

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SOUTH AFRICA

APRIL 2018 NEWSLETTER



FROM THE DIRECTORS DESK: TOGETHER WE'RE #NOTPOWERLESS

© Amnesty International
South Africa

Dear Members and Supporters,

Welcome to the first edition of the Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) monthly newsletter. This is just one of many products we have put together to inform you of AISA's work as well as developments within the broader movement. Please do not hesitate to give us news, views, information and feedback – we value your inputs. In this edition I want to draw your attention to the worsening state of human rights globally. One of the major events organized by AISA in the past few weeks was the launch of Amnesty International's [State of the World's Human Rights Report 2017/18](#).

The Report covers 159 countries, including South Africa, and delivers the most comprehensive analysis of the state of human rights in the world today.

Perhaps the most disturbing finding in the report was that during 2017 there was a serious rolling back of decades of human rights progress and silencing of those who speak out.

Worse still, our report noted that the main perpetrators of this decline in the state of human rights globally are governments.

Last year people across the world faced a deepening human rights crisis fuelled by growing intolerance of dissent and a rise in politics of fear and hate. And as more and more world leaders abandoned human rights, 2017 also saw an increase in protest movements globally.

Millions of people worldwide are facing increasingly precarious access to basic goods and services such as housing, food

and health care. Unless governments tackle the underlying causes of poverty and inequality, there is huge potential for even greater unrest.

South Africa remains one of the most unequal countries in the world today. Profound inequalities continue to undermine economic, social and cultural rights for millions of South Africans.

Across the world people are being forced to live in intolerable conditions. They are being denied access to food, clean water, health care and shelter. If you take away these human rights, you breed despair with no limit or end. From Angola to Zimbabwe we are witnessing the growth of ferocious social discontent.

In the face of all the bad news is there any hope? Well, while 2017 saw protracted and, in some cases, deepening challenges to the state of human rights globally, it also offered hope and opportunities for change.

A key source of hope lay in the countless people across the region who – despite the many challenges and risks to their lives and freedom – stood up for human rights, justice and dignity. People Power is changing the face of the world amidst growing intolerance of dissent and a rise in politics of hate and fear.

As Amnesty International, we call on governments all over the world to stop silencing dissenting voices and instead address the reasons why people are protesting. If they don't they will only fuel further unrest. We see this all too often in South Africa where violent protest action is now part and parcel of the local fabric, sometimes with dire consequences as witnessed at Marikana.

Governments should never underestimate the determination of people who have to overcome overwhelming odds to campaign for their freedom or equal treatment.

The indomitable spirit of human rights activists leading powerful movements reminds us that the thirst for equality, dignity and justice will never be extinguished.

There is a palpable sense that protest movements are on the rise globally. If governments oppose such movements, they will erode their legitimacy.

In 2018 we cannot take for granted that we will be free to gather together in protest or to criticise our governments. We need to be prepared and remain vigilant.

A luta continua! 🇵🇹

OUR FOCUS: JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Calling for justice and holding States to account are at the forefront of Amnesty International's work in South Africa. In a country whose Constitution and legal framework are no longer aligned to prevailing societal norms and values, and where a lack of accountability has far too long been overlooked, the need for justice and accountability is imperative.

Justice: for victims of human rights violations so that government may punish those who have committed crimes, so that the truth is disclosed and repatriation for victims may be awarded.

Accountability: ensuring that the government is held to account for injustices and that they fulfil their commitments to human rights.

The justice and accountability programme at Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) focuses on domestic as well as South Africa's foreign policy.

Locally, Marikana continues to be at the forefront of our work as the victims of the violence are still awaiting reparations almost six years on from the tragedy. There was progress recently with the appearance of nine South African Police Service officers in court on charges relating to the event. AISA will continue to work steadfastly to ensure that the victims and their families are awarded justice.

Internationally, we work on Israel's occupation of Palestine, calling on governments to stop enabling the economy that keeps Israel's illegal settlements growing, fuelling the suffering of Palestinians, by calling for a ban on goods produced in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from entering the South African market.

We continue our work in holding government accountable to "all those who reside in South Africa", specifically women, refugees and migrants, as these groups face daily human rights abuses.

We also call upon government to take ownership of delivering on its Constitutional commitments. The right to education is of particular importance to us, and we work closely with our Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) programme on calling for the delivery of quality education for all.

Finally, we are seeking to focus a large part of our work on engaging the South African government strategically to play a proactive role in regional, continental and global bodies, and to be held accountable to its regional, continental and global commitments.

Justice and accountability is a vital strand of AISA's work and we will continue to endeavor tirelessly to ensure that the wheels of justice turn faster, and the hands of accountability clap harder. 🇵🇹

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



jennifer.wells@amnesty.org.za



+27 (0) 11 283 6000



THE STIRRING OF HOPE: TOGETHER WE'RE #NOTPOWERLESS

In response to the recent social and political changes in South Africa, Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) launched the *Together We're #NotPowerless* digital campaign to commemorate Human Rights Day during the month of March.

Amnesty International is a global movement and our theory of change is the more people come together to take action against human rights violations, the more powerful we are in achieving the change we need. Therefore the *Together We're #NotPowerless* campaign is a reflection of who we are and what we do as a movement in light of the fact that Amnesty was built on the vision of collective action.

As Amnesty, we are always mindful of the country's rich heritage and culture. The *Together We're #NotPowerless* campaign explores South Africa's history of collective action and activism, and acknowledges the great moments to be remembered.

When AISA made the decision to launch the campaign digitally, we did not want to create just another Facebook post. We wanted to reach our audiences with a message about activism and action-taking. We wanted to reach out to the post-liberation generation of young South Africans and appeal to the fact that they are rooted in, and come from, a long lineage of social justice activism.

As the country embraces a new era, where *thuma mina* (send me) is the clarion call for change – change rooted in self-sacrifice and individual responsibility – the campaign calls on supporters to join AISA and take action.

Our campaign reached over 7 000 people online and generated over 1 000 actions. Thank you to all who engaged and took action!

At AISA, we believe in People Power. Together we can work to investigate and expose human rights abuses and create a safer, more just, world. Together We're #NotPowerless!

[Join us](#) as we accept the call. Indeed *thuma mina* because *Together We're #NotPowerless*. 🇵🇹

RIGHTS: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL

In 2017 the Amnesty International's Management Team, collectively decided to amplify the organisation's interventions on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) at the centre of all the work we do. The rationale behind this decision was that unless economic, social and cultural rights are addressed as part of a broader human rights focus, the impact on the quality of life and peoples' ability to access their basic rights will be limited.

At Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) we place ESCR root cause analysis at the centre of all our work and regard the state to be the major duty bearer for the delivery of these rights. In this regard we conduct research and carry out advocacy which calls on the government to respect, protect and fulfil its obligation in international as well as national laws.

This includes the right to work, the right to a basic education, the right to access to clean sanitation, the right to a decent standard of living and the right to housing. Also included is the right of access to culture and to participate in the culture of one's choice.

To make ESCR a practical and legally binding international instrument, the South African government ratified the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 2015. The final ratification of the covenant was a fitting tribute to the late former president Nelson Mandela, who initially signed the ICESCR in 1994. The ratification of the Covenant represents an important step to giving the ICESCR greater force.

AISA is using the opportunity to call on the government to speedily ratify the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR (OP-ICESCR). This is an action that will accentuate South Africa's commitment to advancing the rights of poor (disadvantaged) people in the country. The OP-ICESCR is an additional treaty that provides an individual compliant mechanism. It empowers vulnerable and marginalised groups to lodge individual complaints at the international level relating to violations of their ESCR.

Apart from the mainstreaming of ESCR in all our areas of work, Amnesty's South Africa Programme is presently working on two major pieces of research. This first is an analysis on the practicality



Housing is a human right.

Photo by Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi
© Amnesty International



The Status of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in South Africa's Marginalised communities.

© Lawrence Shabangu, FistoFire Productions

and feasibility of the proposed Implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI) in South Africa. This will initially be a desktop analysis with the scope for additional research.

The second is a more in-depth piece of research analysing the Impact of Low Cost Private Education in South Africa on the right to quality education. The research is part of a joint project between AISA and the Amnesty International's International Secretariat and covers three provinces – Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Western Cape.

The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa guarantees ESCR for all. Section 29(1) states that “everyone has the right (a) to basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible”.

Section 29(3) goes on to say, “everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that (a) do not discriminate on the basis of race; (b) are registered with the state; and (c) maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions”.

The research looks at the growth of private actors providing basic education in South Africa, probing the emerging trend of private companies stepping into the space. It further considers the quality of the education provided and the lack of adequate training for teachers in this sector. Further, the research seeks to understand the mechanisms in place for effective regulation and monitoring by the state and the over-reliance on private-public partnerships.

The project will essentially focus on the lack of equal access, and affordability of education, the failure of the state to provide adequate and quality education for all as well as the lack of proper regulation and planning by the state to hold the corporate sector to account. ¹⁴

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



samson.oyungemi@amnesty.org.za



+27 (0) 11 283 6000

RIGHTS: WOMEN AND MARGINALISED GROUPS

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, and one of the most significant consequences of this inequality, is human rights abuses and violations of the most marginalised groups in society. The women and marginalised groups rights (WMGR) programme at Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) recognises that the patriarchal system we live in, and the resulting inequalities and abuses, affect women and gender non-conforming people in disproportionate ways, and we seek to address this.

In the South African context, those living in the margins of society including refugees, asylum seekers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people, differently abled people, people living with albinism, amongst others, are most at risk of human rights violations.

The WMGR programme will conduct research and develop campaigning and other materials to expose the human rights violations and to advocate for the full and equal realisation of their human rights.

The WMGR program is currently conducting research on the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa, in the international migration management system in South Africa, specifically the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process; and the effects of the closures of the three urban Refugee Reception Offices (RROs).

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be one of South Africa's biggest human rights failures. Women, sex workers and gender non-conforming people experience violence, harassment and stigmatisation throughout their lives, in many

ways, which affects their ability to live with dignity and freedom. In 2018 and 2019, AISA with our university chapters, will undertake research on the prevalence of SGBV in universities; and develop and implement education and awareness programmes and campaigns on campuses and in schools.

AISA will be closely following the decriminalisation of sex work debate this year. We work with partners in the Asjiki Coalition to advocate for the full decriminalisation of sex work, as a starting point of preventing and redressing human rights violations against sex workers in South Africa.

AISA made a written submission to the Multiparty Women's Caucus and an oral submission at their summit on 26 February, regarding the report and recommendations on "Project 107 Sexual Offences Adult Prostitution" (the SALRC report). We are waiting for a decision from the Department of Justice.

As part of our ongoing advocacy work in South Africa, the programme will seek to highlight some of the shortfalls to accessing maternal health and abortion services; we will develop and participate in campaigns to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, and hold government accountable to this. [\[4\]](#)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



susan.tolmay@amnesty.org.za



+27 (0) 11 283 6000

SPOTLIGHT ON THE MOVEMENT: ONE AMNESTY

Human rights and defenders of human rights are under threat, wherever you look. Every day, the Amnesty movement takes steps, argues positions, defends and campaigns on behalf of human rights in an effort to better deliver on rights to life, freedom, dignity and safety. Whilst the movement grows and becomes ever more necessary in a world of injustice, so does the need to re-think and re-shape the movement.

In August of 2017, the Amnesty International board met for its 33rd and final International Council Meeting (ICM) to discuss and

debate its successes and new ways of working and organising for human rights in today's world. Taken together, deliberations on the protection of refugees, attacks on human rights defenders, economic, cultural and social rights as well as gender and diversity, reinforced our commitment to deliver on our goals. Whilst recognising the ever upward battle, we are proud of our achievements and latest reforms.

After four years of discussion and deliberation, a landmark decision was made to reform Amnesty's global governance through the establishment of a global assembly, regional forums and a 'one-entity-one-vote' system. These are significant changes that reinforce our combined commitment to a One Amnesty.

Close collaboration resulted in the formulation of a transparent, high quality human rights policy development process, a significant step to strengthen our movement. The ICM saw the birth of a new Fuerza programme aimed at maximising human rights impact by focusing on our advocacy, mobilisation and fundraising strengths. Workshops held on civil disobedience and boycotts inspired us to take more risks, whilst another on LGBTI rights reminded us of the need to put ourselves in the shoes of The Other.

The 2017 ICM was an opportunity for Amnesty International to reflect, collaborate on, rethink and reshape the ways of moving forward in our commitment to the enjoyment of human rights on the globe.

The moment was historical – after being our highest decision-making body since the birth of the movement, the last ICM came to a close. But for Amnesty, as a truly global human rights movement, we have only just begun, and we are excited for what this will mean for South Africa, the region, the continent and the globe. [\[4\]](#)



One Amnesty.
© Amnesty International

#WORTHBLEEDINGFOR

#WORTHBLEEDINGFOR



JOIN US IN
LEARNING
ABOUT AND
CELEBRATING
OUR BODIES
WITH MINACUP
AND CAMPUS
HEALTH

Campus Health will be
available to answer
student questions

#WORTHBLEEDINGFOR

Most girls are taught at a young age that periods are dirty or unclean.

The shame around menstruation means that women and girls do not speak about the problems they face such as period poverty.

Period poverty affects more than two million school girls in South Africa alone.

We say, #I Am Clean!

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WITS WANTS TO SEE WOMXN STUDENTS PROSPER. HELP US ACHIEVE THIS BY BUYING AND WEARING A #IAMCLEAN STICKER.

ALL PROCEEDS GO TOWARD THE PURCHASE OF SANITARY PRODUCTS FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF IN NEED.

4TH OF APRIL

@ THE PIAZZA

13H15-14H15

BREAK THE SILENCE!

LET'S TALK PERIOD HEALTH

#WorthBleedingFor.

© Amnesty International Wits University

YOUTH: #WORTHBLEEDINGFOR

In 2016, we at Amnesty Wits, started the *Worth Bleeding For Campaign*. In the heat of Fees Must Fall, with discussions happening around access to education, we aimed to highlight the challenges that are unique to women students. We called for an end to period-tax – unfair luxury taxes on sanitary products. We also started a movement to push our university to provide free sanitary pads on campus for students and staff.

University management has been unwilling to comply with our demands. However, we continue to push for change through petitions, talks and provocative art. We aim to educate the public on the rights to sanitation and dignity.

Our campaign has seen us come in contact with many wonderful non-governmental organizations and civic groups working on human rights. This year we teamed up with the MinaCup Foundation to raise funds for the production of menstrual cups for women on campus. The project has collected R 9 000, which will provide 36 students with cups.

We are also working with Amandla.Mobi, a social action platform, with the aim of pressuring the Gauteng Provincial Government to provide girls in the lower income schools with free sanitary pads through school programmes.

In order to better understand the situation, we have been gathering research by surveying women and girls on menstruation, poverty and health. We found that many women on campus suffer in silence and that the situation is much worse than we had previously thought.

According to UNICEF, one in ten African school girls can't afford sanitary pads. That's two million school girls in South Africa alone. In a country plagued by widespread poverty and wealth inequality many girls have to choose between buying food or sanitary products. Women and girls then resort to using newspaper and dirty rags.

This impacts their health and well-being. It also puts an unnecessary strain on their lives.

Amnesty Wits now collects sanitary pad donations and distributes the pads to students who can't afford them. The sanitary pads are either included in grocery packs distributed to students via Wits Community Outreach, or through bathroom distribution boxes.

Earlier this year, Minister of Women in the Presidency, Bathabile Dlamini, said girls in primary and secondary schools will soon receive free sanitary towels, and that the programme will be rolled out from there. Until that happens we aim to find and implement a more sustainable means of ensuring that women students and staff have access to free sanitary pads. [\[1\]](#)

DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT #WORTHBLEEDINGFOR?



[@AI_WITS](#)



[@AmnestyInternationalWITS](#)



[Amnesty Wits](#)

COMMUNITY: A CHAPTER ROOTED IN HOPE

The Vaal Triangle is made up of some hundred thousand people living in dire conditions of poverty, unemployment and drug abuse. Setting up an Amnesty International community chapter in this environment is important in that the beneficiaries would have immediate access to the services that would help them take ownership of the challenges they face, thereby making human rights an everyday, lived, reality.

The aim of the [Amnesty International Vaal](#) community chapter, established in January 2018, is to empower local residents to know their human rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) as per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

In the beginning, we put together a survey to gauge what people know about human rights and how they would like to learn about their rights. We found that poetry, music, acting and dance are the most innovative ways in which to get community members, in particular young people, to talk about their human rights and to realise how they too can take injustice personally.

With this in mind we organised a human rights drive at a local community centre, face painting at a school, and a community human rights talent concert where groups auditioned and, if selected, then expressed one of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights through a performance art of their choice. These events were a huge success and we believe great opportunities lie ahead to change the lived realities of people for the better.

With opportunities come challenges but by bringing hope and originality to our approach, we have overcome these and will keep doing so.

One challenge has been finding a team of volunteers to work for free in an environment where work for money is necessary for survival. However, our team is committed and enthusiastic and this determination means that we feel we are having a positive impact.

Partnerships can also be a challenge, wherever one is based, and this is no different in the Vaal. We have learned that by clarifying roles, responsibilities and expectations beforehand, partnerships can work well.

An example of a successful, partnership we have forged since our establishment is that with the Motswake Theatre Company, which teaches dance, acting and television production to young people in the community, and will join with us to promote human rights through the arts and to provide a platform for talented young people.

Though there may be challenges, there is also excitement, and we are very excited for what the future holds and how we can build Amnesty International Vaal 'from the ground up', growing the movement and gaining members who are empowered to take action on human rights issues that affect them. [8](#)



Amnesty International community chapter in action.
© Amnesty International Vaal Triangle

LOVE TO START A COMMUNITY CHAPTER?



nthabeleng.mzizi@amnesty.org.za



+27 (0)11 283 6000

**THE AISA QUIZ:
Do you know your rights?**

Take this [fun quiz](#) to skill up and learn how you can use your rights to become an agent of change.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS 2017: 5.5 MILLION ACTIONS TAKEN!



Write for Rights in Johannesburg.
© Amnesty International South Africa



© Rebecca Hendin

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS ABOUT TAKING ACTION AND YOU CAN TAKE ACTION NOW:

Demand Justice for Taner [here](#).

And for years they have faced harassment and repeated arrests for their activism. But with *Write for Rights* turning the world's attention to the authorities, the two men say they feel protected.

Nearly 875,000 people wrote for the freedom of Amnesty Turkey's chair Taner Kiliç and the Istanbul 10. Although the Istanbul 10 are no longer in prison, their freedom is still at risk, and Taner remains locked up.

All are under threat simply for defending human rights. We continue to fight on until Taner is free and the charges against all are finally dropped.

Join us this year for *Write for Rights*. **YOUR** words have the power to change lives and to protect human rights everywhere. [Join us.](#) 

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



[Amnesty International South Africa](#)



[@AmnestySAfrica](#)



[@Amnesty_SouthAfrica](#)

YOU WROTE LETTERS AND CHANGED LIVES

Human rights and defenders of human rights are under threat, What's in a word? More precisely, what's in a letter? Originally a way to express deeply personal thoughts and communicate with loved ones, the popularity of the letter has fallen over the years.

And yet, every year, people around the world get together on 10 December, Global Human Rights Day, to write letters. They write to people who are locked up unfairly – and to their family members. They write to the government leaders who put them there, and demand they release them.

Last year, Amnesty supporters from around the world, like you, took an unprecedented 5.5 million actions as part of our global letter-writing marathon, *Write for Rights*. Your carefully crafted letters, drawings and postcards brought strength and comfort, and enough force to unlock prison doors.

In April, Mahadine, an online activist in Chad, walked free after spending more than 18 months in prison on fabricated charges. He had been facing a life sentence for a Facebook post critical of the government. Supporters took more than 690,000 actions for him.

Clovis' activism was rewarded. Clovis' dedication to saving Madagascar's precious rainforest put his life in grave danger. But with his inclusion in *Write for Rights* came global media attention, which has changed his situation in his native country. Today, local organisations show open support for him, awarding him for his environmental activism.

Human rights defenders Issa Amro and Farid al-Atrash have taken a peaceful stand against Israel's illegal settlements in the city of Hebron and other places in the occupied West Bank for years.