

THE Candle

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AMNESTY
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Teodora Vásquez hugs her family after winning her freedom. Amnesty International supporters had long campaigned for Teodora's release.

EL SALVADOR: TEODORA VÁSQUEZ IS FREE!

Teodora was jailed for a decade after suffering a stillbirth. You helped free her.

Teodora del Carmen Vásquez is free! She was released from prison on February 15 on the orders of El Salvador's Supreme Court. Teodora spent over a decade behind bars after she suffered a stillbirth and was accused of "aggravated homicide" under El Salvador's strict anti-abortion laws. Amnesty International supporters had long campaigned for her freedom.

In 2007, Teodora was at work when she began to suffer intense pain and started bleeding. She called an ambulance and collapsed shortly after. When she regained consciousness, she found herself surrounded by police who accused her of inducing an abortion.

Coming from a poor, rural family, Teodora could not afford a good lawyer. She was sentenced to 30 years in a trial that was

marred by irregularities. Teodora's tragic story shows everything that is wrong with the justice system in El Salvador, where human rights are ignored in cases like hers. El Salvador's "guilty until proven innocent" approach when it comes to women who suffer pregnancy-related complications has cost lives and created fear amongst doctors and patients.

When an Amnesty team visited Teodora in prison, they learned she shared a cell with 70 other women. Cramped together, the women often slept on the floor under the building's hot tin roofs. Teodora's family lived far from the prison. Her young son, Ángel, only saw her a handful of times during the years she was in jail. He felt his mother's absence deeply.

In El Salvador, it is a crime for women and girls to have an abortion for any

reason. Women like Teodora who suffer stillbirths and pregnancy complications face up to 50 years in prison. Amnesty International supporters have long pressed El Salvador's government to end this extreme law, and release Teodora and other women imprisoned for pregnancy-related complications.

THANK YOU!
You stood with
Teodora in her
struggle for justice.

ONE DAY IN JANUARY—AND THREE REASONS TO CELEBRATE



© Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press

Released from detention in France and back in Canada, Hassan Diab (second from the left) celebrates freedom with his wife, Rania, lawyer Don Bayne, and Amnesty's Alex Neve. Amnesty supporters defended Hassan's human rights for many years.

Dear partner in human rights,

With three reasons to celebrate, January 17, 2018, was quite a day for human rights in Canada.

First, there was the federal government's announcement that Canada would establish an Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise. If properly supported, this new position will help ensure that Canadian companies behaving badly abroad are held to account. Amnesty International supporters have been campaigning for this for over 10 years. Our work now continues as we press for the new position to be properly resourced and used—the success of the Ombudsperson depends on it. (See page 5 for more on this story.)

It was also on January 17 that Amnesty's Ottawa office welcomed Hassan Diab and his wife, Rania, for a press conference. Just two days earlier, Hassan had returned to Canada from France, where, for 38 months, he had been in pre-trial detention, trapped in a cruel limbo on flimsy evidence as French authorities refused to either release him, or lay formal charges and proceed to trial.

Amnesty International was active in both Canada and France on Hassan's case. Between 2011 and 2014, despite serious reservations about the evidence, Canadian courts ruled that Hassan should be extradited to France to face criminal charges in connection with a 1980 bombing. Amnesty was concerned that the French government was relying on torture-tainted evidence in support of their extradition request. And then we raised concerns that the lengthy pre-trial detention without charge contravened international standards. Amnesty will now stand with Hassan in

demanding that Canada's extradition laws and processes are reformed to ensure no one else experiences what he went through.

The third piece of good news on January 17 came when a British Columbia court ruled that solitary confinement is a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This followed a challenge by the BC Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society. The issue is one Amnesty has spoken out about repeatedly. Finally, solitary confinement is being exposed for what it is—a harsh and cruel punishment.

In 2018, it's easy to become discouraged by signs that human rights are under siege in so many parts of the world, but January 17 brought three very good reasons for optimism, and a timely reminder that, by working together, we can and we will overcome the human rights challenges we face.

—Alex Neve, Secretary General

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Please let us know if you would like extra copies, or if you would prefer not to receive the newsletter in future. If you would like more information on any aspect of our work or how to get more involved, please contact us at: Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa ON, K1N 1H9.

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RAMÓN ESONO EBALÉ

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: Artist freed from prison

An Equatorial Guinean court released artist Ramón Esono Ebalé on March 7. He had been imprisoned on dubious charges for nearly six months. A police officer had accused Ramón of counterfeiting money, but during Ramón's trial, the police officer admitted he only made the accusation on orders from his superiors.

Ramón is a cartoonist whose work is often critical of the government. He was arrested in the capital, Malabo, on September 16. Police questioned him over his cartoons that criticised Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang.

Equatorial Guinea's government has a long record of persecuting its critics, so Ramón's release is an important victory against repression. Amnesty International is now demanding that the authorities ensure the justice system is no longer misused to target and harass activists and human rights defenders.



HUN VANNAK AND DOEM KUNDY

CAMBODIA: Environmental activists released

Prisoners of conscience Hun Vannak and Doem Kundy were freed in Cambodia on February 13. The two environmental activists had been jailed on bogus charges. Both men were prosecuted because of their peaceful environmental activism, and Amnesty supporters backed a campaign calling for their release.

Hun Vannak and Doem Kundy were arrested in 2017 by police while filming two ships anchored off the coast. They suspected the vessels were illegally carrying silica sand, a sought-after natural resource. Sand-dredging companies and the government benefit from the illegal export trade in silica sand.

Human rights in Cambodia are more and more threatened. Freedom of expression is increasingly limited, as is the work of human rights defenders and human rights organizations.

PHILIPPINES: Jerryme Corre reunited with his family

Jerryme Corre is back home with his wife and children after six years behind bars in the Philippines on false drug charges.

In 2012, Jerryme was falsely arrested while visiting his aunt. Ten police officers beat him in the street before taking him to a police station. There, they beat the soles of his feet with a wooden baton, 'waterboarded' him and tortured him with electric shocks. Again and again, the police called Jerryme by the wrong name. Eventually an official arrived to identify him and told police they had arrested the wrong man. But the police charged Jerryme anyway, and forced him to sign a confession that he wasn't allowed to read.



JERRYME CORRE

Following a global Amnesty campaign, Jerryme's case was at long last dismissed on March 2, 2018, and he was freed.

MYANMAR: Thank you for standing 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, 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. As long as the violence continues and crimes against humanity remain unaddressed, Amnesty will continue to take action to restore human rights for the Rohingya. To find out more, please go to amnesty.ca/rohingya-act-now



Rohingya refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar arrive in Bangladesh by boat.

© Andrew Stanbridge/Amnesty International

CHAD: Mahadine freed and reunited with his family

© Private



Mahadine was jailed for criticizing the Chadian government.

There was good news from Chad in April when online activist Mahadine was freed after a court ordered his release. Mahadine was finally reunited with his loved ones after spending over 18 months in prison.

Mahadine was jailed for bravely speaking out against the Chadian government. After he posted videos online criticizing the government, he was arrested, beaten, tortured with electric shocks, and starved of food and water for days.

Amnesty International supporters called on the Chadian government to release Mahadine. In a message of thanks to Amnesty supporters, Mahadine said, "I want to express my gratitude to you all. I appreciate you, I love you, I respect you! Humanity!"

MAURITANIA: Anti-slavery activists face arrest and torture

"The police handcuffed and blindfolded me. I had no idea where they were taking me," said Amadou Tijane Diop, an anti-slavery activist in Mauritania. "A guard told me: 'Just tell them what they want to hear. You know we have what it takes to make you talk.'"

The number of people living in slavery in Mauritania could be as high as 43,000—approximately one per cent of the population. A new Amnesty International report has exposed how Mauritania cracks down on those who speak out against slavery. The security forces arrest, torture and imprison human rights defenders, and the authorities ban anti-slavery organizations.

As an Amnesty supporter, you're demanding an end to slavery in Mauritania, the release of anti-slavery activists, and respect for the important work of anti-slavery human rights defenders.

CANADA

Mexican human rights defenders bring a message of hope to Canada

As an epidemic of disappearances and attacks on Indigenous rights continue in Mexico, Amnesty International was honoured to host a visit to Canada 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.

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 remains 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, please go to amnesty.ca/grassy-narrows



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



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

Canada becomes first country to create watchdog for corporate accountability

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.

Amnesty International supporters and allies have campaigned for over 10 years for an independent ombudsperson.

The government's announcement came after more than 10 years of campaigning and activism by Amnesty International supporters and allies.

SYRIA

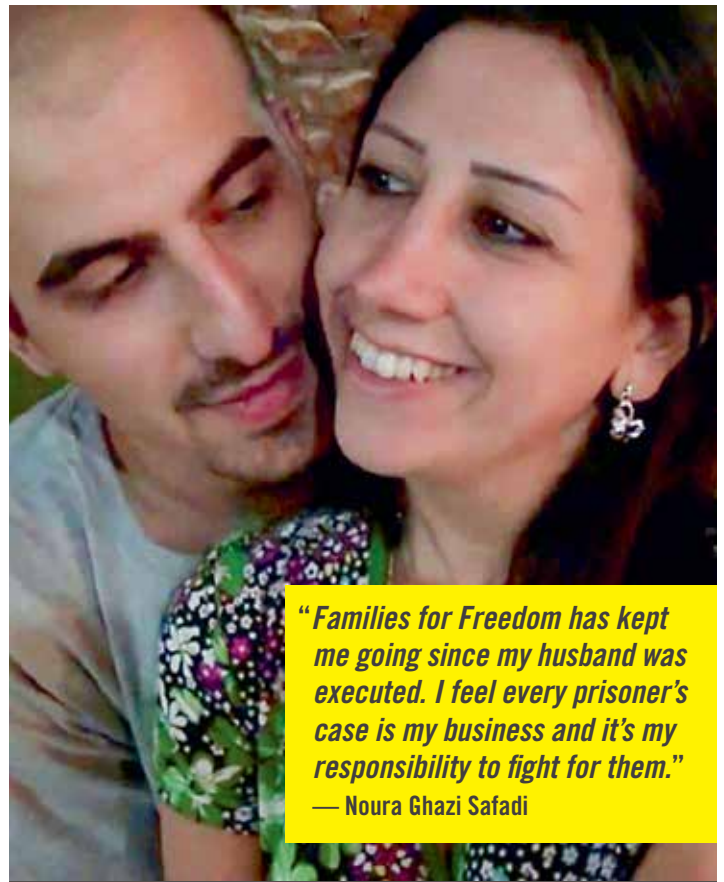
Noura Ghazi Safadi: Demanding justice for Syria's disappeared

Noura Ghazi Safadi is a prominent Syrian human rights lawyer and human rights defender. She campaigns for the rights of the disappeared and prisoners of conscience. Noura's husband, Bassel Khartabil Safadi, was a pro-democracy activist, who was arrested by the Syrian government in 2012 and executed in 2015.

Noura was motivated to become a human rights defender as a child. She would visit her father, who was also a political prisoner, in jail and attend his trial hearings. She told Amnesty International, "The fondness I had for my father's friends, and friends of mine who had been arrested, made me all the more determined. And when Bassel was arrested, defending my own prisoner of conscience became my obsession."

Noura now works with Families for Freedom, a women-led organization of Syrian families demanding freedom for their sons and daughters.

"Families for Freedom has kept me going since my husband was executed," says Noura. "I feel every prisoner's case is my business and it's my responsibility to fight for them. I feel women are best placed to deal with this issue, not just because they are the ones most affected by such violation, but because of the leading role they play in building Syria's future. They have demonstrated that they are capable of handling every obstacle before them, whether it's to do with security, the community, or life generally."



"Families for Freedom has kept me going since my husband was executed. I feel every prisoner's case is my business and it's my responsibility to fight for them."
— Noura Ghazi Safadi

Noura Ghazi Safadi is a leading Syrian human rights defender. Her husband, Bassel, a pro-democracy activist, was executed in 2015.



Thank you for speaking out against human rights abuses in Syria.

Syria's Eastern Ghouta: They fight for life. You fight for them.

Thank you for caring deeply about human rights in Syria, and demanding justice for the Syrian people.

At the start of 2018, more than 1,000 people—many of them children—were killed in Eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, as the Syrian government laid siege to the area in an attempt to defeat anti-government forces. Wave after wave of bombs rained down on homes and schools and hospitals.

Amnesty supporters spoke out to stop the bombing and lift the siege to allow in humanitarian aid. In a glimmer of good news, on March 13, 35 ill and injured people were evacuated out of Eastern Ghouta to Damascus city for urgent medical treatment and care.

Your support makes possible all of Amnesty's work to protect civilians in Syria. Because of you, Amnesty is able to document horrific abuses and pressure the international community to put an end to this catastrophe.

Photo: A man carries a child injured in the bombing of the besieged suburb of Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of Damascus.

CALLING ALL LAWYERS

Are you a lawyer and Amnesty International supporter who is passionate about human rights?

Are you disheartened by the plight of your colleagues around the world who are being persecuted for defending human rights?

In Egypt, Azza Soliman is one such human rights lawyer coming under attack.

Azza risks her own safety and freedom to defend women and girls facing torture, arbitrary detention, and sexual violence. Azza endures harassment from local media and was recently arrested for 'slandering Egypt's image'. She is banned from travel, her assets have been frozen, and she could be facing prison time.

Amnesty International will soon be launching **Partners in Justice**, a new philanthropic initiative for lawyers in Canada. To learn more about becoming a **Partner in Justice**, please contact Chryslyn Pais at **416-363-9933 ext. 337** or **cpais@amnesty.ca**.

As a **Partner in Justice**, your generous support will help protect the human rights of Azza Soliman and other lawyers around the world who are being persecuted because of their work.



Egyptian lawyer Azza Soliman

LET PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS BE YOUR LEGACY TO THE WORLD



©Amnesty International Philippines

"It has made me stronger knowing there are others standing up for me." —Jerry Corra, Philippines

What kind of world do you want to leave behind for your loved ones?

If it is a world in which everyone is treated equally, please consider leaving a gift in your will to human rights through Amnesty International.

Join us as a Human Rights Guardian and help Amnesty International be there wherever and whenever injustice occurs. After you have provided for your loved ones, please remember Amnesty International in your will.

For more information, or to let us know that you have remembered Amnesty International in your will, please use the attached coupon. Or, if you prefer, please contact Amnesty's legacy gift planner Hala Al-Madi directly at **halmadi@amnesty.ca** or **613-744-7667 ext 223**.



**“I shall continue to be a voice for non-violence, peace, democracy and reconciliation. Thanks, Amnesty International!”
— Eskinder Nega**

ETHIOPIA: Eskinder Nega wins his freedom!

ESKINDER WAS JAILED FOR 7 YEARS FOR DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

YOU STOOD WITH THIS BRAVE JOURNALIST AS HE FOUGHT FOR HIS FREEDOM

Seven long years after he was thrown in jail, Eskinder Nega is finally free. The Ethiopian journalist and former prisoner of conscience was released on February 14, 2018. He was among 746 prisoners released in a government pardon.

Eskinder was arrested in September 2011. He was jailed for writing articles criticizing the government and for supporting free speech. Sentenced to

18 years in jail, Eskinder was held in Addis Ababa’s infamous Kality prison where 8,000 inmates are crowded into cramped cells. In Ethiopia, the government cracks down hard on reporters and the independent media.

Eskinder’s personal message of thanks

Eskinder is now reunited with his wife, Serkalem, and son, Nafkot. Serkalem was herself jailed for treason between 2005 and 2007, and gave birth to Nafkot while she was in prison.

In a message to Amnesty supporters after his release, Eskinder said, “I shall continue to be a voice for non-violence,

peace, democracy and reconciliation. Thanks, Amnesty International! I am honoured to have been deemed worthy of your support. God bless you all.”

Release follows a global Amnesty campaign

Thank you for standing with Eskinder during this long struggle for justice. You can be proud of ensuring that Eskinder was never forgotten. The global campaign for his release was backed by Amnesty supporters’ donations and their activism. With your support, Amnesty International will keep working to free thousands of innocent people languishing in Ethiopian jails, separated from their loved ones.

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