WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



# SHE OPPOSED THE WAR, NOW SHE FACES PRISON

## ALEKSANDRA SKOCHILENKO

RUSSIA

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# MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF WRITING LETTERS THAT CHANGE LIVES

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

Some 20 years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon. Over the following years, the idea spread. Today, Write for Rights is the world's biggest human rights event.

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to close to 4.7 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2021, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. Together, these individuals have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, freeing them from torture, harassment or unjust imprisonment.

This year's campaign channels this support towards people targeted for their peaceful activism, views or personal characteristics to protect their right to protest and express themselves freely. This includes women human rights defenders, trans rights activists, artists and peaceful protesters. These individuals have variously been beaten, jailed, shot at, harassed and intimidated. Through Write for Rights, they will receive individual messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. They and their families know that their situations are being brought to public attention and they are not forgotten. By acting in solidarity and ensuring that everyone – including those most discriminated against – can participate in protests equally without fear of violence, we can create a more just and equal world.

Alongside the letter-writing actions, Amnesty speaks to those who have the power to change these people's situations, such as politicians in their countries. Write for Rights also gives visibility to these injustices through public events, and garners international attention on social media.

Individuals and groups featured in the campaign in previous years report the difference that these actions make, and often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people care about them.

Often, there is a noticeable change in the treatment of these individuals, and of other people and groups in a similar situation, by the country's authorities. Charges may be dropped and people released from detention. People are treated more humanely, and new laws or regulations addressing the injustice are introduced.

© Amnesty International Nigeria




*Amnesty Nigeria activists participate in Write for Rights 2021.*

Read about the people we're fighting for: www.amnesty.org/writeforrights

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

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag **#W4R22**

## BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of online or offline settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family or an activist group. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the context and group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size 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. When participants want to take action on a case, discuss whether it is safe for them to do so.

The activities are all based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the cases. This methodology allows participants to:

**DEVELOP** key competencies and skills

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

**TAKE CONTROL** of their learning, and shape discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns

**HAVE THE SPACE** required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes.

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

Amnesty International offers online human rights education courses, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights campaign:** https://academy.amnesty.org/learn

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# YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

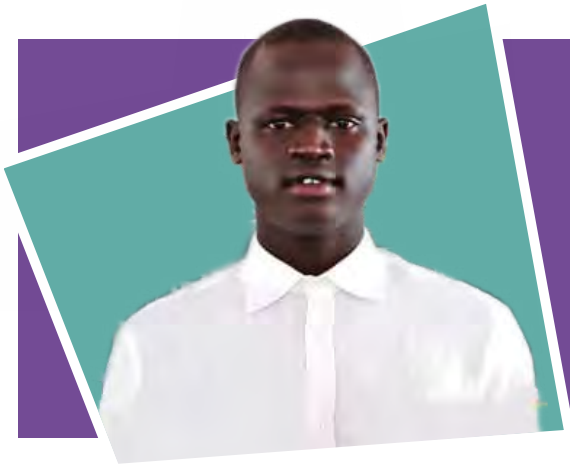
## REUNITED WITH HIS FAMILY

On 30 June 2021, human rights defender Germain Rukuki was released after serving more than four years in prison in Burundi. He had been arrested, prosecuted and convicted simply for his human rights work.

During Write for Rights 2020, supporters from around the world took more than 436,000 actions calling for Germain's freedom. Unable to leave the country following his release, Germain was finally reunited with his family in Belgium in February 2022. He said: "Write for Rights really does have a positive impact. [The] support has made me, Germain Rukuki, come out of prison even more committed to defending human rights."



© Private



## FREED FROM DEATH ROW

Magai Matiop Ngong from South Sudan was just a schoolboy when he was sentenced to death on 14 November 2017 for murder. Magai recounted how he told the judge the death was an accident and that he was only 15 years old at the time. Yet Magai was tried for capital murder without any access to a lawyer. Over 700,000 actions were taken for Magai during Write for Rights 2019. In March 2022 the High Court agreed that, because he had been a child at the time, he should be released. Magai is now safely out of the country and determined more than ever to help people like him.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FREED

Bernardo Caal Xol, a teacher and father, worked tirelessly to defend communities affected by hydroelectric projects on the Cahabón river, in northern Guatemala. In November 2018 he was sentenced to more than seven years in prison on bogus charges aimed at preventing his human rights work. During Write for Rights 2021 over half a million actions were taken for Bernardo and, in March 2022, he was released.



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# ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic 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 and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries to be met only when practicalities allow.




© Amnesty International Switzerland

*Amnesty Switzerland activists participate in Write for Rights 2021.*


THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF Human Rights

UNITED NATIONS

© UN Photo

## 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 that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they 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. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

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# 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! |

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# ACTIVITY
# RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

## KEY CONCEPTS
- freedom of expression
- right to seek, receive and impart information
- censorship

## ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY
Participants will learn about peaceful opposition and the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, through the real-life story of Aleksandra Skochilenko, an artist who was arrested by the Russian authorities for peacefully opposing Russia's war against Ukraine. As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write a letter to call for Aleksandra's immediate and unconditional release from detention and to show solidarity with her.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES
Participants will:
- **understand** the concept of freedom of expression and connect it to their own lives;
- **explore** the consequences of a violation of the right to freedom of expression;
- **recognize** how other rights are interlinked with the right to freedom of expression;
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign;
- **write** letters in support of and showing solidarity with Aleksandra Skochilenko.

## AGE: 12+

## TIME NEEDED
60 minutes – you may want additional time for the **Take Action** section.

## MATERIALS
- **Handout:** Action images (pages 9-11)
- **Handout:** The story unfolds (page 13)
- **Background information** on the right to freedom of expression (page 14)
- **Handout:** Aleksandra's story (page 15)
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** simplified version (page 5)
- Paper, pens and envelopes (if sending letters)
- Optional: Template letters from www.amnesty.org/writeforrights/
- Optional: Video of Aleksandra from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

## PREPARATION
- Print the handouts, background information and copies of the UDHR for each participant/group.
- Read the background information on page 14 and Aleksandra's story on page 15.

## MORE INFORMATION
- Take the Write for Rights short course at academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/145/write-for-rights-a-short-guide
- Take our Right to Protest short course at academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/201/the-right-to-protest
- Read Amnesty's briefing on the right to protest at amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT30/5856/2022/en/

## IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER
- Some people might relate freedom of expression to hate speech and/or discrimination. If such sentiments come up during the activity, the **background information** will help the facilitator to explain the difference between speech which criticizes the authorities, speech that might be offensive, and hate speech.
- In contexts where using the word *protest* is too controversial and might put participants at risk, you may want to replace it with an alternative such as *the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression*.

## 1. CREATIVE WAYS OF EXPRESSING OPPOSITION

20 MINUTES

In plenary, get a quick round of responses to the following questions:

- **Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and opinion. What does that mean?**
- **Have you ever used this right to express yourself against something you oppose?**
- **How did you do that, or what action did you take?**

You might want to use a whiteboard or flipchart to take some notes, as a visual aid.

After some initial answers, proceed to hand out the **Action images** on pages 9-11 and discuss what each image is about, using the following questions:

- **Is this part of a protest or an action? How?**
- **What might the message be?**
- **Is there anything that grabs your attention in this image?**
- **What do you like about this action?**

Divide participants into smaller groups to discuss one image each. After a couple of minutes, ask them to present back to the larger group, or do this in plenary.

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You may want to draw attention to some of the similarities and differences between the pictures and how protest can take many different forms. Some people take action alone or in small groups, others take part in mass mobilizations. Some actions happen in the moment, others remain visible long afterwards. Some forms of action may be loud, while others are more discreet and can even be done from people's homes.

Close this part of the activity by asking participants if they know of other creative and inspiring forms of protest.

## 2. RESISTANCE: THE STORY OF ALEKSANDRA

25 MINUTES

Explain that we are going to look at the story of Aleksandra (or Sasha for short). Read, or ask a participant to read, the following paragraphs out loud:

> Aleksandra is a freelance artist and singer from Saint Petersburg, Russia, born in 1990. She is creative and normally busy with a variety of activities – she works in a children's centre, she renovates apartments, she films and edits videos, and she creates music videos for her friends.
>
> Troubled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Aleksandra took action on 31 March 2022. She replaced price tags in a local supermarket in Saint Petersburg with little paper labels containing anti-war information and slogans.

Get initial responses from participants. Ask them:

- **What do we know about Aleksandra?**
- **What do you think about her method of opposing the war?**
- **Imagine you live in Russia and are concerned about Russia's war against Ukraine and misinformation about the war. Can you imagine yourself opposing the conflict in this way? Why, or why not?**

Divide the participants into pairs and give each pair a copy of the handout **The story unfolds** (page 13) which shares what happened next to Aleksandra. Give them around 10 minutes to discuss the case, using the questions on the handout to consider how Aleksandra's story relates to various human rights. You can give participants a copy of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** (page 5) or the **background information** on freedom of expression (page 14) to help.

If this is the first time that participants have been introduced to the UDHR, you should start by explaining what it is, using the information on page 4.

Get the group back together. If there is enough time left, you can ask pairs to share some of their findings and discussions. Otherwise, directly reflect on the following questions:

- **What inspires you about her story?**
- **What do you think gives Aleksandra the strength and courage to continue?**
- **How could you take action to support her?**

Take answers from a few people.

## 3. TAKE ACTION

15 MINUTES

Explain about Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to demand justice for Aleksandra. You can give examples from last year's campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be.

If there isn't enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative.

Show participants the video of Aleksandra which can be found here: www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

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## WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to the Russian authorities using the contact information on the right.

Explain that a personal message to the officials can have the most impact. You can give the participants the following guidelines to help them write their letter:

- Tell the authorities something about yourself to make this a personal letter.
- Tell them what shocks you about the case of Aleksandra Skochilenko.
- Tell them why you think it is important that governments respect the right to freedom of expression.
- Tell them to **immediately and unconditionally release Aleksandra Skochilenko and drop all charges against her**, as she has been detained solely for expressing her opposition to the war.

The Prosecutor of Saint Petersburg
2/9 Pochtamtskaya Street
Saint Petersburg
190000
Russian Federation

*Fax:* +7(812) 318-26-11

*Salutation:* Dear Prosecutor

## SHOW SOLIDARITY

Help keep Aleksandra's spirit strong. Send her your message of solidarity and hope. Tell her a little bit about yourself and where you are from. Make some drawings, for example of cats (Aleksandra has two cats called Lucy and Maude) to accompany your message. Then post your message to the address on the right.

Alternatively, take a photo of your message and post it to your social media, tagging Aleksandra when you do.

Facebook: facebook.com/sasha.skochilenko

Instagram: @skochilenko

Aleksandra speaks Russian and English.
Here are some example messages to include:

**Саша, держись! (Sasha, stay strong!)**

**Мы думаем о тебе (Our thoughts are with you)**

**Мы с тобой! (We stand by you!)**

Aleksandra Skochilenko
Write for Rights
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom




*Drawing done by Aleksandra while in detention.*

© Aleksandra Skochilenko

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# HANDOUT
# ACTION IMAGES



1



2

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# HANDOUT
# ACTION IMAGES



3



4

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# HANDOUT
# ACTION IMAGES



5



6

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# HANDOUT
# ACTION IMAGES

BACKGROUND INFO FOR THE FACILITATOR

**1**

People in Switzerland organized a flash mob in 2016 at eight major train stations, including here in Geneva. Some dressed up as refugees in emergency blankets and stood in the flow of commuters while other activists distributed flyers asking for better protection for refugees.

**2**

People use rainbow-coloured flowers to protest against violence against LGBTI people. During this protest in 2019, a petition with more than 65,000 signatures was also delivered to the Russian Embassy in London, calling on President Putin to investigate the attacks and abduction of LGBTI people in Chechnya.

**3**

A person demonstrates for freedom of expression, equality and social justice by holding up a blank sign in Los Angeles, USA, in 2020. All over the world people have used blank signs to protest, for various reasons and causes. It may refer to being silenced or subjected to censorship, or as a creative way to protest using a coded or invisible message, for example.

**4**

Taiwan is on the verge of legalizing same-sex marriage. Activists from Taiwan gathered in front of the Legislative Yuan (legislative assembly), to show their eagerness and support for legalizing same-sex marriage as soon as possible. Local LGBTI organizations provided rainbow-coloured plastic cards and asked participants to use their mobile phone flashlights to create rays of colours to “light up Taiwan”.

**5**

Art is a powerful tool for social change, with creators using their creativity and their talents to call for justice and an end to human rights abuses around the world. Here, artists are painting a mural in Lebanon in 2019, in support of community leaders who speak out against abuse and exploitation of women from refugee and migrant communities who face exploitative working conditions, poor living conditions, violence and racism.

**6**

A woman in Togo takes part in Write for Rights 2021 by signing a petition that calls upon the government in Belarus to release Mikita Zalatarou. As a teenager, Mikita was tortured and sentenced to five years in a juvenile educational colony despite lack of evidence, for allegedly participating in a protest. Thousands of people around the world took action for him in 2021.

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# HANDOUT
# THE STORY UNFOLDS

In the early morning of 11 April 2022, police came to Aleksandra's house, searched it, and arrested Aleksandra for "public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation". This was a new article of the criminal code rapidly introduced by the Russian authorities in March 2022 to try and stop Russian people criticizing the invasion of Ukraine. Dozens of people have been detained under this new offence.

Aleksandra is accused of swapping price tags in a Saint Petersburg supermarket for anti-war slogans, something that does not constitute an internationally recognized crime. According to the prosecution, Aleksandra's supermarket action on 31 March was an act of "political hostility" that "disseminated false information" about the use of Russia's armed forces. Following her arrest, she was interrogated until 3am the next morning. Since then she has been held in detention in terrible conditions.

Aleksandra Skochilenko has the serious health condition coeliac disease (genetic gluten intolerance). If she consumes gluten, she is at risk of developing organ failure or oncological and autoimmune diseases. Aleksandra has been forced to go hungry most of the time because the detention centre does not give her the gluten-free food she needs. This puts her health and well-being at risk. Aleksandra has also been harassed, threatened and intimidated by detention centre employees and her cellmates. If she is convicted, Aleksandra faces up to 10 years in prison.

Amnesty International has declared Aleksandra a 'prisoner of conscience': someone who has not used or advocated violence or hatred and is imprisoned solely because of who they are (based on their sexual orientation, ethnicity, national or social origin, language, birth, colour, sex or economic status) or what they believe (including religious, political or other conscientiously held beliefs).



© Aleksandra Skochilenko



Top: *Aleksandra Skochilenko.*
Bottom: *Aleksandra's partner, Sonia Subbotina, holds Aleksandra's photo.*

## ACTIVITY

10 MINUTES

Knowing Aleksandra's story, consider the following human rights and discuss in pairs how they are related to her situation and how they might be violated:

- **The right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information**
- **Arbitrary detention and the right to liberty and security of person**
- **The right to be free from torture and other ill-treatment or punishment**
- **The right to health**
- **The right to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person while in detention**

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# BACKGROUND INFORMATION
# THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

**ARTICLE 19 OF THE UDHR**

**"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 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) protects the right to freedom of expression. Freedom of expression guarantees your right to hold your own opinions and to express them freely, without government interference. This includes the right to express views through public protests or through written materials, media broadcasts, the internet and works of art. This right is regarded as a very important element in any society. We need a free flow of ideas to ensure that different opinions are taken into account and different ideas are aired. The right to freedom of expression enhances transparency and accountability. Our right to seek, receive and share information and ideas, without fear or unlawful interference, is crucial for our education and development as individuals, to help our communities, to access justice and to enjoy all our other rights.

Yet the conditions necessary for debate – such as civic engagement and political participation, transparency and access to trustworthy information – have been increasingly eroded. Not everyone is safe when expressing their opinion, especially when it concerns the political situation in their country. The threats to freedom of expression are greatest when the ideas or opinions being expressed challenge the status quo and the position of people in power. Around the world there is a growing number of laws and other repressive measures intended to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Those who raise their voice or criticize the authorities risk being silenced, harassed and criminalized through the misuse of criminal, civil and administrative laws. Authorities discourage protest with the threat of violence, arbitrary detention and multiple violations of the right to a fair trial. Governments around the world routinely imprison people – or worse – for speaking out, even though almost every country's constitution refers to the value of 'free speech'.

## RESTRICTIONS TO THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

While international law protects freedom of expression, this is not an absolute right and there are instances where expression can legitimately be restricted for the protection of the rights of others – such as when expression violates the rights of others, or advocates hatred and incites discrimination or violence. Advocacy of hatred, also commonly known as hate speech, threatens the rights of others, particularly their right to equality and non-discrimination, so it is legitimate for states to impose restrictions on protests that may be spreading such hate. For these restrictions to be legitimate, advocacy of hatred needs to be more than just the expression of ideas or opinions that are hateful towards members of a particular group. To be considered as advocacy of hatred, the expression requires a clear showing of intent to incite others to discriminate, be hostile toward, or commit violence against the group or individuals in question.

However, many governments abuse their authority to stifle criticism and silence peaceful dissent by passing laws criminalizing and restricting the right to freedom of expression. Critical speech, dissent and protest are routinely censored, punished or otherwise obstructed, online as well as offline. This is often done in the name of counterterrorism, public order, national security or religion. But respect for human rights is part of national security and public order, and the right to freedom of expression is protected under international human rights law.



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# HANDOUT
# ALEKSANDRA'S STORY

Aleksandra (or Sasha for short) fills her life with music and art. In better times, she loved playing the piano, guitar, mandolin and flute, and hosted jams for anyone who wanted to play together.

Troubled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Aleksandra took action on 31 March 2022. She replaced price tags in a local supermarket in Saint Petersburg with little paper labels containing information about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In the early morning of 11 April 2022, police arrested Aleksandra and charged her with "public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" – a new article of the criminal code hastily introduced by the Russian government in March 2022 to try and stop Russian people criticizing the invasion of Ukraine. Dozens of people have already been detained under this new offence.

Aleksandra has been held in detention ever since, in terrible conditions. She has coeliac disease and has been forced to go hungry most of the time because the detention centre has not given her the gluten-free food she needs. Aleksandra has also been harassed by detention centre employees and her cellmates. If she is convicted, Aleksandra faces up to 10 years in prison.


© Aleksandra Skochilenko


© Aleksandra Skochilenko






© Aleksandra Skochilenko

Top to bottom: *Pictures of Aleksandra;*
*The detention centre where Aleksandra Skochilenko is being held;*
*Drawings done by Aleksandra while in detention.*

# ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

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

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WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS
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INTERNATIONAL
FACING PRISON FOR
A FACEBOOK POST
SHAHNEWAZ CHOWDHURY
BANGLADESH

# SHAHNEWAZ CHOWDHURY | BANGLADESH

A big cricket fan, Shahnewaz has been playing since childhood. He also has a passion for writing and uses the written word to speak out about the struggles faced by people in his region of Banshkhali, a low-lying coastal area in the south-east of Bangladesh, vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

A new coal-fired power plant in Shahnewaz's village was supposed to be a turning point in the region's development. But Shahnewaz was scared about the environmental destruction it would bring.

On 26 May 2021, the area was swept up by a storm. Heavy rainfall and strong winds pounded the village. Homes were destroyed. Worried about the impact of environmentally damaging projects like the new power plant, which he believed contributed to an increase in tidal surges, Shahnewaz took to Facebook to raise his concerns. Encouraging young people to speak out, Shahnewaz wrote: "the youth of Banshkhali must resist injustice and support development through fearless writing."

The following day, the power plant company filed a case against Shahnewaz, accusing him of posting false information. On 28 May 2021, he was arrested by the police for his Facebook post under Bangladesh's oppressive Digital Security Act. He was detained in inhumane conditions for 80 days, without trial. Shahnewaz was granted bail on 16 August 2021, but if he's convicted, he faces many years in prison.

**Tell Bangladesh to drop the charges today**



## WRITE TO THE BANGLADESHI AUTHORITIES

Tell them to immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against Shahnewaz Chowdhury.

**Minister of Justice**
Law and Justice Division
Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
Building No – 04
Bangladesh Secretariat
Dhaka – 1000
Bangladesh

**Email:** minister@minlaw.gov.bd
**Salutation:** Honourable Minister

## SHOW SHAHNEWAZ HE'S NOT ALONE

Write him a message of friendship and support. Take a photo of it and post it on your social media channels, tagging Shahnewaz. Or send cards and letters by post to the address below.

**Address:**
Shahnewaz Chowdhury
C/O Rashid Ahmed Chowdhury
East Baraghona
**Post office:** West Baraghona
**Police station:** Banshkhali
Chittagong
Bangladesh

**Twitter:** @Shahnewaz9

ASA 13/5840/2022
Photo: © Amnesty International


WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
JAILED FOR ATTENDING
HER FIRST PROTEST
DORGELESSE NGUESSAN
CAMEROON

# DORGELESSE NGUESSAN | CAMEROON

Dorgelesse has always dreamt of owning a thriving beauty institute. Two years ago, the single mother and hairdresser was just starting to expand her hairdressing business to include manicures.

On 22 September 2020, Dorgelesse's dream was shattered when she was arrested during a protest in Douala, Cameroon. It was her first ever protest. She had never been politically active before, but her concerns about the state of Cameroon's economy led her to join the demonstrations.

When the peaceful protest began, security forces fired rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters. As Dorgelesse turned into an alleyway, police followed her and fellow protesters and blocked them in. They arrested her and took her to a police station, where she was held in a cell with 22 other people in terrible conditions.

On 29 September 2020, Dorgelesse was transferred to Douala Central Prison, where she still remains. She was charged with "insurrection, assembly, meetings and public demonstrations" and tried by a military court. She was sentenced to five years in prison on 7 December 2021.

Dorgelesse is the breadwinner of her family. Her 18-year-old son has sickle cell anaemia, and the family are struggling to pay for his medication. Dorgelesse is desperate to be reunited with them.

**Tell Cameroon to free Dorgelesse today**



## WRITE TO THE CAMEROONIAN AUTHORITIES

Tell them to release Dorgelesse from prison immediately and unconditionally, as she has been detained solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression and assembly.

**President of the Republic of Cameroon**
Palais Présidentiel
Yaoundé
Cameroon

**Email:** cellcom@prc.cm
**Twitter:** @PR_Paul_BIYA
**Facebook:** @PaulBiya.PageOfficielle
**Instagram:** @presidentpaulbiya
**Salutation:** Dear President

## SHOW DORGELESSE YOU'RE WITH HER

Send Dorgelesse your message of solidarity and hope. Take a photo of it, and post it to your social media, tagging Dorgelesse on Facebook and using the hashtag #freedorgelesse. Her family will convey messages to her. You can also send your handwritten message by post to the address below.

**Address:**
c/o Central Africa Team
Amnesty International
West and Central Africa Regional Office
Pointe E, Rue 34
Immeuble Malaado Plazza, 6ème Etage
B.P. 47582 Liberté
Dakar, Senegal

AFR 17/5835/2022
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Back page photo: © Yakana Rodrigue/Amnesty International


WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
SHE OPPOSED THE WAR,
NOW SHE FACES PRISON
ALEKSANDRA SKOCHILENKO
RUSSIA

# ALEKSANDRA SKOCHILENKO | RUSSIA

Aleksandra (or Sasha for short) fills her life with music and art. In better times, she loved playing the piano, guitar, mandolin and flute, and hosted jams for anyone who wanted to play together.

Troubled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Aleksandra took action on 31 March 2022. She replaced price tags in a local supermarket in Saint Petersburg with little paper labels containing information about the invasion.

In the early morning of 11 April 2022, police arrested Aleksandra and charged her with "public dissemination of knowingly false information about the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" – a new article of the criminal code hastily introduced by the Russian government in March 2022 to try and stop Russian people criticizing the invasion of Ukraine. Dozens of people have already been detained under this new offence.

Aleksandra has been held in detention ever since, in terrible conditions. She has coeliac disease and has been forced to go hungry most of the time because the detention centre has not given her the gluten-free food she needs. Aleksandra has also been harassed by detention centre employees and her cellmates. If she is convicted, Aleksandra faces up to 10 years in prison.

**Tell Russia to free Aleksandra now**

## WRITE TO THE RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

Tell them to immediately release Aleksandra Skochilenko and drop all charges, as she has been detained solely for expressing her opposition to the war.

**The Prosecutor of Saint Petersburg**
2/9 Pochtamtskaya Street
Saint Petersburg
190000
Russian Federation

**Fax:** +7 812 318 26 11
**Salutation:** Dear Prosecutor

EUR 46/5841/2022
Photo: © Private



## HELP KEEP ALEKSANDRA'S SPIRIT STRONG

Send her your message of solidarity and hope. Draw pictures of cats (Aleksandra has two called Lucy and Maude!) to accompany your message, take a photo, and post it to your social media, tagging Aleksandra when you do. Then, mail your message to the address below.

**Address:**
Aleksandra Skochilenko
Write for Rights
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

**Instagram:** @skochilenko
**Facebook:** facebook.com/sasha.skochilenko