

# **BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE**

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Celebrating 10 years of the  
**Human Rights Action Centre**

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Gregori Chiarotti

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# A HOME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Over the last ten years the Human Rights Action Centre has enabled us to achieve phenomenal change. It has given Amnesty International UK a platform from which to inspire, educate, train, mobilise, raise awareness, generate media coverage, and reach new audiences in the UK and around the world.

During this period we secured landmark human rights achievements, such as the historic, life-saving Arms Trade Treaty, and grew dramatically as a global movement, rising from 3 million people in 2005 to 7.8 million today.

From the Human Rights Action Centre we hold human rights-violating regimes, governments and multinationals to account and stand up for people at risk around the world. But the building is much more than an office. It is a human rights hub that in any given week might host live TV and radio interviews, talks by international activists, conferences and training sessions, art and photography exhibitions, plays, film screenings or book launches. An

estimated 150,000 people have visited the Human Rights Action Centre since it opened.

The Human Rights Action Centre is vital for our training and education work. Many children and young people – the next generation of human rights activists – visit on school tours and for events like our annual Student Conference and Youth Awards ceremony. We also host regular training and skills-share events for our activists and human rights defenders from overseas, including members of the Syrian Non-violence Movement.

Over the last ten years Amnesty and the Human Rights Action Centre have had some historic achievements – and with your help we can make the next decade equally successful.



**Kate Allen**  
Director, Amnesty International UK

‘Amnesty is all about people taking action to defend fundamental rights and freedoms... it’s an organisation that enables people to make real changes – to free political prisoners, change policies, and pressure governments. That’s money well spent.’

Dame Anita Roddick



**150,000**  
people have visited the centre to meet, learn and take action on human rights

# 10

## 10 YEARS AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION CENTRE

### Shone a light on human rights

Thanks to the Human Rights Action Centre's facilities and equipment, Amnesty UK ensures widespread media coverage of human rights issues. We reach almost 80 per cent of the UK population, raising awareness about torture, women's rights, the death penalty, and other human rights issues.

'Amnesty International [has] a better record than the foreign media in keeping track of arrests, imprisonment, torture and killings.' *Patrick Cockburn, the Independent's Middle East correspondent*



**2005 Amnesty Media Awards:** Host John Simpson with Jon Snow at the 2005 ceremony.



© Marie-Anne Ventoura

**2006 Mobilising people in the UK behind the Arms Trade Treaty:** Brazil's AfroReggae with Hackney schoolchildren.

### Secured the global Arms Trade Treaty

In the 1990s Amnesty started campaigning for robust laws to control the global arms trade and stop the flow of weapons fuelling atrocities. With the support of millions of people around the world we finally achieved this in late 2014 when the historic, life-saving Arms Trade Treaty came into force. From the Human Rights Action Centre, we worked with local groups to reach 636 MPs out of a possible 650, urging them to push for a global treaty.

## Worked to end the death penalty

Ending capital punishment is one of our key aims. In the decade since the Human Rights Action Centre opened its doors, 20 countries and six US states have abolished the death penalty.



© AI

'I owe my life to Amnesty... Now I am dedicating that life to campaigning against the death penalty and raising awareness about human rights.'  
*Hafez Ibrahim, released after four years under sentence of death in Yemen*

## 2007 Survivors' stories:

Sunny Jacobs, sentenced to death in the USA and later exonerated, speaks at the Human Rights Action Centre.

© Carlos Reyes-Manzo/Andes Press Agency



## Reduced violence against women

Our six-year Stop Violence Against Women campaign ensured UK ratification of the European Convention Against Trafficking and won the right for all women living in the UK to access support and shelter if they leave a violent partner.

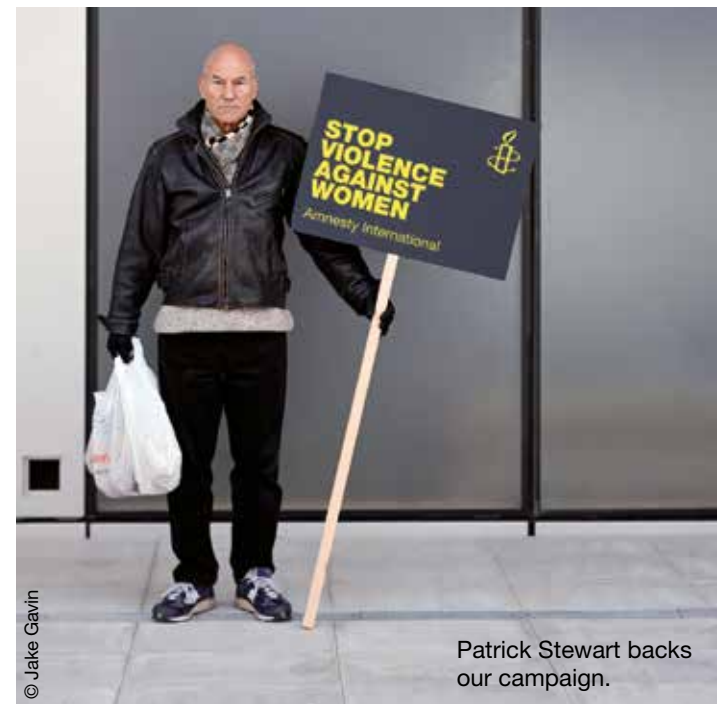
'When we first raised these issues nobody had heard of the 'no recourse' rule and how it trapped women in violent situations. Now you go to any part of the country and people will have heard of it and that's partly due to Amnesty'

*Pragna Patel, Southall Black Sisters*



© Marie-Anne Ventura

## 2008 Stop Violence Against Women



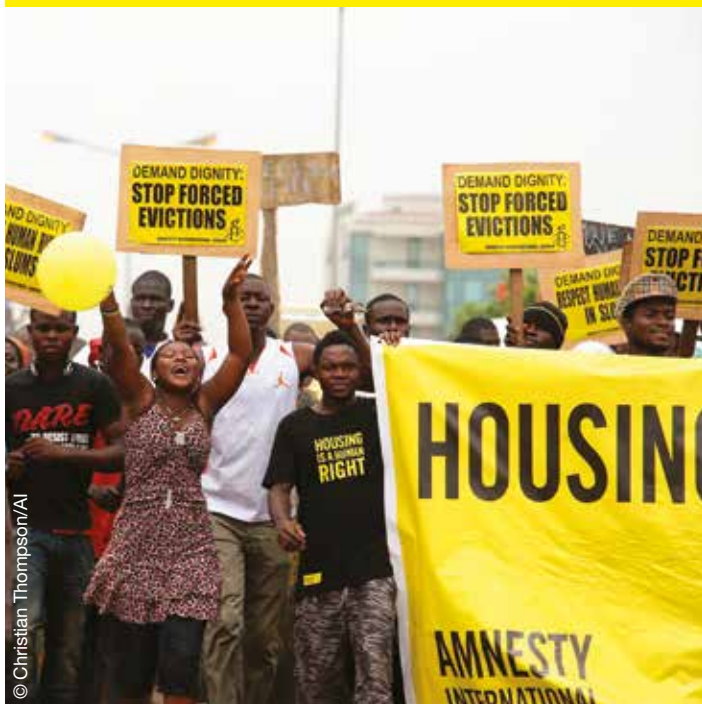
© Jake Gavin

Patrick Stewart backs our campaign.

## Supported our global activists

We are part of an international movement and work particularly closely with Amnesty activists in the global south. We've helped Amnesty Kenya tackle forced evictions and make human rights a reality for people in informal settlements. And they've helped us educate people in the UK about the meaning of human rights for the people of Africa's rapidly expanding cities. We have also held conferences for Syrian activists using the facilities of the Human Rights Action Centre.

**2009 Demand Dignity:** Kenyan activists take part in the anti-poverty Demand Dignity campaign, which launched in 2009.



© Christian Thompson/Al

## Broke through censorship

Ahead of Burma's long-awaited elections, Amnesty delivered radios to communities to give them access to independent media. We also lobbied neighbouring countries to build pressure for human rights reform. Over the next two years scores of political prisoners were released, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.



© Reuben Steains

**2010 Breaking the silence:** Radios paid for by Amnesty supporters helped break through the wall of censorship imposed by Burma's military government.



© Burma Issues

## Freed hundreds of political prisoners

Standing up for those whose rights are abused or denied is at the core of our work. Our support, campaigning and solidarity messages make a huge difference to people like Hakamada Iwao, who was the world's longest-serving death row prisoner, torture survivor Miriam López and Meriam Ibrahim, who faced execution for refusing to renounce her Christian faith.



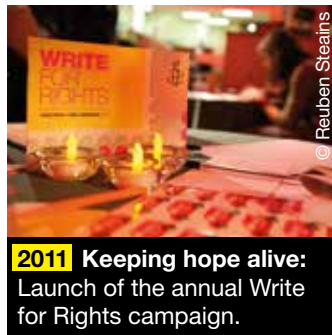
Meriam Ibrahim



Hakamada Iwao



Ihar Tsikhanyuk



**2011** Keeping hope alive: Launch of the annual Write for Rights campaign.

‘When I feel left with no hope to fight, I’ll get a letter and it inspires me. The light of hope appears again, and my confidence in myself and my ability to change things returns. I thank everyone for their support and solidarity letters.’

*Ihar Tsikhanyuk, LGBTI activist, Belarus*

## Held companies to account

Amnesty holds companies to account for their actions. From the Human Rights Action Centre, we campaign on behalf of thousands of victims of oil spills in the Niger Delta. In early 2015 UK legal action forced Shell to make a £55m out-of-court compensation settlement. Our painstaking research also empowered an indigenous community in eastern India to protect its traditional way of life, which was threatened by mining multinational Vedanta. India's Supreme Court ruled that local people should make the final decision on a new mine.

**2012** Clear call: Local artist Pure Evil helped publicise our campaign to hold Dow Chemical to account for the toxic gas leak in Bhopal.



## Stood up for women in Afghanistan

We have kept the spotlight on the plight of women in Afghanistan, ensuring they are supported, protected and involved in making decisions that affect their lives. In late 2014 this resulted in the publication of an EU-wide action plan for protecting Afghanistan's human rights defenders.



© Marie-Anne Ventoura

**2013** At a meeting at the Human Rights Action Centre International Development Minister Justine Greening announced continued support for Afghan women from the UK. Below: Amnesty activists with Baroness Warsi.

‘Organisations such as Amnesty are doing outstanding work to ensure that the voices of Afghan women will never again be pushed into the background.’ *Baroness Warsi, former Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office*



## Inspired the next generation

We inspire the next generation of human rights activists, working with teachers and students to develop a range of educational resources and activities.



© Marie-Anne Ventoura

‘I have been thrilled to see shy students come out of their shells and grow enormously in confidence thanks to their involvement in Amnesty.’  
*Sue Bingham, Henley College*

**2014** Our annual Youth Awards are just one way we encourage young people's enthusiasm for human rights.



© Marie-Anne Ventoura



# BUILDING A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Amnesty has always aimed to be a truly global movement. Our secretary general **Salil Shetty** explains how we are making it happen.

Amnesty's push to build a truly global people's movement for human rights is about making us fit for the 21st century. In contrast to when we were founded in 1961, there are now effective human rights organisations and movements in many parts of the world. The spread of mobile phones, internet and media, reinforced by the growth of democracy, has also empowered people.

And just as the human rights landscape is shifting, so is the global power balance. The increasing influence of economies such as Brazil, India and South Africa is redefining the geopolitical balance of power in unpredictable ways.

Human rights activists must be able to challenge governments in these countries on their human rights policies. To support this, Amnesty will dramatically build membership and create a large, diverse movement of activists across the globe.

A key first step has been for Amnesty's International Secretariat to move from a single centre to a more distributed system with organisational hubs in key regional capitals worldwide.

We have already implemented the first phase of this transition. Most of our Africa programme has moved from London to Dakar, Nairobi and Johannesburg. Our East Asia work is now run from Hong Kong, while Latin America work is about to move to Mexico and we are in the process of establishing a South East Asia office in Bangkok. We are currently exploring the possibilities for more regional offices in the Middle East, North Africa and the Americas.

We have also established significant presences in India and Brazil, and similar work in Nigeria is about to start.

As importantly, we are starting to build our strategies and approaches in a more ground-up manner—working directly with those whose rights are being violated, and combining this with international solidarity and leverage.

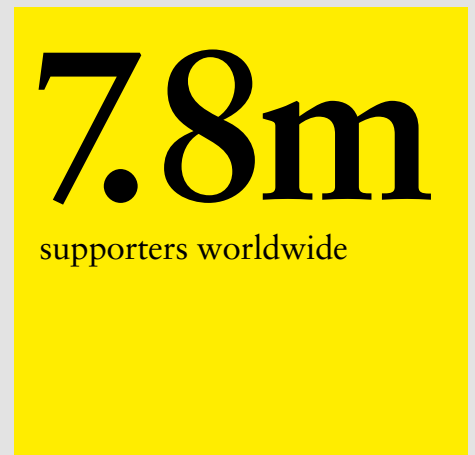
These shifts take a lot of time and effort, but for a global human rights organisation in the 21st century they are necessary.



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# THE FUTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Your support for our key campaigns is crucial for the future of human rights.



© AI

## Challenging draconian abortion laws

El Salvador has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Abortion is banned even if the mother's life is in danger, with harsh prison sentences for anyone accused of terminating a pregnancy. Women who have suffered miscarriages have been charged with aggravated homicide, which carries a sentence of up to 50 years in prison.

Working with local organisations, we are campaigning for the immediate and unconditional release of all women and girls who have been imprisoned for having an abortion or a miscarriage. It's part of our global My Body My Rights campaign.



© Marie-Anne Ventoura

## Defending human rights in the UK

The Human Rights Act makes it easier for all of us in the UK to claim the basic rights we have as human beings and to challenge public authorities if they violate them. Right now, this vital protection is at risk.

Amnesty will work to protect this vital law, mobilising our members, lobbying MPs and talking to the wider UK public about the importance of human rights.



© Massimo Sestini/Eyevine

## Protecting refugees and migrants

People are dying in the effort to escape war, persecution and poverty by crossing the Mediterranean. In just one incident this year, more than a thousand women, men and children drowned: the equivalent of five passenger planes full of people.

To prevent this, we are urging EU governments to put human lives first and mount an adequate search and rescue effort.



## Standing up for civilians in Syria

Amnesty is a core member of the 130-strong #withSyria coalition, whose campaigning led directly to the UN Security Council adopting several resolutions on Syria. We are working hard to persuade the UK to accept vulnerable Syrian refugees and to train Syrian human rights defenders and non-violent activists to help them develop an independent civil society.

© AP

## Supporting human rights defenders

Coal mining is one of India's biggest environmental and human rights challenges. Our research has shown how indigenous communities in coal mining states can lose their homes and livelihoods to expanding coal mines.



© Sanjit Das

To support local people campaigning for their rights, we provide training and digital alert systems (helping expose illegal expansion), and generate global pressure.



## Ending forced evictions in Kenya

We've helped thousands of people in Nairobi's informal settlements to secure better access to water, police protection and compensation for forced eviction. However, evictions continue.

We raise awareness of housing rights, help people take cases to court and work with the government to ensure that Kenya's legal system protects some of the country's most vulnerable citizens.



© Kinoti Imanyara/AI



© John Moore

## Stopping torture

Torture is illegal in the Philippines. In reality, it remains rife, used particularly by those employed to enforce the law.

Systematic beatings, electric shocks, waterboarding, asphyxiation, punches, kicks and degrading treatment are just some of the methods used to extract 'confessions' or extort money from prisoners, or simply to punish them.

As part of our global campaign to Stop Torture, Amnesty's researchers are collecting evidence to hold the state to account.

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

Thanks to you, Amnesty has achieved a lot over the last ten years. But in a world where people's rights are routinely abused, denied and neglected, we are still vitally needed. As the largest voluntary human rights organisation, present in over 150 countries, only Amnesty has the expertise and capacity to create global change.

As we push to build a truly worldwide movement, there are many ways you can help.

**£50,000** could help Amnesty establish a regional office in Bangkok to support local activists bravely campaigning on issues like torture, the death penalty and slavery.

**£28,000** could provide legal assistance to victims of illegal evictions in Kenya, ensuring they receive compensation and can rehouse their families.

**£10,000** could help our crisis team respond to critical human rights violations such as the situation in Syria, documenting the abuses, holding perpetrators to account, supporting activists on the ground and building international pressure to provide sanctuary for the millions of vulnerable refugees.

Contact **James Winkworth**  
Email [james.winkworth@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:james.winkworth@amnesty.org.uk)  
Tel **020 7033 1661**

## JOIN THE CIRCLE OF CONSCIENCE

Over 50 years of campaigning we have learned that lasting change takes time. It took 20 years to secure a global treaty to control the international arms trade, but we did it. We don't give up – and we'd like you to be there with us.

The Circle of Conscience is a special group of Amnesty supporters committed to giving an annual donation for three years. As a member you'll be with like-minded individuals dedicated to protecting the world's most vulnerable people from human rights abuses.

For more information and to join go to [www.amnesty.org.uk/thecircle](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/thecircle)



'For many years I have been a passionate supporter of Amnesty International's struggle for human rights and justice throughout the world. I hope you will join me so we can work together to transform the lives of people who are struggling for their rights and freedoms.' *Bianca Jagger, Circle of Conscience patron*

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