

How to Work with the Media



Engage your local media to promote your Write for Rights event and to increase awareness about this year's featured cases.

How to: Engage online and alternative media

Join the conversation online and on air by offering human rights commentary about prisoners of conscience and other cases featured in this year's Write for Rights.

- Follow AIUSA on Twitter.
- Re-tweet breaking news and connect it to your Write for Rights event. (For example, connect news about this year's Nobel Peace Prize winners to the case of Liu Xiaobo, last year's winner, who remains imprisoned in China.)
- Give your followers information about your Write for Rights event with the hashtag: **#4rights**
- Become a fan of AIUSA on Facebook and repost reports about the Write-a-thon to your profile and how to join. Be sure to link back to additional resources on the Write for Rights website: **www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon**

How to: Get your message on the radio

- Call early into call-in programs even though you may be put on hold. Be prepared to answer questions or address statements made by the show's host about Write for Rights, but always remember that your real target audience is the show's listeners.
- Have two or three key points prepared about prisoners of conscience to make sure you get your message across, using simple statements, words and images. (See the Talking Points in this kit.) Assume listeners do not know much about the topic, and be sure to construct your statements to have the greatest appeal.
- Follow-up your call by visiting the show's website to post additional commentary and resources in the show's comments section, including the link to Amnesty International's Write for Rights webpage: **www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon** You might note that one of this year's Nobel Peace Prize winners – Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – is a former prisoner of conscience, and that last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner – Liu Xiaobo – remains imprisoned in China.

How to: Use events as media opportunities

- Submit a media advisory to local media (including the local *NPR* station and *Associated Press* daybook editor) 3-5 days before your event.
- Invite local public figures (politicians, athletes, musicians, etc.) to your event to increase interest.
- Submit details of your event to event calendars of traditional and online media.
- Take photographs of your event and submit them electronically to your weekly paper, and post on social media within 48 hours.

How to: Write a media advisory (see enclosed template)

- Issued a few days before your event, a media advisory will provide journalists and planning editors with basic information for your Write-a-thon and should answer the questions: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, and WHY.
- Brevity is key: on one page clearly state the news value of your event and any photo opportunities with props to build interest. A catchy headline, list of speakers with titles, contact information and a quote (if space permits) should also be included.
- Distribute the advisory via email 3-5 days before the event and make follow-up pitch calls to assignment editors 1-2 days before the event. Pitch calls should be brief, between 10 am and 2 pm before journalists are on deadline and include a clear ask for the outlet to cover your event.

Helpful tips

- Reporters are interested in a local angle; emphasize you are a chapter group of a global organization that represents more than 3 million members engaged in an international day of awareness.
- Beware of acronyms.
- Stick to your three talking points and repeat, repeat, repeat. When you've answered the question to your satisfaction, STOP TALKING.
- Build a press list of reporters and contact your regional office for help.

Talking Points



Below are three main messages about Write for Rights, along with examples that can be used to excite public interest in your event. Use these messages when promoting and speaking about your Write for Rights event.

For 50 years, Amnesty International's human rights campaigns have been instrumental in obtaining freedom for prisoners of conscience worldwide through pressure from letters, faxes, and e-mails written by AI activists. Tens of thousands of individuals have been released from jail, rescued from torture or aided in other ways following action by Amnesty International.

- 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** was an activist for peaceful change and when her political activism put her at odds with the ruling powers in the mid-1980s, she was jailed. Amnesty International campaigned for her release. Liberian authorities bowed to international pressure and released her in 1986. Today, she is the president of Liberia.
- Throughout her many years in detention, **Aung San Suu Kyi** never gave up her struggle for human rights. Amnesty International never gave up its fight for her and the many others jailed in Myanmar. The world celebrated Aung San Suu Kyi's release in November 2010. In October 2011, authorities released more political prisoners, including **Su Su Nway**, who had been a focus of Amnesty's Write for Rights last year

Thousands of people are in prison around the world because of their beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity. Many are held without charge or trial and are at risk of torture or execution. Write for Rights empowers individuals to take action against these violations. Here are a few of the people we are working for this year:

- **Liu Xiaobo**, recipient of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, remains imprisoned for seeking political and legal reforms in China. The movements of his wife and fellow human rights defender, Liu Xia, are severely restricted by the authorities.

- Police arrested 19-year-old **Jabbar Savalan** after he posted a message on Facebook calling for peaceful protests against the government in Azerbaijan.
- **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. Many of them never leave the camps alive due to torture, forced labor, lack of food and medical care.

From December 3-11, 2011, the world's largest annual human rights event will take place. During *Write for Rights*, communities all over the world will send a powerful message in defense of human rights working to help release the thousands of people who are in prison unjustly.

- These and other events have helped release and/or improve conditions of tens of thousands of people at risk. Out of the 12 cases featured in 2010 *Write for Rights*, 6 people were either released or saw marked improvement in their conditions/treatment.
- From South Korea to South Dakota, from Portugal to Peru, and from Canada to Croatia, Amnesty International activists around the world join forces to *Write for Rights* during the Global Write-a-thon in December.
- Last year's *Write for Rights* resulted in more than 600,000 actions taken on behalf of prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders and others at risk of human rights abuses around the world. *Write for Rights* events will take place in schools, coffee shops, community centers, office buildings, and street corners. Anywhere people gather – human rights activism can flourish.

Sample Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release:

[Date submitted to the media]

To Commemorate Human Rights Day, Amnesty International Activists in [Your City] Mobilize for Victims of Human Rights Violations

*[Your City/School] Amnesty International Chapter Joins Activists around the World in
Global Write for Rights*

[Your town, state] - As part of a global week of action, [Name of Person Leading Effort], representing the [Your City/Town/School] Amnesty International Group, will host a Write-a-thon for local activists to call on governments worldwide to protect and release victims of human rights abuses. The group will [add a brief description of your group's event]. This event is just one of thousands that will be carried out throughout the United States and over 50 countries worldwide.

"The actions of people in our community and thousands of others around the world will help bring freedom and justice to an individual being denied their basic human rights," said [name and title of spokesperson].

Amnesty International's Write for Rights - Global Write-a-thon commemorates the rights enshrined more than 60 years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, International Human Rights Day. Every year, thousands of participants worldwide take action on behalf of prisoners of conscience and others at risk of human rights violations. This year, Amnesty International USA aims to have a Write for Rights event in every state and to generate 250,000 letters from the United States.

Amnesty International welcomes members of the media to report on the Global Write-a-thon and the general public to join us in this event on [schedule/locations of the write-a-thon event]. You can find out more about the worldwide scope of the Global Write-a-thon at www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon.

The [your city/town] Amnesty International group welcomes the general public to its meetings, which take place [detail schedule of meetings].

WHO: [Name of chief group spokesperson], Coordinator, [city] Amnesty Internat'l Group

WHAT: [Your City/School] Amnesty International Group hosts letter-writing event to aid victims of human rights violations around the world

WHEN: [Date and time]

WHERE: [Write-a-thon Event Location]

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Sample Letter to the Editor #1

[Name of editor]

[Name of paper]

[Street address]

[City, ST, ZIP]

[Date]

Dear Editor,

The Chinese government has jailed or detained hundreds of individuals in their ongoing efforts to silence dissenting political views.

The most prominent example is Liu Xiaobo, one of China's best-known human rights activists, who was sentenced to eleven years in prison and two years deprivation of political rights for "inciting subversion of state power" in December 2009.

In 2010 Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.

On December 10, International Human Rights Day, this year's Nobel Peace Prize will be awarded to three human rights activists, including Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience, who helped to stabilize Liberia after a devastating civil war.

To commemorate this day, I will be one of thousands of people around the world writing letters on behalf of Liu Xiaobo and others imprisoned for exercising their basic rights in Amnesty International's Write for Rights - Global Write-a-thon. We all can speak out against human rights abuses by taking part in the Global Write-a-thon at www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon.

[Your name]

[Amnesty International, group # or other AIUSA affiliation]

[Daytime phone number, not for publication, just for verification of authorship]

Sample Letter to the Editor #2

[Name of editor]

[Name of paper]

[Street address]

[City, ST, ZIP]

[Date]

Dear Editor,

The Zimbabwe government repeatedly misuses laws to arbitrarily arrest and detain human rights activists and perceived critics of the president's political party.

Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) organize peaceful demonstrations to protest the worsening social, economic and political climate in their country. In response, authorities have harassed, intimidated, beaten and jailed these brave women. Jenni Williams and other WOZA activists have been arrested multiple times for their political activities, spending time in Zimbabwe's notoriously filthy, over-crowded, and disease-ridden jails.

On December 10, International Human Rights Day, I will be writing a letter on behalf of WOZA during Amnesty International's Write for Rights - Global Write-a-thon. My letter will be one of thousands calling for the release of prisoners of conscience.

It is because of the support of organizations like Amnesty International that WOZA and its members can exercise their basic human rights.

"I am alive today because members of Amnesty International spoke out for me," Jenni Williams has said.

No one should be held prisoner because of peaceful political expression. We all can speak out against human rights abuses by taking part in the Global Write-a-thon at www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon.

[Your name]

[Amnesty International, group # or other AIUSA affiliation]

[Daytime phone number, not for publication, just for verification of authorship]

Sample Letter to the Editor #3

[Name of editor]

[Name of paper]

[Street address]

[City, ST, ZIP]

[Date]

Dear Editor,

In many countries around the world, expressing a dissenting political view with the wave of a flag or an online message can result in arrest or torture. In Azerbaijan, Jabbar Savalan is imprisoned for posting a Facebook message that called for protests against the government. Filep Karma is imprisoned for raising a flag in Indonesia. Student leaders Behareh Hedayat and Majid Tavakkoli are serving long prison sentences for calling for greater freedom in Iran.

Thanks to the efforts of the international community, some prisoners of conscience are released and continue to fight for human rights. Mohamed Nasheed, who was jailed for accusing the Maldivian government of rigging an election in 1989, is now president of his country, having won the first democratic presidential election in the Maldives. Former South Korean president Kim Dae-jung, who was on death row for his public opposition to South Korea's former military dictatorship, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000.

December 10, International Human Rights Day, people worldwide will gather together on behalf of human rights through Amnesty International's Write for Rights Global Write-a-thon.

Speak out against human rights abuses by registering for the Global Write-a-thon at www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon.

[Your name]

[Amnesty International, group # or other AIUSA affiliation]

[Daytime phone number, not for publication, just for verification of authorship]