

**'MY CHILDREN
DESERVE A FUTURE;
I FOUGHT FOR IT'**

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



Joel Paredes,
Argentina

Human Rights
Education
Activity



WRITE FOR RIGHTS

WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.

More than 20 years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon. In the years that followed, the idea spread. Today, Write for Rights is the world's biggest human rights event.

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to nearly 6 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2023, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. In 2023 alone, more than 1.4 million people were engaged through human rights education activities. Together, our actions have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, by releasing activists from detention, securing justice for those whose rights have been abused and protecting people who advocate for change.

This year's campaign once again includes people from around the world. They are connected because their human rights have been violated simply for who they are or because they exercised their rights. Together, we can fight for them to receive justice. Through Write for Rights, each of the individuals will receive personalized messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. The awareness that their situations are gaining public attention offers reassurance to them and their families that they are not forgotten. And, by writing directly to the authorities to demand that they end the injustice, we can create a more just and equal world.

Individuals and groups featured in the campaign in previous years report the difference that these actions make, and often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people care about them.

Often, there is a noticeable change in the treatment of these individuals and others in a similar situation. Charges may be dropped and people released from detention. People are treated more humanely, and new laws or regulations addressing the injustice are introduced.

“From the bottom of my heart, this campaign has kept me alive, it's what has stopped them from killing me because they know that you are there.”

Jani Silva, environmental defender, 2021

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of online or offline settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family or an activist group. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the context and group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity, delivering it in-person or online, and any limitations. When participants want to take action for an individual or group, discuss whether it is safe for them to do so.

The activities are all based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyse and question issues relating to the individuals' stories. This methodology allows participants to:

DEVELOP key competencies and skills

FORM their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

TAKE CONTROL of their learning, and shape discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns

HAVE THE SPACE required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes.



Letter writing with friends in Czechia for Write for Rights 2023.

© Valerie Mirić

Read about the people we're fighting for: [amnesty.org/writeforrights](https://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights)

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: [amnesty.org/countries](https://www.amnesty.org/countries)

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R24

If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start: [amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/)

Amnesty International offers online human rights education courses, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights campaign**: academy.amnesty.org/learn

YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ACQUITTED

Rita Karasartova is a human rights defender and an expert in civic governance. For more than a decade she has dedicated her life to providing independent legal advice, helping people whose rights had been violated by a corrupt and unreliable legal system. Alongside 26 others, Rita was arrested for opposing a new border agreement giving control of a freshwater reservoir to Uzbekistan. Charged with attempting to “violently overthrow the government”, which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years’ imprisonment, Rita and at least 21 other defendants were acquitted on 14 June 2024.

“I would like to express my huge, huge gratitude... Your timely actions – these letters, petitions, signatures, and the huge number of letters that went to the court, that went to the prosecutor’s office – it was all very powerful. In fact, it was very empowering to us all... Of course, the acquittal was totally unexpected. I don’t even know how to process it in my head. We had been playing with all sorts of scenarios, different outcomes in our heads, but we didn’t think we would all be acquitted!... I thank you all.”

Rita Karasartova
from Kyrgyzstan



© Private

“I feel so relieved, and I thank you for the amazing Write for Rights campaign. I am forever indebted. It is like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Reading all the letters and cards made me feel so loved and appreciated.”

Cecillia Chimhiri from Zimbabwe



OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS FREED

Opposition activists Cecillia Chimhiri, Joana Mamombe and Netsai Marova were abducted, tortured and imprisoned after attending a protest in Zimbabwe. They were charged with “communicating falsehoods” and “obstructing the course of justice”. Netsai fled Zimbabwe following the attack. After being featured in Write for Rights 2022, Cecillia and Joana were acquitted by the High Court.



© Amnesty International Togo

Amnesty supporters in the Netherlands (far left) and Togo (left) at events for Write For Rights 2023.

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries to be met only when practicalities allow.



© Amnesty International Benin

Write for Rights event in Benin in 2023.



© UN Photo

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed to be bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world to abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up based on its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

 <p>Civil rights and liberties Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.</p>	<p>Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights</p> <p>Article 2 Non-discrimination</p> <p>Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person</p> <p>Article 4 Freedom from slavery</p> <p>Article 5 Freedom from torture</p>
 <p>Legal rights Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.</p>	<p>Article 6 All are protected by the law</p> <p>Article 7 All are equal before the law</p> <p>Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated</p> <p>Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile</p> <p>Article 10 Right to a fair trial</p> <p>Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty</p> <p>Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection</p>
 <p>Social rights Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.</p>	<p>Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life</p> <p>Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders</p> <p>Article 16 Right to marry and start a family</p> <p>Article 24 Right to rest and leisure</p> <p>Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education</p>
 <p>Economic rights Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.</p>	<p>Article 15 Right to a nationality</p> <p>Article 17 Right to own property and possessions</p> <p>Article 22 Right to social security</p> <p>Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union</p> <p>Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being</p>
 <p>Political rights Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion.</p>	<p>Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief)</p> <p>Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information</p> <p>Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way</p> <p>Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country</p>
 <p>Cultural rights, solidarity rights Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.</p>	<p>Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life</p> <p>Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized</p> <p>Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others</p> <p>Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!</p>

ACTIVITY

THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

KEY CONCEPTS

- Right to protest peacefully
- Excessive use of force by the police
- Access to justice

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Through the story of Joel Paredes, who was seriously injured by police during a protest, participants will learn about the right to peacefully protest as a tool to defend human rights and how excessive use of force by the police is a human rights violation. Participants will be encouraged to write a letter urging the authorities to bring to justice those found responsible for Joel's injuries, and to show solidarity with Joel.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **understand** the right to protest.
- **reflect** on the role of the police when policing protests and how their unlawful use of force can threaten human rights.
- **recognize** the power of empathy and solidarity with those whose rights have been violated.
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign.
- **write** a letter in support of and showing solidarity with Joel Paredes.

AGE: 14+

TIME NEEDED

60 minutes – you may want additional time for the **Take Action** section.

PREPARATION

- Print the handouts for each participant/group.
- Read the background information on pages 9–10 and Joel Paredes's story on page 11.
- Optional: Prepare access to YouTube to show the videos.

MORE INFORMATION

- News story: "Argentina: Violent repression and criminalization in response to protests in Jujuy" from www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/argentina-repression-criminalization-protests-jujuy/
- Learn more about human rights including the right to protest, policing and human rights at the Amnesty Academy: www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/online-courses/

MATERIALS

- **Handout:** Joel Paredes's story (page 11)
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** simplified version (page 5)
- **Background information:** Right to protest (page 9) and Human rights and the use of force (page 10)
- **Paper, pens and envelopes** (if sending letters)
- Optional: Template letters from www.amnesty.org/writeforrights/
- Optional: YouTube video: "Dread Mar I - Así Fue (En Vivo)" from www.youtube.com/watch?v=csx53ZqoQqI
- Optional: YouTube video: "Survivor of police violence who lost an eye to a rubber bullet explains all" from www.youtube.com/watch?v=4I8V4Zm3KCg&t=139s
- Optional: "Write for Rights: Take action" video from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos

PRECAUTIONS

The YouTube video "Survivor of police violence who lost an eye to a rubber bullet explains all" is a real-life story which contains strong images of violence and weapons. Some people may find this distressing. Facilitators should be sensitive to these emotions and provide a safe space for participants to step away from the activity and/or offer support as needed.

1. EXPLORING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST AND THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN PROTESTS



Ask participants in plenary:

- **Do you know what a protest is?**
- **What does it look like? How does it sound?**
- **What are the reasons that people protest?**
- **Do we have a right to protest?**
- **Why is the right to protest so important?**

Take answers from a few participants.

Hand out copies of the simplified UDHR (page 5) and explain that the right to protest is protected under the following rights in the UDHR:

- **Article 19: Freedom of expression:** Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

If this is the first time that participants are introduced to the UDHR, you should focus on building a shared understanding of what it is first, using the information starting on page 4.

- **Article 20: Freedom of assembly:** Everyone has the right to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way.

You can highlight key points from the Background information: The right to protest (page 9).

Ask participants to think about the role that the police should play in society. This can be done individually or in pairs.

- **Why do we have police?**
- **What do you think the police should do?**
- **How do you think police officers should act when policing a protest?**

Remind participants that, in most countries, the police have the following key roles:

- **Making sure that people obey the law (enforcing the law).**
- **Protecting people and property and keeping public order.**
- **Investigating crimes and making arrests.**

Optional: It is recommended to screen the 2:28-minute video “Survivor of police violence who lost an eye to a rubber bullet explains all” (see “Materials” on page 6 for the link). This video is based on a true story and calls for greater controls on law enforcement equipment. Warn participants that the video contains strong images of violence and weapons which some people may find distressing and allow individual participants to opt-out of watching it if they choose.

Sum up the discussion by highlighting other elements in the Background information: Human rights and the use of force (page 10). You can print this for participants, or just discuss it to strengthen their understanding of the role of police in protests.

2. JOEL PAREDES’S STORY



Ask participants to close their eyes, if they feel comfortable doing so, and to think about their hobbies.

Read the following paragraph aloud:

“What do you like to do in your free time? Visualize yourself engaging with your hobbies – what are you doing? Who are you with? Which body parts are you using? How are they moving? What do you see, how do you feel? You have your eyes closed now. Imagine if you couldn’t use your eyes anymore? Would you still be able to fully participate in your hobby? What would you miss?”

Ask them to keep their eyes closed while you read out the passage below. Tell participants that it is a true story.

“Joel is a musician who plays the bombo drum. He decided to show solidarity with the rights of Indigenous Peoples by attending a protest with his friends, to which they brought their musical instruments. The police arrived, firing tear gas and rubber bullets directly at the heads of demonstrators. Joel was hit by a rubber bullet, leaving him permanently blind in his right eye.”

Ask the participants to open their eyes and do a quick shake-off to bring their attention back to the present moment and their surroundings. Give participants the opportunity to share any feelings or emotions.

Put the participants into pairs and hand out copies of Joel’s story (page 11). Alternatively, you can read it out loud. Give the pairs 10 minutes to read the information and discuss the following questions:

Where participants are directed to close and open their eyes, facilitators should be aware of any participants with visual impairment and adapt the activity accordingly.



- What surprises you most about Joel's story?
- How has Joel's life changed as a result of the police's unlawful use of force?
- Has Joel's right to protest been respected?
- Do you know of other protests where police have used violence to stop people accessing their right to protest?
- What can be done to help Joel to achieve justice?

Bring participants back together and ask them to share some of their responses. Remark on the importance of solidarity from around the world to support Joel's fight for justice.

3. TAKE ACTION



Explain about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty International is encouraging people to join Joel Paredes's fight for justice. You can give examples from last year's campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be, or watch the "Write for Rights: Take action" video from www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos

If there isn't enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards or divide the actions between groups. Encourage them to be creative. If time allows, you can play one of Joel's favourite songs in the background as a way to connect with him: Dread Mar I – Así Fue (En Vivo) from www.youtube.com/watch?v=csx53ZqoQqI

WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to the Attorney General of the Public Prosecutor's Office using the contact information on the right.

- Tell him something about yourself to make this a personal letter.
- Tell him what shocks you about the case of Joel Paredes.
- Tell him why you think it is important that governments respect and uphold the right to protest.
- Demand that **those found responsible for Joel Paredes's injuries and all other violations against protesters be brought to justice in accordance with international law and standards.**

Attorney General of the Public Prosecutor's Office

Sarmiento 427
4600 San Salvador de Jujuy
Argentina

Email: stello@mpajujuy.gob.ar

Instagram: [@mpajujuy](https://www.instagram.com/mpajujuy)

X: [@MpaJujuy](https://twitter.com/MpaJujuy)

Hashtags: #justiciaparaJoel

#justiceforJoel #W4R24

#ProtectTheProtest

Salutation: Dear Sir

SHOW SOLIDARITY

Send your messages of support to show Joel and his family that they are not alone and that you support them in their fight for justice.

Make your message visual. Choose words, postcards, drawings or any other resources that are respectful, not trivial or with explicit or graphic content.

Avoid anything related to Joel's eye, to avoid him feeling re-victimized. Please avoid using religious cards.

Be creative! Show Joel the power of your solidarity! Then send your messages to the address on the right.

Joel Paredes

c/o Amnesty International Argentina
Santos Dumont 3429, 2nd Floor
1427 Buenos Aires
Argentina

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Peaceful protest is a dynamic and public way of exercising our human rights. Throughout history, protests have allowed individuals and groups to express dissent, opinions and ideas, expose injustice and abuse, and demand accountability from those in power.

When people engage in protests, whether individually or collectively, they are exercising a variety of rights which can include the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Without the ability to freely express opinions, public assemblies are simply mass gatherings of people without a message. And without the ability to freely assemble, people's opinions may lack the force of numbers to have their message properly heard.

Other rights are also essential in enabling people to protest peacefully, including the rights to life, privacy, freedom of association, freedom from torture and other ill-treatment or punishment, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, for example.

WHEN GOVERNMENTS CRACK DOWN ON PROTESTS

Instead of addressing pressing concerns and promoting dialogue to find solutions to injustice, abuses and discrimination, governments often respond to protests by stigmatizing and cracking down on peaceful protesters. Governments often impose restrictions on protests based on national security or public order. But respect for human rights is part of national security and public order, and the right to protest is protected under international human rights law.

There are further barriers to protest: people who face inequality and discrimination – whether based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, occupation, or social, economic, migratory or other status – are more likely to be affected by restrictions and repression, and less able to participate in protests. Yet, many advances in human rights around the world have been due to the courage of people who dared to fight for a more inclusive and equal society despite the risks and challenges they faced. It is therefore crucial that everyone can protest safely and without discrimination.

Joel Paredes



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE USE OF FORCE

In order to protect people and keep public order, police officers are permitted to use force against others, but they must always do so in accordance with the law and human rights standards. This is particularly important where the use of force carries a threat to someone's life or risks causing serious injury.

STANDARDS ON THE USE OF FORCE:

- The use of force must be strictly necessary: it must be used only when there is no alternative and with the lowest level of force needed to achieve a legitimate objective.
 - The force must be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence (for example, police are not permitted to use lethal force to protect property).
 - Where use of force by the police has resulted in injury or death, a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation must be carried out.
 - Police officers must be held accountable if they misuse their powers and they must face due process of law.
 - Law enforcement agencies must create clear instructions for police officers about situations where the use of force is appropriate and lawful.
- If some protesters engage in violent actions, police should ensure those who remain peaceful can continue protesting.
 - Acts of violence by a small minority do not justify the dispersal of those who remain peaceful.
 - Law enforcement authorities should, as far as possible, use non-violent means before resorting to force, and, in cases where the use of force is unavoidable, limit the use of force to the minimum necessary in accordance with the principles of necessity and proportionality.
 - The decision to disperse a protest must be a last resort, when all other less restrictive means have proven to be unsuccessful.
 - The use of tear gas or water cannon to disperse a protest is only permitted in response to widespread violence, where more targeted means have failed to contain the violence, and if people can leave the scene. Police officers must warn people that they will be used and allow people to disperse.
 - Under no circumstances may tear gas grenades be fired directly at a person. Repeated and prolonged exposure to tear gas should be avoided.
 - Firearms should NEVER be used to disperse a crowd.

POLICING PROTESTS

Governments have an obligation to ensure that everyone can enjoy the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, including attending protests. There are clear international guidelines for police conduct during protests. It is the role of police to facilitate peaceful protests and ensure that everyone can exercise their rights peacefully and without fear of reprisals. If tensions arise, the police have a duty to de-escalate them, taking into account these principles:

A mural in Purmamarca, Jujuy, by Emilio Ramon Haro Galli, memorializing protests in Jujuy.





JOEL PAREDES'S STORY

Joel Paredes is a 29-year-old ceramicist living in Jujuy province in northern Argentina. In June 2023 the local government made changes to Jujuy's constitution including restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly as well as introducing measures that may damage the environment and risk violating Indigenous Peoples' land rights. The changes were approved without consulting with Indigenous Peoples or the wider population.

Jujuy is a province rich in lithium, a metal known as "white gold" due to its high demand for the production of batteries. Argentina's authorities want to expand lithium exports. But people who live on the land, like Joel and his family, have serious doubts.

Although not Indigenous himself, Joel sympathized greatly and was concerned for the future of his children who would grow up on the land. Joel joined an evening protest alongside hundreds of other peaceful demonstrators, where he played a drum with his band while the city council discussed the changes in a nearby building. For Joel: "Our musical instruments are our weapons."

In the early hours, the police arrived at the square and started recklessly firing rubber bullets into the crowd. Joel was hit in his right eye. The injury required surgery, but doctors could not save his sight and Joel is now permanently blind in his right eye. Joel is also left with debilitating nerve pain that affects his daily life. No one has been held accountable for what happened to Joel and the other protesters.



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© Gabriela Rottaris/Amnesty International

From the top: Joel Paredes; Argentina (the inscription reads: *Where is our indigenous right*).

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

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