

**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**RUNG PANUSAYA  
THAILAND**

# **FACING A LIFE SENTENCE FOR PEACEFUL PROTESTS**



# 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](http://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights)

■ Contact the Amnesty team in your country: [www.amnesty.org/countries](http://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/](http://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

## THE RIGHT TO PROTEST &amp; FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

## KEY CONCEPTS

- The right to protest
- Freedom of peaceful assembly
- Freedom of expression

## ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants will learn about the right to freedom of expression and peaceful protest. They will see how these rights are important to their lives. They will learn about the situation of young people in Thailand who are trying to exercise their rights. As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write a letter to demand justice on behalf of Rung and show solidarity with her.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **understand** the concepts of the right to peaceful protest and freedom of peaceful assembly and how these concepts connect to their own lives;
- **feel** empathy with people, particularly young people, whose rights to protest and to peaceful assembly have been violated;
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign and write letters in support of and showing solidarity with Rung.

AGE: 12+

## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes.

## MATERIALS

- **Background information: The Right to Freedom of Expression and Assembly** (page 9)
- Sticky notes
- Flip chart
- **Handout: Types of protest** (page 10-13)
- **Handout: Protest notes** (page 14)
- **Handout: Rung's story** (page 15)
- Letter templates from [www.amnesty.org/writeforrights](http://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights)
- Paper, pens, envelopes, stamps
- Optional: Internet connection and computer
- Optional: Video interview with Rung (seven minutes with English subtitles) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnNt\\_grlJFo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnNt_grlJFo)

## PREPARATION

- Copy the three handouts for each participant
- Print or display pictures of Rung
- For more information about Thailand read: "What is happening in Thailand: 10 things you need to know" at: [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/whats-happening-thailand-10-things/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/whats-happening-thailand-10-things/)
- Optional: To learn more about the right to protest and freedom of expression, explore Amnesty International's online courses: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course>

## 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. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: WORD CLOUD

Ask participants to write down on sticky notes the ways in which they commonly express themselves. Examples could be "sharing selfies", "writing poems" or "dancing".

Invite participants to put their sticky notes on the flip chart (or wall) so everyone can see their responses. Give participants a minute to look at the sticky notes.

Once the flip chart is covered with notes, ask participants why they express themselves in these ways?

- What does it enable you to do?
- Why is it important to you?

Ask participants to get together in pairs and discuss what the consequences would be if they were not allowed to express themselves in these ways anymore.

- Would it have a big impact on their daily activities and their friendships?
- How would it make them feel?
- Would they be upset? Why? Or why not?



15 MINUTES

Bring the whole group back together. Ask participants what came out of their discussions. What surprised them about the discussions?

Explain to participants that many people around the world cannot express themselves freely and that some people live with the threat or reality of being thrown into prison simply because they speak their minds or express themselves in various ways.

## 2. EXPLORING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

 10 MINUTES

Show the participants the four pictures in the **Handout: Types of protest** (pages 10-13).

- What do the pictures have in common?
- Where are the pictures located?
- What are the people in the pictures doing? Why?
- What would you do if you wanted to change society?

Read the **Handout: Protest notes** (page 14) out loud. Pause after each paragraph and ask the participants which picture is being described. Together with the participants, explore:

- Why have people protested in the ways they did?
- What do the protesters across all the cases have in common?

Tell the participants about the right to freedom of expression and assembly using the **Background information** on page 9.

## 3. RUNG'S STORY

 25 MINUTES

Reveal to participants that picture number one shows Panusaya “Rung” (Rung is her nickname, which translates as “rainbow”.) Rung is a student activist and one of a group of young pro-democracy protest leaders in Thailand, who has been speaking out for herself and her community. Rung takes part in the student-led movement Ratsadon, and is among the leaders of the United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration which is calling for social reforms and for everyone to have the right to comment about the society in which they live.

Distribute **Rung's story** (page 15) to participants and ask them to read it

Ask participants to split up into five groups, research more about Rung's story online and discuss the questions below. If they do not have access to online resources, ask them to work with information in the handout.

- a. Why is Rung protesting? What are her demands? Who is she protesting for?
- b. What are the difficulties she is facing?
- c. Why is it important that Rung can freely express herself? And for whom?
- d. What inspires you about her story?
- e. What do you think gives Rung the strength and courage to continue?  
How could you take action to support her?

Ask each group to answer one of the questions above (a, b, c, d, e) and other groups to comment and add their own findings.

After the last question let everybody decide if they want to take action for Rung.

■ Learn more about Rung and freedom of expression through our online game, **Rights Arcade**, available in English. Search for “Rights Arcade” in the Google Play Store or iOS App Store.







## 4. TAKE ACTION FOR RUNG

 15 MINUTES

Explain about Amnesty's Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to demand justice for Rung by calling on the Thai authorities to unconditionally drop all criminal proceedings against Rung and other peaceful activists. 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 Rung which can be found here: [www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos](http://www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos) (available in English).

### WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to the Prime Minister of Thailand, Prayut Chan-O-Cha, using the contact information in the box to the right:

You can give the participants the following guidelines to help them write their letter:

- Tell the Prime Minister something about themselves.
- Tell him what shocks them about Rung's story. She is a student peaceful protester and a human rights defender who just wants a better life for people in Thailand.
- Urge him to **immediately drop all criminal proceedings against Panusaya "Rung" Sithijirawattanaku and others charged solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.**
- Optional: You can use the letter template available in the letter-writing toolkit at: [www.amnesty.org/writeforrights](http://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights)

The Office of the Permanent Secretary,  
Government House,  
1 Nakhon Pathom Road,  
Dusit,  
Bangkok 10300  
Thailand

Salutation:  
Dear Prime Minister

Email address:  
[sarabun@opm.go.th](mailto:sarabun@opm.go.th)

Fax number: +66 2 282 5131  
Social media: @prayutofficial

### SHOW SOLIDARITY

Encourage participants to show solidarity with Rung by choosing one or more of the following actions:

Rung in Thai means **rainbow**, a symbol we can use to show our support to her. In addition, she loves **cats** so would appreciate any such detail in her solidarity cards and messages. If using social media use suggested hashtags:

**#RungIsMyRainbow #W4R21**

#### WHERE THE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS SHOULD BE SENT:

##### LETTERS OR DRAWINGS:

Amnesty International  
Thailand,  
139/21, Soi Lat Phrao 5,  
Chom Phon,  
Chatuchak,  
Bangkok 10900  
Thailand

##### DIGITAL MESSAGES VIA RUNG'S SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/panusaya.sithijirawattanaku](http://www.facebook.com/panusaya.sithijirawattanaku)  
Twitter: @PanusayaS  
Instagram: @overttherainbow





## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

## THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression is the right of every individual to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers. Freedom of expression protects your right to hold your own opinions and to express them freely without government interference. This includes the right to express views through public protests or through written materials, media broadcasts and works of art.

## THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Freedom of peaceful assembly is the right of people to come together in a public place for a common expressive purpose, such as for meetings, strikes, processions, rallies and sit-ins. The right to peaceful assembly means that someone can gather together with others peacefully without fear of being arrested or harassed by the police. In fact, the authorities have a positive duty to facilitate peaceful assemblies, so the police may be required to take special measures to ensure the safety of both the people assembling and the general public.

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are enshrined in international human rights law, including in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as many national legal systems.

## PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Although we have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, it is not an unlimited right. Sometimes governments have a duty to protect other people's rights or certain public interests which requires some restrictions to assemblies. But the circumstances in which the authorities can restrict freedom of peaceful assembly are very narrow and must be considered as exceptional rather than the norm.

Public health is one public interest. However, as a rule, there should be no blanket bans on assemblies. Each assembly should be assessed, and restrictions must be imposed only to the extent necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate end.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Any restriction of assemblies must be based on the objective to protect public health.
- The restriction must be effective in achieving the objective to protect public health.
- Restrictions must be time-limited and regularly reviewed as to their necessity and proportionality.
- If less restrictive measures are available to achieve the same objective, they should be used instead.
- Complete prohibition of a specific assembly must remain the last resort.



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HANDOUT

# TYPES OF PROTEST



© Kan Sangtong

1





## HANDOUT

## TYPES OF PROTEST







## HANDOUT

## TYPES OF PROTEST



© DMITRY MOTINOV/AFP/Getty Images

**HANDOUT**

# TYPES OF PROTEST





## HANDOUT

## PROTEST NOTES

1



A peaceful protest in Thailand in 2021, calling for justice and a better society.

© Kan Sangtong

2



In 2014, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Hong Kong, China, to call for democratic reforms in the city. The 79-day protest occupied key districts of central Hong Kong and became known as the Umbrella Movement. The umbrellas, used by the protesters to deflect pepper spray and tear gas, has given the everyday item iconic status, symbolizing resistance and the underlying social grievances. © Leung Ching Yau Alex

3



More than 1,000 people, including schoolchildren, protested against bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan on 6 June 2018, after a 20-year-old woman was murdered in a police station by her kidnapper. © DMITRY MOTINOV/AFP/Getty Images

4



This is one of a series of photographs of actions and events taking place in the USA as part of Amnesty International USA's Game of Drones bus tour. This brings Amnesty USA's campaigns and grassroots organizing around a secret drone programme into cities across the USA, building a mobile organizing space that directly incorporates local activists. This photograph shows University of Minnesota students taking action to urge the US government to end extrajudicial executions. Drone strike victims and their families have little chance of securing justice. © Amnesty International / Flor Montero





## HANDOUT

## RUNG'S STORY

Asked to describe herself, Panusaya “Rung” Sithijirawattanakul says she’s “humble and quiet”. The student and amateur violinist was once shy, but today she’s a leading voice in Thailand’s youth democracy movement.

Rung – which means “rainbow” in Thai – became politically active while studying sociology and anthropology at university in the capital, Bangkok. She bravely took part in protests for social and political change throughout 2020. By August, she had become a protest leader. Watched by thousands, Rung called for equality, freedom of expression and – what is a highly sensitive topic in Thailand – the reform of the monarchy. This unprecedented act propelled her onto the national stage and the authorities branded her a troublemaker.

Rung continued to lead protests for constitutional and social reform. Accused of provoking unrest, she was arrested in March under a *lèse-majesté* law that outlaws criticism of the monarchy. She was imprisoned for 60 days during which she was diagnosed with Covid-19. The authorities denied her bail six times. In defiance, she went on a 38-day hunger strike and was released on 30 April 2021.

Rung faces dozens of charges against her and, if found guilty, life imprisonment.

*“Once you step into the prison; you will no longer feel that your humanity is still intact,” Rung says.*

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Top to bottom: Images of Rung attending demonstrations in Thailand

# 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.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL  
SECRETARIAT**

Peter Benenson House,  
1 Easton Street,  
London WC1X 0DW,  
United Kingdom

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English, September 2021

e: [contactus@amnesty.org](mailto:contactus@amnesty.org)  
t: +44-20-74135500  
f: +44-20-79561157

[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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