

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



2020

ACTION GUIDE

You can help ensure justice for Melike and Özgür and 6 other cases of human rights defenders and individuals at risk

WHAT IS WRITE FOR RIGHTS?

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

Write for Rights is Amnesty International's largest annual human rights campaign, held throughout the fall to mark Human Rights Day on December 10th. The best thing about Write for Rights is that it works! Each year, we write letters to support people and help end other abuses, such as individuals who are wrongfully imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their beliefs or identity—people we call prisoners of conscience.

This year's seven cases include human rights defenders and individuals at risk. Melike and Özgür, on the cover of this action guide, are members the LGBTI group at their the Middle East Technical University (METU) and currently face charges that could result in 3 years in prison simply for participating in a sit-in to celebrate Pride. We are demanding that all charges against the peaceful protesters be dropped.



Here's how we help people through Write for Rights: millions of people around the world, like you, each 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! We supplement these letters with e-mail actions, lobbying, media attention and social media to increase the pressure on those officials. We also write “solidarity” notes to the people we are trying to help, or their families, to give them hope.

One key component of Write for Rights is to report your letters. It's important because we share the total number with the people we are trying to help and with the officials we are trying to persuade. You can report at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report) or mail us the form in this guide.

Remember, even if you only have time to write one letter, it counts. You are joining a movement of people around the world using the power of collective action—millions of us, each doing a small part—to help people. Because of us, prison doors will open, families will be reunited, justice will be achieved, and human rights activists will be safe and supported in continuing their important work to change the world.

Ready to get started? Here's key information:

- **Sign up** now at [amnestyusa.org/w4r](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r)
- **Write** from now until January 31, 2021
- **Report** your letters by January 31, 2021 at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report)
- **Read** the Instructions page in this guide and go online for more materials at [amnestyusa.org/w4r](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r)
- **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



SIGN UP FOR WRITE FOR RIGHTS AT [AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r)
[W4R@AMNESTYUSA.ORG](mailto:w4r@amnestyusa.org) #W4R2020



INSTRUCTIONS

1) SIGN UP NOW AT [AMNESTYUSA.ORG/W4R](https://amnestyusa.org/w4r)

- You can sign up to host or join a letter writing party, as an individual, or as an educator
- Once you sign up, you can fill in your profile to get added to our activism and events map
- Our website has an Instructions page with helpful tips and resources for hosting a party or classroom project

2) WRITE AND REPORT YOUR LETTERS

- Use this Action Guide and the sample letters, case sheets and addresses available on our website
- For each case, write and mail one letter to a government official and one to the person we are helping
- You do not have to write on every case; do as many as you can!

- Report online at amnestyusa.org/w4r/report or mail us the form in this guide
- Reporting is just as important as writing because we use the total numbers for lobbying on each case

3) SEND YOUR LETTERS BY JANUARY 31, 2021

- Mail your letters to the addresses listed on the Case Sheets (*preferred* option for greater impact).
- Educators have the option to send all letters in one envelope to:
AIUSA, Attn Classroom W4R
600 Pennsylvania Ave SE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20003

Are you a teacher? If so, please consider holding Write for Rights with your class. Our Educator's Guide makes it easy and fun to build a lesson with the cases: amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom

Are you a student? Please ask your teachers to hold Write for Rights in their classes!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Go to the Instructions page of the website for more tips and resources: amnestyusa.org/w4r/instructions
- Additional resources include videos, party ideas, tips for earning media attention and much more
- Do you have questions? Contact Laura at w4r@aiusa.org or (212) 633-4181

THIS YEAR'S 7 CASES



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 freedom

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: FAMILIES IN DETENTION

Detained by ICE after fleeing from danger

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.



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?

GOOD NEWS!



“...your colleagues have lighted up my life. Pass them all my regards and thanks.”

Magai Matiop Ngong. On July 29, 2020, Magai was removed from death row after an appeal's decision to quash the death sentence due to the fact that Magai was a child at the time of the crime. 2019 Write for Rights - South Sudan.



“I'd like to thank our friends at Amnesty International and Amnesty USA for their remarkable support these last years, culminating just recently in the Write for Rights Campaign”

Albert Woodfox. Freed after 43 years in solitary confinement in Louisiana. 2015 Write for Rights - USA.



“Thank you very much each and every one of you. Not just for campaigning for my release, and the release of other prisoners, but for helping to keep our hope and our beliefs alive.”

Phyo Phyo Aung. Student leader imprisoned after peaceful protest, freed in 2016. 2015 Write for Rights - Myanmar.



“To everyone who sent me countless letters from around the world...I want to express my deep gratitude, while in prison, these actions lifted my spirit and reminded me of the importance of international solidarity in the struggle for human rights.”

Taner Kilic. Amnesty Turkey Board Chair, released after more than 14 months behind bars. 2017 Write for Rights - Turkey.



“Receiving your letters really comforted me when I was in prison. Thank you!”

Yecenia Armenta. Released from prison after 4 years of injustice and police torture. 2016 Write for Rights - Mexico.

For more good news stories from previous Write for Rights, go to: [amnestyusa.org/w4r/successes](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/successes)

2020 REPORT FORM

Please let us know the number of letters you wrote and, if you hosted a party or other letter writing event, the number of letters by all participants.

- Either use our online form at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report) (*preferred*)
- Or complete and mail this form to:

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

Reporting is important because we share the total number of letters with the government officials we are trying to persuade. We will also let our cases and their families know how many letters were written for them!

Have questions? Contact Laura at w4r@aiusa.org

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

AMNESTY GROUP NAME OR #
(IF APPLICABLE): _____

SCHOOL NAME, CITY AND STATE
(IF APPLICABLE): _____

HOW DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN WRITE FOR RIGHTS THIS YEAR?

- I hosted a letter writing party or event
- I joined a party or event
- I wrote on my own
- I am an educator and my students wrote letters in class

HOW MANY PEOPLE JOINED YOUR EVENT? _____

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

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 _____

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How many letters do I write and where do I send them?

There are 7 cases, so if you write both a letter to the government official and a solidarity note to each case, you will total 14 letters. It is fine to do fewer though! Each case sheet and sample letter give you suggestions for what to write; please make them personal as it shows it's not a form letter and you really care. Addresses are listed on each case sheet and sample letter; you will have to get envelopes and stamps to mail the letters. If you receive a reply to one of your letters, you do not need to send it to us. We likely have received the same reply!

Can I just sign the sample letters?

You can, but it will be more effective if you take a little longer to copy the letter in your own writing—or, even better, craft your own personal letter from the points on the case sheets. Unique and personal letters show the government official that you really care about the case and increases the pressure on them to act, so try to write as many as you can. If you run out of time or steam, then please at least sign and send the sample letters (and report them as well!).

Can I send the letters to an Amnesty office?

We strongly prefer that you send your letters directly to the intended recipient and not to our office unless the case sheet indicates otherwise. However, if due to financial hardship or lack of time, you can send everything back to our office. If you send all of your letters to us, please be sure to either use the paper reporting form in this guide or let us know that you used the online form—but please don't use both.

Does it really matter if I report my letters?

Yes! It is essential to let us know how many letters you wrote and, if you hosted a party, how many letters your guests wrote. 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 that was included in your pack, or go online at:

amnestyusa.org/w4r/report

How much is postage? How do I get money for stamps?

Within the United States, letters and cards (up to 1 oz.) are 50 cents each. To all other countries, airmail letters and cards (up to 1 oz.) are \$1.15 each. We recognize that postage for many letters can be expensive. You are welcome to ask for donations, hold a fundraiser, or ask guests to bring stamps.

Do I have to use my full name and address on the letters?

You do not have to include your full name or address. It is sufficient to give your first name and country. However, some governments will send formal form letters replying to you, so you wouldn't receive those. We have no record of anyone being denied entry to a country due to participating in Write for Rights. Also, if you include your address in a solidarity note, sometimes you'll receive a reply from the person we are trying to help, which can be inspirational especially once the person is released.

Do our letters really make a difference?

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 solidarity letters have a huge impact.

What are some ideas for W4R events?

Every year, groups across the globe come together to host W4R events. Here are some ideas for inspiration: Write for Rights is a good way for people new to human rights activism to get involved. You could hold a virtual event at work at lunchtime and ask people to sign action cards or write letters; Human Rights Day is on December 10th and can be used as a hook to get people involved in the campaign; think about links you can make between the case and your local community. For example, if there is a large diaspora community of people from the country you are focusing on, you could work with them!