



# **BANNED BOOKS WEEK 2020 TOOLKIT**

**INDIVIDUALS & GROUPS TOOLKIT**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# BANNED BOOKS WEEK 2020

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# INTRODUCTION

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Each year during Banned Books Week, the American Library Association (ALA) calls attention to books that have been challenged in US Libraries. At the same time Amnesty International activists and groups draw attention to people around the world who have been imprisoned, threatened, or murdered because of what they wrote or published or because of their work in the publishing or media industries.

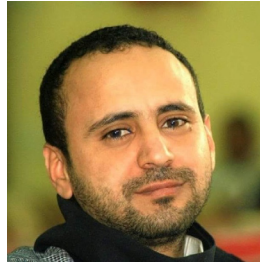
Banned Books Week 2020 will spotlight 7 cases of people whose rights are under attack because of their work. The human rights of authors, journalists, bloggers, filmmakers, poets, novelists, photojournalists, publishers, musicians and more continue to be violated globally, and your help is needed to demand justice!

This toolkit will provide you with information on this year's cases as well as ways that you can take action with us. Take a look at the opportunities listed in the toolkit and consider how you can get involved in your community.

While the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect how we can organize for human rights, there are still ways to make an impact and engage your community to do the same!

# **2020 BANNED BOOKS WEEK CASE INFORMATION & ACTIONS**

## **Akram al-Walidi, Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hareth Hamid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri YEMEN — JOURNALISTS SENTENCED TO DEATH**



On April 11 2020, the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana'a sentenced four journalists, Akram al-Walidi, Abdelkhaleq Amran, Hareth Hamid and Tawfiq Al-Mansouri to death. They were part of a wider group of 10 journalists formally charged in December 2018 with a series of offenses, including spying, which carries the death penalty.

Since their detention in 2015, all 10 journalists have been suffering from a range of medical issues, including stomach and colon pain, hearing problems, hemorrhoids and headaches for which they have not received adequate medical attention.

The arbitrary detention of 10 journalists for five years by the Huthi de facto authorities is a grim indicator of the dire state of media freedom in Yemen.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now, or use the message on the petition page to write and send a letter to:

Ambassador Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak  
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen  
2319 Wyoming Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
Phone: 202 965 4760 | Fax: 202 337 2017  
Email: [information@yemenembassy.org](mailto:information@yemenembassy.org)  
Twitter: @YemenEmbassy\_DC @BelovedAden  
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

[\*\*bit.ly/BBW2020Yemen\*\*](https://bit.ly/BBW2020Yemen)



## Shakthika Sathkumara

### SRI LANKA — AWARD-WINNING WRITER

### CHARGED AND FACING 10 YEARS IN PRISON



Shakthika Sathkumara is an award-winning Sri Lankan writer who was arrested on April 1, 2019 when he went to a police station to give a statement in response to complaints made by Buddhist monks regarding a short story he wrote and shared on his Facebook profile. The fictional story concerned life in a Buddhist temple and allegedly hinted at child sexual abuse.

He was charged under Article 291(B) of the Penal Code of Sri Lanka and Section 3(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act (ICCPR Act), both of which deal with propagating racial and religious hatred that incites discrimination, hostility, and violence,

After spending four months in prison, he was released on bail by the Kurunegala High Court on August 5, 2019.

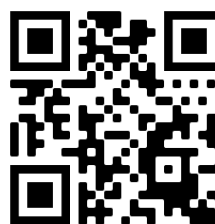
The charges against him remain pending. If found guilty, he could face up to 10 years in prison. The next hearing on his case is scheduled for September 22, 2020. Amnesty had declared Shakthika a prisoner of conscience when he was in prison, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, and has called for all charges against him to be dropped.

Amnesty International is calling on the Sri Lankan government to stop using the ICCPR Act to harass, threaten, and prosecute writers and activists for peacefully expressing their opinions.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now, or use the message on the petition page to write and send a letter to:

Ambassador Rodney Perera  
Embassy of Sri Lanka  
3025 Whitehaven Street NW,  
Washington DC 20008  
Phone: 202 483 4025 | Fax: 202 232 7181  
Email: [slembassy@slembassyusa.org](mailto:slembassy@slembassyusa.org)

[bit.ly/BBW2020SriLanka](https://bit.ly/BBW2020SriLanka)



## Masrat Zahra

INDIA — PHOTOJOURNALIST

FACING CHARGES AND INTIMIDATION FROM INDIAN AUTHORITIES



Masrat Zahra, a 26-year-old award-winning photojournalist from Srinagar, whose work as a freelance photojournalist, has appeared previously in international media such as Washington Post, Al-Jazeera, and Indian media such as Quint, and Caravan among others.

Masrat has been accused on April 20, 2020 of “uploading anti-national posts [on Facebook] with criminal intentions to induce the youth.” The investigation against Masrat Zahra (and other Kashmiri journalists) by the police curbs the right to freedom of expression. Harassment and intimidation threaten efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic and creates an atmosphere of fear and reprisal. In Kashmir, this has been compounded through the general lockdown, prolonged restrictions on internet speed and arbitrary detentions often without any kind of documentation, access to lawyers, and recourse to justice. This severely undermines the human rights guarantees of the people of Kashmir and denies people in India and around the world their right to know.

Amnesty International calls on the Indian authorities to drop all charges against Masrat Zahra and to stop harassing and intimidating journalists in Kashmir. Furthermore, Amnesty International calls on the Indian authorities to repeal the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act or amend it to bring it in line with international human rights law and standards.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now:

[bit.ly/BBW2020India](https://bit.ly/BBW2020India)



Note: Due to Covid-19 causing the temporary suspension of international shipping to certain countries, we are not asking for physical letters to be written to any targets with international addresses. Please take action by signing the online petition only.

## Yang Hengjun

**CHINA — NOVELIST, ACADEMIC & BLOGGER**  
**CHARGED WITH ESPIONAGE FOR HIS WRITINGS**



Yang Hengjun is a prominent novelist, academic, and blogger known for his often-outspoken commentary on Chinese public affairs. He moved to Australia in 1999 and became a citizen in 2002. Between 2002 and 2005, he wrote a trilogy of spy novels about a China-US double agent that was published on his blog site.

Yang flew to the city of Guangzhou with his family in January 2019 and was detained by police upon arrival. He was formally arrested in August 2019 and in March 2020, Chinese authorities finally announced it would charge Yang with espionage.

He has denied that he was ever a spy for any government. Individuals convicted of espionage face a minimum of three years' imprisonment. Those deemed to have caused "particularly serious harm to the country and the people" may be sentenced to death. Suspects in national security trials are regularly deprived of procedural rights afforded to ordinary suspects, including access to legal counsel of their choice and the right to a public hearing.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now:

[bit.ly/BBW2020China](https://bit.ly/BBW2020China)



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## Andrea Sahouri

U.S. — JOURNALIST

### ARRESTED AND DETAINED WHILE REPORTING ON A BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTEST



On the evening of May 31, 2020, police pepper sprayed, arrested, and detained Andrea Sahouri, a journalist with the Des Moines Register. After police in riot gear showed up and ordered the protesters to disperse, people began running in multiple directions. As the police fired tear gas, protesters ran into a busy commercial intersection. Andrea Sahouri and her colleague ran too. As they rounded the corner of a store, the police charged at them. Even as she kept yelling, “I’m press, I’m press, I’m press,” she was pepper sprayed on her arms and face twice at close range. “We dispersed, and they charged at us.”

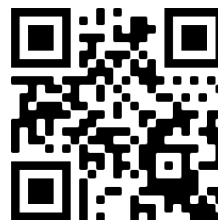
The police arrested Andrea Sahouri, cuffed her in zip ties behind her back, and placed her in a van. Her face was covered in pepper spray, coating the face mask she was wearing; she said her entire face and eyes were burning and she was crying out in pain. While detained at the jail, she had to shower and change clothes due to the pepper spray.

She was charged with failure to disperse and interference with official acts and released around 11.30 pm that same night.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now, or use the message on the petition page to write and send a letter to:

County Attorney John P. Sarcone  
Polk County Attorney’s Office  
Polk County Justice Center  
222 Fifth Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone: (515) 286-3737  
Fax: (515) 286-3428  
Email: [ctyatty@polkcountyiowa.gov](mailto:ctyatty@polkcountyiowa.gov)

[bit.ly/BBW2020US](https://bit.ly/BBW2020US)



## Nguyen Van Hoa

### VIETNAM — ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALIST

### SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR LOCAL REPORTING



Environmental journalist Nguyen Van Hoa was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison in December 2017 for reporting on the 2016 Formosa environmental disaster in central Vietnam. Tortured by the authorities to confess to his “crime”. In May 2019 he was being held in solitary confinement as punishment for his refusal to cooperate.

In August 2018, Nguyen Van Hoa was allowed to testify in court during a trial against environmental activist Le Dinh Luong. During those proceedings, he told the judge that he had been beaten by interrogators to give forced confessions. Instead of promptly launching an investigation into his claim, the judge sent him back to prison and without any action on the allegation.

During his time at An Diem prison, the authorities have attempted many times to force Nguyen Van Hoa to admit the charges against him but they have never succeeded.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now, or use the message on the petition page to write and send a letter to:

Ambassador Ha Kim Ngoc  
Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
1233 20th St NW Ste 400, Washington DC 20036  
Phone: 202 861 0737 | Fax: 202 861 0917  
Email: [vanphong@vietnamembassy.us](mailto:vanphong@vietnamembassy.us)  
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

[bit.ly/BBW2020Vietnam](https://bit.ly/BBW2020Vietnam)



## Yulia Tsvetkova

### RUSSIA — ARTIST AND LGBTI ACTIVIST UNDER HOUSE ARREST



Yulia Tsvetkova is a Russian activist and artist who is facing prosecution and harassment for defending women's and LGBTI rights specifically relating to the posting of controversial images on social media as part of her women's empowerment campaign. Yulia was detained on November 20, 2019 and put under house arrest two days later after being charged with "production and dissemination of pornographic materials," which if convicted she could face up to 6 years in prison.

The basis for these absurd charges were her drawings of the female body, including body-positive pictures of female reproductive organs, which she posted on social media as part of her women empowerment campaign.

On January 17, 2020, Yulia was informed that new proceedings had been opened against her, under the same Article of the Code of Administrative Offences, this time for posting on social media her drawing "Family is where love is. Support LGBT+ families" depicting two same-sex couples with children.

Use the link or scan the QR code below to take action online right now:

[bit.ly/BBW2020Russia](https://bit.ly/BBW2020Russia)



Note: Due to Covid-19 causing the temporary suspension of international shipping to certain countries, we are not asking for physical letters to be written to any targets with international addresses. Please take action by signing the online petition only.

# ACTIONS & EVENT IDEAS

Now that you have learned about the cases and signed the petitions, what's next? Let's get more people in your community involved so that we can flood these offices with messages! The following actions are just a few options for you to consider. Get as creative as you can and look for opportunities in your own community that will make your Banned Books Week of action unique!

## JOIN OUR BANNED BOOKS WEEK EVENT

On Thursday, September 24th at 8:00 p.m. EST, Amnesty International USA will be hosting Silenced Voices: A Banned Books Week Event. The event will include guest speakers discussing freedom expression, censorship, and actions for this year's cases. Invite members of your group, share it with libraries and booksellers in your area to join us for this important discussion of literature, media, and freedom of expression! RSVP for the event here:

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/event/banned-books-week-2020/>

## VIRTUAL LETTER-WRITING PARTY

By writing letters to the leaders who oversee each of these cases, we have a real chance to make a difference in their lives and show that the world is watching. To prove to them that the world is watching, we need to write and send as many letters as possible.

If you are a member of an AIUSA group, organize a letter-writing party during Banned Books week to honor freedom of expression and to support people who are being silenced. If you are not a member of an AIUSA group and one does not exist in your area, you can use the recommendations below to host your own event.

Whether you are with a group or not, be sure to let AIUSA know about what you have planned by posting your event on the Amnesty Events Calendar: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/take-action/events/>

## IDEAS FOR HOSTING AN EVENT

- During the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person letter-writing parties are impossible for most of us, so we encourage you to consider a virtual event through a platform like Zoom or Skype.
- Take some time during the event to share about each of the cases and what Amnesty International is demanding happen to them.
- Write letters and sign petitions during the event! Use the time you're together to write letters. If you need a sample letter and addresses to write your own letters, look at our petitions page. The language from these petitions can be utilized for your letter-writing efforts.
- Contact local artists, writers, and journalists as guest speakers or performers during the event. What better way to celebrate our right to freedom of expression than to celebrate those who are actively engaged in creative expression!
- Reach out to your local library, discuss options for a collaborative event, or even ask for them to feature your virtual letter-writing party on their community calendar.
- Reach out to additional organizations on your campus or in your community based on the cases featured this year. For example, see if any local organizations focused on environmental justice would be interested in joining you to take action on behalf of Nguyen Van Hoa.

## BANNED BOOKS WEEK READ ALOUD

A read aloud event is a creative way to raise awareness on the issues at the heart of Banned Books Week. To plan a read aloud event:

- Think about what readings could be featured at the event and who you might want to invite to read them.
  - » Are there any local celebrities who might feel inspired to raise awareness for freedom of speech and expression?
  - » Is there any currently or formerly banned writing that would resonate most in your community?
- Consider having a host or MC to open and close the event, and to help the event flow smoothly from reader to reader.
- Explore other fun or creative things you can weave into the event to create more interest.
  - » Could you invite community members or kids to share original writing about human rights?
  - » How might you use music or video to create a dynamic experience?

## PARTNER WITH LIBRARIES, BOOKSELLERS, AND LITTLE LIBRARIES IN YOUR AREA FOR AN EVEN BIGGER EVENT

- Connect with your local library to see if they already have a Banned Books Week event planned. Their focus on informing the public of banned books and censorship, paired with Amnesty International's emphasis on protecting the rights of writers around the world could be a powerful combination! Many libraries are currently hosting virtual events in place of in-person programs.
- Know of local booksellers or Little Libraries in your area? Include them in Banned Books Week! Share with them a copy of our toolkit for booksellers; talk with them about hosting a joint event; or even ask for them to hang up one of Amnesty's Banned Books Week flyers (a printable version is available in the 'Additional Resources' section).
- Provide BBW bookmarks to Libraries and Booksellers as a way to reach out to others in the community and take action. You can order Banned Books Week bookmarks here: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/order-your-banned-books-week-bookmarks/>



## TAKING ACTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We need you, your group members, friends, and family to help us fill social media during Banned Books Week. Show everyone why you support freedom of expression during this week. Highlight a new case each day, and call others to action. Be sure to use the hashtag #BannedBooksWeek and tag @amnestyusa in any of your posts.

### SAMPLE POSTS

#### SAMPLE 1

*September 27 – October 3rd is #BannedBooksWeek! Will you take action with @amnestyusa and support freedom of expression? Learn more at [www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020](http://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020)*

#### SAMPLE 2

*Freedom of expression continues to be under threat around the world. Join @amnestyusa during #BannedBooksWeek to fight for human rights defenders! Take action at [www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020](http://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020)*

#### SAMPLE 3

*Join me and @AmnestyUSA on Sept 24 at 8pm ET to defend free speech during #BannedBooksWeek <https://www.amnestyusa.org/event/banned-books-week-2020/>*

#### SAMPLE 4:

*Defend free speech with @amnestyusa this #BannedBooksWeek – visit [www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020](http://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020) to take action today!*

#### SAMPLE 5

*Imagine getting arrested, imprisoned or sentenced to death because of a photo you took, a story you wrote, or something you tweeted. Take action for #BannedBooksWeek – visit [www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020](http://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020)*

**To download Banned Books Week graphics for your social media posts, follow this link:**  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020/social-media>

## REPORT YOUR ACTIVISM TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

However you decide to take action, let us know by reporting back to us! We want to celebrate your activism and count your efforts as we work to defend free speech and protect the freedoms of each writer, journalist, and artist highlighted in our Banned Books 2020 cases. You can use the link below to share what you have done with us:

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/report-your-banned-books-week-action-form/>

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Use these graphics to promote Banned Books Week. Print copies to share with friends, distribute to libraries and booksellers, and hang them in public places around your community.

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



## Banned Books Week

Each year during Banned Books Week, Amnesty International draws attention to people around the world who have been imprisoned, threatened, or murdered because of what they wrote or published. In solidarity with the American Library Association and organizations around the world, Amnesty activists work to fight challenges to freedom of expression.



## Defend Free Speech

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

— Article 19 —  
*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

[amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020](https://amnestyusa.org/banned-books-2020)

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## 2020 Amnesty International Banned Books Cases

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Academic & Blogger - Facing from 3  
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**Masrat Zahra** - *India* - Photojournalist  
- Facing up to 7 years in prison

**Yulia Tsvetkova** - *Russia* - LGBTI &  
Women's Rights Activist - Facing  
prosecution and harassment

**Shakthika Sathkumara** - *Sri Lanka* -  
Writer - Facing up to 10 years in  
prison

**Andrea Sahouri** - *USA* - Journalist -  
Arrested covering a protest and  
charged with failure to disperse and  
interference

**Nguyen Van Hoa** - *Vietnam* -  
Environmental Reporter - Sentenced  
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**Akram al-Walidi, Abdelkhaleq Amran,  
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- *Yemen* - Journalists - Sentenced to  
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To learn more, visit the website or  
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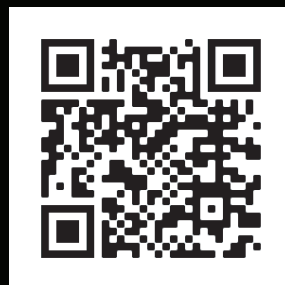
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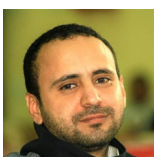
# DEFEND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL!

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DRAWS ATTENTION TO PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD WHO HAVE BEEN  
IMPRISONED, THREATENED, OR MURDERED BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY  
WROTE OR PUBLISHED.

TAKE ACTION NOW  
WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA  
FOR BANNED BOOKS WEEK 2020  
SEPT. 27 - OCT. 3



IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AND  
ORGANIZATIONS AROUND THE WORLD, AMNESTY ACTIVISTS FIGHT  
FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. THIS YEAR WE HIGHLIGHT TEN OF  
THE HUNDREDS OF CASES WORLDWIDE WHERE THE FREEDOM OF  
WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS ARE IN DANGER.



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