

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL** 

2021

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Your students can help Rung Panusaya in Thailand and the 9 other cases of people under threat worldwide

HIGH 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 ten cases include human rights defenders and individuals at risk. Rung Pasuyana, on the cover of the educator's guide, is a university student and a vocal proponent of the right to freedom of expression. In March 2021, the authorities jailed her for 60 days. She went on hunger strike for 38 days and was released. Today, she faces dozens of charges against her and life imprisonment.



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 High School students (grades 9 – 12) and may be implemented in a single or multi-class session.

Ready to get started?

- **Sign up** now at write.amnestyusa.org/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, 2022 at write.amnestyusa.org/impact or using the form in this guide
- **Read** the Instructions page in this guide and go online for more materials at write.amnestyusa.org
- **Ask** questions and get help by contacting me at w4r@aiusa.org.

Thank you again for taking part!

Andrew Fandino

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



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INSTRUCTIONS

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

2) WRITE AND REPORT LETTERS WITH YOUR STUDENTS

The case sheets and sample letters supplementing this guide are available at write.amnestyusa.org/instructions/

- Work on the **3 cases** in this guide
- **Learn more** about the other cases (and take action on them) at write.amnestyusa.org/classroom/
- **Report online** at write.amnestyusa.org/impact 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, 2022**

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: write.amnestyusa.org/impact (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 us w4r@aiusa.org

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. Engage students in writing clear and succinct letters to government officials that incorporate correct syntax, tense and tone
3. Analyze the role of government in relation to human rights and human rights abuses
4. Expose students to different cultures and experiences through stories of individuals in the Write for Rights cases
5. 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. Why is it important to protect the human rights of all people?
3. What is a human rights defender?
4. How can we incorporate the learning objectives into our every day lives?
5. 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 grassroots movement of more than ten 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.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: The UDHR was drawn up by the United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings.

Impunity: Impunity is when people who have committed crimes avoid punishment. Amnesty calls for these people to be investigated, tried and sentenced fairly, according to the law.

Human Rights Defender (HRD): A 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 lawyers, journalists, whistle-blowers, environmentalist, 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.

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).

NATIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

National Council of Teachers of English

Number 4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Number 11: Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

Number 12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

National Council for the Social Studies

Number 5: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Number 6: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

Number 9: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

Number 10: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

THIS YEAR'S 10 CASES

Below you will find a short summary for each of the 10 cases highlighted in this year's Write for Rights. For the full case sheets and sample letters for each case, please go to this webpage for additional information: write.amnestyusa.org/instructions



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 Chernygina, 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.



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.



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.



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

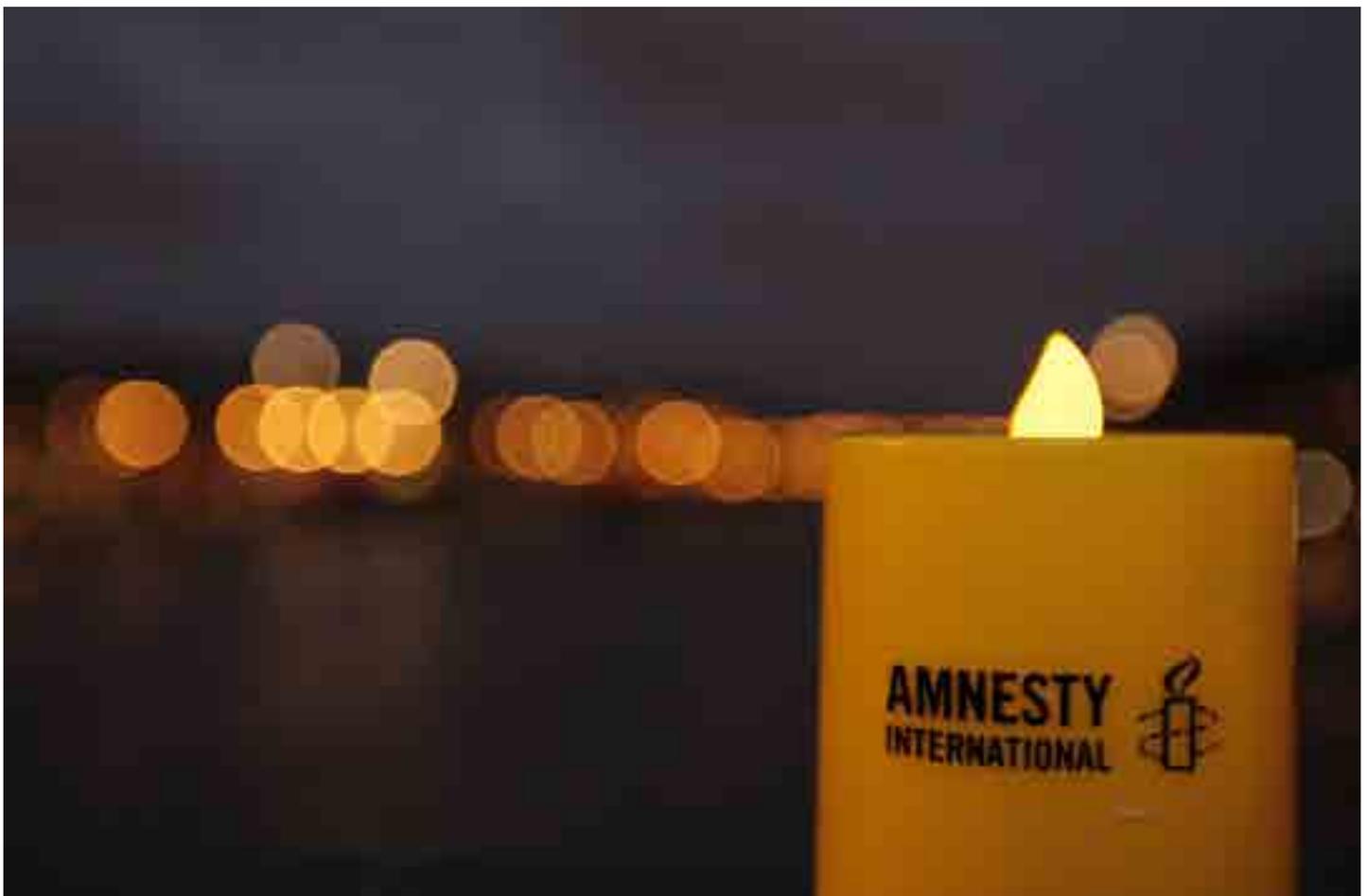
Mikita Zalatarou was waiting for a friend when he was swept up in a crowd of protesters and straight into a nightmare. Within 24 hours, officers arrested the 16-year-old at his home, accusing him of throwing a Molotov cocktail at riot police. They locked him up and allegedly tortured him. Despite a lack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

TEACHING THE UDHR

Historical Context

After the horrors of World War 2 it was felt in many countries that an international charter on human rights 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?

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: write.amnestyusa.org/impact (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 us at w4r@aiusa.org

YOUR NAME: _____

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS:

OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED: _____

NAME OF SCHOOL:

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 _____

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 global 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: write.amnestyusa.org/instructions

HOW MANY CASES SHOULD WE WRITE ON?

It's up to you. There are 10 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 8 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 58 cents each and to all other countries, airmail letters and cards (up to 1 oz.) cost \$1.30 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, 2022!

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 12 or go online at: write.amnestyusa.org/impact

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 letters to government officials and solidarity letters have a huge impact. Hear from them at: write.amnestyusa.org/good-news

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Contact us at w4r@aiusa.org