

# ACTIVISM ACTION GUIDE

INNOVATE, CREATE, AND TAKE BOLD  
ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



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# ACTIVISMx

Amnesty International USA student groups across the country are organizing for human rights. This fall, we are taking this activism to the next level - ActivismX. This campus competition is a chance for students nationwide to develop creative actions for two priority campaigns: Refugee & Migrant Rights and End Gun Violence.

ActivismX is a way to bring your creative ideas to life! The project will take place on high school and college campuses nationwide. Throughout September into early October, student activist groups will sign up to join the competition, choose their focus area from the two priority campaigns, and plan a creative, out-of-the-box action on their campus or in their community. The group which carries out the top project in each of Amnesty's five regions will be invited to join their regional conference to present their action in a workshop on creative activism. Projects will be judged based on creativity, efficacy, number of actions taken, and other factors as outlined in the scoring rubric below. Questions? Contact [youth@aiusa.org](mailto:youth@aiusa.org).

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## HOW CAN WE PARTICIPATE?

Ready to get innovative? Sign up at [www.amnestyusa.org/activismx](http://www.amnestyusa.org/activismx) and download your resources. Once signed up, you'll plan and carry out your action. You'll receive professional coaching and support from an Amnesty organizer throughout the process, but the ultimate project is up to you. Once you've completed your project, make sure to submit a summary of your project, including links to social media posts, pictures, videos, or any other supporting materials so we can judge your project. You will receive details for how to submit once you've signed up.

## WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT US?

AIUSA toolkits and background materials are available online through the ActivismX webpage. You can request a mini-grant as well as campaign materials specific to your chosen issue area. Experienced Amnesty organizers are available for guidance and direction, or just to brainstorm and think through your ideas.

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## PEAK WEEK!

Peak Week runs from October 1-5, 2018! You can plan your action during this week, or post on social media afterwards if you've already completed the action. Groups that complete their projects during Peak Week will get extra recognition on Amnesty social media accounts! (But this doesn't affect overall scoring.)

## PROMOTING YOUR ACTION

Throughout the planning and execution of your event, get active on social media! Post photos, videos, stories and links (especially if you get media for your action) across social media platforms, making sure to use the hashtag #ActivismX and tagging @AmnestyUSA.

## REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Review Committee is made up of members of the AIUSA Youth Collective and Youth & Student Program. The team will evaluate each completed project and make final selections on October 10, 2018.

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## HOW WILL WINNING GROUPS BE SELECTED?

One winning group will be selected from each of AIUSA's five regions. Winning groups will be invited to their regional conference to co-facilitate a workshop on creative activism alongside an Amnesty organizer. Hotel accommodations (one room) and conference registration (two people) will be covered.

Groups will be evaluated on several factors:

- Effectiveness of "telling the story" and how well the project raises awareness on the issue
- Number of actions generated related to campaign goals (petition signatures, calls to elected officials, etc.)
- Potential to grow your group and/or the broader Amnesty movement (new members, SMS or email sign ups, etc.)
- Collaboration with campus organizations, departments, community groups, or other partners fitting to the campaign
- Creativity and out-of-the box thinking!



## ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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 are the world's largest and oldest grassroots human rights organization. We work to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth, and dignity are denied. We take injustice personally, and we take action.

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.

And we get results. Last year alone, Amnesty International helped free 153 people who were wrongfully imprisoned because of who they are or what they believe – and we changed laws in dozens of countries on refugees, reproductive rights, LGBT equality, free speech, the death penalty, and other critical human rights issues.

From start to finish, our work focuses on the individual – people whose human rights are abused, and people who have the power to change the world.

To learn more, visit [www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org).





# REFUGEE & MIGRANT RIGHTS

There are 22.5 million refugees in the world today - the worst refugee crisis in recorded history.

Refugees are people forced to flee their countries and their homes because they fear for their lives or persecution based on who they are or what they believe.

In the face of this humanitarian crisis, governments around the world are not doing enough to help. In the U.S., the Trump administration has implemented successive refugee bans and various administrative policies that are shutting the door on refugees.

These bans and policies disproportionately affect Muslim refugees and are effectively dismantling the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

The U.S. is also restricting the number of refugees who can resettle here. In 2018, President Trump has set the lowest ceiling on refugees that can be admitted since the U.S. refugee program was established in 1980.

Check out the Longer Table Toolkit for more information and ways to take action on this key human rights issue: [www.amnestyusa.org/longertabletoolkit](http://www.amnestyusa.org/longertabletoolkit).

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# END GUN VIOLENCE



30,000 people are killed by guns each year in the U.S.

Gunfire is in our homes, schools and businesses. It is on the streets of America, affecting victims, survivors, families and entire communities. It is impacting people of every age, race and ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and gender identity.

No part of U.S. society is unaffected by gun violence, but some individuals and groups are disproportionately impacted, particularly those living in urban communities of color, children, those experiencing domestic abuse, individuals who may be at risk of self-harm, and survivors of gun violence.

Persistent gun violence is denying people their human rights, including the rights to life, security of person and freedom from discrimination. Gun violence also undermines the right to health and the right to education. The U.S. government has an obligation to protect these rights.

Amnesty International is joining millions of people in the United States to demand real change, and we hope you'll join us. Learn more about the campaign at [www.amnestyusa.org/issues/gun-violence](http://www.amnestyusa.org/issues/gun-violence).

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# BEST PRACTICES: EVENTS & ACTIONS

Many factors go into hosting an effective event and we're here to help you think through your project from start to finish. Once you choose an issue to work on, discuss the questions below with your group. Then use the Planning Checklist to put your idea into action.

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- Who is your target audience? Is it your campus community, a decision-maker, or media outlet?
- Are there groups already working on this issue, and what is their approach? Make sure to consider those impacted by the issue you choose, and work to understand their perspective on the issue.
- How will your action raise awareness about the issue, and inspire people to take action?
- How can you develop an action that gets attention in a new way, or tells the story through a new lens?
- In what ways can you build your group through your event? Can you integrate fundraising, membership, email sign-ups or group growth goals as part of your action?
- How can your message be amplified through social media, traditional media, spokespeople or partnerships?

## PLANNING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Set up a project group to coordinate the work. Sometimes a smaller group is helpful for efficient work to be done, but you should also determine what decisions should be made by your entire group and when to come to the leadership team. Decide how often your group will meet to discuss progress.
- ☐ Prepare a timeline and define roles. Ensure everyone involved in organizing the event has a clearly defined role, with specific tasks and deadlines for each task. Devise a master timeline listing everything that needs to be completed for the event, and then arrange in chronological order.
- ☐ Draft a budget that is within your means, and stick to it. Plan out how much your event will cost and how much you will need to raise if you don't currently have the funds. Make sure to cover expenses, or better yet, make a profit that can support your group for future actions! Consider working with local businesses for donations, give-aways, space rentals, or other resources.



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- ❑ Set a date and find a venue or location for your action. Make sure your event takes place by October 9! If the space needs reserved, do this well in advance. If you're using a public space, research rules or regulations specific to that location. Make sure you visit the venue in advance and know how you will set up for your action.
  - ❑ Find partners and supporters. Early on in the planning process, reach out to campus influencers such as your student government, school mascot, prominent leaders on your campus or key faculty, and ask them for support. Determine who else is already working on your chosen issue, and make sure to connect with them - particularly if they are part of a community impacted by the issue.
  - ❑ Draft a program for your day of action. No matter what your plan is, list out the details in a "play by play." List each portion of the event, who is responsible, and any important details. Include time for set up and clean up.
  - ❑ Approach possible speakers. If your event involves speakers or presenters, approach them early to confirm their availability. Consider speakers from Amnesty, as well as local organizations. Prep each speaker fully before your event.
  - ❑ Prep materials ahead of the event. Make a list of everything you will need for your action, including branded visuals such as posters, placards, projected images, etc.
  - ❑ Use media. Send out a press release a week before your event, and work with any contacts you have at your local newspaper to build coverage opportunities. Designate members of your team to take photos and videos, and post to social media to generate your own media!
  - ❑ Amplify your message. Ensure you have members assigned to give out information and gather signatures or other actions during the event. Prepare handouts, sign-up sheets, and other materials in advance of your event.



**ACTIVISTS IN DETROIT, MI PLACED 2,300 ORIGAMI BUTTERFLIES ON THE 'SPIRIT OF DETROIT' STATUE TO SYMBOLIZE THE 2,300 CHILDREN SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILIES AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER.**



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# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Both traditional and social media are powerful tools to promote your action and amplify your message.

THE "TRAIL OF GREEN" INSTALLATION WAS SET UP IN LOS ANGELES, CA DURING A RECENT CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTERS IN IRAN.



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## OP-EDS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Op-Eds (Opinion Editorials) are a great way to reshape a public debate and affect policy. Letters to the Editor (LTEs) also contribute to the public discourse, and are also a way to promote your event, gain a larger following, and spread awareness about a human rights issue. If you want to write a piece that will add to the conversation and get published, draft your piece so that it meets the OPTIC criteria:

**ORIGINAL** – Are you writing something that's fresh and different? Find a new way to make an argument.

**PERSONAL** – Why are you the right person to provide this point of view? Don't be afraid to offer personal insights and stories.

**TIMELY** – Why now? Finding a good news hook is often the key to getting a piece published.

**INFORMATIVE** – Did the reader learn something? Op-eds and LTEs aren't just a chance to rant or rave on an issue; they should enrich the reader's knowledge.

**CONTROVERSIAL/COUNTERINTUITIVE** – Are people arguing about this issue? Is your take on this unexpected?

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## SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

- Post often, but not too much. Use photos and videos to get attention, and share from your group as well as personal channels.
- Use Facebook events to spread the word about your upcoming action. Share with friends, and ask influencers to share as well.
- Get the attention of decision makers by tagging them in posts about your campaign.
- Use the hashtag #ActivismX and tag @AmnestyUSA in posts about your project.

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## EARNED MEDIA COVERAGE

Getting coverage of your action means you'll need a media-worthy event. Here are tips to generate buzz about your event:

- Send out a media advisory: Media advisories inform and lure press to your event. They can help get your event on the daybooks, so make sure to send to calendar and assignment editors. Send one-page advisories at least one week prior to the event and include the basic facts: who, what, where, when and why.
- Make follow up calls to local media outlets: A few days before the event, call the outlets you want to cover your event. Speak to the assignment editors and ask if they received your media advisory. Follow up that same day and again on the morning of the event.
- Distribute a press release to local newspapers: Press releases are a good way to share information about your event. Keep press releases to one page. The release can look a lot like the advisory, and should include details about the event (number of people who attended, impact, etc.) as well as a quote or two that reporters can plug into their story. Always include the name of a spokesperson from your group and their contact information.
- Pitch directly to reporters: Look up relevant reporters by checking the contact sections of the outlet's website. Contact reporters through email first and then follow up by phone.
- Report back: If your event or project is covered by the media, let us know! Send us a link when it's available to [media@aiusa.org](mailto:media@aiusa.org).

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## REPRESENTING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

As representatives of Amnesty International, it is important that you accurately and responsibly reflect the organization.

### DO...

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- Maintain Amnesty's position of impartiality. Amnesty International is independent of any government, political ideology or religion, and does not take sides in armed conflict.
- Always be honest if you don't know the answer to something about Amnesty's work. You can redirect questions to the website, or agree to follow up afterwards.
- Fundraise for your group, but not for other organizations.
- Make sure your action is legal and non-violent.
- Get permission from the areas you're going to be setting up in, including any needed permits.

### DON'T...

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- Don't make exaggerated claims about the human rights issue you're working on, or make up information under pressure. No one can be expected to know everything about human rights!
- Don't take sides with or endorse a political party or candidate.
- Don't make statements about a situation before researching Amnesty's official position.
- Don't use offensive language or plan an action that could harm or disrespectful any group of people - especially those impacted by the issue you are working on.