



WATER DEFENDERS: RISKING THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

On March 29, 2017, outside El Salvador's Legislative Assembly, people protested against mining in the country. That same day, El Salvador's Congress approved a law that prohibits metals mining because of its negative impacts on the environment, including water resources, and on people's health.

Every day, throughout the Americas, courageous water defenders put their lives on the line to protect the lands and waters on which we all depend. In this issue of *Activist*, we celebrate the work of these brave and inspiring activists.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation facing human rights defenders has declared that the work of water defenders is crucial to protecting the environment, respecting Indigenous rights and achieving sustainable development. Yet, at a time when their work is of utmost importance to our planet, water defenders have never been so at-risk.

In Canada, defenders are questioning risky and damaging mines, hydro dams, forestry practices and state failures to protect the right to a healthy environment. In British Columbia, the Tiny House Warriors occupy their traditional lands by building tiny, solar-powered homes along the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline route. In Northern BC, Indigenous peoples and farmers are standing up to the destruction of the Peace Valley to make way for a hydro-electric dam. In Rigolet, Labrador, Inuit peoples are taking action to prevent the destruction of traditional foods such as seal and fish from methylmercury poisoning. These activists are part of a strong, connected and determined movement of water defenders from coast to coast to coast.

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KUMI NAIDOO WILL BE AMNESTY'S NEXT GLOBAL SECRETARY GENERAL

Amnesty International has appointed Kumi Naidoo as the next Secretary General of the global human rights movement. From August 2018, Kumi will succeed Salil Shetty, Secretary General since 2010. Kumi is an activist and civil society leader. His previous leadership roles include Executive Director of Greenpeace, Chair of the Global Call for Climate Action, and Secretary General and CEO of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Kumi said, "I have been an activist and campaigner all my life, so I am excited to be joining the world's largest people movement for human rights at a time when we need to counter increasing attacks on basic freedoms and on civil society around the globe."

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S VISION AND MISSION

Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights.

RECEIVING ACTIVIST MAGAZINE

To receive Activist magazine, phone **1-800-AMNESTY (1-800-266-3789)** and confirm you are a supporter. Published in print three times a year, Activist is free to all Amnesty supporters who request it. Change of address or problems receiving Activist? Contact Sue McNamara at our National Office by email at smcnamara@amnesty.ca

BRANCH FINANCIAL UPDATE

Fundraised revenue for 2017 amounted to \$13.443 million, slightly less than the amount of \$13.740 million which had been targeted in the budget for the year, resulting in a shortfall from budget for fundraised revenue of \$297 thousand. Income from other sources amounted to \$96 thousand, resulting in total revenue for the year of \$13.539 million.

Expenditures for the same period amounted to \$14.280 million, an amount which is slightly less than the budgeted amount of \$14.326 million. This positive result can be attributed to the fact that, during the year, there had been vacant positions in the Branch that had been fully funded in the original Operating Budget.

Table of Revenue & Expenditure (in 000s of dollars)

	Actual to December 31	Budget to December 31
Revenues		
Fundraised	13,443	13,740
Other	96	134
Subtotal	13,539	13,874
Expenditures	14,280	14,326
Net Deficit	(741)	(452)

There was a net deficit from operations for the year of \$741 thousand as compared to the budgeted net deficit of \$452 thousand. The shortfall in fundraised revenue can be attributed to a lower than expected amount of bequest gifts. Trends in the 2017 budget have been taken into account in the course of establishing budgetary levels for 2018. It is important to note that the figures above are preliminary, and that there may be changes as a result of the external audit of the accounts taking place in March of 2018.

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EDITOR: David Griffiths
(dgriffiths@amnesty.ca)

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National Office
312 Laurier Avenue East,
Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9
PHONE 613-744-7667 or
1-800-AMNESTY
(1-800-266-3789)
FAX 613-746-2411
E-MAIL members@amnesty.ca
WEB www.amnesty.ca

Toronto Office
1992 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON M4S 1Z7
PHONE 416-363-9933
FAX 416-363-3103
E-MAIL toronto@amnesty.ca

Vancouver Office
Suite 430, 319 West Pender
Vancouver, BC V6B 1T3
PHONE 604-294-5160
E-MAIL vancouver@amnesty.ca

RISKING THEIR LIVES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT



In 2017, Amnesty Canada's Tara Scurr and Kathy Price visited the Casillas peaceful resistance camp in Guatemala. The community is campaigning against contamination of its land by a foreign-owned silver mine. Tara and Kathy shared solidarity messages from Amnesty supporters in Canada.

(cover story continued)

In May 2017, water and Indigenous rights defenders from across Canada met with the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights to provide testimony on Canada's implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Speaker after speaker explained how vital it is to protect life-giving waters from mining, oil and gas industries, dam construction and agri-business. They spoke of how their voices are ignored by politicians and companies who prioritize short-term economic interests over the needs of Indigenous peoples. The UN Working Group noted these concerns in its initial findings and will report fully to the UN Human Rights Council in June 2018.

Environmental defenders in Latin America are also standing up to powerful economic interests in order to protect water. Latin America is one of the most dangerous places for environmental defenders. The UN Special Rapporteur has noted that 52% of all documented attacks in the world in 2015/16 took place in Latin America.

Despite the incredible danger, there have been some notable victories in the last two years.

In El Salvador, environmental defenders won a major victory when the Salvadoran government approved legislation banning metals mining in the water-stressed country. The science showed that the cost to the environment from mining outweighed the benefits. El Salvador was the first country in the world to ban metals mining.

In 2017, courageous Guatemalan defenders who were shot during a 2013 protest outside a Canadian silver mine had the way cleared for a lawsuit against

Tahoe Resources to go to trial in British Columbia. If the defenders succeed, the case will set a major legal precedent for corporate liability in Canada.

Peruvian water defender and Goldman Environmental Prize winner, Máxima Acuña, won a major legal victory against a US mining company and its Peruvian subsidiary last year when a Peruvian court threw out the company's lawsuit against her which claimed Máxima and her family had usurped company land to build their house.

We must take heart from these victories. Water is our common ground. Some would call it our battleground. It's where communities draw the line on profit over people and nature. When water is threatened, water defenders take a stand, no matter the personal cost. And we must stand with them. Please join us in solidarity and action to protect brave territory, land and environmental rights defenders.

TAKE ACTION

- › In Peru's Amazon and Andes regions, Indigenous communities' only sources of water are being contaminated with toxic metals. The Peruvian state has failed to provide these communities with safe drinking water or adequate healthcare—a violation of the right to health. Please go to toxicstate.pe and sign a petition calling on Peru to respond to this urgent health crisis.
- › If you are aged 25 or under, contact youth@amnesty.ca to find out how you can take action for water defenders through our *Extraction!* Art and Activism project.



Toronto youth activists held their first Amnesty Youth CAFÉ on November 30. The event featured an evening of inspirational stories, grassroots activism, and arts and crafts.

Amnesty supporters around the world marked December 10, International Human Rights Day, by holding *Write for Rights* letter-writing marathons. Amnesty supporters in Montreal held their *Write for Rights* event at the Centre for Sustainable Development.



© Laura Dumitru/Amnistie internationale



In Regina, Saskatchewan, Amnesty supporters held their *Write for Rights* event at the Artful Dodger Cafe and Music Emporium.



The *Write for Rights* event held at Toronto's Centre for Social Innovation was one of the largest of many letter-writing events held in the city on or around December 10.

On January 20, activists in Ottawa took part in the city's Women's March. The event was one of thousands around the world. One year after the inauguration of US President Donald Trump, protestors were declaring that women's rights are human rights.



The 12th annual Amnesty Toronto Reel Awareness Film Festival was held November 16-18. Filmgoers called for the protection of land and water defenders in Honduras and Guatemala.

DON'T SEE YOURSELF ON THESE PAGES?

If you attend or organize an Amnesty International event in your community, please share your photographs with other Amnesty members across Canada. Email high-resolution images with captions to members@amnesty.ca



© Tom Arne Brantvold

LET TAIBEH STAY!

Students demonstrate in the main square in Trondheim, Norway. They were calling on the Norwegian government not to deport their friend Taibeh Abbasi to Afghanistan.



TAIBEH ABBASI

STUDENTS CAMPAIGN TO KEEP THEIR CLASSMATE IN NORWAY

More than 1,000 teenagers flocked into the main square of Norway's third city, Trondheim, during one lunchtime last October. Together, they sang songs and listened to speeches as part of a protest to stop their government

deporting their 18-year-old friend, Taibeh Abbasi, to Afghanistan. Taibeh, who was born in Iran to Afghan parents, has never even been to Afghanistan.

"This case has touched many people," said Mona Elfareh, Student Council leader at Taibeh's high school. "Young people want to be heard."

One of those young people is Emma Marshall who leads Trondheim's Amnesty International youth group. "It was important to me to show support for Taibeh and her family," she said. "Afghanistan is absolutely not a safe country to send people back to."

A day after the protest, Amnesty revealed that European governments forced almost 10,000 Afghan asylum-seekers to go back in 2016, risking torture and even death. Amnesty called for a complete stop to all deportations because the country is simply too dangerous right now.

Meanwhile, support for the Abbasi family continues to grow. Headlines appeared after high-profile campaigner Malala Yousafzai shared Amnesty's video of Taibeh speaking about her situation.

By December, more than 100,000 people worldwide had signed Amnesty's petition asking the Norwegian government to stop forcing people back to danger. Amnesty youth activists in Canada and other countries organized solidarity protests. Canadian youth leader Parsa Mahmud helped shape the global campaign.

As the campaign continues, one thing is for sure: the youth activists in Norway can count on the support of thousands of people worldwide, who are backing Taibeh and others in her situation and telling Norway loud and clear: **#AbbasiStays**.

TAKE ACTION

Please call on Norway's government to stop Taibeh's deportation. Add your name to the petition at amnesty.ca/stand-with-taibeh

SIGN UP TO OUR YOUTH E-NEWSLETTER

The Youth e-newsletter features all the latest actions, opportunities and special events. Email youth@amnesty.ca with the subject line "Sign me up for the youth e-newsletter".

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018

Amnesty Canada's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on June 2, 2018, at 1pm Eastern time. This will be a small meeting, held at the National Office in Ottawa, Ontario. The focus of the meeting will be on essential business of the organization. There will be no subsidies available for travel to this AGM, no guest speakers, workshops or special events. The next large AGM will be held in 2019. For more information, go to amnesty.ca/agm

VOTE ONLINE IN THE 2018 ELECTIONS

Members will elect Amnesty Board Members using an online voting system. Only members can vote, nominate candidates, stand for election, and move or second nominations. To learn more about Amnesty membership and ensure you're eligible to vote, go to amnesty.ca/members

All members will be notified of the AGM 60 days before the meeting. In order to vote at the AGM or in online elections, you must be a member by May 3, 2018 (30 days before the AGM)

WANT TO JOIN AMNESTY'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

ENTHUSIASTIC? COMMITTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS? THEN RUN FOR ELECTION

Each year at our Annual General Meeting (AGM), members of Amnesty International Canada elect new leadership to the Branch's volunteer governing body, the Board of Directors. Could you be a candidate?

The positions of President, Vice-President, Treasurer and two Directors are up for election at this year's AGM to be held in Ottawa on June 2.

If you're interested in joining Amnesty's Board, or if you know someone who might be interested, please visit amnesty.ca/nominations for more information and contact nominations@amnesty.ca to start the process of being nominated. The nominations deadline is May 3, 2018.



LET PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS BE YOUR LEGACY TO THE WORLD

Join us as a Human Rights Guardian by leaving a gift in your Will to human rights through Amnesty International.



Please contact Hala Al-Madi at **613-744-7667** ext 223 or email halmadi@amnesty.ca

Visit Amnesty.ca/legacy for more information.

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Actor Sir Ian McKellen joins Amnesty International supporters at a protest over LGBTI rights in Chechnya. Men suspected of being gay have been abducted and even killed in Chechnya.

WHY PROTESTING AGAINST HOMOPHOBIC CRACKDOWNS WORKS

By Laura Carter, LGBTI researcher at Amnesty International

It's nearly a year since reports surfaced of a carefully orchestrated campaign by Chechen police in which more than a hundred men were abducted and detained within the space of a few weeks. Marked by its extreme brutality, the region-wide crackdown left at least three men dead, while many more were tortured in detention.

The only 'crime' of these men was that they were suspected of being gay. The victims reported that they were tortured in order to force them to 'out' others.

The NGO Russian LGBT Network laid out in harrowing detail the dehumanizing ordeal these men faced. They were subjected to severe beatings, electrocution, sleep deprivation, denied food and water, forced to sleep on concrete floors and routinely humiliated.

But state-sponsored homophobic persecution is not unique to Chechnya. Amnesty International's latest annual report on the state of human rights reveals the alarming scale of mass arrests and persecution of LGBTI people that took place last year.

Take Azerbaijan, for example; 83 people were detained in September in a police raid, with many beaten, denied access to lawyers and sentenced to up to three weeks in administrative detention. An

Azerbaijani government official was quoted in the media saying the raid was in response to complaints from locals that LGBTI people were not "respecting others around them".

The following month, 51 people were arrested in Indonesia when police raided a sauna in Jakarta, claiming that it was hosting a 'gay sex party.'

And at least 76 people were arrested in Egypt, for "debauchery" under the country's prostitution's law, after some audience members raised a rainbow flag at a music concert in Cairo in September. Several men detained were subjected to forced anal examinations, in violation of international prohibitions against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

WHEN DECRIMINALIZING HOMOSEXUALITY IS NOT ENOUGH

Beyond the flagrant persecution of LGBTI communities, these cases share something else in common: of the hundreds arrested, not a single person was detained under laws that explicitly prohibit same-sex sexual activity. This is because no such laws exist in these countries.

Russia, Azerbaijan, and Egypt are not among the 72 nations that explicitly criminalize sex between adults of the same gender. Neither does Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. Instead, police and criminal justice systems use other laws to harass, arrest and detain LGBTI people.

In Chechnya, the brutal crackdown was facilitated by a climate of homophobia and impunity for police harassment. Police can freely arrest people on inflated charges and Russian laws banning “the promotion of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors” could have also been a reason why there was no public outcry in Russia in response to this outrageous campaign.

Other similarly ambiguous or vague laws are being exploited elsewhere.

Those convicted in Azerbaijan were done so largely on the basis of police allegations that they were “resisting the police’s legitimate orders.”

And it is common practice to see scores of people charged with “habitual debauchery” in Egypt. This vague indictment is one that prosecutors often like to use against LGBTI people as it is not defined under Egyptian law, meaning that although it does not specify that it criminalizes sex between adults of the same sex, it is vague enough that it can be used to prosecute them.

GIVING GOVERNMENTS THE UNWANTED ATTENTION THEY DESERVE

So what does all of this tell us?

Firstly, it shows that while explicit decriminalization is needed, it is still not enough to ensure the full protection of LGBTI rights, which are also human rights. If they want to, law enforcement and other state authorities will find different ways to harass and criminalize LGBTI people and communities.

This tactic isn’t new, but 2017 saw its use becoming more widespread and increasingly flagrant. Vague laws, selectively enforced, create a chilling effect on entire communities.

But, more encouragingly, last year also demonstrated that people are more willing than ever to stand up to the persecution of LGBTI communities.

Amnesty’s latest annual report on the state of global human rights reveals the alarming scale of mass arrests and persecution of LGBTI people

Even in countries where homosexuality is taboo and where these communities have long been targeted by police, most governments still prefer to avoid the attention that widespread global condemnation brings.

Last year more than 650,000 people around the globe joined Amnesty International to protest the arrests in Chechnya. From Brazil to Ukraine to Taiwan, activists signed petitions, protested outside embassies and stood in solidarity with LGBTI people.

Instead of turning a blind eye to these human rights abuses—which is their usual response—the international outcry forced central Russian authorities to at least announce a “pre-investigation examination” of the reports of the purge of gay men in Chechnya.

A year on, no official investigation has been opened, which just underscores the need to keep up the pressure on Russian authorities to address this issue urgently.

The world is watching. No one should be harassed, arrested or killed because of who they are or who they love. Last year hundreds of thousands of people around the world showed they were ready to stand up for LGBTI rights. We need to keep doing so if we are to put an end to these brutal crackdowns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please go to [amnesty.ca/lgbti](https://www.amnesty.ca/lgbti)

Originally published in PinkNews



LGBTI rights activists at a Pride event in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Russia’s absurd “homosexual propaganda law” has been used to persecute human rights activists.



Amnesty supporters Jim Hutchings and Daylene Sliz wishing happy birthday to Amnesty Turkey's Idil Esner.

TURKEY: CELEBRATING IDIL ESNER'S BIRTHDAY

On Saturday October 14, 2017, Amnesty activists across Canada and around the world celebrated the birthday of Idil Esner, the Director of Amnesty Turkey. Idil was behind bars on her birthday facing ridiculous charges related to her human rights work. Happily Idil was released from custody, pending trial, on October 25. Amnesty continues to campaign for all of the charges to be dropped against human rights defenders in Turkey, including Idil and Taner Kiliç, Chair of Amnesty Turkey. Taner remains detained following a tumultuous 24-hour period in early February when he was ordered released by one court and then re-arrested by another.

TAKE ACTION

› Demand Taner Kiliç's freedom at amnesty.ca/free-taner

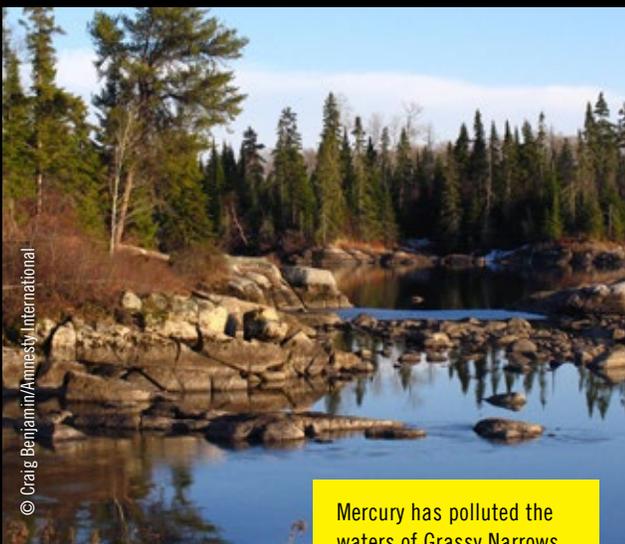
MYANMAR: AMNESTY SUPPORTERS STAND WITH ROHINGYA

Over 650,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have fled ethnic cleansing in Northern Rakhine state since August 2017. Military forces have burned villages to the ground, shot at people as they fled their villages and planted landmines on pathways leading to safety in Bangladesh. Amnesty International describes the pre-existing conditions for the Rohingya in Northern Rakhine State as apartheid. And the violence continues. In February 2018, Amnesty revealed how forced starvation, abductions and looting of property continue to drive people from their homes. The proposed return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar from Bangladesh is clearly premature.

The outpouring of compassion from Amnesty supporters in Canada to the crisis has been truly amazing. They have organized public events and gathered names on petitions, calling on the Myanmar military to immediately end its campaign of violence and ethnic cleansing. As long as the violence continues and crimes against humanity remain unaddressed, Amnesty supporters will continue to take action to demand justice and restore human rights for the Rohingya.

TAKE ACTION

› To take action on the crisis, go to amnesty.ca/rohingya-act-now



Mercury has polluted the waters of Grassy Narrows since the 1960s.

GRASSY NARROWS FIRST NATION WINS IMPORTANT VICTORIES

The Grassy Narrows First Nation in northwest Ontario has won two extraordinary victories in a decades-long struggle for justice.

In the 1960s, the Ontario government allowed a pulp and paper mill to dump tons of mercury into the river system that is the lifeblood of the First Nation. Independent studies concluded that widespread, debilitating health problems at Grassy Narrows are the result of mercury poisoning. Other studies found that mercury contamination in the river system remain at dangerous levels even today. Government officials denied the health crisis for years.

In the fall of 2017, however, the province finally agreed to fund a clean-up of the river system. Then the federal government announced that it would fund specialized medical care for those suffering from mercury poisoning.

For more information, go to amnesty.ca/grassy-narrows

MEXICAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS BRING A MESSAGE OF HOPE AMIDST CRISIS

Photo: Mexican human rights defenders Martha Camacho, Alicia Bustamante and Michelle Quevedo on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, February 2018.

As an epidemic of disappearances and attacks on Indigenous rights continue in Mexico, Amnesty Canada was honoured to host a visit in February by three women who epitomize hope for change.

Michelle Quevedo and Martha Camacho have lived the agony of a loved one disappearing amidst state complicity. They've joined forces with other families searching for missing relatives and together formed the National Movement for our Disappeared in Mexico. In November 2017, they achieved new legislation to confront disappearances. Now they are working hard to press for implementation.

With dignity and determination, Otomí Indigenous defender Alicia Bustamante is challenging injustice, corruption and repression to protect the sacred forest on which the community of San Francisco Xochicuautla depends for water, food and its cultural integrity.

Alicia, Michelle and Martha moved Canadian MPs, Senators, and government officials with their courage and determination to confront the human rights crisis in Mexico. They inspired Amnesty supporters to urge Canada to support their vital efforts.

TAKE ACTION

- Download our petition at [amnesty.ca/2018-mexico-hrds](https://www.amnesty.ca/2018-mexico-hrds)
- To support families of the disappeared around Mother's Day in May, please contact kprice@amnesty.ca or wait for the Spring Activism Guide at [amnesty.ca/activism-guide](https://www.amnesty.ca/activism-guide)

FROM CANADA TO CENTRAL AMERICA, WE STAND WITH THREATENED WATER DEFENDERS

During a mission in November 2017 to visit threatened land and water defenders in Honduras and Guatemala, Amnesty Canada campaigners Kathy Price and Tara Scurr delivered dozens of hand-crafted solidarity messages from activists in Canada.

The messages of support, coloured blue like the water that has become a human-rights battleground in Central America, were deeply appreciated by defenders at risk like Bertha Zuniga Caceres. She and other members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) continue to face attacks for opposing the impacts of a controversial dam project on the Gualcarque River.

"In Honduras, we met with government authorities and handed over more than 30,000 signatures calling for action to protect the lives and rights of members of COPINH," said Amnesty's Kathy Price.

In Guatemala, solidarity messages were delivered to community members targeted with smear campaigns and violence for speaking out about the impacts on water and crops of a silver mine owned by Canadian-based Tahoe Resources.

"These expressions of your support mean so much to us," said Luis Fernando Garcia, still recovering from being shot during a peaceful protest against the mine.

Amnesty Canada's Tara Scurr (top left) and Kathy Price (bottom left) deliver solidarity messages from activists in Canada to Bertha Zuniga (bottom right) and other COPINH defenders in Honduras.





© Habibah Haque/Amnesty International

CANADA FINALLY CREATES CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY WATCHDOG

A letter-writer at a 2017 University of Toronto Amnesty event calls on the government to appoint an ombudsperson for Canadian businesses. In January 2018, the government announced it was creating such a position to investigate allegations of human rights abuses linked to Canadian corporate activity abroad.

Canada will be the first country in the world to have an ombudsperson responsible for business conduct. On January 17, 2018, following an Amnesty International campaign, the government announced it was creating a Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise to investigate allegations of human rights abuses linked to Canadian corporate activity abroad.

Individuals and communities who have been harmed by Canadian mining, oil, gas and garment companies overseas will now be able to submit their complaints to the independent ombudsperson for investigation. The ombudsperson will make their findings public and will provide recommendations for redress.

This announcement is the culmination of over ten years of campaigning and activism by Amnesty International members and supporters, and colleagues at the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability. An enormous thank you to everyone who met their Member of Parliament and wrote letters to the government about this important issue.

The creation of the ombudsperson will help ensure that Canada is finally “Open for Justice”.

Some elements of the ombudsperson have yet to be defined however. Amnesty will continue to work with the Canadian government to ensure that the ombudsperson office will be credible and effective. In order to be credible and effective, we believe it is vital that the ombudsperson be free from political and corporate interference, and be empowered to conduct effective investigations, including the ability to gather evidence that may be in a company’s possession.

TAKE ACTION

Please write a letter to Canada’s Minister for International Trade:

- › Congratulate him on the creation of the ombudsperson;
- › Urge him to take all necessary steps to ensure that the ombudsperson is independent from political and corporate influence;
- › Underscore that in order to be effective, it is crucial that the ombudsperson be given the tools necessary to compel corporate disclosure.

WRITE TO:

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of International Trade
125 Sussex Dr
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

SALUTATION: Dear Minister

- › If you use Twitter, please send the following tweet to the Minister: *Thank you @FP_Champagne for creating a #humanrights ombudsperson to help ensure corporate accountability and remedy for people harmed. Remember, the credibility of this office will depend on its ability to access relevant information. #open4justice #power2investigate*
- › For more information about this campaign, visit amnesty.ca/openforjustice
- › To receive regular email updates about Amnesty Canada’s business and human rights work, please sign up at amnesty.ca/bhr-subscribe or follow us on social media at facebook.com/AICanadaBHR or twitter.com/AICanadaBHR



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SITE C: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS MUST PREVAIL

A solidarity demonstration in Vancouver in support of First Nations who are resisting the Site C Dam in the Peace River Valley in northern BC. The fight to save the Peace River Valley is far from over.

When he was in opposition, British Columbia NDP leader John Horgan denounced the massive Site C dam project as a violation of the Treaty rights of First Nations who will lose lands vital for hunting, fishing and ceremony. Yet, less than six months after being sworn in as BC's new premier, John Horgan announced that his government would continue construction of the dam.

“ To our allies, we say, ‘keep fighting.’ And to those of you just learning about this ruinous decision, don’t stand for it... Call, meet, write, email, tweet.”

– Chief Lynette Tsakoza, Prophet River First Nation

In making the announcement, Premier Horgan said that it would simply cost too much to stop Site C and pursue less destructive alternatives. This claim has been widely criticized by economists and energy experts who point to the findings of the recent government-appointed review of Site C. That review found that, even now, completing the \$10.7 billion dam is almost certainly the most expensive of many options.

Critically, however, even if continuing construction might be marginally cheaper for the province, such cost savings could never justify the deliberate violation of Indigenous peoples’ human rights.

Premier Horgan’s about-face on Site C illustrates a disturbing truth about public life in Canada. Despite public commitments to reconciliation, politicians of all stripes continue to treat the rights of Indigenous peoples as second class rights, to be honoured only when its convenient to do so. It’s hard to imagine a public official describing violation of the rights of any other group as a legitimate cost saving strategy.

Amnesty supporters have stood alongside First Nations in the Peace Valley in their fight to protect their lands and cultures. For the last two years, stopping Site C has been a campaigning priority for our Branch, reflected in the inclusion of an appeal in our annual *Write for Rights* event two years in a row.

First Nations have now been forced to once again take this fight to court. How the provincial and federal governments respond to the legal challenge launched in January will be a second critical test of the strength of their commitments to Indigenous rights.

Amnesty will continue to mobilize to hold both levels of government accountable, through ongoing letter writing actions, and actively promote public awareness and debate. We will also support the First Nations struggle by helping promote fundraising efforts to cover the costs of what could be a long and expensive court process.

TAKE ACTION

- › Please go to amnesty.ca/site-c-dam for the latest updates and actions.



© Private

IRAN:

CALL FOR THE RELEASE OF ACTIVISTS

Since 2013, the Iranian authorities have increased their repression against Iran’s courageous human rights defenders. Among those targeted are a new crop of young defenders, many of whom were born after the 1979 Revolution. They include a group of friends: Atena Daemi, Omid Alishenas, and husband and wife Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee. All four have been targeted solely for their peaceful human rights activities, including their involvement in Iran’s growing movement against the death penalty, which has seen anti-death penalty activists often accused by the authorities of “threatening national security” or “defying Islam”.

Atena Daemi, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee and Arash Sadeghi are imprisoned in Shahr-e Rey and Evin prisons, and are prisoners of conscience. (On January 24, 2018, Atena Daemi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee were unlawfully transferred from Evin prison to Shahr-e Rey prison.) Omid Alishenas was jailed in Evin prison until he was given conditional release in July 2017, though he could be recalled to prison to finish serving his sentence.

JOIN THE URGENT ACTION NETWORK

When an individual is in immediate danger of a human rights violation, Amnesty International mobilizes a dedicated group of letter-writers—the Urgent Action Network—to take action quickly to protect them. To join the network and receive regular Urgent Actions, send an e-mail to urgentaction@amnesty.ca with “I want to join” in the subject line.

TAKE ACTION

Please write to Iran’s Head of the Judiciary:

- › Call on him to release Atena Daemi, Arash Sadeghi, and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee immediately and unconditionally;
- › Call on him to ensure that Atena Daemi, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee and Arash Sadeghi are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that they are granted access to the specialized medical care they need outside prison;
- › Call on him to ensure a prompt, independent, impartial, and thorough investigation into the torture allegations of Atena Daemi and Arash Sadeghi, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in a fair trial;
- › Demand that the conviction and sentence of Omid Alishenas is quashed and his release is made unconditional. He must be able to carry out his human rights activities without harassment, intimidation, or reprisal.

WRITE TO:

Head of the Judiciary, Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office Number 4
Deadend of 1 Azizi
Above Pasteur Intersection
Vali Asr Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

SALUTATION: Your Excellency

SEND COPIES TO:

Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations in Geneva
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Secretary General, High Council for Human Rights,
Mohammad Javad Larijani
Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Esfandiar Boulevard, Intersection of Niyayesh Street
Vali Asr Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran



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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: HELP JESSICA PROFETA REGAIN HER NATIONALITY

Jessica Profeta is a 16-year-old girl born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents. Like other teenagers, she is full of hope and dreams for her future. She likes school and is passionate about literature. However, Jessica’s dreams are rapidly vanishing because, like tens of thousands of other Dominicans of Haitian descent, she was arbitrarily stripped of her Dominican nationality in 2013 and is now stateless. She is in a legal limbo, unable to access identity documents, and with no hope to continue studying at university in the future.

The impact of statelessness and the lack of identity documents have devastating effects on the daily lives of people like Jessica. Dominicans of Haitian descent are unable to exercise their most basic human rights, like access to education, formal employment and adequate healthcare, social security and retirement pensions, the right to vote, and the right to marry.

TAKE ACTION

Please write to the President of the Dominican Republic:

- › Call on him to ensure that Jessica Profeta’s Dominican nationality is fully returned and respected, along with all other Dominicans of Haitian descent;
- › Call on him to ensure that Jessica Profeta is able to access her identity documents without further discrimination.

WRITE TO:

President of the Republic Danilo Medina
Palacio Nacional
Avenida México esquina Doctor Delgado
Gazcue, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

SALUTATION: Dear Mr. President / Señor Presidente

EMAIL: prensa2@presidencia.gob.do

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/PresidenciaRD

TWITTER: @PresidenciaRD

SEND A COPY TO:

His Excellency Briunny Garabito Segura
Embassy of the Dominican Republic
130 Albert St, Suite 1605
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4



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CAMBODIA: DEMAND TEP VANNY’S FREEDOM

Tep Vanny is a symbol of peaceful activism in Cambodia and is currently in jail because of her determination to defend the rights of others. She is a housing rights activist and for almost 10 years has been defending her community in the centre of the capital city of Phnom Penh where thousands of families have been forcibly evicted from their homes by the Cambodian authorities

Along with her fellow activists, many of them women, she has been targeted by the authorities and harassed, beaten, arrested and imprisoned. The Cambodian government is attempting to silence her and intimidate other activists like her.

On February 7, 2018, the Supreme Court upheld Tep Vanny’s conviction of “intentional violence with aggravating circumstances” as well as her 30-month prison sentence for her peaceful participation in a protest in 2013.

TAKE ACTION

Please write to Cambodia’s Prime Minister:

- › Tell him that Tep Vanny is a human rights defender and prisoner of conscience, detained on baseless charges for her peaceful activism defending the right to housing and freedom of expression;
- › Call on him to immediately and unconditionally release Tep Vanny, and drop all charges and end all criminal investigations against her;
- › Call on him to publicly condemn and order an end to harassment and violence against human rights defenders, including unwarranted legal action and imprisonment.

WRITE TO:

Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen
Office of the Prime Minister
Jok Dimitrov Boulevard,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

SALUTATION: Dear Prime Minister

SEND A COPY TO:

His Excellency Ry Tuy
Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia
to the United Nations
327 E 58 St, New York, NY 10022 USA

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

AMNESTY
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Agossa, an Amnesty supporter in Lomé, Togo, inspires schoolchildren to join *Write for Rights*, Amnesty's global letter-writing campaign and the world's biggest human rights event. "Everyone has rights," Agossa says. "There are people in prison who have done nothing wrong. I want to help raise awareness among the children."

Now in its 15th year, *Write for Rights* 2017 prompted tens of thousands of people to pick up their pens and write for someone's freedom in every region of the world. **The final numbers are still being tallied, but so far the global count of actions stands at more than 5 million. In Canada alone, there were more than 1,500 events and more than 70,000 actions taken.**

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