should lend our hand in the fight.” Alesi**

**“It’s important for young people to stand up for human rights because we are the future. We are the future generations that will be making decisions in the world and we need to have that world be a safe place for all human beings.” Lavender**





# BRAVE STEP 3: ACT & ASK

## Sign

Sign the BRAVE petitions calling on the authorities and those in power to protect human rights defenders like Arash, Azza and Vitalina. Your signature will be added to the thousands of others in Ireland, and millions of signatures globally, of people asking for these human rights defenders to be freed from jail, to live without the fear of stigma or persecution, and to continue their actions defending human rights. Each signature counts – together we can send a strong message to those in power that they are being watched, and that the global community will not stop until they take action to end human rights violations.

**Arash Sadeghi:** <http://bit.ly/ArashUA>

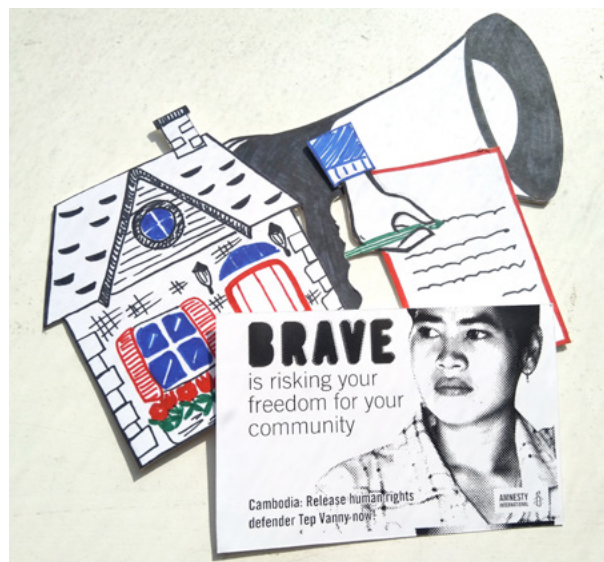
**Azza Soliman:** [www.amnesty.ie/speak-womens-rights-defender-azza-soliman](http://www.amnesty.ie/speak-womens-rights-defender-azza-soliman)

**Vitalina Koval:** [www.amnesty.ie/protect-ukrainian-activist-vitalina-koval](http://www.amnesty.ie/protect-ukrainian-activist-vitalina-koval)

## Solidarity

Send messages of solidarity to Arash, Azza or Vitalina. Messages will keep them motivated to continue their work as a human rights defender, and remind them that people around the world stand with them against oppression and violence. Think about what you would like to hear if you were in their situation, and write a letter or a postcard to them. Encourage visual or unique solidarity messages!

Send your messages to the Amnesty office and we will post them to the human rights defenders.



## Ask

Share your learning and motivation to act with others in your school and community! Host a petition signing table, make a school announcement or a speech at an assembly, or give a talk to another class in your school. You could set a target to get a percentage of all students to sign the petition. Explain what you have learned to your family and people in your after-school clubs and groups, and ask them to join the Brave Challenge.

Host an action around the particular human rights issues our defenders are focused on – the death penalty, women's rights, or LGBTI rights.

Share your messages on social media using #Brave #YouthAmnesty #FreeOurDefenders and tag Amnesty International Ireland and we will re-share! Explain why you are motivated to act and how others can act by taking some or all of these steps: **Sign, Solidarity, and Ask.**

Check out the Amnesty International Post-Primary School Pack for more guidelines on how to use social media for human rights: [www.amnesty.ie/what-we-do/human-rights-education](http://www.amnesty.ie/what-we-do/human-rights-education)





## Talk to a TD

Your TDs are elected representatives of your constituency or electoral area in Dáil Éireann. They have been voted in by people in your community and have a responsibility and a duty to listen to your views and concerns as one of their constituents.

You can find your TDs on **[www.whoismytd.com](http://www.whoismytd.com)**

## Write an email or send a letter

TDs are elected into positions of power, and you can ask them to use this position to act for human rights. Write a letter or send an email in your own words. It will have more impact if you communicate your personal reasons for taking this Brave Challenge.

Ask them to take the Brave Challenge steps above: **Sign, Solidarity, Ask.**

Amnesty International is also calling on leaders and politicians to recognise the crucial role human rights defenders play in the defence of human rights by joining our global pledge:

**[www.amnesty.ie/bravepledge](http://www.amnesty.ie/bravepledge)**

## Arrange a meeting

If you get a response to the letter or email that is the perfect opportunity to request a meeting. If you don't get a response after 2 weeks, call or send another written message asking to arrange a meeting.

Invite the TD to your school so that you can talk about the Brave Challenge in person, and the cases of the human rights defenders. Or arrange to visit them in their constituency office.

Amnesty staff will support you to prepare for a meeting!

TDs may not be aware of the challenges facing human rights defenders around the world, or how they can take action. They will welcome new information on this issue, and simple suggestions on how they can take action and be BRAVE with you.

## Follow up email

After a meeting follow up with an email, thanking them for the meeting, confirming again what your personal reasons are for taking the Brave Challenge, and asking for their action on this issue.

**With these steps and tools young people can take action with those who are Brave, and be Brave by doing so.**

### Contact Amnesty International Ireland


Please contact the Youth Activism Officer on **[youth@amnesty.ie](mailto:youth@amnesty.ie)** or **01 863 8341** with any questions or requests. Amnesty can provide you with materials such as printed petitions and Brave stickers. Send signed petitions and solidarity messages to:

Amnesty International Ireland, Sean McBride House, 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2.


We'll ensure your activism ends up in the hands of decision makers and Arash, Azza, and Vitalina are aware of your support!

Become a youth member:  
**[www.amnesty.ie/donations/become-youth-member](http://www.amnesty.ie/donations/become-youth-member)**

[www.amnesty.ie](http://www.amnesty.ie)

 @youthamnestyireland

 @amnestyyouth

 actamnesty

*\*Inspiration taken from: [www.amnesty.org.nz/register-freedom-challenge-2018](http://www.amnesty.org.nz/register-freedom-challenge-2018)*

