



Write for Rights



Action Guide 2019

Contents

- What is Write for Rights?
- This year's ten cases
- Ways to get involved
- Take Action
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Success Stories 2018
- Contact us

What is Write for Rights?

Thank you for joining us for Write for Rights 2019!

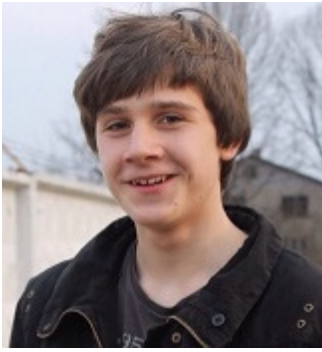
Write for Rights is Amnesty International's largest annual human rights campaign. Every December, Amnesty supporters across the globe will write millions of letters for those whose basic human rights are being attacked. They are people like you, continuing a long tradition of writing letters to right some of the world's biggest wrongs. And it's not just letters – it could be petitions, emails, Tweets, Facebook posts, photos, postcards.

This year's ten cases are all about young activists and young people experiencing severe human rights violations. Many have stepped in where adults have failed to lead and are facing terrible danger as a result. For example, Yasaman Aryani has been imprisoned for standing up to Iran's forced veiling laws and speaking up of her hopes for a future when all women would have the freedom to choose what to wear. Jose Adrian, another case, was wrongfully arrested and beaten after walking through a street fight.

Here's how we help people through Write for Rights: millions of people, like you, across the globe each write a letter to the government official responsible for the case. All these letters pile up in their offices and can't be ignored – imagine receiving a million letters! We supplement these letters with email actions, lobbying, media attention and social media to increase the pressure on those officials. We also write "solidarity" notes to the people we are trying to help, or their families, to give them hope.

Remember that every letter counts. Even if you only have time to write one letter, it can make a difference. You are joining a movement of people around the world using the power of collective action – millions of us, each doing a small part – to help people. Because of us, prison doors will open, families will be reunited, justice will be achieved, and human rights activists will be safe and supported in continuing their important work to change the world.

This year's ten cases



BELARUS - EMIL OSTROVKO

Jailed teenager yearns for freedom

Emil Ostrovko was 17 when he was arrested and badly beaten by police officers. Now 19, he is serving an eight-year prison sentence for a minor drug offence, crushing his plans to go to university. He is one of thousands of children and young people serving long prison sentences in Belarus for petty drugs offences. They are forced to do hard labour for long hours and treated more harshly than other offenders. Call for his release!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/demand-justice-for-emil/>

GREECE – SEAN BINDER & SARAH MARDINI

Facing jail for saving lives

In Greece, you can go to jail for saving lives. It happened to rescue workers Sarah Mardini, 24, and Seán Binder, 25. They are activists and trained rescuers who volunteered as rescue workers for an organisation in Lesbos, spotting and rescuing boats in distress at sea and helping refugees. They were stopped by the Greek police while driving and patrolling the island as part of their activities and are accused of spying, people smuggling and belonging to a criminal organisation. If found guilty, they could go to prison for 25 years. Tell Greece to drop the charges against Seán and Sarah!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/demand-the-charges-against-sarah-and-sean-are-dropped/>



IRAN – YASAMAN ARYANI

16 years in prison for speaking up for women's rights

Yasaman Aryani, an actor who loves climbing mountains, dared to defy Iran's forced veiling laws in Iran. With her hair boldly uncovered, she handed out white flowers to women passengers. A video of her brave act of defiance went viral in March 2019, prompting Iran's authorities to arrest her. Now Yasaman has been sentenced to a shocking 16-year prison term – all because she believes women should have the freedom to choose what they wear. Tell Iran to free Yasaman now!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/help-release-yasaman-from-prison/>



PHILIPPINES – MARINEL SUMOOK UBALDO

Fighting to save her community from climate change

Marinel Sumook Ubaldo was 16 when she knew she had to fight to find a way to protect herself and her community from the disastrous effects of the climate crisis. She survived the deadly Typhoon Yolanda in 2013 to become a leading youth activist, dedicated to ensuring governments around the world confront the climate crisis and tackle its effects on her community, and others like them. Demand support for climate change survivors!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/join-marinel-s-calls-for-climate-justice/>





CANADA – GRASSY NARROWS YOUTH

Growing up with mercury poisoning

Over the past 50 years, toxic mercury has poisoned rivers and fish vital to the Indigenous Anishinaabe community of Grassy Narrows. Because of government inaction, generations of young people have grown up with devastating health problems and the loss of their cultural traditions. In 2017, the government promised to deal with the mercury crisis “once and for all” – the community’s youth are determined to get them to keep their promises. Demand a healthy future for Grassy Narrows Youth!

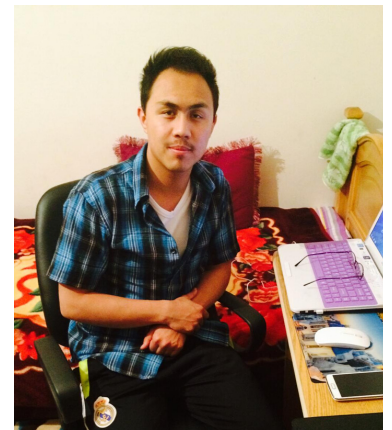
<https://www.amnesty.ie/get-justice-for-grassy-narrows-youth/>

CHINA – YILIYASIJIANG REHEMAN

Torn from his family

Yiliyasijiang Reheman and his wife Mairinisha Abuduaini were expecting their second baby when Yiliyasijiang went missing. Both were studying in Egypt when in July 2017, the government rounded up about 200 Uyghurs – a predominantly Muslim ethnic group from China’s Xinjiang region – forcing some back to China. Mairinisha believes her husband is now among up to 1 million mainly Muslim people locked up in secret camps in China. Tell China to release Yiliyasijiang!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/help-us-find-yiliyasijiang-reheman/>



MEXICO – JOSE ADRIAN

Wrongfully arrested and beaten by police

José Adrián was walking home from school, when police jumped him and threw him against their car. Adrián had stumbled onto the aftermath of a clash between a group of youths that ended up damaging a police car. Police arrested only Adrián, a Mayan boy, with no explanation. They strung him up and beat him, then released him after making his parents pay a fine and the cost of damage to the police car. He is one of many youths who are discriminated against for being Indigenous, poor and young. Demand justice for Adrián!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/demand-justice-for-jose-adrian/>



NIGERIA – NASU ABDULAZIZ

Shot while defending his home

Nasu Abdulaziz loves football and cycling – normal pastimes for a young person in Nigeria. But Nasu's circumstances are nowhere near normal. Between November 2016 and April 2017, Nasu and his community in Lagos were evicted without warning from their century-old settlement. Men came with guns and bulldozers, and razed their homes to the ground, leaving 30,000 people homeless, including Nasu. Today, Nasu and his peers are demanding to live in dignity. Tell Nigeria to protect Nasu's right to a home!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/join-nasus-call-to-end-enforced-evictions/>



EGYPT – IBRAHIM EZZ EL-DIN

Disappeared from the streets of Cairo

Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, a researcher on housing rights, was arrested on 11 June 2019 near his home in Cairo. But the police say they don't have him, and his family have no information about where he is or what has happened to him. It gets worse: he's the fifth person linked to his organization, which documents and campaigns against human rights violations in Egypt, to have been arrested. Across Egypt, hundreds of people are being disappeared by the state simply because they or their families oppose or criticize the government. Seek his safe return!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/demand-to-know-where-ibrahim-is/>



SOUTH SUDAN – MAGAI MATIOP NGONG

Sentenced to death at 15

Magai Matiop Ngong was in high school when he was sentenced to death for murder in an incident which, he told the judge, was an accident. Only 15 years old, he did not have a lawyer to help him until after his trial. Two years later, at 17, he is on death row in Juba central prison, surviving on the hope that he will win his appeal against his execution and get back to school. Tell South Sudan to cancel Magai's death sentence!

<https://www.amnesty.ie/help-free-magai-from-death-row/>



Ways to get involved

Step 1: Sign up if you haven't already!

To receive a pack of materials and ask any questions you might have, contact letterwriting@amnesty.ie

Step 2: Write and report your letters by **31 January 2020**

Use the Action Guide, Case Sheets, Sample Letters and other tools below to write your letters. Write one short appeal letter on each case to the government official we are trying to persuade and one short solidarity letter or card to the person we are trying to help, to give them or their family hope.

Step 3: Mail your letters by **31 January 2020**

You can send all letters in one envelope to Amnesty Ireland, FREEPOST, 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2. Please write your name or the name of your school or group as the sender on the envelope.

Are you a teacher? If so, please consider holding Write for Rights with your class.

Are you a student? Why not run a Write for Rights coffee morning /evening and ask people to write letters for this year's cases!

Let us know if you write your letters, email letterwriting@amnesty.ie



Take Action

Have five minutes?

- Write letters and sign postcards for the Write for Rights cases.
- Do a photo action. Take a photo of your letter or of an event that you have hosted on social media. Sharing your messages of solidarity with a photo on social media can be really effective and can encourage others to the same!
- Petition! We have petitions for all of the cases, if you are interested in collecting signatures for us let us know and we can support you.

Have a bit longer?

- Host a coffee morning. Ask some friends, family or colleagues to come along to a coffee morning. Have tea, coffee and some treats and ask attendees to write letters to some (or all of this years cases). Materials: Tea, coffee, posters, paper, pens, info packs, posters
- Hold an event at work at lunchtime and ask people to sign action cards or write letters
- Host an info talk. Interested in one of our cases in particular? Why not host an info talk where you invite someone to speak about the case or cases and then ask people to write letters or sign some petitions? This could be an Amnesty staff person or volunteer, or someone engaged in activism around that particular human rights issues in Ireland.

There are many other ways to take action for Write for Rights in your school, in your college or university or in your community. Here are some examples:

- Attend a Christmas market. Is there a Christmas market in your community, school or college? Why not ask to have an Amnesty stall and ask people to sign some of our petitions. It's an effective way to get more people engaged with Amnesty and in our Write for Rights cases! Email letterwriting@amnesty.ie to receive more info and to get some petitions
- Set up a present-wrapping stall or combine a letter-writing event with selling drinks and sweets in your school, college or community!
- If you are in University or in school, why not ask if you can speak at the beginning of a lecture or visit other classes and speak about what Write for Rights is and about our cases. Email letterwriting@amnesty.ie and we can send you more information about a specific case.

Human Rights Day is on 10 December and can be used as a hook to get people involved in the campaign!

Frequently Asked Questions

How many letters do I write and how do I send them?

You can write both a letter to the government official and a solidarity note to each case. So, if you do that for each of the 10 cases, you can write 20 letters. It is fine to do fewer though! Each case sheet and sample letter give you suggestions for what to write; please make them personal as it shows the government official you really care. You can send your letters to Amnesty Ireland, FREEPOST, 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2. Make sure to put your name, college or school on the envelope.

Can I just sign the sample letters?

You can but copying the letter in your own writing will be more effective – or, even better, craft your own personal letter from the points on the case sheets. Unique and personal letters show the government official that you really care about the case and it increases the pressure on them to act, so please try to write as many as you can. If you run out of time or steam, then please at least sign and send the sample letters (and report them as well!).

Does it really matter if I report my letters?

Yes! It is important to let us know how many letters you wrote and, if you hosted an event or party, how many letters your guests wrote. We share the total number of letters with the people we are trying to help and their families, as well as with the government officials we are trying to persuade. Reporting also helps us evaluate how we can improve Write for Rights and get more people involved.

Do I have to use my full name and address on the letters?

You do not have to include your full name or address. It is enough to give your first name and country. However, some governments will send formal form letters replying to you, so you wouldn't receive those. Thousands of Amnesty supporters sign their letters without experiencing any problems and we have no record of anyone being denied entry to a country due to participating in Write for Rights. Also, if you include your address in a solidarity note, sometimes you'll receive a reply from the person we are trying to help, which can be inspirational especially once the person is released.

Why can't I send religious cards to some people or mention Amnesty?

It is for the safety of the recipient, as in some cases association with a particular faith or our human rights work could put them at greater risk. Non-religious cards could be cards illustrated with things like snowy scenes, fir trees or robins. The message 'Season's greetings' is non-religious.

What if the email address for the appeal letter doesn't work?

Please send a letter or card instead. The email address may have been switched off because of the overwhelming amount of appeals or the inbox is full.

Do our letters really make a difference?

Yes! Solidarity is effective. When authorities receive thousands of letters about a particular person, they know that the world is watching them. Individuals who have experienced these human rights abuses tell us that our solidarity letters have a huge impact. Nawal Benaissa, who featured in Write for Rights 2018, said: "Amnesty International's adoption of my case has been like a beacon of light in my way, the light that had been extinguished by the injustices of the state. I now feel I have family everywhere in the world."

What else can I do on the cases of individuals at risk?

You can join our Urgent Action Network, which throughout the year responds to urgent human rights situations, including when people are at risk from torture and the death penalty, imprisoned for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, or for their social, political or religious beliefs. As a member of the network you will be sent requests – how many is up to you – to take urgent action on behalf of individuals at risk. Find out more at <https://www.amnesty.ie/get-involved/become-an-activist/urgent-action-network/>

Success Stories 2018

Last year, hundreds of thousands of people joined our global Write for Rights campaign, resulting in almost **6 million messages**, letters and cards of support and appeals to the authorities.

VENEZUELA – GERALDINE CHACON

Human rights activist Geraldine Chacon was detained and spent four months behind bars. She was never charged with any crimes but was conditionally released. The Write for Rights campaign urged the Venezuelan authorities to close Geraldine's case and Geraldine and her mother say that the support they received helped them get through hard emotional moments and expressed how each message injected hope and joy into their lives.

"I've campaigned for Write for Rights cases before. I never imagined I'd be on the other side of the campaign. I have no words to thank all that Amnesty has done for me."



BRAZIL – MARIELLE FRANCO

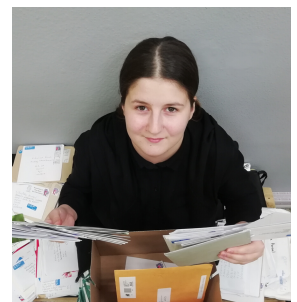
Marielle Franco was a prominent politician and dedicated her life to defending the rights of women, black, LGBTI and other marginalised people. More than half a million people all over the world signed a petition that was directed at the Brazilian government, with the request: bring the perpetrators to justice and protect human rights defenders. In March 2019, two ex-police officers were arrested for killing Marielle Franco. It was a small step towards justice.

"It helps me to get up in the morning... knowing that there is this big global network of affection." – Monica Benicio, Marielle's partner



UKRAINE – VITALINA KOVAL

Vitalina Koval is a relentless defender of women's rights and LGBTI rights who was attacked at an International Women's Day march. Thanks to your letters and support, an investigation into Vitalina's attack was finally initiated and measures were taken to ensure protection during the 2018 International Women's Day rally. Vitalina told Amnesty International that because of Write for Rights she has ***"...never felt so much support in my life"*** and how the expression of solidarity from around the world was overwhelming.



KYRGYZSTAN – GULZAR DUISHENOVA

Gulzar Duishenova fights for the rights of people with disabilities in Kyrgyzstan. In March 2019, her persistence, and that of other disability rights defenders, paid off when Kyrgyzstan finally signed up to the Disability Rights Convention, paving the road to the effective inclusion of hundreds of thousands living with disabilities. Gulzar told Amnesty International how the solidarity messages she received were an amazing support. She explained that she has grown as a human rights defender and reinforced her alliances.



Want to read more success stories?

Visit: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/10/nearly-6-million-messages-of-support-for-women-activists-around-the-world/>

Contact Us

If you have any questions or want to know more about any of these cases, or on Amnesty's work in general, please get in touch and let us know.

Email letterwriting@amnesty.ie

Visit our website <http://www.amnesty.ie/write-for-rights/>

Thank you for being part of Write for Rights and joining millions to support young people who defend rights around the world.