



**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



2020

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Your students can help Idris Khattak in Pakistan
and 6 other cases of people under threat worldwide

COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY EDITION

WHAT IS WRITE FOR RIGHTS?

Hello and thank you for joining this year's Write for Rights!

This guide was created to help you and your students participate in Write for Rights, Amnesty International's largest annual global letter writing campaign, focusing on individual cases of human rights abuses around the world. Amnesty International is a grassroots, Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights organization; we are independent of any political party, ideology, or religion. Each year through Write for Rights, we help free people who are wrongfully imprisoned and end other human rights abuses.

This year's seven cases are all individuals at risk, people like Idris Khattak on the cover, who was disappeared in Pakistan for his work to uncover cases of enforced disappearances in the country.



How does Write for Rights work? Millions of people around the world like you and your students write a letter to the government official responsible for the case. These letters pile up in their offices and can't be ignored—imagine receiving a million letters on your desk!

We supplement these letters with e-mail actions, lobbying, media attention and social media. We also write “solidarity” notes to the people we are trying to help, or their families, to give them hope.

By participating in Write for Rights, your students will support these cases and learn the skills needed to write effective appeal letters and be exposed to human rights through stories of people from different countries and cultures.

This guide was created for College and University students and may be implemented in a single or multi-class session.

Ready to get started?

- **Sign up** now at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)
- **Write and mail** your students' letters (either to the addresses on each case sheet or to us)
- **Report** your students' letters by January 31, 2021 at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report) or using the form in this guide
- **Read** the Instructions page for more info
- **Ask** questions and get help by contacting me at w4r@aiusa.org and (212) 633-4181

Thank you again for taking part!

Laura Galeano

Laura Galeano

Programs Associate at Amnesty International USA



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INSTRUCTIONS

1) SIGN UP AS AN EDUCATOR AT [AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/CLASSROOM](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

2) WRITE AND REPORT LETTERS WITH YOUR STUDENTS

The case sheets and sample letters supplementing this guide are available at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

- Work on the **3 cases** in this guide
- **Learn more** about the other cases (and take action on them) at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)
- **Report online** at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report) or by sending the report form in this guide to us at the address below

**Reporting is important, as we share the total number with the people we are trying to help and their families, as well as with the government officials we are trying to persuade.*

3) MAIL YOUR STUDENTS' LETTERS BY **JANUARY 31, 2021**

You have two options for sending in your letters:

1. Mail the letters to the addresses included on each case sheet, and let us know how many you sent at: [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report) (this is the **preferred** option to ensure the authorities receive mail quickly)
2. If you cannot mail your letters directly, mail all letters and the letter reporting form (Page 15 of this guide) in one envelope to Amnesty International USA's office:

Amnesty International USA
Attn: Classroom W4R
600 Pennsylvania Ave, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20003

**If you need help with postage, let us know and we may be able to reimburse you.*

QUESTIONS? Contact Laura at w4r@aiusa.org or (212) 633-4181

LEARNING OBJECTIVES & MATERIALS

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze the role of government in relation to human rights and human rights abuses
2. Expose students to different cultures and experiences through stories of individuals in the Write for Rights cases
3. Understand the role of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in holding states accountable to human rights objectives

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are examples of human rights in these cases?
2. What is a human rights defender?
3. How can we make connections between the human rights issues illustrated in these cases and examples from other course work on human rights, sociology, etc.?
4. What human rights issues do you see reflected in your own community?

MATERIALS

1. Case Sheets
2. Sample Letters
3. Annotated Letter
4. Letter Scaffold
5. Reporting Form

GLOSSARY

Amnesty International: Amnesty International is a global movement of more than seven million people in over 150 countries and territories. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. Our motto is “Better to light a candle than curse the darkness.” Amnesty has grown from seeking the release of prisoners of conscience to upholding the whole spectrum of human rights. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom and dignity are under threat. Amnesty International is impartial and independent of any political party, ideology, or religion.

Human Rights Defender: An HRD is someone who, individually or in association with others, acts to defend or promote human rights at the local, national, regional or international levels, without resorting to or advocating hatred, discrimination or violence. HRDs come from every walk of life; they may be journalists, lawyers, health professionals, teachers, whistle-blowers, farmers, or relatives of victims of human rights violations. They might defend human rights as part of their professional role, as part of a volunteer group, or one-time basis.

Solidarity Letter: A letter, drawing or other message of support delivered to the individuals in each Write for Rights case. When these messages arrive in huge numbers, they are also a reminder to authorities and others that the world is watching. Those letters not only bring hope, but they can also help make people safer. Appeal letters are the letters sent to government officials.

THIS YEAR'S 7 CASES

This guide will provide lesson plans for 3 of the 7 cases; however, if you have more time or would like to work on other cases altogether, these lesson plans can be adapted for the other 4 cases.

See below for a short summary of each case and find more information at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)



BURUNDI: GERMAIN RUKUKI

Jailed for 32 years for defending human rights

Above everything, Germain is a husband and father. But this stalwart of human rights has never seen his youngest son. Instead, the father of three is sitting in a jail cell in Burundi, sentenced to 32 years imprisonment on sham charges after a flawed trial. “For how long must my husband suffer this injustice?” asks his wife, Emelyne.



COLOMBIA: JANI SILVA

Threatened with death for defending the Amazon

Born in the heart of the Colombian Amazon, Jani Silva has dedicated her life to defending the trees and land that are everyone’s lifeblood. From the age of 16, she’s been standing with the campesino farmers of Putumayo, a region nestled in the south of the country and brimming with unique biodiversity. Her work has pitted her against forces greedy for that land’s oil wealth. Harassed by unknown aggressors, her life is in danger.



PAKISTAN: IDRIS KHATTAK

Abducted for exposing disappearances

Described by his daughters as an “enthusiastic but terrible” cook, Idris Khattak is Pakistan’s expert on enforced disappearances. He’s spent years documenting them for Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. But in November 2019, Idris, too, disappeared. After his daughter, Talia, bravely went public calling for her father’s release, the authorities admitted they had him. Now Idris could be charged with espionage, which could mean 14 years in jail or a death sentence.



SAUDI ARABIA: NASSIMA AL-SADA

Jailed for defending women's rights

For much of her life, Nassima al-Sada has campaigned for women's freedom in Saudi Arabia. Now, she's lost her own. She's one of 13 prominent female activists prosecuted for demanding women's right to drive and the right to carry out their daily business without the permission of a male "guardian". Since her arrest in July 2018, she has been locked up, enduring torture and solitary confinement – all for her peaceful efforts to defend women's rights.



TURKEY: MELIKE BALKAN AND ÖZGÜR GÜR

Prosecuted for celebrating LGBTI rights

From day one, biology students Melike Balkan and Özgür Gür dedicated themselves to defending lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) rights at their university. As members of the LGBTI+ Solidarity Group, they have organized campus Pride marches successfully for years. But in May 2019, the university banned the planned march and called the police to disperse the peaceful sit-in. Despite simply exercising their right to peaceful protest, 18 students and an academic are now on trial.



USA: ANA* & VICTORIA*

Detained by ICE after fleeing from danger

Ana* (22) and her daughter Victoria* (4) fled Honduras after repeated threats against their lives after her partner and Victoria's father was killed because of his political beliefs. Ana has been suffering from ovarian cysts that have pained her daily for months and has not received the appropriate medical care. Victoria now has anxiety attacks, nightmares, and wets the bed—something she didn't used to do.



USA: TEYONNA LOFTON

Shot while waiting outside of a gas station

On the evening of May 31st, Teyonna decided to go out to get something to drink from a local gas station around the corner from her home. Security footage from the gas station shows a white vehicle driving onto the scene and an individual opening fire on the customers who were waiting in line. As people hit the ground, you can see Teyonna has been shot. With medical bills mounting, this Chicago teen wants answers. Why did the police not come to the scene? Why was no incident report filed? Why has she received no updates on her case?

TEACHING THE UDHR

Historical Context

After the horrors of World War 2 it was felt in many countries that an international charter on human rights¹ would reduce the chances that such atrocities would be repeated. As a result, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was established and by 1948, a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) had been drawn up. The UDHR is an important document for curbing unjust behavior by governments.

Though the Declaration itself is not legally enforceable, the International Conventions that emanate from it (e.g., the International Convention on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights) and are ratified by individual countries are expected to be incorporated into appropriate national legislation which is, then, enforceable; in addition, countries that are signatories to such conventions are expected to submit reports on their national compliance to the appropriate UN body. “Watchdog” organizations also help to monitor compliance.



TEACHING THE UDHR

The word “rights” is used in a number of different contexts to include legal, moral, and human rights. Those rights which are thought to have universal application are known as human rights.

1. Give students copies of the UDHR
(www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)
2. Ask students to pick out an Article of the UDHR, read it aloud and then provide a simplified version of the Article – what do they think it means?
3. In small groups, ask students to discuss the following questions:
 - How do the values and principles expressed in the UDHR relate your everyday life and the way you treat others?
 - Is this about the basic values and principles of being a good citizen, and if so, where do these principles come from?
 - How do you learn a code of conduct?
 - How do you learn what it means to be a good citizen?
4. Share out responses and then read this quotation by Eleanor Roosevelt, made at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, March 27, 1958:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.

5. As a follow up activity, have students answer the following aloud or in journal entries:
 - How do you recognize respect for human rights near your home or community?
 - What challenges exist in your own community for recognizing and acting on fundamental human rights?

LESSON PLAN 1: FOR IDRIS KHATTAK

Start out with a short introduction to enforced disappearances.

“Victims of enforced disappearance are people who have literally disappeared; from their loved ones and their community. They go missing when state officials (or someone acting with state consent) grabs them from the street or from their homes and then deny it or refuse to say where they are. Sometimes disappearances may be committed by armed non-state actors, like armed opposition groups. And it is always a crime under international law.

These people are often never released and their fate remains unknown. Victims are frequently tortured and many are killed, or live in constant fear of being killed. They know their families have no idea where they are and that there is little chance anyone is coming to help them. Even if they escape death and are eventually released, the physical and psychological scars stay with them.” – Amnesty International

Where do enforced disappearances happen?

Enforced disappearances are a serious problem in many countries, in all regions of the world; from Mexico to Syria, from Bangladesh to Laos and from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Spain. Recently Amnesty International has documented disappearances carried out by some of the worst offending countries.

Enforced disappearances have long been a stain on Pakistan’s human rights record. Despite the pledges of successive governments to criminalize the practice, there has been slow movement on legislation while people continue to be forcibly disappeared with impunity.

LESSON PLAN 1: FOR IDRIS KHATTAK

Introduce Idris' case sheet which can be found at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

Ask your students to **discuss Idris' case** in the context of enforced disappearances in Pakistan. Points for discussion can include:

- What are other examples of enforced disappearances throughout history?
Examples can include Hitler and the many Jewish people who were disappeared during WW2, disappearances throughout Latin America during the 1960s under various dictatorships, and disappearances in Punjab from 1986 to 1992
- **Ask students to read** the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CED/Pages/ConventionCED.aspx
Ask a couple of students to read Articles 6, 7 & 8
How does the class interpret these Articles?
How do these Articles relate to Idris' case?

With a baseline knowledge of enforced disappearances and the plight of individuals like Idris and their families, explain to your students that they will be **writing letters to the Ambassador of Pakistan** requesting that the authorities disclose Idris' whereabouts and release him immediately and unconditionally. Each student should take this opportunity to **reference the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance** in their letters. It is important that students highlight the state's responsibility to its citizens in order to make a more nuanced appeal for Idris' release.

Have time to write a message of hope too? Please do! Have your students use the suggested messaging on Idris' case sheet to show support for his daughters, Talia and Shumaisa. They can even show off their social media skills and send a Tweet their way!



LESSON PLAN 2: FOR TEYONNA LOFTON

For this activity, give some context regarding the **Break the Cycle of Violence Act**. For a short reference sheet, please see: www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AIUSA-Break-the-Cycle-of-Violence-Act-Congressional-Leave-Behind.2020.pdf

Read aloud:

Communities of color have a long and complicated history of disadvantage and marginalization in the US, which contributes to the disparate impact of firearm homicides and injuries. Unfortunately, community-level firearm violence in the US disproportionately impacts communities of color, particularly young black men. **Firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for black men and boys aged 15-34 in 2018 and the third-leading cause of death for Latino men and boys in the same age range.**

Discuss the following:

1. What do you think can be done to better address firearm violence in the US?
2. Why do you think individual states and the federal government have trouble passing gun laws?

Next, **introduce** Teyonna's case sheet which can be found at amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom

Discuss the following;

1. There are several community-based organizations that have suggested community-based violence intervention programs to combat gun violence. What are the hallmarks of community-based violence intervention programs? How could these be effective models for combatting gun violence?
2. How should the authorities have responded to the shooting incident? What can be done to prevent incidents like this from reoccurring?
3. How might Teyonna's story have been different if the Break the Cycle of Violence Act was passed?

Explain to your students that they will be writing to the State Attorney of Illinois to ask that Teyonna receive the victim's compensation she is owed. Students can use this opportunity to write about personal experiences if they feel comfortable doing so.

Have time to write a message of hope too? Please get creative! Employ your students' art skills and have them draw and/or write to Teyonna, to let her know that there are people out there that know about her story and care.

LESSON PLAN 3: FOR MELIKE & ÖZGÜR

Take some time to talk about the history of Pride events:

The Stonewall Inn (which is still open in NYC!) provided a space for the poorest and most rejected of the LGBT+ community, such as effeminate young men, drag queens and transgender people, not welcome at the more palatable bars that could be mistaken as a meeting place for straight, male, very close friends. A raid on the premises on June 28th, 1969 by the New York City Police resulted in riots that lasted for several days and nights and saw thousands of supporters. Though history has largely erased the roots of the riots, the beginning of the Stonewall demonstrations are largely attributed to two trans women of color: Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. Johnson's involvement in the uprising is shrouded in legend, with several accounts of her actions. One story is how she threw a shot glass into a mirror, shouting "I got my civil rights!" A year on, the first pride march with 5000 attendees took place. They carried on annually. – from Tech UK

Introduce Melike and Özgür's case sheet which can be found at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

Ask your students to **discuss the following in small groups**:

1. What parallels do you see between the Articles in the UDHR and Melike and Özgür's case? In other words, which Articles apply to this case that would guarantee their human rights?
2. Define freedom of expression and how it relates to this case. In what ways do people exercise their right to freedom of expression every day?
3. Why do you think that the administration wanted to halt Pride activities? What can cultural and political context in Turkey tell us?

With the right to freedom of expression in mind and the myriad issues underlining the Turkish government's role in this miscarriage of justice, ask your students to **write a letter to the Ambassador of Turkey** asking him to drop all charges against Melike, Özgür and the other participants of the Pride sit-in.

Have time to write a message of hope too? Please do! Have your students write a letter to Melike and Özgür demonstrating their support. They can even show off their social media skills and send a Tweet to the METU LGBTI+ Solidarity Group!

Once their letters are complete, allow time for students to reflect on what they have learned and the letters they have written. Consider asking students the following questions to inspire reflection and sharing among the class:

- How has your understanding of human rights changed?
- How did it feel to advocate for another person's human rights?
- Which case inspired you, and why?

LETTER REPORTING FORM

Please let us know the number of letters you and your students wrote. You have two options for sending in your letters:

a. Mail the letters to the addresses included on each case sheet, and let us know how many you sent at: [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report) (this is the preferred option to ensure the authorities receive mail quickly)

b. If you cannot mail your letters directly, mail all letters and the letter reporting form in one envelope to our office:

Amnesty International USA
Attn: Classroom Write for Rights
600 Pennsylvania Ave SE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20003

If you need help with postage, let us know and we may be able to reimburse you.

Questions? Contact Laura at w4r@aiusa.org

YOUR NAME: _____

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

WOULD YOU LIKE A WRITE FOR RIGHTS CLASSROOM CERTIFICATE?

- Yes
 No

MAILING ADDRESS FOR CLASSROOM CERTIFICATE AND ADDRESSED TO WHOM:

HOW MANY LETTERS DID YOU (OR YOUR CLASS) WRITE FOR EACH CASE?

1) 1) Burundi: Tell Burundi to free Germain now

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

2) Colombia: Demand protection for Jani

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

3) Pakistan: Tell Pakistan's authorities to release Idris

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

4) Saudi Arabia: Tell Saudi Arabia to free Nassima now

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

5) Turkey: Tell Turkey to acquit protesters of all charges

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

6) USA: Tell ICE to release all families in detention

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

7) USA: Demand victim's compensation for Teyonna

Appeal Letters _____ Solidarity Messages _____

ANNOTATED LETTER

President Lenín Moreno
President of the Republic of Ecuador
Palacio de Carondelet
Quito
Ecuador

Make sure to have the correct address for your target, which includes title, organization name and full address with country for foreign contacts

Dear President Moreno,

Use the correct salutation for your target to show respect

I write to you regarding the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Amazon. Indigenous and human rights organizations say that they have been excluded from Emergency Operations Committees in charge of implementing safety protocols in response to COVID-19.

Introduce the purpose of your letter early on

I ask you to ensure that the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon participate in the decision-making structure in charge of the COVID-19 response in the Amazon and guarantee that this response respects their rights and needs and is sufficiently funded. Any policy or action affecting Indigenous Peoples should comply with human rights standards, including the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Describe the desired outcome in your second paragraph as clearly as possible

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Be polite in your closing statement – the target is more likely to act in your favor this way

Yours sincerely,

Jane Doe

Include your signature; it's more powerful than you think!

LETTER WRITING SCAFFOLD

RECIPIENT'S TITLE AND ADDRESS	
THE SALUTATION (GREETING TO THE RECIPIENT)	
INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT THAT OUTLINES THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER	
STATEMENT OF THE DESIRED OUTCOME OF THE LETTER	
DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET THE DESIRED OUTCOME	
THE COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE (SHORT AND POLITE REMARK TO END THE LETTER)	
YOUR SIGNATURE	

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL?

Amnesty International is a grassroots, Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights organization; we are independent of any political party, ideology, or religion. Each year through Write for Rights, we help free people who are wrongfully imprisoned and end other human rights abuses.

WHERE DO I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON EACH CASE?

Case sheets and sample letters on each of the ten cases can be found at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

HOW MANY CASES SHOULD WE WRITE ON?

It's up to you. There are 7 cases this year. For each case, Write for Rights involves writing a letter to the government official who can resolve the case and a letter or note of solidarity to the person (or their family) we are trying to help. Every letter helps.

One option if time is limited, but you want to have your students take action on every case is to write letters on two cases, and then sign the sample letters on the other 5 cases.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARTICIPATE?

All that we require from you as an educator are paper, envelopes and postage. We encourage you to send all letters directly to the addresses on the case sheets; here are postage rates: within the United States, letters (up to 1 oz.) cost 50 cents each and to all other countries, airmail letters and cards (up to 1 oz.) cost \$1.15 each. If cost is a barrier for participation, please contact us and we will try to reimburse you for postage. Please note that you are welcome to raise funds for postage.

SHOULD MY STUDENTS INCLUDE THEIR NAME AND ADDRESS ON THEIR LETTERS?

It is up to you! Students can sign their full name or just their first name, and either leave off their address or include it. Please note that sometimes governments will send an acknowledgement letter on the case and sometimes the people we are trying to help will respond to solidarity notes. If a student does not include their address, then they will not be able to receive these.

WHEN SHOULD WE WRITE?

Anytime between now and January 31, 2021!

DOES IT REALLY MATTER IF I SHARE HOW MANY LETTERS MY STUDENTS WROTE?

Yes! It is essential to let us know how many letters your students wrote, either by filling out the online form or by sending their letters to our office. We share the total number of letters with the people we are trying to help and their families, as well as with the government officials we are trying to persuade. Reporting also helps us evaluate how we can improve Write for Rights and get more people involved. To report, please use the feedback form on page 15 or go online at: [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report)

DO OUR LETTERS REALLY MATTER?

Yes! A letter may seem a little old-fashioned in this age of online activity, but that is also a source of its strength. When authorities receive thousands of letters about a particular person, they know that the world is watching them. Individuals who have experienced these human rights abuses tell us that our letters to government officials and solidarity letters have a huge impact. Hear from them at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/successes](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/successes)

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Contact Laura at w4r@aiusa.org or call (212) 633-4181