

WRITE FOR

RIGHTS 2023

ORGANISING

AN EVENT

Activist Toolkit

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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INTRODUCTION

Write for Rights **EVENTS**

Every year, Amnesty International UK calls on activists to take part in Write for Rights and show their support for people enduring human rights abuses.

Since its early days, Amnesty groups and supporters across the country have organised a wide variety of events to encourage others to take action with them. This guide is designed to help people who are looking to hold their first Write for Rights event, as well as anyone interested in additional ideas for the campaign, such as ways to involve the wider community.

From concerts and theatre to bake sales at local clubs, Amnesty group and supporter events have helped to make Write for Rights the world's largest human rights campaign and activism event, with tens of thousands of people coming together every year.

For inspiration, read the campaign booklet for some of the many uplifting success stories that highlight the impact of activists acting in solidarity.

We want to hear from you

If you've organised an event or done something creative and impactful in the past, please tell us about it so we can share it with the movement to inspire others. Also let us know if you find this toolkit useful: email us at activism@amnesty.org.uk or contact your community organiser.



Letter-writing concert, Belgium



'Write for Rights really does have a positive impact. Their support has made me... come out of prison even more committed to defending human rights.'

Human rights defender Germain Rukuki, freed in 2021, four years into a 32-year prison sentence in Burundi. Supporters took more than 436,000 actions for his release through Write for Rights 2020.

PLANNING YOUR EVENT AND ACTIVITIES

For starters, define what your event might look like and what you're hoping to achieve. This will help to determine the venue, date, and how many people you need to make it happen.

1 Choose an event to host

Here are some suggestions:

- Hold a Write for Rights letter-writing meeting aimed at members and local Amnesty supporters.
- Run a group stall in your market or shopping centre.
- Ask your local faith group, church, mosque, synagogue or temple to put up an exhibition or display or to send a Write for Rights action to their congregation.
- Host a large-scale public event such as a concert or comedy night to introduce new people to Write for Rights, Amnesty and human rights issues.
- Organise a Write for Rights-themed AmnesTea. For a 'How to' guide, go to amnesty.org.uk/amnestea
- Run an event linked to the issue or the activities that characterises a case your group is supporting.

2 Pick your venue

When deciding on your venue, consider the next steps for booking it:

- Is it suitable for your event's needs? For example, does it have IT facilities, display backboards and power?
- How accessible is it? What are the options for ramps, lifts, toilets, seating and tables?
- Does the venue offer facilities such as a catering space or can you bring your own food?
- Does it have restrictions on numbers?

What else do you need? A cover for your market stall, for instance. If you're running a Write for Rights disco or live music Jamnesty, read our in-depth How to Plan a Jamnesty at amnesty.org.uk/resources/new-student-fundraising-guide-jamnesty

3 Who to invite?

Is your event designed for existing Amnesty supporters or do you want as many people as possible to come along? Write for Rights is a popular campaign proven to inspire more and more people every year. See how to approach new people on page 4. Think about the number of guests and send out invitations. Start assigning roles to people delivering the event and building a rota.

4 Read the resources

This guide comes with resources but you can go to the Write for Rights resources page at amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2023-get-started to order or download case sheets, posters, template letters, educational resources and more. Alternatively, email us on activism@amnesty.org.uk

5 Be safe, inclusive and responsible

- Make sure you run your event safely. For a copy of Amnesty UK's Public Liability Insurance certificate, email sct@amnesty.org.uk
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify hazards and mitigating measures ahead of your event. If you have any questions about this, contact activism@amnesty.org.uk
- Is your event accessible and welcoming for all people and cultures? Consider the location, advertising and invitation list.
- Read our Safeguarding policies at amnesty.org.uk/issues/safeguarding



WHAT'S NEXT?

What you need to consider now depends on your chosen event. Here are a few ideas you may find useful:

Does your event have a theme beyond Write for Rights?

For example:

- Folk music battle of the bands
- Christmas dinner party
- End-of-year school assembly
- Society social at your university

Do you need decorations?

Write for Right resources include booklets and posters, but can you think of anything else to make your event, stall or display stand out?

Do you need a sound system?

Check this out for music events, if you've invited a speaker or just for background music.

Will anyone be speaking (eg a panel, Q&A or presentation)?

For extra information on this year's cases and our Individuals at Risk work, email the Individuals at Risk team: iar@amnesty.org.uk

What about food and catering?

If you're putting on a dinner or bake sale, think about what type of food and drinks you want to serve, as well as timings and venue restrictions.

How will you engage a new audience?

You could hold an event at work at lunchtime or ask people to sign action cards in your workplace, school, library or community club.

As Amnesty supporters know more than most, stopping human rights abuses and helping people in difficult situations is serious and vital work. But there is also joy in solidarity and your events can be engaging and fun. Write for Rights is a great time for activists to come together and celebrate human rights successes over the year, as well as their own campaigning work.

Who can you invite?

However big or small your event is, it will make an impact. But if you're keen to reach out to a wider audience than you've done before, consider this guest list:

- MPs and local councillors
- Local civic society groups. For example, the WI, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Scout and Guides groups, faith groups, parenting groups, and other charities.
- Group homes, for instance for elderly people and adults with disabilities.
- People in your community who might be interested in the individuals, countries or issues in this year's campaign.

How to extend your reach

- Contact local media using the press release template on page 6. An interview, a plug on a radio show or an article can engage a broader audience.
- Spread the word about your Write for Rights event on social media, such as Facebook, using the hashtag #W4R23, or specific ones that link to individual cases (you'll find them in the main Write for Rights 2023 booklet).

It can be nerve-wracking to ask people you don't know to come to an event. Read the Eden Project's excellent tips on *Beating invite anxiety – how to invite people to your event*. This guide is tailored to a Big Lunch, but the advice works for any community event.

Visit edenprojectcommunities.com/big-lunch-resources/how-to-invite-people-to-your-big-lunch Or scan the QR code.



Build momentum

At your event, consider ways to extend the impact of the moment into the New Year and beyond.

Ask people to take a photo of their action and tag your local group, letting their friends know where they can take action, too.

Provide people with newsletter sign up forms so you can keep in touch. Also offer Amnesty membership sign-up forms.

Invite any particularly engaged people to your next group meeting.

Fundraising at your event

Fundraise at your event to help cover your costs and raise funds for your group and Amnesty International.



Live music event, Mongolia

Here are some suggestions – but feel free to get creative and try out your own ideas, too.

Quiz You'll need a venue, quizmaster and prizes (usually donated). Charge for entry. Between rounds, ask people to take action on a Write for Rights case.

Live music Busking sessions, open-mic nights, barn dances, day-long jazz concerts, inviting a choir or someone to play the guitar while people are writing – these have all worked for activists before. People are inclined to donate if they are being treated to live performances.

AmnesTea Serve drinks and cakes in return for donations, and write cards together. Bake your own cakes or ask a local supermarket or bakery to donate them. See amnesty.org.uk/amnestea

Raffle Approach local businesses and supporters for prizes. Sell tickets at your event and hold the draw at the end. This will keep people around to take action on cases and learn more about human rights.

Support and materials

Our Community and Events Fundraising team can talk through your plans, provide free resources and help promote your event to other Amnesty supporters near you. We will add your event to our events listings amnesty.org.uk/events. Email fundraise@amnesty.org.uk or call **07827 964313**. Also visit amnesty.org.uk/organise-event



Solidarity stand and posters

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Tell your local press about Write for Rights and your event. You can find your local papers and radio stations email addresses on their website.

We have created a template press release for your group to fill out and send. See [amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2023-get-started](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-rights-2023-get-started)

Include the below lines as appropriate for your group/activities:

Amnesty International [GROUP]

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
[Insert Date Of Release]

[TOWN/AREA NAME] RESIDENTS JOIN WORLD'S BIGGEST LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN TO HELP 10 ACTIVISTS FACING DANGER

Amnesty International [group]'s *Write for Rights* campaign launches to support 10 individuals facing human rights abuses [Town name] locals will join millions around the world sending letters, emails and texts to support people who have been jailed, attacked or disappeared. People across the UK can join to help 10 individuals facing abuses

Add details on any Write for Rights activities that your group is organising. Include details about media opportunities at the event, including photo/interview opportunities

Amnesty International [group] has launched its flagship annual letter-writing campaign, *Write for Rights* across [area], to support 10 activists around the world who have been attacked, jailed, harassed or disappeared for standing up for their rights.

[Town] residents are invited to join the global action which takes place across November and December. People around the world will send millions of cards, emails and tweets of solidarity to individuals or groups of people whose freedoms are being denied and will write letters putting pressure on those in power to stop the abuses being committed against them.

This year, *Write for Rights* - which is funded by players of the *People's Postcode Lottery* - will support 10 individuals who are suffering abuses, including:

Ahmed Mansoor from the **United Arab Emirates** is a father, husband, poet, blogger and human rights defender. Before his arrest, Ahmed regularly raised concerns about the detention, torture and unfair trials of dissenting voices in the UAE. He spoke about problems within the justice system and of domestic laws that breach international ones. Now, he too is locked away, held in solitary confinement without a bed.

Justyna Wydrzyńska is an activist from **Poland** who felt compelled to help a woman in an abusive relationship access a safe abortion. However, it is a crime in Poland to help a woman access an abortion outside of the two remaining legal grounds – pregnancy resulting from an illegal act such as rape or incest, or danger to a woman's health or life. Now Justyna has been convicted, setting a dangerous precedent and making access to a safe abortion even harder for those who seek one.

Rita Karasartova from **Kyrgyzstan** loves yoga, travelling and sewing traditional Kyrgyzstani jackets with her daughter. Now she is under house arrest, having spent months detained in a cramped cell unable to see or speak to her family. Worried about her people's access to water, Rita peacefully opposed a border agreement giving control of a freshwater reservoir to Uzbekistan. She has been charged with attempting to 'violently overthrow the government' and faces 15 years' imprisonment.

Rocky Myers from the **USA** is a Black man with an intellectual disability who has spent three decades on death row in Alabama for murder. Assigned ineffective legal representation, Rocky was convicted following testimonies blighted by inconsistencies and alleged police pressure. Sentenced to death by a judge who imposed a death sentence against the jury's wishes, Rocky was abandoned by his post-conviction lawyer, meaning he missed key dates for his appeal. Now he needs your help.

[Option: The XXX Amnesty Group is hosting its letter-writing event at [insert details]]

[Optional quote – amend and tweak as you wish]:

Amnesty International [group] spokesperson, [name] said:

'We hope that many [town name] residents take part in Amnesty International's *Write for Rights* campaign this year to make a difference to the lives of 10 individuals who are facing horrific abuses and urgently need support. Letters sent from [town] will make the noise about the injustices they face even louder and will have a huge impact.'

Sacha Deshmukh, Chief Executive of Amnesty International UK, said:

'The people we have focused on this year are fighting for their rights and the human rights of others. By joining this campaign, people in the UK – and indeed around the world – have the power to boost their chances of getting justice. Sending a letter or email might seem like a small act, but when sent in their thousands they can change lives: those in power are forced to take notice.'

'Amnesty's *Write for Rights* campaign – which has been made possible with funding from the players of the People's Postcode Lottery – helps to protect the lives of persecuted people every year. We hope to see people across the country getting involved to make as big a noise as possible about the injustices these human rights defenders are facing.'

Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign

Write for Rights goes back to the very roots of Amnesty International, which was founded in 1961, with Amnesty's early campaigners writing letters of support to those affected by human rights abuses, as well as letters of concern to governments around the world.

Successes from previous Write for Rights campaigns:

In 2021 Amnesty International campaigned for human rights lawyer Mohamed Baker, who received a presidential pardon on 19 July 2023 and was released from prison the following day. He is now safely reunited with his loved ones.

Cecillia Chimbiri and Joanah Mamombe were acquitted by the High Court in July 2023 of communicating falsehoods and obstructing the course of justice. The two – together with Netsai Marova, who did not face trial as she is out of the country – were arrested and abducted in May 2020 following a protest on government's failure to provide social protection during the Covid 19 pandemic. Amnesty International campaigned for them in the 2022 *Write for Rights* campaign.

ENDS

Background information

For more information on *Write for Rights* 2020 and for pictures, illustrations and further detail on the cases please contact [NAME].

Media contact:

For more information contact: (Name, number, email)

FOCUS CASES 2023

This year, as Amnesty UK, we are focusing on four cases where solidarity from the UK is likely to make a particular impact. After the campaign, you may want to continue campaigning for them and the rights they represent or defend. To highlight the context of their cases, Amnesty UK activists are sharing their insights with you here.

Read more about their stories in the Write for Rights campaign booklet or at [amnesty.org.uk/write](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write)

Justyna Wydrzyńska

Poland



Prosecuted for defending safe abortion

Determined to help a woman access a safe abortion, Justyna Wydrzyńska was sentenced to eight

months' community service in 2023. She co-founded the Abortion Dream Team to offer advice on abortion care in Poland, where abortion law is among the most restrictive in Europe.

Since the Law and Justice party gained power in 2015, it has systemically attacked women's rights and the right to protest, while taking control of the courts. Despite widespread protests, a total ban on abortion in almost all circumstances took effect in 2021, with devastating consequences.

Justyna's conviction sets a dangerous precedent. Without activists like her, there would be no support or access to information to help people make informed decisions about their reproductive rights.

- To campaign for Justyna and for abortion rights in Poland, email ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk

Ahmed Mansoor

United Arab Emirates



Locked up for 10 years for speaking out

Human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansoor was sentenced to 10 years in prison for his peaceful activism in 2018. He remains in

solitary confinement and continues to be denied access to medical care.

Since 2011, the UAE authorities have mounted crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression and association. Many dissenting voices have been tortured, forcibly disappeared, subjected to arbitrary detention and, like Ahmed, unjustly imprisoned. Meantime, the UAE continues to present itself as a tolerant and rights-respecting country.

It is in this environment of abuse and authoritarianism that the UAE is hosting COP28, an international conference on the climate emergency, held in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December. There is a valid fear that it cannot be successful in such a tightly restrictive context.

- To campaign further for Ahmed and for human rights issues in the UAE, email alma.rinaldi@amnesty.org.uk

Rita Karasartova

Kyrgyzstan



Under house arrest for protesting

Rita Karasartova is under house arrest after being held in a cell for months for speaking against a border agreement giving control of a freshwater reservoir to Uzbekistan.

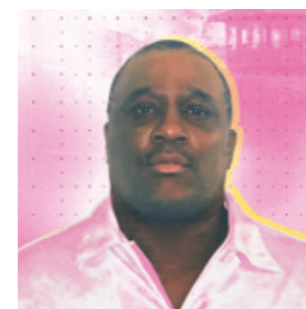
She was detained in 2022 along with 23 other activists in a politically motivated move to stifle state critics and peaceful assemblies.

An expert in civic governance, Rita is one of the first women human rights defenders to publicly cover law enforcement and judiciary system issues in the Kyrgyz language. Human rights defenders are subjected to attacks and harassment in Kyrgyzstan. Rita is now being charged with attempts to violently overthrow the government. If convicted, she faces up to 15 years in prison.

- To campaign further for Rita Karasartova and for human rights issues in Kyrgyzstan, email freshhta.salam@amnesty.org.uk

Rocky Myers

USA



Sentenced to death in flawed process

Rocky Myers has been on death row for more than three decades in Alabama.

He was found guilty of the murder of his white

neighbour in 1994. He has an intellectual disability, was burdened with an incompetent lawyer, convicted on tainted and inconsistent testimonies, and sentenced to death by a judge against the jury's wishes. Now he's one of 175 prisoners on death row in Alabama – despite all the faults in his case – with no evidence tying him to the scene of the crime.

His case is an example of what is wrong with the death penalty – and of the discrimination against Black men in the US legal system. By the year 2000, Black people made up nearly half of the US state prison population but only 13 per cent of the US population. In 2020, Black adults were imprisoned at five times the rate of white adults. Racial and class bias as well as intellectual disability affected the proceedings against Rocky. We oppose the death penalty in all cases without exception.

To get involved:

- In our racial justice work: email Amnesty's Anti-Racism Network antiracismnetwork@email.amnestyuk.org.uk
- In the campaign to end the death penalty: email deathpenalty@amnesty.org.uk
- In work on the USA: email lise.rossi@amnesty.org

OUR ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

When you are working with rights holders

Amnesty International as an organisation has an ethical responsibility when we work with people or act on their behalf. Any action, project or campaign needs to be rooted in these six ethical principles:

- dignity and agency
- duty of care
- non-exploitation
- equity and non-discrimination
- integrity and transparency
- confidentiality

These principles apply to your own activities and events in support of campaigns, for example, when you organise events, liaise with speakers, represent Amnesty at meetings, actions and protests, and research and feature people in materials. Working ethically is something we constantly have to remind ourselves of. Keeping these principles in mind will ensure that the people we work with and for are safe and treated respectfully, and that we make decisions that are appropriate and create positive impacts.



AI Mongolia's letter-writing event in Ulaanbaatar

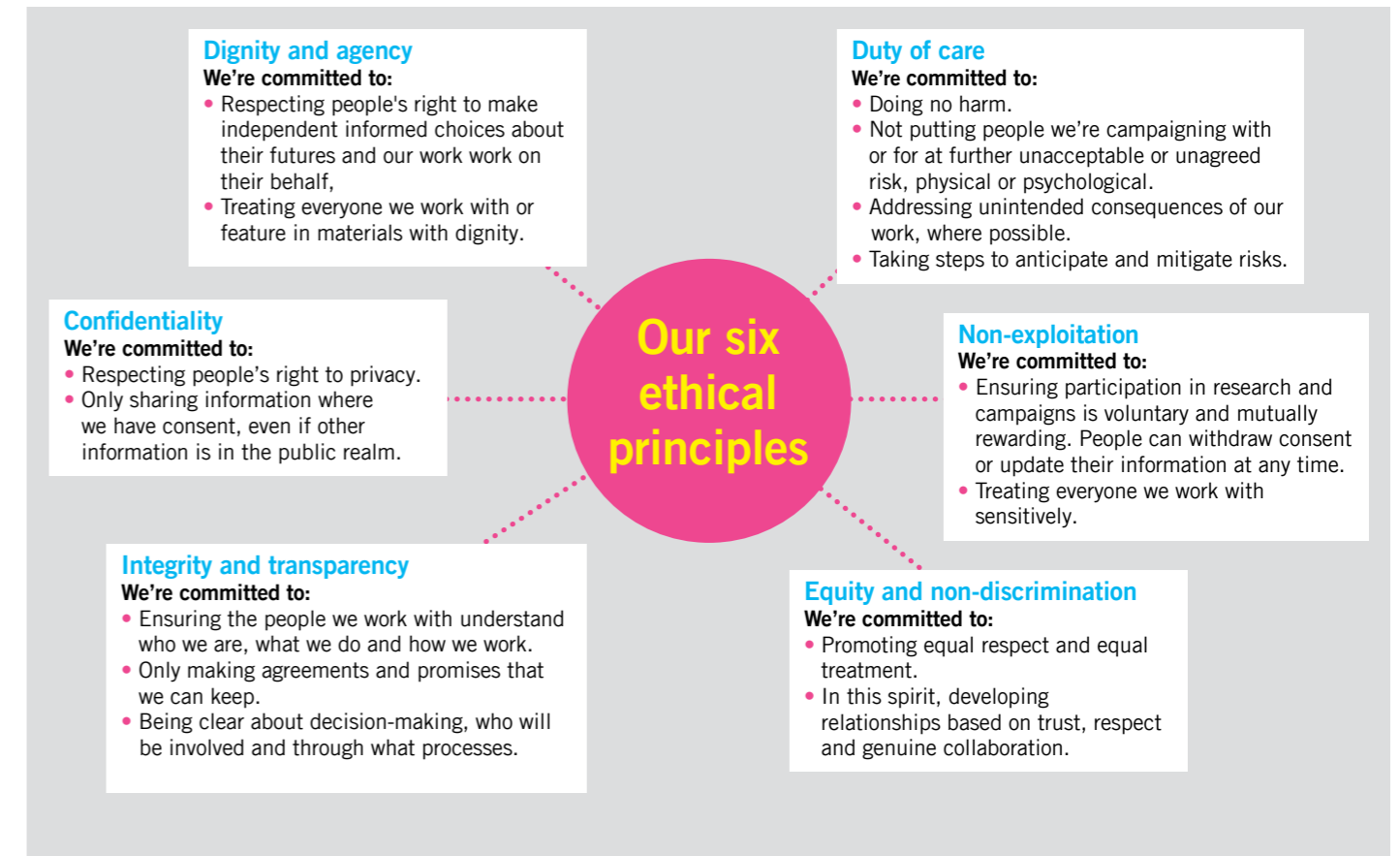
Why do we have ethical principles?

As activists with good intentions, it can be easy to assume that our campaign actions are ethical, that we are treating everyone with respect and protecting the dignity and safety of those we work for and with. Everything we do affects the fate and feelings of real people, whether this be campaigning or appeals.

However, due to the nature of our work, our best intentions can sometimes inadvertently lead to negative consequences. For example, when we're under pressure to quickly produce materials that grab people's attention or we're trying to live up to the expectations of others involved. There are also limits to our own experience.

These principles are guidelines to help us work well as a global movement. They can be referred to as a checklist to identify moments when we should seek advice from colleagues, supporters, and the people we work alongside.

- These ethical principles are designed to reflect and embody Amnesty's values as an organisation and outline how we should treat everyone – fairly, honestly and with dignity.
- They help ensure we're acting responsibly and guide our work.
- They serve as a statement to the public, donors and rights holders that we take good practice and acting responsibly seriously.
- Having a set of principles enables local interpretation but ensures consistency across sections and the Amnesty movement.
- They are a requirement of Accountable Now (formerly known as INGO Accountability Charter) as part of responsible and transparent advocacy.



How to apply our ethical principles to your own work

Here are some examples to think about and why it's important

Principle	Example	Guidance
Dignity and agency	Inviting a speaker to an event	Speak to the person beforehand. How do they want to be introduced and represented? What pronouns do they want to use? What part of their story do they want to be at the core of our messaging and communications?
Duty of care	Organising an event with a visiting human rights defender	Do not post their details or what they've said on social media without their consent. First assess the risks together, for example, reprisals when returning to their country for publicly criticising the authorities or associating with Amnesty. The same applies to developing content on an individual's case.
Non-exploitation	Writing a piece of communication to show how Amnesty has been effective in past campaigns	Do not include a case story from 10 years ago without checking if we still have consent to feature that person. Consent expires after two years – and can be withdrawn at any time. The information or the way it is appears may also have changed.
	Your group is building a new relationship	Undertake a cost-benefit analysis with that person so they understand how they can benefit from working with Amnesty – and what the potential risks are. Talk through the different ways we can support and promote their work. Be transparent about the benefits Amnesty may gain from the relationship beyond creating human rights change.
Equity and non-discrimination	Working with an individual	Equity means putting in place everything that is needed for a person to have an experience working with Amnesty equal to the one we have in working with them. This means ensuring equal power in an unequal dynamic. Create the space for them to say no, to suggest or implement ideas, and to advance or change the course of our work.
Integrity and transparency	Starting a new relationship	Be upfront about the limits of our expertise and abilities, and how and when decisions on work will be made, and include steps to ensure equitable participation. Record and share agreements. Don't say 'We'll stick with you till the end' because we can't promise that.
Confidentiality	Writing a press release or other materials	Only include information from Amnesty, not other sources, for example the web or media outlets. We do not know if the person has given consent for the information to be shared and for the way they are represented, or whether they are happy for Amnesty to use and act on the content.

If you have any questions or would like to talk through anything, we can provide advice from community organisers and fundraisers.

Please contact activism@amnesty.org.uk
or fundraise@amnesty.org.uk

