
Amnesty International

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

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Human Rights Defenders Campaign – *BRAVE*

On 16 May 2017, Amnesty International launched a new global campaign, BRAVE, to strengthen the recognition and protection of human rights defenders around the world. The campaign is in response to the increased attacks and targeting of Human Rights Defenders (HRD), Activists and civil society organisations around the world. The campaign will run until the end of 2019 and will also be a priority campaign at Amnesty UK (AIUK).

Over the next month we at AIUK will be working to create more detailed plans and activity for the AIUK campaign for the next months and this is to keep you up to date about some of the outputs and content that you can expect to see over the coming months and also chance to familiarise yourselves with the issues that will sit within the campaign.



Below is more background information to the campaign with a link to the Global Campaign Briefing setting out the main threats and issues facing Human Rights Defenders today and also information on upcoming and continued casework on Human Rights Defenders that will be available for you to work on as part of the campaign.

Background & key issues

Over the past few years we have seen Human Rights Defenders (HRD's) around the world increasingly face harassment, intimidation, smear campaigns, ill-treatment and unlawful detention; or even being killed. In 2016, at least 281 HRD's were killed in 22 countries, including defenders who challenged entrenched economic interests, protected the environment, defending minorities or opposed traditional barriers to women and LGBTI rights.

Right now, people across the world are risking everything to speak out against injustice. Student leaders, political opponents, teachers, lawyers, journalists, women's rights & environmental activists and many others. But they're being harassed, tortured, jailed and even killed – just for daring to stand up for what's right.

HRD's are crucial to uphold freedoms and human rights across the world and supporting their rights and their space to live and operate in is one of the most important ways to ensure human rights for all. Without them and you promoting people's rights around the world, there'd be no human rights.

Against this backdrop, Amnesty is launching a campaign calling for HRD's to be recognised, protected and able to operate in a safer environment.

Within the campaign, there will be 4 priority areas reflecting key issues that HRD's have highlighted as particular issues and threats that they are facing;

Smear and Stigmatisation of HRDs traversing each of the thematic areas below

- Women Human Rights Defenders includes LGBTIQ and inter-sectional discrimination
- Killings, to include Enforced Disappearances
- Misuse and Regressive use of criminal, civil and administrative law
- Surveillance of HRDs (online and offline)

Who is a Human Rights Defender?

A Human Rights Defender is a person who individually or in association with others acts to defend and/or promote human rights at local, national, regional or international levels, using nonviolent means.

Human Rights Defenders comes from all walks of life and can be journalists, lawyers, health professionals, teachers, trade unionists, whistle-blowers, farmers and victims or relatives of victims of human rights violations and abuses. But fundamentally identified by what they do rather than by their profession.

The term WHRDs (women human rights defenders) refers to both female HRDs (who may work on any human rights issue), and to defenders (who may not necessarily be women) who work on women's rights or on a range of gender-related issues.

Human Rights Defender Casework

Throughout the lifetime of the Human Rights Defender Priority Campaign, Amnesty UK will be working on 5 additional individual HRDs. These 5 individuals have all experienced the constraints, restrictions, threats and intimidation that Amnesty UK are looking to address within the Priority Campaign.

We wanted to take the opportunity this month to introduce you to the 5 cases. Amnesty UK will be campaigning on these 5 cases in a sustained way for at least the next two years, and we would really appreciate your support.

The cases will be available to work on by Friday 28th July. If you would like to sign up to work on any of the cases, please get in touch with the relevant Country Coordinator using the details found here:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-country-coordinators>

Other HRD casework will continue too – so if your group is already working on a HRD case that is not one of the 5 below, thank you – and please keep up the good work! Write for Rights this year will also be focused on HRDs – keep an eye out for information about that nearer the time.

The Cases:

Azza Soliman – Egypt:

Azza is a lawyer, a long-standing Women Human Rights Defender, and the co-founder of the Centre for Egyptian victims of torture and arbitrary detention. She has been arrested several times, and harassed by the Egyptian authorities and the media for defending women's rights. Today, Azza is facing three trumped up charges, is banned from travel, and has had her assets frozen. She risks imprisonment of up to 15 years for her activities as a human rights defender.

Sakris Kupila – Finland:

Sakris is a 21 year old medical student, youth activist and a defender of transgender rights. Sakris is being denied legal gender recognition because he refuses to fulfil the requirements of the current process – which requires a diagnosis of mental disorder and enforced sterilisation. Because of his work advocating for the rights of Trans people, Sakris has faced harassment, intimidation, threats of violent beatings and open hostility, forcing him to take a year away from his education.

Tep Vanny – Cambodia:

Tep Vanny is a housing rights activist, human rights defender, and community representative in Cambodia. She has been in prison since 16 August 2016 for her land protest work, and the authorities are going to extraordinary lengths to ensure that she remains in prison. They hope to send a chilling message to other human rights defenders and activists.

Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam – Sudan:

Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam is a human rights defender working to shine a spotlight on human rights violations in Sudan. He is a Professor of Engineering at the University of Khartoum, and the founder and former director of the Sudan Social Development Organisation. He has been arrested several times for his human rights work, most recently on the 7 December 2016. He has been detained without charge since.

Rodrigo Mundaca and members of MODATIMA – Chile:

Rodrigo Mundaca is a member and spokesperson of the Defence Movement of Earth, Environmental Protection and Access to Water in central Chile. Since 2012, Rodrigo has denounced abuses committed by politicians and businesses in the area which affected communities' right to water. Between 2012 and 2015, Rodrigo has had four criminal cases initiated against him, and threats and attacks against him and other members of MODATIM are regular.

Get in touch with the relevant Country Coordinator to sign up to the cases:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-country-coordinators>

Further reading

Amnesty Human Rights Defender Campaign Briefing: *Human Rights Defenders Under Threat – a shrinking space for civil society*: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/6011/2017/en/>

Key dates for Amnesty UK Priority Campaign 2017

- **28 July** – Additional Human Rights Defender Cases available for AIUK groups to work on
- **31 August** – AIUK Campaign Materials available to order from MDA
- **October 2017 (date tbc)** - AIUK Skill share focusing on Human Rights Defenders
- **1 November** – Write for Rights 2017 – featuring 10 Human Rights Defender case