



**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



2020

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Your students can help Melike and Özgür in Turkey
and 6 other cases of people under threat worldwide

ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL 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 Germain Rukuki, on the cover, who has been sentenced to 32 years in prison for defending the human rights of individuals in Burundi.



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 Elementary and Middle school students (grades 4 – 8) and may be implemented in a single or multi-class session.

Ready to get started?

- **Sign up** now at 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 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. To familiarize students with general concepts of human rights issues (e.g. freedom of expression, freedom of association, prisoners of conscience)
2. Use storytelling to illustrate these human rights concepts
3. Provide students with the tools to write short but clear messages to government officials
4. Allow students to creatively express themselves through messages of hope to individuals in these cases

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are human rights?
2. Why is it important to stand up for people?
3. What is a human rights defender?
4. How can we stand up for people in our everyday lives?

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.

Freedom of expression: The right to seek, receive and share information and ideas, without fear or interference. It is closely linked with freedom of association (the right to meet with anyone you choose, for example, to form and join clubs, societies or trade unions) and the right to take part in a peaceful assembly, such as a demonstration or public meeting.

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.

Inalienable: Refers to rights that belong to every person and cannot be taken from a person under any circumstances.

LGBTI: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. Discrimination based on real or perceived LGBTI status could be based on sexual orientation (who you’re attracted to); gender identity (how you define yourself, irrespective of your biological sex), gender expression (how you express your gender through your clothing, hair or make-up), or sex characteristics (for example, your reproductive organs).

COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR ELA

They build strong content knowledge.

Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.

They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

1. Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
2. Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
3. Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
4. Establish and maintain a formal style.
5. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.

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: 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?

LESSON PLAN 1: FOR MELIKE & ÖZGÜR

Ask your students to imagine that they're planning a birthday party or other celebration for their best friend. They have spent weeks sending out invites, picking out the perfect birthday cake and choosing decorations for the celebration.

The celebration is now only **2 days away**. Your students have gotten a call from a government official telling them that they must cancel the event. "Why?" they ask. The government has banned all community and family celebrations. There is no other reason given.

Ask your students the following questions:

1. How did it feel to imagine the story? Do you think something like this would ever happen in reality?
2. Do you think any human rights violations occurred in your story? Which ones?
3. Do you know anyone or any groups of people who do not have the right to celebrate something important to them in your country? What about elsewhere in the world?

Explain to your students that what you read out before was a fictitious event. However, there is an important event for the LGBTI community that, in some countries around the world, is completely banned.

Explain that Pride started out as a commemoration of the Stonewall uprising – a demonstration against police raids for LGBT+ people – in 1969 in New York.

Pride has evolved over the decades and is now celebrated annually as a form of solidarity, love, expression and belonging for the LGBT+ community in many countries around the world. Pride is a celebration of people who face or have faced inequality, discrimination and violence just because of who they love, how they dress, and how they identify themselves.

However, in many countries, LGBT+ people face a range of human rights violations, from the banning of LGBT+ events in some places to physical violence, being taken to court and imprisonment.

LESSON PLAN 1: FOR MELIKE & ÖZGÜR

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

Discuss the following:

1. How do you feel about what happened to Melike, Özgür and the other METU Pride participants?
2. Why do you think Pride is important to LGBT+ people?
3. How is Pride celebrated in your community?

Take some time to explain to your students that they will be **writing a letter to the Ambassador of Turkey**, asking that all charges against the protesters be dropped. It's important that, when we know about instances of human rights abuse, we take action. You can tell them that all around the world, people are writing letters to support Melike Balkan and Özgür Gür.

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



LESSON PLAN 2: FOR NASSIMA AL-SADA

Ask your students to write down all the activities they like to participate in (e.g. basketball, sleepovers, listening to music, video games). After they have put together a list of a few activities, ask them to imagine that they live in a society that forbids them from taking part in these activities.

Questions to consider:

1. How would you feel if someone else was given responsibility to approve, or not, the decisions you feel are important for you to decide?
2. Is there any difference in your community between what people of different genders are able to decide? Why, or why not?

Explaining the Male Guardianship System

Explain that for a woman in Saudi Arabia, no matter what her age is, the male guardianship system there requires all women to have a male guardian (who can be father, husband, brother, or son) to make decisions and give permission for different aspects of their lives.

Follow up questions:

1. Do you think this system is fair? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think this system exists, and what do you think should be done to ensure equal rights for women in Saudi Arabia?



LESSON PLAN 2: FOR NASSIMA AL-SADA

It's time to introduce Nassima's case sheet which can be found at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

Discuss the following:

1. How do you feel about what happened to Nassima?
2. Why do you think it's important for women to have the right to drive or participate in other activities without a male guardian?

Take some time to explain to your students that they will be **writing a letter to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia**, asking that Nassima al-Sada be released from prison. It's important that, when we know about instances of human rights abuse, we take action. You can tell them that all around the world, people are writing letters to support Nassima al-Sada.

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



LESSON PLAN 3: FOR GERMAIN RUKUKI

Ask your students to think about a time that they spoke up about something that was unjust (e.g. when someone told a lie or when they saw a friend being bullied). Why did they speak up? Were there any consequences, positive or negative, that they faced? Have a few students share their memories, and then ask them to imagine that they were punished for speaking up about that incident.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you think it's important to speak up when something unjust is happening? Why or why not?
2. How would you feel if you were punished for doing the right thing?

It's time to introduce Germain's case sheet which can be found at [amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/classroom)

Discuss the following:

1. How do you feel about what happened to Germain?
2. What message is the Burundi government sending to other human rights defenders in the country through their treatment of Germain?

Take some time to explain to your students that they will be **writing a letter to the Ambassador of Burundi**, asking that Germain Rukuki be released from prison. It's important that, when we know about instances of human rights abuse, we take action. You can tell them that all around the world, people are writing letters to support Germain Rukuki.

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

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:

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

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

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

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