

# Speak up for those who speak out for us all



## ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS

It's easy to take human rights for granted – they seem permanent and timeless. But they are the result of struggle, campaigning, resistance and great courage. And they only survive because people around the world stand up for them.

It's not just the likes of Emily Pankhurst, Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela and Chelesa Manning. Ordinary people from all walks of life are doing extraordinary things. Students, community leaders, journalists, lawyers, teachers, trade unionists, Indigenous communities, farmers, environmental activists, doctors, and many others are standing up against injustice.

Often at great risk to themselves, they take on governments and big corporations. They stand up for human rights and dignity for all, challenging abuses of power, protecting the environment and opposing racism, sexism and homophobia. In the face of violence, harassment, discrimination and demonisation, they get results.

Without their courage, our world would be less fair, less just and less equal.

*'Human rights defenders are messengers of social change, advocates for equality and justice, and support for them is support for a world free of cruelty, human suffering and pain.'*

Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, Sudan

**Taking a risk**  
Today people who stand up against injustice face unprecedented levels of intimidation and attack from governments, armed groups and businesses around the world.

They are labelled 'criminals', 'foreign agents', 'terrorists', and portrayed as threats to security, development or traditional values. They face harassment, torture, jail, violence and even death – just for daring to speak out for what's right. Women and LGBTI rights defenders face additional threats, including sexual violence and defamation based on their gender or sexual orientation.

**281** human rights defenders killed last year, up from 156 in 2015  
**Source: Front Line Defenders**

At the same time, trade unions are being disbanded, newspapers closed down, social media banned, digital activity unlawfully monitored, and peaceful protesters met with violence. Speaking out for human rights is difficult and dangerous – and that's why we need human rights defenders.

## Speak up for those who speak out for us all



**Rodrigo Mundaca, Chile**

Rodrigo protects community access to water in an arid region of Chile. He has received death threats, been attacked and taken to court.

**Brave is Amnesty International's campaign calling for increased recognition and protection of human rights defenders around the world.**

[amnesty.org.uk/defenders](http://amnesty.org.uk/defenders)

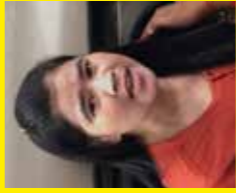
Amnesty International  
The Human Rights Action Centre  
17-25 New Inn Yard  
London EC2A 3EA

Cover image: A girl calls for the release from prison of Cambodian human rights defender Tep Vanny. © Getty Images



**Sakris Kupila, Finland**

Sakris defends the rights of transgender people. As a result, he has endured open hostility, intimidation and threats of violence.



**Tep Vanny, Cambodia**

Activist Tep supports people who are being forced from their homes. She was arrested on 16 August 2016 and has been in jail ever since.



**Azza Soliman, Egypt**

Lawyer Azza has defended women's rights for almost 20 years. She has been arrested, harassed, put under surveillance, and smeared by the authorities.

### A shrinking space for civil society

To stand up against injustice, we depend on some basic rights. Freedom of expression enables us to speak out. Freedom of association allows us to team up with others and take collective action. Freedom of peaceful assembly enables us to take to the streets and voice our concerns.

These rights – which belong to all of us – are under sustained attack by governments on every continent. Ever-increasing surveillance and ever more restrictive laws limit space we need to defend our rights.

### Our campaign

We can't defend human rights without defending those who stand up against injustice. Our new campaign calls on governments to:

- Increase protection and recognition of human rights defenders
- Scrap repressive laws that restrict or endanger their work
- Stop silencing peaceful dissent
- Release people who have been locked up solely for challenging injustice
- Raise awareness of the role and importance of human rights defenders. We also want people everywhere to speak up for human rights defenders and for human rights.

### What you can do

People like you have a vital role to play in the campaign. We need you to write letters, sign petitions, participate in demonstrations, and spread the word on social media. Together we can take action alongside human rights defenders, to fight injustice and build a fairer world.

When we do this, change happens. In 2015, Amnesty supporters wrote more than 394,000 messages for jailed Burmese student activist Phyo Aung Aung. A court then dropped charges against her and she walked free in April 2016. 'Thank you very much each and every one of you,' she says. 'Not just for campaigning for my release, and the release of other prisoners, but for helping to keep our hope and our beliefs alive.'

*'It is clear that the authorities are using the courts to lock me up, silence my freedom of expression and break my spirit'*

Tep Vanny, Cambodia

# ON THE FRONT LINE

In 2016, human rights defenders were:

- Killed in at least 22 countries for peacefully standing up for human rights
- Threatened or attacked in at least 94 countries
- Arrested or detained in at least 68 countries solely for their peaceful work
- Subjected to smear campaigns in at least 63 countries

Source: Amnesty International Annual Report 2016/17



Act now to speak up for those who speak out for all of us  
[amnesty.org.uk/defenders](http://amnesty.org.uk/defenders)

