

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND SUPPRESSION OF DISSENT

WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



WHO GETS TO SPEAK?

Human Rights
Education Activity



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.

Twenty-five years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon to support individuals at risk of human rights violations. What started as a small event has since evolved into the world's largest human rights campaign: Write for Rights.

Since 2001, Write for Rights has shown that ordinary people can challenge injustice through collective action. Millions have written letters, signed petitions and sent messages of hope to people whose rights have been denied. Together, those actions have helped to free prisoners of conscience, reunite families, change unjust laws and remind countless people that they are not alone.

Today, human rights education is an important part of the campaign. Through Write for Rights, people learn about human rights and the individuals at risk, and are invited to take action if they wish. In 2025, 415,601 people took part in human rights education activities like this one.

Now, that shared determination is more important than ever.

Authoritarian practices are expanding at an unprecedented pace – eroding civic freedoms, weaponizing surveillance, and silencing those who speak up to further entrench power. From genocide to repression and the dismantling of hard-won rights, we are witnessing a systemic assault on the foundations of our shared humanity. This is not the work of a single leader or a single moment. It is a pattern – and it demands a response.

The individuals at the heart of this year's campaign have experienced that repression first-hand. Through our learning activities this year, you will build your knowledge about their situations and the human rights violations they experience. You can decide to join the letter-writing activity, sign petitions and raise your voice. By doing so, you become part of that resistance too.

Year after year, individuals featured in the campaign tell us how deeply these actions matter. Many describe the strength they draw from knowing that so many people care about and support them. Often, your letters lead to real change: charges are dropped, people are released from detention, and authorities introduce new laws or policies to protect human rights.

Now is the time to make a choice. Join Write for Rights. Learn and take action!

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education** activity can take place in a variety of settings: online or offline, in classrooms, community groups or activist networks. As a facilitator, adapt the activity to your group's context. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size and age range of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity, delivering it in-person or online, and any limitations. The timings suggested are estimates and should be adapted for the size of your group and the time available. Please also adapt the activities to ensure inclusivity for all learners.

When participants want to take action in support of an individual at risk, discuss how to do so safely and ensure you follow school or local guidelines on consent.

The activities are based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyse and question issues relating to the individuals' and groups' stories. This helps participants to:

build key competencies and skills

form their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

take ownership of their learning, and shape discussions around their interests, abilities and concerns

engage emotionally and develop values and personal commitment.

Read about the people we're fighting for: amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: amnesty.org/en/countries/

Tweet your support to [@Amnesty](https://twitter.com/Amnesty) using the hashtag #W4R26

If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start: amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/

Amnesty International offers free online human rights education courses: academy.amnesty.org/ learn and quizzes: <https://create.kahoot.it/profiles/AmnestyInternational>

YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

GUERRERAS POR LA AMAZONÍA AND THE UNIÓN DE AFECTADOS POR TEXACO (UDAPT) WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2025

Thanks to the solidarity and support of people around the world, there has been an important development in the struggle of the Guerreras por la Amazonía and the Unión de Afectados por Texaco (UDAPT) in Ecuador.

For years, the Guerreras have campaigned against toxic gas flares in the Ecuadorian Amazon that harm the health, environment and lives of nearby communities. Through the Write for Rights campaign, almost half a million actions were collected calling on the Ecuadorian government to comply with a landmark 2021 court ruling ordering the elimination of the gas flares.

On 29 April 2026, Amnesty International joined members of the Guerreras and UDAPT in delivering signatures from supporters around the world to Ecuador's Ministry of Environment and Energy. Following this action, the Ministry

announced the creation of technical working groups involving government institutions and affected communities.

While this is not yet in full compliance with the ruling, it is an important first step towards accountability and change – and one that would not have been possible without the pressure and solidarity shown by supporters worldwide.

“It was very enriching, and it also gave us much more strength to keep going, because there were many letters, many people who were always telling us, ‘Don’t give up, girls, don’t give up. Even if the state violates your rights, it has to take responsibility for its actions.’”

Dannya Bravo, Guerrera por la Amazonía, who featured in Write for Rights 2025



Thank you for taking action and standing with the Guerreras por la Amazonía and UDAPT in their fight for environmental justice. Your support has helped amplify their voices and keep international attention on their struggle.

ROCKY MYERS WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2023



Rocky Myers, a Black man with an intellectual disability, spent three decades on death row in Alabama, USA, accused of murder. Rocky was convicted following testimonies blighted by inconsistencies. He was sentenced to death by a judge who imposed a death sentence against the jury's wishes, a practice abolished in Alabama in 2017 but never applied retroactively to Rocky or others like him.

Rocky was featured in Write for Rights 2023, leading to huge global campaigning calling for the Governor of Alabama to grant him clemency and commute his death sentence. In February 2025, this

was granted. Rocky's fight for justice is not over, as his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, but the threat of execution has been stopped.

“Not only did this campaign bring awareness to his case, but it was done in such a way that honoured Rocky as a person, father and grandfather. I know the outpouring of support meant the world to Rocky, and to know that so many people felt called to action is truly inspiring.”

Miriam Bankston, member of Rocky Myers's legal team



AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES: A PATTERN OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TO ENTRENCH POWER

Imagine waking up one day to find that certain topics can no longer be discussed openly. Schools avoid difficult conversations. Journalists tread more carefully. Your news feed shows fewer critical voices. Public spaces feel less safe for protest or dissent.

Nothing dramatic happened overnight. There are no obvious turning points, only a gradual shift. Yet over time, the space for dialogue, disagreement and public participation has narrowed.

Would you notice? And more importantly, if you did, would you know how to respond?

For many people around the world, this is not hypothetical. Authoritarian practices that violate human rights rarely arrive all at once. More often, they emerge gradually through policies, narratives and practices that may even go unnoticed in isolation. Restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, access to information or political participation are often justified in the language of security, stability, public order or national interest. Over time, repeated exposure to these narratives can normalize limitations on human rights and make them increasingly difficult to recognize or challenge. But their true intent is to benefit those in power, privileging one group at the expense of another.

Across different regions and political contexts, the cases presented in these educational resources reveal similar patterns. Human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, activists, Indigenous leaders, opposition voices and ordinary citizens are criminalized, surveilled, detained, disappeared or punished to silence dissent and evade accountability. Criticism is reframed as “extremism”, “terrorism” or “subversion”, while fear is used to discourage dissent and collective action as another tactic to redirect public anger away from the government. At the same time, legal protections are weakened and institutions intended to keep power in check are undermined.

Although the contexts of these individuals at risk differ, the authoritarian practices operating across these cases follow recognizable patterns.



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They silence voices and criticism, suppress collective action and participation, and weaken legal protections and the rule of law to unduly concentrate power or shield the authorities from any potential threats. Violations of one right often lead to the erosion of others, demonstrating how human rights are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Patterns of authoritarian practices connect all the cases despite the range of human rights violations experienced by those affected.

The activities in this educational resource invite learners not only to understand the unique cases, but also to explore and reflect on the broader patterns through which authoritarian practices operate across different contexts. By linking individual experiences to wider global trends, the activities encourage critical reflection on the relationships between power, freedoms, human rights and resistance. They also highlight how authoritarian practices violate human rights and lead to the concentration and entrenchment of power.

As you engage with these cases, consider: what patterns do you notice? What has become normalized that should be questioned? Spotting the patterns and gaining a deeper understanding of the groups of cases will create a foundation of learning for informed action now and in the future.

People take part in Write for Rights at Amnesty International Nepal in 2025.

Take part in our Kahoot quiz on authoritarian practices and test your knowledge: tinyurl.com/yc7b5kjin (in English only).

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make choices about your own life. Human rights are universal – they belong to everyone, everywhere.

They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – each right is equally important and they are interconnected.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a powerful framework for national, regional and international legislation

designed to protect against abuses of power and improve lives across the world. Human rights are laws for governments. Human rights are not optional privileges or luxuries to be granted only when convenient. They create binding obligations for governments and public officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all people, both within their borders and beyond.



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THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed to be bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

As its name suggests, the UDHR is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that it will abide by certain

standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. These laws and agreements provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to demand that governments end the abuses experienced by the individuals featured in our Write for Rights campaign.



Above: A Write for Rights event organized by Amnesty International Canada in 2025.

Top: Launch of Write for Rights 2025 in Côte d'Ivoire.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

	Civil rights and liberties Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.	Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights Article 2 Non-discrimination Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person Article 4 Freedom from slavery Article 5 Freedom from torture
	Legal rights Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.	Article 6 All are protected by the law Article 7 All are equal before the law Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile Article 10 Right to a fair trial Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection
	Social rights Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.	Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders Article 16 Right to marry and start a family Article 24 Right to rest and leisure Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education
	Economic rights Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.	Article 15 Right to a nationality Article 17 Right to own property and possessions Article 22 Right to social security Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being
	Political rights Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion.	Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief) Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country
	Cultural rights, solidarity rights Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.	Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!

ACTIVITY

WHO GETS TO SPEAK?

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND SUPPRESSION OF DISSENT

AT A GLANCE

The right to freedom of expression protects people's ability to express opinions, share information and speak about issues that matter. When people are punished for using their voice, solidarity can help defend freedom of expression and strengthen the right of everyone to dissent and be heard.

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

This activity explores what happens when people are punished for expressing opinions, sharing information, criticizing those in power, or defending human rights.

Through the stories of Rokiatou Doumbia from Mali, Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha from Pakistan, Ayachi Hammami from Tunisia and Ruth Eleonora López from El Salvador, learners examine how restrictions on the right to freedom of expression can affect individuals and communities.

The activity helps learners understand why freedom of expression matters, how it supports participation and accountability, and why people should be able to express opinions and share information without fear of punishment.

STRUCTURE

The activity is designed as a flexible, three-part modular learning unit. Modules A and B (20 minutes each) function as a self-contained learning activity with a clear learning outcome, a participatory exercise, a guided reflection and a short debrief.

The modules may be delivered independently, combined in different sequences – A+B+C (60min), A+C (40min), B+C (40min) – and adapted for different audiences, or used as a complete 60-minute learning journey.

METHODOLOGY

As a facilitator, adapt the activity to your group's context. You may want to consider the size, age range and existing knowledge of your group, how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting, delivering the activity in-person or online, and any limitations. The timings suggested are estimates and should be adapted for the size of your group and the time available. When learners want to take action in support of an individual at risk, discuss how to do so safely and ensure you follow school or local guidelines on consent.

INCLUSION, WELL-BEING AND SAFEGUARDING

Please adapt the learning activities to accommodate learners with disabilities and any specific learning needs. Some learners may find themes of imprisonment, injustice or abuse of power upsetting. Remind learners that they may pause, step out briefly, or choose not to share personal experiences. Keep discussions supportive and respectful. Focus on dignity, participation and human rights rather than political debates or personal beliefs. If a learner becomes upset or distressed, please use school or local resources to offer follow-up support.

OVERALL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learners will:

- **understand** why freedom of expression is an important human right.
- **identify** how people may be punished for expressing opinions or exposing concerns.
- **recognize** connections between expression, participation, accountability and human rights.
- **demonstrate** empathy and solidarity through discussion, reflection and action.

AGE: 12+

TIME NEEDED

20, 40 or 60 minutes (20 minutes per module). Ideally, learners would complete at least two modules together. The modules can be delivered over multiple days or sessions to accommodate different contexts and schedules.

MATERIALS

- Handout: story cards and take action cards (pages 16-19)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) simplified version (page 6)
- Background information: Freedom of Expression and Suppression of Dissent (pages 14-15)
- Optional: paper, pens and envelopes (if sending letters)
- Optional: videos from [amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos](https://www.amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos)
- Optional: template letters from [amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/)

PREPARATION

- Read the story cards and select which case(s) to work on.
- Print the handouts for each learner/group.
- Read the background information.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of opinion
- Access to information
- Participation in public affairs
- Human rights defenders
- Fair trial rights
- Dissent
- Solidarity

If this is the first time that learners are introduced to the UDHR, you should focus on building a shared understanding of what it is first, using the information starting on page 5. Allow additional time for this, either during the session itself or in a preparatory session beforehand.

To enrich this activity, learners can use Amnesty International's human rights quizzes on Kahoot alongside the accompanying teaching guidelines available in the resource section: see <https://create.kahoot.it/profiles/AmnestyInternational>. For this activity, we recommend using the "Introduction to Human Rights" quiz and the "Freedom of Expression" quiz. Together, these resources provide an engaging and interactive way for learners to explore human rights principles and examine the importance of freedom of expression in different contexts. They are available in English only:

Introduction to Human Rights: tinyurl.com/bdcm33fh

Freedom of Expression: tinyurl.com/yc73un4a

MODULE A. WHO GETS TO SPEAK?

 **20 MINUTES**

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will explore why freedom of expression matters, recognize the importance of sharing ideas, concerns and opinions, and understand how restrictions on the right to freedom of expression can affect individuals and communities.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

PART 1: THE SILENT CLASSROOM

Take a moment to think quietly about your own experiences. Think of a time when you wanted to say what you thought, ask a question, share an opinion or stand up for something you believed was important, but decided not to.

Invite learners to reflect individually on the following questions:

- **What made you stay silent?**
- **How did it feel?**
- **What might have helped you feel safe enough to speak?**

After one or two minutes, invite volunteers to share their thoughts if they wish.

Transition: Sometimes people choose not to speak because they feel nervous, embarrassed or worried about what others might think. In other situations, people are prevented from speaking because they fear punishment, arrest or other consequences for expressing their views.

Ask learners to imagine that, starting tomorrow, students cannot question school rules, suggest improvements, raise concerns or share opinions about school decisions. (Adapt this to your context if the learning activity is not taking place in a school.)

Ask learners to work in pairs and discuss: how would this feel? What problems might arise? Who would be affected? What opportunities would be lost?

Invite a few learners to share their thoughts (based on the size of the group and the time available).

Transition: Explain that expressing opinions and raising concerns can be important because they help students, classrooms and communities identify problems that need attention. By sharing different perspectives, people can work together to find solutions and make informed decisions that benefit everyone.

Students take part in a human rights education activity during Write for Rights in 2025.



PART 2: VOICES MATTER

Read the following situations aloud.

SITUATION 1

A student notices something unfair happening at school and writes a respectful letter asking for change. The student is punished for speaking up.

Which right is most connected?

- A. The right to freedom of expression
- B. The right to education

SITUATION 2

A community group shares information online about a local problem and encourages discussion. Local authorities threaten members of the group with punishment if they continue.

Which right is most connected?

- A. The right to freedom of expression
- B. The right to participate in public affairs

Debrief by explaining that human rights are interconnected. People often need to express ideas, concerns and opinions to participate in society and defend other rights.

Facilitator note: This exercise is not about getting a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. In fact, these situations involve more than one human right, and the rights are often interconnected. Guide learners to reflect on why they chose a particular answer and help them to see how these rights overlap and depend on each other. Keep the tone open and exploratory, rather than quiz-like. You can use the background information on pages 14-15 to guide this exercise or explain certain concepts in more detail.

Facilitator note: There is often more than one reasonable answer. Encourage learners to explain their thinking and recognize how rights support one another. Feel free to adapt the approach, pacing and level of discussion to the needs and experience of the learners.

PART 3: GUIDED REFLECTION AND CLOSURE

Reflection: How would being silenced and denied your rights make you feel?

Conclusion: Freedom of expression helps people share ideas, participate in society and hold decision-makers accountable. When people are afraid to speak, society may lose important information and perspectives.

Stand-alone use of module A

This module works independently as an introductory exploration of freedom of expression, participation and accountability.

After completion, you can go to module B if you have time, **or go directly to module C**, which is the action module.

If you choose to continue with module B, introduce it by saying:

The situations we discussed are not imaginary for many people around the world. In the next activity, we will learn about real people whose rights were violated.



Students in South Korea strike and demonstrate to support the school strike for climate movement, also known as Fridays for Future.

© Ashley Crowther



MODULE B: REAL STORIES – VOICES UNDER PRESSURE

20 MINUTES

STAND-ALONE USE

Module B works independently as a case-study-based exploration of freedom of expression and human rights. Learners can begin this module without having completed Module A.

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will explore real examples of restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, identify human rights issues affecting individuals and communities, and reflect on solidarity, accountability and participation.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

PART 1: INDIVIDUAL STORIES

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Today we will learn about people who faced punishment because of what they said, shared, exposed or defended.

Divide learners into small groups of five or six participants.

Provide one or more story cards for:

- **Rokiatou Doumbia from Mali**
- **Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha from Pakistan**
- **Ayachi Hammami from Tunisia**
- **Ruth Eleonora López from El Salvador**

You can choose to focus on one case in depth, or compare all four cases to identify common themes and differences.

GROUP TASK: WHOSE VOICE WAS BEING SILENCED?

Read the story card(s) together in your group.

Suggested discussion questions (you can choose two or three of these):

- **What stood out to you about this story?**
- **What was this person saying, sharing or defending?**
- **Why might their message have mattered?**
- **Who could have benefited from hearing their voice(s)?**
- **What happened when they spoke out?**
- **Which rights were affected by their imprisonment/punishment?**
- **Why is it important that different voices be heard?**
- **What would justice look like in this case?**



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From top:
Rokiatou Doumbia from Mali; Imaan
Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha from Pakistan;
Ayachi Hammami from Tunisia; Ruth
Eleonora López from El Salvador

SHORT DEBRIEF: INVITE GROUPS TO SHARE THEIR REFLECTIONS.

Ask:

- What emotions came up while hearing these stories?
- Why can solidarity matter?
- What role does freedom of expression play in society?

PART 2: CONCLUSION

FACILITATOR CONCLUDES MODULE B AND LINKS TO MODULE C:

These stories show how people can face serious consequences for expressing their opinions, sharing information, defending human rights or criticizing those in power. In all countries of the world, individuals continue to speak out on issues that matter to them, even when doing so puts them at risk. And, all around the world, people continue to show solidarity by supporting people whose rights are restricted.

Amnesty International hands over petition signatures to the authorities in Abuja, Nigeria.

© Amnesty International Nigeria



MODULE C: TAKE ACTION AND SHOW SOLIDARITY (20 MIN)**20 MINUTES****LEARNING OUTCOME**

Learners will understand how solidarity can support people whose rights are restricted, participate in meaningful collective action, and reflect on their role in defending human rights.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY**PART 1: INTRODUCE WRITE FOR RIGHTS**

Ask the learners if they would like to take part in an action to support Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign (if they are children, please consider school and local requirements related to consent).

Tell learners about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign using the information on page 2. Explain that Amnesty is calling on people to write letters to the individuals on the story cards, and also to the authorities responsible for protecting, respecting and fulfilling their human rights. You can give examples from previous years' campaigns (from page 3), demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be, or watch this one-minute story from Magai, who was sentenced to death at the age of 15 in South Sudan. Thousands of people wrote letters and signed petitions for his release and he is now free: [youtube.com/watch?v=ol8aZ_NhiJo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol8aZ_NhiJo)

Ask:

- **Why can small actions matter?**
- **How can solidarity help protect human rights?**
- **What role can ordinary people play in defending freedom of expression?**

If there is time, ask learners to take the action now.

If time is limited, please encourage them to organize when and where they will take the actions later and divide the actions among the groups. As appropriate, encourage them to be creative. They can write a letter, or create a drawing, poster, postcard or other creative pieces that communicate encouragement and express solidarity.

Facilitator note: If learners have only completed module A, and did not engage in module B, begin module C by introducing the individual(s) at risk on whom you wish to focus, using the accompanying story cards from pages 16-19. Explain who they are, what happened to them, which human rights are at the centre of their case, and what the campaign is calling for.

Facilitator note: Explain that acts of solidarity remind people that they are not forgotten and can put pressure on the authorities to stop violating their rights. They are a way of recognizing our shared humanity and standing up for the rights and dignity of others.

Optional: show learners the videos of Rokiatou Doumbia from Mali, Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha from Pakistan, Ayachi Hammami from Tunisia and Ruth Eleonora López from El Salvador, which can be found here: [amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos](https://www.amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos) (available in English).



In 2025, Amnesty International Zimbabwe conducted a Write for Rights Human Rights Training activity with teachers from around Zimbabwe whose schools have human rights clubs.

© Amnesty International Zimbabwe

PART 2: WRITE A LETTER

Ask learners to choose one of the people whose cases they have learned about and give them a copy of the take action card from pages 16-19 for that person. Tell the learners that their letters will be sent to the authorities responsible for protecting that person's human rights.

Give everyone letter-writing materials and allow time for them to write their letters. Explain that a personal message to the officials can have the most impact. Ask them to:

- **Write something about themselves.**
- **Tell the official what shocks them about the individual's story.**
- **Say why they think it is important that governments respect human rights.**

If people wish to share their finished letters with the group or express their feelings at the end of the activity, provide an opportunity for them to do so.

PART 3: SHOW SOLIDARITY

If you have time, you can also do some of the solidarity actions on the take action cards. The letters of solidarity are often a great source of support and strength for the people featured in these cases.

Send your messages of friendship and hope to Rokiatou Doumbia from Mali, Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chattha from Pakistan, Ayachi Hammami from Tunisia and Ruth Eleonora López from El Salvador to inspire them to keep up their fight for justice and to show that they are not alone. Be creative and tell them a little bit about yourself to make this a personal letter.

Learn more about other activities in the Write for Rights campaign at amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

Solidarity and collective action can help protect individuals at risk and remind those facing injustice that they are not alone.

Facilitator note: Follow your section's Write for Rights guidance regarding participant privacy and any relevant safety considerations when sending appeals or solidarity messages, such as using pseudonyms if there is a security risk to students partaking. Ask the learners if they would like to take part in an action to support Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign and, if they are children under 18, please consider local requirements related to consent.



Amnesty International Taiwan participates in Taiwan LGBT+ Pride and Transgender Pride in 2025.

© Amnesty International Taiwan

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND SUPPRESSION OF DISSENT

The right to freedom of expression allows people to share ideas, express opinions, seek and receive information, ask questions, participate in public debates and speak out about issues that affect their lives and communities.

People exercise their right to freedom of expression every day. They may share opinions with friends, create art, write articles, post on social media, participate in discussions, report information, advocate for change or speak out against injustice. Being able to express thoughts and ideas freely helps people learn from one another, solve problems and contribute to society.

Freedom of expression supports many other human rights. People often need to express themselves in order to defend their rights, participate in public life, expose wrongdoing, protect their communities or advocate for change. It allows different voices and perspectives to be heard, including those that challenge powerful institutions or criticize decisions and policies.

Human rights are interconnected. For example:

- Journalists may report information that helps the public understand important issues.
- Lawyers and human rights defenders may speak out against injustice, corruption or abuse of power.
- Activists may raise awareness about social, environmental or human rights concerns.
- People may question decisions, express concerns and advocate for change.
- Communities may use social media, campaigns or public discussions to share information and support one another.

Freedom of expression includes the right to express opinions that others may disagree with. It protects the sharing of ideas, information and viewpoints, provided that these do not incite violence, discrimination, or cause other serious harm, for example, to public health.

Dissent is an important part of freedom of expression. Dissent means expressing disagreement with policies, decisions, actions or systems. Throughout history, people have used dissent to challenge injustice, demand reforms and advocate for human rights. Peaceful criticism and debate can help societies to grow, improve and become more accountable. In healthy societies, people should be able to express disagreement peacefully without fear of punishment.

When people are punished, threatened or imprisoned for expressing opinions peacefully, many other rights can also be affected. Fear of punishment may discourage people from speaking openly, participating in public life, sharing information or defending the rights of others. This can reduce public debate and make it harder for communities to identify problems, seek solutions and hold decision-makers accountable.



Members of the Philippines' so-called "Tacloban 5", a group of activists who were arrested during simultaneous government raids of their offices in Tacloban City in Feb 2020.

© Photo courtesy of Altermidyia

In some situations, people who criticize authorities, expose corruption, defend human rights or share information about public concerns may face harassment, criminal charges, unfair trials or imprisonment. Such actions can create a chilling effect, where others become afraid to speak out because they fear similar consequences.

International human rights standards recognize the importance of freedom of expression. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19).
- Everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (Article 19).
- Everyone has the right to participate in public affairs and public life (Article 21).

Freedom of expression is about speaking. It is also about listening, learning, exchanging ideas and ensuring that people can participate meaningfully in society. Protecting freedom of expression helps create communities where people can share information, discuss challenges, and contribute to positive change.

The stories in this activity show how restrictions on the right to freedom of expression can affect individuals, families and communities. They also demonstrate why protecting the right to speak out remains an important part of defending human rights, promoting accountability and supporting justice.

Young members of Amnesty International Morocco take part in the 2023 Write for Rights campaign.

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TIKTOK INFLUENCER AND ACTIVIST JAILED FOR SPEAKING OUT

Rokiatou Doumbia is a business owner, activist and social media influencer known for her courage and outspoken personality. Through TikTok, she created a space where her 175,000 followers could speak openly about daily hardships and rising food prices, earning her the nickname “Rose Poivron” (“Bell Pepper Rose”).

Rokiatou has long supported women and families in her community, creating an association to help women start small businesses and organizing food distributions for people in need. Friends and supporters describe her as caring, generous and community-focused.

But in March 2023, after criticizing rising living costs and Mali’s military authorities during a TikTok livestream, she was arrested and charged with “incitement to revolt”, “disturbing public order”, “discrediting the

state” and “criminal conspiracy”. Although two of the charges were later quashed, in August 2026, Rokiatou was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment, including seven years to be served in prison and three years suspended, for “discrediting the state” and “criminal conspiracy”.

Rokiatou’s detention reflects a wider crackdown in Mali, where authorities increasingly use arrests and criminal charges to silence critics. Her situation shows how women who speak publicly can face repression, online harassment, discrimination and social stigma aimed at pushing them out of public debate. It also highlights how digital spaces in Mali are increasingly becoming places of surveillance and control.

Call on the Malian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Rokiatou Doumbia.

ROKIATOU DOUMBIA

📍 MALI

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MARRIED LAWYERS JAILED FOR DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Imaan Mazari-Hazir (right) and Hadi Ali Chattha (left) are human rights lawyers. They are also a married couple in their thirties who met while representing a mutual client in court. When they’re not working long hours, they love eating out together and meeting up with friends.

The pair have dedicated their careers to representing victims of state oppression – something that is not without risk in Pakistan. Despite threats and harassment by the authorities, they bravely persisted.

Imaan said: “Not once have I considered stopping my advocacy work due to these threats. If you keep looking over your shoulder, it derails you from the cause and your detractors win.”

On 24 January 2026, Imaan and Hadi were given long prison sentences for their posts on social media expressing solidarity with Baloch and Pashtun activists and criticizing the Pakistan military. Their conviction reflects the Pakistani authorities’ use of the justice system to crack down on freedom of expression, silencing critics and punishing lawyers to consolidate their power and control.

Imaan and Hadi should be doing their vital work and the things they love. Instead, they have been locked up and kept apart.

Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha must be unconditionally released and all charges against them dropped immediately.

**IMAAAN MAZARI-HAZIR
AND HADI ALI CHATTHA**

📍 PAKISTAN

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WRITE TO MALI'S MINISTER OF JUSTICE

Demand Rokatou be immediately and unconditionally released.

ADDRESS: Minister of Justice and Human Rights
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
Cité Administrative
Bâtiment 12, 3e étage
BP 97 Bamako
MALI

SALUTATION: Dear Minister of Justice
Please do not use Amnesty International branding on your letters or envelopes.

EMAIL: mkassogue@justice.gouv.ml

X: @Ministere_Mali, @Ministreka

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/JusticeMali.Gouv

HASHTAGS: #FreeRosePoivron, #FreeRokatou, #W4R26

SEND ROKIATOU MESSAGES OF SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY TO REMIND HER SHE IS NOT ALONE AND THAT HER COURAGE INSPIRES MANY PEOPLE

You can also include drawings symbolizing the issues she spoke out about and the support surrounding her, such as peppers or food items, paths or footsteps, women standing together, shared meals or food baskets, or circles representing community and mutual support.

ADDRESS: Rokatou Doumbia
c/o Amnesty International West & Central Africa Regional Office
Point E, Rue 34
Immeuble Malaado Plaza, 6th Floor
PO box 47582 Liberté
Dakar
SENEGAL

TIKTOK: [@rokiatoudoumbia1](https://www.tiktok.com/@rokiatoudoumbia1)

HASHTAGS: #FreeRosePoivron, #FreeRokatou, #W4R26

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WRITE TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN

Demand the immediate and unconditional release of Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha, the quashing of their convictions and that any outstanding charges against them are dropped, as they result solely from their human rights activism.

ADDRESS: Prime Minister of Pakistan
Prime Minister's Office
Constitution Avenue
Sector G-5/2
Islamabad 44010
PAKISTAN

SALUTATION: Honourable Prime Minister
Please do not use Amnesty International branding on your letters or envelopes.

EMAIL: info@pmo.gov.pk

X: @ThePMOPAK, @CMShehbaz

HASHTAGS: #ReleaseImaanAndHadi, #W4R26

LET IMAAN AND HADI KNOW YOU ARE WITH THEM

Send them your messages of friendship and hope to help keep their spirits strong. You can also include your poetry or sketches of Imaan and Hadi with the families of forcibly disappeared people and people accused of blasphemy – both causes very close to their hearts.

ADDRESS: Imaan Mazari-Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha
c/o Amnesty International South Asia
23/2 Horton Place
Colombo 7, 00700
SRI LANKA

X: @ImaanZHazir, @AdvHadiali

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/hadi.dushkara,
www.facebook.com/imaan.mazari

HASHTAGS: #ReleaseImaanAndHadi, #W4R26

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TARGETED FOR SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Ayachi Hammami is a Tunisian human rights lawyer, husband, father and grandfather who has spent decades defending victims of injustice and speaking out for human rights and judicial independence. Friends describe him as a “young soul” who loves astronomy, classical music and long walks with his dog, Arya.

Since President Kais Saied’s power grab in 2021, Ayachi has openly criticized the growing repression and authoritarian practices in Tunisia and has defended lawyers, judges, journalists and opposition figures targeted for peaceful dissent. After representing defendants in the notorious “conspiracy case” – a mass prosecution in which opposition figures were accused of plotting against state security – he was himself accused of terrorism-related offences in the same case.

In April 2025, following a sham trial that lasted only minutes, Ayachi was sentenced to eight years in prison. An appeal court reduced his sentence to five years in November 2025. He was jailed in the following days and went on a 45-day hunger strike to protest his arbitrary detention.

Ayachi’s imprisonment exposes how Tunisian authorities are increasingly abusing the criminal justice system to punish critics, intimidate lawyers and silence those who challenge abuses of power. Yet even in prison, Ayachi continues to inspire others through his courage and integrity.

Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Ayachi Hammami, as he is detained solely for his peaceful human rights activism and legal work.

AYACHI HAMMAMI

TUNISIA

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SPEAKING UP FOR JUSTICE COST RUTH HER FREEDOM

Ruth López is a lawyer and human rights defender known for her strong belief in justice and accountability. When she is not teaching or mentoring young lawyers and activists, Ruth enjoys reading and caring for her garden of orchids.

For years, Ruth spoke out against corruption and human rights abuses in El Salvador. She dedicated her life to defending justice and protecting the rule of law, even as it became dangerous to do so.

Since 2022, El Salvador has been under a state of emergency that has given authorities sweeping powers to silence critics, target activists and weaken basic legal rights. Today, peacefully speaking out or defending

human rights can put your right to liberty at risk.

In May 2025, Ruth was arrested at her home and locked up. Her family didn’t know where she was for 40 hours. One year later she remains in pretrial detention. She is being denied the right to a fair trial and regular access to her family or lawyer.

Ruth López is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising her human rights.

Call on the Salvadoran authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ruth López and drop all charges against her.

RUTH ELEONORA LÓPEZ

EL SALVADOR

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WRITE TO THE PRESIDENT OF TUNISIA

Demand the immediate and unconditional release of Ayachi Hammami, as he is detained solely for peacefully exercising his human rights and carrying out his professional duties as a defence lawyer and human rights defender.

ADDRESS: President of the Republic of Tunisia
Presidency of the Republic of Tunisia
Carthage Presidential Palace
Route de La Goulette
Tunis
TUNISIA

Letters and postcards can also be sent to Tunisian embassies and consulates in your own country.

SALUTATION: Your Excellency
X: @TnPresidency
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/Presidence.tn
HASHTAGS: #FreeAyachiHammami,
#Tunisia, #W4R26

SHOW AYACHI SOLIDARITY THROUGH ART AND MESSAGES OF HOPE

Send Ayachi messages of support, or draw him speaking out for justice, spending time with loved ones, or enjoying the things that bring him happiness – like walking his dog or looking up at the stars. You can also recommend books in French or Arabic for him to read in prison, on topics such as history, philosophy, science or inspiring memoirs.

ADDRESS: Ayachi Hammami
29 Rue du 2 Mars 1934
2013 Ben Arous
TUNISIA
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/ayachi.hammami1
INSTAGRAM: [free_ayachi](https://www.instagram.com/free_ayachi)
WEB: freeayachi.net

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WRITE TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR

Demand that the Salvadoran authorities immediately and unconditionally release Ruth López and drop all charges against her.

ADDRESS: Attorney General of the Republic
of El Salvador
Attorney General's Office of the Republic
of El Salvador
Avenida El Boquerón y Calle Izalco
Urbanización Santa Elena
Distrito de Antiguo Cuscatlán
Municipio de La Libertad Este
La Libertad
EL SALVADOR

As letters in El Salvador are often censored, please also appeal to the Salvadoran embassy or diplomatic mission in your own country.

SALUTATION: Dear Chief Executive
EMAIL: transparenciainstitucional@fgr.gob.sv
X: @FiscalGeneralSV
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/FGR.SV
HASHTAGS: #LibertadParaRuth, #W4R26

SHOW RUTH LÓPEZ THAT YOU SUPPORT HER

Send your messages of solidarity along with drawings of orchids and quotes from your favourite books.

ADDRESS: Ruth López
c/o Amnistía Internacional Américas
Luz Saviñón 519
Col del Valle Nte
Benito Juárez
03103
Ciudad de México
MÉXICO
EMAIL: w4r26ruthlopez@gmail.com
X: @Cristosal
INSTAGRAM: [Cristosal_ca](https://www.instagram.com/Cristosal_ca), [Cristosal_org](https://www.instagram.com/Cristosal_org)
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/cristosalorg
(English content)
www.facebook.com/cristosalca
(Spanish content)

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ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people that mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held accountable for their actions. We investigate and expose abuses wherever they occur. By amplifying the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and act in solidarity with activists on the frontlines. We also support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty and advancing climate justice and equality, to combating discrimination and defending the rights of refugees and migrants. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws and free people who have been jailed solely for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity is under threat.



Above: Amnesty International Argentina launched last year's Write for Rights at the Model United Nations held at the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires.

Below: Amnesty International Zimbabwe launch the 2025 Write For Rights campaign in Masvingo Province.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS
A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.
WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE
PERSON, IT MATTERS TO US ALL.**



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