



ACTIVIST TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

As a member of Amnesty International, you play an active role in the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. This Activist Toolkit is designed to give you the resources and information you'll need to be successful. It's an everyday reference with tips for running an effective group, advice on how to educate and advocate, planning materials, information about AI and much more!

Whether you are a student or local-group activist, a volunteer leader, or an Amnesty International USA member interested in getting active, this is your guide. Bring it with you to group meetings and events, when you table or give a speech and wherever you go to defend human rights.

The Toolkit you hold in your hands is also just the tip of the iceberg. Much more information is available in the online Activist Toolkit at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit, including downloadable tools and interactive user-generated content. So log on, share your successes and challenges with other AIUSA groups and learn what other groups are doing.

If you have any questions, contact your regional office toll free at 1-866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466). Your field organizer is available and looking forward to supporting your success.

GET STARTED »»

This section explains how to assess your group's interests and capabilities and assign tasks for events and activities over the course of the year.

Get more information and planning ideas at
*[www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/
runyourgroup](http://www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/runyourgroup)*.

Planning Your Year

To be successful, your group must be well organized and committed. The more organized your group becomes, the stronger Amnesty International will be as a global movement, and the greater its leverage will be to end human rights abuses. This section is designed to help you plan your group's work for the next six months or year by demonstrating how effective groups strategize, develop and implement action plans, and evaluate their efforts.

Strategic planning varies from group to group, depending on the group's age, size, areas of interest, and member experience. Recently established groups will need to spend more time educating members about the fundamentals of Amnesty International. Small groups may opt to include all members in all steps of the planning process; in larger groups, group leaders may do strategic planning, involving the full membership when it's time for action planning.

Upon receiving this Activist Toolkit and the Core Action packet, the leaders of your group should call a start-of-year strategic planning meeting to set the framework for your group's work for the next year. When strategic planning is complete, your group should know:

- The group's short term and long-term (one-year or longer) goals
- How your group will work on AIUSA's priority campaigns
- What resources will be needed
- How your group will integrate recruitment into all events and activities

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR GROUP'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Brainstorm a brief list of last year's accomplishments. Ask all participants to name at least one aspect of your group's past activism that they liked and one that specifically needs to be improved.

STEP 2: REVIEW CORE ACTION AND THE TOOLKIT

Group leaders must be familiar with the Core Action packet as all groups are asked to complete at least one action for each AIUSA priority campaign. You are also strongly encouraged to review all the elements of this Activist Toolkit.

STEP 3: SET STRATEGIC GOALS

The goals your group sets at this point should be long-term but specific. *Don't confuse goal-setting with planning specific "action steps,"* which will happen after your strategic goals have been accepted by the

group's entire membership. Goals should be **SMART**: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Realistic and Time-Oriented.

Strategic goals generally fall into two categories that complement each other:

1. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION GOALS

These should specifically identify what your group will accomplish within the context of AI's goals for particular campaigns or actions. Remember that student and local groups are asked to complete one action for each AIUSA priority campaign (see Core Action). Some examples:

- Educate 300 people about the death penalty and get them to take an action.
- Have 50 people participate in a December 10 Human Rights day action.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS

These goals build the capacity of your group by better equipping it to meet your human rights action goals. Be sure to include goals for recruiting new members and raising funds. Some examples:

- Recruit 15 new members in the next nine months.
- Recruit 100 new dues-paying members to AIUSA in one year.
- Establish functioning committees within one year to direct each area of the group's work, such as membership, fundraising, urgent actions or death penalty.

STEP 4: CREATE SPECIFIC PLANS FOR RECRUITING AND RETAINING NEW MEMBERS

Integrating recruitment and retention into all event and activity planning is key to group success. Each meeting and event should include a way to welcome and incorporate new members. For example, you might designate one member to welcome guests, get to know their interests and follow up by phone or e-mail to invite them to the next meeting or event.

STEP 5: DECIDE LEADERSHIP ROLES

Once strategic goals have been identified, decide who will take responsibility for each one. These leaders will be responsible for coordinating individual action plans and ensuring that they are implemented.

STEP 6: DEVELOP SPECIFIC ACTION PLANS

Hold a general membership meeting to obtain feedback and encourage participation. Working with the whole group or subgroups, the

leader responsible for each strategic goal can facilitate a brainstorming session to develop an action plan. Completed action plans should include a list of specific tasks and the group members who will be responsible for each, a timeline for task completion and a list of necessary resources.

All the planning in the world will do no good if you don't implement your plan. Once the action plan is complete and tasks are delegated, the group begins its work!

STEP 7: SUPPORT YOUR GROUP MEMBERS

Leaders should follow up with members who are in charge of specific tasks to ensure they have the resources and information they need. *Be careful not to over-plan* or allow the group to suffer from “perfection paralysis.” Recognize that things might not go exactly as planned, and *be flexible*. Know that your group may make some mistakes along the way—especially if you are trying something new such as hosting a benefit concert or a teach-in for the first time—and be prepared to learn from your experience.

STEP 8: CHECK YOUR PLAN

Refer back to your goals and action plans on a regular basis. Make sure things are getting done and adjust plans as necessary.

STEP 9: EVALUATING AND RETURNING TO STEP 1

Hold a meeting with your general membership and discuss the successes and challenges over the past year. Some examples:

- What went well?
- How will we celebrate this success and thank those who helped?
- How many new members did we recruit?
- What contacts and connections did we make?
- What can we do better next time?
- What challenges do we face?
- What did we learn that we could use in the future?
- What new resources became available to us because of this action or event?
- Who else could benefit from this information (e.g., new group members or leaders, the regional office, other human rights organizations)?

GET CONNECTED »»

Have a question? Need support, such as advice on organizing an event? Want to start a new group? This section has what you need to know about contacting staff and volunteer leaders and accessing print and online resources.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- How to Contact AIUSA Staff and Volunteer Leaders
- The Online Toolkit
- Other Resources Available to Your Group

Find more information on getting connected at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/connect.

How to Contact Staff and Volunteer Leaders

With an ear trained to local issues, your regional office provides support and preparation for carrying out your human rights activism. Contact your regional office if you are:

- Looking to network and work with other AIUSA activists and leaders in your area.
- Interested in starting a local or student group.
- Looking for ongoing support, including ideas for or assistance planning events, organizing actions or getting involved in AIUSA national priority campaigns.
- Interested in attending training events and conferences.
- In need of Amnesty resources or information.

You can reach your regional office (toll free) at 1-866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466). Your regional office can also put you in contact with the following staff and volunteer leaders who are available to assist your local or student group.

Student Area Coordinators (SAC) and Area Coordinators (AC): SACs and ACs are experienced AI volunteers who serve as advisors to groups. They provide valuable assistance and support in organizing meetings, planning strategies, recruiting members, locating resources, participating in local and regional events and sharing ideas for human rights activism.

Legislative Coordinators (LC): Legislative coordinators work with our professional legislative advocates in Washington DC and with staff and other volunteers to achieve AIUSA's legislative goals. LCs can help you coordinate your group's legislative agenda and work with other groups in your congressional district.

Country Specialists: Country specialists serve as primary experts and strategists on countries other than the United States. They can help develop your group's strategy for the case or Action File you are working on. Contact the Country Specialist program in Washington DC for contact information.

State Death Penalty Abolition Coordinators (SDPAC): SDPACs work with other members and staff to achieve specific legislative goals related to the death penalty. They support groups in their state and provide information, advice and training about the death penalty.

The Online Toolkit

All groups should be familiar with the most fundamental resource provided by AIUSA—the Online Activist Toolkit, available at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit. An even more comprehensive resource than the printed Toolkit you have in your hands, the online toolkit provides activists with critical information needed to start, build and sustain a group, along with basic information about the organization.

The online toolkit is organized into nine sections:

- **About Amnesty** includes the basics about Amnesty International, such as frequently asked questions and important membership information.
- **Start a Group** is your essential guide to forming a new group.
- **Run Your Group** includes fundraising suggestions, tips on holding meetings and important information on recruiting and retaining members.
- **Plan Events and Activities** is a great resource for organizing events such as vigils, film nights and tabling. This section also includes instructions on lobbying Congress and letter writing.
- **Promote Your Group** provides ideas for publicizing events and group meetings.
- **Connect with Amnesty** provides important regional office and program contact information, including e-mail distribution lists for committees and task forces.
- **The Online Library** includes a glossary and acronym list, the complete *AI Annual Report* and program guides such as the Action File Guide, Letter Writing Guide and Special Focus Case Guide.
- **Forms, Applications, Sample Documents and Policies** is a one-stop shop for all the forms you'll need to run your group—sign-in sheets, flyers, sample group charters and more.
- **The Calendar** provides significant dates for Amnesty International and human rights.

Throughout the online toolkit you will also find a number of opportunities for posting and accessing user-generated content on the AIUSA website. We encourage you to take pictures at your events and post them along with general commentary or tips that other groups may find useful.

Other Resources Available to Your Group

Advocating for human rights is a serious job. When you're out there in your community or school, you have to know what you're talking about. Here is a short list of resources that will keep you informed.

Regional Offices – They are the primary contact for student and local groups. Get in touch with your regional office to get connected with AIUSA volunteer leaders in your area, to work with the field organizer for your state or to find resources for projects and get your questions answered. Call toll-free 1-866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466).

Mailings and Newsletters

- *Amnesty International* magazine is a quarterly magazine published by AIUSA. It offers news, features and analysis, with an emphasis on success stories and profiles of human rights defenders worldwide. It has a circulation of about 300,000.
- *Connect* is AIUSA's in-house activist newsletter serving as the primary information vehicle for student and local group members, as well as other core activists. Available online, *Connect* contains news features and activist profiles and offers updates on current campaigns and actions.

Internet Resources – www.amnestyusa.org The Amnesty International USA website is updated daily with the latest news, events, actions and campaign information.

- Find events: Learn about nationwide AIUSA events and to post your own events at www.amnestyusa.org/events.
- Sign up to become an Activist 2.0 and use social networks, bookmarking sites and blogs to promote AIUSA's campaigns and actions.
- Take action online and sign up for the Human Rights Action Center at www.amnestyusa.org/act.
- Get a password for the members-only area, where you can find internal documents and additional resources. www.amnestyusa.org/members.
- Actúa Ya: Recibe Alertas sobre Casos Urgentes. Actúa ya para promover la justicia social y solidarizarte con las personas que mas lo necesitan. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/aliados>

www.amnesty.org – The website of AI's International Secretariat contains additional news releases, full-text versions of all external reports since 1994, worldwide campaign information and more.

www.amnesty-volunteer.org – The Amnesty Volunteers website is a forum for all Amnesty members and volunteers and provides additional information and links to Amnesty-related websites.

LOCAL GROUPS»»

This section provides a brief overview of local group work and profiles a very successful local group in Houston, TX, to provide ideas and inspiration.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- All About Local Groups
- Profile: Houston, TX, Group #23

Get more info about local groups, including how to start a group, at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/startagroup.

All About Local Groups

Since the early days of Amnesty International, local groups have been the mainstay of our activism and the backbone of the organization.

Local groups have always been at the forefront when it comes to speaking out for people who can't speak for themselves. Using a variety of tools to promote and defend human rights, they write letters, circulate petitions, and table at public events. AIUSA local groups are also the representatives of Amnesty International in their communities. They work with local media, lobby public officials, organize events, work in coalition with other organizations and raise money for AIUSA.

Local groups are community-based. They bring together people of different backgrounds, including teachers, professionals, retirees, students and many others to work as a team for the promotion of human rights. Close involvement with their communities provides local group activists with important resources for their work and an ideal foundation from which to tackle human rights abuses on a global scale. Local groups also help Amnesty's membership grow by recruiting national and local members who strengthen AI's capacity to win human rights victories.

Here are some quick facts about local group activism at Amnesty International:

- Amnesty International USA has about 250 local groups.
- Most groups send one or more representatives to AIUSA's Annual General Meeting to vote on policies and priorities.
- Local groups adopt prisoners of conscience and work on long-term cases.
- Local groups are the primary representatives of Amnesty International in their communities.

Being a local group member is a great opportunity to work with the world's largest human rights organization. Join a local group in your community today or start one yourself. Call toll free 1- 866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466) to get contact information for a local group near you.

Profile: Houston, TX, Group #23

Local group #23, located in Houston, Texas, has a knack for playing to the strengths of its members. Since its inception in the 1960s, this group has used the assorted talents and interests of its members to develop an innovative, successful AIUSA group with a strong presence in its community.

Take, for example, the Eye and Tooth Project, a series of acting workshops and performances held in major cities across Texas. This idea came to the Houston group through John Sullivan and Sheli Rae, two members with backgrounds in theater, who used their expertise to create a powerful project. The plays, performed by both actors and non-actors, bring different Amnesty International issues to life through interaction with audiences, and they use that experience to bring about community healing and motivation to make change. This technique, known as Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), has such a moving effect on audience and participants alike that Bill Ohsie, Houston group coordinator, says, “You can’t believe these people are non-actors. You would think they had done at least a few years in community theater.”

An equally impressive project is the “Human Rights Show,” a weekly radio program that discusses human rights issues—the only radio program of its kind produced by an AIUSA group. In its six years on the air, the program has covered a huge variety of topics, from human rights issues along the Texas–Mexico border to human trafficking to anti-terrorism laws to Russian elections. Using first-hand interviews and commentary, the program opens the eyes of listeners to Amnesty International issues and more.

Sponsoring creative programs like these alongside more traditional AI work, local group #23 offers something for everyone and is always looking for folks who want to start something new! Thanks to the initiative of its 15–20 core members and the dedicated leadership team of Bill Ohsie, Phivan Wright and others, this group continues to do excellent, far-reaching work for Amnesty International and for human rights here at home.

ORGANIZING TIPS: Every group should create a system to learn about the interests, skills and network connections of its members. For example, when new people come to meetings or express interest, have them fill out a brief form that identifies contact information, interests, availability, skills and affiliations. Or have someone from the group talk individually with new members at their first meeting to find out why they came, what they’re interested in and how they would like to be involved in the future. This contact can also be made through one-on-one phone calls. Remember also to invite all new group members to join AIUSA as a dues-paying member.

STUDENT GROUPS»»

This section provides a brief overview of student group work and profiles a successful student groups to provide ideas and inspiration.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- All About Student Groups
- Profile: Columbia College

Get more info about student groups, including how to start a group, at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/startagroup.

All About Student Groups

Students and young people make up the majority of Amnesty International's activist corps—over 80 percent! When it comes to speaking out for human rights and bringing human rights violators to justice, AIUSA's student members are on the front lines.

AIUSA's vibrant student groups undertake a wide range of activities—from public demonstrations and letter-writing campaigns to educational projects to face-to-face meetings with government representatives—to prevent human rights abuses. They also work to grow the organization through recruiting new national and local members.

Student members are also welcomed into Amnesty International's most important decision-making processes, including those at AIUSA's Annual General Meeting (AGM), where policy is made. As student members, your group gets to vote on the big issues, and you have real opportunities to participate at all levels of Amnesty International's worldwide movement.

Here are some facts about student activism at Amnesty International:

- AIUSA has nearly 1,500 student chapters on both high school and college campuses all over the country.
- Student groups find fun ways to inform their fellow students about human rights, such as hosting social events, concerts and movies.
- During AIUSA's National Week of Student Action, student activists join together to focus on a specific pressing human rights issue.
- Students account for about half of Annual General Meeting participants.
- AI provides its student groups with extensive online and print resources to recruit members and perform effective human rights work.

AIUSA proves that students have the power to tackle global injustice. All you have to do is get involved with an AIUSA student group today—or start one of your own! Call 1- 866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466) for more information.

Profile: Columbia College, Chicago

The AIUSA student group at Columbia College of Chicago certainly came a long way in its first year—such a long way, in fact, that it was awarded the campus Community Activism Award and the Outstanding Student Group at the 2007 AIUSA Midwestern Regional Conference. Even group president Casey Hart was surprised at the success the group achieved in such a short time. “I was shocked about the attention [given to] us,” he said. “I feel like there is so much more we can do.”

In the upcoming school year, group members will be focusing on getting the campus involved and creating a bigger “buzz” around their group, which now has about eight core members, says Hart. And they will once again hold their wildly successful “Smacktivism” event. To prepare, each group member chooses an issue that he or she feels passionately about and drafts a letter addressing the issue. The letters are then laid on designated tables on the perimeter of a room, surrounding a refreshments table in the center. On the day of the event, guests move from station to station, learning more about the issues and signing letters as they go. According to former president Austin Heredia, over 200 letters were signed last year!

Despite the hard work and detailed planning that went into the group’s Smacktivism event last year, the mainstay of the group’s work is a “simple and straightforward” approach to activism. An enormous part of the group’s work was organizing film screenings—simple events that draw a substantial audience on a college campus and provide the opportunity to gain new members and motivate people to take action. Even the way the group gets the word out about events is easy—members use brightly colored flyers that catch your eye amid the mess of papers on campus bulletin boards. They also rely on Facebook to publicize events and to remind members of meetings and other upcoming dates.

The success of the Columbia College group shows that starting out small can be a great way to get an AIUSA group going and to introduce a campus to human rights activism. Their simple and straightforward mentality has allowed them to grow into a close-knit, award-winning group in under a year. And as their expertise grows, their plans for the future keep getting bigger.

ORGANIZING TIPS: Hold creative events that attract people’s attention, and allow them to get involved in simple and straightforward ways. Cover your bases with promotion and get the word out in a variety of ways. Always work to grow your core group so they can help plan even more events.

RUN YOUR GROUP »»

This section provides comprehensive information for groups on recruiting and retaining members, as well as valuable tips for planning and setting group goals, raising funds and holding effective meetings. This section will also help groups involve members of diverse backgrounds and work effectively with other organizations.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- How to Hold an Effective Meeting
- How to Recruit and Retain Members
- How to Build Diversity
- How to Grow the Movement
- How to Promote Your Group
- How to Use Technology to Build Your Group
- How to Work with Other Organizations
- How to Raise Funds
- How to Work with the Media
- How to Work with Your School Administration

Get more tips and ideas for how to run your group at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/runyourgroup.

How to Hold an Effective Meeting

Meetings can make or break your AIUSA group. If your meetings are well prepared and facilitated in an efficient yet engaging and upbeat manner, they'll help strengthen your group. If your meetings are poorly planned and poorly run, it will be difficult to advance your group's goal of defending human rights. Effective meetings are characterized by three key elements: solid planning, good facilitation and thorough follow-up. With these pieces in place, your AI group can move forward to defend human rights.

PLANNING

Step 1 Determine what type of meeting you are going to have. Planning meetings are used to plan action, make decisions and organize your group. They lay the groundwork for how your group will run and are usually internal meetings for key leadership. General meetings are held regularly to accomplish your group's goals and to ensure a sense of stability within the group. These meetings are your full-group meetings that all members attend.

Step 2 Review your group's priorities and plan your meetings accordingly. Be sure to identify clear goals and draft an agenda for each meeting. Your goals should be concrete, realistic and measurable and help to achieve your group's long-term objectives.

Step 3 Determine where your meetings will be held. Take into consideration familiarity, accessibility and whether the site will be comfortable for all group members.

Step 4 Set a date and time. Be sure to pick a time that is convenient to all members. For local groups, schedule evening or weekend meetings so they will not conflict with most members' work schedules. For student groups, try to schedule around typical class schedules and school wide activities.

FACILITATING

- Make every meeting enjoyable, efficient and an experience that builds moral.
- Sign everyone in.
- Stick to the agenda. Meetings that get off-track are often unproductive.
- Include time to welcome new members, introduce them, find out their interests and inform them about your group.
- Be flexible. Sometimes important issues arise that cannot wait to be addressed.
- Encourage participation. Balance those members who tend to talk all the time with those who speak infrequently or only when asked.
- Seek commitment. Get members to sign up for tabling, action committees and other specific tasks. Keep track of who has committed to what and follow up with those members.
- Avoid detailed decision making, which is better reserved for planning or committee meetings.

FOLLOWING UP

Make follow-up a priority after your meetings. When people are reminded of the commitments that they made and thanked for what that they have already done, they are inspired to keep up the good work.

- Call or e-mail members who missed the meeting. Provide them with updates and ask if they would like to volunteer for any upcoming events or actions.
- Call new people who came to the meeting, thank them for their participation, and ask if they have any questions you can address. If a large number of new members showed up, send thank-you notes or e-mails with an invitation to the next event or meeting.
- If a big event is coming up, update members on how the planning is going and send reminders of all important dates and times.
- Consider information, suggestions and requests from each meeting when planning your next meeting.

How to Recruit and Retain Members

Over the years, AI has proven that people who join together to take collective action can save lives, secure the release of political prisoners, protect human rights defenders and hold governments accountable for human rights abuses. Through your work with Amnesty International, you are taking part every day in building an active and dynamic human rights movement. By increasing our numbers, we can magnify our power to protect all of our rights.

The ability to recruit new members and retain existing ones is an essential skill for your AIUSA chapter. The larger your group, the more resources and capacity you have to take action for human rights.

MAKE ONE-ON-ONE CONTACT

Identify individuals who may want to join Amnesty International USA and personally invite each one. Strive to take names and contact information for every person who expresses interest.

- Attach a tear-off coupon to flyers for people to pre-register for events.
- Have a sign-in sheet at each of your group's activities.
- Attend other organizations' meetings with a sign-up sheet for those who want information about Amnesty International.
- Once people have shown interest in getting involved or learning about your group, contact them immediately. A phone call is the best way to personalize the information you give them and invite them to participate.

INVOLVE NEWCOMERS

Incorporate newcomers into the group right away. Identify tasks for new people and ask them, specifically, to get involved at their first meeting or event. Take time to find out what brought them to your group and identify their interests, skills and availability.

PRIORITIZE ACTION AND FOLLOW-UP

- People are more likely to join your group if they perceive it as action-oriented, effective and fun. Make sure that general meetings always include an action component, such as planning an event or writing letters.
- Follow up with everyone within a week of any event, and thank them for their participation. Ask what they liked, how they see themselves getting involved in the future, etc.
- Make the effort to let everyone know that you value their perspective and are interested in their involvement.

How to Build Diversity

WHAT IS MULTICULTURALISM?

AIUSA strives to draw upon the richness of our society to increase and strengthen our organization. This richness includes people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, ages, economic status, gender, sexual orientation and physical and mental abilities. We work to ensure that members of different social identities are represented, can freely participate in all aspects of the organization and are treated fairly and equally.

WHY IS MULTICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL?

Amnesty International's integrity, sustainability and effectiveness as a human rights organization depend on our commitment to multiculturalism. The more we reflect all aspects of our society, the more effective our organization will be in creating a more just society and world. Building a multicultural organization is essential to building an effective human rights movement.

In addition to holding others accountable to human rights standards, we must create just relationships within our own organization if we want our work to reflect our values. At this level, respecting human rights means nurturing an environment where people from all backgrounds can freely participate and are equally valued.

Moreover, to effectively confront human rights violators, we must understand the causes of human rights violations. Often, unjust social systems—i.e., systems of oppression like racism, classism and sexism—are at the root, and when we can identify those causes, we are better equipped to find effective solutions. A more diverse membership increases our capacity to do both.

WHAT STRATEGIES ENCOURAGE MULTICULTURALISM?

- To build diversity into recruitment efforts, identify opportunities to reach out to a variety of people of different backgrounds and identities. Consider, for example, tabling at a wide variety of locations with appropriate materials and actions.
- Reach out to new audiences through targeted events, speaking engagements and actions. Follow up with new people who show interest.
- Encourage members to seek and form relationships with a variety of people. Find out their interests and affiliations, and invite them to attend a group meeting or event.
- Be prepared to alter the way your group works (e.g., where it meets) to become more inclusive.

How to Grow the Movement

Recruiting new AIUSA members is one of the most important actions local and student groups can take. Even though national membership costs less than a pair of movie tickets, every dues-paying member materially increases AIUSA's capacity to send research teams around the world, publish findings and mobilize actions that turn into human rights victories. And dues come straight back to you! AIUSA literature, activist training, regional conferences—all are paid for with member dues.

Local and student groups can grow the movement in two ways. First, and easiest, make a pledge to ensure each member of your group is also an active AIUSA member. Stand up and be counted! Second, challenge your group members to make recruitment a continual priority.

Here are some ideas:

SET MONTHLY RECRUITMENT GOALS. Challenge your group to recruit a certain number of new AIUSA members from the local community or your school every 30 days.

ACTIVELY RECRUIT AT MEETINGS AND EVENTS. Make it a practice to ask everyone to join AIUSA at all meetings and events.

MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO JOIN. Prominently display AIUSA membership forms as well as information on how to join online.

With 2.2 million members around the world, Amnesty International is able to lead the struggle to defend human rights and save lives. We know our strength lies in our numbers. This year, make a commitment to join with others across the country and around the world to demand human rights for all. Call 1-800-AMNESTY or visit www.amnestyusa.org/join.

How to Promote Your Group

Promoting your group is an important ongoing process. Reaching out lets everyone know that Amnesty International USA is at work in the community and serves as an invitation to others to get involved in human rights work that makes a difference both locally and globally.

Here are a few suggestions. Be creative! Every year, groups across the country come up with new and interesting ways to spread the word—and so can you!

INCREASE VISIBILITY

Be visible on your campus or in your community. The more active you appear, the more people will want to work with your group. Tabling and hosting events are great promotional tools. Remember, everyone who comes to your table or your event is a potential new member. The trick is to follow up with each and every participant.

You also increase visibility when you publicize your events and activities well by using flyers, e-mails, and posters and by placing ads in your local or school newspaper. Consider advertising your group's regular meetings too.

MAKE ONE-ON-ONE CONTACT

Use a sign-in sheet whenever you host an event or work a table. Ask people for their contact information and whether they would like to receive information about upcoming events and activities. Be sure to follow up within one week with each person who attended or expressed interest. Encourage their participation in your next event, and ask them about their interests.

HOLD AN INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Plan an introductory agenda about human rights and Amnesty International, and advertise the meeting in your community or on your campus. The event should be informal and welcoming. Remember that hungry people don't pay as much attention—so offer snacks, coffee and sodas!

How to Use Technology to Build Your Group

Take the next step—bring your offline activism online, and help spread Amnesty International’s message of hope across the Web! The Web is a great tool for spreading the word about human rights, encouraging others to take action and recruiting new members to your group. From online newspapers and blogs to message boards and social networks, there are many ways you can use the ’Net for human rights.

Here are just a few places to begin:

Social Network Sites Use social networks, bookmarking sites and blogs to promote your group and recruit members. Link your friends to our pages on Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Change.org.

Your Blogs and Pages Promote Amnesty USA campaigns important to you on your personal blog or profile page. Include links to actions from our Action Center, embed our videos or add AI banners. Get banners and more at www.amnestyusa.org/onlinetools.

RSS Feeds Automatically have our actions or news feeds posted to your website, blog or profile page. Find out more at www.amnestyusa.org/rss.

E-mail Lists Many groups communicate with their members by using electronic mailing lists.

Reader Comments Read a blog post or online news article about one of our human rights priorities? Take a minute to submit comments with links back to relevant Amnesty International USA pages or actions.

How to Work with Other Organizations

Working with other organizations that have similar goals increases our ability to make a difference. In the struggle for human rights, our strength and our ability to make a difference increases when we work in coordination with other groups on campus and in our local communities. Together, we can accomplish bigger goals, build broader support and make the message more compelling to a wider audience.

GETTING STARTED

- Identify the issue you want to work on. Here are a few questions your group should answer:
 - What are Amnesty International's policies and goals on this issue?
 - What are your group's particular goals on this issue?
 - What do you hope to accomplish on this issue?
- Identify groups that might be interested in the same issue. Besides other human rights groups, potential allies can be found among service and special-cause groups, college student associations, religious institutions, and youth groups. Also consider faith communities, local service-based groups (e.g., treatment centers for survivors of torture or AIDS clinics) and groups for people of a particular identity or background.

CONNECTING WITH ALLIES

- Develop a strategy for inviting others to join you in the very beginning stages of your planning. Include them early enough so they can be an active and real part of developing ideas and plans.
- Make contact! Assign a member of your group to meet with a representative of the other group. Be clear and upfront about your interests and expectations, and remember to listen equally to their interests and expectations.
- Identify and clarify common stances on the issue. Where do your group and the other group overlap? Will this collaboration be long- or short-term?

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

- Be specific. When defining your goal and planning your strategy or event, be as specific as possible. Concrete expectations are easier to fulfill than abstract ideas or vague plans.
- Assign responsibilities. Help all participants fulfill their potential by making sure everyone is assigned a specific task. After each meeting, make sure that tasks are divided according to each person's abilities and interest.
- Maintain communication. Keeping all participating groups updated and involved in the decision-making process is key to collaboration.

How to Raise Funds

Human rights work costs money. Whether you are raising funds to support your group’s activities at the local level or to support the life-saving work of Amnesty International worldwide, fundraising is an absolutely essential component of your human rights work. But raising cash need not be burdensome or onerous. In fact, it can be fun. Here are some basics:

USE THE PRINCIPLES OF FUNDRAISING

- Keep it simple and fun.
- You don’t get money unless you ask for it.
- The best approach is the direct, personal approach.
- You have to give people something for their money, even if only a sense of accomplishment in knowing their funds will support your good work.
- Funds raised in the name of Amnesty International are to be used either in support of your group’s activities or donated to AIUSA.

PLAN YOUR BUDGET AHEAD OF TIME

The following basic cost categories will help you get started.

Your annual group assessment fee: All AIUSA groups are asked to give a minimum of \$50 per year to AIUSA to help cover the cost of training, resource materials, and other support.

Publicity: Flyers, posters, photocopying, brochures, newsletters.

Meeting costs: Refreshments, rooms for special meetings, advertising, equipment.

Action costs: Postage! Transportation, signs, posters, bull horn, printed materials.

Speakers: Include travel, lodging, meals and honoraria.

Fundraising-related expenses: Merchandise, publicity, facility costs, prizes, food, etc.

SEPARATE OPERATING EXPENSES FROM SPECIAL APPEALS

It is often easier to raise money when you can tell donors exactly what the money is for. Large donors, in particular, like to be able to see their money at work. Use upcoming events as an opportunity to make a special appeal to your regular donors and others.

START SMALL

Let’s take selling merchandise for an example. Your group can order merchandise online through AIUSA’s online store www.amnestyusa.org/store/, or design your own products through a local vendor.

TRY FAIR TRADE FUNDRAISERS

AIUSA and Equal Exchange provide a compelling way to raise funds and help farmers around the world. Groups earn 45 percent profits selling organic and fair-trade coffees, teas and chocolates. Order directly from Equal Exchange (774-776-7371) and mention Amnesty International USA. For more information, visit www.equalexchange.com/fundraiser.

How to Work with the Media

The media work of student and local groups is of enormous value to Amnesty International USA. It generates support for campaigns, attracts new members and helps bring human rights issues to the attention of people who may not hear about them through the national media.

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Letters pages in newspapers are widely read and can be used very effectively to promote AI's work.

- Keep letters short—250 words at the most. Letters page editors will cut long letters.
- AIUSA's Media Relations Unit creates letters-to-the-editors templates for key events, reports and campaigns. If you are interested in receiving periodic templates, contact media@aiusa.org.
- Make sure to give your contact details.

SPEAKING ON TALK RADIO Talk radio is one of the quickest, easiest, and least expensive ways to get an issue out to the public. You will be answering questions or addressing statements made by the show's host, but always remember that your real target audience is the show's listeners.

- Know what you are going to say before you call. Write down two or three key points to focus your thoughts and make sure you get those messages across.
- Call early in the program even though you may still be put on hold.
- Always assume listeners don't know much about your issue and construct your statements to have the greatest appeal.

USING EVENTS AS MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES Amnesty International USA groups are welcome to contact the media about vigils, demonstrations, guest speakers, protests, art shows and many other activities. To encourage media outlets to cover your event:

- Notify the media at least 48 hours before your event, if possible.
- Write a media advisory and fax it to the local Associated Press and any other local media you can.
- Take photographs at your event and submit them electronically to your weekly paper within 48 hours.
- Invite celebrities—such as local politicians, sports figures, musicians, actors and others in the public eye—to increase interest in your event.

How to Work with Your School Administration

Establishing an AIUSA chapter at your school may be difficult. Here are some strategies for dealing with a tough administration.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you attend a publicly funded school, you have the right to meet as an AIUSA group and work on any issues you choose, even controversial and political subjects, as long as you are not interfering with instruction time, group members participate voluntarily, and no one is harmed by the group's activities. The only way a public high school can shut down an AIUSA group is to shut down ALL groups. If you attend a private school, you will need to find out your school policies and work from there.

KNOW YOUR AI FACTS

If you can demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about the issue you want to work on, you will be taken more seriously than if you appear interested only because it's controversial or heart-wrenching. Bring information in writing to present to administrators, along with a description of the educational benefits of working on this issue for the student body. And remember that it's okay to disagree with an administrator—just make sure you disagree respectfully.

BE DIPLOMATIC

Making the effort to establish a decent rapport with school administrators will open doors and create room for negotiation. Remember that how you deliver your message can be as important as what your message is, and the last thing you want to do is polarize administrators against your group. Respectful and appropriate communication is key to diplomacy.

EMPHASIZE EDUCATIONAL AND CIVIC VALUE

Present your efforts constructively. You are not trying to stir up division in the student body; you are promoting education and thoughtful discussion on important social issues. Remember to emphasize that Amnesty International is a nonpartisan organization.

FIND ALLIES

Don't challenge an administration alone. Find teachers, parents and other students who support you and who are willing to advocate on your behalf.

DON'T LET THINGS GET UGLY!

Before you hit a dead end, call your regional office at 1-866-A-REGION for advice and support. Staff there may be able to speak directly to your administrators or strategize with you on how to get your message across.

EDUCATE»»

This section provides ideas and detailed instructions for organizing group events. Start with the list of things to do at every event to get an idea of the steps involved in planning an event.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- Things to Do at Every Event
- How to Table Effectively
- How to Host a Speaker
- How to Host a Film Night
- How to Hold a Vigil

Find more info about educating your group and local community at http://www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/planevents.

Things to Do at Every Event

Successful events require solid planning, preparation and follow-up. Events are a prime way to attract, inspire and recruit new members, and to increase your groups' visibility in your school or local community.

The following lists provide a framework for planning your event and will be helpful in delegating tasks!

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Clearly identify the event's purpose and concrete goals. Be specific about what you want to accomplish. For example, how many attendees and new members would you like to gain from the event?
- Create a timeline, budget and task list with deadlines.
- Delegate specific roles and responsibilities.
- Secure the event venue and any necessary permits.
- Reach out to other local AIUSA student and local groups to encourage participation, volunteers and support.
- Publicize your event in multiple places, including campus bulletin boards and radio stations, local newspapers and coffee shops. Be sure to add a post to the events section of the AIUSA website.
- Use your event as a media opportunity. Contact local media outlets at least 48 hours in advance and encourage them to cover your event.

DURING THE EVENT

- Actively recruit AIUSA members at every event. Prominently display membership materials and don't be shy about asking attendees to join AIUSA.
- Remember that all guests are also potential group members! Use sign-in sheets to gather contact information.
- Provide an action opportunity at every event. Have AIUSA action materials available that includes something attendees can do at the event (such as signing a letter or petition).

AFTER THE EVENT

- Personally thank everyone who made your event a success (speakers, group members, school administrators, etc.).
- Mail all action items, such as signed postcards or letters, completed at the event.
- Follow up with potential group members by contacting them within one week inviting each to your next meeting.

How to Table Effectively

Tabling is a simple and effective way to make Amnesty International more visible in your community or at your school. It's also an important tool for recruiting new members, gathering signatures and building support for your group's work.

Most high school and college campuses invite student groups to table in common areas with only minimal restrictions. Tables are often welcome at street fairs, churches, community events, coffeehouses and even in some malls and shopping centers. Wherever you decide to go, make sure you have permission from those in charge, and remember to play by the rules so you will be welcome back in the future. Keep in mind that the appearance of your table and your volunteers are important. Both should be neat, welcoming and inviting!

CHECK LIST

- Prepare volunteers. Have them practice their introduction to Amnesty International and what they will ask people to do.
- Check to see if you need to reserve a table.
- Have at least one banner, and consider a mounted poster to ensure passersby know you're there.
- Use music or a video to draw attention to your table.
- Make sure to have a sign-up sheet for visitors' contact information.
- Create an area where people can help themselves to general AI information, such as brochures or postcards.
- Distribute flyers about upcoming events and group meetings.
- Feature a letter-writing action, postcards or a petition so all visitors can take action for human rights.
- Bring plenty of pens!
- Put out a donation jar, if permitted.
- Be prepared to ask people to join your group and to become members of Amnesty International.
- Follow up by inviting people who signed in to your next event and meeting.

How to Host a Speaker

Hosting a speaker can inject excitement into your regular group routine, give members a closer, more personal look at human rights issues, and provide a great opportunity to attract and involve new people. Guest speakers can be other AIUSA staff or activists (such as country specialists or student area coordinators), representatives from other organizations, authors, or visitors from other countries.

PLANNING FOR YOUR EVENT

- Begin planning a speaker event at least two months (preferably four) ahead of time, and set clear goals for the event.
- In your invitation to speakers, be clear about what you want them to discuss.
- Clarify whether each speaker expects a fee, honoraria or other expense your group will need to cover and how and when the speaker expects to be paid.
- Develop a clear agenda, with times, for the event. Don't forget to schedule time at the beginning to introduce Amnesty International and at the end to ask people to take action and join.
- Assign someone to act as host and to give an introduction at the event.
- Develop a recruitment plan for reaching out to new people whom you think the speaker will attract. Ask all guests to sign in, and follow up with newcomers after the event.
- If possible, arrange to meet speakers when they arrive, and take them to their hotel or other destination.
- Send a thank-you note to the speaker.
- Report the success of your event to your regional office and consider posting a review and photos on the AIUSA website.

How to Host a Film Night

Screening a film is a great way to use a popular form of entertainment to reach out to people who are concerned about a particular issue. An AI film night—including film, discussion and action opportunity—is even better, allowing you to educate and inspire others, give them with an opportunity to take concrete action, and promote your group effectively.

SELECTING YOUR FILM

There are plenty of human rights–themed feature films out there to choose from: *Hotel Rwanda*, *Blood Diamond*, *The Killing Fields*, *Rendition* and *Kite Runner* are just a few examples. There are also excellent documentaries available, some produced by Amnesty International and available from your regional office. Be sure to check out the AI film curriculum guides at www.amnestyusa.org/what-you-can-do/educate/.

HOSTING THE EVENT

Choose a well-known and accessible location, and publicize the event well in advance through e-mail, flyers, posters and newspaper calendars. Be sure to ask people to sign in when they arrive, and always include a pitch at the end asking them to join Amnesty International USA and your group.

Decide how you want to introduce the film’s theme (don’t forget to mention AI’s position on the subject!). Include time after the screening for discussion, an introduction to AI and your group’s work, and a concrete action opportunity—preferably one that relates to the film just shown. Time your agenda to ensure the event isn’t too long!

CHECK LIST

- Sign-in sheet
- Amnesty International literature: Have enough on hand, including membership brochures, newsletters, and handouts. Make sure all actions and handouts are displayed prominently.
- Pens and paper: Be sure you have enough, including paper for taking notes.
- Equipment: Nothing is more embarrassing than having a room full of people and being unable to get your DVD player to work. Make sure it is ready to roll before guests arrive!
- Letters don’t go anywhere without postage!

How to Hold a Vigil

A powerful way to raise community members' interest in human rights issues is to hold a silent candlelight vigil on behalf of a person or group of people your group is supporting. Consider inviting not only students and community members but ally organizations as well. Vigils can also draw attention to other events you have planned, such as a guest speaker or film screening.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Obtain permission from local authorities or your school administration. A permit to demonstrate is often required. Plan adequate time to obtain permits—depending on the venue, it can take weeks or even months for a permit to be issued.
- Plan your program. Set the length of the vigil by determining how it will start, how it will end and what will happen in between. Some vigils begin with a few words about the purpose, a reading about a case or a poem that demonstrates the importance of the issue or situation. During the vigil, participants may either maintain a silent focus or choose instead to read names or statements relevant to the issue. To wrap up, give a call to action, and make sure everyone is asked to join AIUSA.
- To get your message across, be sure to have clearly worded signs that demonstrate your purpose. Incorporate photos if possible (i.e., a giant photo of the person or issue you are focusing on).
- Bring lots of candles.
- Use wax-paper cups to prevent candles from dripping or blowing out. Simply cut a hole in the bottom of each cup and insert candles.
- Use the candlelight to create a pattern—a line or a circle—that can easily be seen by others.
- Don't block entrances, sidewalks or passages.
- Designate two spokespersons to stand apart from the vigil line or circle to distribute action materials and talk to passersby who want to know what your group is doing. The vigil itself should be as free from distraction as possible.
- Concentrate on the quality of the vigil; numbers are important but not decisive.
- As with any event, bring a sign-in sheet and clipboard to pass around or to greet people with. Remember to follow up with newcomers.

ADVOCATE»»

Writing letters and lobbying elected officials are a mainstay of Amnesty International's advocacy work. This section contains valuable information on letter writing and techniques to improve your lobbying skills.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- How to Write Letters
- How to Lobby Your Member of Congress

Get more info at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/planevents.

How to Write Letters

Writing letters to government officials and other authoritative figures is a main activity of Amnesty International groups and members. Your single letter gains its greatest power from being combined with those from AI members around the world. Often governments relent when a flood of letters indicates that the world cares about a particular prisoner or issue.

SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Letters do not need to be long or beautifully composed. All they need do is express your concern and make a simple request.
- Letters should be brief and to the point. They should not fill more than one printed page.
- Use professional or personal letterhead when available.
- For Urgent Action Appeals, write as soon as you can.
- Post, e-mail, fax or cable your letter as soon as it is written.

WHEN WRITING YOUR LETTER

- Identify yourself by profession and nationality to emphasize that all kinds of individuals everywhere are concerned about human rights in the recipient's country.
- Always include the date and your mailing address.
- Follow AIUSA's action recommendations. AIUSA always indicates for what and to whom appeals should be made; follow these directions and use the designated titles of officials.
- Stay within AI's mission. Don't ask for release if the appeal says AI's concern is commutation of a death sentence.
- Assume governments are reasonable and that the official to whom you are writing is unaware of the specific incident. Assume he or she is on your side and wants to remedy the situation.
- Request a response.
- Write in English unless you know the appropriate language well or have a translator.

How to Lobby Your Member of Congress

Lobbying elected officials is a mainstay of Amnesty International's advocacy work. Through coordinated legislative advocacy, AIUSA activists gain the power to influence important human rights legislation.

All groups are asked to participate in at least one of AIUSA's coordinated lobbying efforts each year. You can also check AIUSA's website and events calendar for info on upcoming mobilizations. Your **legislative coordinator** (LC) can fill you in on current lobbying efforts in your state, background on your legislators, and tips to maximize your efforts. To obtain your LC's contact info, call your regional office toll free at 1-866-A-REGION (1-866-219-4466).

The key to influencing the people who represent you is proving to them that you are a well-informed, committed and persistent constituent. Whether you send an e-mail or a letter, make a telephone call or meet with your representative, your communication has an impact proportional to the amount of effort that you put into it. It is important to take time to prepare your thoughts, familiarize yourself with AIUSA's strategy, and follow up as many times as it takes.

Once you have joined an AIUSA legislative effort, here are some tips to make your lobbying successful:

METHODS OF CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATORS

Write a letter. Letters are an important and effective way to introduce yourself and your purpose. Short handwritten letters are best, and always remember to be specific about the action you want your member of Congress to take.

Make a phone call. You can call your U.S. senator or representative by contacting the Capitol Hill switchboard at 1-202-224-3121. Once you are connected to the right office, ask to speak to the staff member who handles human rights. Clearly have in mind a specific request of your representative. If you are planning a visit, this is also the time to set up a meeting to discuss your request.

Meet with your Member of Congress. This is the most effective method of lobbying. Your group can organize a meeting with your member of Congress on an AI concern or join an AIUSA lobbying delegation either in Washington, D.C., or at a district office in your state. Contact your regional office or check the AIUSA website to be a part of the latest lobbying efforts.

MEETING OR TALKING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

BE ACCURATE. To build a working relationship and get action, you need to be a credible source of information. If you don't know something, just say so. Tell your Congress member you will find out and get back to him or her.

BE BRIEF. Members of Congress and their staffs are incredibly busy, and so are you. Because your meeting or phone call might be interrupted, get to your request in the first few minutes.

BE COURTEOUS. Always, always be courteous. A "How are you?" after the initial hello works wonders!

BE SPECIFIC. Make a point to mention the bill that you are requesting action on by number, give reasons why you support it, and let your listeners know that you are a constituent.

BE PERSISTENT. If you find that the staff people you need to speak with are out of the office, leave a note with your name and number. If they don't get back to you within two to three days, call again to set up another meeting.

Not everyone has the time to go to Washington or the district office and meet directly with their representative. Your members of Congress understand—they're busy people too—and they still want to hear from you any way they can!

ABOUT AI»»

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for human rights. This section will help familiarize you and your group members with the organization and its activities.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES

- AI Works
- Frequently Asked Questions
- UDHR

Get more info at www.amnestyusa.org/activist_toolkit/aboutamnesty.

AI Works

Amnesty International (AI) is a worldwide, voluntary movement of people who campaign for human rights. Our vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards. Our mission is to undertake research and action to prevent and end grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of our work to promote all human rights.

THE BEGINNING

In late 1960, British lawyer Peter Benenson read a newspaper story about two Portuguese students sentenced to seven years in jail. Their crime? Raising their glasses in a toast to freedom. Outraged, Benenson published an article called “The Forgotten Prisoners” in the *London Observer* on May 28, 1961. In his article Benenson asked readers to write letters demanding the release of the students and other “prisoners of conscience” around the world. The response was so overwhelming that by the end of the year-long “appeal for amnesty,” groups of letter writers had formed in a dozen countries. Amnesty International was born. In 1977, Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize for having “contributed to securing ground for freedom, for justice, and thereby also for peace in the world.”

TODAY

More than 2.2 million Amnesty International members in more than 150 countries worldwide are leading the struggle to defend human rights and save lives. They create public pressure to stop abuses by organizing campaigns on specific issues and developing programs of action for specific countries. By writing letters, lobbying government officials, publicizing abuses and organizing events, AI members actively fight for human rights. Over 370,000 of AI’s worldwide members are in the United States, and many belong to one of AIUSA’s 1,700 local and student groups.

AIUSA members meet regularly in hundreds of communities across the country to write letters and organize actions to protect individuals at risk of arbitrary detention, torture and ill treatment, death threats and execution. Through our online Human Rights Action Center, tens of thousands of online activists receive e-mail alerts and sign electronic letters of protest when someone is at risk of a severe human rights violation. They also access online information on pending legislation and opportunities to focus their action where it can make a difference.

OUR WORK

Amnesty International campaigns on a diverse range of issues worldwide, including freeing individuals at risk; ending torture, unlawful detentions and other human rights abuses occurring within the context of the “war on terror”; stopping violence against women; abolishing the death penalty; and attaining justice for the people of Darfur.

Amnesty International regularly conducts intensive and far-reaching analyses of human rights around the world. Findings are released to the international community to publicize important issues, advocate for change, and hold human rights violators accountable for their crimes.

OUR RESULTS

Amnesty International campaigns get the job done. Since 1961, pressure from your letters, faxes and, recently, e-mails has helped free more than 40,000 political prisoners worldwide. Our campaign against torture led the United Nations to adopt the Convention against Torture. Our pursuit of international justice spurred the arrests of former Chilean dictator Pinochet and the former Yugoslavia’s Slobodan Milosevic. We have successfully campaigned for the rights of rape victims in South Africa to receive treatment for HIV/AIDS.

YOUR PART

Every day, people turn to Amnesty International to protect their human rights. And for more than 40 years, AI has been there, opening prison doors, confronting those who torture, rape and kill, and speaking for those whose voices have been silenced. With over 370,000 members, AIUSA is now the largest country section of Amnesty International, and our work here benefits people of conscience around the world. Join us in our defense of human rights for all. You can make a difference. Write a letter, sign a petition, become a member, make a donation or log on at www.amnestyusa.org.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

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New York, NY 10001
www.amnestyusa.org
Tel: 212-807-8400
Fax: 212-627-1451
1-800-AMNESTY

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the foundation of the international system of protection for human rights. In 1948 it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, a day now celebrated annually as International Human Rights Day. The thirty articles of the UDHR establish the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all people. Together, they represent a vision for human dignity that transcends political boundaries and authority and that commits governments to uphold the fundamental rights of each person.

WHO FUNDS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S WORK?

Amnesty International (AI) is a democratic, self-governing movement funded largely by its worldwide membership and by donations from the public. No funds are sought or accepted from governments for AI's work.

IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL A PARTISAN ORGANIZATION?

No. AI is impartial. It is independent of any government, political ideology or religious creed. It does not support or oppose any government or political system, or the political opinions of the victims whose rights it seeks to protect. AI is concerned solely with the protection of human rights in every case, regardless of the ideology of the government, opposition forces, or individual in question.

HOW DOES AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GET INFORMATION ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES?

AI's campaigning activities are based on meticulous research. The organization systematically and impartially researches the facts about individual cases and patterns of human rights abuses. Research into human rights violations and individual victims is conducted by AI's International Secretariat, based in London.

WHAT ARE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE?

Prisoners of Conscience (POCs) are people who have been detained solely because of their beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, color, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth or other status and who have not used or advocated violence. Some POCs are prominent individuals, active and well known in public life. Most, however, are ordinary women, men and even children who come from all walks of life. Frequently, they are not political dissidents. They are imprisoned simply for their peaceful exercise of their human rights.

WHAT IS A POLITICAL PRISONER?

A political prisoner is anyone whose imprisonment is politically motivated. Perhaps the “crime” was politically motivated; perhaps the arrest, trial or sentence has political undertones. In cases where it is not clear, AI’s legal office makes a determination on a case-by-case basis. When political prisoners do not qualify as POCs (e.g., suspected members of armed opposition groups), AI works to ensure fair and prompt trials. If a prisoner has been detained without charge, AI will generally ask that he or she be charged with a recognizable crime or be released.

WHAT IS A FAIR TRIAL?

The United Nations sets out international standards on fair trials, which AI urges countries to abide by. AI advocates fair trials within a reasonable time for all political prisoners and works on behalf of such people detained without charge or trial.

WHAT IS “CRUEL, INHUMAN AND DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENTS?”

Both the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights forbid “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.” Although the terms have not been defined specifically, they are intended to provide the widest possible protection against both physical and psychological abuses, such as stun belts used as restraints, 24-hour-a-day isolation units and death by stoning.

WHAT ARE EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTIONS (EJEs)?

Extra-judicial executions (political killings) are planned executions committed by governments or government-backed agents with a total lack of regard for due process of law and/or judicial procedure as protected in the UDHR. These killings are often the work of regular military and police forces, special units that function without normal supervision and “death squads” that operate while the government looks the other way. The term does not include killings by warring factions.

WHAT IS A DISAPPEARANCE?

AI defines enforced disappearances as the apprehension of people by a government or security force that never officially acknowledges the detentions. The people apprehended may be prisoners of conscience or may face torture or the threat of execution. Disappearances cloud the identity of the perpetrator. If there is no identifiable victim, prisoner or body, no one can be accused of having done anything wrong.

Frequently Asked Questions CONTINUED

WHY DOES AI OPPOSE THE DEATH PENALTY?

AI unconditionally opposes the death penalty on the grounds that an execution is a cruel, inhuman and degrading form of punishment that violates international human rights standards. The application of the death penalty is arbitrary and unfair, and it is applied in a discriminatory manner against the poor and against racial and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the chance of executing an innocent person is too high. Since 1973 in the United States, more than 125 people have been released from death row after having been found innocent.

WHAT ARE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S NATIONAL PRIORITY CAMPAIGNS?

Given the array of human rights violations that AI activists tackle each day, it is helpful to identify specific priority areas to guide how we collaborate with each other and organize our work. AIUSA's strategic plan, which guides our organization in fulfilling our mission to prevent and end grave abuses and to promote all human rights, calls on AIUSA to establish national priority campaigns to concentrate action and resources for maximum effect.

WHAT IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA?

Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) is the largest national section of Amnesty International, marshalling more than 370,000 members and 1,700 local and student groups that take action to free prisoners of conscience, prevent abuses and bring to justice those responsible. All international sections of Amnesty International participate in organizational decision-making at the highest level by sending representatives to the International Council Meeting every two years.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) a common standard for all people and all nations. The UDHR describes in clear and simple terms the rights that belong equally to every person. These rights belong to you. Familiarize yourself with them, then help to promote and defend them.

1. Right to equality
2. Freedom from discrimination
3. Right to life, liberty and personal security
4. Freedom from slavery
5. Freedom from torture and degrading treatment
6. Right to recognition as a person before the law
7. Right to equality before the law
8. Right to remedy by competent tribunal
9. Freedom from arbitrary arrest or exile
10. Right to a fair public hearing
11. Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty
12. Freedom from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence
13. Right to free movement in and out of any country
14. Right to asylum in other countries from persecution
15. Right to a nationality and freedom to change it
16. Right to marriage and family
17. Right to own property
18. Freedom of belief and religion
19. Freedom of opinion and information
20. Right of peaceful assembly and association
21. Right to participate in government and in free elections
22. Right to social security
23. Right to desirable work and to join trade unions
24. Right to rest and leisure
25. Right to adequate living standards
26. Right to education
27. Right to participate in cultural life and community
28. Right to social order ensuring human rights
29. Community duties essential to free and full development
30. Freedom from state and personal interference in the above rights

Amnesty International believes that governments should adhere to all these principles so the the promise of the UDHR can be fulfilled. Through the tireless work of our membership, Amnesty International commits itself to making the vision of the UDHR a reality for every citizen of every country in the world.



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