FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

TOGETHER WE STAND?

Human Rights Education Activity

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
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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 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

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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

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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

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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.

© Amnesty International Nepal

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

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.

Take part in our Kahoot quiz on authoritarian practices and test your knowledge: tinyurl.com/yc7b5kjn (in English only).

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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.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF Human Rights

UNITED NATIONS

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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.

© Amnesty International Canada (Photo: PASCAL RATTHE)

Above: *A Write for Rights event organized by Amnesty International Canada in 2025.*
Top: *Launch of Write for Rights 2025 in Côte d'Ivoire.*

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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!

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ACTIVITY

TOGETHER WE STAND?

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

AT A GLANCE

Human rights protect people's ability to come together, participate in society and support their communities. When these freedoms are restricted and people are prevented from organizing or supporting their communities, solidarity can help protect these freedoms and strengthen our collective voice.

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

This activity explores what happens when people are prevented or restricted from coming together, organizing, defending their communities, protecting culture and identity, or participating in public, including taking part in public affairs and elections.

Through the stories of Owen Chow from Hong Kong, Daria Egereva from Russia and Marwa Arafa from Egypt, learners examine how governments restrict collective action and silence people who advocate for change.

The activity helps learners understand why freedom of peaceful assembly and association matter, how these rights support participation and community action, and why everyone should be able to join with others to express concerns, defend rights and contribute to society.

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 peaceful assembly, association and participation are important human rights.
- **identify** how governments sometimes restrict these rights.
- **recognize** the connection between participation, equality, cultural identity and human rights.
- **demonstrate** empathy and solidarity through reflection, discussion and meaningful 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 Peaceful Assembly, Association and Participation in Public Affairs (pages 14-15)
- Optional: paper, pens and envelopes (if sending letters)
- Optional: videos from amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos
- Optional: template letters from 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 peaceful assembly
- Freedom of association
- Freedom of expression
- Participation in public affairs
- Rights of minorities and Indigenous Peoples
- Cultural rights
- Human rights defenders
- 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. This resource provides an engaging and interactive way for learners to explore fundamental human rights principles. This is available in English only: tinyurl.com/bdcm33fh

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MODULE A. WHY DO PEOPLE COME TOGETHER?

20 MINUTES

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will understand why people join together to support shared goals. They will see why communities recognize that participation, organizing and collective action are important human rights, and will explore the relationship between peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs. This module builds learners' awareness of patterns across several countries, showing how governments and other actors use authoritarian practices to limit people's freedoms.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

PART 1: THE MISSING CLUB

Take a moment to think quietly about your own experiences. Think about a group, club, team or community that is important to you. It could be a sports team, youth group, music group, online community, or another group where people come together.

Invite learners to reflect individually on the following questions:

- **Why is this group important to you?**
- **What do you enjoy or value being part of?**
- **How would you feel if you were suddenly told you could no longer take part, or that the group was no longer allowed to meet?**

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

Transition: Being part of a group or club helps people to make friends, support one another, protect culture and identity, help their communities and take part in public life.

Ask learners to imagine that, starting tomorrow, all school clubs, youth groups, sports teams, cultural groups and student councils are banned, and that students can no longer vote for or stand in any school elections, nor continue enjoying any activity that exists to help them have fun or improve their well-being.

Split learners into pairs to discuss the following questions:

- **Which group would you miss most?**
- **What would you lose if it disappeared?**
- **How would it affect your friendships?**
- **How would it affect your community?**

Invite pairs to briefly share their thoughts.

Transition: Explain that, throughout history, people have formed groups, organizations and movements to support each other, protect communities and create positive change. And, throughout history, those in power have tried to stop this. Nowadays, we see powerful people in many countries around the world increasingly trying to prevent people meeting together in this way.

Amnesty members and supporters take part in Write for Rights in Seoul, South Korea, in 2025.

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PART 2: WHY DO PEOPLE COME TOGETHER?

Write the following examples on a board or provide them on slips of paper:

- **To participate in public affairs and elections that affect their community.**
- **To defend rights and freedoms.**
- **To support people facing difficulties.**
- **To protect culture, language or traditions.**
- **To speak out when people are treated unfairly.**
- **To raise awareness about important issues.**
- **To represent the needs of their community.**
- **To celebrate identity and heritage.**
- **To work together on shared concerns.**

Working in small groups, learners spend five minutes grouping the examples into categories of their own choosing.

After grouping, ask groups to discuss:

- **What do the examples have in common?**
- **Why did they group the examples this way?**
- **Why might people choose to act together rather than alone?**

Continue the discussion in plenary using two or three of the following questions:

- **Why do communities form groups or organizations?**
- **Why might protecting culture, language, identity or traditions be important to some communities?**
- **Why is it important for people to participate in decisions that affect them?**
- **What could happen if people were prevented from organizing, meeting, or participating in public affairs?**
- **Which reason seemed most important?**

Facilitator note: This is an exploratory exercise. The purpose is not to classify statements factually, but to help learners identify themes across examples. By grouping the statements themselves, learners begin to notice patterns such as collective identity, civic participation, protection of rights, and social action, thereby surfacing the broader idea of people coming together through association and peaceful assembly. For example, learners may group "protect culture, language or traditions" with "celebrate identity and heritage." This can help to highlight themes related to shared identity, cultural belonging and collective expression among Indigenous Peoples. There are no right or wrong categories.

PART 3: CONCLUSION

Conclude by reading the following statement:

People come together to support one another, protect rights, represent their communities, participate in decisions, and celebrate or protect culture and identity. Freedom of peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs help make this possible. These stories are not isolated. Around the world, people who organize peacefully, defend rights or participate in public affairs can face increasing restrictions. Recognizing these signs of authoritarianism can help us to understand why these rights matter.

For many Indigenous Peoples and minority communities, the ability to organize, gather and maintain cultural networks is also important for protecting their identity, language and traditions.

Stand-alone use of module A

This module works independently as an introductory exploration of freedom of peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs.

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 module, we will learn about real people who participated in public life, defended rights or represented their communities, and faced restrictions because of their peaceful activities.

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MODULE B: REAL STORIES – PEOPLE WHO STOOD TOGETHER

20 MINUTES

STAND-ALONE USE

Module B also works independently as an empathy-building and case-study-based exploration of freedom of peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs. Learners can begin this module without having completed Module A.

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will explore how restrictions on peaceful assembly, association and participation affect real people and communities. They will identify human rights issues in real-world situations, and reflect on solidarity, participation and community action.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

PART 1: INDIVIDUAL STORIES

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Today we will learn about three people who were punished for organizing, participating in, or supporting their communities.

Divide learners into small groups of five or six participants.

Provide one or more story cards for:

- **Owen Chow from Hong Kong**
- **Daria Egereva from Russia**
- **Marwa Arafa from Egypt**

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

GROUP TASK: WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT PROTECTIONS FAILED?

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

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

- **What happened to this person?**
- **What community, group or identity was this person trying to support or protect?**
- **Why do you think their activities matter?**
- **Could this person meet with others freely?**
- **Could they organize freely with others?**
- **Could they participate safely?**
- **Were they treated fairly?**
- **Which of their human rights were affected?**
- **How did the restrictions affect their community?**
- **What would justice look like in this case?**

Facilitator note: Although each story highlights different experiences, they all demonstrate how freedom of peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs enable people to contribute to public life. Owen's story focuses on participation in public affairs; Daria's story highlights Indigenous rights, culture and community representation; and Marwa's story shows how supporting families and defending human rights through civil society are also important ways for people to exercise these freedoms.

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From top:
Daria Egereva from Russia; Marwa Arafa from Egypt; Owen Chow from Hong Kong

SHORT DEBRIEF: INVITE GROUPS TO SHARE A FEW RESPONSES.

Ask:

- **What emotions came up while hearing these stories?**
- **Why can solidarity matter?**
- **What communities were affected by these cases?**
- **Why is it important that people can organize peacefully?**

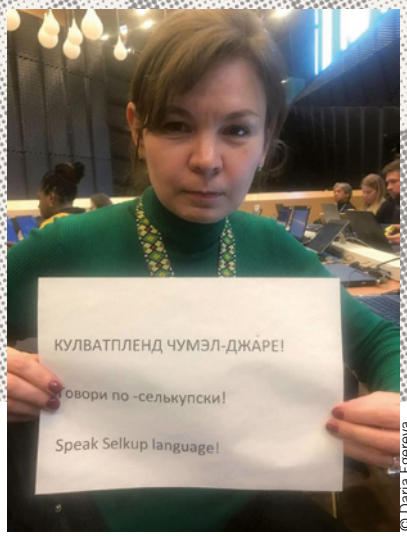
PART 2: CONCLUSION

Facilitator concludes module B and links to module C:

These stories show how people can face serious consequences simply for working with others, defending their communities, or speaking up for change. Around the world, people continue to show solidarity and support those whose rights are restricted.

Background: Launch of Write for Rights 2025 in Togo.

Main images: Daria Egereva; Marwa Arafa; Owen Chow.



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MODULE C: TAKE ACTION AND SHOW SOLIDARITY

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 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=oI8aZ_NhiJo

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.

Ask:

- **Why can small actions matter?**
- **How can solidarity help protect human rights?**
- **What role can ordinary people play in defending freedom of association, peaceful assembly and participation in public affairs?**

Facilitator note: Explain that acts of solidarity remind people that they are not forgotten. They are a way of recognizing our shared humanity and standing up for the rights and dignity of others.

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.

Optional: show learners the videos of Owen Chow from Hong Kong, Daria Egereva from Russia, and Marwa Arafa from Egypt, which can be found here: amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos (available in English).

Amnesty activists take part in Write for Rights 2025 in Zimbabwe.
© Amnesty International Zimbabwe

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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 solidarity and hope to Owen Chow from Hong Kong, Daria Egereva from Russia, and Marwa Arafa from Egypt 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.

A letter writing marathon for Write for Rights 2025 in an independent bookshop in Sofia, Bulgaria.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Human beings are social. People come together to share ideas, support one another, celebrate their identities, defend their communities and work towards common goals. Whether through youth groups, cultural organizations, sports clubs, community initiatives, trade unions, social movements or advocacy campaigns, joining with others is an important part of participating in society.

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly protects people's ability to gather together for a specific purpose in a public, private or online space (or combination of these), whether indoors or outdoors. This may include meetings, demonstrations, cultural events, community gatherings or other peaceful collective activities.

The right to freedom of association protects people's ability to form, join and participate in groups, organizations and networks. These groups may work on social issues, community concerns, cultural preservation, environmental protection, human rights, education, faith, labour rights, or many other causes.

These rights help people participate in public life in many different ways. People may join organizations, support others, defend human rights, protect culture and identity, take part in social movements, or work together to contribute to decisions that affect their communities. They also support other human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, cultural rights, and the right to equality and non-discrimination.

For many Indigenous Peoples and minority communities, freedom of association and peaceful assembly are not only political rights. They can also be essential for protecting culture, language, traditions and community identity. When communities are prevented from organizing, meeting or advocating for their rights, cultural and collective rights may also be affected. The ability to come together, share knowledge and speak collectively can play an important role in preserving cultures and strengthening community life.

Human rights are interconnected. People often need to come together in order to exercise other rights. For example:

- Community groups may advocate for better schools, healthcare or environmental protection.
- Indigenous Peoples may organize to protect their cultures, languages and traditional lands.
- Human rights defenders may work together to document abuse and support affected communities.
- Citizens may gather peacefully to express concerns about government decisions or public policies.

When people are prevented from organizing, participating or gathering peacefully, many other rights can also be affected. In many situations, restrictions on these freedoms are accompanied by other human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, unfair trials or restrictions on freedom of expression. Human rights are interconnected and violations often occur together.

People take part in a Write for Rights activity in 2025.

© EECA HRE Central Asia Teachers and partners

Authorities may restrict organizations, ban meetings, criminalize peaceful activism, target community leaders, or punish people for participating in public life. Such restrictions can create fear and make it harder for communities to express concerns, protect their interests, or contribute to society.

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

- Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association (Article 20).
- Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives (Article 21).
- Everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without discrimination (Article 2).

Participation is not limited to voting or politics. People participate in society every day when they join groups, support community initiatives, celebrate their cultures, defend rights, volunteer, organize events, or work together to address shared challenges.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association help people to build communities, strengthen solidarity and contribute to positive change. These rights play an important role in creating societies where people can participate freely, express their identities, and work together to shape their futures.

The stories in this activity show how restrictions on these rights can affect individuals and communities. They also demonstrate the importance of solidarity, participation and collective action in protecting human rights and promoting justice.

People attend the Trans March as part of the LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in May 2024.

© crisfaga

© ADIL BOUKIND

READ OUR STORIES

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
STORY CARD

The stories below are of Owen Chow from Hong Kong, Daria Egereva from Russia and Marwa Arafa from Egypt, whose rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and participation in public affairs were restricted. Their stories show the human impact of preventing people from organizing, supporting their communities, and participating in public life. Your support and solidarity matter.

SUPPORT US – WRITE A LETTER!

You're here to learn about human rights and also because you want to make a real difference. Through these actions, you will learn how your voice can positively affect people's lives. Whether you do this with a group of friends, classmates, your family or by yourself, the words you write will change lives.

© Amnesty International Canada (Photo: PASCAL RATTHE)

TARGETED FOR DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

MARWA ARAFA
EGYPT

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
STORY CARD

Marwa Arafa is a 33-year-old Egyptian human rights activist, translator and mother. She has been arbitrarily detained for over six years solely because of her peaceful activism. Marwa dedicated herself to supporting families of people detained for political reasons, as well as detained children. Sadly, her own daughter is now growing up without her mother after Marwa was arrested in front of her when she was just two years old. Her daughter, now aged eight, continues to struggle deeply with the separation.

Marwa is being punished for showing solidarity with detainees, speaking out against abuses facing children and helping families with the costs of prison visits. In April 2020, Egyptian security forces raided her friend's home, where Marwa was staying, and forcibly disappeared her for two weeks. She was later charged with unfounded terrorism-related offences. She now faces an unfair trial on charges that can carry life imprisonment.

Marwa's health has seriously deteriorated in prison, where she has been denied adequate healthcare. Marwa's situation highlights the abuse of terrorism laws in Egypt to target peaceful dissidents, human rights defenders and anyone seen as criticizing those in power. Marwa continues to hold onto hope, drawing strength from her love for her daughter and her belief in justice.

Call for Marwa Arafa's immediate and unconditional release and the dropping of all charges against her, as she is detained solely for exercising her human rights.

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Amnesty International Netherlands supporters and members take part in Write for Rights 2025 in Amsterdam.
© Jitske Nap

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
TAKE ACTION

WRITE TO THE PRESIDENT OF EGYPT

Demand the immediate and unconditional release of Marwa Arafa, as she is detained solely for exercising her human rights.

ADDRESS: President of Egypt
Office of the President
Al-Ittihadiya Palace
Al Nadi, El-Montaza, Heliopolis
Cairo Governorate 4460210
EGYPT

You can also send your appeals to the Egyptian embassy or diplomatic mission in your country.

SALUTATION: Your Excellency
EMAIL: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
X: @AlsisiOfficial
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/AlSisiofficial
HASHTAGS: #FreeMarwaArafa, #Egypt, #W4R26

SEND MARWA MESSAGES OF HOPE AND SOLIDARITY TO REMIND HER SHE IS NOT ALONE

You can also draw Marwa reunited with her daughter and mother after her release, celebrating the freedom and family life she has been denied for so many years.

Please send solidarity letters/cards to your local Amnesty office. If there is no Amnesty office in your country, please send them to:

ADDRESS: Marwa Arafa
c/o Amnesty International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
UNITED KINGDOM
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/FreeMarwaArafa
HASHTAGS: #FreeMarwaArafa, #Egypt, #W4R26

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
TAKE ACTION

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HE STOOD UP FOR DEMOCRACY NOW HE'S IMPRISONED

OWEN CHOW

HONG KONG

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

STORY CARD

© Private; Private/Amnesty International; © Amnesty International (Photo: Nicole Millar)

Described by friends as adventurous and philosophical, Owen Chow studied nursing and is a practicing Tibetan Buddhist who has always wanted to own a dog.

At the age of 15, Owen joined his first pro-democracy march. He stepped into public life hoping to serve the underprivileged and build a fairer society. But speaking up has become dangerous in Hong Kong.

In 2020, Beijing imposed a draconian national security law on Hong Kong. As a result, the city has seen political opposition crushed, independent media silenced, and civil society organizations shut down.

Despite the risks, Owen fearlessly stood in unofficial "primaries", aimed at selecting candidates for upcoming elections, when he was 23. In response, the authorities accused Owen and 46 others of conspiracy to commit subversion.

In 2021, Owen was arrested, and by 2024 had been sentenced to more than 12 years in prison. He may not be released until 2032 and has already spent at least three years in solitary confinement.

Owen's story is one of many in Hong Kong. A city once known for open debate is now gripped by fear. People who once took for granted their right to speak up now no longer feel free to exercise their freedom.

Call on Hong Kong authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Owen.

PUNISHED FOR PROTECTING HER PEOPLE

DARIA EGEREVA

RUSSIA

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

STORY CARD

© Daria Egereva; Private; Private.

Daria Egereva has spent her life protecting people, culture and the environment. Born in Siberia and part of the Selkup Indigenous People – who number only around 3,500 – she trained as a teacher before becoming a respected advocate for Indigenous rights and climate justice. Friends describe her as warm, sociable and deeply compassionate. She loves reading and long walks outdoors, and often speaks about growing up in the taiga, vast evergreen forests where she gathered berries with her family and built a lifelong connection with nature.

Today, Daria faces up to 20 years in prison for her peaceful human rights work. In December 2025, Russian authorities detained Daria and accused her of involvement with an Indigenous rights network they had labelled "terrorist", even though her work focused on protecting Indigenous lands, languages and cultures.

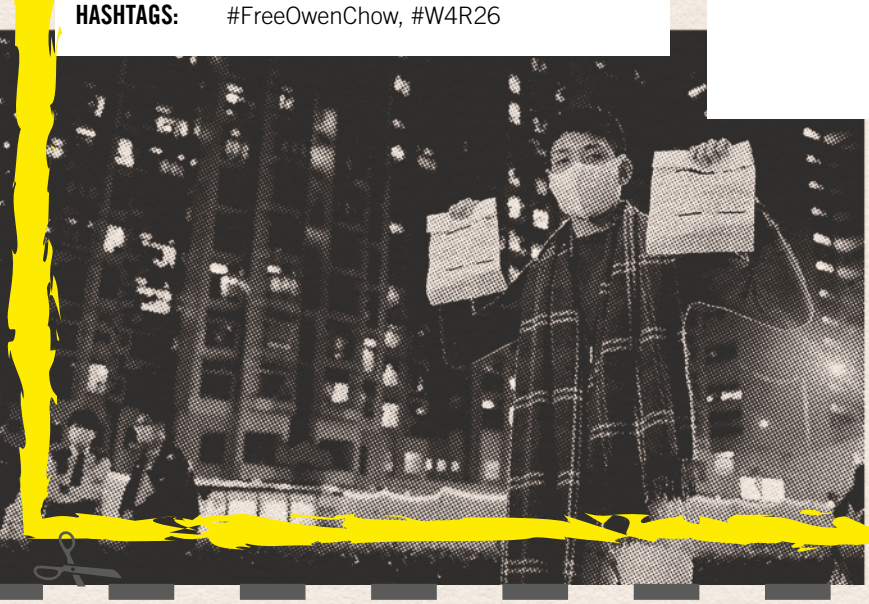
Daria's experience reflects a wider pattern in which accusations of "extremism" and "terrorism" are being used against activists, helping those in power silence independent voices and discourage others from speaking out. Yet Daria refused to abandon her values. Even when facing pressure and threats, she continued defending her people and their rights with courage and determination.

Call for the immediate and unconditional release of Daria Egereva and for an end to the repression of Indigenous activists exercising their rights across Russia.

WRITE TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

Demand that Hong Kong authorities immediately and unconditionally release Owen Chow.

ADDRESS: Chief Executive's Office
Tamar
HONG KONG
SALUTATION: Dear Chief Executive
EMAIL: ceo@ceo.gov.hk, enquiry@1835500.gov.hk
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/johnleekachiu
INSTAGRAM: 李家超 John KC Lee
HASHTAGS: #FreeOwenChow, #W4R26



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WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
TAKE ACTION

SHOW OWEN CHOW THAT YOU SUPPORT HIM

Send your creative messages of support to show Owen Chow that he is not alone. Share your favourite philosophical quotes, travel memories or pictures of nature – or dogs!

ADDRESS: Owen Chow
c/o Amnesty International Secretariat
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
UNITED KINGDOM

WRITE TO THE HEAD OF THE INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Demand Daria Egereva's immediate and unconditional release, and the end of repression against Indigenous activists across Russia.

ADDRESS: Head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation
Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation
2 Tehnicheskiy Pereulok
105005 Moscow
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
SALUTATION: Dear Head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation
SOCIAL MEDIA: Help amplify the message by tagging Russian embassies and consulates in your country via social media.
HASHTAGS: #FreeDariaEgereva, #ProtectIndigenousRights, #W4R26

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
TAKE ACTION

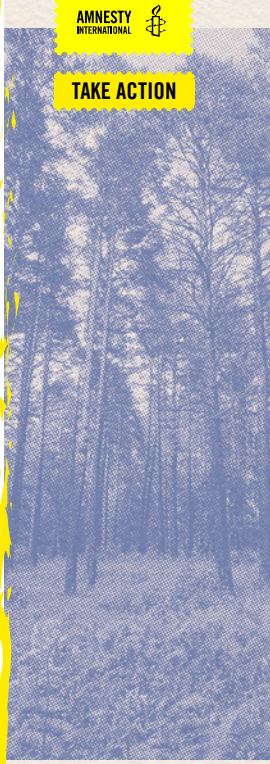
SEND DARIA MESSAGES OF HOPE AND SOLIDARITY

Please write in Russian and do not mention Amnesty International, or your messages might not reach her.

Suggested message:
Дорогая Дарья, мы узнали вашу историю и очень вдохновились вашей работой. Леса, реки и вся наша природа должны быть защищены.
С приветом и солидарностью

Dear Daria, we have learned about your story and are deeply inspired by your work. Forests, rivers, and all our nature must be protected. With greetings and solidarity,

ADDRESS: Egereva Daria Anatolyevna, 1977
FKU SIZO-6
92 Shosseynaya Street
109383 Moscow
RUSSIAN FEDERATION
(Including Daria's full name and year of birth is essential.)



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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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WRITE FOR RIGHTS
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