GERMAIN RUKUKI, BURUNDI

JAILED FOR
32 YEARS
FOR DEFENDING
HUMAN RIGHTS
GERMAIN RUKUKI, BURUNDI

In better times, Germain Rukuki liked nothing more than playing with his sons, now aged six and seven. He also loved music, Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” being a favourite – an apt choice, as it would later turn out.

It was early one morning in July 2017 when Germain and his wife, Emelyne Mupfasoni, were woken by heavy footfall and banging on their door. Dozens of members of the security forces had piled into their compound. Emelyne was just weeks away from giving birth to their third child.

Officers interrogated the couple, both NGO workers, in their home. They arrested Germain, later transferring him to Ngozi prison, northern Burundi, where he remains to this day.

On 26 April 2018, Germain was found guilty of a slew of sham charges, including “rebellion” and “threatening State security”. His previous association with the NGO Action by Christians for Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi) was used against him. ACAT-Burundi had been shut down in 2016 for allegedly “tarnishing the image of the country”. But one of the prosecution’s pieces of “evidence” during the trial included an email Germain had written to them when they were still legal.

Germain was sentenced to 32 years in prison. He and his three-year-old son have never laid eyes on each other. “For how long must my husband suffer this injustice?” asks Emelyne.

Tell Burundi to free Germain now.

WRITE TO THE AMBASSADOR OF BURUNDI

Ask him to release Germain immediately and unconditionally.

Ambassador Gaudence Sindayigaya
Embassy of the Republic of Burundi
2233 Wisconsin Ave NW #408
Washington, DC 20007
Email: burundiembusadc@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

HELP KEEP GERMAIN’S SPIRIT STRONG

Send your messages of support to Germain or his wife Emelyne, including the Kirundi words: Komera Turikumwe! (“Stay strong, we are together!”).

Amnesty International
c/o Burundi Team
Regional Office for East Africa, the Horn and Great Lakes
Riverside Studios, Riverside Lane,
Off Riverside Drive
P.O Box 1527-00606
Nairobi, Kenya
Email: burunditeam@amnesty.org

REPORT YOUR LETTERS AT AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/REPORT

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Script development: ©David Hunter
Back page image: © CC
JANI SILVA, COLOMBIA

PROTECTING THE AMAZON COULD GET HER KILLED
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.

Jani co-founded the Association for the Integral and Sustainable Development of the Amazonian Pearl (ADISPA) in 2008. Through it, she protects the environment and rights of those living in the Amazonian Pearl, a campesino reserve in Putumayo.

Her work placed her at loggerheads with the Ecopetrol oil company, which won a license to operate in areas overlapping with the reserve in 2006. In 2009 the license was transferred to the Amerisur oil company. Since then, at least two oil spills have poisoned the water sources that local communities depend on.

Defending the territory has had terrifying consequences for Jani. She’s been followed, intimidated by unknown aggressors, and threatened with death. COVID-19 has made matters worse, confining activists to their homes and limiting their protection.

Still, Jani remains undaunted. “Because I defend my territory, people have put a gun to my head to kill me”, she says. “However, I stay … because … we cannot run away or let ourselves be won over by fear.”

WRITE TO THE AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA

Tell him to protect Jani and all ADISPA members so that they can safely defend the natural resources we all depend on.

Ambassador Francisco Santos
Embassy of the Republic of Colombia
1724 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036
Email: emwas@colombiaemb.org
Twitter: @ColombiaEmbUSA
@PachoSantos
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

SHOW JANI YOU’RE WITH HER

Tell her and fellow ADISPA members how much you admire their courage. Include one of these lines, and draw a picture that represents the one you’ve chosen.

Nature is ________ to me.
Thanks for taking care of it.

Water means ________ to me.
Thanks for fighting for it.

Oficina Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
Carrera 37ª #25B – 42
Bogotá, Colombia.

REPORT YOUR LETTERS AT AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/REPORT

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IDRIS KHATTAK, PAKISTAN

ABDUCTED
FOR EXPOSING
DISAPPEARANCES
IDRIS KHATTAK, PAKISTAN

Described by his daughters as an “enthusiastic but terrible” cook, Idris Khattak is a man of many interests. He speaks Russian, reads voraciously, and breeds chickens that he loves to chat to.

Idris is also Pakistan’s expert on enforced disappearances. He’s spent years documenting this crime under international law for Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. But in a cruel twist Idris, too, disappeared.

It was 13 November 2019 and Idris was on his way home from the capital, Islamabad, when his rented car was intercepted. He hasn’t been seen since. In Pakistan, the authorities use enforced disappearance to silence human rights defenders like Idris, and other critics.

With Amnesty’s help, Idris’ 20-year-old daughter, Talia, began fighting for her father’s return, despite being warned not to. Her bravery paid off. In June, the authorities admitted they had Idris in their custody and that they would be charging him under the Official Secrets Act. They still haven’t disclosed where he is.

Idris’ family fear he could be charged with espionage. If convicted, he could be jailed for 14 years or even sentenced to death.

“I look at pictures of Papa, and only dream of him walking into the room to be with us again,” says Talia. “We deserve answers and he deserves the protection of the law.”

Tell Pakistan’s authorities to release Idris.

WRITE TO THE AMBASSADOR OF PAKISTAN

Tell him to release Idris or, if there is credible and admissible evidence of an internationally recognized offence, bring him promptly to justice in a fair trial before a civilian court.

Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
3517 International Ct NW
Washington, DC 20008
E-mail: ambassador@embassyofpakistanusa.org
Twitter: @PakEmbassyDC
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

SHOW IDRIS’ FAMILY YOU’RE WITH THEM

Send your messages of support to his daughters Talia and Shumaisa. You can send photos of your book recommendations or of yourself gardening – two things Idris loved. Tweet them @TaliaKhattak and @shumaisa77 or send hard copies to:

Amnesty International South Asia Regional Office
23/2 Horton Place
Colombo 07
Sri Lanka

REPORT YOUR LETTERS AT AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/REPORT

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Back page image: © Private
NASSIMA AL-SADA, SAUDI ARABIA
LOCKED UP FOR DEMANDING WOMEN’S RIGHTS
NASSIMA AL-SADA, SAUDI ARABIA

Nassima al-Sada loves animals and cherishes her garden back home. Even in her prison cell, she has a carefully tended plant. It is her only link to the outside world she must sorely miss.

For much of her life, Nassima campaigned for women’s freedom in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, she’s lost her own. She was one of several prominent activists demanding women’s right to drive and the right to carry out their daily business without the permission of a male “guardian”.

Saudi Arabia’s guardianship laws required women to seek a man’s permission to go out, and other basic needs. While these laws have been eased in recent months, the women who have campaigned to end the guardianship system remain behind bars. “Why should an under-age boy be the guardian of a woman who is an adult?” Nassima wrote in 2016. “Why isn’t there an age at which a woman becomes an adult, responsible for her decisions and her life? Why should there be a man responsible for her life?”

Nassima was arrested for her peaceful human rights work in July 2018. While in jail, she was ill-treated. She was placed in a cell alone, in complete isolation from other detainees from February 2019 to February 2020. She is allowed one weekly phone call with her family, but no visits, not even from her lawyer.

Still, Nassima and her family aren’t giving up. Nor should we.

Tell Saudi Arabia to free Nassima now.

WRITE TO THE AMBASSADOR OF SAUDI ARABIA

Tell her to free Nassima and other women’s rights activists immediately and unconditionally.

Princess Reema Bandar Al-Saud
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
601 New Hampshire Ave NW
Washington, DC 20037
Email: saudiusemb@mofa.gov.sa
Twitter: @rbalsaud
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

HELP KEEP NASSIMA’S SPIRIT STRONG

Post a photo of yourself gardening or simply enjoying the sun on your social media channels. Include a personal message to Nassima. Remember to tag her @nasema33, as well as @KingSalman, and use the hashtag #FreeNassima.

Physical copies can be sent to:
Amnesty International
for Moussa
Postbus 1968
1000 BZ Amsterdam
Netherlands

REPORT YOUR LETTERS AT AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/REPORT

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Cover photograph: © Private
Script development: © David
METU PRIDE DEFENDERS, TURKEY

PROSECUTED FOR CELEBRATING LGBTI RIGHTS
METU PRIDE DEFENDERS, TURKEY

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 prominent members of the LGBTI+ Solidarity Group at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, they’ve organized numerous marches, meetings and other events. They’ve engaged with an ever-growing number of students, against a backdrop of increasing homophobia and restrictions on freedom of expression in Turkey.

Founded in 1996, METU LGBTI+ Solidarity Group have organised an annual Pride march on campus since 2011. Over the years, Pride on METU campus grew in size and visibility. However, in 2019, the university’s management told the students the Pride march planned for 10 May could not go ahead on campus.

Undeterred, the Solidarity Group staged a Pride sit-in instead. In response, the university called the police who used excessive force, including tear gas, against the peaceful protestors. Police arrested at least 23 students – including Melike and Özgür – and an academic. Some of those detained hadn’t even taken part in the protest. Despite simply exercising their right to peaceful protest, 18 students and the academic are on trial.

If found guilty, they face up to three years in prison.

Tell Turkey they must be acquitted of all charges.

WRITE TO THE AMBASSADOR OF TURKEY

Remind him that the students and the academic were exercising their right to peaceful assembly and should therefore be acquitted of all charges against them.

Ambassador Serdar Kiliç
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
2525 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20008
Email: ambassador@turkishembassy.org
Twitter: @serdarkilic9
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

SHARE YOUR PRIDE IN MELIKE & ÖZGÜR

Visit METU LGBTI+ Solidarity Group’s Twitter & Instagram feed @odtulgbti. Take a photo of yourself with a Pride flag and share on your social media channels, tagging @odtulgbti, and adding a message of support in the caption.

Physical copies can be sent to:
Uluslararası Af Örgütü
Hacımimi Mah. Kemeraltı Cad.
Adahan No:31 Kat:2 PK:34425
Karaköy-Beyoğlu/Istanbul
Turkey

REPORT YOUR LETTERS AT AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/REPORT

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Script development: © David Hunter
Back page image: © Amnesty International
FAMILIES IN DETENTION, USA
DETAINED BY ICE AFTER FLEEING FROM DANGER
FAMILIES IN DETENTION, USA

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is locking up nearly 100 families at three facilities in Pennsylvania and Texas. After COVID-19 was confirmed in family detention centers, a federal judge ordered ICE to release all children by 7 August 2020, but the judge does not have jurisdiction over their parents.

ICE has the legal authority to release families together and has historically done so but is now choosing to separate families or keep them detained indefinitely. Detained families are at extreme risk of COVID-19 due to inadequate hygiene and negligent medical care.

At one fateful protest in November, police loaded their shotguns with rubber-coated buckshot and fired into the gathered crowds. It was no different from other protests where hundreds were hurt and dozens suffered eye injuries almost every day. Those in charge didn’t stop the police. Instead, they allowed the violence to continue.

With confirmed cases of COVID-19 in family detention facilities, families face grave complications and even death if they contract the virus. There are credible, consistent, and disturbing accounts by families of dangerous conditions that put all families, facility staff, and surrounding communities at risk.

These families came to the United States seeking protection from violence and persecution. They must be able to pursue the right to seek asylum in safety.

Tell ICE to release all the families.

WRITE TO THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF ICE

Tell him to immediately and unconditionally release all the families from ICE detention together.

Tony Pham
Interim ICE Director
US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20536
Email: tony.h.pham@ice.dhs.gov
Twitter: @ICEgov
Salutation: Dear Director Pham

SEND A MESSAGE OF HOPE TO THE FAMILIES

Send them notes through our partner, the Immigration Justice Campaign.

Letters can be sent to:
Mackenzie Levy
1111 N. Main Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78212

REPORT YOUR LETTERS AT AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R/REPORT

December 2020
Script development: © David Hunter
Back page image: © Edgard Garrido
TEYONNA LOFTON, USA
SHOT WHILE WAITING OUTSIDE OF A GAS STATION
Teyonna Lofton, 18, graduated from high school the morning of May 31, 2020. She spent much of the day watching celebratory car parades and taking pictures with family. Excited to start college at Louisiana State University in the fall, Teyonna is a proud graduate and Vice President of the Honor Society of Chicago's Perspectives Leadership Academy. 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. Due to COVID-19, the gas station had locked its doors and were allowing only one customer at a time. A line of patrons stood socially-distanced outside the store.

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 had been shot. The bullet ruptured a main artery in her left arm. Teyonna repeatedly called the police, but they hung up and no one came to the scene. She managed to reach her mother who drove her to a nearby hospital. Teyonna underwent numerous surgeries to treat her injuries and is in therapy to learn how to use her hand again. The recovery will likely push off her college plans but she is determined to attend in the near future. With medical bills mounting, this Chicago teen wants answers.

It’s Teyonna’s mission to ensure that her community receives the help it needs to prevent shootings like this in the future. She’s channeled her advocacy through BRAVE Youth Leaders, a violence prevention youth council of the Fatih Community of Saint Sabina whose mission it is to cultivate leaders and develop youth into leaders and agents of social justice.

Demand victim’s compensation for Teyonna.