

**WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



**ZHANG ZHAN
CHINA**

**REPORTING ON COVID-19
GOT HER LOCKED UP**

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

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

ACTIVITY

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM
OF EXPRESSION

KEY CONCEPTS

- Freedom of expression

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

This activity examines the right to freedom of expression and relates it to the participants' lives, using the real case of Zhang Zhan. As part of the activity, participants are encouraged to write a letter in support of Zhang Zhan and show solidarity with her.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- understand the concept of freedom of expression and its importance and connect it to their own lives;
- feel empathy with those whose right to freedom of expression has been violated;
- learn about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign;
- write letters in support of and showing solidarity with Zhang Zhan

AGE: 13+

TIME NEEDED

60 minutes.

MATERIALS

- Handout: UDHR Article Cards (page 10)
- Handout: Daily Action Cards (page 11)
- Simplified UDHR (page 5)
- Background information: Freedom of Expression (page 12)
- Handout: Zhang Zhan's story (page 13)
- Paper and pencils
- Pens, envelopes, stamps

PREPARATION

- Copy the handouts for each participant/group.

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. MATCH RIGHTS WITH DAILY ACTIONS

Open the discussion by asking participants whether they have ever heard about human rights and what human rights they may know.

Introduce human rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) using the information on page 4.

Explain that they will be exploring how human rights are a part of our daily lives. Divide participants into small groups and distribute the eight **UDHR Article Cards** and eight **Daily Action Cards** on pages 10-11 to each group.

Ask the groups to match the rights with the actions (that is, which Daily Action Card is relevant to which UDHR Article).

Regroup and ask participants to discuss their answers.

They could look like this: (There is more than one possible solution for some of the rights)

Article 3: I walk freely in my town without fearing for my life

Article 12: I do not have to disclose my personal life to my teacher

Article 13: I can go wherever I want in my country freely

Article 18: I speak freely and practice my religion and beliefs

Article 19: I use social media and say what I think on different topics

Article 24: I play with my friends

Article 25: I go to see a doctor if I am sick

Article 26: I can go to school and study



Ask the participants to pick one or two rights and discuss what would be different in their lives if this right was denied.

Explain that human rights are universal and interconnected. Removing one right can have an impact on other rights. Share the **simplified version of the UDHR** (page 5).

2. EXPLORING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Ask participants to share their ideas about the following questions:

- What are some ways in which young people express themselves in your country?
- What are some of the ways that you like to express your ideas?

Ask participants to share what they understand by “freedom of expression”. Explore a little more with the following questions:

- Should there be any limits to what people can say or how they express themselves?
- If you were the government, how would you decide what should be allowed to be said, and what should not be allowed?
- Does it make a difference whom you’re criticizing? Why or why not?
- What do you think about criticizing the government itself?

Give participants some information on the right to freedom of expression using **Background Information: The Right to Freedom of Expression** (page 12).

3. ZHANG ZHAN’S STORY

Hand out **Zhang Zhan’s story** (page 13) and give participants a few minutes to read it.

Explain that, in countries all over the world, there are governments that try to control what a person says or expresses. By doing this, they are limiting the right to freedom of expression for people living in their country.

Split participants into pairs and ask them to discuss the following questions:

- What surprises you most about Zhang Zhan’s case?
- What human rights violations has Zhang Zhan been subjected to?
- What impact does government censorship, and other violations of the right to freedom of expression, have on people?
- How does censorship change society?

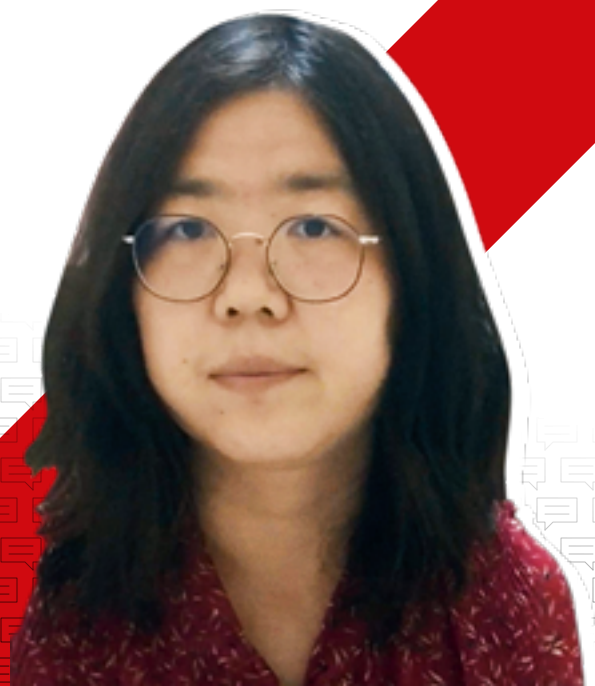
Ask participants to share responses from their discussions and highlight any other rights that may have been violated along with Zhang Zhan’s right to freedom of expression.



■ If you have internet access, watch this three-minute YouTube video explaining the right to freedom of expression: www.youtube.com/watch?v=711bdA9XLq0 (available in English)



■ Learn more about Zhang Zhan 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 ZHANG ZHAN

 15 MINUTES

Explain that Amnesty is encouraging people to demand justice for Zhang Zhan. 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 Zhang Zhan which can be found here: www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos (available in English).

WRITE A LETTER

- Encourage participants to write to the President of China, Xi Jinping, using the contact information in the box to the right.
- Participants can use the template letter on page 14 or you can give them the following guidelines to write a more personal letter:
 - Tell the president what shocks you about the case of Zhang Zhan.
 - Tell him why you think it is important that governments respect the right to freedom of expression.
 - Tell him to **immediately release Zhang Zhan**.
 - Ask that his government **repeals or amends all laws that violate the right to freedom of expression**.

Amnesty International Australia
Locked Bag 23
Broadway NSW 2007



Write for Rights letter writing event in Togo, 2020.



SHOW SOLIDARITY

Encourage participants to show solidarity with Zhang Zhan directly. They can write letters and post online messages expressing their support or any encouraging words to Zhang Zhan. Explain to the participants that their words will not only contribute to lifting Zhang's spirit but also alert the detention centre where she is being held that the world is concerned about her.

Encourage participants to send Zhang Zhan a postcard or letter that includes a landmark or scenery from their own country to the following address:

**Zhang Zhan,
No 1601, Zhangjing Road, Sijing Zhen,
Songjiang Qu, Shanghai 201601,
People's Republic of China**

Please note that all letters to Zhang will be opened and may be read by prison authorities. It is advised NOT to mention Amnesty International in these letters to increase the likelihood of them actually being delivered to Zhang Zhan.

SUGGESTED MESSAGE:

**Zhang Zhan, your dedication to reporting the truth will continue to inspire others.
We will continue to support you and look forward to the day you regain freedom.
Keep your spirits up!**

SIMPLIFIED CHINESE:

张展，您对报导真相的坚持将会继续激励他人。
我们会继续支持和关注您。
我们期待您重获自由的一天。
加油！

Take pictures of your actions, and post them on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using the hashtags
#ZhangZhan #张展 #FreeZhangzhan #释放张展
for your action to be captured on social media.



HANDOUT

UDHR ARTICLE CARDS

ARTICLE 19:**RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION****ARTICLE 3:****RIGHT TO LIFE AND TO LIVE IN FREEDOM
AND SAFETY****ARTICLE 12:****RIGHT TO PRIVACY****ARTICLE 13:****RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT****ARTICLE 25:****RIGHT TO A STANDARD OF LIVING
ADEQUATE FOR YOUR HEALTH AND
WELLBEING****ARTICLE 18:****RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF THOUGHT,
CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION****ARTICLE 24:****RIGHT TO REST AND LEISURE****ARTICLE 26:****RIGHT TO EDUCATION**

HANDOUT

DAILY ACTION CARDS

I USE SOCIAL MEDIA
TO SAY WHAT I THINK ON DIFFERENT
TOPICS

I WALK FREELY IN MY TOWN
WITHOUT FEARING FOR MY LIFE

I DO NOT HAVE TO
DISCLOSE MY PERSONAL
LIFE TO MY TEACHER

I CAN GO WHEREVER I
WANT IN MY COUNTRY FREELY

I GO TO SEE A DOCTOR
IF I AM SICK

I SPEAK FREELY
ABOUT MY BELIEFS

I PLAY WITH
MY FRIENDS

I CAN GO TO SCHOOL
AND STUDY

HANDOUT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ARTICLE 19, UDHR

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) protects the right to freedom of expression. Freedom of expression guarantees your right to hold your own opinions and to express them freely, without unjustified government interference. This includes the right to express views through public protests or through written materials, media broadcasts, the internet and works of art. This right is regarded as a very important feature in any society. We need a free flow of ideas in order to ensure that different opinions are taken into account and different ideas are aired. Limiting the right to freedom of expression also undermines transparency and accountability and makes the fight for human rights more difficult.

Freedom of expression is important not just to society as a whole, but also to individuals. Our opinions, thoughts and ways to make them known are a fundamental part of what makes us human, and stopping people from expressing themselves is equivalent to cutting off a part of their personality!

Legally, the right to freedom of expression can only be restricted in some very limited cases. Most countries, for example, have laws against racist or other discriminatory speech. However, limits to the right to freedom of expression are only permitted where these are necessary for the protection of specific public interests, such as public health, national security or the rights of others.

■ To learn more about freedom of expression, check out the Amnesty Academy's online courses: <https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/100/speaking-out-for-freedom-of-expression> (available in English)



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Citizen journalist Zhang Zhan has been detained in China since May 2020.

HANDOUT

ZHANG ZHAN'S STORY

When Wuhan – then the centre of the Covid-19 outbreak in China – first went into lockdown, Zhang Zhan was one of the few citizen journalists to report on the unfolding crisis.

Determined to get the truth out, the former lawyer travelled to Wuhan in February 2020. She took to social media, reporting how government officials had detained independent reporters and harassed the families of Covid-19 patients. Citizen journalists were the only source of uncensored, first-hand information about the epidemic.

Working independently of state-controlled media, citizen journalists face constant harassment for exposing information the government would rather keep quiet.

Zhang Zhan went missing in Wuhan in May 2020. Authorities later confirmed that she had been held by police in Shanghai, 640km away. In June 2020, she began a hunger strike to protest against her detention. In December, her body was so weak she had to attend her court hearing in a wheelchair. The judge sentenced her to four years in prison for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”.

Zhang Zhan was transferred to Shanghai Women's Prison in March 2021. The authorities continue to refuse her visits from her family.

“We should seek the truth and seek it at all costs. Truth has always been the most expensive thing in the world. It is our life,” Zhang Zhan says.

Top to bottom: Zhang Zhan attending court on 28 December 2020; Zhang Zhan's Youtube channel; Zhang Zhan.



HANDOUT

LETTER TEMPLATE

ZHANG ZHAN – CHINA

President Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
Zhongnanhai
Xichang'anjie
Xichengqu, Beijing Shi 100017
People's Republic of China

Dear President Xi

Zhang Zhan typifies the courage of investigative journalists who speak truth to power. Citizen journalists like her were the only source of uncensored, independent, and first-hand information about the coronavirus outbreak, publishing reports on social media and the internet despite constant harassment and repression. Yet, instead of being praised, Zhang Zhan received four years' imprisonment for daring to report what she saw. If the Chinese authorities are serious about combating Covid-19 and preventing similar outbreaks from happening again, they must stop censorship and respect freedom of expression – free Zhang Zhan immediately and unconditionally.

Yours sincerely





NOTES

A large, empty white rectangular area intended for taking notes. The area is framed by a thin grey border. At the bottom and left edges, there is a decorative border consisting of a repeating pattern of small, light grey speech bubble icons.

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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WRITE
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TRANS