

Itai Dzamara
Zimbabwe



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Activist missing for six years

Itai Peace Dzamara, a journalist and pro-democracy activist, was taken from a barber shop in Harare's Glen View suburb by five unknown men, on the morning of 9 March 2015. The men accused him of stealing cattle, then handcuffed him and drove off with him in a white truck with concealed number plates. Family members and human rights lawyers have tried to find him, but to no avail.

Immediately after Itai Dzamara's abduction, his wife filed a missing person report at Glen Norah Police Station in Harare. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) approached the High Court, which ruled that the state should expend all available resources to investigate and locate Itai Dzamara. But he is still missing.

APPEAL Urge the head of the Zimbabwe Police to comply fully with the High Court order to report progress of the search for Itai Dzamara fortnightly until he is found. Ask the authorities for an independent, judge-led commission of inquiry to comprehensively investigate the disappearance of Itai Dzamara, establish his whereabouts and bring to justice those responsible for his enforced disappearance.

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Salutation: Dear Commissioner General

▶ His Excellency Colonel Christian Katsande
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Salutation: Your Excellency

Ciham Ali Ahmed
Eritrea



© Saleh Younis

Eight years in secret detention

Ciham Ali Ahmed is a victim of enforced disappearance. She has been held incommunicado in secret detention since 8 December 2012. She was never charged and no explanation was ever given for her arrest and prolonged detention. It is believed that this could be the government's way of punishing her father's alleged involvement in an attempted coup in Eritrea.

Ciham Ali Ahmed was born on 3 April 1997 in Los Angeles, California, USA, but she was raised in Eritrea, the country from which her family originates. She is a dual national of both Eritrea and the United States.

APPEAL Urge the Eritrean authorities to release Ciham Ali Ahmed and all others held arbitrarily immediately and unconditionally, unless they are charged with a recognisable offence. Urge them to allow everyone placed in detention immediate access to family, lawyers and an independent court.

▶ President Isaias Afwerki
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Salutation: Your Excellency

▶ His Excellency Mr Estifanos Habtemariam
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Salutation: Your Excellency

Ahmadreza Djalali
Iran



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Academic faces execution

Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-Swedish medical doctor and academic living in Sweden, was on a business trip to Iran when he was arrested on 26 April 2016. He was accused of spying. In October 2017, after a grossly unfair trial, he was sentenced to death for 'corruption on earth'. The court relied primarily on 'confessions' that Ahmadreza says were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment while he was held in prolonged solitary confinement without access to a lawyer.

Since 24 November 2020, when he was told his death sentence was about to be carried out, Ahmadreza has been held incommunicado in Tehran's Evin prison. In late December, his family learned that the execution had been postponed for a month. He remains at imminent risk of execution.

APPEAL Ask the head of Iran's judiciary to halt plans to execute Ahmadreza Djalali, quash his conviction and sentence, and immediately provide him access to his family and lawyers. Urge him to release Ahmadreza Djalali immediately and accord him an enforceable right to compensation.

▶ Head of Judiciary
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Salutation: Dear Mr Raisi

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Salutation: Your Excellency

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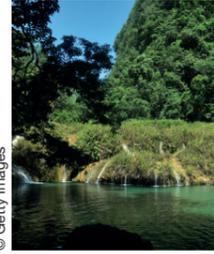
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Bernardo Caal Xol Guatemala



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Human rights defender in prison

Bernardo Caal Xol, 48, has been unfairly imprisoned for almost two and a half years for defending the rights of Indigenous Mayan Qeqchi communities affected by a hydroelectric project. Bernardo peacefully opposed the Oxec I and II hydroelectric project on the Cahabón in the department of Alta Verapaz, in northern Guatemala. A teacher and trade unionist, he was among the leaders appointed by 56 communities in Santa María Cahabón to take legal action against the project, in particular the lack of prior and informed consultation with indigenous peoples.

Bernardo was detained on 30 January 2018, accused of instigating alleged acts of violence in the affected area. Although there is no evidence to support the accusations, he was sentenced to seven years and four months in prison.

On 7 September 2020 his sentence was declared incommutable, ruling out any chance of early release. He faces another four years in prison.

APPEAL Ask the Attorney General to review Bernardo Caal's casefile: there is no evidence against him, so all charges should be dropped and he should be released immediately. Ask for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the case against Bernardo Caal, to ensure those responsible for bringing the unfounded accusations are held accountable.

▶ Attorney General/Fiscal General
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Salutation: Dear Attorney General

▶ Minister counsellor/Chargé d'affaires
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Salutation: Dear Ms Pérez Tuna

Karla Pontigo Mexico



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Accidental death finding ignores the evidence

On 28 October 2012, Karla Pontigo was found in her workplace severely injured. She died in hospital the next day. The Attorney General of San Luis Potosí concluded that the death of the 22-year-old was an accident. Yet her injuries were inconsistent with the alleged accident and the autopsy recorded evidence of sexual assault.

On 13 November 2019, the National Supreme Court of Justice ordered the Prosecutor's Office to open a new investigation, taking into account the possibility that Karla's gender may have been one reason for the killing. But the new investigation has yet to begin. Mexico has a long-established pattern of impunity for violent crimes against women, so this case must be investigated carefully.

APPEAL Ask the Attorney General of San Luis Potosí to open an investigation into Karla's death as femicide, and to bring to justice the authorities for the negligent first investigation into Karla's death.

▶ Attorney General San Luis Potosí
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Salutation: Ministro

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Salutation: Dear Chargé d'Affaires

Tran Huynh Duy Thuc Viet Nam



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16-year sentence for blogging

Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, a successful entrepreneur, is serving a 16-year prison sentence, to be followed by five years' house arrest, for blogging about political and economic issues in Viet Nam. He was arrested in May 2009.

At his one-day trial, on 20 January 2010, he declared that he had been tortured into making a confession. Eyewitnesses say the judges deliberated for only 15 minutes before returning with the judgment, which took 45 minutes to read, indicating that it had been prepared before the hearing.

Tran Huynh Duy Thuc has advocated economic reform and called for better governance, promoting education, democracy, reconciliation and transparency, with respect for human rights.

APPEAL Ask the Vietnamese authorities to reduce Tran Huynh Duy Thuc's sentence. Urge them to agree to prison visits by foreign diplomats, and to allow Tran Huynh Duy Thuc regular access to his family and appropriate medical care. Call on them to ensure he is held in conditions that comply with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

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Salutation: Your Excellency

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu Nigeria



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STOP PRESS

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu is to be retried. Please call on the Governor of Kano State to drop all the charges against him and ensure he is released immediately.

Singer sentenced to death

Singer Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, 22, has been sentenced to death by an Upper Shari'a Court in northern Nigeria for circulating an allegedly blasphemous song via WhatsApp. Influential individuals and religious leaders are mounting pressure on the authorities to carry out the judgement as soon as possible. Yahaya, who is held in Kano prison, is appealing the sentence.

He was not permitted legal representation before and during his trial, but was granted access to legal advice to prepare the appeal after human rights lawyers and activists pressured the court to respect his fair trial rights.

Yahaya was arrested in March 2020. On 4 March angry youths protesting against the song set fire to his family's house, forcing family members to flee. No one was arrested or prosecuted for the violence.

Ela, Anna and Joanna Poland



© Getty Images

Pride parade in Plock, 2019

Activists charged over LGBTI Pride poster

Three human rights defenders could face a prison sentence of up to two years. Elżbieta (Ela), Anna and Joanna have been charged with 'offending religious beliefs', a criminal offence under article 196 of Poland's Criminal Code. They are accused of using posters depicting the Virgin Mary with a rainbow-coloured halo – matching the LGBTI Pride flag – and displaying them around the central Polish city of Plock in April 2019.

Article 196 of the Criminal Code imposes undue restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and should be repealed. Ela, Anna and Joanna have committed no crime and the charges against them should be dropped.

APPEAL Ask the governor of Kano State to refrain from signing any execution warrant for Yahaya Sharif-Aminu. Urge him to release Yahaya immediately and unconditionally.

▶ Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje
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Salutation: Dear Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje

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Salutation: Your Excellency

APPEAL Ask the Prosecutor General to ensure that the charges against Elżbieta, Anna and Joanna for 'offending religious beliefs' are dropped immediately, and that they can carry out their peaceful activism free from harassment and reprisals by the authorities.

▶ Prosecutor General
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Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

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Salutation: Your Excellency

Rostov Prisoners of Conscience Russian Federation



© Elena Koimykova

Yan Sidorov (left) and Vladislav Mordasov

Years in prison for peaceful protest

Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov were prosecuted for trying to stage a peaceful protest in Rostov-on-Don on 5 November 2017, in support of local residents who had lost their homes when a suspiciously large fire swept through a prime city location. At the time, Yan was just 18 years old, and Vlad was 21.

They were sentenced on 4 October 2019 to a strict regime penal colony: Yan for six years and seven months and Vlad for six years and six months. On 10 December a court of appeal upheld their conviction.

Yan and Vlad are prisoners of conscience and say they were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

APPEAL Urge the Prosecutor General to release Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience. Ask for their convictions to be quashed, for both to receive adequate reparation, and for the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment to be effectively investigated.

▶ Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation
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