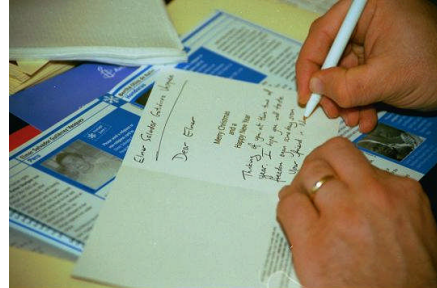


Amnesty International

How to Write Letters

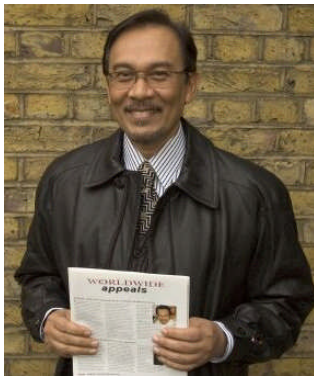


Since Amnesty International was established in 1961, people have written letters on behalf of victims of human rights abuses. Today hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world challenge injustice by taking a few minutes to write a letter.



It's easy!

Your letters don't have to be long or detailed and you don't have to discuss complex political questions. We always include clear advice on the key points to make.



It works!

"Write more and you'll affect them more. From my experience in government and in prison I can tell you that these letters work."

Anwar Ibrahim (former Prisoner of Conscience and Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia)

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Remember, your letter, combined with others from all over the world, can lead to dramatic improvements. Putting pressure on officials can result in torture being stopped, access granted to doctors or lawyers, death sentences being commuted, 'disappearances' investigated, and prisoners released.

Who should you write to?

We will always tell you who to write to. This can vary from heads of state to government ministers or ambassadors, or officials directly responsible for the victim's welfare, such as prison governors or local police chiefs. We will tell you how to address officials.

As part of our annual Greetings Card campaign (Nov-Jan) you can write directly to people who have suffered human rights abuses or their families.

General tips

- Always be polite. Take special care not to sound aggressive or offensive.
- Keep letters factual and to the point. Our researchers have been very careful to give accurate information and make the correct request for each case, so please follow the instructions exactly.
- Make it clear that your concern is about human rights and is not political. Remember, Amnesty International does not support or oppose any government or political system.
- Say a little about yourself if you want to - for example something about where you live or what you do. This shows that the letter is genuine and people from different walks of life are concerned.
- Write in English unless you can get an accurate translation.
- You can mention that you are an Amnesty member or you can write as an individual.
- Give your school address rather than your personal address.
- Letters can be hand-written or typed.
- Always conclude by asking for a response.

Find out how much postage you need to pay.
Go to: www.royalmail.com

Emails

Sometimes we ask you to send an email rather than a letter. Make sure you put a clear request in the subject line, so at least this message gets through even if the email gets deleted. For example:

- *Stop the execution of Carlos Manchez*
- *Investigate the killings in Jonestown*

Follow the same principles as for letter writing – keep the message simple and brief. Sometimes your email will bounce back – this may happen because officials have closed down the email address, or their account is overloaded by all our messages. If this keeps happening, write a letter or fax if you can.

Making an even bigger impact

Ask your local mayor, police chief, MP or football team to write or sign a letter, especially if you can get local press coverage for this.

Is it risky to sign my letters and give my address? Will that country refuse to let me visit in the future?

We have no record of this happening. Thousand of Amnesty International members sign their letters without experiencing any problems. However if you have close links with a country and have concerns, then choose another case to write about. In addition, we recommend that you give your school address rather than your personal address.

SAMPLE LETTER

42 Main Street
Somewhereon
United Kingdom

Give your school address, rather than your personal address

Date

Dear Prime Minister

Give the full name of the case

Re: Name

Follow the directions given to you

I am writing about the case of (name) who was arrested on (date) in (place). I understand that he is in poor health, and has been held without charge for several months. Please use your influence to ensure that he receives medical treatment and that he is charged with an internationally recognisable criminal offence and promptly brought to court or released.

Make a clear request

Please could you let me know what medical treatment (name) has received and when, and tell me when he will be charged?

Ask for a reply

I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Print your name clearly

Yours respectfully

Brenda Jones

Send Save as a Draft Spell Check Cancel

From: [Add Mail Account]

Insert addresses or enter nicknames (separated by commas)

To: President Jonas

Cc: Bcc:

Subject: Stop the Execution of Carlos Manchez

Please use your influence to commute the sentence of Carlos Manchez, scheduled for April 4.
I am extremely concerned that the state is continuing to seek his execution despite serious doubts about the reliability of his conviction.
John Smith, Aberdeen, Scotland

SAMPLE EMAIL

What next?

You may hear nothing

Sometimes you get a reply, but your letter may get no response at all. Do not despair! Your letter, along with hundreds or thousand of others from around the world, will have had an impact. As the ancient proverb says, 'it is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.'

If you get a reply

Please send us a copy of the reply. We will pass it on to the relevant person who will decide what further action, if any, is needed.

Updates on cases

Check the Amnesty website for updates. It isn't always possible to follow up on every case, but whenever we can, we will give you further information on the subject.



Letter-writing works!

In more than a third of the Urgent Action cases Amnesty works on, we hear of some improvement - torture is stopped, someone listed as "disappeared" is found, a prisoner avoids execution.

"I was beaten and verbally abused in detention. After a few days, the guards asked me, 'Do you know that your name is all over the internet?' After that, I was treated better before being released. The appeals sent by Amnesty members definitely had an effect..." *R. Abdel Bagi Mohamed Ali, Sudan*