

**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**2021**

# **ACTION GUIDE**

**You can help Mohamed Baker and the 9 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 ten cases** include human rights defenders and individuals at risk. Mohamed Baker, on the cover of this action guide, is a human rights lawyer who is falsely accused of terrorism. He is in prison for defending the rights of some of the most marginalized people in Egypt. Defending people's freedoms should not cost him his own. We are calling for his immediate release.

**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 [write.amnestyusa.org/impact](https://write.amnestyusa.org/impact) 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 [write.amnestyusa.org](https://write.amnestyusa.org)
- **Write** from now until December 20, 2021
- **Report** your letters by January 31, 2022 at [write.amnestyusa.org/impact](https://write.amnestyusa.org/impact)
- **Read** the Instructions page in this guide and go online for more materials at [write.amnestyusa.org](https://write.amnestyusa.org)
- **Ask** questions and get help by contacting me at [w4r@aiusa.org](mailto:w4r@aiusa.org)

Thank you again for taking part!

Andrew Fandino

Andrew Fandino  
Senior Program Officer, Individuals at Risk Program at AIUSA



SIGN UP AT [WRITE.AMNESTYUSA.ORG](https://write.amnestyusa.org)  
[W4R@AIUSA.ORG](mailto:w4r@aiusa.org) #W4R2021

# INSTRUCTIONS

## 1) SIGN UP NOW AT [WRITE.AMNESTYUSA.ORG](https://write.amnestyusa.org)

- 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 [write.amnestyusa.org/impact](https://write.amnestyusa.org/impact) 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, 2022

- 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](https://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: [write.amnestyusa.org/instructions](https://write.amnestyusa.org/instructions)
- Additional resources include videos, party ideas, tips for earning media attention and much more
- Do you have questions? Contact us at [w4r@aiusa.org](mailto:w4r@aiusa.org)

# THIS YEAR'S 10 CASES



## GUATEMALA: BERNARDO CAAL XOL

### Jailed for defending a sacred river

Bernardo Caal Xol has done everything he can to peacefully protect his people's land and natural resources from plunder and biodiversity loss. When the river they rely on for survival was threatened by the construction of two hydroelectric power plants, Bernardo and his people protested. He was publicly smeared with repeated and baseless accusations. In 2018, a judge sentenced Bernardo to more than seven years in prison, convicting him without any evidence.



## CHINA: ZHANG ZHAN

### Reporting on COVID-19 got her locked up

When Wuhan went into lockdown, Zhang Zhan was one of the few citizen journalists to report on the unfolding Covid-19 crisis. Determined to get the truth out, the former lawyer travelled there in February 2020. She took to social media to report how government officials had detained independent reporters and harassed families of Covid-19 patients. She was later detained and sentenced to four years in prison to silence her.



## EGYPT: MOHAMED BAKER

### Locked away for defending freedom

Human rights lawyer Mohamed Baker must do without his wife, cats, and everyone else he loves. Falsely accused of terrorism, he's in prison for defending the rights of some of the most marginalized people in Egypt. The prison authorities have treated him especially cruelly, refusing him a bed, mattress, outdoor exercise, even family photos. Defending people's freedoms should not cost him his own.



## MEXICO: WENDY GALARZA

### Shot while protesting violence against women

For Wendy Galarza, helping to raise young children is the best way to create a fairer world. It's a goal she works hard for in Mexico, where women are often abused and killed for being women. In November 2020, she joined a march protesting the murder of a woman known as Alexis. During it, police fired shots and Wendy was wounded. She launched a case against the police, but those responsible for the violence have not been brought to justice.



## UKRAINE: SPHERE

### Attacked for defending LGBTI & women's rights

Sphere NGO have been championing LGBTI and women's rights since 2006, and are among the oldest organizations of their kind in the country. Founded by activists Anna Sharyhina and Vira Chernyгина, they provide a safe space for women and LGBTI people in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. In recent years, however, they have suffered dozens of attacks by violent anti-LGBTI groups. Anna and Vira report these incidents, but the police have failed to hold anyone accountable.



## ERITREA: CIHAM ALI

### Taken at 15 and never seen again

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Eritrea, Ciham Ali wanted to be a fashion designer. But at 15, her ambitions were cut short when she was arrested trying to flee Eritrea – and never seen again. The authorities appear to have taken her in retaliation against her father’s suspected involvement in a coup attempt on the government. Nine years on and no one knows where Ciham is being held. Meanwhile, the US government has been silent on their citizen’s plight.



## NIGERIA: IMOLEAYO MICHAEL

### Facing trumped-up charges for protesting police violence

When young people took to Nigeria’s streets in October 2020, Imoleayo Michael joined them. They were protesting against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad – or SARS – a police unit notorious for violence. The young computer programmer promoted the protests on social media, using the hashtag #EndSARS. Two weeks later, armed men took him from his home and locked him in an underground cell for 41 days. He’s facing trumped-up charges and years in prison.



## OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: JANNA JIHAD

### Harassed for exposing Israeli violence

Janna Jihad just wants a normal childhood for herself and all other Palestinian children. But the 15-year-old Palestinian teen lives in the Israeli-occupied West Bank – and life under systematic discrimination is anything but normal. Having begun documenting military violations at the age of seven, Janna’s principled journalism has attracted unwanted attention. She’s been harassed and threatened with death, but she won’t give up – not until institutional racism against Palestinians ends.



## THAILAND: RUNG PANUSAYA

### Facing a life sentence for peaceful protest

Once a shy, quiet teenager, Panusaya – known as “Rung”, meaning “rainbow” – has become a leading voice in Thailand’s democracy movement. The university student, a vocal proponent for equality and the right to freedom of expression, opposes the use of the lèse-majesté law to silence government critics. In March 2021, the authorities jailed her for 60 days under this law. She went on hunger strike for 38 days and was released. Today, she faces dozens of charges against her and life imprisonment.



## BELARUS: MIKITA ZALATAROU

### Teen beaten, electrocuted, and jailed

Mikita Zalatarou was waiting for a friend when he was swept up in a crowd of protesters and straight into a nightmare. Within 24 hours, officers arrested the 16-year-old at his home, accusing him of throwing a Molotov cocktail at riot police. They locked him up and allegedly tortured him. Despite a lack of evidence, Mikita – who also has epilepsy – was convicted and jailed for five years.

# GOOD NEWS!



"I am delighted by the release of Germain but also fear for his safety. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you all to have mobilized and made it possible for Germain to reunite with us soon" by Emelyne Mupfasoni, wife of Germain Rukuki.

**Germain Rukuki, human rights defender released from prison after being found guilty of a slew of sham charges and sentenced to 32 years in prison. 2020 Write for Rights - Burundi.**



"...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.**



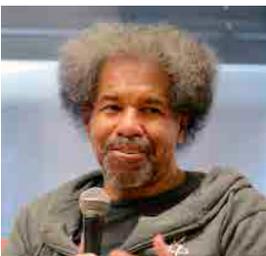
"To everyone who sent me countless letters from around the world...I want to express my deep gratitude, while in prison, these actions lifted my spirit and reminded me of the importance of international solidarity in the struggle for human rights."

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



"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.**



"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.**

For more good news stories from previous Write for Rights go to: [write.amnestyusa.org/good-news](https://write.amnestyusa.org/good-news)

# 2021 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 [write.amnestyusa.org/impact](https://write.amnestyusa.org/impact) (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 us at [w4r@aiusa.org](mailto: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) Guatemala: Tell Guatemala to free Bernardo today**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**2) China: Tell China to free Zhang Zhan immediately**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**3) Egypt: Tell Egypt to release Baker immediately**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**4) Mexico: Demand justice for Wendy from Mexico's authorities**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**5) Ukraine: Tell Ukraine to bring Sphere's attackers to justice**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**6) OPT: Tell Israel to protect Janna from discrimination and violence**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**7) Nigeria: Tell Nigeria to drop all charges against Imoleayo**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**8) Thailand: Tell Thailand to drop all charges against Rung**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**9) Belarus: Tell Belarus to release Mikita and give him a fair trial**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

**10) Eritrea: Tell the USA to speak out for Ciham**

Appeal Letters \_\_\_\_\_ Solidarity Messages \_\_\_\_\_

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

There are 10 cases, so if you write both a letter to the government official and a solidarity note to each case, you will total 20 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:

[write.amnestyusa.org/impact](https://write.amnestyusa.org/impact)

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

Within the United States, letters and cards (up to 1 oz.) are 58

cents each. To all other countries, airmail letters and cards (up to 1 oz.) are \$1.30 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!