

Matsumoto Kenji
Japan



Two decades on death row

Matsumoto Kenji has been on death row for more than two decades and could be executed at any moment.

Convicted in September 1993 of two separate robberies and murders, Matsumoto has a longstanding intellectual disability, allegedly because of mercury poisoning, and a low IQ. Yet court authorities ruled he was mentally competent enough to make a reliable 'confession' and be sentenced to death, even though his lawyer says Matsumoto, who cannot understand or participate in his legal case, was pressured by the police. He now uses a wheelchair, and suffers from a delusional disorder, thought to be a result of his prolonged detention and solitary confinement.

Japan, which hosts the Olympics this summer, shrouds its executions in secrecy, with prisoners typically given only a few hours' notice; some receive no warning at all. Their families are usually only told about the execution after it has taken place. There have been 39 executions since 2012.

APPEAL Urge the authorities not to execute Matsumoto Kenji and to commute his – and every other – death sentence. Call for a moratorium on executions, the promotion of debate about the subject, and better treatment of death row inmates, including an end to solitary confinement.

▶ Masako Mori
Ministry of Justice
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Chiyoda-ku
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Japan

Salutation: Dear Minister

Postage: World

▶ His Excellency Koji Tsuruoka
Embassy of Japan
101-104 Piccadilly
London W1J 7JT

Salutation: Your Excellency

Azza Soliman
Egypt



Women's rights lawyer faces prison term

Women's rights campaigner Azza Soliman (Write for Rights 2017) faces a lengthy prison sentence on politically motivated charges as the military regime desperately attempts to cling to power through a clampdown on human rights. Her freedom is already severely restricted thanks to an asset freeze and travel ban.

Azza, co-founder of two organisations, the Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance and Lawyers for Justice and Peace, has dedicated her life to defending victims of torture, arbitrary detention, domestic abuse and rape. For this she has been persecuted by successive governments for almost 30 years, labelled a 'spy' and a 'threat' to national security, put under surveillance, smeared and harassed.

Azza now faces trial on charges of tax evasion, operating a civil society organisation without proper registration, and slandering Egypt's reputation by stating women in the country are at risk of rape. It is part of Case 173 (aka the 'foreign funding case'), which targets NGOs and activists.

APPEAL Urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against Azza Soliman and lift the travel ban and asset freeze orders. Call for them to drop Case 173 and lift travel ban and asset freeze orders against other human rights defenders and human rights organisations.

▶ President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt

Salutation: Your Excellency

Postage: World

▶ His Excellency Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
26 South Street
London W1K 1DW

Salutation: Your Excellency

Vitalina Koval
Ukraine



LGBTI activist remains at risk

Leading LGBTI activist Vitalina Koval (Write for Rights 2018) has fearlessly spoken out against hate for years. As a result, she has been repeatedly threatened and attacked, including at the 2017 and 2018 International Women's Day marches in her home city of Uzhgorod.

At the 2018 march, members of a right-wing group attacked participants and doused them in red paint. Vitalina, one of the event's organisers, was among those attacked, sustaining chemical burns to her eyes. The group later threatened Vitalina and other activists with further violence on its social media accounts.

During last year's march, Vitalina and her fellow activists were able to demonstrate safely thanks to improved police protection, something she credits in part to international pressure from Amnesty. However, ongoing safety fears have forced her to leave Uzhgorod and move to Kyiv, where she continues to fight for LGBTI rights.

APPEAL Call on the minister to take all necessary steps to ensure those responsible for the attacks on Vitalina Koval are identified and held to account in fair trials. Also urge him to take the discriminatory motive of the attacks into account during the investigation.

▶ Minister of Interior Arsen Avakov
Vul. Akademika Bohomoltsa, 10
01601 Kyiv
Ukraine

Salutation: Dear Minister

Postage: Europe

▶ Her Excellency Natalia Galibarenko
Embassy of Ukraine
60 Holland Park
London W11 3SJ

Salutation: Your Excellency

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Bhima Koregaon 9 India



Human rights activists targeted in government crackdown

Nine prominent activists who have defended the rights of some of India's most marginalised communities are behind bars following false accusations from the government.

In 2018, amid a massive crackdown on government critics, the Bhima Koregaon Nine were arrested in Maharashtra state under a draconian counter-terrorism law – the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act – frequently used to silence dissent. Surendra Gadling, Rona Wilson, Sudhir Dhawale, Shoma Sen, Mahesh Raut, Sudha Bharadwaj, Vernon Gonsalves, Arun Ferreira and Varavara Rao were targeted because of their work on behalf of Dalit (a group at the bottom of India's rigid caste system) and Adivasi (indigenous) communities.

An aggressive smear campaign was launched against these lawyers, trade unionists, academics and artists by the government, who branded them 'anti-nationals' working against India. Many mainstream media outlets have already branded the Bhima Koregaon Nine, currently in jail pending trial, 'guilty'.

APPEAL Urge the prime minister to immediately and unconditionally release the Bhima Koregaon Nine and to stop trying to crush human rights work in India.

▶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi
c/o Amnesty International India
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Hoysala Nagar Indiranagar
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India

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister
Postage: World

▶ Her Excellency Ruchi Ghanashyam
Office of the High Commissioner for India
India House
Aldwych
London WC2B 4NA

Salutation: Your Excellency

Peacock Generation Myanmar



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Poets jailed for satirical performances

Six members of satirical poetry troupe the Peacock Generation were jailed in the autumn of 2019 for taking part in peaceful performances critical of the military. A seventh member could soon join them behind bars.

Kay Khine Tun (pictured), Zayar Lwin, Paing Pyo Min, Paing Ye Thu, Zaw Lin Htut, Su Yadanar Myint, and Nyein Chan Soe were arrested in April-May 2019 after a Thangyat, a traditional performance art akin to slam poetry in which they wore army uniforms and satirised the military. All of them apart from Nyein Chan Soe have since been convicted and sentenced to between 18 months and two and a half years in prison.

The whole group, including Nyein Chan Soe, faces a further charge of 'online defamation' for sharing their performances through social media. This charge carries a maximum two-year prison sentence.

APPEAL Urge the president to immediately and unconditionally release all members of the Peacock Generation troupe, quash their convictions, and drop further charges. Pending their release, call on him to ensure they are held in conditions that meet international standards, with access to their families, lawyers and healthcare. Urge him to repeal or amend laws arbitrarily restricting freedom of expression.

▶ President U Win Myint
President's Office
Office No 18 Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Salutation: Dear President
Postage: World

▶ His Excellency Kyaw Zwar Minn
Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
19A Charles Street
London W1J 5DX

Salutation: Your Excellency

Vanyaneka and Ovaherero communities Angola



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Pastoralists go hungry as ranchers expand

The diversion of communal grazing land by the government to commercial cattle farmers in southern Angola has caused widespread hunger, malnourishment and starvation among the Vanyaneka and Ovaherero pastoralist groups.

Since the end of the Angolan civil war in 2002, the government has allowed the ranchers to occupy 67 per cent of this fertile area in Gambos municipality without due process. The Vanyaneka and Ovaherero are now struggling to produce food for themselves and the cattle on which they depend.

Their plight has been exacerbated by a severe drought, which started in November 2018 and affects more than 2.3 million people in southern Angola and a further 500,000 in neighbouring Namibia. Historically, communal grazing land played a vital role in mitigating the impact of droughts in this semi-arid region.

APPEAL Ask the authorities to immediately provide adequate food and drinking water for Gambos communities suffering from, or at risk of, hunger. Urge them to stop granting communal grazing land to commercial livestock farmers; hold those responsible for granting large parts of communal land in the Gambos; and make reparations to the communities affected. Call for long-term measures to increase Gambos communities' resilience to climate-driven hazards.

▶ President João Lourenço
Secretário-Geral do Presidente da República
Órgãos Auxiliares do Presidente da República
Palácio Presidencial
Rua 17 de Setembro
Cidade Alta
Luanda
Angola

Salutation: Honourable President
Postage: World

▶ His Excellency Dr Rui Jorge Carneiro Mangureira
Embassy of the Republic of Angola
22 Dorset Street
London W1U 6QY

Salutation: Your Excellency

Aser Mohamed
Egypt



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Teenager jailed after ‘confession’ extracted through torture

Four years after being tortured into ‘confessing’ to a raft of offences, teenager Aser Mohamed was sentenced to 10 years in prison in October 2019. His trial was grossly unfair.

On 12 January 2016, Aser, then aged 14, was arrested, forcibly disappeared for 35 days, and given electric shocks and suspended by his limbs until he ‘confessed’ to crimes including ‘membership of a terrorist group’ and attacking a hotel. He says he did not commit any of the offences.

Aser was prosecuted, detained and sentenced alongside adults, even though international law requires children deprived of their liberty to be held separately from adults and treated humanely. His appeal will be judged by the Court of Cassation in Cairo, which could drop or reduce the sentence.

Amnesty has documented numerous cases in which Egypt’s National Security Agency has used enforced disappearances to prevent peaceful dissent.

APPEAL Urge the authorities to immediately release Aser Mohamed, protect him from torture and other ill-treatment, and allow him full access to his family, lawyer, and medical treatment. Call for an impartial investigation into his enforced disappearance and allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, with those responsible brought to justice.

▶ Hamada al-Sawy
Public Prosecutor
Madinat al-Rehab
New Cairo
Arab Republic of Egypt

Salutation: Dear Public Prosecutor

Postage: World

▶ His Excellency Tarek Ahmed Ibrahim Adel
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Salutation: Your Excellency

Ahmed Mansoor
United Arab Emirates



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Jailed activist held in dire conditions

Poet, blogger and human rights defender Ahmed Mansoor is being held in dire conditions in prison, denied a mattress, books, and access to the yard for exercise and fresh air.

On 7 September, after being beaten by guards, Ahmed went on his second hunger strike of 2019. For the first week, the guards forced him to eat, but between 14 September and at least 28 October, he took in only fluids. As a result, his physical and mental health has deteriorated. Running water was made available in his isolation unit in October, but otherwise his conditions remain unchanged.

Ahmed has documented the human rights situation in the UAE since 2006, using his blog, social media and interviews with the international media to speak out against abuses. In May 2018, he was convicted in an unfair trial of several spurious charges, including ‘insulting the status and prestige of the UAE and its symbols’. He was given a 10-year sentence. Amnesty considers him a prisoner of conscience.

In October 2019, more than 100 organisations, including Amnesty, signed an open letter calling for the end of his unlawful imprisonment.

APPEAL Call on the authorities to quash Ahmed Mansoor’s conviction and release him immediately and unconditionally. Pending his release, urge them to ensure he is held in conditions that comply with international standards, is not tortured or ill-treated, and has immediate and regular access to his family and the healthcare he requires.

▶ His Excellency Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan
Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi
Crown Prince Court
King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Street
PO Box 124
Abu Dhabi
United Arab Emirates

Salutation: Your Excellency

Postage: World

▶ His Excellency Mansoor Abdullah Khalfan Juma Abulhoul
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates
1-2 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW1X 7EF

Salutation: Your Excellency

Marielle Franco
Brazil



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Still no justice for murdered activist

Two years on from the killing of Marielle Franco (Write for Rights 2018), the authorities have still not made any meaningful progress in identifying the people who ordered the crime or their motives.

Marielle dedicated her life to defending the rights of women, black, LGBTI and other marginalised people in Rio de Janeiro. A well-known city councillor who grew up in a favela, she also fearlessly denounced police abuses and extrajudicial killings. On 14 March 2018, Marielle and her driver, Anderson Pedro Gomes, were shot dead as they drove home from a public debate.

In March 2019, two former police officers were arrested on suspicion of having carried out the killings. This was an important step forward, yet a year on, the people who instigated and orchestrated the crime have still not been identified.

Brazil is one of the deadliest countries in the world for human rights defenders – at least 23 were killed in 2019, according to Front Line Defenders. The perpetrators are rarely brought to justice.

APPEAL Urge the attorney general to ensure there is an immediate, impartial and independent investigation to identify everyone involved in the killing of Marielle Franco, with those responsible brought to justice.

▶ José Eduardo Ciotola Gussem
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Brazil

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Postage: World

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Salutation: Your Excellency