

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

BRIEFING

Write for Rights: All you need to know

KEY FACTS

Write for Rights was first launched in 2001 as a 24-hour letter writing marathon in Poland.

By 2013 it had grown into a global campaign with hundreds of thousands of people from 140 countries taking part.

2.3 million petition signatures, letters and tweets were collected on behalf of 12 individuals in 2013 alone.

Three unfairly imprisoned activists -- Cambodian housing rights activist Yorm Bopha and Russian activists Vladimir Akimenkov and Mikhail Kosenko -- were released after Amnesty International supporters sent thousands of signatures on their behalf.

THIS YEAR'S CASES

[Daniel Quintero, Venezuela: Tortured for going to a public protest](#)

Daniel Quintero, 21, was viciously beaten by members of Venezuela's national guard after he was arrested on his way home from a demonstration in February 2014.

[Chelsea Manning, USA: Jailed after exposing possible human rights abuses](#)

Chelsea Manning was sentenced to 35 years in prison after leaking classified US government documents to the website Wikileaks, including material which exposes possible human rights violations. She is currently in detention.

[Mohammed Al-Roken, United Arab Emirates: Harassed and Jailed for long-term activism](#)

Lawyer and Professor Dr Mohammed al-Roken was jailed for 10 years after a huge crackdown on political and human rights activists in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2013. He was sentenced after a mass trial of 94 government critics. The trial was grossly unfair and all defendants were denied the right to appeal to the court's verdict.

[Women and girls in Mkhondo Municipality, South Africa: Denied vital health care](#)

Pregnant women and new mothers in Mkhondo Municipality, eastern South Africa, are dying needlessly because they are not getting vital health care. Maternal mortality in Mkhondo municipality more than doubled between 2012 and 2013.

[John Jeanette Solstad Remø, Norway: Prevented from changing her legal gender](#)

John Jeanette is a transgender woman in Norway who wants to change her legal gender from "male" to "female". This is important to her as her current documents describe her as a man. But the Norwegian government says she can't – unless she has compulsory medical treatment, including surgery that will leave her sterile.

[Raif Badawi, Saudi Arabia: Prison and 1,000 lashes for setting up a website](#)

Raif Badawi was arrested in June 2012 and charged with violating Saudi Arabia's information

and technology law and insulting Islamic religion after starting an online forum for social and political debate in the country. In May 2014 he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, 1,000 lashes, a hefty fine and a ban on expressing his opinions publicly through social media.

Jerryme Corre, Philippines: Electrocuted, punched and threatened with death

Public transport driver Jerryme Corre suffered torture at the hands of police in the Philippines, after he was accused of killing a police officer in 2012. He says he was forced to sign a document he did not have the chance to read. He is still in prison.

Moses Akatugba, Nigeria: Tortured, beaten and sentenced to death

Moses Akatugba was only 16 when he was arrested by police in 2005 under suspicion of armed robbery, a crime he says he never committed. He spent more than three months in police detention and claims that he only confessed after being severely tortured. Since then he was sentenced to death and transferred to prison.

Communities of Bhopal, India: Justice for victims of toxic gas leak

Thirty years ago, up to 22,000 people died within three days of a toxic gas leak at a pesticide factory in Bhopal, central India. Hundreds of thousands of survivors and their descendants have suffered long-term health problems. What's more, contamination from chemicals left at the abandoned factory site continues to pose a serious health risk for the local community.

Liu Ping, China: Tortured and jailed for fighting corruption

Human rights campaigner Liu Ping was sentenced to six-and-a-half years in prison in 2014, after organizing an event which called on the Chinese government to step up its fight against corruption. She is one of many people in China persecuted for their links with the New Citizens' Movement, a loose network of human rights activists. She was reportedly tortured while in pre-trial detention. She is still in prison.

Erkin Musaev, Uzbekistan: Tortured and jailed after three unfair trials

Erkin Musaev, a former Ministry of Defence official, was working for the UN Development Programme in Uzbekistan when he was detained by the National Security Service in 2006. He was falsely accused of spying. He was then tortured and jailed for 20 years after a series of unfair trials. He is still in prison.

Paraskevi Kokoni, Greece: Beaten up in a racist attack

Paraskevi Kokoni, 35, is a Roma woman living in western Greece. She and her nephew – who has a learning disability – were beaten up in a violent racist attack while they were out shopping in October 2012. The suspects were found guilty at trial, but the racist motive of the assault has not been taken into account.

SUCESSES

Below are some examples of the positive change brought to the lives of many individuals after pressure from Amnesty International's activists.

Guantánamo: Hussain Almerfedj, a Yemeni national who had been held at the US detention centre in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba since 2003, was released and transferred to Slovakia on 20 November 2014. His case featured in the 2012 *Write for Rights* campaign.

Cambodia: Housing rights activist Yorm Bopha was released in 2013. She had been imprisoned a year earlier after protesting against forced evictions in her community.

Russian: Activists Vladimir Akimenkov and Mikhail Kosenko were also freed from prison in

2013 and 2014 respectively. They had been detained and charged with participating in “mass riots” after taking part in an authorized protest in Moscow's Bolotnaya Square in May 2012.

China: In January 2013 authorities granted human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng a visit from his family for the first time in nine months.

Belarus: Activist Ales Bialiatski – who featured in the 2012 *Write for Rights* -- was released from prison in June 2014, eight months ahead of time. He said the treatment he received while in prison improved after being featured in the campaign.

Mexico: In 2013, four soldiers were arrested and charged with torture, including rape, of indigenous women Valentina Rosendo Cantú and Inés Fernández in 2002. Their cases featured in the Write for Rights campaign 2011.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Below are some quotes from activists on whose behalf Amnesty International has campaigned for.

“One thing that gives us hope is support and solidarity from regular people. People are the only impetus for change. [The] government will not improve or do anything unless there is pressure from people... The amount of messages I received gives me a lot of hope despite all the challenges,” said Azza Hilal Ahmad Suleiman, who was beaten by Egyptian soldiers during a protest in 2011. Her case featured in *Write for Rights* 2012.

“We, as a people, thank all those who have nursed this initiative. We are sure that this struggle on our behalf will yield fruit gradually. We are hopeful for the best. We are encouraged. In fact, it is this kind of support that is helping us live on,” said Chief Baribor Koottee of the Bodo community in Nigeria, which was devastated by an oil spill in 2008. The case was featured in *Write for Rights* 2012.

“I would like to thank Amnesty International for helping and supporting my community, as well as myself. I want to thank all the people who devoted their time to write petition letters to the government to request for my release. I believe everyone will continue their support not only for Boeung Kok community, but also other communities, other countries which do not respect human rights,” Yorm Bopha, housing rights activist released from prison in Cambodia. Yorm Bopha featured in the 2013 *Write for Rights* and more than 250,000 campaign actions were taken on her behalf.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Amnesty International's press office on press@amnesty.org, +44 207 413 5566 or +44 7778 472 126.