

Amnesty International

IMPRISONED WRITERS



DAILY READINGS: TOP AUTHORS READ FROM WORK THAT HIGHLIGHTS
HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES & RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Saturday 18 August

Freedom *with* Freedom from Torture

Every survivor of torture has a different story and different needs. Freedom from Torture offers counselling, group and creative writing therapy in centres around the UK. <https://edinburghfft.org/>

Today's readings:

Aso Sebir – *Trust*. I am a writer from Iraq and I joined 'Write to Life' four years ago. I write to express my feelings about different colours, which belong to everything in human feeling, like pain and pleasure. In my writing, I like to show the conflict between peace and human suffering in one line, then work and work on this line until find real beauty. Write to Life is always helping me to continue writing and gives me a new idea every time we gather at Freedom from Torture with my colleagues. When different stories are born in a very short time, at that time I see my imagination flying as though in a mirror. Then I run away from silence and become a friend of beautiful words.

Hasani – *The Interview*. A certain writer once remarked that, 'We tell ourselves stories in order to live.' Having gone through a terrible experience in my country of birth because of my political views, I left it for the UK. Through the 'Write to Life' group I have found a place that helps me to free myself from the turmoil inside. After enduring harsh experiences, sometimes writing them down calms the emotions that their memories bring about. Like they say, the pen is mightier than the sword. It is through such little words, woven into sentences, that I hope to continue expressing what I believe in, and to contribute, even in a small way, to a better future. As an aspiring writer I appreciate the therapeutic nature of writing.

Tracy – *Waterloo*.

I was born in Harare to a Zimbabwean mother and a father whose family were from Malawi. They had a flower farm where they grew roses for Holland and Canada. Even now when I'm unhappy I just have to look at a green plant or a flower and it cheers me up. I studied electrical engineering and worked in the electricity industry as an engineer. I was imprisoned and only released when the authorities thought I was about to die. Luckily one of the army doctors had been a friend of my father's and kept me alive. After my release I was helped to escape from Mozambique and thence via Malawi to the UK, from whence I was deported back to South Africa, then to Ireland, then Holland and eventually was given asylum in the UK.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALL TO ACTION:

Photojournalist Shawkan has been locked up in a brutal Egyptian prison for over four years. Tell the Egyptian authorities to drop the charges and release Shawkan immediately.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/egypt-journalism-not-crime>

After nearly five years I was reunited with my daughter whom I brought here to live with me. I recently finished re-qualifying to work as an electrical engineer here. But after my experiences in prison, I'm not so keen on working with electricity. I have now completed a degree in Health and Social Welfare. In terms of education, nothing will stop me!

Kayitesi – Freedom. My name is Kayitesi. I am from Burundi. I was tortured, beaten and gang raped by Tutsi militia. I had to run into hiding in the bush hoping I would find safety there. I met a stranger who offered to help me flee the country; but I ended up locked in a house in London for three and half years before I escaped. In 2010 I was detained in Yarl's Wood Removal Centre for six weeks. I became more traumatised, depressed, stressed and suicidal. However, I do thank FFT especially Write to Life, which gave me moral support to become who I am now. Write to Life and its volunteers help people like me with their new life in London, and to feel comfortable in their homes. We meet every two weeks and share our experiences through poems and other writing. When I joined the group at least my tears stopped, though sometimes they still fall. I have been in the UK for more than 15 years, still waiting to get my refugee status.

Today's readers:

John Fairbanks, otherwise known as **DJ Semtex**, is an award-winning DJ, author, and presenter for BBC Radio 1Xtra's flagship hip-hop show. His book, *Hip Hop Raised Me*, examines the influence of hip-hop on his own life, the life of disenfranchised youths, and today's society.

Omar El Akkad is an award-winning journalist and author. His book, *American War*, is set in a near future USA, in which climate change has led to a second civil war, fighting over the use of fossil fuels.

A L Kennedy is a Scottish author, and fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, and Royal Society of Literature. She recently contributed to *24 Stories: of Hope for the Survivors of the Grenfell Tower Fire*.

Mohammad Saba'aneh is a Palestinian cartoonist, born in Kuwait, and currently living in Ramallah in the West Bank. He is currently the principal political cartoonist for *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, the Palestinian Authority's daily newspaper

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