

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA BANNED BOOKS WEEK 2023 TOOLKIT

WORDS CAN SAVE LIVES
-ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA



AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL 

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02

Welcome	3
Amnesty's Historical Connection to Banned Books	4
2023 Case Profiles	5
Ways to Take Action	8
READ: Research, Educate, Advocate, Demonstrate	9
Learning and Engagement Activities	10
Supporting Your Local Libraries and Bookstores	17
Social Media Messaging	19
Online Resources	21
Solidarity Actions	24
Reporting Your Action	25

“ IF HUMAN RIGHTS
ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE ANY
MEANING, THEN THEY HAVE
TO BE DISCUSSED OPENLY.

03

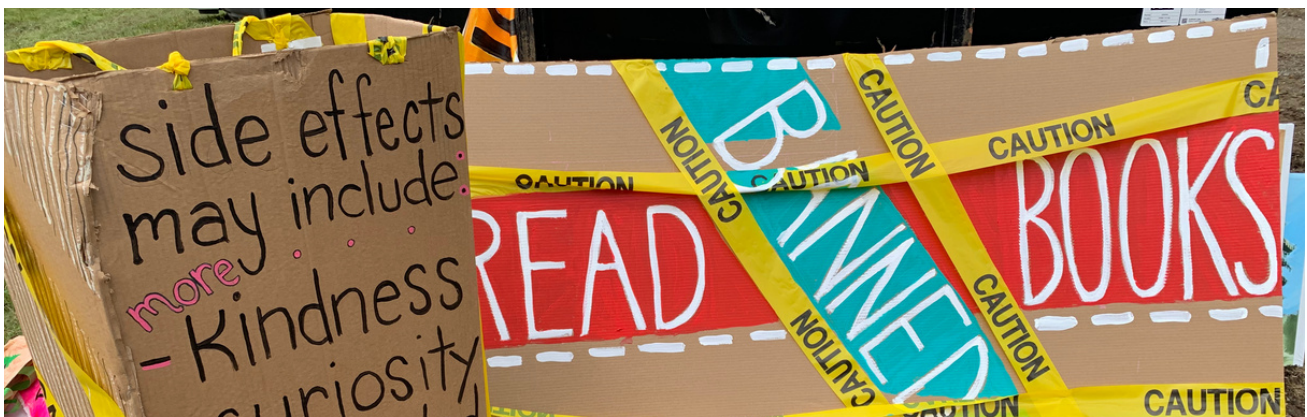
-AI WEIWEI

WELCOME FROM AMNESTY

Amnesty International is a global movement of millions of people demanding human rights for all people – no matter who they are or where they are. We work to protect people whenever justice, freedom, truth, and dignity are denied.

All people have fundamental human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – but these rights are abused every single day. Around the world, Amnesty International researches the facts, exposes what’s happening, and rallies people together to force governments and others to respect everyone’s human rights.

Each year during Banned Books Week, Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) draws attention to people around the world who have been imprisoned, threatened, or murdered because of their writing, art, or other published work.



THE HISTORICAL CONNECTION:

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA AND NATIONAL BANNED BOOKS WEEK

04

Banned Books Week was founded in 1982 under the leadership of prominent First Amendment and library activist Judith Krug of the American Library Association. Krug said that the Association of American Publishers contacted her with ideas to bring banned books "to the attention of the American public" after a "slew of books" had been banned that year. Krug relayed the information to the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee and "six weeks later we celebrated the first Banned Books Week."

Nearly every September since 1990, Amnesty International has worked with partners during Banned Books Week to draw attention to writers, editors, librarians, publishers, artists, musicians, bloggers, and readers who suffer human rights violations because of the written word and other publications. Because of the proverbial "power of the word", many journalists and artists are under attack around the world — by governments and opposition groups.

Banned Books Week participants include Amnesty International members, Student Groups, and Local Groups, as well as the many partners Amnesty staff and members work with, like librarians and booksellers. These partners include: the American Library Association (ALA), the American Booksellers Association, American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE), American Society of Journalists and Authors, Association of American Publishers, National Association of College Stores, Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF), the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), and others. Banned Books Week is also endorsed by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

In 2013, Amnesty International's contribution was recognized by the American Library Association via the John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award. "Rather than focusing on book censorship, per se, Amnesty International's approach focus[es] on the logical consequences that would follow when governments are allowed to censor. Beyond the removal or burning of books comes the removal and physical harm to authors, journalists, and others," said Immroth Award Chair Charles Kratz.

At Amnesty International USA, action for Banned Books Week was launched by Thesil Morlan, a member of AI who organized a Local Group in Bath and Brunswick, Maine. Thesil also held many leadership roles including Country Specialist for Europe and Area Coordinator for Maine, where she helped to build a community of human rights activists. Right up until her death in 2011, Thesil prepared, organized, distributed, and promoted plans and resources for actions every year for this event.

Thesil also found the time to be active in the Maine Alliance for the International Criminal Court and the United Nations Association of Maine; and to produce "Minerva", a twice-yearly journal about women and world affairs sponsored by the World Federalist Institute of Citizens for Global Solutions.

The following excerpt was taken from a personal update from Thesil. We share this with you so you may have a glimpse into the person she was and how she approached her human rights work:

“ Among my Amnesty tasks over the weekend: I wrote a letter from my AI group to the mother of an orthopedic surgeon who disappeared in Algeria 12 years ago, affirming our continuing effort to learn what has happened to him (even though the case apparently has been abandoned at other levels); and, as AIUSA's EURAN coordinator, I sent to participating groups a “solidarity action” asking for supportive cards to go to a 13-year-old Romani girl who is trying to recover from an apparently racist attack on her home in Hungary, during which her mother died and she was injured. This is one of several strictly internal actions ahead of a longer-term campaign on the recent rise of violent attacks by non-state actors on Roma communities.

MEET THE 2023 CASE PROFILES

05



AHMETJAN JUMA, ABDUKADIR JALALIDIN, RAHILE DAWUT

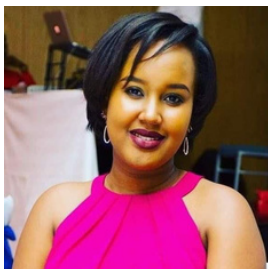
High School Teacher, Professor, Ethnographer | China

Sent to internment camps or prisons in light of professional work and publications

Perhaps 1 million or more predominantly Muslim men and women have been detained in Xinjiang, China since 2017. Some have disappeared, their whereabouts unknown; others are known to have been sentenced to or detained in internment camps. Many are being held because of their academic publications, reporting, or literary writings.

As Amnesty International documented in its report *Like We Were Enemies in a War*, huge numbers of men and women from predominantly Muslim ethnic groups have been arbitrarily detained and sent to internment camps or prisons in Xinjiang, China.

This is part of a larger campaign of subjugation and forced assimilation of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Lawful activities many of us take for granted can be considered a reason for detention: traveling or living or studying abroad; number of children; religion; having WhatsApp on their phone; and making calls to friends and relatives abroad. Possessing books or articles about Islam or Uyghur culture may be classified as “extremist” activity, and intellectuals, academics, and other writers have been detained for exercising their right to freedom of expression. Ahmetjan Juma, Abdukadir Jalalidin, and Rahile Dawut were all active in writing about Uyghur culture, translation, or publication, which were likely factors in their detentions.



FLORIANE IRANGABIYE

Journalist | Burundi

Sentenced to 10 Years in prison for Expressing Critical Views on a Radio Program

Journalist Floriane Irangabiye, the mother of 2 young children, was arbitrarily detained and convicted on January 2, 2023, for “undermining the integrity of the national territory.” She was sentenced to 10 years in prison and a one million Burundian francs fine by the High Court of Mukaza in Bujumbura. Her lawyers unsuccessfully appealed this decision.

During the trial, the prosecution presented comments made during the broadcasting of a show, in August 2022, on Radio Igicaniro, a Burundian online media outlet, where she criticized the government of Burundi. In an audio recording of the show retrieved by the prosecutor, she purportedly said: “The population is resigned to the evils of the leaders of Burundi, citizens do not express themselves for fear of being killed, we call on Burundians to brave the fear.” The prosecution also presented as evidence photos of her posing with President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and former President Pierre Buyoya at public events. She was also accused of participating in meetings held by Burundian youths in exile in Rwanda.

Floriane Irangabiye’s unfair prosecution is motivated by continuous efforts by Burundian authorities to clamp down on peaceful dissent, despite multiple promises by President Evariste Ndayishimiye to improve the country’s human rights situation.



MICHELLE RECINOS

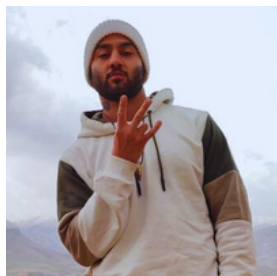
Author | El Salvador

Her book was removed from an international book fair

Author Michelle Recinos, age 24, whose short story collection *Sustancia del hígado* [“Liver broth”], which dramatizes the abusive ‘state of exception’ maintained by Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, was scheduled for presentation at the XX Guatemalan International Book Fair (July 2023). However, the Salvadoran government issued an ultimatum to the Book Fair organizers: either remove the book from the program, or El Salvador would cancel its participation in the gathering.

In El Salvador, a state of exception declared in 2022 by President Nayib Bukele is causing a human rights crisis. This measure, allegedly enacted to counter gang violence, has suspended basic rights, leading to over 60,000 people being unjustly detained without due process. Harassment and stigmatization have become the norm for human rights defenders and journalists who dare to speak out against these injustices. The right to free speech and press is also seriously under threat, with journalists leaving the country or self-censoring their voices.

Amnesty International calls for the end of this state of exception and the creation of human rights-focused policies. Although the government claims to combat gang violence, the widespread incarceration leaves the structural causes unaddressed.



TOOMAJ SALEHI

Hip-Hop Artist & Rapper | Iran

Sentenced to more than 6 years and a ban on his artistic activities

Well-known Iranian rapper and hip-hop artist Toomaj Salehi, age 32, has been in detention since late October 2022 in connection with critical music and social media posts denouncing the unjust practices of the Iranian government and calling for freedom and human rights. He was a very vocal supporter of the protests that broke out in Iran after the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September 2022, and through his music, he has called for freedom and an end to repression.

He reportedly has been tortured, kept in prolonged solitary confinement, and according to his Twitter account, he was severely beaten despite fears that he could lose his eyesight. He was originally charged with “enmity against God” and “corruption on earth”, which could have carried the death penalty.

In July 2023 he was convicted of “corruption on earth” and sentenced to six years, three months in prison, and a ban on his music and artistic activities for an additional two years.

Toomaj Salehi has used his music and videos to call for an end to human rights violations in Iran. He gained notoriety for his videos and lyrics that rail against corruption, widespread poverty, state executions, and the killing of protesters in Iran. His songs also point to a widening gap between ordinary Iranians and the country’s leadership, accusing authorities of “suffocating” the people without regard for their well-being. Toomaj Salehi has filmed himself participating in the most recent wave of protests that erupted in September 2022 and has supported demonstrators.

He was previously targeted for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression in September 2021 when he was arrested in Esfahan and accused of “propaganda against the system” and “insulting the leadership”, but was subsequently released on bail.



YAHAYA SHARIF-AMINU

Singer | Nigeria

Facing a death sentence for circulating a song on Whatsapp

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, age 25, is a singer detained in Kano prison, Kano State, in northern Nigeria. He is at risk of imminent execution after an Upper Shari'a Court sentenced him to death by hanging for circulating a song via WhatsApp considered blasphemous.

On August 27, 2020, the Kano State government published on its official website a statement that the governor would not hesitate to sign the warrant for Yahaya Sharif-Aminu's execution.

Three years later, Yahaya remains in jail without bail while awaiting a retrial, where he still faces a potential death penalty.

There are serious concerns about the fairness of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu's first trial and the framing of the charges against him. Before and during the trial, he was not permitted legal representation. He was only granted access to legal advice to prepare an appeal after human rights lawyers and activists pressured the court to respect his right to legal representation. Shar'ia law, which is practiced in many states in northern Nigeria, provides for the death penalty for blasphemy. No one should ever be sentenced to death or executed.

Amnesty International calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu.



UNITE AGAINST BOOK BANS

United States of America

Stop government censorship, protect freedom of expression, safeguard librarians and teachers

Widespread efforts throughout the U.S. that permit state and municipal-sponsored censorship through book bans on content related to race, gender, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ subject matter restrict the right to freedom of expression. They also deny equal access to all, jeopardizing community members' right to education and right to health, among other rights.

Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and erodes the U.S. government's obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the right to freedom of expression.

States must respect, protect and fulfill the right to free expression by not interfering with it as well as take active steps to ensure people can enjoy this right. The right to freedom of expression is violated whenever a government limits the freedom of individuals to hold opinions or to seek, receive, or impart information.

Under human rights law, governments have obligations to set a framework for conduct that enables people's enjoyment of their rights. All persons who have been vested with state authority for certain tasks such as public administration are responsible for supporting the realization of these rights for all people.

Amnesty International is concerned about the targeting of librarians and teachers in light of the publications they use to support their professional responsibilities, including elevated incidents of threats & harassment as well as police reports filed against library staff regarding books available for circulation. These reports mirror serious challenges to freedom of expression found in authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the world.

According to data from the Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked in 2022, there were 41 reported incidents of threats and or harassment, and 25 police reports filed against library staff regarding books available for circulation.

WAYS TO TAKE ACTION



Sign the online petitions for each Banned Books Focus Cases



Gather as many signatures as you can on the printable petitions



Send a letter or email to express your concerns
([click here to download sample letters](#))



Encourage your social media networks to take action by using our 2023 Banned Books Week graphics that you will find in this toolkit.



Send a solidarity card with messages of support that will be collected and delivered to each of the Banned Books Focus Cases.



READ: Research, Educate, Advocate, Demonstrate

PLEASE REPORT YOUR ACTIONS

Why does reporting matter?

Reporting helps us to measure our impact and we share the total number of actions taken with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

You can report your actions by scanning the QR code below, or by clicking on the link below, or by emailing IAR@aiusa.org.

Thank you!



SCAN ME

<https://qrco.de/beGj5M>

R . E . A . D

9

RESEARCH, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, DEMONSTRATE



RESEARCH *how book bans are taking effect across the country*

Look into what book bans may be taking place in your community

- How to research local Book Bans
- Host a book group and read a banned book or author who has been persecuted for their writings



EDUCATE *yourself on the Unite Against Book Bans campaign*

- Start by reading about the importance of access to books
- Check out the Unite Against Book Bans campaign website:
<https://uniteagainstbookbans.org>



ADVOCATE *for Freedom of Expression and Say No to Censorship*

- Take action on Amnesty's Banned Books Week Focus Cases
- Show up at your town and school board meetings
- Support your local libraries
- Submit a letter to the editor or your local paper
- Guide to Attending Library and School Board Meetings:
<https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/attend-library-school-board-meetings/>
- Sample letter to the editor to submit to your local paper



DEMONSTRATE *how book bans are taking effect across the country*

- Say no to censorship! This is one of the #1 most important steps you can do
- Be visible in your community and raise awareness of human rights violations that result in the denial of freedom of expression.
- See the Learning & Activities section for some creative ideas for action, we also encourage you to develop your own ideas.
- Support for materials may be requested through AIUSA by emailing cgabriel@aiusa.org

LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

10

In this section, you will find 10 ideas for how to engage people in Banned Books Week Action. All these activities are meant to raise awareness and engage people in taking action on the 2023 Banned Books Week Focus Cases. We also invite you to develop your own creative activities. If you need support with organizing and or materials, please contact IAR@aiusa.org.

10 IDEAS INCLUDE:

- Take Amnesty’s Human Rights Academy e-learning course on Freedom of Expression
- Create a Freedom of Expression Mural
- Set up a Banned Books Display
- Host a Banned Books Book Group
- Host a Banned Books Cafe
- Host a Banned Books Reading
- Host a Freedom of Expression Spoken Word & Music Open-Mic
- Organize a Banned Books Parade
- Set-up an “I Read Banned Books” Photo Action
- Play “Guess the Challenged or Banned Book” Jeopardy Game



Photos Credited to Artists Rapid Response Team (ARRT), Maine

1. HUMAN RIGHTS ACADEMY FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ONLINE LEARNING COURSE

11

This short course will equip you with the knowledge to understand and claim your right to freedom of expression, as well as the skills and confidence to take action to defend it.

You will be challenged to think critically and devise effective actions to defend the human rights of others. You will be able to adapt the human rights of freedom of expression, association, and assembly to real-life situations and engage with other course participants in discussions.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain to others the concept of human rights
- Determine the scope of the right to freedom of expression.
- Identify the obligations of the state and permissible restrictions to the right to freedom of expression.
- Explain how other rights are interlinked with the right to freedom of expression.
- Take action to defend the right to freedom of expression

To Access the Freedom of Expression Course visit: <https://register.academy.amnesty.org/>

A printable certificate will be awarded upon completion!

2. CREATE A FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: SAY NO TO CENSORSHIP MURAL

Community art projects are a great way to create space for collective thought and dialogue! All you need is a canvas drop cloth or wall space and paints. Invite everyone to participate in creating this visual art statement and or seek support from local artists.

- To learn more about muralism check out Community Murals, Helpful Information for Communities and Artists: <https://communitymurals.info/>

3. SET UP A BANNED BOOKS DISPLAY INCLUDING BOOKS FROM AMNESTY'S LIST AND OTHERS THAT FOREGROUND HUMAN RIGHTS

Contact your local bookshop, library, or cafe and ask if you can set up a Banned Books display that will provide education and inspire people to take action to end book banning and protect freedom of expression.

4. HOST A BANNED BOOKS BOOK GROUP

Invite people to join you in reading a banned or challenged book. Hold a post-read discussion at your favorite cafe or plan a potluck meal. Ask libraries and bookstores to include information and actions associated with AI's featured Banned Books Week cases and books.

5. HOST A BANNED BOOKS CAFE

Identify a location in a heavy foot traffic area and set up an interactive space for people to learn about the books that are being banned or challenged or the authors, poets, and musicians that have been persecuted for their written or spoken word. A Banned Books Cafe invites people to engage in learning, advocacy, and artistic activities such as bookmark making and creating solidarity cards for Amnesty's 2023 Banned Books Week IAR Cases.

Refer to:

Amnesty International's Top 16 Banned or Persecuted Authors: (insert link)

ALA Top 13 Most Challenged Books of 2022:

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>

If you need resource support with accessing these books and building your Banned Books Cafe, email IAR@aiusa.org.



6. HOST A BANNED BOOKS READING

13

One of the best ways to support Banned Books Week is by hosting a reading of a banned or challenged book followed by a discussion. We recommend reading children's books that have been challenged or banned because they can be easy to engage with and captivating for an audience. Below are some tips for hosting your own reading and book suggestions.

RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL READING:

Step 1: Choose a location

We suggest that you host the reading in a public place that is accessible for people to travel to. Any number of places would make for a good reading, such as with the lunch crowd in a public place, at the public library, public parks, community centers, local theaters, or the Town Hall steps. You could also work with a private group and use the speech as your book club's monthly read.

Step 2: Come prepared

We recommend reading banned or challenged children's books as they are able to reach large audiences and highlight the repressive nature of book bans.

We recommend books such as:

- *Loujain Dreams Of Sunflowers* by Lina AlHathloul and Uma Mishra-Newbery is an inspiring story about female empowerment in Saudi Arabia
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings is a popular, true story about a transgender child
- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell is a heartwarming story about two male penguins starting a family in the Central Park Zoo
- *Because of You, John Lewis: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship* by Andrea Davis Pinkney is an inspiring story of a young boy and Congressman during a march for voting rights in Selma, Alabama

If it is a large event, you may need to arrange for amplification, and depending on the location, you may need to get a permit from your town hall and/or arrange for wheelchair access and seating. If your event will include a moderated discussion, be sure to prepare for that.

Begin your reading by explaining what Banned Books Week is! You can use the first page of this toolkit as a guide or print it out and distribute it to attendees. Explaining the history and significance of Banned Books Week is an important aspect of raising awareness.

Step 3: Food and drink

People talk more freely and happily if they can have something to eat and drink. If the event is public, oftentimes a local market (including the supermarket) is willing to donate cookies or fruit and lemonade.



Step 4: Publicize Your Reading

Invite locally well-known persons to introduce the event and to start off the reading. You can identify your readers in advance or you can invite attendees to read a page until each book has been read.

Collaborate with other organizations so that you will have more attendees, more resources, and more publicity. Reach out to local student groups, community organizations, or local activists and politicians. Collaborate with your local bookstore, college, or school library asking them to provide a table of Banned Books that attendees can browse. You may also post flyers around your community or encourage organizers to post on social media with the event details.

- Below you will find a downloadable poster to customize with your event's details. You will need Acrobat Reader to edit the PDF. Just click on the poster graphic to download, open the PDF, and fill in the details on the screen. **Print and Copy as needed.**
 - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pvO0uYJuFB4SI75TGgVJN7tJ8Lga_X75?usp=drive_link
- Submit your event to your local newspaper and public radio station and other online community calendars. Don't forget to submit your event to Amnesty International's online events calendar by emailing IAR@aiusa.org
- Inform your local media of your Banned Book Reading. You can use the media advisory template
- Invite Your State Reps and Local School Board Officials!

7. HOST A MUSIC AND SPOKEN WORD OPEN-MIC PERFORMANCE

Spoken word poetry is a performance art that transcends the written form. If you've ever watched slam poetry or a dramatic monologue at an open mic night, the intense, emotional delivery may have stayed with you long after it was over. This is the power of spoken word poetry, and it's meant to be memorable.

Host an open-mic performance focused on freedom of expression and why we must say no to censorship!

Be sure to include the musical work of AI's 2023 Banned Books Week Focus Cases in your performance (see individual case information).



8. ORGANIZE A BANNED BOOKS PARADE OR RALLY

Parades can be organized for any occasion. Choose your location and route. Permission may need to be obtained depending on your route. Invite people to make signs that will provide education on book bans and freedom of expression. Invite musicians to join you and or create your own musical instruments using recycled materials.

9. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION PHOTO ACTION

Create an artistic backdrop that promotes Freedom of Expression and invite participants to write a message on a small chalkboard or whiteboard or poster paper and take a photo of the individual(s) holding their message. Ask them to repost this photo on their social media outlets using the following hashtags and send a copy to IAR@aiusa.org. You can also collect all the photos to create a large collage to send to your State Rep or local elected officials and school board.

Please be sure to obtain permission from participants prior to taking and posting any photos.

Suggested Messaging:

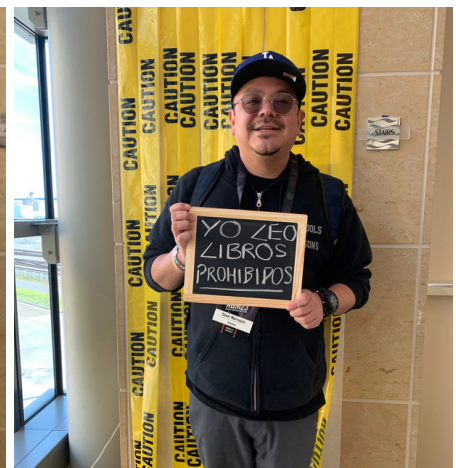
I TAKE ACTION FOR BANNED AUTHORS

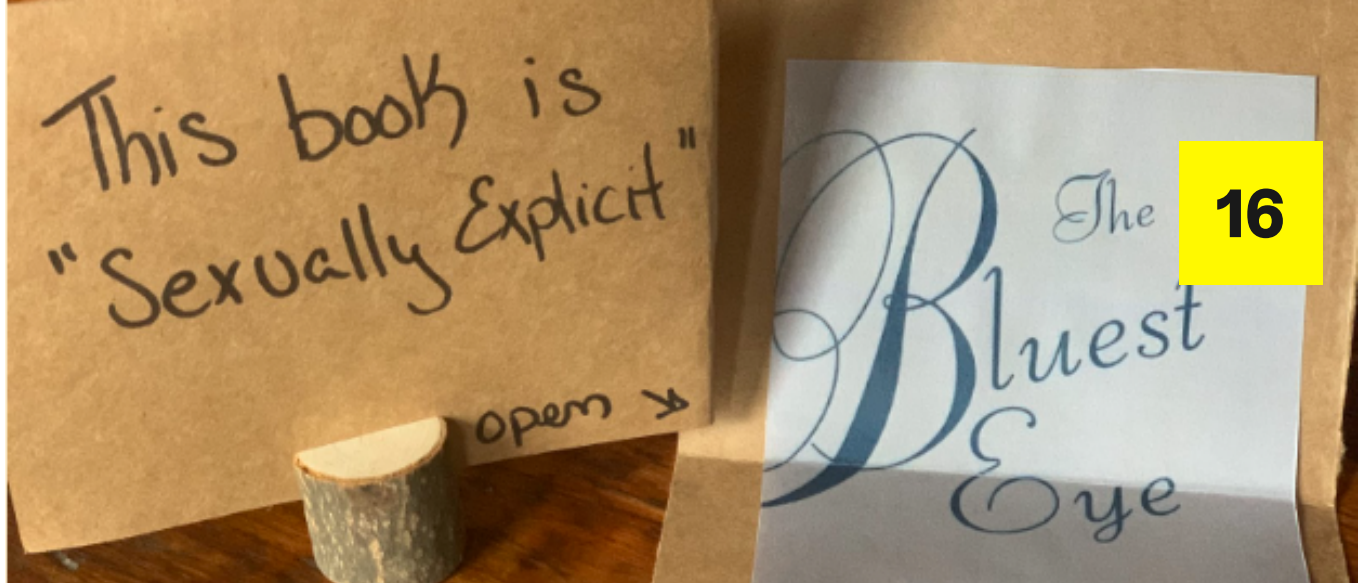
I READ BANNED AUTHORS

I STAND IN SOLIDARITY FOR BANNED AUTHORS

Social Media Handles

#bannedbooks #amnestyusa





10. SET UP AN INTERACTIVE “GUESS THE CHALLENGED OR BANNED BOOK” JEOPARDY GAME

This is a simple activity that provides learning about books that are currently challenged or banned. To set up the activity use plain note cards and on the outside of the card write the reason cited for why the book has been challenged or banned. On the inside write or print out a book cover of the relative book and glue it (see photo). The learner will understand the pervasive narrative that is being used to challenge or ban books.

Materials Needed:

- Plain note cards
- Printed book covers
- Markers
- Glue stick
- Scissors

Below is messaging for each note card:

This book depicts “profanity and violence”:
The Hate You Give by Angie Thomas

This book has “offensive language” and “racism”:
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

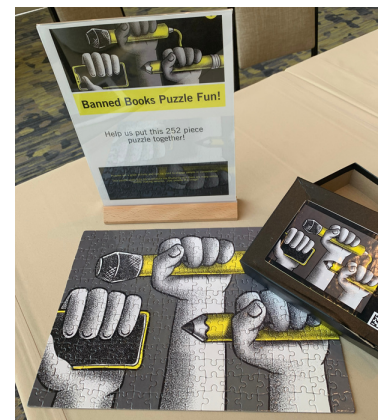
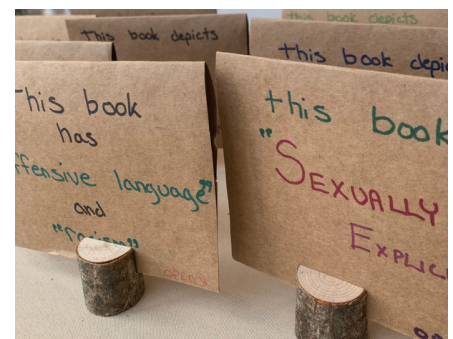
This book is “sexually explicit”:
The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

This book is “unsuitable for young children” and has “homosexual overtones”:
And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

This book depicts “same-sex situations” and “distrust in adults”:
The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

This book depicts “violence”, “nudity” and “profanity”:
Maus by Art Spiegelman

This book “promotes communism” and “sexuality”:
1984 by George Orwell



HOW LIBRARIES AND BOOKSTORES CAN HELP SUPPORT BANNED BOOKS WEEK

17

Libraries and bookstores are on the front lines of book-banning challenges. Here are a few ways you can support your own community and other affected groups.

START BY MAKING AN OFFICIAL BANNED BOOKS WEEK PROCLAMATION

Use the American Library Association's model, or write your own, [Banned Books Week Proclamation](#) to declare your official support. Post this proclamation of support in your library, on your website, or wherever your community can access it!

CREATE A BANNED BOOK DISPLAY

Display the most challenged books in a designated section of your library or bookstore. Provide free educational resources within the display.

You can find the ALA's free printable resources at:

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/bannedbooksweek/ideasandresources/freedownloads>

Consider providing petitions for patrons to sign in support of individual freedom of expression cases. Printable versions of these petitions can be found at the end of this toolkit. Each community is different so design your display with your community and needs in mind.

HOST A BANNED BOOKS EVENT

Bring your community together and spread the word about Banned Books Week! See if there is a local Amnesty International chapter that you could partner with to host your event. You can find a list of local chapters at <https://www.amnestyusa.org/about-us/who-we-are/local-groups/> or register your own!

Some ideas include:

- Create a banned books book club and invite local community members by putting an ad in the newspaper, posting on social media, or posting flyers in community spaces.
- Host a banned books Q&A. Offer a space for librarians, employees, or community members to ask questions about banned books week. These topics are complex and challenging so prepare by reviewing the ALA's example Q&A page [here](#).
- Host a letter-writing event and write letters to an author of a challenged book. Expressing support is incredibly important both for and to banned authors.
- Host a banned books film festival! A fun and powerful way to garner support is by showing a First Amendment film. A list of possible ideas may be found [here](#). Note that some of these films may require a license. Ensure you have the proper permission to show your chosen film.

REPORT CENSORSHIP

One of the most important things a library or bookstore can do is report all book-banning attempts. Maintaining an accurate database is crucial in the fight against book bans. You can report censorship at <https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/report> or by emailing oif@ala.org. You can also find this form by going to the “Challenge Support” page on the American Library Association’s website

STAY PREPARED

Make sure all your librarians and employees have access to resources to talk about book bans or how to respond to a challenge. Keep a copy of these documents printed out and readily available for any staff member who may need them. Remember, at any time you can contact the Office for Intellectual Freedom for help!

Guidelines on how to respond to an informal challenge can be found at <https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/respond>.

Guidelines on how to respond to a formal challenge can be found at <https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/requestforreconsideration>. All of these resources can also be found on the American Library Association’s website in the “Challenge Support” tab.



SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING

19

Social media is a powerful tool for social change. Help raise the profiles of this year's 6 cases, inspire action, and show our action targets that there is a global movement standing with them!

We encourage you to use Amnesty's 2023 Banned Books Social Media Graphics to promote our online actions. You can choose from any of the graphics below. There are both country-specific and general Banned Books Week posts. We ask that you include the associated link in your caption or story! You can post these graphics on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or any other social media you would like. Make sure to tag @AmnestyUSA in your post!

LINK TO ALL THE SOCIAL MEDIA GRAPHICS:

When posting these graphics please be sure to include the link specific to each case. If you are using the generic Banned Books Week social media graphic, be sure to include the link to our 2023 Banned Books Week Action page: <https://bit.ly/3QMi0PC>

- Online Action for Librarians Under Threat: <https://qrco.de/beGAhV>
- Online Action for Floraine Irangabiye: <https://qrco.de/beGAa0>
- Online Action for Michelle Recinos: <https://qrco.de/beGAdD>
- Online Action for Toomaj Salehi: <https://qrco.de/beGAgG>
- Online Action for Yahaya Sharif-Aminu: <https://qrco.de/beGAee>
- Online Action for Xinjiang Detainees: <https://qrco.de/beGdrr>

Share Toomaj Salehi's video on all social media platforms:

<https://twitter.com/amnesty/status/1679178408025112588> using the hashtag #FreeToomaj

Twitter Accounts for Action Targets

Message or tag these accounts in your actions!

El Salvador: President Bukele: @nayibbukele

Iran: @Iran_UN

Amnesty International USA Social Media Pages:

Tag these pages in your posts or check them out for action ideas!

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/amnestyusa>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/amnestyusa/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/amnestyusa> <https://twitter.com/AIUSAYouth?s=20>

SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAGS

20

WHY USE HASHTAGS?

Using hashtags is a great way to group together posts around a certain topic. Hashtags ensure that your post is included in the larger conversation and make it easier to find content that interests you.

Hashtags can be used on just about any social media platform, but they're most popular on Twitter and Instagram.

Suggested Hashtags:

#BannedBooksWeek #AmnestyUSA #UniteAgainstBookBans #BannedBooks

Below you will find a list of social media accounts connected to our partner organizations:

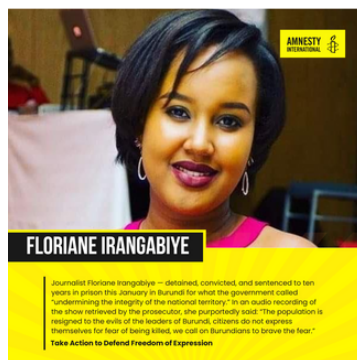
Twitter: @UABookBans @ALALibrary @BannedBooksWeek

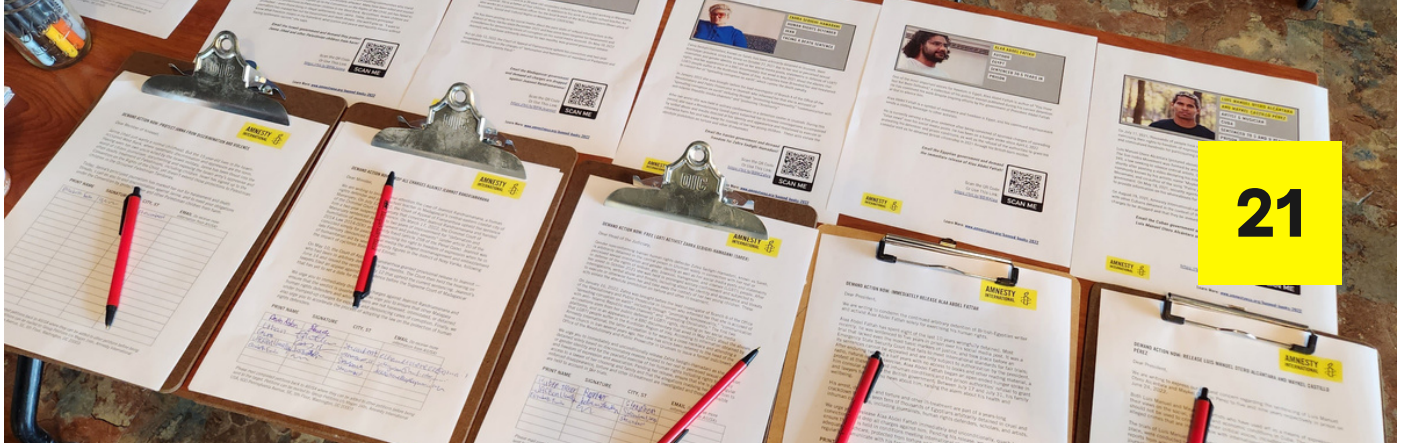
Instagram: @AmericanLibraryAssociation @UniteAgainstBookBans @LetAmericaRead

Facebook: @AmericanLibraryAssociation

Link to All the Social Media Graphics:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1n5hkjiFyG2_eMPyD9W0KIFzKSe4H655o?usp=sharing





ONLINE RESOURCES

AMNESTY REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

Amnesty International's State of the World Human Rights Report, 2022-2023:
<https://www.amnestyusa.org/amnesty-international-annual-report-2022-23-the-state-of-the-worlds-human-rights/>

China:

“Like We Were Enemies in a War”: China’s Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/4137/2021/en/>

This interactive website presents the evidence gathered by Amnesty’s investigation and includes detailed information about more than 120 cases of missing or detained persons: <https://xinjiang.amnesty.org>

El Salvador:

Press Release, June 2022: “President Bukele Engulfs El Salvador in a Human Rights Crisis After Three Years in Government”:
<https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/president-bukele-engulfs-el-salvador-in-a-human-rights-crisis-after-three-years-in-government/>

Iran:

Toomaj Salahi Amnesty International Call to Action Video on Twitter / X:
<https://twitter.com/amnesty/status/1679178408025112588?s=20>

PUBLICATIONS BY INDIVIDUALS FEATURED IN AMNESTY'S 2023 BANNED BOOK WEEK ACTION

22

The opportunity to get to know the work of individuals subjected to human rights abuses in light of their publications offers an opportunity to learn about the situations in which they live and provides a counterweight to the likely goal of censorship by increasing awareness of these works rather than obscuring them.

Abdukadir Jalalidin:

Find his poem and story via this linked NY Times article: [No Road Back Home](#) -

Find information on his context as a cultural leader and a translation of his poem: [Boredom](#)

Rahile Dawut:

Dawut contributes an academic chapter related to her ethnographic work in the book: [Music of Central Asia](#)

<https://iupress.org/9780253017512/the-music-of-central-asia/>

Cultural recordings obtained by Dawut as well as some of her written work can be found on the associated: [Music of Central Asia](#) website

<https://www.musicofcentralasia.org/Tracks/Chapter/24>

A chapter about Islam in China can be found in the book: [Ethnographies of Islam in China](#)
<https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/ethnographies-of-islam-in-china/>

An interview with Dawut in which she talks about her ethnographic work can be found in the book: [Living Shrines of Uyghur China](#)

Toomaj Salehi:

Music video with English-language subtitles of a song titled "Bazmandeh [Survivor]":

<https://www.memri.org/tv/iranian-rapper-toomaj-salehi-imprisoned-anti-regime-protests-music-video>

YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/toomajsalehi>

Michelle Recinos:

Book "Sustancia de Hígado" (can be purchased at Amazon or ordered from your local book vendor):

https://www.amazon.com/Sustancia-hígado-Spanish-Michelle-Recinos/dp/9993938122/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1690927416&sr=1-1

A [Guardian article](#) provides context and links to the Fundación Paiz presentation of [Barberas en Huelga](#) ([Barbers on Strike](#)) in Spanish, a short story by Recinos that is included in the collection challenged by the president.

Website:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/11/el-salvador-michelle-recinos-barbers-strike-book-guatemala-president-nayib-bukele>

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

23

Banned Books Week Website:

<https://bannedbooksweek.org/>

Unite Against Book Bans:

<https://uniteagainstbookbans.org>

Report an Incident of Censorship to the Office for Intellectual Freedom:

<https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/report>

How to Start Your Own Little Free Library:

<https://littlefreelibrary.org/start/>

Freedom of Expression Letter to the Editor Template:

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/bannedbooksweek/ideasandresources/lettereditor>

Most Challenged Books of 2022:

<https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2023/04/national-library-week-kicks-highly-anticipated-annual-list-top-10-most>

LOCAL RESOURCES

Database of Little Free Libraries:

<https://littlefreelibrary.org/map/>

Database of Little Free Diverse Libraries:

<https://www.diverstories.org/find-a-lfdl-near-you>

PRINTABLE RESOURCES

List of Printable Resources available on the 2023 Banned Books Week Action page:

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/campaigns/banned-books/bbw2023/>

Resources include:

- Petitions
- Sample Letters
- Case Sheets
- Social Media Graphics
- Event Flyer Templates
- Billboard Flyer Templates
- Amnesty International Authors' poster
- Printable Bookmarks
- Children's Resources

SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

24

SENDING A MESSAGE EXPRESSING HOPE AND SOLIDARITY TO INDIVIDUALS AT RISK DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- To participate in this action, people are invited to write a simple message. You can use store-bought cards or make your own cards!
- Please refrain from discussing the circumstances of the case and or using any religious symbols.
- All cards will be collected and sent in bulk to the individual.

Check out this brief video featuring Bernardo Caal Xol and family, who receive 30,000 letters of solidarity from Amnesty International Members from all over the world: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdBISjzcEcw>

SEND SOLIDARITY CARDS TO:

- USA: Librarians Under Threat
- Burundi: Floraine Irangabiye
- El Salvador: Michelle Recinos
- Nigeria: Yahaya Sharif-Aminu
- Iran: Toomaj Salehi
- China: Online Solidarity for Xinjiang Detainees

Write messages of support to the relatives of those who are detained or imprisoned in Xinjiang, China: <https://bit.ly/XinjiangRelativesSolidarity>

COMPLETED SOLIDARITY ACTIONS CAN BE MAILED TO:

Amnesty International
Attn: BBW Solidarity
89 South Street, Suite LL01
Boston, MA 02111

END CENSORSHIP. NOT LIVES.

THE END

#BannedBooksWeek

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



REPORTING YOUR ACTION

Reporting helps us to measure our impact and we share the total number of actions taken with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

You can report your actions by scanning the QR code, clicking on the link below, or emailing IAR@aiusa.org.

THANK YOU!

As a small gift of thanks for taking the time to complete this report by October 30, your name will be entered into a raffle to win an Amnesty t-shirt! Be 1 of 50 raffle winners to be selected!



SCAN ME

<https://qrco.de/beGj5M>

