PROTECTION FROM ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



WHERE IS HE?

Human Rights Education Activity

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WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

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

Twenty-five years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon to support individuals at risk of human rights violations. What started as a small event has since evolved into the world's largest human rights campaign: Write for Rights.

Since 2001, Write for Rights has shown that ordinary people can challenge injustice through collective action. Millions have written letters, signed petitions and sent messages of hope to people whose rights have been denied. Together, those actions have helped to free prisoners of conscience, reunite families, change unjust laws and remind countless people that they are not alone.

Today, human rights education is an important part of the campaign. Through Write for Rights, people learn about human rights and the individuals at risk, and are invited to take action if they wish. In 2025, 415,601 people took part in human rights education activities like this one.

Now, that shared determination is more important than ever.

Authoritarian practices are expanding at an unprecedented pace – eroding civic freedoms, weaponizing surveillance, and silencing those who speak up to further entrench power. From genocide to repression and the dismantling of hard-won rights, we are witnessing a systemic assault on the foundations of our shared humanity. This is not the work of a single leader or a single moment. It is a pattern – and it demands a response.

The individuals at the heart of this year's campaign have experienced that repression first-hand. Through our learning activities this year, you will build your knowledge about their situations and the human rights violations they experience. You can decide to join the letter-writing activity, sign petitions and raise your voice. By doing so, you become part of that resistance too.

Year after year, individuals featured in the campaign tell us how deeply these actions matter. Many describe the strength they draw from knowing that so many people care about and support them. Often, your letters lead to real change: charges are dropped, people are released from detention, and authorities introduce new laws or policies to protect human rights.

Now is the time to make a choice. Join Write for Rights. Learn and take action!

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education** activity can take place in a variety of settings: online or offline, in classrooms, community groups or activist networks. As a facilitator, adapt the activity to your group's context. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size and age range 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. The timings suggested are estimates and should be adapted for the size of your group and the time available. Please also adapt the activities to ensure inclusivity for all learners.

When participants want to take action in support of an individual at risk, discuss how to do so safely and ensure you follow school or local guidelines on consent.

The activities are 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' and groups' stories. This helps participants to:

build key competencies and skills

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

take ownership of their learning, and shape discussions around their interests, abilities and concerns

engage emotionally and develop values and personal commitment.

Read about the people we're fighting for: amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: amnesty.org/en/countries/

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R26

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/

Amnesty International offers free online human rights education courses: academy.amnesty.org/learn and quizzes: https://create.kahoot.it/profiles/AmnestyInternational

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YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

GUERRERAS POR LA AMAZONÍA AND THE UNIÓN DE AFECTADOS POR TEXACO (UDAPT) WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2025

Thanks to the solidarity and support of people around the world, there has been an important development in the struggle of the Guerreras por la Amazonía and the Unión de Afectados por Texaco (UDAPT) in Ecuador.

For years, the Guerreras have campaigned against toxic gas flares in the Ecuadorian Amazon that harm the health, environment and lives of nearby communities. Through the Write for Rights campaign, almost half a million actions were collected calling on the Ecuadorian government to comply with a landmark 2021 court ruling ordering the elimination of the gas flares.

On 29 April 2026, Amnesty International joined members of the Guerreras and UDAPT in delivering signatures from supporters around the world to Ecuador's Ministry of Environment and Energy. Following this action, the Ministry announced the creation of technical working groups involving government institutions and affected communities.

While this is not yet in full compliance with the ruling, it is an important first step towards accountability and change – and one that would not have been possible without the pressure and solidarity shown by supporters worldwide.

*"It was very enriching, and it also gave us much more strength to keep going, because there were many letters, many people who were always telling us, '**Don't give up, girls, don't give up. Even if the state violates your rights, it has to take responsibility for its actions.**'"*

Dannya Bravo, Guerrera por la Amazonía, who featured in Write for Rights 2025



Thank you for taking action and standing with the Guerreras por la Amazonía and UDAPT in their fight for environmental justice. Your support has helped amplify their voices and keep international attention on their struggle.

ROCKY MYERS WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2023



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Rocky Myers, a Black man with an intellectual disability, spent three decades on death row in Alabama, USA, accused of murder. Rocky was convicted following testimonies blighted by inconsistencies. He was sentenced to death by a judge who imposed a death sentence against the jury's wishes, a practice abolished in Alabama in 2017 but never applied retroactively to Rocky or others like him.

Rocky was featured in Write for Rights 2023, leading to huge global campaigning calling for the Governor of Alabama to grant him clemency and commute his death sentence. In February 2025, this was granted. Rocky's fight for justice is not over, as his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, but the threat of execution has been stopped.

"Not only did this campaign bring awareness to his case, but it was done in such a way that honoured Rocky as a person, father and grandfather. I know the outpouring of support meant the world to Rocky, and to know that so many people felt called to action is truly inspiring."

Miriam Bankston, member of Rocky Myers's legal team

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AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES: A PATTERN OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TO ENTRENCH POWER

Imagine waking up one day to find that certain topics can no longer be discussed openly. Schools avoid difficult conversations. Journalists tread more carefully. Your news feed shows fewer critical voices. Public spaces feel less safe for protest or dissent.

Nothing dramatic happened overnight. There are no obvious turning points, only a gradual shift. Yet over time, the space for dialogue, disagreement and public participation has narrowed.

Would you notice? And more importantly, if you did, would you know how to respond?

For many people around the world, this is not hypothetical. Authoritarian practices that violate human rights rarely arrive all at once. More often, they emerge gradually through policies, narratives and practices that may even go unnoticed in isolation. Restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, access to information or political participation are often justified in the language of security, stability, public order or national interest. Over time, repeated exposure to these narratives can normalize limitations on human rights and make them increasingly difficult to recognize or challenge. But their true intent is to benefit those in power, privileging one group at the expense of another.

Across different regions and political contexts, the cases presented in these educational resources reveal similar patterns. Human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, activists, Indigenous leaders, opposition voices and ordinary citizens are criminalized, surveilled, detained, disappeared or punished to silence dissent and evade accountability. Criticism is reframed as “extremism”, “terrorism” or “subversion”, while fear is used to discourage dissent and collective action as another tactic to redirect public anger away from the government. At the same time, legal protections are weakened and institutions intended to keep power in check are undermined.

Although the contexts of these individuals at risk differ, the authoritarian practices operating across these cases follow recognizable patterns.



© Amnesty International Nepal

People take part in Write for Rights at Amnesty International Nepal in 2025.

They silence voices and criticism, suppress collective action and participation, and weaken legal protections and the rule of law to unduly concentrate power or shield the authorities from any potential threats. Violations of one right often lead to the erosion of others, demonstrating how human rights are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Patterns of authoritarian practices connect all the cases despite the range of human rights violations experienced by those affected.

The activities in this educational resource invite learners not only to understand the unique cases, but also to explore and reflect on the broader patterns through which authoritarian practices operate across different contexts. By linking individual experiences to wider global trends, the activities encourage critical reflection on the relationships between power, freedoms, human rights and resistance. They also highlight how authoritarian practices violate human rights and lead to the concentration and entrenchment of power.

As you engage with these cases, consider: what patterns do you notice? What has become normalized that should be questioned? Spotting the patterns and gaining a deeper understanding of the groups of cases will create a foundation of learning for informed action now and in the future.

Take part in our Kahoot quiz on authoritarian practices and test your knowledge: tinyurl.com/yc7b5kjn (in English only).



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ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the 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, treating others fairly and having the ability to make choices about your own life. Human rights are universal – they belong to everyone, everywhere.

They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – each right is equally important and they are interconnected.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a powerful framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to protect against abuses of power and improve lives across the world. Human rights are laws for governments. Human rights are not optional privileges or luxuries to be granted only when convenient. They create binding obligations for governments and public officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all people, both within their borders and beyond.


THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF Human Rights

UNITED NATIONS

© 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.

As its name suggests, the UDHR is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that it will 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 on the basis of its principles. These laws and agreements provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to demand that governments end the abuses experienced by the individuals featured in our Write for Rights campaign.



© Amnesty International Canada (Photo: PASCAL RATTHE)

Above: *A Write for Rights event organized by Amnesty International Canada in 2025.*
Top: *Launch of Write for Rights 2025 in Côte d'Ivoire.*

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UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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

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ACTIVITY

WHERE IS HE?

PROTECTION FROM ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

AT A GLANCE

Human rights protections exist to prevent individuals from being subjected to unfairness, abuse or neglect, and to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity, humanity and justice. Solidarity strengthens these protections by bringing people together to recognize shared responsibility, amplify vulnerable voices and collectively defend rights when they are threatened.

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

This activity explores what happens when governments abuse their power by arresting or detaining people unfairly, making them disappear, or denying them justice.

Through the story of Humphrey Polepole from Tanzania, learners discover how fear and secrecy can harm individuals, families and communities. His story highlights how abuses of power can undermine justice, dignity and human rights protections.

The activity helps learners understand why laws and human rights protections matter, and why everyone has the right to be treated fairly, safely and with dignity. It also encourages learners to recognize our shared humanity and understand why protecting one another's rights helps build fair and safe societies.

STRUCTURE

The activity is designed as a flexible three-part modular learning unit. Modules A and B (20 minutes each) function as a self-contained learning activity with a clear learning outcome, a participatory exercise, a guided reflection and a short debrief.

The modules may be delivered independently, combined in different sequences – A+B+C (60min), A+C (40min), B+C (40min) – and adapted for different audiences, or used as a complete 60-minute learning journey.

METHODOLOGY

As a facilitator, adapt the activity to your group's context. You may want to consider the size, age range and existing knowledge of your group, how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting, delivering the activity in-person or online, and any limitations. The timings suggested are estimates and should be adapted for the size of your group and the time available. When learners want to take action in support of an individual at risk, they discuss how to do so safely and ensure you follow school or local guidelines on consent.

INCLUSION, WELL-BEING AND SAFEGUARDING

Please adapt the learning activities to accommodate learners with disabilities and any specific learning needs. Some learners may find themes of imprisonment, injustice or abuse of power upsetting. Remind learners that they may pause, step out briefly, or choose not to share personal experiences. Keep discussions supportive and respectful. Focus on dignity, participation and human rights rather than political debates or personal beliefs. If a learner becomes upset or distressed, please use school or local resources to offer follow-up support.

OVERALL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learners will:

- **explore** how human rights protect people from arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, abuse and injustice, and why these protections matter for individuals, families and society.
- **identify** how governments may misuse laws, detention and fear to silence critics or control society.
- **demonstrate** empathy and solidarity through reflection, discussion and meaningful action.

AGE: 12+

Please follow relevant local guidelines for school-aged children.

TIME NEEDED

20, 40 or 60 minutes (20 minutes per module). Ideally, learners would complete at least two modules together. The modules can be delivered over multiple days or sessions to accommodate different contexts and schedules.

MATERIALS

- Handout: story card and take action card (page 15)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) simplified version (page 6)
- Background information: Protection from Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearance (page 13)
- Optional: paper, pens, and envelopes (if sending letters)
- Optional: videos from amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos
- Optional: template letters from amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

PREPARATION

- Read the story card.
- Print the handouts for each learner/group.
- Read the background information.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Dignity and humanity
- Protection from arbitrary detention
- Enforced disappearance
- Torture and other ill-treatment
- Fair trials and due process
- Abuse of state power
- Fear and repression
- Solidarity

If this is the first time that learners are introduced to the UDHR, you should focus on building a shared understanding of what it is first, using the information starting on page 5. Allow additional time for this, either during the session itself or in a preparatory session beforehand.

To enrich this activity, learners can use Amnesty International's human rights quizzes on Kahoot alongside the accompanying teaching guidelines available in the resource section: see https://create.kahoot.it/profiles/AmnestyInternational

For this activity, we recommend using the "Introduction to Human Rights" quiz. This resource provides an engaging and interactive way for learners to explore fundamental human rights principles. This is available in English only: tinyurl.com/bdcm33fh

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MODULE A. RECOGNIZING WHEN RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS DISAPPEAR

20 MINUTES

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will understand that human rights protections exist to prevent unfair treatment, enforced disappearance and abuse. They will be able to identify connections between liberty, fairness, humanity and dignity and reflect on the emotional and social impact of losing legal protections.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

Facilitator guidance: Encourage learners to explain their thinking rather than focus on finding the 'correct' answer.

PART 1: THE EMPTY CHAIR/DESK

Place an empty chair or desk at the front of the room. Tell learners:

> *This chair belongs to someone who has gone missing. No one knows where they are. Their family and friends do not know where they are, who took them, what has happened to them, or when they will return. In human rights terms, when someone is arrested or detained and the authorities refuse to reveal where they are or what has happened to them, this is called an enforced disappearance.*

Invite learners to silently observe the chair.

Then ask:

- **What questions would the family ask?**
- **How might they feel?**
- **Why do people need protection from this happening?**

Let the learners reflect on the questions for one minute in silence.

Then, in the plenary, allow learners to share their reflections in response to the questions above.

Transition: Explain that human rights protections exist to stop people from being unfairly arrested or detained, or forcibly disappeared.

PART 2: THE MISSING PROTECTIONS

Tell learners: Everyone should have certain protections when decisions affecting their freedom or safety are made.

Write the following protections on a board:

- **Their family knows where they are.**
- **The person is told why they are being arrested or detained.**
- **The person can contact a lawyer.**
- **The person can contact their family.**
- **A judge checks whether their detention is lawful.**
- **Authorities keep a record of where the person is being held.**
- **Someone monitors how the person is being treated.**
- **The person can challenge decisions they believe are unfair.**

KEY TERMS

PROTECTIONS (HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS)

Protections are rules, laws and procedures that help protect people's rights and ensure they are treated fairly and safely, with dignity and humanity. These protections help prevent abuse and ensure people can seek justice if their rights are violated.

MISSING

A person is missing when their family or others do not know where they are or what has happened to them. People can go missing for many different reasons.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

An enforced disappearance is different from someone simply going missing. It happens when a person is arrested or detained, taken away, and the authorities refuse to acknowledge it or deliberately hide their whereabouts. This is a serious human rights violation. It is also a crime under international law.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Arbitrary detention is when someone is arrested or detained, or kept in the custody of the authorities, without a lawful reason, or when they continue to be detained without following fair legal procedures or without a legal basis.

Facilitator note: This exercise is not about getting a 'right' or 'wrong' answer. In fact, these situations involve more than one right answer, and they are interconnected. Guide learners to reflect on why they chose a particular answer and help them to see how these rights overlap and depend on each other. Keep the tone open and exploratory, rather than quiz-like. You can use the background information on page 13 to guide this exercise or explain certain concepts in more detail.

Working in small groups, learners discuss the protections and choose the three they believe are most important.

Groups should be prepared to explain their choices.

Continue the discussion in plenary using two or three of the following questions:

- **Which protections did your group choose and why?**
- **Which protections would matter most to a family member?**
- **What could happen if a person was detained and could not contact anyone?**
- **What could happen if authorities take people away without explaining why?**
- **Why is it important that decisions can be reviewed or challenged?**
- **How do these protections help protect people's dignity and humanity?**

Draw two columns on a board:

HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS ARE RESPECTED	HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS ARE NOT RESPECTED
Family knows where a detained person is	Family members search for their loved one without answers
Detention is reviewed	Detention continues unchecked

Invite learners to suggest additional examples for each column.

PART 3: CONCLUSION

Explain that human rights protections exist to prevent and protect people from disappearing in the custody of the state, and from unfair treatment and abuse. When these protections are removed, people become more vulnerable to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and other abuses of power.

Stand-alone use of module A

This module works independently as an introductory exploration of protection from arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance.

After completion, you can go to module B if you have time, **or go directly to module C**, which is the action module.

If you choose to continue with module B, introduce it by saying:

The story that you will explore next involves a person whose protections were ignored or denied, leading to serious consequences for them and their family.



Human rights activists display dolls depicting 1,000 missing ethnic Chinese Uighur outside the Chinese embassy in The Hague, the Netherlands, in 2020.

© Pierre Crom/Getty Images



MODULE B: REAL STORY – WHEN A PERSON IS DISAPPEARED

20 MINUTES

STAND-ALONE USE

Module B also works independently as an empathy-building and case-study-based exploration of liberty, justice and rights protection. Learners can begin this module without having completed Module A.

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will explore how arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance affect real people and families, identify human rights violations in real-world situations, develop empathy and reflect on the importance of solidarity and justice.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

PART 1: INDIVIDUAL STORY

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Today we will learn about a real person whose rights were violated. As you hear his story, think about which human rights protections failed and how these events affected this individual and his family.

Divide learners into small groups of five or six participants. Give each group a copy of the story card for Humphrey Polepole from Tanzania.

GROUP TASK: WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT PROTECTIONS FAILED?

Read the story card together in your group.

Suggested discussion questions (you can choose two or three of these):

- **Was Humphrey told why he was arrested or detained?**
- **Could he contact his family?**
- **Could he contact a lawyer?**
- **Did the authorities explain where he was?**
- **Did the law protect him?**



© Private

Humphrey Polepole from Tanzania

SHORT DEBRIEF: INVITE GROUPS TO SHARE A FEW RESPONSES.

Ask:

- **What emotions came up while hearing Humphrey's story?**
- **What protections failed?**
- **Why can solidarity matter?**
- **How does recognizing our shared humanity change the way we think about Humphrey's story?**

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PART 2: CONCLUSION

FACILITATOR CONCLUDES MODULE B AND LINKS TO MODULE C:

Humphrey's story shows how human rights protections exist to prevent unfair treatment, abuse, and people being disappeared by the state without trace. When these protections are removed, people become more vulnerable to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and other human rights violations. Around the world, people continue to show solidarity and support those whose rights are restricted.

MODULE C: TAKE ACTION AND SHOW SOLIDARITY

20 MINUTES

LEARNING OUTCOME

Learners will understand how solidarity can support people whose rights are restricted, participate in meaningful collective action, and reflect on their role in defending human rights.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITY

PART 1: INTRODUCE WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Ask the learners if they would like to take part in an action to support Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign (if they are children, please consider school and local requirements related to consent).

Tell learners about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign using the information on page 2. Explain that Amnesty is calling on people to write letters to the individuals on the story cards, and also to the authorities responsible for protecting, respecting and fulfilling their human rights. You can give examples from previous years' campaigns (from page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be, or watch this one-minute story from Magai, who was sentenced to death at the age of 15 in South Sudan. Thousands of people wrote letters and signed petitions for his release and he is now free: youtube.com/watch?v=oI8aZ_NhiJo

Ask:

- **Why can small actions matter?**
- **How can solidarity help protect human rights?**
- **What role can ordinary people play in protecting human rights and supporting people facing injustice?**

If there is time, ask learners to take action now.

If time is limited, please encourage them to organize when and where they will take the actions later and divide the actions among the groups. As appropriate, encourage them to be creative. They can write a letter, or create a drawing, poster, postcard or other creative pieces that communicate encouragement and express solidarity.

Facilitator note: If learners have only completed module A, and did not engage in module B, begin module C by introducing the individual at risk using the accompanying story card from page 15. Explain who they are, what happened to them, which human rights are at the centre of their case, and what the campaign is calling for.

Facilitator note: Explain that acts of solidarity remind people that they are not forgotten. They are a way of recognizing our shared humanity and standing up for the rights and dignity of others.

Optional: show learners the video of Humphrey Polepole from Tanzania, which can be found here: amnesty.org/en/w4r-videos (available in English).

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PART 2: WRITE A LETTER

Give learners a copy of the take action card from page 15. Tell the learners that their letters will be sent to the authorities responsible for protecting Humphrey Polepole's human rights.

Give everyone letter-writing materials and allow time for them to write their letters. Explain that a personal message to the officials can have the most impact. Ask them to:

- **Write something about themselves.**
- **Tell the official what shocks them about Humphrey Polepole's story.**
- **Say why they think it is important that governments respect human rights.**

If people wish to share their finished letters with the group or express their feelings at the end of the activity, provide an opportunity for them to do so.

Facilitator note: Follow your section's Write for Rights guidance regarding participant privacy and any relevant safety considerations when sending appeals or solidarity messages, such as using pseudonyms if there is a security risk to students partaking. Ask the learners if they would like to take part in an action to support Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign and, if they are children under 18, please consider local requirements related to consent.

PART 3: SHOW SOLIDARITY

If you have time, you can also do the solidarity action on the take action card. The letters of solidarity are often a great source of support and strength for the people featured in these cases.

Send your messages of friendship and hope to the family of Humphrey Polepole to inspire them to keep up their fight for justice and to show that they are not alone. Be creative and tell them a little bit about yourself to make this a personal letter.

Learn more about other activities in the Write for Rights campaign at amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/

Solidarity and collective action can help protect individuals at risk and remind those facing injustice that they are not alone.



Amnesty International Netherlands supporters and members take part in Write for Rights events in 2025.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

PROTECTION FROM ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Human rights exist to protect people from being treated unfairly, abused by authorities, or deprived of their freedom without good reason. These protections are especially important when governments or armed opposition groups have control over people's liberty and safety.

Human rights are based on the idea that every person has equal worth. Laws and legal protections exist not only to protect people's freedoms, but also to uphold their dignity, prevent abuse and ensure that everyone is treated with humanity.

The right to liberty and security means that nobody should be arrested, imprisoned or punished unfairly. Governments must follow the law, explain why someone is being arrested or detained, and treat all people with dignity and respect.

Arbitrary detention happens when someone is imprisoned unfairly or without proper legal reasons or procedures. For example, a person might not be told what they are accused of, may not be allowed to speak to a lawyer, or may never receive a fair trial.

People can go missing for many different reasons. Enforced disappearance is different to simply "going missing".

Enforced disappearance happens when a person is taken away, arrested, detained or abducted by people acting on behalf of the state, and the authorities refuse to reveal where they are or what happened to them. Families are often left frightened and without answers. Not knowing whether someone is safe or even alive can cause deep suffering for loved ones and communities.

People who are arrested or detained still have human rights. Governments must protect their safety, health and dignity at all times. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is always wrong and is prohibited under international human rights law. Torture means deliberately causing severe mental or physical pain or suffering. Other forms of degrading or inhuman treatment may involve serious abuse or humiliation.

Some people may face additional risks when arrested or detained, including pregnant women, children, older people, persons with disabilities and people with particular health needs. Governments have a responsibility to protect their specific needs, health, safety and dignity. Human rights are connected and depend on each other. When one protection disappears, other rights are often affected too. For example:

- Arbitrary detention can lead to unfair trials.
- Enforced disappearance can separate families and create fear.
- Denial of medical care can harm health and dignity.
- Abuse in detention can amount to torture or another form of ill-treatment.

Governments have a responsibility to protect these rights for everyone, without discrimination. International human rights agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), set out these protections clearly.

Among other things, governments must:

- protect people from arbitrary arrest and detention (Article 9)
- ensure fair hearings and fair trials (Article 10)
- protect people from torture and other ill-treatment (Article 5)
- protect the right to liberty and security (Article 3)
- recognize that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Article 1).

When governments ignore these responsibilities, fear and injustice can grow. But people around the world continue to speak out, support affected families, and demand justice and accountability.

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(Photo: PASCAL RATTHE)

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Above: *Amnesty International Argentina launched last year's Write for Rights at the Model United Nations held at the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires.*

Below: *Amnesty International Zimbabwe launch the 2025 Write For Rights campaign in Masvingo Province.*

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people that 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 accountable for their actions. We investigate and expose abuses wherever they occur. By amplifying the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and act in solidarity with activists on the frontlines. We also support people to claim their rights through education and training.

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



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE PERSON, IT MATTERS TO US ALL.

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