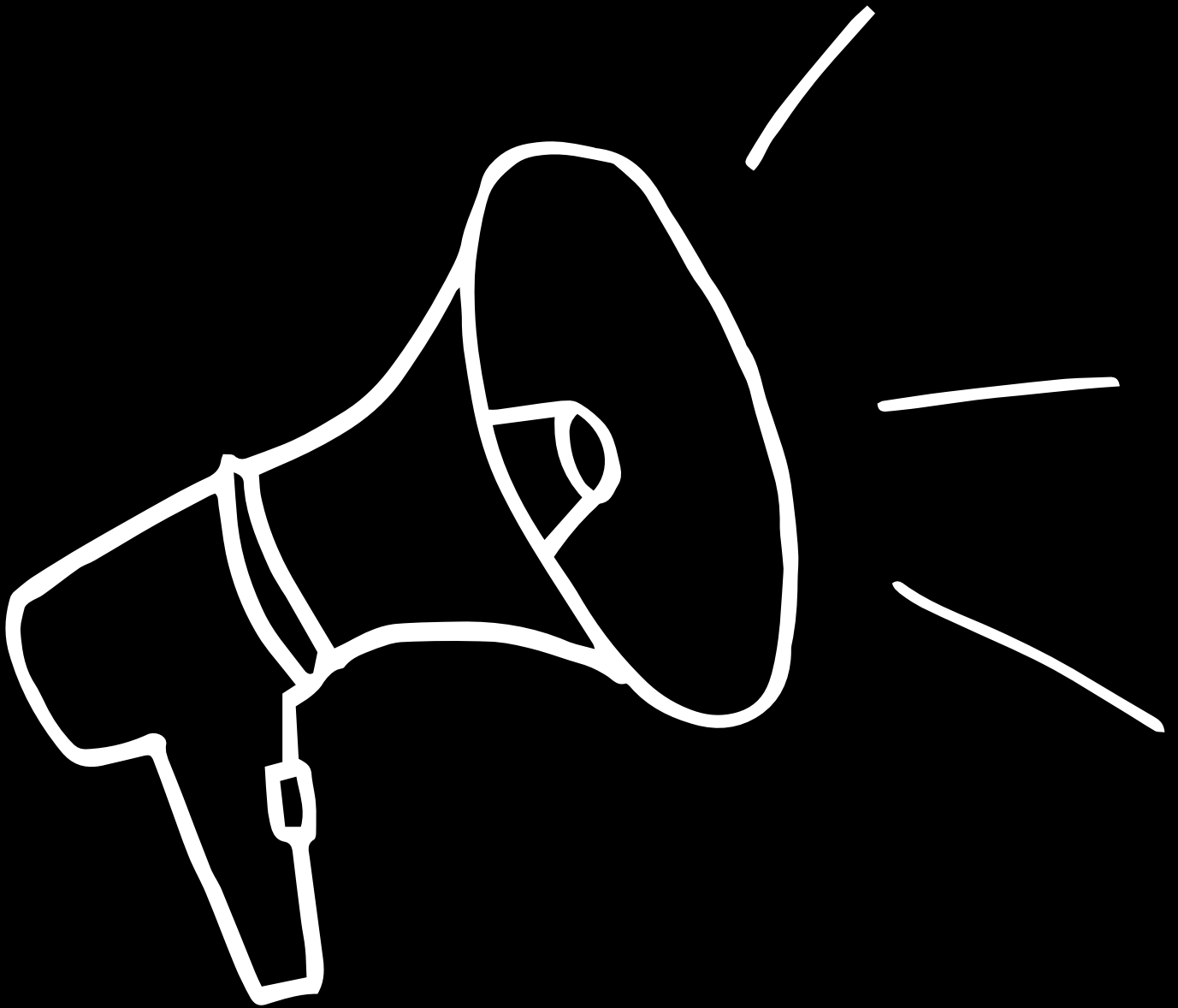


# STUDENT ACTIVISM GUIDE







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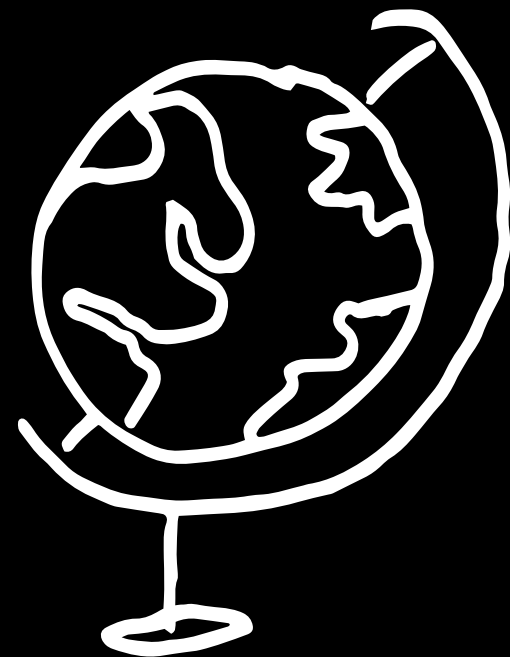
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# SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION



### Introduction

Across the world, young people have always been at the forefront of social change. The recent strikes for climate justice are a great example of this, led by young activist Greta Thunberg, the Friday's for Future movement and Extinction Rebellion activists. In recent times, young people have been heavily involved in change in Ireland from repealing the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution, to the Marriage Equality Referendum in 2015, which saw Ireland become the first country in the world to vote by referendum for marriage equality for all of its citizens. Students have always had a huge part to play in social change.

Grassroots activism and student activism are at the heart of Amnesty International. We are a movement of everyday people who take injustice personally – and by working together, can make real change. Activism means lots of different things to different people, and there are many ways to be 'active'. This resource is aimed at young human rights activists as a tool for leading human rights change in your University, college or community. By becoming an Amnesty activist, you'll be part of a movement of millions of young people raising their voices around the world.

**“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.” — Malala Yousafai**

## 1.1 Eight Reasons to Get Involved in an Amnesty International Student Group

### 1 YOU'LL LEARN MORE ABOUT YOURSELF

Joining or setting up an Amnesty International society presents many opportunities to learn more about yourself, what interests you, your goals, and your strengths.

### 2 YOU'LL LEARN HOW TO WORK WITH A TEAM

The ability to work as part of a team is an essential skill in life. Being in a student group teaches you how to do this by putting you in situations where you are required to take on board the opinions of others, as well as give your own.

### 3 YOU'LL MAKE NEW CONNECTIONS

You will receive the opportunity to network through meeting students from different backgrounds, making connections, and building relationships. Because you're all part of the same organisation, you'll meet like-minded people with similar interests to you. This also applies to being part of the wider Amnesty community outside of your college. There will be opportunities to meet meeting Amnesty staff and youth activists across Europe and even further afield!

### 4 YOU'LL GAIN PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

While you learn to use skills like project management and fundraising, you get to test them out in a safe environment where making mistakes is perfectly normal. We will organise different workshops throughout the year, where our staff are enthusiastic and willing to help you and your group in areas you find most interesting.

### 5 YOU'LL GAIN LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Taking on a leadership role will help you develop essential leadership skills. You'll be presented with many opportunities to improve how to present yourself in front of large groups of people and gain confidence in yourself as an individual.

### 6 YOU'LL GET A BREAK FROM YOUR STUDIES

Concentrating on college work is important but giving your mind a break is necessary!

### 7 YOU'LL EXPAND YOUR CV

Showing employers that you participated in, or (better yet) lead, a student group is impressive and shows that you are hardworking and committed and can handle multiple responsibilities at once. You will be able to show that you can lead a team, work with a team, have experience with event management and time management (to name a few!)

### 8 YOU'LL HAVE FUN!

Above all else, joining an Amnesty International society allows you to have fun. Making new friends and participating in extra-curricular activities will help you make the most of your college experience!

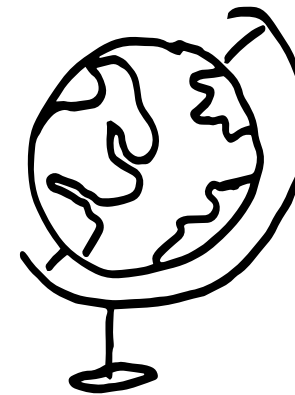
*"Through Amnesty International Youth I have gained lifelong friendships and had amazing fun. Other than that, it has benefitted my future career in ways I did not think were possible. Through my involvement in the organisation I discovered where my passions lie and where I want to fit into the world. As part of my student group, I had the opportunity to travel to the United Nations HQ in Geneva. Overall, I have gained so much confidence and increased my skills such as administration, leadership and creativity."*

– Alesi Horan, DCU 2018

*"Being involved in an Amnesty Society has allowed me to meet like-minded people and make new friends. It has also meant making great contacts, almost like a doorway to new connections and opportunities, such as with Amnesty International Ireland staff."*

– Sophia Finucane, UCD 2018.

## 1.2 Amnesty at a Glance

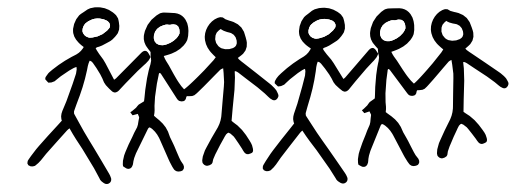


### HOW DID AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BEGIN?

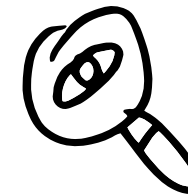
In 1961, British lawyer Peter Benenson was outraged when two Portuguese students were arrested simply for raising a toast to freedom during the Salazar regime. He wrote an article in the newspaper and called for people to join the campaign to fight for justice and for freedom of speech and demanded the release of anyone imprisoned for their ideas or beliefs. This action sparked the idea that people everywhere can unite in solidarity for justice and freedom and gave birth to Amnesty International. Today, Amnesty is a global movement of more than 7 million people.

### WHO RUNS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL?

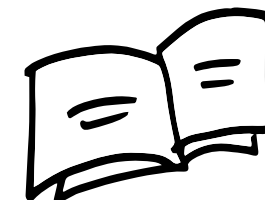
Amnesty is run by its members. We are independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion and we are funded by our members and supporters.



### HOW DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CARRY OUT ITS WORK?



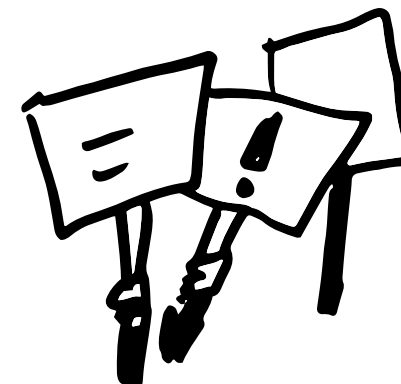
**Research:** Amnesty's researchers find out what's really happening by investigating, interviewing, observing and speaking to rights holders and stakeholders.



**Advocacy and Lobbying:** We work to change laws and policies that enable human rights abuses. We put pressure on governments and companies to improve their human rights record.



**We educate, take action, mobilise and organise activists,** through letter writing, petitions and protests!



### WHAT ISSUES DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WORK ON?

Current Amnesty International campaigns include:

- Women's Rights
- Economic Social and Cultural Rights
- Ending the Death Penalty
- Refugee and Migrant Rights
- Sexuality and Identity Rights
- Individuals at Risk
- Defending Human Rights Defenders

## DOES AMNESTY'S WORK RESULT IN HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT?

Throughout its history, Amnesty International has won critical protections for individuals and systemic change affecting millions. The organisation's human rights impact in 2018 included: <sup>1</sup>

- Our decades-long campaign led to the abolition of the death penalty in law or practice in two-thirds of the world's countries. In 2018, the number of known executions dropped by over 30% and reached the lowest figure Amnesty International has reported in the past decade.
- Throughout the organisation's history, tens of thousands of people have been freed after we campaigned against their unjust imprisonment for exercising their human rights. In 2018, Amnesty International helped release at least 170 people who had been unfairly imprisoned in 18 countries.
- Amnesty International has helped to pass many different laws that strengthen human rights. Until 2018, there was a near constitutional ban on abortion in Ireland. After decades of tireless campaigning by activists and organisations including Amnesty International, the Irish public voted to repeal the country's constitutional amendment that amounted to a near total ban on abortion.
- Human rights crises cannot be addressed until they are exposed. Amnesty International has conducted careful investigations, gathering evidence of crimes against humanity. In Myanmar in 2018, Amnesty International campaigned for an end to the state-sanctioned violence against the Rohingya people, a comprehensive arms embargo, and access for humanitarian actors.
- There are more refugees than ever before, with millions of people fleeing conflict, violence and persecution around the world. Amnesty International has helped to establish and strengthen community sponsorship programmes supporting refugees to live safely and with dignity.
- A free and safe internet is an essential tool for activists everywhere. Throughout 2018, Amnesty International exposed and stopped malware and phishing attacks against activists, journalists, bloggers and peaceful protesters – preventing privacy breaches that would threaten their work.

## 1.3 Human Rights Documents

Atrocities committed by states during World War II, and in particular the abuse of the Holocaust, led the newly formed United Nations to establish a Human Rights Commission in 1947. A group of government leaders came together, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt (former first lady of the USA), to draft a new document in an attempt to prevent such human rights abuses from happening again.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is not legally binding for countries, which means countries are not obligated by law to ensure the rights are provided for in legislation or policy. However, it has formed the basis of a range of treaties that are legally binding, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention against Torture. Regional groups of countries and individual states have incorporated these human rights into their own treaties and laws, such as the European Convention of Human Rights.

<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International, (2018). Rights Today: Why Our Movement Matters. London. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/AmnestyRightsToday.pdf>

## RIGHTS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO DIFFERENT GROUPS OF RIGHTS, FOR EXAMPLE CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS.

These are rights to civil liberty and equality including:

- Freedom to express yourself
- Access to information
- A right to life
- A fair trial
- Freedom from torture
- Privacy and respect for your family life

People also have Economic, Social and Cultural Rights relating to the material necessities of life such as the right to:

- Adequate housing
- Health
- Work
- Social security
- Education
- Food

## 1.4 Activism & Student Activism

Activism is the practice of vigorous action or involvement as a means of achieving political or other goals, sometimes by demonstrations, protests, public actions etc<sup>2</sup>. Activism is vital to the work of Amnesty International. In order to achieve the greatest human rights impact, we must engage and mobilise a diverse group of people to take action in various ways. Activism can be anything from rallies, petitions, street actions or protests. Collective action is the power and strength a group has by coming together and working toward a shared interest to achieve a goal.

### APPROACHES TO STUDENT ACTIVISM

“Those who today still feel a sense of impotence can do something: they can support Amnesty International. They can help it to stand up for freedom and justice” – Peter Benenson, Amnesty International founder. Activism is a vital part of Amnesty's work; and our activists drive real transformations both locally and globally.

There are many different ways to take action and no two activists or student groups are the same. Some people choose to focus solely on campaigning, whilst others get involved in a mixture of campaigning and fundraising. Some actively lobby their TDs and others build strong relationships with other societies and organisations in their local communities. From Amnesty's point of view, there is not necessarily one right way to 'do' activism. We only ask that you are aligned to Amnesty's overall values and keep impact-making at the heart of everything you do.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/activism>

# 1.5 APPROACHES AT A GLANCE

Approaches	Description
Advocacy & Lobbying	Writing letters and emails to local TDs and councilors, meeting with TDs or councilors in their constituency offices, and inviting TDs and councilors to your campus
Awareness-raising & Peer-learning	Deliver talks/workshops to other students, creating welcoming spaces for people to chat about human rights issues, hosting or participating in debates, speaking at events, and sharing information through social media
Community Organising	Developing relationships with other individuals and groups in your community, and engaging in collaborative action
Creative Campaigning	Creating posters, street art & murals, hosting exhibitions, photography and video projects, and hosting film screenings
Solidarity Action	Solidarity means to show support for another person and act with them as equals. Actions include writing letters or postcards to prisoners of conscience or people experiencing human rights violations, and working alongside people who are affected by human rights issues in Ireland
Fundraising	Jamnesty gigs, Jailbreak, AmnesTEA parties, sponsored runs or walks
On-street Action & Events	Protests, marches, vigils, petition deliveries, street-art, or canvassing door to door
Online Action	Sharing human rights information and news, mobilising people to do online petitions, and connecting with youth activists around the world
Media & Communications	Acting on social media, getting local media or press coverage in newspapers, radio or TV
Petitioning and Letter-writing	The Amnesty write for rights campaign, printed and online petitions, writing/signing letters, emails or postcards to politicians and people in positions of power

# 1.6 HUMAN RIGHTS GLOSSARY

**Human Rights:** These are the fundamental freedoms that belong to us all. They establish minimum standards for the treatment of people and include our rights to equality, marriage, travel, education, health, housing, freedom of opinion, belief and expression.

**Human Rights Convention:** The United Nations has conventions, which declare the existence of rights (e.g. the UDHR), as well as conventions which give enforceable legal rights to individuals. Some conventions focus on the prevention of specific abuses (e.g. torture or genocide). While others seek to protect those in especially vulnerable situations (e.g. refugees, women, racial minorities, children, migrant workers, people with disabilities).

**Human Rights Campaign:** A focused project that is realistic and completed within a specific time. A campaign is planned, organised and communicated to achieve agreed goals. It uses a range of tactics (methods), including research, communications, awareness-raising and action. A successful campaign requires the creativity, skills, and energy of committed activists!

**Rights-holders:** The people most directly affected by the human rights issue e.g. a person who is forced to seek refuge or asylum in another country.

The person or people who can take the action required to create positive human rights change. They should have the power to make decisions or have a direct link or line of influence with the decision-makers.

**Stakeholders:** The rights-holders or community of interest plus anyone else who has a vested interest in an issue, i.e. local politicians, local business owners, or staff of a local NGO.

3 <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/petition>  
4 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/detention/>

**Human Rights Activist:** Activists campaign to protect human rights around the world. This includes acting online and in person with other people to create positive human rights change. Activists are educated about human rights issues and use their skills, knowledge and creativity to work together as part of a movement of people who are enthusiastic and passionate about campaigning for human rights.

**Petition:** This is a formal request, often including the names of a number people making the request and addressed to a person or group in authority or power, asking for them to take action on behalf of a person or group of people experiencing human rights abuses.<sup>3</sup>

**Prisoner of Conscience:** Someone who has not used or advocated violence but is imprisoned because of who they are (sexual orientation, ethnic, national or social origin, language, place of birth, colour, gender or economic status) or what they believe (religious, political or other conscientiously held beliefs). <sup>4</sup>

**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.

Rights can be absolute, limited or qualified. An absolute right can never be interfered with; a limited right can be interfered with in specific circumstances; a qualified right is one where the individual's right is qualified by needs of community or state.

**Balancing Rights:** There can be conflict between rights; for example, an individual's right to privacy may conflict with a journalist's right to freedom of expression.

# SECTION 2

## GETTING AN AMNESTY STUDENT GROUP STARTED



### 2.1 Getting an Amnesty Student Group Started

#### HOW TO SET UP AN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IRELAND STUDENT GROUP (If you're already an established society, you can skip this bit!)

1. First of all, check if your college or University already has an Amnesty society established. You can view this on our website at [www.Amnesty.ie/Youth](http://www.Amnesty.ie/Youth).
2. If there is no society as of yet, contact Amnesty Ireland's Youth Activism Officer to register your interest. They will be able to provide you with resources, materials and can support you every step of the way.
3. Contact your Students' Union and ask them for the steps required to set up a society. This will include information about how many members you need to get, how much to charge them, what positions you're supposed to have on your committee and so on. You will need to follow these steps in order to become an official society and to be allocated a budget by the Student Union. Your Student Union's Societies Officer (or equivalent sabbatical officer) has been elected to represent you, so make sure to ask them for advice! We can support you with developing a constitution for your society.
4. See if there are any friends or individuals in your college that may be interested in joining you. You can advertise your group on social media, on your Student Union's mailing or Facebook page. You can reach out to similar societies and ask them to share info with their members. Write an op-ed and ask the college newspaper to share.
5. Once you have a group set up (go to page 17 for committee roles) organise your first meeting.
6. Learn about the issues. Amnesty works on many issues and has a few priority campaigns. Reach out to your Youth Activism Officer for support and for resources on campaigns. You can also reach out and ask for training on a specific issue or topic.
7. Plan your year! Look at Amnesty's key calendar dates and decide some actions and events to go with and get planning.

### 2.2 Support from Amnesty International

Student societies affiliate to Amnesty International Ireland. They are then supplied with resources and information about Amnesty and our current campaigns. Amnesty youth staff are available to support you with training and skills development to become youth leaders for human rights. We send a monthly newsletter and regular emails to all student activists with updates on our campaigns, suggested actions, ideas and tips & guides.

You can contact Amnesty staff for information, guidance and support. The main contact is the Youth Activism Officer, whose role is to support young activists in 3rd level colleges and universities.

If you have any questions or want more information, get in contact with the Amnesty Youth Activism Officer.

**YOU CAN ALSO KEEP UP TO DATE BY FOLLOWING US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:**

**f** @youthamnestyireland      **t** @amnestyyouth      **@** @actamnesty



## 2.3 Amnesty International Ireland Youth Membership

### Your Voice is Powerful!

We believe in the importance of youth voices in Amnesty International's work in human rights. Youth members are a group of young people aged 14-25 year olds who represent the views and voices of young people all over Ireland. Youth members of Amnesty International Ireland have a say into how Amnesty International can improve and ensures that human rights are at the centre of what we do.

As well as being members of your society in college, it is also a requirement that all committee members become members of Amnesty International Ireland too. As a student, this cost is discounted at only €5 per annum.

#### AS A MEMBER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IRELAND, THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS INCLUDING:

- You will receive a monthly e-bulletin and materials by post with current information on human rights news from around the world, and how you can take action and volunteer with others.
- You will receive online training opportunities, and invitations to join workshops with other youth members. Our aim is to support you to grow in confidence and gain new skills in human rights activism.
- You can vote at our Annual Conference and put forward motions (proposed changes) to how we work, and what human rights issues you want us to focus on.
- You will have the opportunity to apply to travel to international Annual Youth Conferences to represent Amnesty Ireland Youth.
- You will get opportunities to meet like-minded people not only in Ireland but across the world and be part of the wider Amnesty International movement.

***“Being a youth member of Amnesty Ireland means your voice and your priorities can be directly reflected to influence the shape of our international movement and human rights activism worldwide” – Katie O’Houlihan, Youth Board Member, Amnesty International Ireland***

## 2.4 Student Conferences

There is a student conference day every year in October/November, where student activists come together to engage in peer learning, connect with the wider community of youth activists in Ireland, listen to inspirational speakers and collectively take action.

If you would like to get involved in the planning of one of our student conferences, please contact your Youth Activism Officer.

There are also opportunities for student activists to attend a Student Conference abroad. In July 2019, three students represented Ireland at the European Youth Meeting in Brussels. It's a great way to get more involved with Amnesty International at a planning and decision-making level.



## 2.5 Working with your Students' Union

Student Unions have been at the forefront of social change in Ireland and abroad. In colleges and Universities throughout the country, they have a long history of organising and mobilising students around common causes. This activism has included working extensively in areas such as reproductive rights, student fees, climate action and welcoming refugees. Get in contact with your SU and they can support you in your goals!

Student groups, clubs and societies are usually funded and resourced by their Students' Unions. Your Student's Union can give you information on how to set up a society, as well as information on the general running of a society. Your Students' Union can also give you information on running events, booking rooms, applying for grants and getting a budget.

## 2.6 Amnesty Society Committee Roles & Responsibilities

There are many different leadership structures, and you should make changes and adjustments that fit your group. The Student Union normally requires each society to have a Chair (or President), Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Additional committee roles that other student Amnesty societies in Ireland have are also described below.

### CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson is ultimately the main point of contact everyone will go to and is tasked with leading the society. However, the secret to running a society and getting a degree, is successful teamwork! The role of the Chairperson is to therefore motivate members, delegate tasks efficiently and make sure everyone is fulfilling their roles. The Chairperson and Treasurer are usually jointly responsible for the society's finances.

### SECRETARY

Organisation is the main function of a society Secretary, whether this be in terms of sending emails or booking meeting rooms. The Secretary acts as the main means of communication between the society committee and its members and gives notice of meetings, events and functions, normally through email updates. The Secretary keeps minutes of all committee meetings or any other meetings relating to the business of the society when requested by the committee.

### TREASURER

The role of a treasurer is to control their society's expenditure, keeping records of income and outgoings, and handling all cash. If you are a new society, you may need to set up a society bank account. One of the main roles of the treasurer is to apply for funding on behalf of their society. Further information on these areas can be found once you set a meeting with your SU.

### PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

The Public Relations Officer's (PRO) role is closely correlated to that of the Secretary in that they communicate with the general public on behalf of the society. The PRO deals with external correspondence, such as giving comments to the student newspaper on topics relevant to the society. The PRO is also responsible for the advertising of all functions of the society through the society's different social media channels. The PRO can get as creative as they like – capturing society actions through a camera lens or putting together some snazzy event posters!

## 1ST YEAR REPRESENTATIVE

Many Amnesty International student societies recommend facilitating a representative who is in their first year of study as a committee role. The most important aspect of this is that it can aid the continuation of the society upon the graduation of older society members. The role of the 1<sup>st</sup> year representative will be to help out in a general capacity the organising and running of events. The 1<sup>st</sup> year representative can also help encourage new membership from their year group.

## HEAD OF SPECIFIC AMNESTY CAMPAIGN

Some Amnesty International society groups have a committee member dedicated to a specific Amnesty International campaign. This person follows the campaign updates and informs the rest of the group. This person can push for the group to facilitate actions in relation to their campaign area and creatively brainstorm actions.

## 2.7 Fresher's Fair

The Freshers' Fair, usually held within the first few weeks of the academic year, is an ideal time to attract new members and to set your group up as an official society. We can send you a pack of materials designed to be used at your fresher's stall containing posters, leaflets, stickers, petitions or banners. Most society's find it helpful to organise a rota for the Freshers Fair outlining the different times for committee member's shifts. This should be organised fairly ensuring that each individual gets sufficient breaks and are still able to attend classes. Make sure to have a sheet (or laptop) where interested people can fill in their name, email and student number.

**Top Tip: Trinity Amnesty International Soc 2018 had 'membership cards' with discounted deals with local restaurants. The university's SU helps organise a society's membership cards. This acts as a great incentive to get people to sign up. If this is something your society is interested in it is worth checking out with your SU!**

## FREEBIES

Who doesn't love them? Have some sweets, stickers or other giveaways on the table to encourage students to stop at your stall.

## KEEP IT VISUAL

There tends to be lots of stalls at Fresher's Fairs so make your stall stand out with banners, flags, pull-ups, and even balloons.

## PHOTO ACTION

Creating a DIY photo frame out of cardboard and painting it yellow with an Amnesty campaign slogan is another great idea. The photos taken with potential members can then be uploaded to your social media pages. This is an effective way of drawing attention to your online platforms and gaining new likes.

**DON'T FORGET: An effective way of getting a student group started is to hold your info night within 10 days of the Freshers' Fair. If you have a room booked in advance you can tell everyone at the fair when and where the first meeting will be held. Aim to avoid clashes with any other popular meetings, clubs, or societies similar to Amnesty.**

## MISSED THE FAIR?

If you've missed the Freshers' Fair and you're worried about how to attract members to your budding group, don't despair. Do one of the following:

- Organise a stall in a public place in the college or Students' Union – for example next to a coffee room or canteen where lots of people will be coming past.
- Organise a 'First Meeting', and make sure that you advertise in your Students' Union and campus with posters.
- If you're feeling more ambitious, you could even screen a human rights related movie/documentary and sign up interested students afterwards!

## 2.8 Hosting an Annual General Meeting

The idea of the AGM is to inform students about what Amnesty International is, the direction of the society and to elect students to any committee positions available. It is worth remembering that students join many societies in the first week of term but can only give their time to one or two. The first few meetings are therefore crucial to generate and maintain the interest of new members!

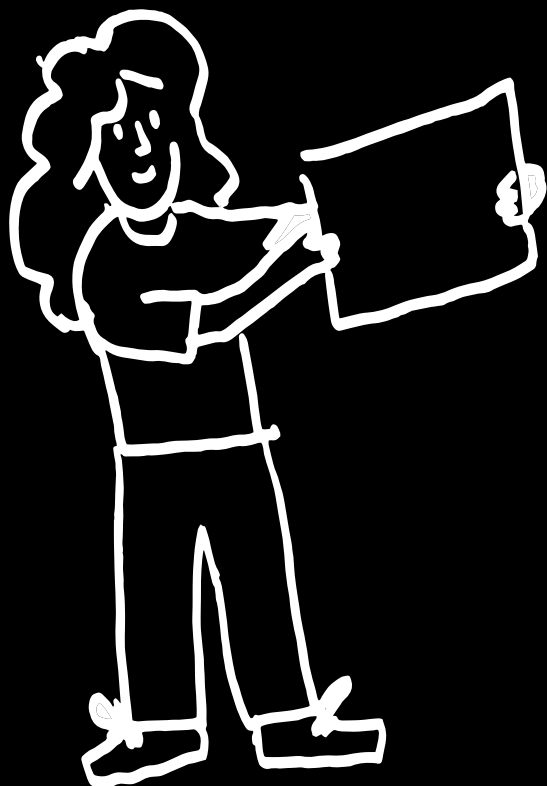
## STEPS

1. Pick a time and venue.
2. Decide what will be discussed, who will be speaking and what materials are needed. It is advised that you cover the following:
  - An introduction to Amnesty International
  - An introduction to the latest campaigns
  - A summary of what the society expects to get up to during the year, major events or a look at what other Amnesty student groups have done
  - An outline of committee roles available and a fair election to positions (if hosting an AGM)
3. Advertise the talk/AGM: Create a Facebook event page, send out an email reminder to all your members, invite people you think will be interested, ask other societies or groups to attend, remind people at the start of a lecture or class, design and put up some posters at key locations.
4. Lure people with food, and then captivate them with your passion to fight for human rights! A lot of clubs and societies also have deals with local takeaways and other businesses which can include free or heavily discounted food such as pizza for your events. Make enquires in your Student Unions' offices.
5. Give yourselves plenty of time before the meeting is due to start, set up the projector and lay out any leaflets and newsletters.

**Top Tip: Stick up direction posters on the way from the main entrance door to your meeting room – new first years may not know their way around and may be discouraged from attending if they cannot find the room!**

# SECTION 3

## RUNNING AN AMNESTY STUDENT GROUP



### 3.1 Organising Weekly Meetings

Most college committees meet together weekly to plan for upcoming events and share updates. Weekly meetings are important as they give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives and develop courses of action. They also keep members updated on current events and provide opportunities for the group to communicate and promote group cohesion.

**An agenda** can be prepared prior to each meeting and will help make sure that you get through the important parts!

An agenda is a quick outline of what you want to cover and what needs to happen during the meeting. For example, if you need to take some time to plan an event or you need to recruit volunteers, the agenda should allocate time to strategising on these tasks. You can find a template agenda for your society to use at the back!

**TO GET STARTED:** THINK BACK TO A REALLY GOOD WORKSHOP OR MEETING YOU HAVE ATTENDED. WHAT QUALITIES DID THE FACILITATOR POSSESS THAT MADE IT PRODUCTIVE AND ENJOYABLE?

#### CHAIRING SUCCESSFUL GROUP MEETINGS

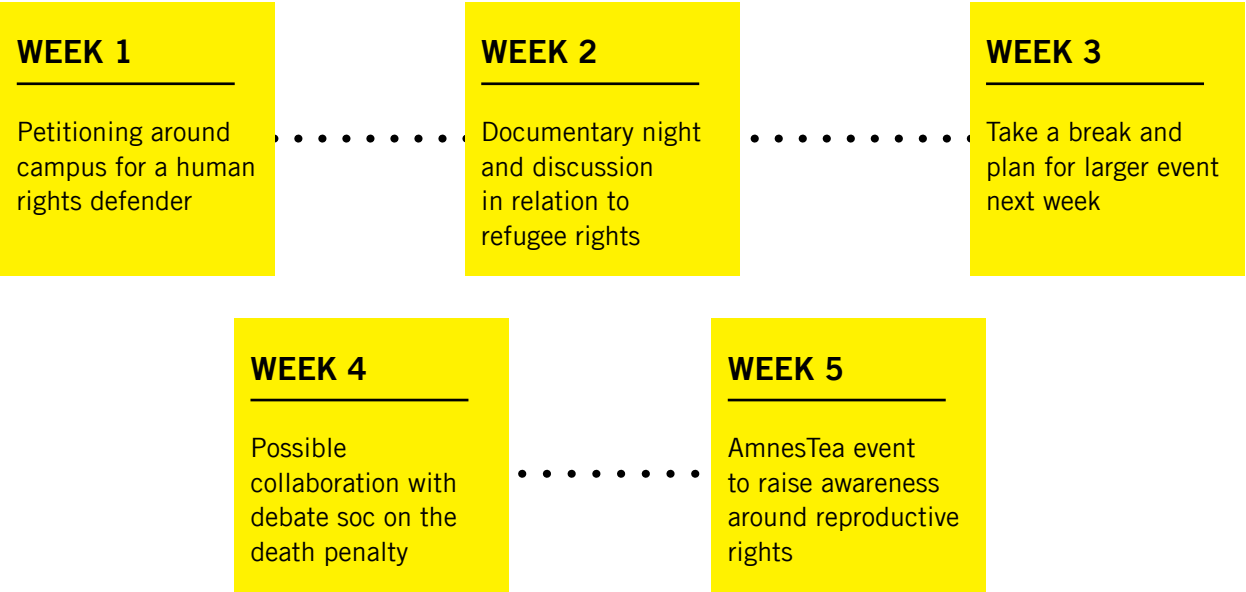
- Meetings should be open and allow for the attendance of all members and make contributions as ordinary committee members (OCMs). Encourage others to participate by asking for ideas and suggestions, or by having other members run the meeting from time to time.
- Stay on track and be mindful of time. With student groups, especially where there may be existing friendships among members, it can be very easy to get side-tracked talking about things unrelated to human rights. This can make it harder to get things done. If you're running the meeting, then it's your responsibility to keep the meeting on track and to the agenda.
- Collaboration can sometimes feel inefficient, and those with 'main' committee roles are often tempted to lead rather than facilitate. However, collaborative groups are much more empowered and productive. Make an effort to share group facilitation with group members and ensure that all participants have a task to complete before the following meet-up.
- To close the meeting remind people of the action points for them to complete, and thank everyone for coming.
- Why not bring some treats, tea or even change up where the committee meetings take place. A new venue can spark new ideas.
- After a meeting, it is a good idea to reflect on what was discussed, what went well and what could be done better. Check out these tips from Amnesty International Australia.

FACILITATION CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to evaluate the meeting or workshop you have facilitated. This will help you identify areas for improvement.

1	DID YOU GET THROUGH THE AGENDA?	✓
2	DID THE TASKS YOU HAD SET GET DONE?	
3	DID PROBLEMS GET SOLVED?	
4	DO THE TASKS / EVENTS PLANNED MEET THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GROUP?	
5	DID YOU HAVE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION FROM ALL MEMBERS?	
6	DID THE MEETING MAKE GOOD USE OF EVERYONE'S SKILLS?	
7	WAS THE MEETING ENJOYABLE?	
8	DID EVERYONE LEAVE WITH SOMETHING TO DO?	

EXAMPLE:



**Top Tip:** “Having a general plan for your events at the beginning of the academic year for each semester is useful. Although events can seem far away, they give you something to work towards and aim for. It also means that you can plug the event further in advance and give committee and members something to look forward to” – Sophia Finucane, UCD 2018.

3.2 How to Communicate Online

Social media is a powerful tool that societies can utilise by sharing information and facts about human rights violations; sharing messages, photos, and videos of solidarity; sharing your events and campaigns, recruiting new members, and by calling on others to act with you. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are great platforms that you can use to share all of your groups’ activities!

PRESENTING YOURSELF ONLINE

Whatever social media spaces you decide to use there are some rules you should follow and general tips for conducting an effective social media campaign:

- For your profile picture it is recommended that you use the Amnesty candle or something that is similarly simple and recognisable as an Amnesty affiliated group.
- Be consistent with your name! Use the format ‘Amnesty International (insert college/ university)’ as your profile name and URL online. This will help your followers to find you.
- Research relevant hashtags (#) for the human rights issue/campaign you are working on and include these in your posts – this will strengthen your campaign and connect your message to wider global activism on the issue.
- Personal messages are a powerful way to reach people and to demonstrate empathy and solidarity. Have fun, share your messages, and be the change you want to see!
- Be brave visually – think about how you can create a striking image or short video that will resonate with people and catch their attention. Use selfie-frames, Amnesty badges/ stickers/t-shirts, and handmade posters and signs to strengthen your images and connect them to the human rights issue.
- Try to update your page at least twice a week with a mix of photos, news or action links and videos from Amnesty or other sources. People respond best to variety! You can use content from the Amnesty International Ireland social media accounts if you need extra ideas.
- It is important to use caution whilst acting online. When a personal photo or video is posted it’s in a very public sphere and will remain there indefinitely. Ensure everyone has given consent and is comfortable with what is being shared.
- When your audience shares content be sure to acknowledge them and give proper credit. You can do this by adding ‘credit’, ‘photo,’ or ‘cc,’ along with the creator’s handle.
- Tag Amnesty International Ireland/Act Amnesty and we will re-share to increase the reach and impact of your campaign.
- Share outcomes on social media after your campaign, for example any update on the issue, the number of petitions signed, and acknowledge the contribution your student population and the wider community made. Amnesty International will provide you with information.
- Although social media is conversational, remember that you are on record. What you post may be quoted or reposted as an Amnesty response. If in doubt, don’t post! When sharing news or actions from other organisations, consider whether it is appropriate for an Amnesty space.



### FACEBOOK

- Make use of the events tools when hosting any activities and invite your members to come along.
- Create a FB Group or group chat with committee members.
- Join the FB Group with other Amnesty student activists

### INSTAGRAM

By default, your account will be a personal profile. However, you may find it useful to switch to a 'business profile' in order to examine the demographics of your followers and how they interact with your page. This can be done in the settings menu.

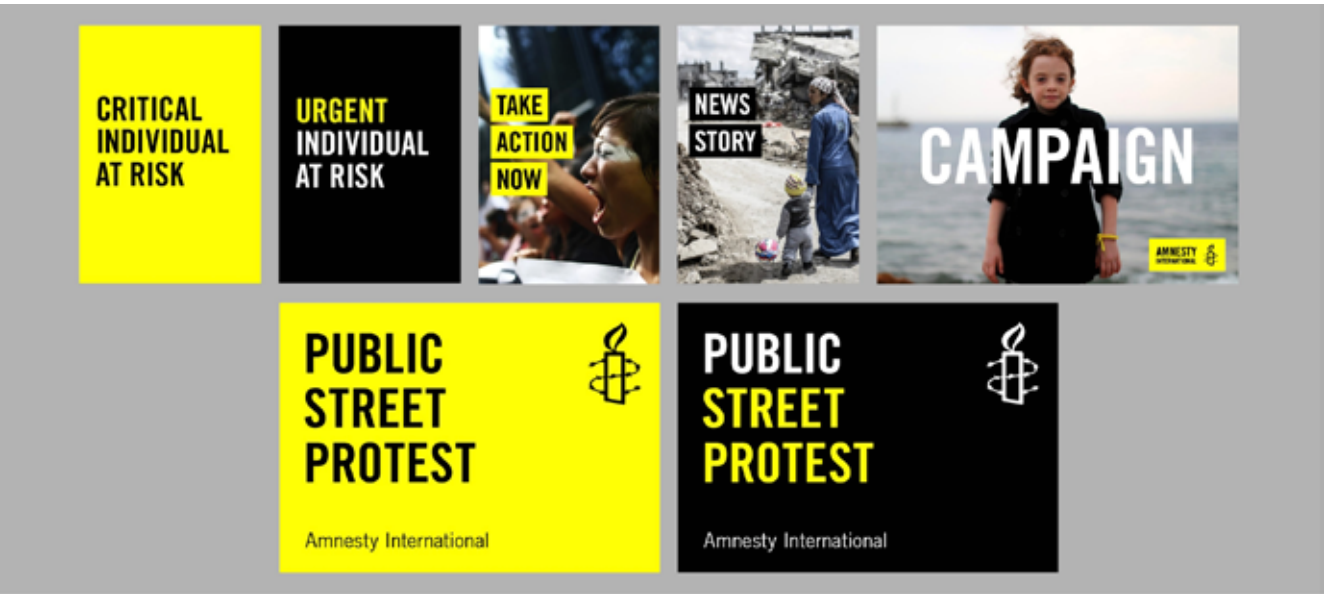
You can also use stories to increase engagement. You can get creative with stories by publishing human rights quizzes and polls!

### TWITTER

Twitter can be effectively used to reach politicians and decision-makers in social media campaigns.

### BRANDING

The Amnesty International brand is very recognisable, and it is important as a representative of Amnesty International that you try and align with how Amnesty looks (there is still room to get creative though!) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/brand-hub/>



### Communicating Our Message

Deciding what pictures to use or what language to go with can be difficult, but here are some important things to consider.

1. If you are using a personal image, it's important to consult the person in the photograph and get consent for the use of their image. Never use images without copyright or approval.
2. Avoid content that portrays people as one-dimensional. Promote the representation of diverse roles and diverse lives. Images should show people with stories to tell, rather than helpless victims.
3. Make the protagonist the hero, not the storyteller. Think about the power dynamics implied in your images.
4. What language are you using for an action or event? Consider the rights holder at the centre of your messaging. If possible, consult with them.

For further information on ethical and respectful communications, check out the Dóchas Code of Images and Messaging: [www.dochas.ie/images-and-messages](http://www.dochas.ie/images-and-messages)

### 3.3 Fundraising Guidelines

There's a reason it's called FUNdraising!

You can get as creative as you like, you can brighten up the campus and give stressed out students a good laugh. Have a brainstorm and throw in any and all ideas that come to mind, pick through them and decide which will make the most money with the least effort. Have a chat with our youth activism officer about the event, they will put you in touch with the Amnesty fundraising team who have lots of experience and can give you valuable advice. Below are some ideas for raising money and at the end are instructions on how to donate the money you raise.

Plan your fundraising over the year and apply for permission to the relevant college authority for each event. In general, colleges need at least 2 months notice for a fundraising event.

### EVENTS

**Run a Slamnesty/Jamnesty/Dramnesty night!** There's nothing better than a fun cheap night out when you're a student. You could collaborate with other societies like the Dram Soc to put on a night of entertainment. You could also get in touch with the college newspaper/newsletter to market the event and why not get the marketing students involved?

Entrance fee could be cash €5 or 'Text to Donate' for €4 (see below for instructions). We can supply you with a letter to confirm that you are holding the event on Amnesty's behalf so that you can look for sponsorship from local businesses.

### BUCKET COLLECTION

- **On Campus:** We can supply you with buckets, badges, stickers, bibs and ID badges. All you need are volunteers to shake the buckets. Your college will probably need to know about this at least 2 months in advance, have a chat with the relevant authority on your campus.
- **Off Campus:** We'd need to have a chat with you about any off-campus event, some are easy, some a bit more challenging. Amnesty has to apply for permission from the Gardaí so let us know at least 2 months in advance of your event.
- **Bag packing at your local supermarket.** This is one of the easiest and most lucrative bucket collections. Approach your local supermarket and we'll give you a letter of permission.

### JAILBREAK

Jailbreak is a madcap student race around the world and is also the biggest student fundraising event of the year. Take a look at their website [jailbreakrace.com](http://jailbreakrace.com) and check out their Facebook for more info.

### ACTIVE EVENTS

Running, yoga, sleep out etc. All of these events can be done in teams or by individuals. The easiest way to fundraise for these is by using an online donation platform. JustGiving.ie is the one that we use. It's simple to set up a fundraising page and share it on social media.

## MERCHANDISE

Amnesty merchandise can make great Christmas pressies! Does your college do a Christmas market? Could you do a stall there? If not, could you set up a stall somewhere on campus? We can supply you with merchandise like T-Shirts, Christmas cards and Books and give you display items.

You could also sell badges all year round. We have a range of different badges - Amnesty gives you 20 badges and expect a minimum of €18 in return. We could have a chat about customising a badge for your college or society.

## STUDENT RAISE OFF

Have a competition over the year to see who can raise the most money – you can do this individually or in teams.

## VOLUNTEERING

Our local Amnesty groups run events like bag packing in their local supermarkets and would be delighted with your help. Please get in touch with our Community Fundraising Officer fundraising@amnesty.ie for contact details of your local group.

### Text to Donate – How it works:

1. Ask people to text the word AMNESTY to 50300
2. €4 will be taken from their phone credit
3. Make sure not to include anything else in the text message
4. You can donate three times in any 24-hour period
5. The service is limited to the Republic of Ireland

## How To Pay In The Funds Raised:

You can send the money you raised for Amnesty International Ireland by cheque, postal order, online donation or bank transfer.

By cheque or postal order, send to address below or you can drop in to Amnesty reception if you're in the area.

If you've collected coins and find that your bank won't accept them, drop into your local post office who will exchange the coins for a postal order.

### 1. ONLINE DONATION.

Go to [www.amnesty.ie/donations/students-and-youth](http://www.amnesty.ie/donations/students-and-youth).

### 2. BANK TRANSFER:

Amnesty International Ireland

Bank Details: Bank of Ireland, College Green, Dublin 2, Ireland  
A/C Name: Amnesty International Irish Section Ltd, No. 4 Current Account  
Sort Code: 90-00-17  
A/C Number: 81854058  
Swift Code/BIC: BOFIE2D  
IBAN: IE31 BOFI 9000 1781 8540 58

## 3.4 Committee Handovers

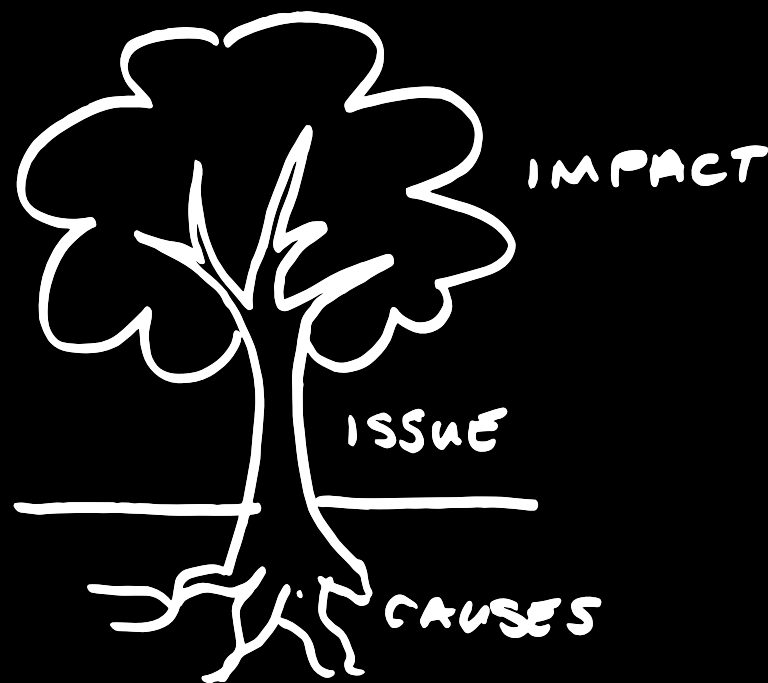
All Amnesty Student Group members eventually leave University; so, keeping groups going from one year to the next can be tricky. Committee handovers are important, as they ensure that each new committee doesn't have to start from scratch again each year. By running strong and effective handovers, Amnesty can be confident that student groups across the country will continue to get bigger, better and more impactful every academic year. We've included some tips below:

- If possible, try to hold committee elections in late March/April. By this time, the old Committee will still be around for a while to help and to pass on knowledge. Keep contact numbers and emails of last year's committee as these may be useful.
- Encourage all committee and society members not graduating to stand. Share your personal experiences of running the society and the benefits you gained!
- Make sure you get the logins and passwords to all Amnesty society accounts before the old committee disappear – for example email account, social media and bank account.
- Has your group been involved in any long-term campaigns that you'd like to continue in the future? If yes, touching base on past successes would be a great way to start planning for the following academic year.
- Each year, Amnesty societies build really good working relationships with other societies on their campus. Leave a list of societies that you worked with over the year.
- Make up your own "society pack" containing information about how your Student Union works – for example how to book rooms, what committee roles are required by the union, how to get events listed in the Student Union newsletter, and how to get funding.
- Keep a record of all events that you have organised and when they took place. Take photos of your events and include these. Record what was good about the event – as well as any problems that arose. Make it the task of one of your officers to update these records.
- If you have storage space, make sure it is kept in order and that the new Committee knows where it is and what is in it.
- As well as being officially affiliated to your Student Union, Amnesty require that every student group affiliate to us too and become Youth members of Amnesty. The old committee should make sure the incoming committee members are aware of this.

Before taking action as an Amnesty group, it's important to remember that you are a representative of Amnesty International Ireland. Have a look on our website or speak to the Youth Activism Officer about our campaigns and how you can learn more about issues that you are interested in and learn about Amnesty's position on that issue.

# SECTION 4

## EVENT AND ACTION PLANNING



### 4.1 Taking Action

There are many ways to take action, from running events on your campus or in your community, to joining or organising a demonstration, street action or protest, or simply by talking to friends and family about the issues that you care about. This section will guide you through some ways that you and your group can take action.

#### Activity

##### 1. WHAT ISSUES DO YOU THINK ARE HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT IN THE WORLD RIGHT NOW?

- Brainstorm individually try write as many issues as possible down or draw them if that's easier! 10mins
- Come together as a group and talk about some of the issues that you came up with. Are there any issues that a few of you in the group thought of? 15mins
- Pick the top three issues that you discussed as a group. Bearing in mind that these issues can be local issues or global issues 5 mins

(A local issue has a direct effect in your community or a disproportionate effect in your community. An example could be 'the lack of diversity in your student group'. A global issue on the other hand is an issue that affects the world, although can still be felt in your community. An example of a global issue is climate change).

Depending on group size, pick one or two issues to work on. For the purpose of this exercise, pick one issue to work on.

##### 2. GET INFORMED!

- Before deciding how to work on an issue it is important to learn more about the issue
- Ask Amnesty International Ireland for information on a particular issue or campaign, research online and in your library
- Invite an expert in to talk about the issue in more depth. For example, if you are interested in hearing more about the experience of living in Direct Provision, reach out to Amnesty and other organisations that work with individuals in Direct Provision.

##### 3. BRAINSTORM THE ISSUE FURTHER

- Write the issue on a large sheet of paper and think about the problems associated with the issue
- E.g. Direct Provision - Right to work, physical and mental health, the legal process
- The problem Tree tool is useful for this. Map out the causes of the problem (roots), the issue at the trunk and the impacts at the leaves. (opposite page)

**4. BRAINSTORM WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT THE ISSUE YOU HAVE CHOSEN**

There are many ways to do this, here are some examples:

- a) Alphabet brainstorming – Write all the letters of the alphabet on a flipchart, think of an activity for each letter
- b) Timed brainstorming – You only have 4 mins to brainstorm. GO!
- c) Silent brainstorming – No one talks. Everyone has a pen. All brainstorm on the same flipchart
- d) Picture brainstorming – Stop brainstorming and flick through magazines. Search for an image that you particularly like or that gives you ideas for activities. Go back to your brainstorm and see what happens!

Now come back to the group and chat about what ideas you came up with. Are there any issues that stand out to you?

**5. PICK ONE IDEA TO GO WITH, AND ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING:**

- What will we do?
- How will we do it?
- Who are we doing it for?
- What do we need to do it?
- What does a successful outcome look like?
- Are the other groups or individuals that we can work with?
- What human rights change will happen?

**4.2 How Do You Ensure Your Activism Is Effective?<sup>5</sup>**

**ENGAGE WITH RIGHTS HOLDERS**

Rights holders should be at the centre of our decision-making and campaigning. Rights holders are also fundamentally activists for change. A key to your success is to work in empowering ways – creating space for rights holders to express their opinions and voice their demands. This approach is about learning from each other and, where appropriate, enabling rights holders to strengthen their skills and knowledge so that they are effectively acting on their own behalf. To sum up, it's about working with rights holders, not working for them.

**GAIN ACTIVIST 'OWNERSHIP'**

As a student society, the strength of your power comes from your members. An effective way for your membership to remain an effective force is to give all activists a central role in campaign implementation in order to generate a sense of commitment and ownership. You should analyse the skills of your members and use them strategically.

5 Amended from: Amnesty International (2011): Seven Action Points for Effective Activism: Lessons from the Impact Assessment of Amnesty International's Activism, Available at: <https://www.framework.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/AI-Effective-Activism-Booklet-signed.pdf>

**MAKE RELATIONSHIPS COUNT**

Working with external partners, such as other college societies or NGOs, contributes to effective activism as it enables you to have a greater reach. You can have access to a wider range of people, an expanded realm of influence, and can build a greater constituency for human rights. Having strong relationships with others can help you achieve more and offer more opportunities for human rights activists to engage, as you pool your resources and skills.

**INNOVATE AND TAKE RISKS**

Get creative... if you stay static in your activism, most authorities stay static in their response to it! Effective activism often involves taking that “extra step” – moving beyond the comfortable and the familiar. Identifying the action that is most appropriate to achieving your desired change could involve challenging yourself to act in new ways, or test the limits you may be setting for yourself.

**ENSURE IMPACT THROUGH REFLECTION AND LEARNING**

None of your efforts will be complete if you don't learn from experience and improve your work as a result. Identifying what difference you're making and how is the first step to ensure this happens. Check out Section Five of this booklet to discover how to ensure human rights impact through reflection and learning.

**WORKING WITH OTHERS**

The following are some of the examples of barriers to engaging rights holders, partners and other activists in campaigning. These barriers relate to institutionalised structures of unequal power relations, exclusion and discrimination. These intersect with each other, making it important for those working with human rights to be mindful of these cross-cutting issues.

**GENDER**

In all your activities, remember to discuss representation and participation by different gender groups.

**MARGINALISED AND VULNERABLE GROUPS OR COMMUNITIES**

- Be sensitive to the challenges specific groups may face in participating in your activities and any specific needs they may have. Talk to people in advance and ask what would help make them feel comfortable. Avoid emphasising people's victimisation over their sense of empowerment.

**AGE**

- College campuses are home to people of many different age groups. In your activities, remember to discuss representation and participation by different age groups - this could also include having a first year or mature student representation on your committee.



### SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Think about what makes people uncomfortable and what you can do to create a nonthreatening environment. If participants in activities lack the confidence to speak in big groups, you can split them into smaller groups. Make use of informal icebreakers to help make everyone at ease, rather than diving right into the subject matter.

### COMMUNICATION

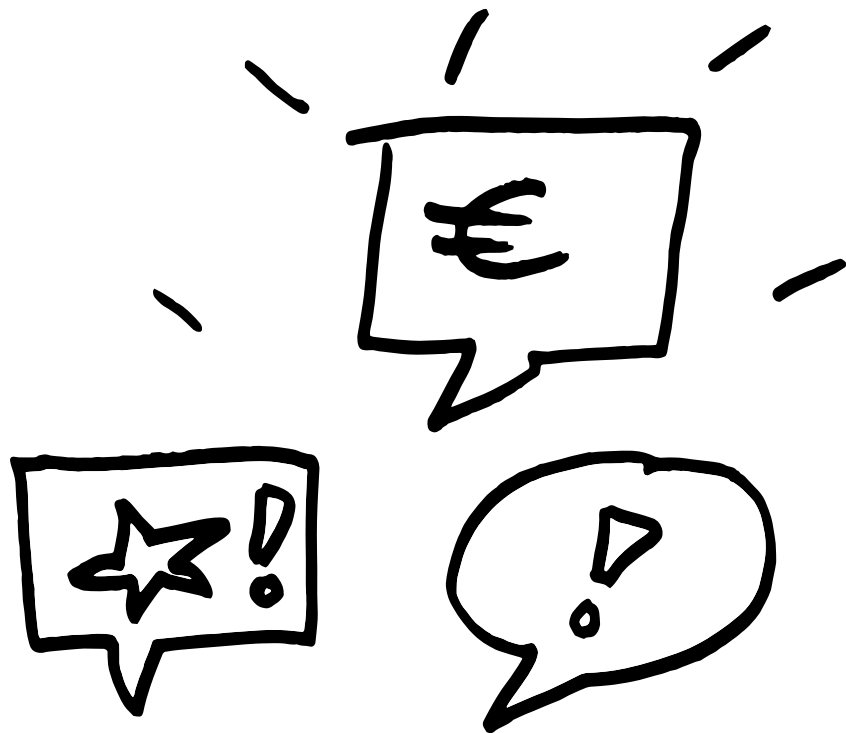
- Create different options for engagement to ensure that your messaging is reaching different kinds of people. Communicate in clear language; avoid jargon, abbreviations and any language that may intimidate participants.

### LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

- Consider the perspective of the group when deciding the best location for any activity. Make sure that the location is easy and safe to reach and that it is not too expensive and accessible to everyone if taking place off-campus.

### FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- Try to organize your activities in a way that they will not have financial implications for participants, such as inviting a rights holder to speak to your group. This could include considering travelling to them rather than asking them to come to you. However, if that is not possible, you should compensate participants for any financial losses they may have. Most Student Union' have a budget for inviting guests onto the campus and can offer help.



## 4.3 Event Planning

There are an unlimited number of events that you can run as an Amnesty Group. Some ideas have been tried and tested, whilst there is also room to try something new! Below you will find some ideas for events, which can be adapted and changed to suit you!

#### Things to consider:

1. What is the aim of the event?
2. What resources do you have/need – for example, do you have enough money?
3. When do you want to host it?
4. Where will you host it?
5. How will you advertise and promote the event?
6. What impact will it have? – for example more petition signatures, engaging more people with human rights.
7. Can you reach out to other societies or groups to get onboard?

#### Before deciding what event to go with, have a brainstorm with your committee:

1. Think about events that you have gone to in the past that you enjoyed or that worked well.
2. Think outside the walls of your university, sometimes having an event in your local community can be really beneficial.
3. Could you work with other Amnesty groups in Ireland, could you come together and host a JAMnesty gig?
4. See if there are any established events and/or awareness-raising weeks organised by your Student Union, which you might be able to link up with – for example Refugee Week or LGBTI Week. You may be able to get free publicity and resources through these.

## 4.4 Event Ideas

### SOLIDARITY DINNER<sup>6</sup>

Solidarity Dinners are when people gather together to share food, stories and friendship. The aim is to bring people together in order to build links and connections, to get to know each other, to learn from each other and to welcome new people to a community. Organising and being part of a solidarity dinner is a great way to make people feel at home in Ireland and to learn about the cultures of new people arriving here.

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International (2018), Welcoming Communities: A 'How To' Guide for Amnesty International Activists on Creating Welcoming Communities. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.ie/welcoming-communities/>

## HOSTING A TALK OR PANEL DISCUSSION

Inviting a human rights defender or expert to your campus can leave a lasting impact on students and motivate them to take action for human rights. Contact a speaker or an Amnesty staff member well in advance and outline your reasons for wishing to invite them to your campus. Indicate a suggested time frame for their visit and what exactly you hope they could discuss in their presentation to the students. You could also contact lecturers from relevant subjects who may be willing to talk to your group about Human Rights Issues – for example Politics, International Relations or Human Geography Departments are a good place to look. Throughout the year, Amnesty may also organise speaker tours for human rights defenders. It is also advisable that you finish the event by asking the speaker what action students can take to help their cause.

## HOSTING A JAMNESTY EVENT

A live music Jamnesty event is a great way to raise money and make a noise about Amnesty International.

## THE VENUE

The venue can make or break your event so make sure you choose the right one. Student Unions often have venues you can use for free or at a discount. Staging events off campus is potentially more challenging but increases your options and may help draw a broader crowd. Pubs make excellent venues and often come with their own fan bases.

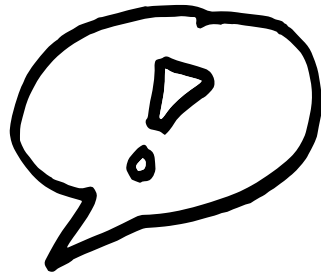
## THE BANDS/DJS

Colleges are full of musical talent so use personal contacts and get in touch with student societies. Watch bands perform live or during a practice session to help you gauge their appeal. It may also be worth getting DJs to perform on the night. Find out the bands' equipment needs and what they can provide for the night. Emphasise that proceeds go to Amnesty, and that by performing for free, the musicians are supporting our work. They may also be willing to speak about their support for human rights and a particular campaign onstage.

## HOSTING A FILM/DOCUMENTARY NIGHT

Screening a film is a great way to use a popular form of entertainment to reach out to people who are concerned about an issue. An Amnesty film night is even better, allowing you to educate and inspire others, giving them the opportunity to take concrete action, and to promote action for human rights. There are plenty of human rights-themed feature films and excellent documentaries out there to choose from. Decide how you want to introduce the film's theme (don't forget to mention Amnesty's position on the subject). Include time after the screening for discussion, mention any upcoming campaigning activities people can get involved in and try to include an action opportunity. This could simply be asking those in attendance to sign an amnesty petition, preferably one that relates to the film just shown.

Sophia from UCD's society 2018 recalls their film screening of Syria as being very memorable. They also asked the film's director to skype in and they could ask him questions!



## HOSTING AN AmnesTea EVENT

AmnesTEA is a simple event. Bake some cakes, get some hot water, tea bags, coffee and a few biscuits and you have everything you need to raise some funds and get some petition signatures. This action can tie in easily with any campaign and you can use it as an opportunity to network and raise awareness and interest in Amnesty International's work.

See if you can get some sponsorship for some sweet things to attract attention. Ask a local shop or well-known brand. Also, make sure to set up somewhere visible where you will get a lot of foot traffic. Lunch time is a good time to catch people looking for cheap snacks. This could be a weekly or bi-monthly event, a great way for new members to join and learn more about Amnesty. Amnesty can also provide materials for your event!

Amnesty UCD 2018 had a great idea of hosting regular themed AmnesTEA events, where members could choose topics to talk about each week.

## SPEED-FRIENDING EVENT

Can you make a new friend in just a few minutes? We think you can! Speed-friending involves icebreaker activities and it is a great way to reach out to students on campus and possibly sign up some new members to your society. Make sure everyone writes their name on a sticker or nametag when they arrive and have light refreshments and music to create a relaxed atmosphere. Speed-friending events can be used to educate students about Amnesty and human rights.

2018's Trinity College Dublin's society set up lots of Jenga games around the room and split attendees up into different groups. However, the human rights catch was that each wooden block had facts about Amnesty and current campaigns written on them! They also organised a lot of 'speed activism' nights with other civil and political societies. At the event, a statement would be read out in relation to human rights – for example I think the death penalty should be abolished. Participants go to either side of the room depending on whether they disagree or agree. Participants then sit back in a circle in the middle and are given the opportunity to argue their case and their reasoning. A great example of this kind of event is the series called 'Middle Ground' which can be found on the YouTube page 'Jubilee'.

## PETITIONING

Every day, Amnesty receives information about prisoners and other individuals at risk around the world through the Urgent Action Network. This network provides a swift worldwide mobilisation of people ready to take rapid action at short notice when somebody is in immediate danger, or when there is a human rights crisis. Information about these Urgent Actions should be distributed to your membership by email and highlighted on social media accounts. However, you are also encouraged to gather petition signatures for these cases. The signatures you collect can help put pressure on governments and decision-makers around the world. Petition sheets can be obtained by contacting the Amnesty youth officer. Why not have a few petitions at every event? Make sure to hand in or post petitions to the Amnesty International Ireland office and keep them in a locked and safe space until you can deliver them to Amnesty. Idea: A great idea is to pin facts relating to the case on the chest of members involved in petitioning. For example, if petitioning on a death penalty case this could include: 'no physical evidence'. You can also pin the person's name or the title of the petition on the back of the member's t-shirts.

LETTER-WRITING

Similar to petitioning, writing letters to those in authority is a fantastic way to stand up for someone in trouble and show them your support. It also sends a message to authorities that people around the world are watching what they do and demand change. Amnesty International’s Urgent Action cases always include details of who you could write to and what points you should make, so you can be as clear and concise as possible. For each case, Amnesty have template letters you can use or read for inspiration.

Every December, Amnesty supporters across the globe also write millions of letters for those whose basic human rights are being attacked through an event known as Write for Rights. Every year, we ask supporters to write two letters. One is to the person in authority – it could be a president or head of police – who can help make change happen. And the other letter is to the person (or group of people) we are fighting for, so they know we will never forget them. Write for Rights can act as inspiring and impactful event to end your first semester. Amnesty will give you a pack with materials including posters, pens, stickers and case files.

*“I can’t emphasize enough how important getting letters from people around the world is. It gave me a sense of worth. It gave me strength – convinced me that what I was doing was right.”*  
- Albert Woodfox, freed in February 2016 after nearly 44 years in solitary confinement in a US prison. Supporters took more than 650,000 actions for his release through Write for Rights 2015.

REACHING OUT TO YOUR LOCAL TDS/POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES

Reaching your local TD or Representatives is a great way of advocating for human rights change. This can be done by emailing, letter writing or even tweeting!

Pointers for meeting with decision makers:

Before meeting your TD, make sure to do some research to find out their position on the issue you care about, as well as the position of their party. Decide what you want to achieve – what is your aim? Do you have something specific you want them to do, such as attending an event, or making a supportive public statement?

During your meeting:

Begin by informing them of your name, contact information, and your college. It is most effective to keep your presentation brief and to the point and make your reason for contacting them clear. Politely but firmly, state the specific action (ask or demand) you want the official to take and request a time specific response. The reason for why the politician must take the action should be made clear and telling a brief version of your own story and experiences to illustrate why action is so necessary can be useful. At the end of the meeting thank the official/staff member and leave documentation including a short summary of what you are asking them to do (no more than 2 pages). Aim to follow up your meeting with a thank you email or letter, in which you reiterate your ask.



JOIN JAILBREAK

Jailbreak is Ireland’s largest student-run charity challenge which takes place annually around February. All funds raised are split equally between Amnesty International Ireland and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Originating in Trinity College in 2013, Jailbreak has now expanded to include many other third level institutions countrywide. During Jailbreak, students in teams of two have thirty-six hours to escape the starting point in Dublin and race toward ‘Location X,’ which is revealed over the course of the competition with the help of several clues. However, teams may not spend any of their own money in order to reach the destination. During the competition, teams raise the profile of the two charities in a competition against other teams with two honourable goals: Get to Location X first and raise the most money and awareness for human rights.

POSTER MAKING/ATTENDING MARCHES

Throughout the year, there are many demonstrations and protests in Dublin and beyond in relation to campaign issues that Amnesty International works on. These events normally draw a large student crowd as young people bring a lot of passion to social change in Ireland. Organising for your members to attend some of these demonstrations and protests can be a fantastic way to get your voices heard and inject a lot of energy into your college society. In advance of a demonstration or march, it can be a good idea to collaborate with other student groups in your college that will be attending to organise a ‘poster-making workshop’. Cardboard boxes can often be sourced from your college shops, bars and restaurants! Go to an arts and crafts shop and buy lots of paint, markers, glitter and other materials for students to use. Make sure you keep all leftover materials at the end so that they can be reused for later events.

POETRY SLAM/SPOKEN WORD

Hold a Poetry Slam or Spoken word event. This can be done in conjunction with other university societies in order to increase event reach. You could make it thematic with issues like ‘Freedom’ and ‘Justice’ and allow people to be as creative as they wish in exploring this theme. To add a fundraising element to this event, charge a small entrance fee and if possible see if a local business will sponsor you with a prize incentive for the overall winner.

WIKIPEDIA EDIT

Did you know that only 17 per cent of notable profiles on Wikipedia are of women? Even fewer are Women Human Rights Defenders. You can host a WikipediaEdit, run by a representative from Wikipedia. Making women or other human rights defenders more visible among Wikipedia’s millions of daily users will also make it harder for existing powers to ignore, repress, attack and silence them. You could host the event with journalism societies or college newspapers. For more info on these kinds of events, email your Youth Activism Officer.

### PHOTOGRAPHY/Art Exhibition

Why not host an exhibition with the photography or visual arts society in your college? You could host an exhibition on the theme of 'Discrimination' or 'Human Rights' and do an open call for submissions. All you need is a room with some wall space, something to stick the photographs up with and some food and drink to attract more people!

### ARTIVISM

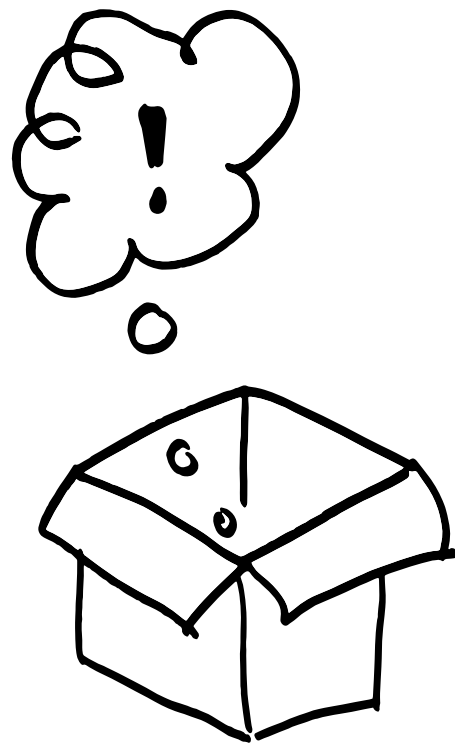
Art + Activism! Artivism is a great way to get more people involved in your work. You could host an artivism workshop, invite an artist in to speak about their art and how it contributes to social change. You could also collaborate with another College Society, like a visual art society or Knitting soc, and create some art pieces around a particular issue.

The 2018 UCD society hosted 'Draw a Human Rights Future' exploring how we can create a visual representation of a brighter future for human rights.

### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

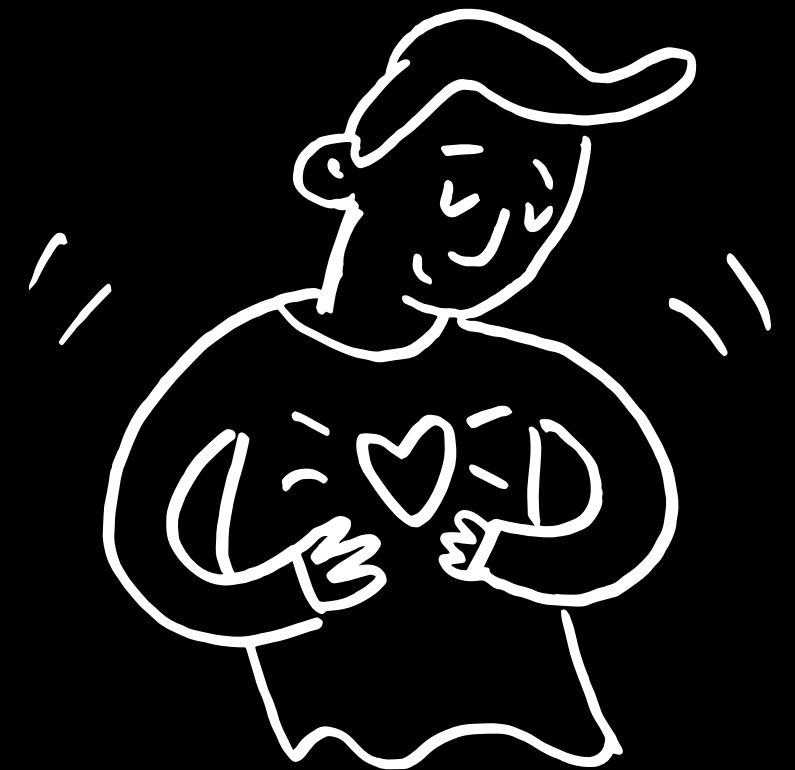
These actions are only suggested ideas and you are free to get as creative as you like! A creative event idea by TCD, 2018: One of their most successful turnouts was a 'tie dye' event. Committee members bought some plain white t-shirts and purchased some dye. The event was held in the college bar. If people turned up and paid €2 to join the society, they were taught how to tie dye, had a bit of fun and were able to take the t-shirts home with them afterwards!

An exciting trip for DCU, 2017: Some student groups acquire funding from their SU to travel abroad. DCU travelled to the United Nations offices in Geneva and attended a human rights film festival!



# SECTION 5

## REFLECTION & SELF-CARE





## 5.1 Practicing Self-Care

Activism can often be seen as a selfless task and we push ourselves to go further because we know our work is important. However, as activists, it is important to be aware of burnout and self-care. Campaigning for human rights can be difficult at times, so it's important to know the signs of burnout and what you can do to prevent it and how you can take action to help.

### WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout can relate to psychological and physical fatigue, or that feeling of being exhausted or stressed. Burnout generally persists overtime. You may have one or many of these symptoms:

Anxiety, Guilt, Isolation, Irritability, Anger, Sadness, Pessimism, Disappointment, Numbness, Fatigue/insomnia, Lack of motivation, Physical pain/sickness, Feeling hopeless, Feelings of anger or frustration, Compassion fatigue<sup>7</sup>

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Burnout is common and there are many steps that you can take to help!

- Increasingly we get news and information online via social media. While this keeps us informed, it's difficult to truly disconnect and second hand trauma and working on heavy issues can have a real effect. In order to avoid internalising the negatives effects of issues we are trying to combat, we must set time aside to switch off. Take a break and do things that give you joy such as meeting up with friends, watching your favourite film, reading a book or taking a walk and listening to some music.
- It's also ok to say no! It can be hard as a committed activist to say no to actions and events, but in order to be a good activist you need to be able to look after yourself as well! As students, it is very important that you put your studies first when you need to. Grabbing a diary and writing down your tasks for the day and events is a simple but effective way to assist your time management.
- Learning how to campaign effectively can ease tensions caused during campaigning. Fully inform yourself of the issue at hand. Host preliminary meetings, have fact sheets, direct your activists and members to helpful links and websites. We aren't expected to know everything, and we shouldn't beat ourselves up for this. Dedicate time to reflect afterwards and chat about any positive or negative experiences.
- Mindfulness is up for interpretation. Certain people can sit down and meditate for an hour and other can't. Regardless, being aware of your feelings and particularly how you are coping as an activist is what matters. Simply asking the questions am I okay? Do I need to talk to someone about how I feel? Do I need a break? Can be useful.



- Such as the title suggests, self-care points to the self. However, we can't forget that we work together as a group. Spending 5 minutes of each weekly meeting speaking about self-care and checking up with each other is a nice idea. It is important that all members are also aware of the wider supports within Amnesty International Ireland and have access to relevant contact information.
- Finally, be kind to yourself! Treat yourself how you treat your best friend or the people you love. You are doing your part to make the world a better place and you are a wonderful human being! As human rights activists, we must practice what we preach for others.

## 5.2 Evaluating Action & Reflecting on Learning

Effective activism comes from learning and reflecting on our activism on an ongoing basis. If we don't assess how our activism is contributing to human rights changes and what difference we're making we won't know if our efforts are effective. This process doesn't have to turn into a large piece of work– it's a way of working to learn from our experience.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REFLECT AND EVALUATE?

Reflection is about sitting down and listening to each other, asking critical questions on your work, practice and progress and overall learning from our experiences so that you can improve your future actions and events. It focuses on understanding whether particular actions have been successful or not, and on why they have been relatively successful or unsuccessful in particular contexts. Evaluations also allow you to share the outcomes of our work. Actions can also be about group cohesion and growing society membership!

Asking the following guiding questions can be useful:

- Is or was the action a good idea, considering the human rights situation that needs improvement? Does it deal with the priorities of the people affected? Why/why not?
- Have we achieved what we set out to achieve? Why/why not?
- What can be done next time to be more effective?
- Could a different type of action have addressed the same issue more effectively?
- What intended and unintended, positive and negative changes did the action produce?
- How has the change affected different stakeholders, in particular the targeted rights holders?
- Will the positive impacts continue once your action is completed? Why/why not?

**WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?**

Gather information on how your activities worked to achieve your goal and share these with Amnesty Ireland where relevant.

For example:

- The number of petitions signed
- Comments of people that participated in your activities
- Responses or engagement from politicians
- Number of likes, shares and comments on social media
- Number of people attending events
- Amount of money raised

**BUT REMEMBER!**

***“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted”***

*– attributed to Albert Einstein.*

Although an action may not have an immediate quantifiable human rights impact, this does not mean that it had no impact. Through your actions as a student activist group, you are enabling the growth of one another, the expression of your essential selves and values and your potential to lead as human rights activists.

# SECTION 6

## FURTHER INFORMATION



USEFUL WEBSITES

Human Rights & Education Resources

Amnesty International Ireland	<a href="http://www.amnesty.ie">www.amnesty.ie</a>
Amnesty International	<a href="http://www.amnesty.org">www.amnesty.org</a>
National Youth Council of Ireland	<a href="http://www.youth.ie">www.youth.ie</a>
	<a href="http://www.oneworldweek.ie">www.oneworldweek.ie</a>
Sustainable Development Goals	<a href="http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment">www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment</a>
Model UN Programme	<a href="http://www.nmun.org">www.nmun.org</a>
80:20 Educating & Acting for a Better World	<a href="http://www.8020.ie">www.8020.ie</a>
Irish Development Education A`ssociation	<a href="http://www.ideaonline.ie">www.ideaonline.ie</a>

International Human Rights Organisations

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	<a href="http://www.ohchr.org">www.ohchr.org</a>
United Nations	<a href="http://www.un.org/en/about-un">www.un.org/en/about-un</a>
Council of Europe	<a href="http://www.coe.int">www.coe.int</a>
Human Rights Watch	<a href="http://www.hrw.org">www.hrw.org</a>
Frontline Defenders	<a href="http://www.frontlinedefenders.org">www.frontlinedefenders.org</a>

International Human Rights Organisations

Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission	<a href="http://www.ihrec.ie">www.ihrec.ie</a>
Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC)	<a href="http://www.flac.ie">www.flac.ie</a>
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	<a href="http://www.nihrc.org">www.nihrc.org</a>
Migrant Rights Centre	<a href="http://www.mrci.ie">www.mrci.ie</a>

Irish Government Contact Information

The Oireachtas	<a href="http://www.oireachtas.ie">www.oireachtas.ie</a>
Local TDs	<a href="http://www.kildarestreet.com/tds/">www.kildarestreet.com/tds/</a>
	<a href="http://www.whoismytd.com">www.whoismytd.com</a>

Other

Ideas + Inspiration	<a href="http://www.pinterest.ie">www.pinterest.ie</a>
Design (Great for designing posters and event pictures)	<a href="http://www.canva.com">www.canva.com</a>
Inspiration + Motivation	<a href="http://www.Ted.com">www.Ted.com</a>
Video Editing + Watching	<a href="http://www.vimeo.com">www.vimeo.com</a>
Amnesty International Youtube	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/AmnestyInternational">https://www.youtube.com/user/AmnestyInternational</a>

HUMAN RIGHTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

24 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of Education
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FEBRUARY

TBC	Jailbreak
20 <sup>th</sup>	World Day of Social Justice

MARCH

8 <sup>th</sup>	International Women’s Day
20 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of Happiness
21 <sup>st</sup>	International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

APRIL

7 <sup>th</sup>	World Health Day
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Earth Day

MAY

3 <sup>rd</sup>	World Press Freedom Day
15 <sup>th</sup>	International Day for Families
16 <sup>th</sup>	Global Accessibility Awareness Day
17 <sup>th</sup>	International Day Against Homophobia

JUNE

4 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
12 <sup>th</sup>	World Day Against Child Labour
20 <sup>th</sup>	World Refugee Day
26 <sup>th</sup>	International Day in Support of Victims Against Torture

JULY

11 <sup>th</sup>	World Youth Skills Day
30 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of Friendship

AUGUST

9 <sup>th</sup>	International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples
12 <sup>th</sup>	International Youth Day
19 <sup>th</sup>	World Humanitarian Day

SEPTEMBER

21 <sup>st</sup>	International Day of Peace
28 <sup>th</sup>	Right to Information Day

OCTOBER

2 <sup>nd</sup>	International Day of Non-Violence
10 <sup>th</sup>	World Mental Health Day
10 <sup>th</sup>	World Day Against the Death Penalty
16 <sup>th</sup>	World Food Day
17 <sup>th</sup>	International Day for Eradication of Poverty
26 <sup>th</sup>	Intersex Awareness Day

NOVEMBER

20 <sup>th</sup>	Universal Children’s Day
25 <sup>th</sup>	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

DECEMBER

TBD	Write for Rights
1 <sup>st</sup>	World Aids Day
5 <sup>th</sup>	International Volunteer Day
2 <sup>nd</sup>	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
3 <sup>rd</sup>	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
10 <sup>th</sup>	Human Rights Day
18 <sup>th</sup>	International Migrants Day
20 <sup>th</sup>	International Human Solidarity Day



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This resource is full of tips and guidance on how to run an **Amnesty International student group**. There are a number of activities and ideas that will help you and your group move towards positive change. Keep us updated with how your group is doing and we welcome any suggestions or comments you wish to make!

