

April–June 2018

WIRE

TOGETHER AGAINST INJUSTICE



Mind what you say

Freedom of expression under threat in Spain

Challenging power

Women human rights defenders

Forest versus people

Indigenous land rights in Kenya

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INTERNATIONAL



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Receive Wire every three months in Arabic, English, French or Spanish (£16/US\$25/€19 per year).

Published by the Publishing Team, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, UK. All rights reserved.
Index: NWS 21/8147/2018 ISSN: 1472-443X.
Printed by Warners Midlands PLC, Lincolnshire, UK. Printed on 100% recycled paper.



Cover illustration: People take part in a pro-abortion demonstration in front of the Polish Parliament in Warsaw, 13 January 2018
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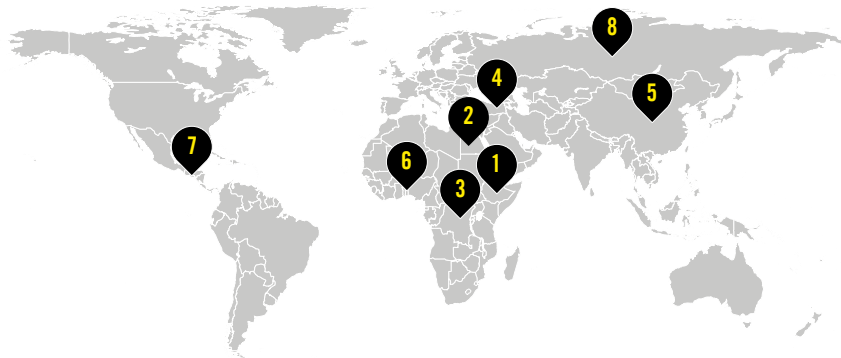
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AMNESTY AROUND THE WORLD



1 SOME CRITICS FREED

In Sudan, 80 political opposition supporters and human rights defenders were released in February. This followed intense campaigning by us and others, after at least 140 people had been arbitrarily arrested by the Sudanese Intelligence and Security Service in January and February. They were all arrested in connection with protests around Sudan against rises in the cost of food and medicine.

<http://bit.ly/211pwzp>



© Getty Images

“My family and I thank you for your strong support during the period of [my] detention... Now I am back at home.”

Mohammad Abdalla Aldoma, Deputy Chair, National Umma Party

2 PEACEFUL PROTESTERS RELEASED

On 13 January, Egyptian human rights defender and former prisoner of conscience Mahienour el-Masry, as well as labour activist Moatasem Medhat, were acquitted of all charges by a court of Appeals in Alexandria. Egyptian authorities released Mahienour on 16 January and Moatasem on 18 January. They were detained on 18 November 2017 and sentenced on 30 December



© Mohamed Hosny

to two years' imprisonment for taking part in a peaceful protest. Thank you to all of you who sent appeals.

<http://bit.ly/2G6MqZC>

3 FIVE ACTIVISTS RELEASED



© Amnesty International

Five pro-democracy activists who were held in the Democratic Republic of Congo for participating in a peaceful protest were released on 20 March. A court in Goma found them not guilty of the false charges they had been accused of. Rachel Pilipili, François Kahombo Hangi, Justin Mutabesha, Benjamin Kamuntu and Parfait Muhani are all members of the youth movement Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA). They were arbitrarily detained on 21 January. We considered them to be prisoners of conscience. Thank you for sending your appeals.

<http://bit.ly/2ugHZWM>

4 DOCTORS RELEASED

Eleven doctors who are members of the Turkish Medical Association's Central Council were released from police detention, three of them on 2 February, the remaining eight on 5 February. The doctors had been detained on 30 January after the association had called for an end to Turkey's military operation in Afrin, northern Syria. An investigation against them is still ongoing; we're calling for the investigation to be dropped.

<http://bit.ly/2DVXItL>

5 MEMORIAL ACTIVISTS RELEASED ON BAIL

Chinese independent writers Li Xuewen and Zhan Huidong (aka “Xiaozhang” or “Headmaster”) have been released on bail. The two men were detained for participating in the July 2017 seaside memorial for late Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo. Li Xuewen was

released on 15 January and Zhan Huidong was released on 23 January. Both men had been criminally detained since December 2017 on suspicion of “gathering a crowd to disturb social order”. We’ll continue to monitor the situation.

<http://bit.ly/2140kGA>

“The detention has left an indelible mark in my life and brought glory to my soul.”

Zhan Huidong



7 RELEASED FROM PRISON

On 15 February, Teodora del Carmen Vásquez was released from prison in San Salvador, capital of El Salvador, after a court reduced her sentence. Teodora suffered a stillbirth in 2007. Under El Salvador’s extreme anti-abortion laws she was charged with aggravated homicide and sentenced to 30 years in prison. The sentence was reduced in February after she had spent 10 years behind bars. A huge thank you to everyone who supported Teodora’s case as part of our Write for Rights 2015 campaign and to all who continued to call for her freedom!

<http://bit.ly/2uILJWQ>

6 DEATH SENTENCES COMMUTED

On 21 February, the Benin authorities commuted the death sentences of 14 men. The prisoners were 10 Beninese, two Nigerians, one Togolese and one Ivorian. They had been languishing on death row under grim conditions for between 18 to 20 years. The men were the last ones to be on death row in Benin which effectively abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 2016. Thank you for supporting our global petition for the commutation of their death sentences.

<http://bit.ly/2GdC850>

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8 IMPROVING PRISON TRANSPORT

Our October 2017 report on the inhumane conditions in special prison carriages used to transport prisoners in Russia forced the authorities to acknowledge the need to reform the prisoner transport system. Prisoners are transported thousands of miles, often for weeks on end, in cramped, windowless train compartments. You supported us in influencing public concern and in January 2018, the Russian prison service announced it would no longer transport passengers who require wheelchairs in cell-like coaches, a small but important step in the right direction.

<http://bit.ly/2pLfjzl>



© Yuri Smityuk/TASS via Getty Images

DEATH PENALTY IN 2017

993

executions were recorded worldwide

4%

fewer people executed than in 2016

2,591

people were sentenced to death in 53 countries

2

countries abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 2017: Guinea and Mongolia

1

country abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes only: Guatemala

106

countries have totally abolished the death penalty



BEHIND THE SCENES

TACKLING THE ROOT CAUSES

It's been more than 15 years since Amnesty decided to work on economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR). Iain Byrne and Makmid Kamara from our ESCR team talk about how we're taking this body of work to the next level.

When Amnesty started its ESCR work, we were a bit late to the party given that the organization had been around for over 40 years and ESCR had been part of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But we've made up for lost time by producing over 250 major research and advocacy outputs on issues ranging from forced evictions to maternal health.

We've contributed to significant changes in people's lives and international laws and standards. But there's much more to do. Recently, we decided to upgrade Amnesty's ESCR work and to look not only at the symptoms of ESCR violations but to also focus on some of the root causes. In partnership with other teams, regional offices and sections, we're researching issues like the impact of

austerity measures on health care, the privatization of education services and the criminalization of homelessness. We're also looking at the growing threats from technology in the workplace and its impact on people's right to work and their social protections.

Our aim is to uncover and challenge particular political and economic choices that governments make when they decide on measures. We demonstrate both the human rights impacts of such measures as well as the failings in the decision-making processes, such as lack of transparency and participation, so that we can hold state and non-state actors accountable.



*Iain Byrne (left) and
Makmid Kamara,
London, UK,
April 2018*

DIARY DATES AND ANNIVERSARIES 2018

1

MAY

International
Workers' Day

3

MAY

World Press
Freedom Day

15

MAY

International Day
of Families

16

MAY

International Day of
Living Together in
Peace

21

MAY

World Day for
Cultural Diversity
for Dialogue and
Development

4

JUNE

International
Day of Innocent
Children Victims of
Aggression

12

JUNE

World Day Against
Child Labour

13

JUNE

International
Albinism Awareness
Day

15

JUNE

World Elder Abuse
Awareness Day

19

JUNE

International Day
for the Elimination
of Sexual Violence
in Conflict

20

JUNE

World Refugee
Day

26

JUNE

United Nations
International Day in
Support of Victims
of Torture

EDITORIAL

POWERFUL GESTURE

We protest against injustice in many different ways. Sometimes the image of non-violent gestures can shout as loud as words. The visual language of peaceful protest has an instant effect as it illustrates an issue without the need for words. It connects to emotions and can inspire people globally as there is no language barrier to understanding the message. In our current world, the use of technology supports immediate sharing of such images; they can go viral in an instant and influence global debates.

This April, we presented our 2018 Ambassador of Conscience Award to US footballer Colin Kaepernick. When Colin made his non-violent gesture of protest by kneeling during the US national anthem at a National Football League game in 2016, he drew worldwide attention to the disproportionate number of black people being killed by police in his country. The image sparked a global debate about racism, discrimination and excessive use of force by police, not just in the USA. Colin Kaepernick "taking a knee" was a respectful way of calling for the country to remember to protect the rights of all its people.

Peaceful gestures like Colin's strike us as simultaneously humble, eloquent and extremely powerful. The power comes from the person using their body to express their protest as a direct expression of what is felt inside. By kneeling, Colin triggered polarized responses around the world: one of his most vocal critics was US President Donald Trump. Correspondingly, Colin's act started a positive movement of non-violent protests that aims to empower and educate people about their rights all over the globe.

Colin Kaepernick shows our movement that creating such a moment can encapsulate an issue, cut through the noise of our busy world and get right to the core of how people feel about a topic. By reaching the emotions in people, we can inspire and unite with them to campaign for a more equal world.

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CAMPAIGN: BRAVE

CHALLENGING POWER

WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS

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Protesters at the women's strike in Mexico City, Mexico, demanding the end of violence against women, 8 March 2018

All around the globe, brave individuals speak up and fight for human rights. In today's world, this is an increasingly tough and dangerous endeavour. Women human rights defenders face additional obstacles and discrimination because of who they are and the issues they work on. Brave, our global human rights defenders campaign, celebrates its first anniversary and we're now highlighting the situation of women defenders. We're teaming up with Wikipedia to make their stories and struggles public. Because the more people know who these brave individuals are and what they do, the more space this creates for them to claim their rights.

People who fight for the principles of freedom, justice and equality often do so in an environment where they are demonized and restricted in their work. Many human rights defenders are smeared, threatened, physically attacked, criminalized and sometimes even killed, just for daring to stand up to those in power. Imagine now how much harder your life as a human rights defender must be if you were targeted not only for what you do but also for who you are: welcome to your life as a woman human rights defender.

As a woman human rights defender, in most parts of the world, you as an individual are considered less worthy just because you're a woman, an LGBTI person, or because you work on issues related to gender and sexuality. You're



People taking action on issues related to women or minority groups often face discrimination. Women raising their voices at International Women's Day in Mexico City, Mexico, 8 March 2018



more likely to be seen as not fitting in with social norms and expectations when raising your voice. And in your daily life, you'll be at risk of violence, sexual attacks and harassment. You'll be afraid of becoming the target of sexualized smears and of being judged by the value of your "honour" when you stand out. Add to that the daily grind of patriarchal oppression and inequality and you can begin to see the double whammy of being a woman human rights defender.

It comes as no surprise that as a consequence of these negative perceptions and difficult circumstances, women human rights defenders continue to be ignored, dismissed and silenced. Their extremely brave, cutting-edge work continues to be underrepresented and insufficiently recognized by mainstream society, policy-makers and the media. This is why we've decided to shine a light on them on Wikipedia, the largest and most popular online

open-source platform of information available today. Currently, profiles of women and LGBTI people, and issues relating to gender and discrimination, are underrepresented on the platform. We want to change that. In May, we run a global edit-a-thon event called "Brave:edit" where volunteers trained by us edit and upload hundreds of profiles of woman human rights defenders to Wikipedia. Featuring these women from

all over the world on Wikipedia will help put a spotlight on their personal stories, their work and the challenges they face. Read on and get to know some of them on the following pages.

FIND OUT MORE
<http://bit.ly/2tjc08J>

WHO IS A WOMAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER?

Woman human rights defenders are women defenders in all of their diversity working on any human rights issue, and defenders of all genders working on rights related to gender and sexuality. It could be an Indigenous woman fighting for her community's rights and against gender-based violence, a woman advocating against torture, a trans rights campaigner, a sex workers' rights collective, or a man fighting for sexual and reproductive rights. Often, woman human rights defenders break new ground with their work as they challenge power and social norms. What these defenders have in common are the additional, specific challenges they face for being women, LGBTI people or for identifying with their struggles. Women defenders need special recognition of their work, a safe space to work in, and specific protection to meet their needs.

MEET WOMEN WHO CHALLENGE POWER

Women human rights defenders do brave and innovative work and win many of their struggles. We're raising their profiles by telling their stories and putting a face to their name.



ISABEL ZULETA, COLOMBIA

Born on 12 April 1982 in Ituango, Antioquia Department. Isabel and her family were forcibly displaced by paramilitary forces when she was aged 14. She studied sociology and researched why thousands of people were displaced, or forcibly disappeared and killed in the canyon of the Cauca river, Antioquia, where the Hidroituango, the largest hydroelectric dam in Colombia, is being built. Due to her activism, there have been attempts on her life and she has been a victim of surveillance, interferences with her communications, death threats and criminalization. She's a member of Movimiento Rios Vivos (Living Rivers Movement), an environmental movement that defends the territories and communities affected by dam and mining projects; Isabel is a spokesperson against the Hidroituango dam.

ALESSANDRA RAMOS MAKKEDA, BRAZIL

Alessandra was born in 1982 in Brasilia and lives in Rio de Janeiro. She's a trans woman and an LGBTI activist, and works as a translator and interpreter in several languages, including sign language. Alessandra is a member of Transrevolução, a Rio-based group that fights discrimination and promotes discussions of lesbian, gay and transgender issues. She regularly publishes her blogs on blogueirasnegras.com. In 2015, she helped organize the first National Black Trans Forum in



Porto Alegre. Alessandra was one of the National Co-ordinators of the National Forum for Afro-Brazilian transgender people.

MARYAM AKBARI MONFARED, IRAN

Born on 14 December 1975 in Iran. Three of her brothers and one of her sisters were executed in the 1980s. Maryam was arrested in 2009, forcibly disappeared for five months, and is now



serving a 15-year sentence after being convicted of "enmity against God". She has three daughters, her youngest was a toddler when she was imprisoned. She's a prisoner of conscience whose conviction is solely based on an arbitrary interference with her privacy, family and correspondence. Even while detained, Maryam campaigns and raises her voice by publishing open letters about prison conditions for women. Also while in prison, she filed a formal complaint demanding truth and justice for her siblings and several thousand political prisoners who were victims of extrajudicial executions in 1988. As a result, she has been threatened with an extended prison sentence and denied medical care.



**ELENA GOROLOVA,
CZECHIA**

Born on 2 January 1969, Elena works as a social worker in Ostrava and is of Roma origins. At the age of 21, she was forcibly sterilized in hospital after giving birth to her second son. Elena had hoped to have another child and had not given her informed consent to the procedure. Elena has been a campaigner against forced sterilization and discrimination against Roma women in Czechia. She's been advocating for redress and awareness of forced sterilizations.

“I wanted to be a normal woman and have a normal family, but after the forced sterilization I feel incomplete. One thing we’ve succeeded in is changing the hospitals’ attitude – we have done this by becoming visible, by getting out there, in the media across the region, and speaking out.”

**SHAHNAZ ISLAMOVA,
KYRGYZSTAN**

Born on 30 August 1974 in Bishkek. She started her activism in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in the early 2000s. She heads the NGO Tais Plus – an organization set up in the



90s to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, combat gender-based violence, and to advocate for the rights of sex workers. She defends the rights of groups affected by HIV/AIDS and campaigns for HIV/AIDS programmes to be based on human rights and scientifically sound approaches. She co-authored several best practice guides on the implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes for the government, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in Central Asia. As a women’s rights advocate, she co-authored alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on issues such as intersecting forms of discrimination against women, police abuse and arbitrary detention.

**GRACE KABERA, DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

Born on 23 October 1993 in Beni, the third child of five. Grace studied psychology and has been involved in social issues since the age of 16. She’s based in Goma. Since 2015, Grace has been a member of Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA), a youth movement calling for democratic governance and respect of human rights.



RADHYA AL-MUTAWAKEL, YEMEN

Born on 12 April 1967. Radhya graduated in mass media communication and holds diplomas in Gender Studies and Political Science from the University of Sana’a. She’s the chairperson and co-founder of the independent Mwatana Organization for Human Rights in Yemen. Radhya has documented human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, airstrikes and ground attacks before and during the current conflict in Yemen, and has been calling for an independent international mechanism to investigate violations by all parties in the conflict. She’s briefed policy-makers at the UN Security Council on the conflict in Yemen.



SANGHAPALI ARUNA, INDIA

Born on 19 October 1979 in Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. She comes from a Dalit community and currently she's a Doctoral Scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi. She's one of the founding members of Birsra Ambedkar Phule Students association (BAPSA) at JNU, a students' organization raising awareness of issues affecting students from cultural and religious minorities and marginalized communities. Sanghapali is a social media activist and has pioneered social media campaigns like #DalitWomenFight, #DalitHistory and #JusticeForRohith. She's also worked on Dalit and Adivasi rights and campaigned against caste-based sexual violence. She was part of the Swabhiman Yatra (Self Respect Rally) that was initiated by All India Dalit Adhikar Manch to highlight



caste-based gender violence across universities and other platforms in the USA. She runs an organization that has representation of women from Muslim, Adivasi and Dalit communities, including non-binary and trans individuals. Her organization focuses on building digital literacy and security amongst grassroots activists, students and civil society, by focusing on marginalized people.

CATHERINE OUEDRAOGO, BURKINA FASO

Born on 1 February 1962 in Réo. She's been co-ordinating the Fondation Cardinale Emile Biyenda (FOCEB) shelter in Ouagadougou since 2005. The shelter takes in girls aged 12 to 18 who have survived rape, early and forced marriage and unwanted pregnancy. Between 2001 and 2009, the shelter accommodated at least 209 girls and their 168 children, who were either born there or taken in with their mothers.



CHONTHICHA JAENGRAEW, THAILAND

Born on 16 December 1992 in Pak Kret District, Nonthaburi Province. She's a pro-democracy campaigner and is currently a Master's student at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University. She has been a prominent student activist for civil and political rights since the 2014 military coup and ensuing crackdown on civil society by the military government. Prior to the coup, Chonthicha was an environmental activist. Despite official restrictions, she and other students have continued to carry out small-scale peaceful protests calling for democracy, rule of law and an end to unlimited use of powers by the military government. As a result, she currently faces criminal proceedings and an unfair trial before a military and civilian court. In June 2015, she was injured on arrest and detained for 12 days in prison for participating in a silent, peaceful gathering on the first anniversary of the coup. She has participated in or co-founded three campaigning groups since the coup, including the Thai Students Centre for Democracy, New Democracy Movement, and the Democracy Restoration Group. Chonthicha has also faced online and offline harassment and threats.



“At first, some parents insulted us but eventually many parents came or called to thank us for the role we played in their children’s lives.”



FOCUS: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SPAIN

**“SOME PEOPLE
THINK TWICE
NOW BEFORE
TWEETING...”**

The space for expressing your opinion in Spain, especially online, is shrinking. Journalists, musicians and ordinary people making comments on social media are fined and even sentenced to prison under a dangerously vague counter-terrorism law. As a result, more and more people feel wary of saying something that may be considered politically controversial or shocking.



GAZTAN



Agoszu 2017
PUICA Agoszu



A man with his mouth taped during a protest against the Spanish government's new security law in Gijon, northern Spain, 30 June 2015



© Amnesty International

In Spain, the threat to freedom of expression is no laughing matter. Just ask Cassandra Vera. In 2016, the 22-year-old history student and transgender woman from Murcia was arrested for jokes she tweeted about Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, a Prime Minister during the Franco regime who was killed in 1973 by an ETA bomb that lifted his car into the sky. “Not only did ETA have a policy about official cars, they also had a space programme,” she joked.

Cassandra received a one-year suspended prison sentence and a seven-year ban on employment in the public sector under Article 578 of the Criminal Code – Spain’s dangerously vague law against “glorifying terrorism” and “humiliating” its victims. Convictions for this offence have soared in recent years: in 2011, only one person was convicted, rising to 31 people in 2017.

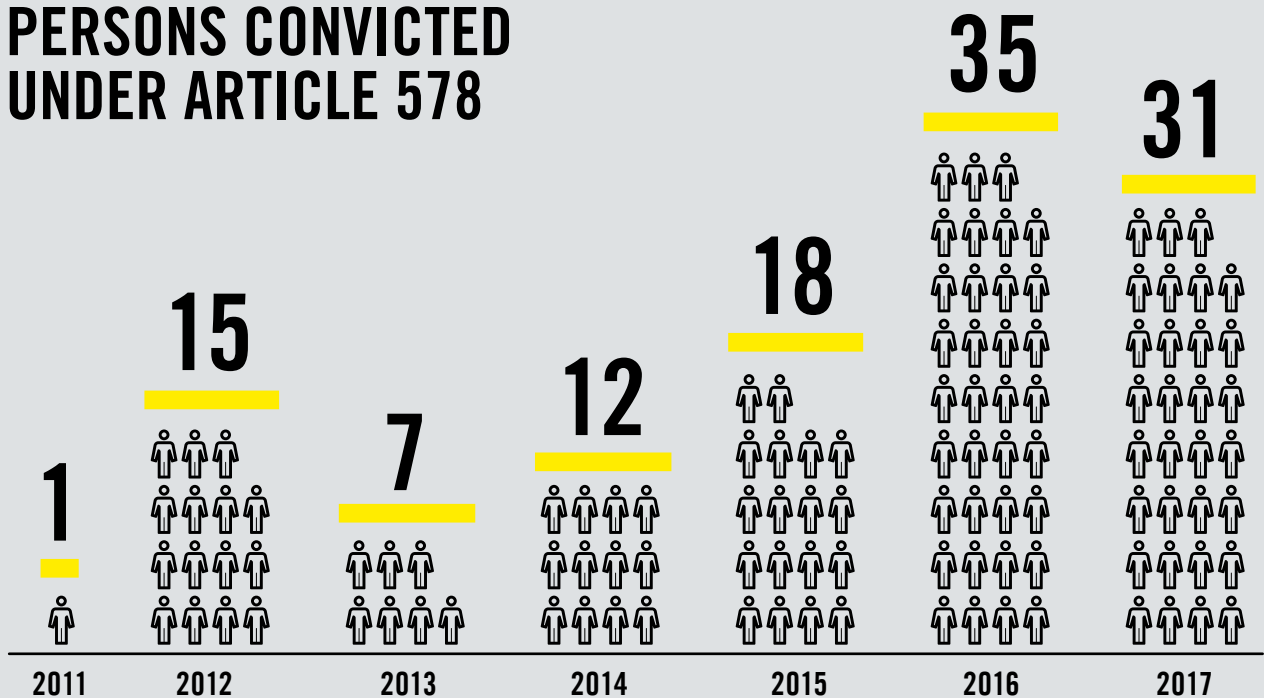


Rapper Nyto Rukeli is part of a collective of 12 rappers who were convicted for glorifying terrorism in their lyrics



A man holding a finger puppet demanding the right to freedom of expression and the release of imprisoned puppeteers accused of “glorifying terrorism” in their artistic work, Madrid, Spain, 13 June 2016

PERSONS CONVICTED UNDER ARTICLE 578





© Marcos del Mazo/Getty Images

Under Article 578, ordinary social media users have been prosecuted for their tweets, rappers face jail for their lyrics and even puppeteers have found themselves in detention. Those convicted receive hefty fines, bans from jobs in the public sector and even prison sentences. These prosecutions have had a profoundly chilling effect, reducing the space for expression of alternative views or controversial jokes and stifling artistic freedom.

“Many got scared,” said Nyto Rukeli, a member of La Insurgencia, a collective of 12 rappers convicted under this law for their lyrics. “The authorities succeeded as about half the members have stopped singing or have changed the messages in their songs.”

Spain is part of a wider trend across Europe that has seen states restricting forms of expression, especially online speech, in the name of national security. Laws criminalizing “glorification” or “apology” of terrorism exist in France and the UK, while similar laws have been proposed in countries such as Belgium and The Netherlands.

Cassandra Vera was one of the luckier ones. She appealed her conviction and was finally exonerated in March 2018. One of the many who came to her defence was the niece of Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, who wrote that she was “fearful of

a society where freedom of expression, however regrettable it may be, could lead to imprisonment”. In Spain, such a society has become a reality.

FIND OUT MORE

Read “Tweet... if you dare: How counter-terrorism laws restrict freedom of expression in Spain” <http://bit.ly/2ujolsW>

Watch the video of rapper Nyto Rukeli <http://bit.ly/214RLNC>

Amnesty campaigns for free speech <http://bit.ly/2IUvmz8>

RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. – Article 19 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

US athlete and activist Colin Kaepernick (left) receives the 2018 Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience Award from Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International, in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 21 April 2018.

During the 2016 pre-season of the National Football League, Colin Kaepernick knelt during the US national anthem as a respectful way of calling for the country to protect and uphold the rights of all its people.

The Ambassador of Conscience Award is Amnesty International's highest honour, recognizing individuals who have promoted and enhanced the cause of human rights through their lives and by example.





AMASSADOR OF CONSCIENCE
INTERNATIONAL
AMBASSADOR OF CONSCIENCE
AM



“I would like to thank Amnesty International for the Ambassador of Conscience Award. But in truth, this is an award that I share with all of the countless people throughout the world combating the human rights violations of police officers, and their uses of oppressive and excessive force.”

Colin Kaepernick

FOCUS: INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS IN KENYA

FIGHTING TO STAY IN THE FOREST

Elias Kimaiyo uses his camera to document the Kenyan authorities evicting his Indigenous community from their land in the Embobut Forest. The community are forced to make way for a conservation programme. They've lived in the forest for centuries but now their houses are being burnt and they're met with violence. Elias wants the government to recognize people's land rights and to work with them to conserve the land.



The Indigenous Sengwer community have lived in the Embobut Forest in the Western Highlands of Kenya for centuries. Now they're being forcibly evicted from their land to make way for a conservation project





Elias is a 38-year-old leader of the Indigenous Sengwer who lives in the Embobut Forest, in the Cherangany Hills in Kenya. He has taken hundreds of photos and films to monitor and gather evidence of the forced evictions his community is experiencing.

“What got me into activism is the almost daily forceful evictions of Sengwer Indigenous people by government, rendering us homeless and landless, and my cultural attachment to the forest. My dream is to make Embobut regain its glorious state by recognition of Sengwer land ownership”, Elias says.

The Sengwer are bee-keepers and cattle-herders. Since 2014, the government has intensified the forced evictions of the Sengwer and claims this is necessary to protect the environment. The forest is part of a conservation area managed by the government, which means it’s illegal for anyone to live there; the EU is also a funder of this conservation project in the forest.

His fight for communal land rights has won Elias positive recognition. On 26 January, he received the 2017 Human Rights Defender Award in the capital Nairobi. “It was an amazing experience, it spoke volumes for me, being a man of few words. It was a limelight for me to continue courageously struggling for my Sengwer Indigenous community”, he says.

But Elias has also paid the price for his human rights work. In April 2017, he was badly injured by Kenya Forest Service (KFS) guards, who are tasked by the government to manage the forest. Elias recalls: “I was taking pictures of KFS guards who were burning houses... I counted 29 burnt houses. The guards started shooting at me. I ran, but tripped and fell, breaking my kneecap, and they caught up with me. They hit me with the butt of a rifle, and broke my arm. They took two cameras and an iPad from me.” Elias had to spend two weeks in hospital and his kneecap has not healed to date. As of now, no one has been held accountable for the attack. He’s aware that he has come under surveillance from the authorities; his phone is being tracked and he has been told the KFS wants to “eliminate” him.

The forced evictions violate the Sengwer’s human rights under international law, including their rights to adequate housing and to their ancestral lands. The Constitution of Kenya acknowledges the right of Indigenous Peoples to own their land, yet the government has violated that right by declaring Embobut a protected forest. Amnesty has supported the Sengwer by making their struggle public and organizing urgent action letters to pressure the authorities to stop the forced evictions



The Sengwer Indigenous people are not giving up on their rights. Their demands are clear: the government must recognize their land rights and work with them to protect the forest



Elias Kimaiyo giving a speech after winning the Human Rights Defender of the Year 2017 Award in Nairobi, Kenya, 26 January 2018

© RoyalTrendia



© Amnesty International

and for the EU to be held accountable for funding a project which violates the human rights of the Sengwer. As a result of Amnesty's and civil society's efforts, the Kenyan government agreed to a formal human rights investigation in Embobut led by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

Elias has been evicted more times than he can remember, nine times between January 2014 and March 2015 alone. He says: "We no longer have peace to practise our proud culture and heritage... I can't live with my kids, they're forced to live outside of the forest because of the impact of the evictions. This might cause loss of culture and identity..."

The Forest Service sees a clash between protecting the Indigenous Sengwer's rights and protecting nature. But Elias disagrees: "The only alternative is for the government to trust and recognize the Sengwer people as the custodian of the Embobut forest. We've been caring, preserving and protecting the fauna and flora for centuries and have used it sustainably."

Instead of looking for peaceful and sustainable solutions, there is more confrontation. On 16 January, just 10 days before Elias received his Human Rights Defender award, KFS guards allegedly shot and killed one Sengwer man and seriously injured another. Both men were unarmed and herding cattle when they were targeted as part of a forced eviction.

Due to the violence, the EU announced a suspension of the funding for the conservation project a day later, on 17 January. It is not clear yet if and under which conditions the EU would agree to resume it, and how they would guarantee the protection of the Sengwer's human rights. The Kenyan government insisted that the evictions would continue nonetheless.

On 5 February, over 30 armed KFS guards burnt houses and destroyed cattle pens in the forest. This happened despite the community having obtained a renewed court order that forbids evictions and arrests in the Embobut Forest. The government says the community agreed to leave, but in reality they were told they had to go. A cash compensation scheme was set up only after the forced evictions had started and was hampered by corruption. There was no opportunity for the Sengwer to give their free, prior and informed consent.

Elias knows that the land and the people are on the same side. The authorities must recognize this and stop the evictions to protect the Sengwer's rights and the forest.

FIND OUT MORE

Support Elias' fight and tell the Kenyan authorities to stop evicting the Sengwer community.
<http://bit.ly/2DTNMB5>

FOCUS: HUMAN DIGNITY

SHAPING BODY POLITICS

INTERVIEW: CRIMINALIZATION OF SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTION



Amnesty has just released its new series “Body Politics: Criminalization of Sexuality and Reproduction” which covers sexual and reproductive rights (SRR). Carrie Eisert and Jaime Todd-Gher, Law and Policy Advisers based in our New York office, co-wrote it. We’ve talked to them about the series and why this type of criminalization restricts fundamental rights that matter to all of us.

What is the “Body Politics” series?

This is a new tool for our global movement. We can use it to challenge unjust criminalization of sexuality and reproduction in our national as well as international contexts. The series is made up of a reference book on criminalization and SRR, a toolkit with guidelines on how to run a campaign on the issue, and a module for capacity building.



Ribbons being prepared at the Support and Care Centre of the Sumanahalli Society on the eve of World AIDS Day, Bangalore, India, 30 November 2015

© Manjunath Kiran/AFP/Getty Images

Why do states criminalize sexuality and reproduction?

For a range of reasons, but the most common include morality, religion, wanting to “protect” women and children, tradition and nationalism. States also want to control and oppress people who challenge social, sexual and gender norms. Using criminal law to label something as “wrong” or “bad” is also appealing to law and policy-makers

who want to show that they have “taken action” to “protect” the public. This can increase their popularity. Sometimes criminal laws are passed with a positive intent but have a negative impact; for example, laws criminalizing drug use during pregnancy may be intended to improve public health, but in reality pregnant women fear going to the hospital and getting reported to the authorities or even arrested. But other

times, such laws are simply used to further target and punish those of us that are already stigmatized. For instance, when police profile transgender women as sex workers.



An Acehese woman escorted by the Shari'a police is positioned to receive cane lashes in public for spending time with a man who is not her husband, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 20 March 2017



Peaceful protesters during the Women's March on Washington, Washington, DC., USA, 21 January 2017

Why is criminalization of sexuality and reproduction a human rights issue?

This type of criminalization is a major barrier for many of us around the world to claiming our human rights, and it denies millions of us our human dignity. Governments are using criminal or other punitive laws and policies to control issues that are connected to our bodies. This control violates our bodily autonomy and impacts a number of our human rights, like to freedom from discrimination, to privacy and health. For example, governments try to control who we can have sex with and why, or they control how we access sexual and reproductive health information and services which influences our decisions on whether and when to become pregnant. States also often try to regulate how we express our gender identity; this compromises our right to express ourselves in ways that reflect who we are.

What are the consequences for people?

Criminalization of sexuality and reproduction can lead to arbitrary detention, unjust punishment, extortion, violence and harassment, as well as reinforcing stigma and discrimination. Individuals and groups of people end up in a position of social and economic marginalization where they are being excluded from vital services, such as health, housing and education. This is why we are taking on this issue from a human rights perspective.

Who is most affected?

Criminal laws and policies are disproportionately used against the most marginalized, particularly those who transgress social norms. These individuals often face multiple levels of discrimination already and find themselves even further penalized. When we're forced to hide our sexual

orientation or gender identity, for example, we cannot fully claim our rights to freedom of expression and association, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

What do we want to achieve with this work?

We believe that we should all be able to make decisions about how we experience our sexualities and express our sexual orientations and gender identities. We want all of us to be free to decide whether and when to become pregnant, and with whom, and when or if we marry. The ability to make decisions about our bodies, sexualities and reproduction is essential to human dignity. This allows us to enjoy physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing and to realize the full range of our human rights.

LAWS CRIMINALIZING SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTION

1. CRIMINALIZING SAME-SEX SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Criminal laws that enable stigmatization, policing and punishment of people whose sexual orientation or gender identity don't conform to strict norms.

2. CRIMINALIZING SEX OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

Often referred to in criminal law as "adultery" or "fornication," these criminal laws are used to punish women and compound the discrimination and violence they face.

3. CRIMINALIZING HIV NON-DISCLOSURE, EXPOSURE AND TRANSMISSION

Using criminal laws and other civil sanctions to punish people living with HIV for passing on or allegedly exposing others to the virus, even if there was no intention of harm.

4. CRIMINALIZING ADOLESCENT SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Focusing on protection from harm rather than consent and empowerment hampers adolescents' rights to sexual and reproductive health information and services, and their decision-making capacity.

5. CRIMINALIZING SEX WORK

Restrictive and punitive laws deny sex workers their dignity and personal autonomy over their bodies and lives.

6. CRIMINALIZING ABORTION

Restrictive abortion laws routinely force women and girls to continue pregnancies that may damage their physical and mental health, or drive them to unsafe abortions.

7. CRIMINALIZING PREGNANCY

Specific laws are used to police and punish pregnant women. Typically, these target women facing the highest levels of discrimination and those most in need of health care services.

FIND OUT MORE

Body Politics series:

<http://bit.ly/2pF2He0>





THE LEGACY OF BERTA CÁCERES LIVES ON

On 2 March 2016, environmental human rights defender Berta Cáceres was shot dead by gunmen who entered her home in Intibucá, Honduras.

Berta and the Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) were campaigning against the construction of a hydroelectric dam project called Agua Zarca and the impact it would have on the land of the Indigenous Lenca People. This struggle placed Berta at great risk and continues to threaten the lives of other members of COPINH.

In the two years since Berta was murdered, Amnesty has documented a pattern of threats against those seeking justice for her killing and those who report the actions of powerful companies against local Indigenous or peasant farmers' communities.

The Honduran Attorney General's office has arrested nine people in connection with Berta's murder, including some individuals linked to Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA), the company building the Agua Zarca dam, and others with ties to the military.

With a trial tabled for June 2018, campaigners from COPINH haven't given up the fight and they won't stop until justice is served.



A woman lighting candles at the memorial for Berta Cáceres in the training center of the NGO COPINH, Honduras, 6 November 2017



Keeping the memory alive: images of Berta Cáceres at COPINH's training center, Honduras, 6 November 2017



“WE NEED TO NOURISH OUR DREAMS”



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Kaporal Wisdom is a slam artist and musician in Togo who performed at Amnesty's Write for Rights concert in the capital, Lomé, in December 2017. Shiromi Pinto, Creative Manager, went to meet him at his recording studio and asked him about his work, his influences and how the messages in his songs are improving lives.



Kaporal Wisdom at his studio in Lomé, Togo, 9 December 2017

How did you start to combine activism with your music?

I always wanted to touch people's hearts and change their thinking. I was writing and protesting about AIDS and malaria and people were interested in what I had to say.

I released my first album in 2016. It's about my dream of a new world where basic human rights are respected: where everyone has clean water, education and health care.

I listened to prisoners, street children and miners to hear their stories. I'm from a poor family and I wanted to show people that if we believe in ourselves and our dreams, we can escape.

What impact has your activism had in Togo?

There are a lot of street children in Togo who are at risk of rape, theft and other abuses. Sometimes they're arrested because they steal food. Often people have to make money through illegal activities like selling contraband petrol.

The messages in my songs have made a difference. Today when I look around Lomé I see the government has rebuilt roads and sewers and there is solar powered street lighting. I speak to the authorities through my music about my dream for a better world. To defend the rights of my neighbour is like defending my own rights.

Do you have to be careful what you say and write about?

I go to a lot of public events and they ask for the written text in advance so they can censor it. Young people listen to me because they know I have influence. Personally, I've never been followed by the police but you do get a bit scared because you could disappear without anyone knowing. They can get you through your friends or your family. Where I live, it's not secure; soldiers break into your house.

But I continue because we need to go beyond our fear and nourish our dreams – I want to say what I want, how I want and wherever I want.



SKRIV FÖR SHACKELNA

BE STRONG



YOUR WORDS CAN CHANGE LIVES

Reform the justice
stop the police killings
STOP
killings

I Support Human Rights
Dear Prime Minister of Jamaica Asha

5.5 MILLION ACTIONS FOR WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty supporters worldwide took Write for Rights to unprecedented heights in 2017. Together you wrote an incredible 5,500,650 letters, emails, tweets and much, much more. Your words brought hope to the many human rights defenders we featured. Among them was Mahadine, who was freed in April. He had been facing a life sentence in Chad for a Facebook post. "I want to express my gratitude to you all," he said earlier in the year. "I appreciate you, I love you, I respect you. Humanity."

**‘YOU MUST BE
BOLD, BRAVE, AND
COURAGEOUS
AND FIND A WAY...
TO GET IN THE WAY’**

*John Lewis (born 1940)
US politician and civil rights leader*