

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GREETINGS CARD CAMPAIGN 2009 **GUIDELINES AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



About the campaign

Amnesty International's annual Greetings Card Campaign brings people across the world in touch with each other in a simple way – sending a card with a friendly greeting or message of solidarity to someone who is in danger or unjustly imprisoned. These are prisoners of conscience, people under sentence of death, human rights defenders under threat because of their work, and others at risk.

The campaign, which runs from November 1 to January 31, offers hope and encouragement to the people who receive our cards. It can also help bring about change - the impression their international mail makes on police, prison staff or political authorities can help keep them safe.

Guidelines for sending cards

Please send messages of goodwill taking note of these recommendations:

- Do not use cards with Amnesty's name or logo, or mention Amnesty in your message (unless otherwise stated)
- Simple messages of goodwill are enough. Never include political comments
- As a rule, only send non-religious cards. In cases where we say religious cards can be sent, you may send either a card of any religion or a card of a specific religion as directed, without causing offence or posing a threat. When a non-religious card is advised, avoid referring to religion in your message. For example, rather than writing "you are in our prayers", write "you are in our thoughts"
- Put your name and address (including country) on your card, except if we specifically ask you not to. If you receive a reply please send a copy to Amnesty International
- Write your message in English or your first language. Only write in the recipient's language if you are confident your message will be accurate. Suggested messages translated into the recipient's first language are available for some cases
- Take note of the instructions for addressing your card
- Use airmail stickers for sending cards overseas
- Note: the campaign runs until January 31, 2010

Frequently asked questions

How are the cases selected?

We choose cases where we know that receiving cards will benefit the individual, their family, or the members and staff of an organisation. We also check that the people are happy to feature in the campaign, and that it is safe for them to receive cards and to have their address published. We try to cover a variety of countries, human rights issues and different sorts of people in the campaign.

Why send cards to organisations and families as well as individuals?

In many places, the staff or members of non-governmental organisations or community groups may be under threat because they are defending human rights. This makes their work difficult and frightening. Receiving a mass of cards can really boost morale. When you send a card to one of the organisations featured in the campaign, you are writing to a group of people, not a faceless bureaucracy. And you are telling them that you appreciate the value of their work and recognise the risks they face.

It is not always possible to write directly to an individual victim of human rights violations, for example when someone has 'disappeared' or where the authorities withhold or limit prisoners' mail. In such cases the family can benefit from the support and may eventually be able to tell the individual about the cards.

Why send cards only between November 1 and January 31?

Many cards arriving in a shorter period makes a bigger impact, both on the recipients and on the authorities, than a trickle of cards through the year.

Also, we check that it is safe for the recipients to receive cards during the three months of the campaign, but we cannot guarantee this will continue indefinitely.

What about the rest of the year?

If you want to take action after January 31, you can download the casesheets available online for each case. You can also join the Urgent Action scheme, which protects people in immediate danger. Visit amnesty.ca/urgentaction for more information.

Is it all right to continue writing to people featured in the campaign after January 31?

To check whether it is still safe and desirable to write to a particular person check the cases page online at amnesty.org.uk.

Is it all right to send religious cards? And can they be of any religion, or only the religion of the recipient or country the card is going to?

As a rule, send non-religious cards. Only send religious cards when this is recommended or given as an option in the campaign leaflet.

Many religious festivals coincide with the campaign period, for example Divali, Hanukah and Eid, so Christmas cards are not the only option.

Unless otherwise stated in the instructions for the case, when religious cards may be sent, you can send a card of any religion without causing offence or posing a threat.

If the recommendation is to send non-religious cards only, then a religious symbol from any religion (e.g. cross, nativity scene, star and crescent, Buddha, etc) will not be acceptable. It may endanger the recipient or cause offence.

When a non-religious card is recommended, avoid referring to religion in your message. For example, rather than 'you are in our prayers' you can write 'you are in our thoughts'.

What counts as a non-religious card and where can I buy one?

Many cards sold around Christmas time are non-religious, for example those illustrated with snowy scenes, fir trees or robins. These are acceptable and pose no danger to prisoners.

The message "Season's Greetings" is non-religious. Card shops also sell cards with non-religious pictures and the inside left blank.

Why must I avoid mentioning Amnesty International in the message?

People who are in danger or in prison because of their political beliefs may be at greater risk if the authorities associate them with Amnesty's human rights work. Expressions of solidarity from individual people are important, it is the organisations association which could be problematic in some cases and should be avoided.

Can I send cards produced by other non-governmental organisations?

This is usually fine as long as their work cannot be considered political.

What do I write?

Simple messages of solidarity and goodwill are enough, especially if you are not writing in the recipient's first language. For example: 'Wishing you peace and happiness for the future' or 'Thinking of you'.

Never advance your political opinions or discuss politics. Do not mention Amnesty.

Why should I give my name and address on the cards? And is this safe?

Writing your name and address (unless we recommend otherwise) shows that the cards come from real people and shows the breadth of international support. It also gives the recipient the opportunity to write back.

If you are worried about giving your full name and address, just write your initials and the name of your city or country. If you are worried because you have family, friends or business contacts in a particular country, you may prefer to choose a different case.