



Syrian children wear face masks during a COVID-19 awareness campaign at a camp for displaced people in northwestern Syria. Around the world, refugees and displaced people living in crowded camps without access to good sanitation are especially at risk from COVID-19.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: Thank you for protecting the most vulnerable

“I'M VERY AFRAID, because if the virus arrives in the camp, no one will be alive, as many people are living in a very small place,” Hotiza told Amnesty International researchers just a few weeks ago. Hotiza is around 85 years old and she lives in a camp for refugees in Bangladesh.

Hotiza is one of almost 860,000 Rohingya who fled a vicious campaign of violence by Myanmar's security forces in 2017. Older refugees like Hotiza face a devastating combination: they are the group most at risk of COVID-19, and they are also the least likely to receive aid. As an Amnesty supporter, you are calling for that invisibility to end.

With your support, Amnesty teams are working on every continent during the COVID-19 pandemic, doing all they can to protect vulnerable people and communities.

You are defending the human rights of refugees unable to social distance in crowded camps, prisoners held in jail cells that are filled many times over capacity, and journalists jailed for reporting the truth.

In Eritrea, you are calling for the release of Ciham Ali Ahmed. Ciham turned 23 in April and spent her birthday in a crowded, unsanitary prison, faced with the potentially deadly risk of contracting COVID-19. Ciham is a prisoner of conscience, jailed when she was 15 simply for trying to leave Eritrea.

In April, you helped win the freedom of Venezuelan journalist Darvinson Rojas after he was arrested for reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. His release came hours after Amnesty declared him a prisoner of conscience. You're ensuring that journalists like Darvinson are able to carry out their vital work freely and safely.

Thank you for everything you're doing for human rights during this extraordinary crisis. We hope you and your loved ones are staying safe.

PLEASE SEE PAGES 4 AND 5 TO READ MORE ABOUT AMNESTY'S WORK ON COVID-19.



A child on a scooter passes a mural on a boarded-up window in Vancouver's Gastown on April 19.

Thank you for everything you do for human rights



Dear human rights supporter,

COVID-19 has been dominating the news, and necessarily so. The focus has been on infection rates and the economic impact; concerns about the safety of health care workers; physical-distancing guidance.

People everywhere are responding in ways that resonate with the universal human rights vision, through compassion, community and putting others first. Health care, transportation, grocery store, sanitation, and other workers head out each day to ensure that their fellow citizens are supported. More broadly, people are looking out for friends and neighbours, and are refraining from actions that may put others at risk.

Amidst everything that's going on, we're not hearing much about human rights. But the COVID-19 pandemic is all about human rights. The virus attacks the rights to health and to life. The economic crisis affects livelihoods, and the rights to housing and food. The shutdowns affect the right to education, employment and freedom of movement. Preventing the spread of COVID-19 is itself a crucial human rights responsibility of governments in terms of the rights to health and to life. Governments may temporarily restrict some rights to uphold other rights, but the restrictions must be proportionate.

Amnesty has decades of experience defending human rights during crises. We've been drawing on that experience to

ensure that no one is left behind during this pandemic, especially those who are already experiencing marginalization and human rights violations. Indigenous communities, older people, women and children at increased risk of violence in the home, people with disabilities, refugees and migrants, and racialized communities. You can read about some of the work in the pages of this newsletter and you can read more at [amnesty.ca](https://www.amnesty.ca).

There will be important long-term human rights work coming out of this crisis. A post-COVID-19 human rights agenda is already starting to emerge, including global health-care reform, gender equality, addressing poverty and inadequate housing, and crucial lessons with respect to the rights of Indigenous peoples, environmental sustainability, and the climate crisis.

Because of your generous and committed support, Amnesty International has been able to respond quickly to this crisis. Thank you for making sure that human rights are our guide now and in the future.

—Alex Neve, Secretary General

Rights!Now (Spring 2020, Vol. 21, No. 1) is published twice a year for Amnesty International's supporters who donate monthly or take action regularly. Please let us know if you would like extra copies, or if you would prefer not to receive the newsletter in future. If you have questions or comments or would like more information on any aspect of our work or how to get more involved, please contact us at:

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LAYOUT: Joss MacLennan Design. Printed by union labour at Thistle Printing.

Canadian Publication Mail Agreement Number 40065443



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Tran Thi Nga is starting a new life in the United States.

VIET NAM

Freed activist thanks Amnesty supporters

“I am happy that my family are now reunited and living in peace!” said Tran Thi Nga, a prisoner of conscience who was released in Viet Nam in January.

Tran Thi Nga especially thanked Amnesty supporters for their tireless efforts in demanding her freedom. The former prisoner of conscience and her family are now starting a new life in the United States.

Tran Thi Nga was arrested in January 2017 and sentenced to nine years in prison. Her only “crime” was to campaign for the rights of migrant workers and victims of landgrabs. Because of her human rights work, Tran Thi Nga was subjected to harassment and physical assault many times over the years.

IRAQ

Historic trial in Germany is a step towards justice

On April 24, in a court in Frankfurt, Germany, a man identified only as Taha al-J., went on trial for genocide and other crimes.

The court case is the first in history to address the persecution of the Yezidi people by the so-called Islamic State (IS). From 2014, IS massacred and enslaved Yezidi people in northern Iraq. Among the allegations against Taha al-J. is that he murdered a young Yezidi girl in 2015.

Amnesty International supporters have long campaigned with the Yezidi people. The trial in Frankfurt is an historic step towards achieving justice for them.

ARNE DEDEYER/POOL/AFPO/Agfity Images



Accused of genocide in Iraq, the defendant, known as Taha al-J., hides his face.

NIGER

Journalist freed after being arrested for doing his job

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Mamane Kaka Touda

“I want to thank and encourage those who were mobilized for my release!” said journalist Mamane Kaka Touda to Amnesty supporters after his release from prison in Niger in March. “Arbitrary arrests and detentions will not stop us doing our work and keep fighting. I am grateful, thank you!”

Mamane Kaka Touda was held for three weeks after he published a post on social media about a suspected case of COVID-19 in a hospital in the capital, Niamey. The journalist was charged with “disseminating data tending to disturb public order”. Amnesty supporters called on the authorities to free him, and to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression.

MYANMAR

Filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi released

AI AUNG MAN/AFPO/Agfity Images



Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi

On February 21, filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi was released from prison in Myanmar. Amnesty supporters called for Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi to be freed after he was thrown in jail in April 2019 for criticizing the military’s role in politics.

Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi’s release is to be welcomed and celebrated, but he should have never been arrested in the first place. Amnesty supporters are campaigning for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar, where the authorities continue to crack down on activists and human rights defenders.

COVID-19: THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS NEVER STOPS

In these extraordinary times, human rights are more important than ever. Amnesty International is closely monitoring government responses to the COVID-19 crisis. Some governments may be trying to use the crisis to hide their human rights violations. They should know that Amnesty International is watching them. We will call out human rights violators wherever we see them. On these pages we feature just a few of the countries that Amnesty's experts have been focused on during the COVID-19 pandemic.



USA

USA

You called on the authorities to grant humanitarian parole to immigration detainees and provide alternatives to detention.

With nearly 40,000 people in over 200 detention centres, the United States runs the largest immigration detention system in the world. Some detainees have been on hunger strikes to protest against dangerous hygiene and sanitation conditions. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the detention of tens of thousands of people poses a major threat to public health.



Brazil

HUNGARY

You spoke out when Hungary's parliament passed a COVID-19 law giving the government of Viktor Orbán unlimited new powers.

During his years as Prime Minister, Orbán has severely rolled back human rights in Hungary, stoked up hostility towards refugees and other marginalized groups and tried to silence critical voices.



Hungary

BRAZIL

You held President Jair Bolsonaro to account when he recklessly dismissed lockdowns and called on Brazil's governors and mayors to roll back measures they had put in place to respond to COVID-19. There are fears that the COVID-19 pandemic may devastate marginalized populations in Brazil, including Indigenous peoples, people living in poverty or experiencing homelessness, and other vulnerable groups.

USA

Children call for their father to be freed from an immigration detention centre in Colorado. Immigration detainees should be granted humanitarian parole during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Hyung Chang/MediaNews Group/The Denver Post/Getty Images

BRAZIL

President Jair Bolsonaro speaks to his supporters rallying against social distancing measures. Time and again Brazil's president has recklessly dismissed COVID-19 lockdown measures.



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BANGLADESH

You added your voice to those of Rohingya refugees who are calling for increased protection for the most vulnerable members of their community.

Older people in the refugee camps are at high risk from the virus due to their age, lack of access to water and sanitation, and cramped living conditions. Your support means Amnesty is pressing the government to put older people at the centre of its COVID-19 planning and response.

CHINA

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the dire consequences of the Chinese government's attacks on human rights. In the critical early weeks of the outbreak, the Chinese authorities suppressed information about the virus and its dangers. In late December, concerned doctors in Wuhan tried to sound the alarm, but they were silenced and punished by local authorities for "spreading rumours". One of the doctors, Li Wenliang, was infected by the virus and died in February. The Chinese authorities' censorship and control of information increased the risk of harm and delayed an effective response. The Chinese government needs to learn important lessons from the coronavirus outbreak. Most importantly that it should end its crackdown on human rights.

China

Bangladesh

Cambodia

Philippines

Eritrea

ERITREA

You called for the release of prisoners held for peacefully exercising their human rights. In Eritrea, people expressing a different political view from the government are at risk of arrest. Thousands of politicians, journalists, human rights defenders, and their family members have been detained for many years. Releasing these prisoners, apart from being the right thing to do, would make jails less crowded and help to protect prisoners and staff from COVID-19.

CAMBODIA

You helped expose inhumane conditions inside Cambodian prisons. Amnesty revealed shocking video footage of extreme overcrowding. Some Cambodian prisons are estimated to be up to 460% over capacity. Such conditions were never acceptable but are a ticking time bomb during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHILIPPINES

You spoke out against President Duterte's "shoot to kill" order during the pandemic. The president's order was directed against people protesting the lack of help from local government in Quezon City. President Duterte had warned that he would send the protestors to their graves. Amnesty demanded the president stop his dangerous incitement to violence.

ERITREA

Ciham Ali Ahmed is a 23-year-old prisoner of conscience, jailed for trying to leave Eritrea. Held for eight years, she now faces the additional risk of contracting COVID-19 in prison.



© Saïen Youns

CHINA

A memorial outside a hospital in Wuhan, China, to Li Wenliang, one of the doctors who was punished by the authorities after raising the alarm about the new coronavirus.



Feature China Barcroft Media/Getty Images



Colombian defenders Andrea Nocove, Julia Figueroa, and Iván Madero with Amnesty campaigner Kathy Price and Peace Brigades International's Javier Garate.

Colombian human rights defenders inspire on visit to Canada

Amnesty International hosted four courageous Colombian human rights defenders during their visits to Canada at the end of 2019. Julia Figueroa and Andrea Nocove are members of an all-women collective of lawyers known by its acronym CCALCP, and Iván Madero is president of CREDHOS, a human rights organization.

Much of their work is defending environmental human rights. The Colombian authorities award mining and oil concessions, including to Canadian companies, without properly evaluating the impact on the drinking water, lands, and health of nearby communities.

The communities that Julia, Andrea, and Iván work with are in constant danger (as are Julia, Andrea, and Iván themselves). More than 700 community leaders and human rights defenders have been reported killed in the last three years.

Your support really matters. International solidarity puts pressure on the Colombian authorities to do more to protect human rights defenders.

Site C: Construction must be halted during pandemic

Shortly after the global COVID-19 pandemic was declared, Amnesty International supporters joined the community of Fort St. John and First Nations Chiefs in British Columbia in calling for a stop to the construction of the Site C dam.

The workers lodge at the Site C dam can house up to 1,600 employees. Any outbreak of the coronavirus at Site C could spread to local communities and overburden the Fort St. John hospital's seven ventilators and other medical resources. The hospital has only 55 beds and three ICU units.

Megaproject work camps like Site C house hundreds of workers who fly in and out of the site, returning on their days off to their homes as far away as Alberta, Ontario, and Newfoundland.



Closing the Canada-US border puts refugees at risk of human rights abuses.

Canada must not turn away refugees

Amnesty International is calling on the Canadian government to reopen the Canada-US border to refugee claims. The government closed the border to refugees on March 21, violating its obligations under international law, and reversing an earlier decision. Previously the government had announced a sensible plan to keep the border open and ensure safe housing and quarantine for refugees crossing into Canada.

Refugees are already facing increased danger as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the border closure puts them at additional risk of being forcibly returned from the US to countries where they may face torture and other human rights abuses.

We do not have to choose between tackling the pandemic and upholding human rights: we can and should do both.

Amnesty International's response to the global COVID-19 crisis embodies my vision of the world I want to leave behind for future generations

“I am a healthy 70-year-old, and as I connect with family and friends, we remind ourselves that in the midst of this crisis, we are so privileged. We are white, middle class, and we live in a wealthy country. I can FaceTime with my three-year-old grandson. It is from this place of privilege that I support Amnesty International.

Amnesty offers us a path forward in uncertain times. I am so proud of our work in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We are highlighting instances of racism and discrimination and calling for the protection of marginalized communities. Our ongoing work with refugees, on climate change, and supporting environmental defenders here in Canada and around the globe remains critical.

I believe that Amnesty International has risen to the occasion. As both a monthly donor and someone who has left a gift to Amnesty in my will, I urge you all to do what you can to support human rights. Together, we can ensure that Amnesty will always be there for humanity, no matter what future challenges may come our way.

— Lee Seymour, Amnesty International Board Member and legacy donor



I am proud to say that I, too, have left a gift in my will to Amnesty International

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“At difficult times, organizations like Amnesty International help me envision the world as I would want it to be. I am inspired by our movement's immediate call for solidarity worldwide and our rise to action in response to the abundant human rights concerns that this pandemic presents. All this gives me faith that Amnesty International will always be there for others—today, and well into the future.

During these trying times, it may feel really challenging to plan ahead. But if the moment should arise that you might consider a gift in your will, please do not hesitate to contact me at halmadi@amnesty.ca, 613-744-7667 (ext 223), or visit amnesty.ca/legacy.

Thank you for everything you do to support human rights work!

— Hala Al-Madi, Human Rights Guardian and Legacy Giving Support Staff



Activist and writer Dr. Stella Nyanzi in a Ugandan court on February 20, shortly before a judge overturned her conviction for “cyber harassment”. Dr. Nyanzi spent 18 months in jail for criticizing Uganda’s president on Facebook.

UGANDA: Dr. Stella Nyanzi wins her freedom!

After an 18-month battle for justice, writer and activist Dr. Stella Nyanzi was finally freed by a Ugandan court on February 20. Dr. Nyanzi was arrested and jailed after she criticized Uganda’s president on Facebook. In an attempt to silence her, the authorities accused Dr. Nyanzi of “cyber harassment”. Amnesty supporters repeatedly pressed the Ugandan authorities to release Dr. Nyanzi.

The treatment of Dr. Nyanzi is not isolated. Freedom of expression is coming under attack around the world—even more so now during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Recently Amnesty has exposed a worldwide backlash against journalists and others who criticize governments’ handling of COVID-19.

Thank you for your solidarity with journalists and activists who are risking all while holding governments to account for their COVID-19 responses. With your support, Amnesty International will continue to campaign to end crackdowns on their critical human rights work.

**FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
IS MORE VITAL THAN
EVER. THANK YOU FOR
PROTECTING IT.**

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