WRITE FOR RIGHTS

WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.

Twenty-five years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon to support individuals at risk of human rights violations. What started as a small event has since evolved into the world's largest human rights campaign: Write for Rights.

Since 2001, Write for Rights has shown that ordinary people can challenge injustice through collective action. Millions have written letters, signed petitions and sent messages of hope to people whose rights have been denied. Together, those actions have helped to free prisoners of conscience, reunite families, change unjust laws and remind countless people that they are not alone.

Today, human rights education is an important part of the campaign. Through Write for Rights, people learn about human rights and the individuals at risk, and are invited to take action if they wish. In 2025, 415,601 people took part in human rights education activities like this one.

Now, that shared determination is more important than ever.

Authoritarian practices are expanding at an unprecedented pace – eroding civic freedoms, weaponizing surveillance, and silencing those who speak up to further entrench power. From genocide to repression and the dismantling of hard-won rights, we are witnessing a systemic assault on the foundations of our shared humanity. This is not the work of a single leader or a single moment. It is a pattern – and it demands a response.

The individuals at the heart of this year's campaign have experienced that repression first-hand. Through our learning activities this year, you will build your knowledge about their situations and the human rights violations they experience. You can decide to join the letter-writing activity, sign petitions and raise your voice. By doing so, you become part of that resistance too.

Year after year, individuals featured in the campaign tell us how deeply these actions matter. Many describe the strength they draw from knowing that so many people care about and support them. Often, your letters lead to real change: charges are dropped, people are released from detention, and authorities introduce new laws or policies to protect human rights.

Now is the time to make a choice. Join Write for Rights. Learn and take action!

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education** activity can take place in a variety of settings: online or offline, in classrooms, community groups or activist networks. As a facilitator, adapt the activity to your group's context. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size and age range of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity, delivering it in-person or online, and any limitations. The timings suggested are estimates and should be adapted for the size of your group and the time available. Please also adapt the activities to ensure inclusivity for all learners.

When participants want to take action in support of an individual at risk, discuss how to do so safely and ensure you follow school or local guidelines on consent.

The activities are based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyse and question issues relating to the individuals' and groups' stories. This helps participants to:

build key competencies and skills

form their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

take ownership of their learning, and shape discussions around their interests, abilities and concerns

engage emotionally and develop values and personal commitment.

Read about the people we're fighting for: amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: amnesty.org/en/countries/

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R26

If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start: amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/

Amnesty International offers free online human rights education courses: academy.amnesty.org/learn and quizzes: https://create.kahoot.it/profiles/AmnestyInternational

YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

GUERRERAS POR LA AMAZONÍA AND THE UNIÓN DE AFECTADOS POR TEXACO (UDAPT) WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2025

Thanks to the solidarity and support of people around the world, there has been an important development in the struggle of the Guerreras por la Amazonía and the Unión de Afectados por Texaco (UDAPT) in Ecuador.

For years, the Guerreras have campaigned against toxic gas flares in the Ecuadorian Amazon that harm the health, environment and lives of nearby communities. Through the Write for Rights campaign, almost half a million actions were collected calling on the Ecuadorian government to comply with a landmark 2021 court ruling ordering the elimination of the gas flares.

On 29 April 2026, Amnesty International joined members of the Guerreras and UDAPT in delivering signatures from supporters around the world to Ecuador's Ministry of Environment and Energy. Following this action, the Ministry announced the creation of technical working groups involving government institutions and affected communities.

While this is not yet in full compliance with the ruling, it is an important first step towards accountability and change – and one that would not have been possible without the pressure and solidarity shown by supporters worldwide.

*"It was very enriching, and it also gave us much more strength to keep going, because there were many letters, many people who were always telling us, '**Don't give up, girls, don't give up. Even if the state violates your rights, it has to take responsibility for its actions.**'"*

Dannya Bravo, Guerrera por la Amazonía, who featured in Write for Rights 2025



Thank you for taking action and standing with the Guerreras por la Amazonía and UDAPT in their fight for environmental justice. Your support has helped amplify their voices and keep international attention on their struggle.

ROCKY MYERS WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2023



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Rocky Myers, a Black man with an intellectual disability, spent three decades on death row in Alabama, USA, accused of murder. Rocky was convicted following testimonies blighted by inconsistencies. He was sentenced to death by a judge who imposed a death sentence against the jury's wishes, a practice abolished in Alabama in 2017 but never applied retroactively to Rocky or others like him.

Rocky was featured in Write for Rights 2023, leading to huge global campaigning calling for the Governor of Alabama to grant him clemency and commute his death sentence. In February 2025, this was granted. Rocky's fight for justice is not over, as his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, but the threat of execution has been stopped.

"Not only did this campaign bring awareness to his case, but it was done in such a way that honoured Rocky as a person, father and grandfather. I know the outpouring of support meant the world to Rocky, and to know that so many people felt called to action is truly inspiring."

Miriam Bankston, member of Rocky Myers's legal team

AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES: A PATTERN OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TO ENTRENCH POWER

Imagine waking up one day to find that certain topics can no longer be discussed openly. Schools avoid difficult conversations. Journalists tread more carefully. Your news feed shows fewer critical voices. Public spaces feel less safe for protest or dissent.

Nothing dramatic happened overnight. There are no obvious turning points, only a gradual shift. Yet over time, the space for dialogue, disagreement and public participation has narrowed.

Would you notice? And more importantly, if you did, would you know how to respond?

For many people around the world, this is not hypothetical. Authoritarian practices that violate human rights rarely arrive all at once. More often, they emerge gradually through policies, narratives and practices that may even go unnoticed in isolation. Restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, access to information or political participation are often justified in the language of security, stability, public order or national interest. Over time, repeated exposure to these narratives can normalize limitations on human rights and make them increasingly difficult to recognize or challenge. But their true intent is to benefit those in power, privileging one group at the expense of another.

Across different regions and political contexts, the cases presented in these educational resources reveal similar patterns. Human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, activists, Indigenous leaders, opposition voices and ordinary citizens are criminalized, surveilled, detained, disappeared or punished to silence dissent and evade accountability. Criticism is reframed as “extremism”, “terrorism” or “subversion”, while fear is used to discourage dissent and collective action as another tactic to redirect public anger away from the government. At the same time, legal protections are weakened and institutions intended to keep power in check are undermined.

Although the contexts of these individuals at risk differ, the authoritarian practices operating across these cases follow recognizable patterns. They silence voices and criticism, suppress collective action and participation, and weaken legal protections and the rule of law to unduly concentrate power or shield the authorities from any potential threats. Violations of one right often lead to the erosion of others, demonstrating how human rights are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Patterns of authoritarian practices connect all the cases despite the range of human rights violations experienced by those affected.



© Amnesty International Nepal

People take part in Write for Rights at Amnesty International Nepal in 2025.

The activities in this educational resource invite learners not only to understand the unique cases, but also to explore and reflect on the broader patterns through which authoritarian practices operate across different contexts. By linking individual experiences to wider global trends, the activities encourage critical reflection on the relationships between power, freedoms, human rights and resistance. They also highlight how authoritarian practices violate human rights and lead to the concentration and entrenchment of power.

As you engage with these cases, consider: what patterns do you notice? What has become normalized that should be questioned? Spotting the patterns and gaining a deeper understanding of the groups of cases will create a foundation of learning for informed action now and in the future.

Take part in our Kahoot quiz on authoritarian practices and test your knowledge: tinyurl.com/yc7b5kjn (in English only).



ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly, treating others fairly and having the ability to make choices about your own life. Human rights are universal – they belong to everyone, everywhere.

They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – each right is equally important and they are interconnected.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a powerful framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to protect against abuses of power and improve lives across the world. Human rights are laws for governments. Human rights are not optional privileges or luxuries to be granted only when convenient. They create binding obligations for governments and public officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all people, both within their borders and beyond.


THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION
OF Human Rights
UNITED NATIONS

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THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed to be bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

As its name suggests, the UDHR is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that it will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. These laws and agreements provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to demand that governments end the abuses experienced by the individuals featured in our Write for Rights campaign.



© Amnesty International Canada (Photo: PASCAL RATTHE)

Above: *A Write for Rights event organized by Amnesty International Canada in 2025.*
Top: *Launch of Write for Rights 2025 in Côte d'Ivoire.*

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

 Civil rights and liberties Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.	**Article 1**	Freedom and equality in dignity and rights
	Article 2	Non-discrimination
	Article 3	Right to life, liberty and security of person
	Article 4	Freedom from slavery
	Article 5	Freedom from torture
 Legal rights Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.	**Article 6**	All are protected by the law
	Article 7	All are equal before the law
	Article 8	A remedy when rights have been violated
	Article 9	No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile
	Article 10	Right to a fair trial
	Article 11	Innocent until proven guilty
	Article 14	Right to go to another country and ask for protection
 Social rights Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.	**Article 12**	Privacy and the right to home and family life
	Article 13	Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders
	Article 16	Right to marry and start a family
	Article 24	Right to rest and leisure
	Article 26	Right to education, including free primary education
 Economic rights Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.	**Article 15**	Right to a nationality
	Article 17	Right to own property and possessions
	Article 22	Right to social security
	Article 23	Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union
	Article 25	Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being
 Political rights Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion.	**Article 18**	Freedom of belief (including religious belief)
	Article 19	Freedom of expression and the right to spread information
	Article 20	Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way
	Article 21	Right to take part in the government of your country
 Cultural rights, solidarity rights Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.	**Article 27**	Right to share in your community's cultural life
	Article 28	Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized
	Article 29	Responsibility to respect the rights of others
	Article 30	No taking away any of these rights!

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Above: *Amnesty International Argentina launched last year's Write for Rights at the Model United Nations held at the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires.*

Below: *Amnesty International Zimbabwe launch the 2025 Write For Rights campaign in Masvingo Province.*

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people that mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held accountable for their actions. We investigate and expose abuses wherever they occur. By amplifying the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and act in solidarity with activists on the frontlines. We also support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty and advancing climate justice and equality, to combating discrimination and defending the rights of refugees and migrants. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws and free people who have been jailed solely for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity is under threat.





AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE PERSON, IT MATTERS TO US ALL.