



Write for Rights

The World's biggest annual human rights event



Write 4 Rights

Success Stories

“AMNESTY ACTIVISTS ARE MY HEROS”

MOSES AKATUGBA



LAST YEAR YOU HELPED FREE MOSES AKATUGBA

When he was only 16 years old, in 2005, Moses Akatugba was arrested, tortured, and eventually sentenced to death for a robbery he says he did not commit. Last year, he was one of the Write for Rights cases. Now, he is free.



Yorm Bopha—was jailed in Cambodia after protesting against forced evictions in her community—was released in November 2013 after authorities received nearly 253,000 letters from Amnesty supporters during its ***2013 Write for Rights***

“I thank all of the people who devoted their time to write to the government. I am very happy to know that we are not alone.”

“...Recently [Mikhail] received a letter from the UK where, not quite correctly but very diligently, somebody wrote in Russian several phrases of support. He told me about it and smiled a little at last.”

-Vladimir Akimenkov and Ksenia met with Amnesty and Ksenia spoke about her brother, Mikhail Kosenko.

In ***2013 Write for Rights***, letters from Amnesty supporters focused attention on three activists arrested following a protest in Bolotnaya Square, Moscow. The pressure on **Russia** led to the **release** of two of them, **Vladimir Akimenkov** and **Mikhail Kosenko**.



“It is very important for us [LGBTI community] and for me personally. When I feel I am left with no hope or will to fight, I'll get a letter out and it will inspire me and a light of hope appears again. The confidence in myself and ability to change something returns!”

-Ihar Tsikhanyuk



Ihar was a case in **2013** ***Write for Rights***. He was arrested in February 2013, beaten and subjected to threats and abuse for being openly gay. The arrest came one month after he attempted to register LGBTI rights NGO Human Rights Center Lambda in Belarus. He has been released without charge and created a support group for families of gay children.



In July 1999, the authorities were trying to find **Ma Khin Khin Leh's** husband **Kyaw Wunna**. When they could not find him, the authorities arrested Ma Khin Khin Leh instead. She was then sentenced to life in prison.

She was featured in ***2008 Write for Rights*** and was set free in Myanmar in February 2009.

“Amnesty International's support is one of the reasons that I was released. Your messages gave me a sense of solidarity.”

-Musaad Abu Fagr
was a **2009 Write for Rights** case.

In July 2010 the authorities in **Egypt** released this Bedouin writer and activist from detention.



*ur letters kept
e alive at the
kest hours of
d.”*

ukan Mideksa,
isoned for exercising
ight to freedom of
ession. She was
red in Amnesty's
9 Write for Rights

government in
opia released her after
served 21 months of a
entence.





“Amnesty International members are living proof that this world can be a better place. I would like to thank the members... for taking time out of their lives to protect us.”

-Father Solalinde, featured in *2010 Write for Rights*, is no longer harassed for protecting the rights of migrant workers in Mexico.

Su Su Nway served 7 years for acts of political protest in Myanmar. Amnesty advocated for her as a prisoner of conscience leading to her release in 2011. She sent a message of thanks to all those who campaigned for her release in the ***2010 Write for Rights***





“I wanted a laptop for Christmas, but I got my father back, the biggest Christmas present ever.”

-Femi Peters Jr., son of Femi Peters (pictured left), who was released in Gambia on Human Rights Day, and was a feature case in 2010 Write for Rights.



The ***2011 Write for Rights*** made it possible for **Halil Savda** to **travel to France** to talk about the situation of conscientious objectors in **Turkey**, his home country.

His visit highlighted the many restrictions on free expression in the country.



“I am **alive today** because the international community has heard about our work... Amnesty helped us to amplify our voice and they gave us incredible protection. Really, we must thank all the members of Amnesty International for that wonderful moral support.”

-Jenni Williams of human rights group **Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA)**.
WOZA was a **2011 Write for Rights** case.



“Without your letters, your action and your solidarity, we would have not achieved this moment,”

-Valentina Rosendo Cantú and Inés Fernández Ortega thanking Amnesty activists. After the **2011 Write for Rights**, the **Mexican government** finally **accepted formal responsibility** for the rape and abuse of Valentina and Inés by Mexican soldiers in 2002.



"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 by the guards before being released. The appeals sent by Amnesty members definitely had an effect on my case."

***– former Sudanese prisoner
Rehab Abdel Bagi Mohamed Ali.***



Rebiya Kadeer, former prisoner of conscience, is reunited with her family in the USA after her **release** from prison in **China** in 2005.



Ngawang Sangdrol is a **Tibetan nun** and a former prisoner of conscience who was beaten and tortured.

Amnesty members defended her human rights and stood alongside her for many years. She is shown here after her **release** on a visit to Amnesty's offices in London, UK.

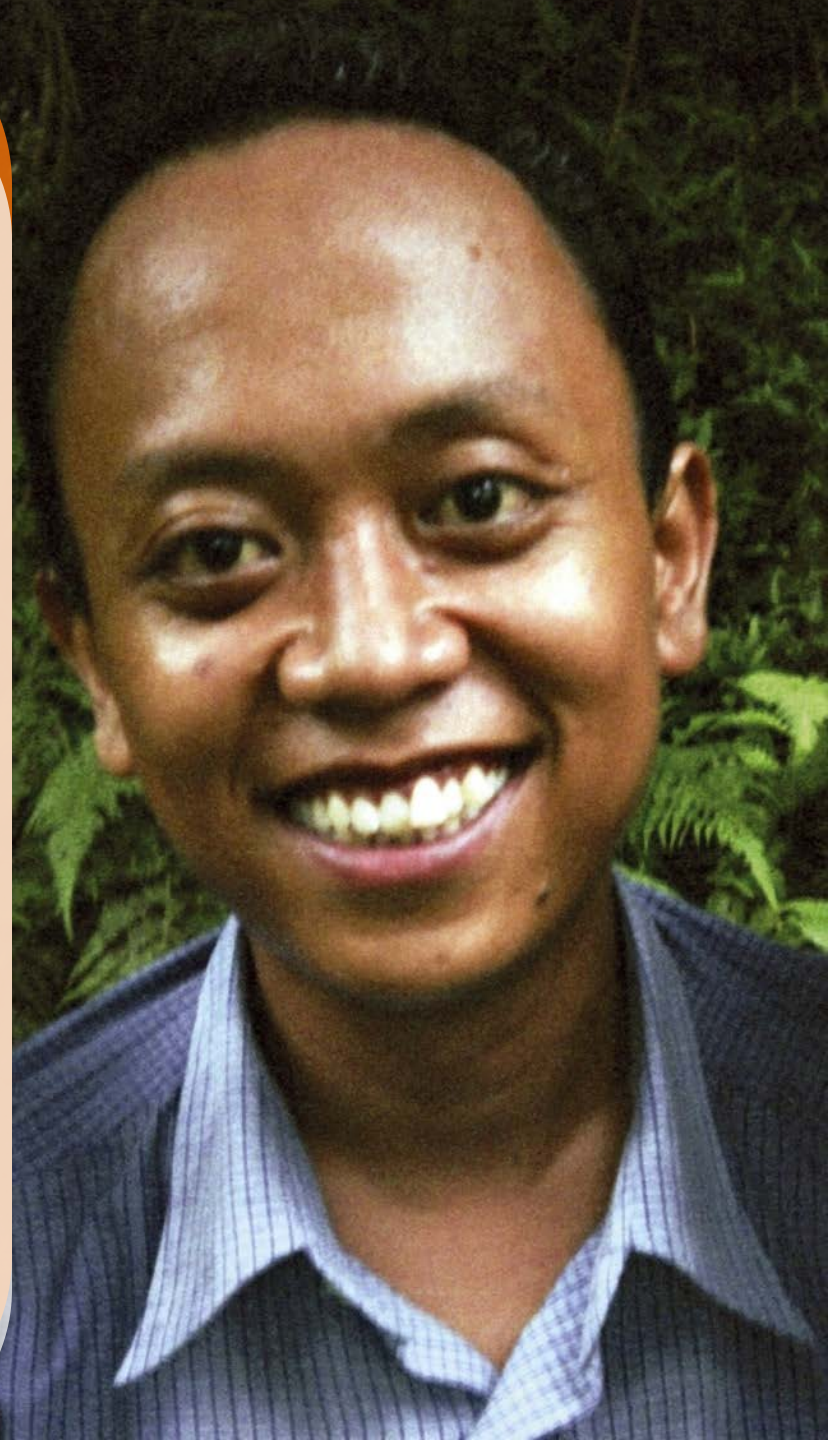
“I endured only because of the support of people who were concerned about my fate. Only this gave me strength. I want to thank them for not forgetting those nearest and dearest to me – that knowledge helped me remain determined.”

– Uzbekistani prisoner of conscience **Mutabar Tadzhibaeva** thanking organizations, including Amnesty International, which campaigned for her **release.**



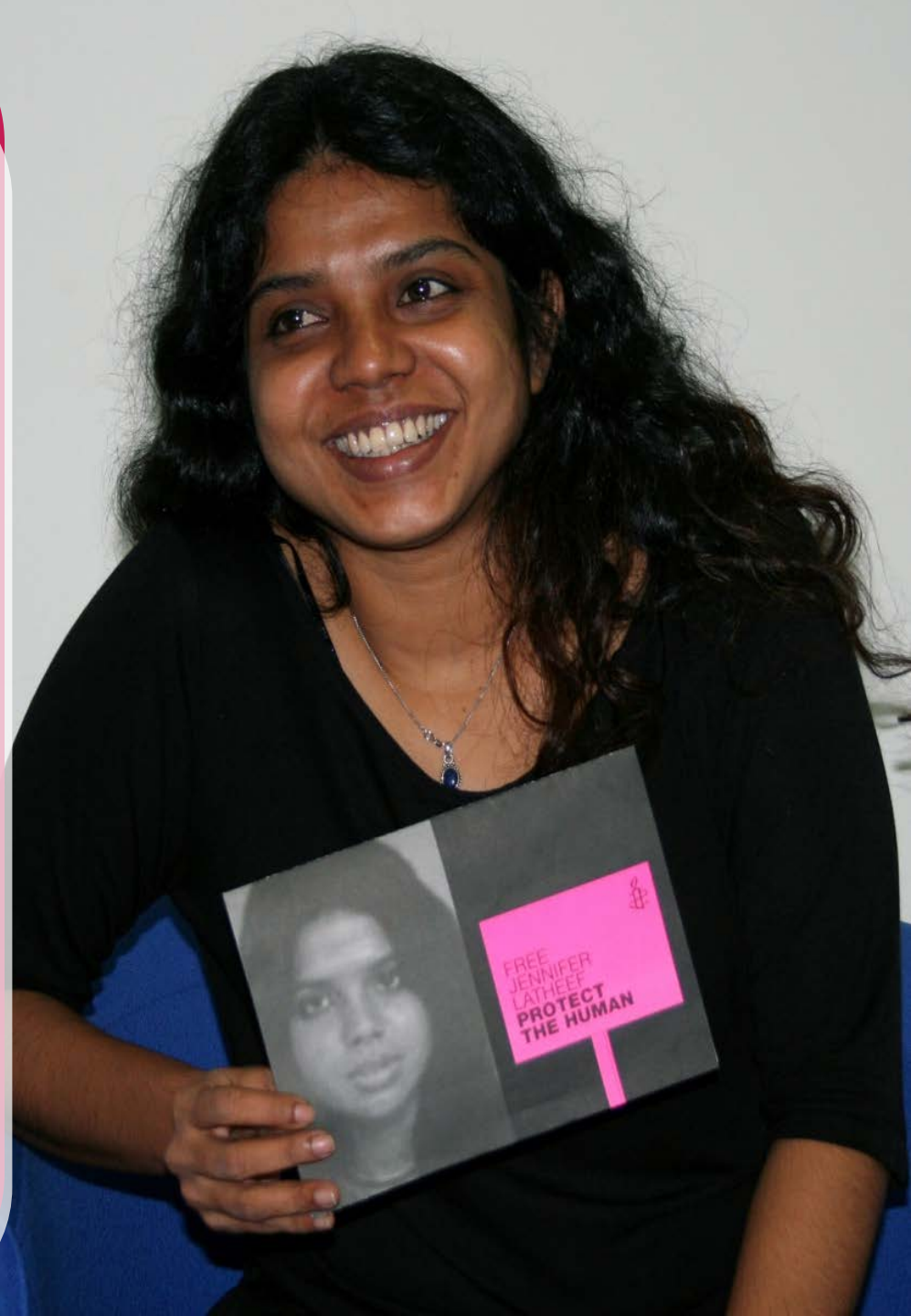
“It was your ideas that you wrote to me, that you poured in lines of thousands of letters that I received, that became my friends in those dark days of my life. Friends that showed that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I send my deepest gratitude for all of your support.”

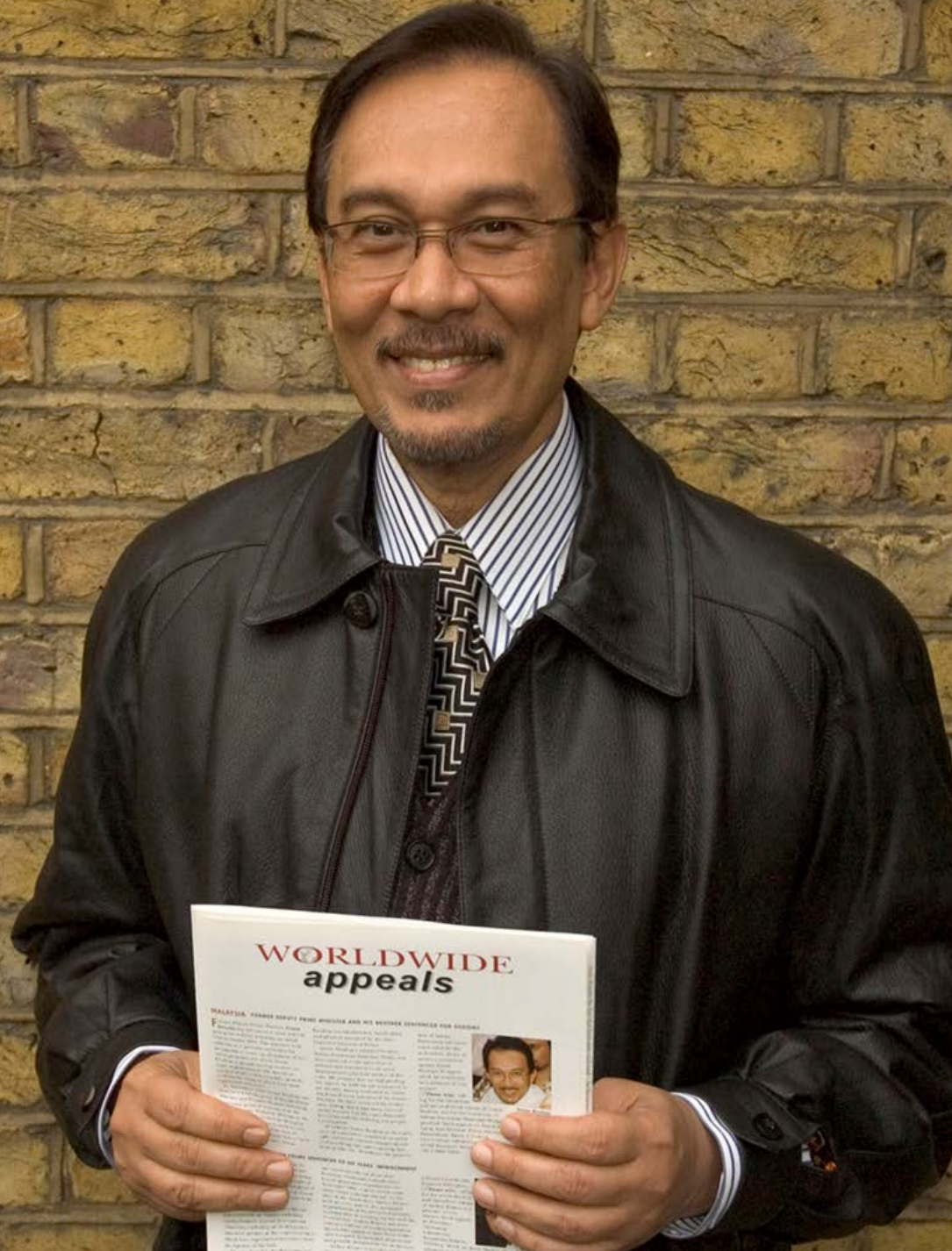
**—Mahendra Kusuma Wardhana,
former Indonesian prisoner of
conscience.**



“I would like to thank each and every person who has believed in my innocence and given their emotions, time and energy to not just my cause, but the cause of each and every Maldivian.”

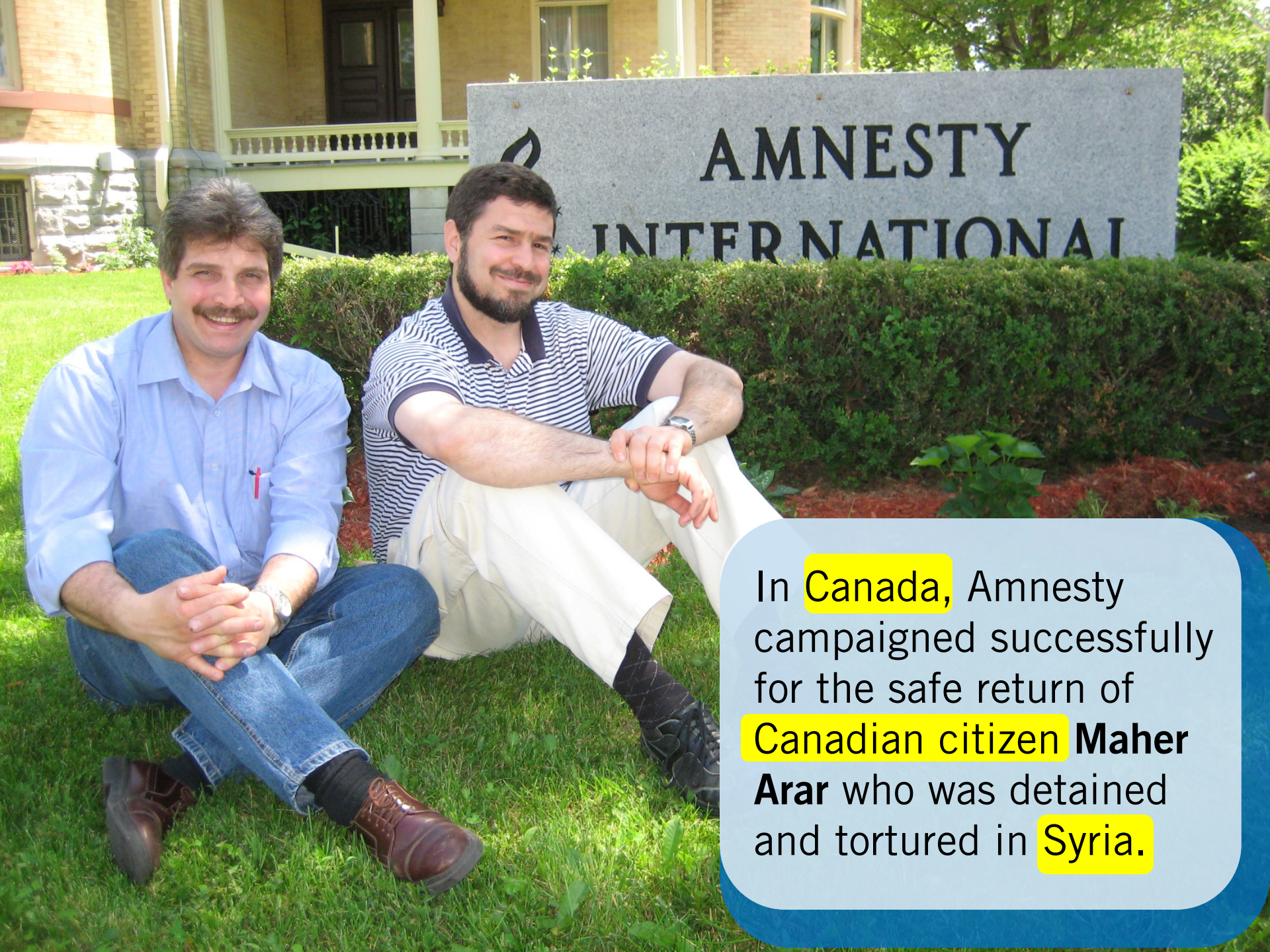
– former **Maldivian** prisoner of conscience **Jennifer Latheef** in a message to Amnesty International members after her **release** from prison.





***“You cannot
imagine
how much
Amnesty
meant to us.”***

-Anwar Ibrahim,
former Deputy Prime
Minister of Malaysia
and freed prisoner of
conscience, thanked
Amnesty for
supporting him
during his six years
in prison.



In Canada, Amnesty campaigned successfully for the safe return of Canadian citizen **Maher Arar** who was detained and tortured in Syria.

Letters, emails and cards to **Nepalese** authorities have ensured that human rights defender **Rita Mahato** (pictured right) is no longer living in fear.





"I owe my life to Amnesty International... Now I am dedicating that life to campaigning against the death penalty and raising awareness about human rights."

-Hafez Ibrahim (pictured right), **Yemen**, who was to be executed for a crime committed when he was a **child**.

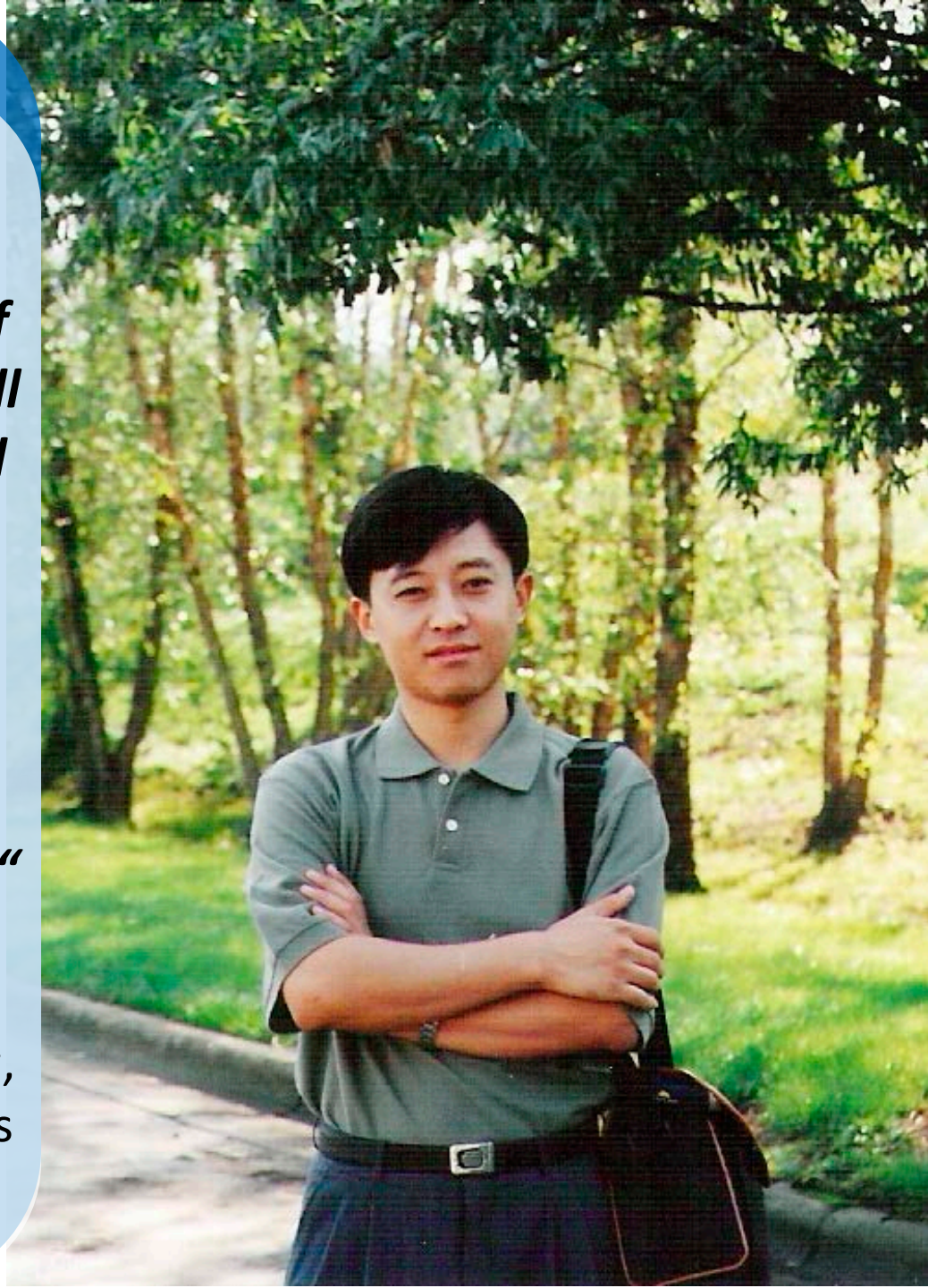
“You have accompanied us with lots of sadness, it's true, but especially with lots of kindness, love and determination through the whole of this year.”

- Jean-Claude Roger Mbede, a 31-year-old student from Cameroon, was sentenced to prison on charges of homosexuality in early 2011. After the **2011 Write for Rights**, the authorities granted a provisional release in July 2012.



“Only after I arrived in the US did I learn that Amnesty members around the world had written me hundreds, if not thousands, of letters. All the letters were impounded by the authorities. But I believe that the pressure from international society, of course including the letters from Amnesty members, helped me a lot. ”

-Bu Dongwei, a member of China's persecuted Falun Gong, now safe in the US, encourages people to write letters with Amnesty International.





"I am very happy to be released. I am extremely grateful to Amnesty International, who have campaigned since the beginning. In my opinion you saved me."

-Prominent Azerbaijani newspaper editor Eynulla Fetullayev.



“Words cannot express my gratitude for Amnesty International’s support. I want to thank all Amnesty staff and members who highlighted my plight throughout the years”

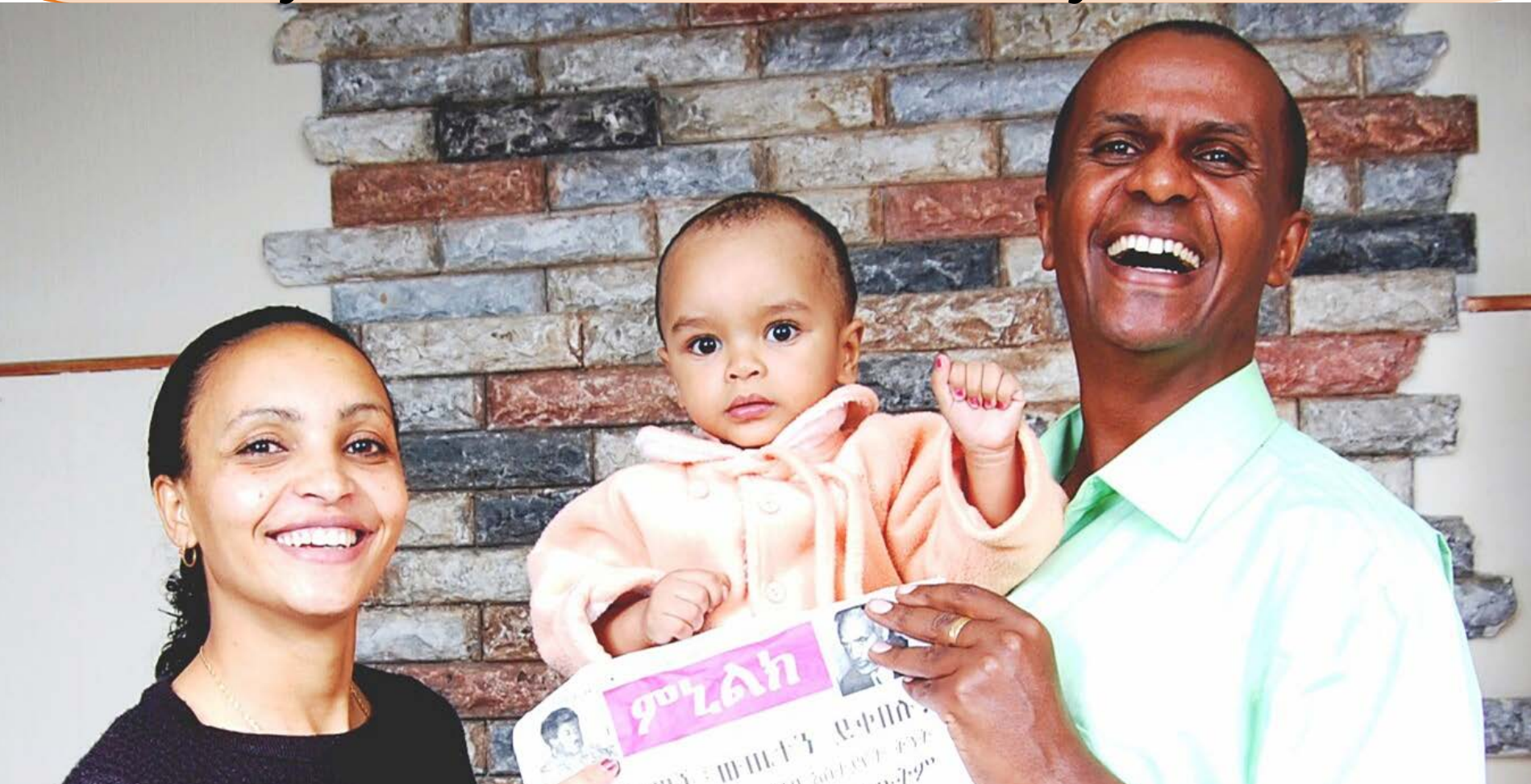
-Jamal al-Hajji, Libyan ex-prisoner of conscience, following seven months of incommunicado detention for demanding reform.



"I think this solidarity, I would say, is the highest we have had.... assisting the Bodo people to actually have a better situation in the disaster which they had. I am so impressed by first of all, Amnesty International organizing this, for inviting us." - Dinebari David Vareba, from the Bodo community, Nigeria.

The Bodo community had good news, when the court of the Economic Community of West African States ordered the Nigerian government to **punish oil companies over pollution.**

Amnesty members campaigned for **Ethiopian journalist**, Serkalem Fasil's release when she was jailed for speaking out against the government. At the time she was pregnant and she and her baby were kept in a rat-infested cell. Serkalem and her baby were finally **freed** after fierce campaigning and she later said: ***"I have no doubt about the importance of Amnesty International in this story."***



“Thank you very much to everyone for the letters that have been sent to the mayor, and also for the letters of solidarity that we received. We feel very much supported and we have confidence that with your support from around the world we will succeed. We do not give up because we know we have so many people that are standing by us in the fight for justice. We are really touched to know that people from all over the world are thinking about us and have written to us. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.” –Claudia in the Coastei Road community in **Romania**, with her daughter. Closely after the **2012 Write for Rights**, the new Minister of Regional Development met with delegates from Amnesty International and other NGOs to positively resolve the issue of access of Roma communities to housing.





Filep Karma, a prominent advocate for the rights of Indonesia's Papuan population received many letters in prison following the ***2011 Write for Rights***.

Amnesty International has been told that he is very happy every time he receives a letter. These messages show him that he is not alone, and that people around the world care about what happens to him.

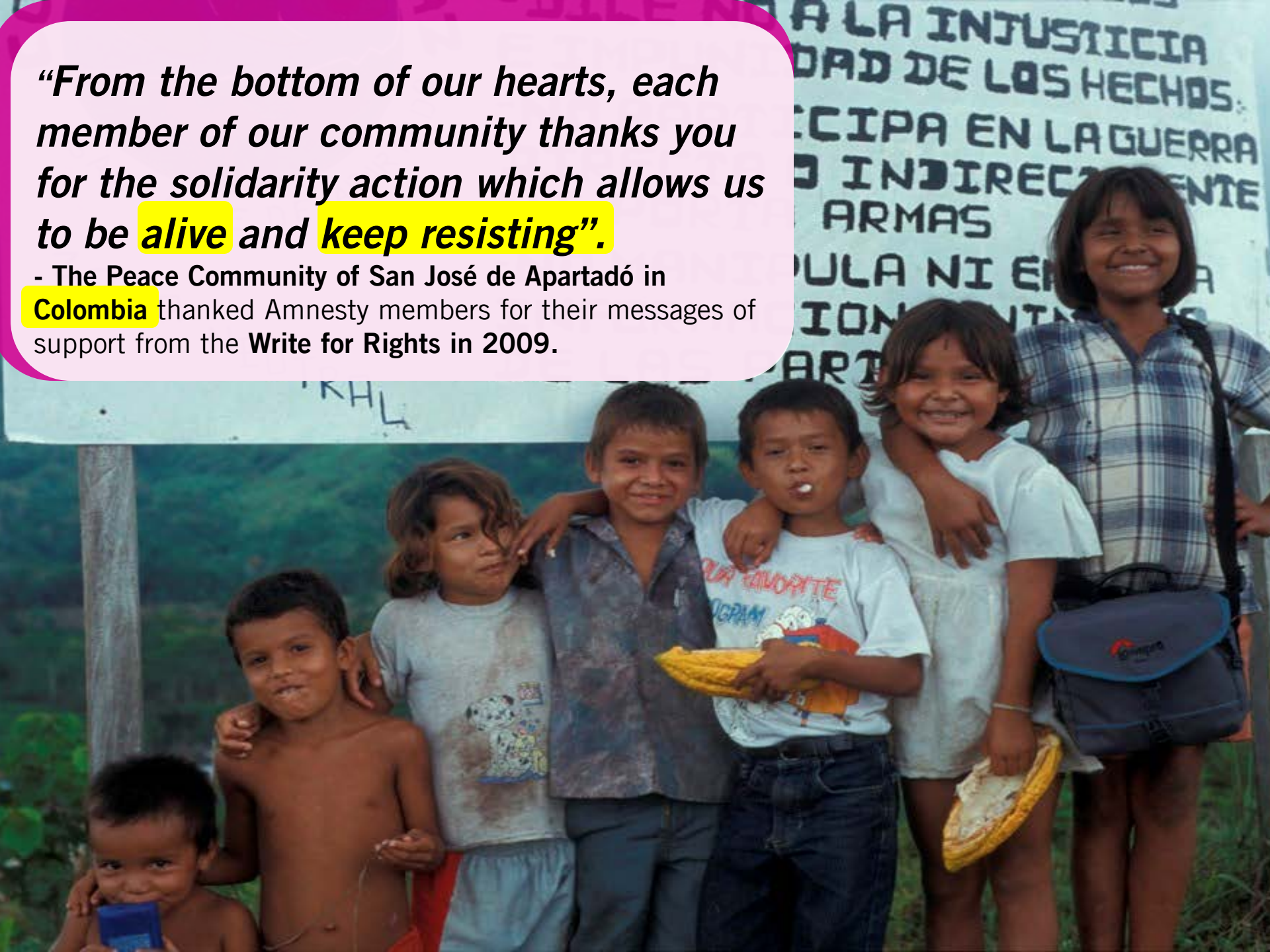
Thanks to the attention brought about by **2010 Write for Rights**, the **Guatemalan** media highlighted the threats against **women's rights** activist **Norma Cruz** and her organization.

Norma said she would like to find a way to thank every individual who has sent her letters and postcards.



“From the bottom of our hearts, each member of our community thanks you for the solidarity action which allows us to be **alive** and **keep resisting**”.

- The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in **Colombia** thanked Amnesty members for their messages of support from the **Write for Rights** in 2009.



“Amnesty International members supported me morally. I received letters from all over the world and this really comforted me. It was extremely important for me to get this support when I was suffering in silence and I can only be thankful to Amnesty members for this support”.

-Khady Bassène from Senegal sent this message to those who wrote to her following the ***2010 Write for Rights.***



“These were such good, kind letters and cards, and they brought good feelings.” The press secretary of the Russian NGO Memorial said, “It is very important to know that many people around the world remember Natalia.”

-Svetlana, sister of Natalia Estemirova, a human rights activists in **Russia** who was killed. Around 1,500 solidarity messages were sent to Natalia's family as part of the **2011 Write for Rights**.





"Amnesty International is a symbol of human rights and freedom, not just in Azerbaijan, but everywhere in the world. I am grateful for all the hard work done by your organisation and other organizations which fight for freedom in Azerbaijan."

-Jabbar Savalan, was arrested the day after he posted on Facebook calling for a "Day of Rage" in Azerbaijan, inspired by protests in the Middle East and North Africa.

Saber Ragoubi had been facing the death penalty in **Tunisia**, after being convicted in December 2007.

His father contacted Amnesty International to thank the movement for its support throughout the years of his son's imprisonment, including the solidarity messages and appeals sent as part of the ***2010 Write for Rights***.





Here are some Thank You's

“Your organization has always been a great support for me and I say that as someone who has spent 14 years of my life behind bars. My wife, Narges Mohammadi and I, as human rights activists, have always been warmed by Amnesty International’s dedication to promoting human rights. For me, Amnesty International is the symbol of an organization that wants human rights for all people. An organization that, free from any political affiliations, urges governments and other entities to respect human rights.”

-Taghi Rahmaniosa, husband of Narges Mohammadi.

Narges Mohammadi is an Iranian women’s rights activist and a mother of 5-year-old twins who was sentenced in April 2012 to six years in prison on charges related to her human rights work.






"It's the most beautiful thing I've received in my life! I'm going to frame them. There are some drawings from children of 8 and 9 years old that are so pretty!" -Yolanda Oquelí

Prior to the **2012 Write for Rights**, Yolanda Oquelí was the subject of one of Amnesty International's ongoing Individuals at Risk actions, after she was **shot for speaking out** against a proposed mining operation in **Guatemala**.

Following our campaigning in the fall, authorities responded by providing her with protection, but activists in her community continue to be the subject of violent attacks.



Many former prisoners tell
Amnesty how much letters
written by members and supporters
have helped.

*though I am
ng, half my
stence is still
prisoned with
r".*

On his **release**, prominent
Iranian journalist **Emadeddin**
Ali spoke out in solidarity
with other prisoners wrongfully
imprisoned in **Iran**





“It was a great pleasure to receive the letters because in prison even a single letter is a great event. The letters prove to [prison administrators] that a person is somehow ‘untouchable’. In this way, the Amnesty letters defended me – and they will defend other people who are still in the same situation.”

-Igor Sutyagin, Russian
prisoner of conscience



“I write today to thank you personally for all your help and support over the past years for my husband, Tissa. We, his family, are certain that it is only through international pressure and attention that no serious harm came to him, that he was not killed or ‘disappeared’.”

Ronnata, wife of **Sri Lankan** journalist J.S. Tissainayagam, in a letter to Amnesty.



**WRITE A LETTER.
SAVE A LIFE.**

Zimbabwean activist
Jestina Mukoko shows
letters and cards of
support sent by
Amnesty members.



“Letter-writing has real value because prisoners know when individuals and organizations are concerned for them ... The letters give moral and emotional support to people experiencing terror... Without Amnesty’s intervention I might not be here today to share my thoughts.”

– Gabriel Shumba,
Zimbabwean human rights
defender and torture survivor.

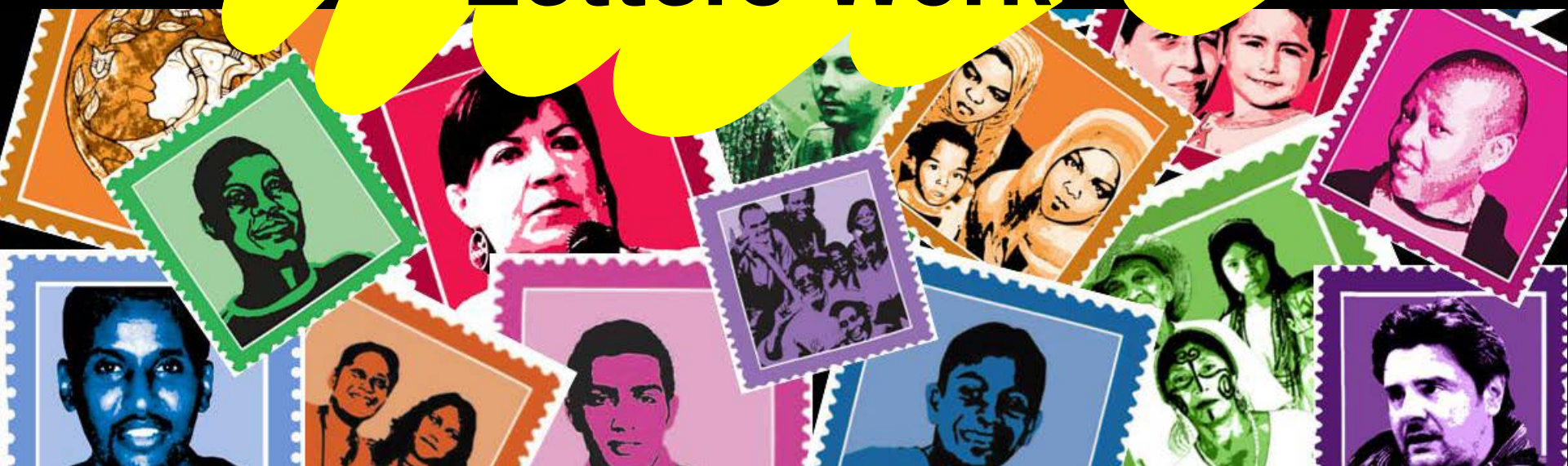


“Thanks to Amnesty letters, today we can smile, we can be alive. The government knows we are being watched over by the world.”

– Dina Meza, human rights activist in Honduras.



Letters Work!





When Nepalese human rights defender **Krishna Pahadi** was freed from jail, he was given a box containing hundreds of letters and postcards sent by Amnesty supporters around the world. These letters, Pahadi believes, were crucial in ensuring his safety and eventual release.

"We need organizations and people like you who will let the killers know that the entire world sees their actions... They fall under siege when organizations like Amnesty International take action."

– **Bertha Oliva de Nativi**, coordinator of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared, **Honduras.**



***“The actions of
Amnesty International
members make me
feel **safer and braver.**”***

– **Asma Jahangir**, a leading
voice for human rights in
Pakistan.



“I rarely felt alone during the solitary confinement because you wonderful people were helping me.”

– **Grigory Pasko**, a journalist who reported on **Russia's** dumping of nuclear waste into the ocean. The authorities put him in prison for three-and-a-half years.



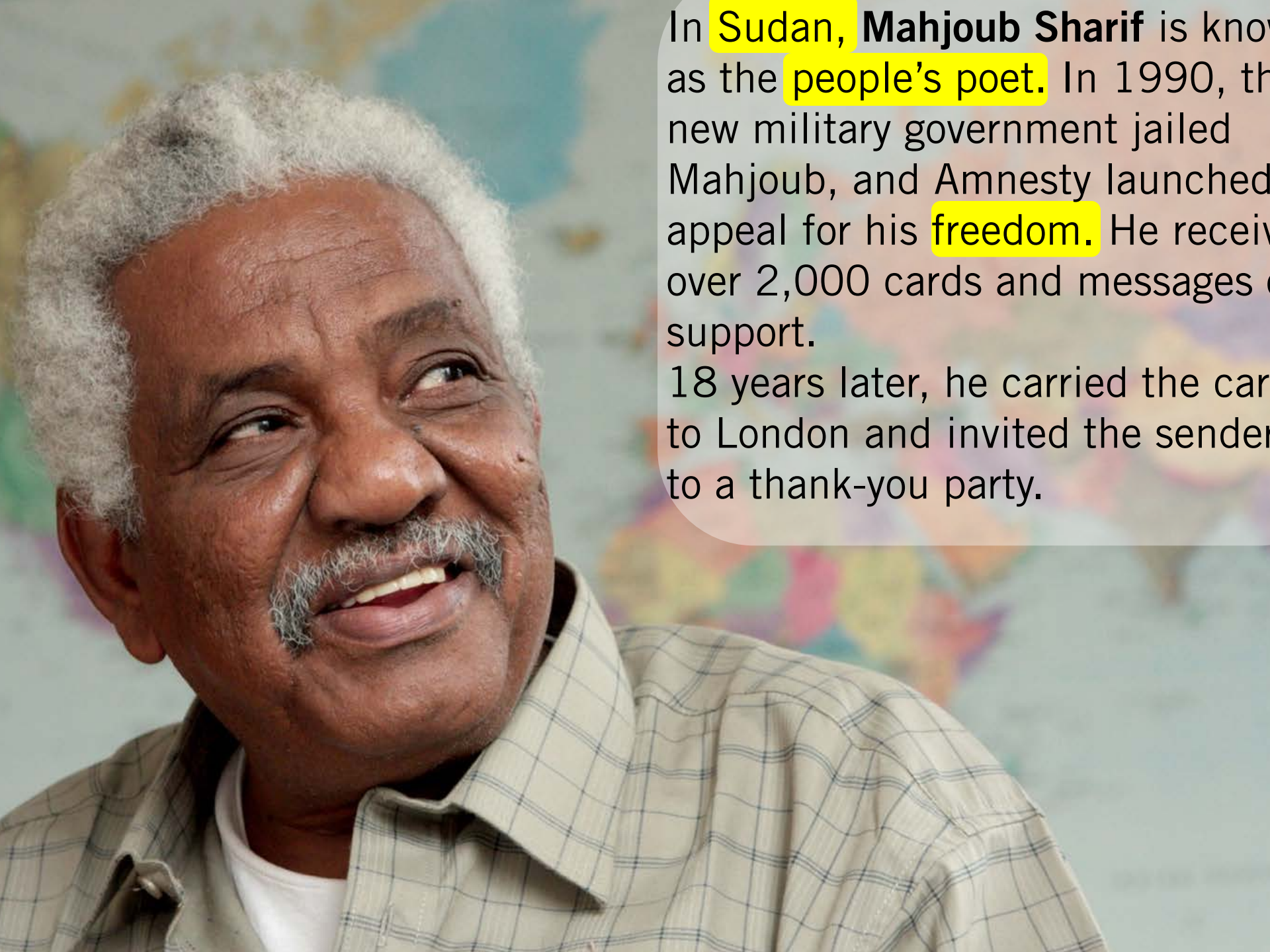
A collage of several photographs showing people of various ages, including children, adults, and seniors, sitting at tables and writing letters. The photos are arranged around a central yellow graphic. The top left shows a man and a woman writing. The top right shows a group of people at a table. The middle left shows a large room with many people at tables, with a screen in the background. The middle right shows a man and a woman writing. The bottom left shows a group of people writing. The bottom right shows a young girl writing. The central yellow graphic is a stylized, abstract shape with a black outline.

**Write a
letter today**

**“Thanks Amnesty International.
You have given me
the strength to
continue.”**

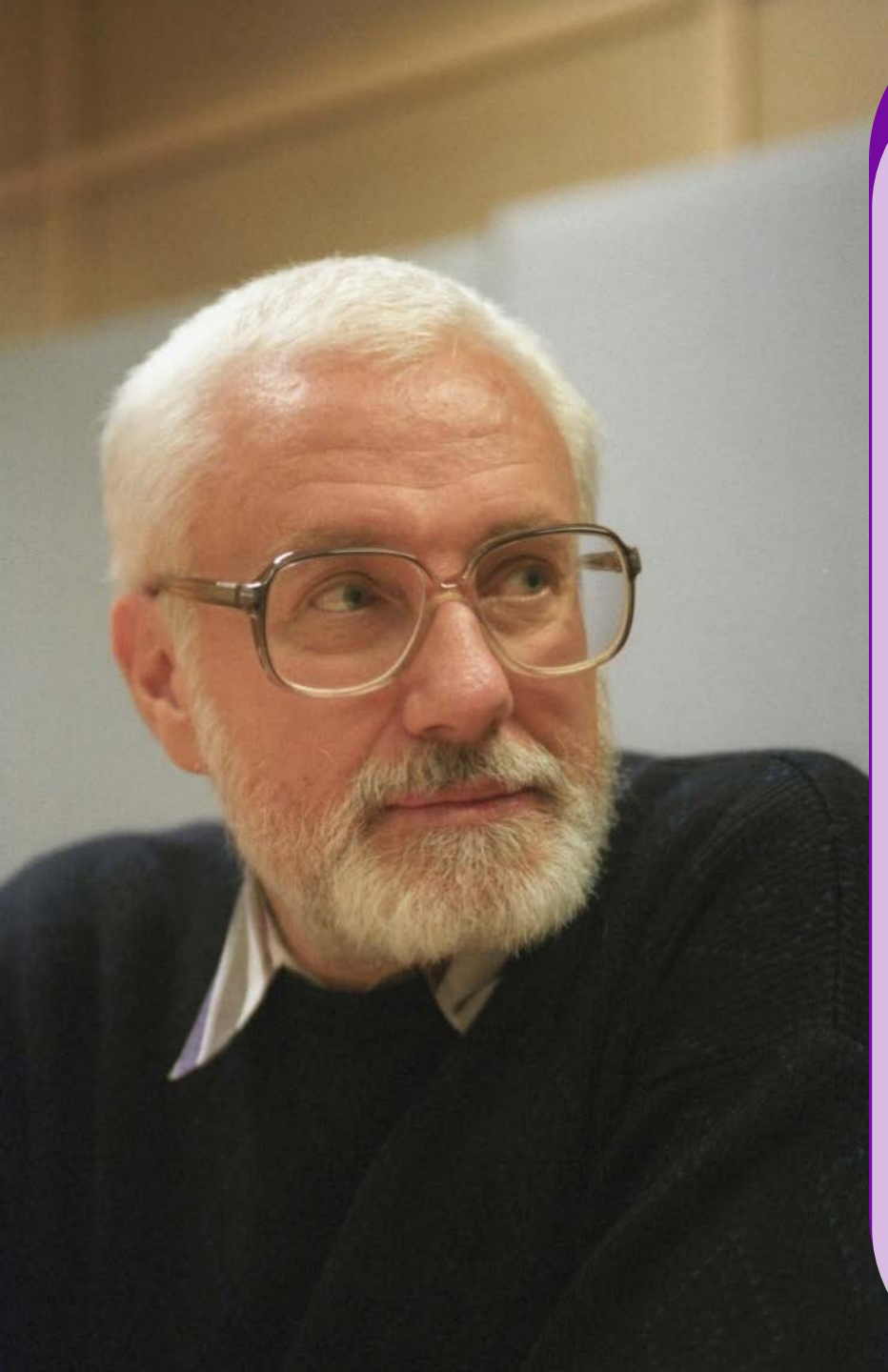
– **Irene Fernandez**, a prominent **Malaysian** human rights activist who has appeared in court more than 150 times for reporting widespread abuses against **migrant workers**.





In **Sudan**, **Mahjoub Sharif** is known as the **people's poet**. In 1990, the new military government jailed Mahjoub, and Amnesty launched an appeal for his **freedom**. He received over 2,000 cards and messages of support.

18 years later, he carried the cards to London and invited the senders to a thank-you party.



“The torturer aims to isolate you, to cut all your links with the outside world. But Amnesty International was able to break that isolation.”

In 1973, **Luiz Rossi**, a **Brazilian professor**, was the focus of Amnesty’s first Urgent Action appeal.

Mexican indigenous activist **Carlos Manzo** holds his own Urgent Action.

The appeal was issued in 2003 after he was arrested for organizing **peaceful protests** against local government corruption in the southern state of Oaxaca. When visiting Amnesty offices in Europe, Carlos was moved as he told how his friends managed to get a copy of the Urgent Action into his cell.



Guatemalan journalist

Marielos Monzon

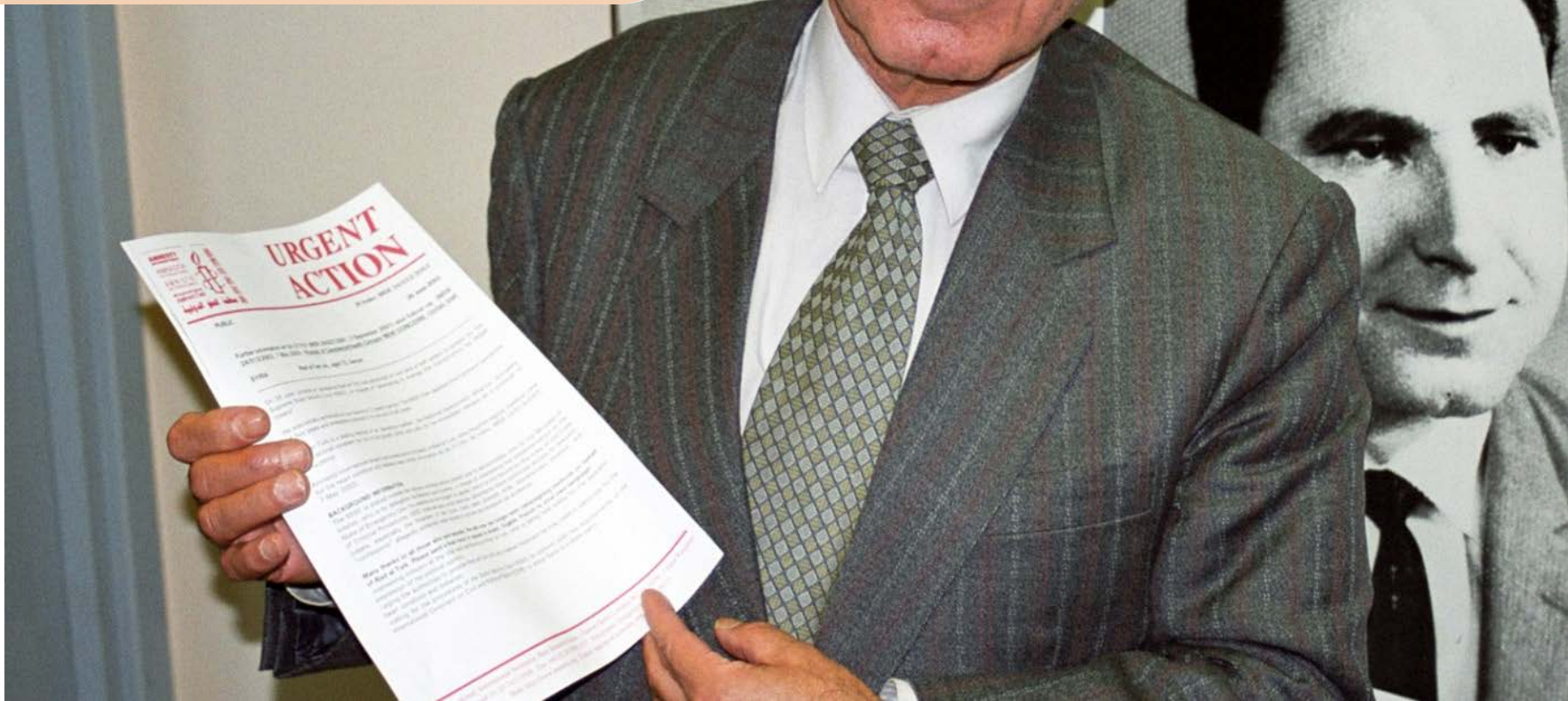
has faced death threats and intimidation to stop her reporting on human rights issues.

Amnesty has worked with her for a number of years and has issued Urgent Actions on her behalf. In 2003, Amnesty helped her and her children leave Guatemala for three months after gunmen came into their house to threaten them.



"I could always feel that you were concerned about us. Throughout your work you have reflected the reality of what was happening to the pro-democracy activists."

– Riad-al-Turk, Syrian prisoner of conscience, upon his release from prison.



Stolen Sisters: Amnesty International stands with Indigenous women from across Canada in demanding justice for their missing and murdered loved ones.





Now it's your turn.



Writeathon.ca
1-800-AMNESTY