

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



MOHAMED BAKER
EGYPT

**LOCKED AWAY FOR
DEFENDING FREEDOM**

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

20 YEARS OF WRITING LETTERS THAT CHANGE LIVES

When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.

Twenty years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon. Over the following years, the idea spread. Today, Write for Rights is the world's biggest human rights event.

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to 4.5 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2020, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. Together, these individuals have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, freeing them from torture, harassment or unjust imprisonment.

This year's campaign channels this support towards people targeted for their peaceful activism, views or personal characteristics. This includes LGBTI activists, environmental defenders and peaceful protesters. These individuals have variously been beaten, jailed, shot at, harassed and intimidated. Through Write for Rights, they will receive individual messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. They and their families know that their situations are being brought to public attention and they are not forgotten.

Alongside the letter writing actions, Amnesty also speaks to those who have the power to change these people's situations, such as politicians in their



*Amnesty
International
Taiwan
letter writing
event,
December
2020.*

countries. Write for Rights also gives visibility to these injustices through public events, and garners international attention on social media.

Individuals and groups featured in the campaign in previous years report the difference that these actions make, and often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people care about them.

Often, there is a noticeable change in the treatment of these individuals, and other people and groups in a similar situation, by the country's authorities. Charges may be dropped and people released from detention. People are treated more humanely, and new laws or regulations addressing the injustice are introduced.

■ Read about the people we're fighting for: www.amnesty.org/writeforrights

■ Contact the Amnesty team in your country: www.amnesty.org/countries

■ Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R21

BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of online or offline settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family or an activist group. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity and any limitations. When participants want to take action on a case, discuss whether it is safe for them to do so.

The activities are all based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyze and question issues relating to the cases. This methodology allows participants to:

DEVELOP key competences and skills

HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY to form their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

TAKE CONTROL of their learning, and shape discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns

HAVE THE SPACE required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes.

■ If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/

■ Amnesty International offers online human rights education courses, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights campaign**: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn>



YOUR WORDS

ARE POWERFUL



ACTIVIST FREED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Nassima al-Sada, a campaigner for women's freedom, was arrested in 2018 for peacefully defending human rights. While in jail, guards beat her and banned everyone – even her lawyer – from visiting her. But thanks to supporters worldwide who wrote a massive 777,611 letters, tweets and more, Nassima walked free in June 2021, and is back with her family and friends.

FATHER OF THREE REUNITED WITH FAMILY

In April 2018, NGO worker and human rights defender Germain Rukuki was found guilty of a slew of sham charges and sentenced to 32 years in prison in Burundi. He was jailed before getting a chance to hold his youngest child, born just weeks after he was arrested. His family fled the country for fear of reprisals. On 30 June 2021, Germain was finally freed and reunited with his family, thanks in part to the more than 436,000 actions calling for his release.



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ONE STEP CLOSER TO JUSTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Friends Popi Qwabe and Bongeka Phungula were murdered while heading for a night out in May 2017. Until recently, their families had been distressed by irregularities and delays in the police investigation. However, in March 2021, police revived the case after receiving 341,106 petition signatures from the families' supporters worldwide. The police have completed their investigation and handed over the case to the country's National Prosecuting Authority. "I feel optimistic," said Popi's sister Thembelihle. "I feel like finally, something is about to change."



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ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries to be met only when practicalities allow.



Amnesty International Benin letter writing event, December 2020.



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

 CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.	Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights Article 2 Non-discrimination Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person Article 4 Freedom from slavery Article 5 Freedom from torture
 LEGAL RIGHTS Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.	Article 6 All are protected by the law Article 7 All are equal before the law Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile Article 10 Right to a fair trial Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection
 SOCIAL RIGHTS Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.	Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders Article 16 Right to marry and start a family Article 24 Right to rest and leisure Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education
 ECONOMIC RIGHTS Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.	Article 15 Right to a nationality Article 17 Right to own property and possessions Article 22 Right to social security Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being
 POLITICAL RIGHTS Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion	Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief) Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country
 CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.	Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!

ACTIVITY

ARBITRARY DETENTION

KEY CONCEPTS

- Arbitrary arrest and detention
- Fair trials
- Torture
- Human rights defenders

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants learn about the rights to liberty and protection from arbitrary arrest and detention. They begin by considering their own attitude to losing these rights, then by considering the real case of Mohamed Baker, before taking action to call for his release from detention.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **understand** the rights to liberty and protection from arbitrary arrest and detention, and how these concepts relate to their own lives;
- **identify** examples where these rights have been violated;
- **feel** empathy with those whose rights have been violated;
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign;
- **write** letters in support of and showing solidarity with Mohamed Baker.

AGE: 13+

TIME NEEDED

60 minutes.

MATERIALS

- **Background information: The Right to Liberty** (page 9)
- **Background information: Arbitrary Arrest and Detention** (Page 9)
- **Mohamed Baker's story** (page 10)
- Pens, paper, envelopes and stamps

PREPARATION

- Print copies of **Mohamed Baker's story** (page 10)
- Place two signs at either end of the room: "Agree" and "Disagree". Make sure that there is space for participants to position themselves along a line between the two signs

FOLLOW COVID-19 MEASURES

Be sure to comply with public health advice in your area during the Covid-19 pandemic. Conduct your activity in a way that ensures the safety of all participants and respects any necessary physical distancing measures.

If you are doing the activity online:

- **Choose** a platform that provides participation and interaction while being secure
- **Adapt** the activity to allow for relevant reflections and debriefing (in small groups)
- **Provide** technical support for participants to allow for good participation.

1 INTRODUCTION: WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Indicate to participants the two signs – "Agree" and "Disagree" – and ask them to stand between them around the midpoint. Explain that you will read out a series of statements, and after each one they should move towards the sign which best represents their opinion.

For example, if they fully agree with the statement, they should stand next to the "Agree" sign. If they agree more than they disagree, they should position themselves somewhere along the line between the signs, closer to "Agree" than "Disagree".

Read out the statements below:

- If someone is arrested, they are probably guilty.
- Prison is the best way of dealing with any crime.
- Parents should be allowed to lock children in their rooms if they are naughty.
- You should only imprison someone if they are a danger to other people.
- Criminal suspects should be held in prison until their trial.

After each statement, allow a little time for discussion and for participants to reposition themselves. Take a few comments after each statement from participants standing at different points: allow them to explain why they have chosen to stand where they have. The aim is to generate discussion.

 15 MINUTES



2. EXPLORING THE RIGHT TO LIBERTY AND FREEDOM FROM ARBITRARY DETENTION

 10 MINUTES

Ask participants what they understand by the right to liberty and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention. Does it mean that no-one can be imprisoned?

Share and explain the information in **Background information: The Right to Liberty** (page 9).

Ask at the end if any participants would change their position on the last statement in the previous exercise: "Criminal suspects should be held in prison until their trial".

If participants are doubtful, remind them that apart from the right to liberty, people also have the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

3. INTRODUCING MOHAMED BAKER

 20 MINUTES

Briefly introduce Mohamed Baker to participants using the information on page 10. Explain that he is a real person who spent two years in prison accused of false charges.

Ask participants to work in pairs and hand out copies of **Mohamed Baker's story**. Give them about 10 minutes to read the information and answer the following questions:

- What difficulties did Mohamed face during the time he spent in jail?
- Why do you think the right to liberty and protection against arbitrary arrest and detention is important?

Bring the group back together and collect some responses from different pairs.





4. TAKE ACTION



Explain about Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to write letters to support Mohamed Baker. Give examples from last year's campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be.

If there isn't enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative.

■ If you have time, you can share this five minute introductory video about Write for Rights: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/145/write-for-rights-a-short-guide>

■ Show participants the video of Mohamed Baker which can be found here: www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi using the following contact information.

Participants can use the template letter on page 11, or you can give them the following guidelines to write a more personal letter:

- Tell the president something about yourself to make this a personal letter.
- Tell him what shocks you about Mohamed Baker's case.
- Tell him to **release Mohamed Baker immediately and unconditionally, and to close all investigations into bogus accusations made against him.**

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

Salutation: Dear President

Fax: +202 2391 1441
Email address: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial

SHOW SOLIDARITY

1. Encourage participants to show solidarity with Mohamed Baker by emailing to express their support.

Email: supportbaker@protonmail.com

2. Post your messages of friendship and solidarity for him on Twitter or Facebook using the hashtags:

#Free_Baker and **#راقب_التي_رحال**

3. Like and follow the Twitter and Facebook accounts below.

Twitter: [@FreeBaker2](https://twitter.com/FreeBaker2)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/freebaker

HANDOUT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE RIGHT TO LIBERTY

The right to liberty does not mean that people can never be detained or imprisoned, but it does say that there must be a very good reason for locking someone up, and that certain safeguards must be met.

Some of these safeguards include:

- An arrest or detention must be carried out according to the law.
- It must not be arbitrary. For example, an arrest or detention without a basis in law is arbitrary, or where the law is vague, over-broad or incompatible with other human rights such as the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly or belief.
- The person arrested must be told why they are being held, and which crime they are accused of committing.
- They must be brought to trial within a reasonable time, or they should be released. It must be the exception, rather than the rule, to deny someone bail (temporary release while awaiting trial) and to hold them in jail before their trial.

If any of these safeguards are not observed, there has been a violation of the right to liberty.

ARBITRARY ARREST AND DETENTION

Everyone has the right to liberty. The arrest and detention of anyone without legal basis or due process of law, or because they are peacefully expressing their opinion, is arbitrary.

There are specific rights designed to protect people in detention from abuses. Everyone has the right:

- to be informed immediately of the reasons for their arrest and detention;
- to a lawyer from the moment of arrest;
- to inform their family of their situation;
- to know which authority is holding them and to have their detention registered immediately;
- to challenge the lawfulness of their detention in court.

PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE

Under international law, there should be a presumption that the accused person is innocent until proven guilty. Therefore, a suspect should only be detained while awaiting trial where it is considered reasonable and strictly necessary. Consideration should be given to the nature and seriousness of the alleged crime, as well as the circumstances of the individual, including their age and health. The decision must be regularly reviewed.



© University of York/Alex Holland

Mohamed Baker

HANDOUT

MOHAMED BAKER'S STORY

Mohamed Baker loves cats so much, he has five of them. A football fan, he's also into squash and motorbike riding. Baker, himself a Nubian, also enjoys Nubian music and culture. But today, the human rights lawyer can only dream of what he loves. He's in prison for defending some of the most marginalized people in Egypt.

In September 2019, he went to the prosecutor's office to defend his friend and was himself arrested. Authorities never put him on trial. Instead, they made false, terrorism-related accusations against him and threw him in jail – all because they disagreed with his human rights work. Baker heads the Adalah Center for Rights and Freedoms, which supports human rights and people jailed unjustly.

In jail, the authorities have subjected Baker to one cruelty after another. They didn't let him see his dying father. They've kept him in a cramped, fetid cell. And they've deprived him of a bed or mattress, hot water, outdoor exercise and even family photos.

Despite the risks of Covid-19 spreading in Egypt's dirty and cramped prisons, authorities are keeping people like Baker locked up unjustly without trial and are not even giving them face masks or sanitary gels to protect themselves.

Still Baker is hopeful.

"One day... we will continue our work [to establish] free societies," Mohamed says.



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HANDOUT

LETTER TEMPLATE

MOHAMED BAKER – EGYPT

The President
Office of the President
Al Ittihadia Palace
Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

Dear President

As a human rights lawyer, Mohamed Baker helps the people who need him most – those who have been marginalized and jailed unfairly. Now Baker, himself, has been locked up unjustly. Falsely accused of terrorism, Baker was never put on trial. Instead he was thrown in jail where prison authorities are confining him to his cell round the clock and cruelly refusing him a bed, mattress, books, newspapers – even family photos.

Defending people's freedoms should not cost him his own. I ask that you release Mohamed Baker immediately and unconditionally, and close all investigations into the bogus accusations made against him.

Yours sincerely



ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

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