



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

GLOBAL WRITE-A-THON 2011 – WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Each year people across the world mark International Human Rights Day on December 10 by taking part in Amnesty International's Write for Rights Global Write-a-thon - the world's largest letter writing event. Join us in demanding that the rights of individuals are respected, protected and fulfilled. Help us show solidarity with those suffering human rights abuses, as we work to bring about real change in people's lives.

This year, we will shine a light on these cases:

AZERBAIJAN Jabbar Savalan / Youth activist detained after using Facebook

Hours after posting a message on Facebook calling for protests against the government, Jabbar Savalan told his family that he was being followed. The next day, police arrested him and "discovered" marijuana in his outer coat pocket. Police questioned him without a lawyer for two days, reportedly hitting and intimidating him to make him sign a confession. Jabbar Savalan maintained that the marijuana was planted on him, and authorities in Azerbaijan have a history of using fabricated drug charges to jail those perceived to be critical of the government. AI considers Jabbar to be a prisoner of conscience.

BAHRAIN Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi Abu Dheeb / Teachers detained for supporting pro-reform efforts

Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi Abu Dheeb, former leaders of the Bahrain Teachers' Association, were detained after their association reportedly supported a teachers' strike amid pro-reform protests in Bahrain. Jalila was reportedly beaten and held in solitary confinement before being released on bail in August. Mahdi Abu Dheeb remains detained. In September, a military court sentenced Jalila and Mahdi to prison terms of 3 years and 10 years, respectively, for various offenses, including "inciting hatred towards the regime." Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience who have been convicted solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.

CAMEROON Jean-Claude Roger Mbede / Imprisoned on charges of "homosexuality"

Jean-Claude Roger Mbede is serving three years in prison on charges of "homosexuality," which is a crime in the central African nation of Cameroon. Arrested in March 2011, Jean-Claude is held in Kondengui central prison in Yaoundé, the capital, where he is at risk of physical attack and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely because of his perceived sexual orientation. Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people is endemic in Cameroon. Arrests, prosecutions and trials of LGBT individuals, or those perceived as such, occur on a regular basis.

CHINA Liu Xiaobo / Nobel Peace Prize laureate imprisoned

Liu Xiaobo, recipient of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, remains imprisoned for seeking for political and legal reforms in China. Charged with "inciting subversion of state power," the human rights defender was sentenced in December 2009 for articles he wrote that criticized corruption, censorship and one-party rule. The court considered the articles to be "rumor mongering, slander and smear" that exceeded the limits of freedom of expression. When Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year, he learned of the honor from his prison guards. Amnesty International considers Liu Xiaobo to be a prisoner of conscience.

INDONESIA Filep Karma / Imprisoned for raising a flag

Filep Karma is serving 15 years in prison for raising a flag. The prominent advocate for the rights of Indonesia's Papuan population was arrested for taking part in a peaceful ceremony that included the raising of the Morning Star flag, a Papuan symbol. Amnesty International believes Filep Karma has been imprisoned solely for the legitimate exercise of his right to freedom of expression. Amnesty is concerned at reports that Filep has been beaten by guards and experienced serious health problems in prison. AI calls on the Indonesian government to free Filep Karma and all other prisoners of conscience.

IRAN Majid Tavakkoli and Behareh Hedayat / Youth leaders imprisoned for speaking out

Majid Tavakkoli and Behareh Hedayat are serving long prison sentences for publicly calling for greater freedom in Iran. Majid was arrested and reportedly beaten by authorities in December 2009, after he addressed a university rally in Tehran. Behareh was arrested later that same month, and charged with several offenses, including "interviews with foreign media," "insulting the leader" and "insulting the president." Behareh and Majid last year issued a joint statement from prison, encouraging others to continue to push for change in Iran. In response, authorities added six months to each of their sentences, which now total ten years for Behareh and nine years for Majid.

MEXICO Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú / Indigenous women raped by soldiers

For more than nine years, two Indigenous women in Mexico have taken on the military and the authorities to demand justice after they were raped by soldiers in 2002. Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo are Indigenous Me'phaa (Tlapaneca) women. Indigenous women in Mexico who are raped rarely file a complaint due to cultural, economic and social barriers. Inés and Valentina have shown courage in reporting their ordeals and pursuing their cases in national and international courts. Their attackers have remained at large, and the women and their families have faced threats as their battle for justice continues.

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NIGERIA Residents of Port Harcourt Settlements / Forced evictions of communities

More than 200,000 people are at risk of forced eviction in Port Harcourt if Nigeria's authorities proceed with planned demolitions of all waterfront settlements without human rights safeguards. In 2009, the demolition of Njemanze settlement in Port Harcourt left thousands of men, women and children homeless. Residents received no adequate notice, compensation, alternative accommodation or legal remedies, although required by international human rights standards. Njemanze is one of more than 40 waterfront settlements in Port Harcourt slated for demolition, which authorities claim is necessary for urban renewal. Residents of the affected communities were not consulted on the redevelopment plans.

NORTH KOREA Shin Sook-ja and others at Yodok Political Prison Camp / Families imprisoned for life

Shin Sook-ja and her daughters are among the estimated 200,000 men, women and children imprisoned in secret political prison camps in North Korea. Forced labor, lack of food, torture, inadequate medical care and unhygienic living conditions result in illness and death for many prisoners. Shin Sook-ja and her two daughters were sent to a camp in 1987 after her husband requested political asylum abroad. The husband at first received letters and photographs from his imprisoned family, but has received no further word since 1991. AI calls for these camps to be closed and for all prisoners of conscience to be released.

SRI LANKA Ragihar Manoharan / Student killed by security forces

As Ragihar Manoharan gathered with fellow students in 2006, a grenade was thrown at the group from a passing vehicle. Uniformed officers arrived soon after, and put the injured students into their jeep. Witnesses report that the officers beat the youths, pushed them out onto the road, and shot dead five of the students, including Ragihar Manoharan. Shortly before his death, Ragihar left a frantic message on his father's telephone saying he was surrounded by security forces. His father ran to the scene in time to hear the students pleading for their lives and guns being fired. Amnesty International is campaigning for justice for these murders.

USA Christi Cheramie / Sentenced as a juvenile to life imprisonment without parole

At age 16, Christi Cheramie was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Now 33, she has spent more than half of her life in a Louisiana prison. It is a violation of international law to sentence anyone to life in prison without parole who was under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. Yet more than 2,500 people in the U.S. are serving such sentences for crimes committed when they were children. Christi Cheramie has been described by a prison warden as "a model inmate... worthy of a second chance in society."

USA Reggie Clemons / Justice derailed

Reggie Clemons was sentenced to death in Missouri as an accomplice in the 1991 murder of two women. Clemons has maintained his innocence, and his case illustrates many of the flaws in the U.S. death penalty system. Shortly after a 2009 execution date was stayed, the Missouri Supreme Court assigned a judge (a "Special Master" to investigate the reliability of his conviction and proportionality of his sentence. Call on Missouri's Governor to grant Reggie Clemons clemency.

USA (Guantánamo) Shaker Aamer / Indefinite detention

Shaker Aamer, a former UK resident, has been held without charge at the detention center at Guantanamo Bay for nearly 10 years – despite the UK government's repeated request that he be returned to the United Kingdom. Shaker Aamer says he was living in Afghanistan with his family and running humanitarian aid projects when Afghan forces seized him in 2001 and transferred him to US custody. Shaker Aamer has never been charged, tried or convicted of any criminal offense by US authorities. Indefinite detention is a human rights violation. Amnesty International calls on the US to either charge and try him fairly or release him.

YEMEN Fatima Hussein Badi / Facing the death penalty following an unfair trial

Fatima Hussein Badi is facing the death penalty following an unfair trial. Fatima and her brother Abdullah were arrested in July 2000 for the murder of Fatima's husband. When Fatima refused to confess, police reportedly brought Abdullah to her, his face covered in blood. She was allegedly threatened with rape in the presence of Abdullah, who apparently confessed to the murder in order to save her from being raped. During a number of their trial hearings, Fatima and Abdullah had no legal representation and were prevented from speaking in court. They were sentenced to death in 2001. Abdullah was executed in 2005. Fatima remains at imminent risk of execution.

ZIMBABWE Jenni Williams and Women of Zimbabwe Arise / Human rights activists at risk

The activists of the human rights organization Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) know the price of freedom. For organizing peaceful demonstrations to protest social, economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe, WOZA members have been repeatedly harassed, intimidated, beaten and jailed by authorities. Government officials misuse the law to arbitrarily arrest and detain human rights activists and perceived critics of the President's political party. The support of organizations like Amnesty International has been crucial for the activists of WOZA. As WOZA leader Jenni Williams says, "I am alive today because members of Amnesty International spoke out for me."