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FORCED TO MARRY AS YOUNG AS 11

GIRLS FORCED INTO MARRIAGE BURKINA FASO

GIRLS FORCED INTO MARRIAGE

BURKINA FASO



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At 13, Maria* was forced to marry a 70-year-old man who already had five wives. When she resisted, her father told her: “If you don’t go to join your husband, I will kill you.”

Across Burkina Faso, thousands of girls and young women like Maria are being forced into early marriage. More than half of all girls are married off before they turn 18. Some are as young as 11.

They’re expected to have as many children as their husbands want, regardless of their own wishes or the threat that early pregnancy poses to their health and life.

Once married, many are set to cook, clean, fetch water and work in the fields, dawn to dusk. Very few have the chance to go to school.

Some girls are doing all they can to escape forced marriages, despite huge pressure from their families and wider society. Maria walked nearly 170km over three days to seek refuge at a shelter for young girls.

Forced and early marriages are banned by Burkina Faso’s Constitution and international law, but the authorities keep turning a blind eye.

Burkina Faso’s government must enforce the law and protect girls and young women from forced marriages. You can help.

** Not her real name.*

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the government of Burkina Faso

Urge the Justice and Human Rights Minister to stop turning a blind eye and meet the country’s obligation to prevent forced and early marriages.

Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
Avenue de l’Indépendance
Ouagadougou 01 BP 526
Burkina Faso



Show the girls they are not alone!

Write a message of support to the girls and young women in Burkina Faso who have fled early marriages and the shelter workers helping them defend their human rights. Send your postcard to:

Amnesty International Burkina
08 Av. Houari Boumedienne
Ouagadougou 08 BP 11344
Burkina Faso



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BEHIND BARS FOR PROMOTING DEMOCRACY

**FRED AND YVES
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

FRED AND YVES

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF CONGO

In March 2015, Congolese security forces stormed a press conference organized by Filimbi (“whistle” in Swahili), a youth movement that encourages people to get involved in peaceful political debate and action. Filimbi members Fred Bauma and Yves Makwambala were among 30 arrested.

Others included youth activists from Senegal and Burkina Faso, international journalists and an American diplomat, who have since been released or deported. But Fred and Yves are still behind bars, facing serious charges.

After their arrest, they were held at a secret location for two weeks. They were also interrogated in secret – Yves for 40 days, Fred for 50 – and denied visits by friends or lawyers. They are now awaiting trial in a Kinshasa jail, accused of forming a criminal gang and attempting to overthrow the regime of President Kabila.



According to their lawyers, there is simply no criminal evidence against them. But this case is politically motivated and, if convicted, they could face the death penalty. The authorities have sought to label Fred and Yves as “terrorists and plotters”. They are quite the opposite: prisoners of conscience, locked up for promoting democracy and trying to hold the government to account.

Enough is enough. Call on the Congolese authorities to drop these absurd charges and release Fred and Yves immediately.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the President of Congo

Call on the President of Congo to order the immediate and unconditional release of Fred Bauma and Yves Makwambala and drop all charges against them.

Président Joseph Kabila
Cabinet du Président de la République
Palais de la Nation
Av. De Lemera
Kinshasa-Gombe
République Démocratique du Congo

Email: presidence.de.la.rdcongo@gmail.com



Send Fred and Yves your support

Write Fred and Yves a letter or postcard to tell them you are calling for their release and the political freedom they stand for.

Fred Bauma and Yves Makwambala
c/o Amnesty International
Regional Office for East Africa, the Horn
and the Great Lakes
PO Box 1527-00606
Nairobi, Kenya



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30 YEARS' JAIL AFTER SUFFERING A STILL-BIRTH

TEODORA DEL CARMEN VÁSQUEZ EL SALVADOR

TEODORA DEL CARMEN VÁSQUEZ

EL SALVADOR

In 2008, Teodora del Carmen Vásquez was sentenced to 30 years in prison for “aggravated homicide” after suffering a still-birth at work.

Teodora, mother of an 11-year-old boy, was expecting a new baby when she started experiencing increasingly severe pain. She called the emergency services but her waters broke soon afterwards. She went into labour, and was unconscious when she gave birth.

When she came round, bleeding profusely, her baby was dead. Police at the scene handcuffed her and arrested her on suspicion of murder. Only then did they take her to hospital where she could get the urgent treatment she needed.

In El Salvador, women who miscarry or suffer a still-birth during pregnancy are routinely suspected of having had an “abortion”. Abortion



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under any circumstance is a crime, even in cases of rape, incest, or where a woman’s life is at risk. This makes women afraid to seek help with pregnancy-related problems, leading inevitably to more preventable deaths.

Teodora’s trial was deeply flawed. As in all similar cases in El Salvador, she was presumed guilty and, being from a poor family, could not afford an effective legal team to represent her. Her only option now is to appeal for her sentence to be changed so that she is released.

Call on El Salvador’s Minister of Justice to release Teodora immediately.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



**Write to El Salvador’s
Justice Minister**

Call on the Minister of Justice to release Teodora, and immediately and impartially review the sentences of all women still in jail for pregnancy-related issues.

Benito Antonio Lara Fernández
Ministro de Justicia y Seguridad Pública
17 Avenida Norte, Complejo Plan Maestro
Edificio B1, nivel 1, Alameda Juan Pablo II
San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: +503 2281 5959

Email: benitolara@seguridad.gob.sv

Twitter: @MiSeguridad_SV



**Post your message of
support for Teodora**

We’ve created a Tumblr space where you can upload your photo or message of support to Teodora.

At the end of the campaign, we’ll incorporate all your images into a printed publication which our local partners Agrupación Ciudadana will present to her family.

Post your contribution at teodoralibre.tumblr.com

A woman with dark hair is shown in profile, hugging a baby wrapped in a white blanket. She is wearing a black top and a patterned skirt. The background is a vibrant, hand-drawn collage. It features a large red heart with a white equals sign inside, a green pencil with a red eraser, a yellow sun, a blue envelope, a green palm tree, a blue bench, and various colorful shapes and lines. The overall style is artistic and expressive.

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**BEATEN UP FOR
BEING IN LOVE**

COSTAS GREECE



In August 2014, Costas and his partner, who is a refugee, were badly beaten by a group of thugs in a homophobic and racist attack in Athens. "I think they could tell we are a couple, and they targeted us because of that, and because of my partner's skin colour," Costas told us. His leg was broken in three places after he was repeatedly punched and kicked. More than a year later, no suspects have been identified, let alone punished.

Between 2014 and 2015, the number of reported attacks against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) people in Greece has more than doubled, while racist attacks remain an ongoing issue.

Greek authorities repeatedly fail to properly investigate any hate motive behind attacks, and to protect everyone affected. "When the police arrived, I was treated as if I'm contagious," said

Costas. Both he and his partner live in constant fear for their safety. In March 2015, Costas' partner was attacked again.

The lack of legal recognition of same-sex relationships and gender identity makes the LGBTI community feel even more vulnerable. "It's like the government condones the attacks by not acknowledging we are real," Costas told us. "It's as if we don't exist."

Urge the Greek government to order a full investigation into this hate crime and bring their attackers to justice.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the Greek Minister of Justice

Urge them to ensure this hate crime is fully investigated and that Costas and his partner get compensation for the injuries and trauma they have suffered.

Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights
96 Mesogeion Avenue
115 27 Athens
Greece

Fax: 0030 775 5835
Email: grammateia@justice.gov.gr



Tweet your support for Costas and his partner

Use social media to show your solidarity and tell the Greek government (@govgr) to end hate crimes. Tweet a photo of yourself kissing your partner or holding a friend's hand in a public place. Be sure to include the hashtag #W4R in your message.

Suggested message:

I stand with #Costas & demand @govgr end homophobic, racist hate crimes! Greece MUST protect #LGBTI people & #refugees! #W4R



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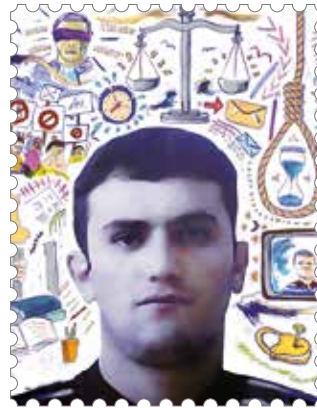
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TORTURED FOR 97 DAYS AND SENTENCED TO DEATH AT 17

SAMAN NASEEM IRAN

SAMAN NASEEM

IRAN



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Saman Naseem, a member of Iran's Kurdish minority, was captured after a gun battle in northwest Iran which led to the death of a Revolutionary Guard, a kind of government soldier. He was, he says, blindfolded, hung upside-down and tortured into confessing to a crime he did not commit. He was just 17 years old.

Saman's treatment has been grossly unfair. The courts used his "confession" as evidence against him, refusing to believe or investigate his allegation that it had been forced out of him. He was even made to confess on state television.

In spite of the fact that Iran has signed up to an international ban on executing minors, Saman was sentenced to death in April 2013

for "enmity against God" and "corruption on earth", "crimes" that simply wouldn't stand up under international law.

However, there is hope. Huge campaigning efforts have secured Saman a retrial, and now continuing global pressure can prevent a repeat.

Help Saman get a fair trial, where forced confessions and the death penalty have no place.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the Iranian authorities

Call on Iran to ensure Saman gets a retrial that is fair and fit for a minor, where the death penalty does not apply, and where forced confessions cannot be used as evidence.

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

Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir



Show Saman your solidarity

Messages* of solidarity are a source of comfort to Saman and show the authorities that the world is watching. Please send your messages to the Iran team at Amnesty and we will pass them on to Saman.

Saman Naseem Solidarity Action
c/o Iran Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

*Please do not send messages with images of alcohol. Thank you.



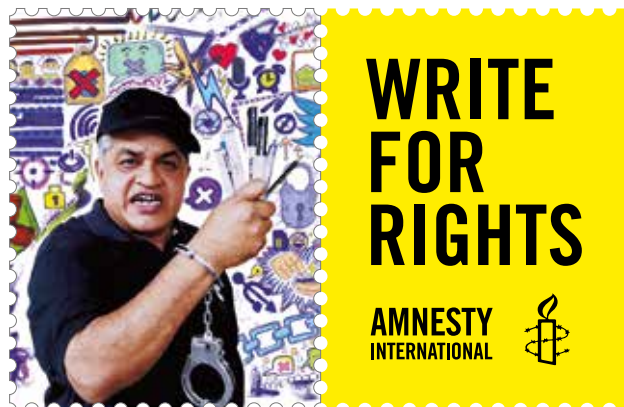
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**TWEETING
IS NOT A CRIME**

ZUNAR MALAYSIA



Zulkiflee Anwar “Zunar” Ulhaque faces a lengthy jail sentence after taking to Twitter to condemn the jailing of Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Zunar is a political cartoonist well known for his satirical attacks on government corruption and electoral fraud. He now faces nine charges under the Sedition Act, a draconian, outdated law from 1948 dredged up to grant the government sweeping powers to arrest and lock up its critics.

It’s not the first time Zunar has fallen foul of the Malaysian authorities. Since 2009, when his offices were first raided by police, he has been intimidated, arrested and imprisoned. They also confiscated and banned his books, and threatened to close down his printers.

Zunar is not the only one. In the first six months of 2015, more than 40 journalists, academics, political activists and lawyers were interrogated, arrested or charged under the Sedition Act. The space for dissent and debate in Malaysia is disappearing fast.

Join us to help stop Zunar being imprisoned, and draw international attention to Malaysia’s escalating crackdown on freedom of expression.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the Prime Minister of Malaysia

Call on him to drop the politically motivated charges against Zunar, who was peacefully exercising his freedom of expression.

Prime Minister Najib Razak
Main Block, Perdana Putra Building
Federal Government Administrative Centre
62502
Putrajaya
Malaysia
Fax: +603 8888 3444

Email: ppm@pmo.gov.my
Twitter: @NajibRazak



Send your support to Zunar

Zunar has told us he’d love people to draw pictures to show their support. It doesn’t have to be anything complicated – it could be a cartoon or simple doodle of solidarity, or a drawing expressing what free speech means to you. Upload your creation to Instagram and tag with #Zunar and #W4R. Please add your age/country as a caption and a message to Zunar if you wish.

Alternatively, please send your drawings to Zunar via our team in Malaysia, and we’ll post a selection online.

c/o AI Malaysia
D-2,33A 8 Avenue
Jalan Sungai Jernih 8/ 1
Section 8, 46050 Petaling Jaya
Selangor, Malaysia



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BEATEN, SUFFOCATED AND RAPED UNTIL SHE CONFESSED

YECENIA ARMENTA MEXICO

YECENIA ARMENTA

MEXICO



In July 2012, Yecenia Armenta was driving relatives to the airport when undercover police pulled her over. They forced her out of her car, blindfolded her and drove her away. They accused her of ordering her husband's murder, and they stopped at nothing to make her confess.

Yecenia was hung upside down by her ankles, suffocated and beaten. "They said they would bring my two children, rape them and cut them up into pieces," she told Amnesty. "After many hours of torture and after they'd raped me, I signed the confession. I was still blindfolded. I never even read what I had signed." Her ordeal lasted 15 hours.

In detention, doctors from the same prosecutor's office that detained her examined Yecenia's injuries but failed to document them. Months later, medical forensic staff from the Federal Attorney General's Office also examined her,

only to conclude that she had not been tortured because the previous doctors had found no signs. Since then, independent medical experts have examined her twice and both times concluded that she was indeed tortured.

Yecenia has spent the last three years in prison, charged without proof on the strength of her "confession", for a crime she says she did not commit: "I want my story to be heard, and I'm asking you to help me."

The Mexican authorities need to know the world is watching. Demand justice for Yecenia now.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to Sinaloa's Attorney General

Call on Attorney General Marco Gómez to drop the charges against Yecenia and release her immediately. He must also carry out a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into her torture and bring those responsible to justice.

Marco Antonio Higuera Gómez
Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Sinaloa
Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado de Sinaloa
Blvd. Enrique Sánchez Alonso No. 1833
Desarrollo Plan Tres Ríos, C.P. 80030
Culiacán, Sinaloa, México



Send a Christmas card of support

Spending a third Christmas in prison will be difficult for Yecenia. Send her a Christmas card with a message of support to show your solidarity.

Yecenia Armenta
c/o Centro de Ejecución de las Consecuencias Jurídicas del Delito de Culiacán (CECJUDE)
Carretera a Navolato Km. 95
Col. Aguaruto, C.P. 80370
Culiacán, Sinaloa
México



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**LOCKED UP FOR
STUDENT PROTEST**

PHYOE PHYOE AUNG MYANMAR

PHYOE PHYOE AUNG

MYANMAR



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In early 2015, student leader Phyoe Phyoe Aung helped to organize a march against a new law in Myanmar, which students said limited academic freedom. In March, as the protesters got closer to Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, they were blocked by police who beat them with batons.

Phyoe Phyoe Aung and more than 100 other student activists – many of them injured – were arrested and charged with a range of questionable criminal offences. Many have been locked up ever since, with some held in solitary confinement and with limited access to lawyers. Some, including Phyoe Phyoe Aung, could face more than nine years in prison.

Across the country, young people and student leaders continue to be harassed by police and other authorities in what appears to be a systematic clampdown on the student movement.

Despite this, there is good reason to believe the authorities can be pressured into releasing Phyoe Phyoe Aung and others. Myanmar's government is hungry for foreign approval and investment. President Thein Sein is keen to demonstrate that his country is still on the road towards political reform and respect for human rights.

Join the call for Myanmar to release Phyoe Phyoe Aung, and all the students and supporters jailed for protesting peacefully.

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CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the President of Myanmar

Urge President Thein Sein to prove his country is still on the road to reform by releasing Phyoe Phyoe Aung and the other peaceful student protesters immediately and unconditionally.

President Thein Sein
President Office, Office No.18, Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: +95 1 652 624
www.facebook.com/myanmarpresidentoffice.gov.mm

Salutation: Your Excellency



Support Myanmar students

Phyoe Phyoe Aung is an animal lover, so please send her your best pictures or drawings of animals. And please also send messages to all the other detained students and supporters and we'll pass them on. You could include this unifying message: "I support Myanmar students".

c/o Myanmar Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London, WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom



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AN ACTIVIST NOT A TERRORIST

WALEED ABU AL-KHAIR SAUDI ARABIA

WALEED ABU AL-KHAIR

SAUDI ARABIA

In July 2014, lawyer Waleed Abu al-Khair was sentenced to 15 years in jail after years of harassment, arrests, threats and court cases. Through his work, he had challenged the widespread attack on human rights in Saudi Arabia.

Since 2012, the authorities have led a ruthless crackdown on their critics, and have handed out long prison sentences to people who have dared to call for greater freedoms. Waleed has represented many peaceful activists, including his brother-in-law Raif Badawi, the blogger jailed and sentenced to 1,000 lashes.

Waleed was found guilty by a special counter-terrorism court of, among other farcical charges, insulting the judiciary, disobeying the ruler, and harming the reputation of the Kingdom. He was offered a reduced sentence of 10 years if he



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apologized for his “offences”, but when he refused an appeal judge ordered him to serve the full term.

Waleed suffers from diabetes, and while in prison he has been beaten, deprived of sleep and kept in solitary confinement. He has been regularly moved from one jail to another, and as a result his wife and child have found it difficult to visit him.

Waleed is a prisoner of conscience, not a terrorist. Join the call for his immediate release and to drop all charges so he can be reunited with his family.

**WRITE A LETTER
CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to the King of Saudi Arabia

Make sure Waleed's plight does not go ignored. Write to the King of Saudi Arabia to reverse this miscarriage of justice and call for his immediate, unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.

King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King, Royal Court,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior) +966 11 403 3125
(please keep trying).

Salutation: Your Majesty



Show solidarity with Waleed

Remind Waleed he is not forgotten, and show the authorities that he has support around the world.

Write to him in prison, and then please take a picture of your letter and email his wife Samar Badawi at freewaleed57@gmail.com

Waleed Abu al-Khair
Al-Ha'ir Prison
Al-Ha'ir
Riyadh 14765
Saudi Arabia



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**SEIZED BY
GOVERNMENT AGENTS –
AND STILL MISSING**

RANIA ALABBASI AND HER FAMILY SYRIA



RANIA ALABBASI AND HER FAMILY

SYRIA

Rania Alabbasi is a successful dentist in Damascus, Syria, and a busy mother of six children: Dima, Entisar, Najah, Alaa, Ahmad and Layan, all aged between 3 and 15. On 9 March 2013, Syrian government agents came to her home and took away her husband. Two days later, they came for her and her children. None of them has been heard of since.

The Syrian authorities have refused to give Rania's relatives any information about what has happened, or where they are now. Her sister Naila can only speculate why they were arrested: "She didn't belong to any opposition party or go to any demonstrations. She was always there to help others."

As the crisis in Syria has escalated, there has been a massive increase in brutality across the country. Thousands of people are missing after



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being detained by state forces or captured by armed groups. Torture in custody is rampant and thousands are believed to have died as a result.

The Syrian government has so far ignored a 2014 UN resolution calling for an end to these so-called "enforced disappearances".

Help shame Syria into releasing Rania's six children immediately and unconditionally. Rania must also be released or given a fair trial for whatever she is alleged to have done.

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CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to President Assad of Syria

Call for Rania Alabbasi to be released or tried fairly for an internationally recognized offence. Insist that Syria releases Rania's six children immediately and unconditionally.

President Bashar al-Assad
c/o His Excellency Bashar Ja'afari, Ph.D.
Syria UN Permanent Representative
820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

Fax: (212) 983-4439
Email: exexec.syria@gmail.com



Send a message of support

Send your message to us or directly to the UN Syria Permanent Representative at the address above. Asking him to forward it to the family is a powerful way to highlight that we do not know where the family is.

c/o Syria Team
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom



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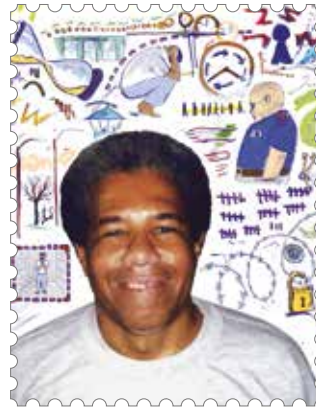


**STILL IN SOLITARY
AFTER 43 YEARS**

ALBERT WOODFOX USA

ALBERT WOODFOX

USA



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Albert Woodfox has spent 40 years in solitary confinement, locked up alone in a tiny cell with little natural light for 23 hours a day. He was convicted in 1973 for the murder of a prison guard the year before, while he was serving time for robbery. But Albert says he is an innocent man.

There was no physical evidence linking him to the crime, and his conviction relied primarily on the dubious testimony of another prisoner, who received a pardon in return. Albert believes his conviction was politically motivated because he was a member of the Black Panther Party, the radical black rights movement.

Decades of isolation have taken an appalling toll on Albert: “I do not have the words to convey the years of mental, emotional and physical torture I have endured.” Even the UN says Albert’s treatment amounts to torture.

The legal process was so flawed that his conviction has been overturned three times. In June 2015, a federal judge ordered his immediate release, but Albert’s freedom has been blocked at every turn. The only person standing in the way is Louisiana’s Attorney General, who is waging a campaign of vengeance against him.

“They might bend me a little bit,” says Albert. “They might cause me a lot of pain. They may even take my life. But they will never be able to break me.”

Justice is long overdue. Call on the Attorney General to release Albert now.

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CHANGE A LIFE**



Write to Louisiana's Attorney General

Ask the Attorney General of Louisiana to end decades of cruel and inhuman treatment and release Albert Woodfox immediately.

Attorney General of Louisiana
Office of the Attorney General
1885 North Third Street
Baton Rouge
LA 70802
USA



Inspire Albert with a postcard

Be the window to a world that Albert hasn't seen for 43 years. Please send him an inspirational postcard to show him what he can look forward to when he is finally released.

Albert Woodfox #72148
West Feliciana Parish Detention Center
PO Box 2727
St Francisville
LA 70775, USA



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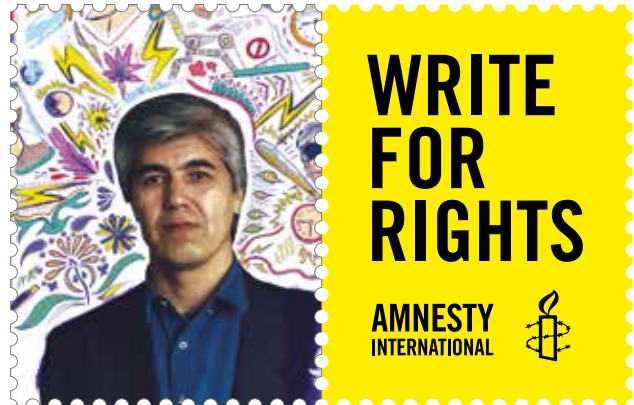


JOURNALIST BRUTALLY TORTURED TO CONFESS

MUHAMMAD BEKZHANOV UZBEKISTAN

MUHAMMAD BEKZHANOV

UZBEKISTAN



“I was lying there in a pool of blood for days – no water, no food. I was trying to remember all the good things in my life, my children, my wife. And mentally I was preparing myself that I was going to die.”

In 1999, Uzbekistani security forces tortured journalist Muhammad Bekzhanov, editor of a banned opposition newspaper. They beat him with rubber truncheons, suffocated him and gave him electric shocks until he confessed to “anti-state” offences.

Even though Uzbekistan has signed up to the UN Convention against Torture which absolutely bans torture and the use of evidence obtained under duress, its courts routinely rely on “confessions” obtained in the most brutal ways imaginable. At trial, a judge dismissed Muhammad’s allegations that he was tortured and used his “confession” to sentence him to 15 years in prison.

Muhammad is now one of the world’s longest-imprisoned journalists. He was due to be released in 2014, but he remains in jail, sentenced to nearly five more years for allegedly violating prison rules. His wife Nina found him at breaking point when she was allowed to visit him last year: “He was unrecognizable. All hope was lost in his eyes, he was just trying to survive.”

Call on the President of Uzbekistan to order the release of Muhammad and a full investigation into his torture.

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Write to the President of Uzbekistan

Muhammad Bekzhanov has already served more time in jail than almost any other journalist in the world. Call on President Islam Karimov to order his immediate release and an independent investigation into his allegations of torture.

President Islam Karimov
Rezidentsia prezidenta
ul. Uzbekistanskaia 43
Tashkent 700163
Uzbekistan



Show Muhammad your solidarity

Muhammad and his family need our moral support. His daughter Aigul tells us her father cherishes every single letter he receives in prison like a priceless possession.

Muhammad Bekzhanov
Otryad 12
KIN 6448
Navoi region
Uzbekistan