



LESEDI

Lighting the way to justice

July/August 2018

EDITION 3 - YEAR 1

"The biggest struggle, I find, is that people don't respect each other's humanity. We must be taught about our human rights, so that we know that we deserve better, and we deserve to be treated equal on a fundamental scale."

- Sophie Kanza,
Amnesty International South Africa volunteer

"FACED WITH
UNPRECEDENTED
CHALLENGES ACROSS
THE WORLD,
PEOPLE HAVE
SHOWN REPEATEDLY
THAT THEIR DESIRE
FOR JUSTICE,
DIGNITY AND
EQUALITY WILL NOT
BE EXTINGUISHED.
AND THAT IS A
POWERFUL SOURCE
OF HOPE"

-SALIL SHETTY



LESEDI – a publication
of Amnesty International South Africa 2018

Shenilla Mohamed
Executive Director

James Jairos
Finance and
Human Resources Manager

Kylen Plasket-Govender
Programme Administrative Assistant

Mienke Mari Steytler
Media and Digital
Communications Officer

Nthabeleng Mzizi
Growth and Membership Officer

Susan Tolmay
Women's Rights and
Marginalized Groups (WRMG) Officer

Samson Oyungemi
Economic, Social and Cultural
Rights (ESCR) Officer

Cynthia Khumalo
Front Office Administrator

Financial Services Unit
Bridget Marango, Yoliswa Mkaza,
Alfred Pahla and Botle Lengope

Alicia Jooste
Growth and Membership Intern

Jennifer Wells
Justice and Accountability Intern

Kuvaniah Moodley
Digital Communications Intern

Ntombi Nkiwane
WRMG and ESCR Intern

Volunteers
Sophie Kanza; Bongiwe Bongwe
Edward Murambwa; Andrew Chinnah
Fortune Madlala; Deepna Desai
Kaylin Sullivan; Diego Galvez
Clara Castrillon; Wendy Kessman
Tanya Van Niekerk; Noreen Wahome
Meryl Plasket; Thulile Zwane

Tag Team
Nkosinam Nene; Mmamone Mfundisi
Dineo Monethi; Lesego Setou

www.amnesty.org.za
info@amnesty.org.za

97 Oxford Road
Saxonwold, Johannesburg
2196, South Africa

+27 (0) 11 283 6000

CONTENTS

Amnesty Update <i>by Shenilla Mohamed</i>	3
What BRICS leaders should have talked about <i>by Jennifer Wells</i>	4
“When we converse as a community, we create the energy to construct causes for change.” <i>by Bongiwe Bongwe</i>	6
A volunteer programme for the passionate <i>by Bongiwe Bongwe</i>	8
Meet our volunteers: Q&A with Sophie Kanza <i>by Kuvaniah Moodley</i>	9
Advancing the right to health <i>by Samson Ogunyemi</i>	10
Farewell Salil: “Mobilize and organize.” <i>by Shenilla Mohamed</i>	11
Aligning for Action <i>by Shenilla Mohamed</i>	13
New policy positions on abortion and drug control <i>by Kuvaniah Moodley</i>	14
Celebrating Mandela Day with the UDHR <i>by Danville Park Girls' High Amnesty Action Club</i>	15

TALK TO US



www.amnesty.org.za



[@AmnestySAfrica](https://www.facebook.com/AmnestySAfrica)



[@AmnestySAfrica](https://twitter.com/AmnestySAfrica)



[@AmnestySAfrica](https://www.instagram.com/AmnestySAfrica)

AMNESTY UPDATE

by Shenilla Mohamed



The Global Assembly 2018, Warsaw, Poland. © Amnesty International

Welcome to the 3rd edition of *Lesedi*. In this edition we have an amazing line-up of news, views, and information that will entertain, inform and, hopefully, inspire you to become a member or a volunteer of Amnesty International South Africa.

We will feature an update on Amnesty International's first ever Global Assembly, which was held in Warsaw, Poland from 6-8 July.

It was a bitter sweet meeting as we said goodbye to our former Secretary General Salil Shetty who has been at the helm of the movement for the past eight years and was responsible for the successful delivery of the Global Transition Programme, which moved us closer to the ground.

It was also an opportunity to welcome our new Secretary General, Kumi Naidoo, who – we are really excited to say – hails from our very own South Africa. In this edition, we carry an interview I conducted with Salil at the Global Assembly, and in our next edition we hope to have an interview with Amnesty's new Secretary General.

The other really exciting news I want to share is that Kumi decided to launch his career with Amnesty from South Africa and our office hosted the launch in conjunction with the Southern African Regional Office. This is the first time in the history of Amnesty that both the Secretary General and the Chairperson of the International Board, Mwikali Muthiani, hail from Africa, so this is indeed a proud moment for the Africans within the movement.

The other features you can look forward to in this edition include an opinion piece on the recently held BRICS Summit, written by one of our talented young interns Jennifer Wells. We also have a piece

on the proposed National Health Insurance scheme in which we share our plans to bring experts together to discuss the viability of the such a scheme in the current context of South Africa.

Spotlight on the Movement focuses on Amnesty's recently passed new policies on abortion and drug control. We will also share the outcomes of our recently held High Level Refugee Reception Offices event held at the beginning of July.

The most inspiring section of our newsletter is undoubtedly our work with the youth, and in this edition we profile one of our amazing young activist volunteers, Sofie Kanza, who is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo. You will also see a photo collage from a Human Rights Education event we held with Danville Park Girls' High School in Durban, which used art to educate the students on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

From my side, I am thrilled to see how Amnesty International South Africa is growing from strength to strength and is playing a much more influential role both within the movement and externally.

However, our power lies in our numbers. I really hope that this newsletter will continue to inspire members to join Amnesty International South Africa, so that we continue to grow and become a force of people who take injustice personally and fight for change.

Aluta continua. ■

Shenilla Mohamed
Executive Director
Amnesty International South Africa



WHAT BRICS LEADERS SHOULD HAVE TALKED ABOUT

by Jennifer Wells

South Africa hosted the 10th annual BRICS Summit in July, which saw heads of state, leaders, business and civil society organizations from Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa as well as other countries converging on Johannesburg.

On the agenda this year, BRICS leaders focused on the economy, development, peacekeeping, health and industrialisation issues within the bloc. However, the focus on economic agendas overshadows equally important issues such as the protection and realization of human rights in the respective countries.

Collectively accounting for 40% of the world's population, BRICS countries have a significant opportunity to bolster human rights globally.

Collectively accounting for 40% of the world's population, BRICS countries have a significant opportunity to bolster human rights globally.

But the BRICS leaders have failed to demonstrate strong political will and leadership to stem the tide of human rights violations and abuses occurring in their countries.

As they met in Johannesburg, BRICS leaders should have talked about the fact that without respect for human rights, genuine socio-economic development will remain a pipe dream. The meeting should have also addressed the many human rights issues that prevail in their respective countries.

Brazil has one of the highest murder rates in the world, with around 60 000 people murdered each year. Firearms are responsible for most homicides in Brazil and less than 8% of cases are brought to justice. Brazil's failure to protect black Brazilians from police violence remains critical as this year marks the 25th anniversary of the Candelaria killings. The tragedy, in which eight young black boys were killed by off-duty police officers in Rio de Janeiro in 1993, represents the endemic racism within the Brazilian security forces. The situation was aggravated by the murder of Rio de Janeiro human rights defender (HRD) and councilwoman Marielle Franco on 14 March this year. Marielle was the only black lesbian woman from the favela in the city's parliament.

Every day that goes by without an answer to this brutal crime increases the risks faced by other defenders in a country with one of the highest rates of HRDs killed in the world. Brazil should combat racism and homicides, and prioritize the necessary pursuit of justice.

Russia enjoyed a month of worldwide attention as it hosted the FIFA World Cup. Behind the revel of the tournament, HRDs and civil society activists continued to face harassment, intimidation and arbitrary arrests across the country. The trial of HRD Oyub Titiev started in Chechnya. He, like several other HRDs, is being prosecuted on trumped-up criminal charges. Law enforcement agencies continue to launch cases on fabricated "extremism" and "terrorism" charges. The Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov, serving 20 years on "terrorism" charges, is on day 100 of a hunger strike demanding the release of "64 political prisoners from Ukraine". The right to freedom of peaceful assembly has been increasingly restricted in Russia since 2012 and remains under severe clampdown. Both the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2017 and the World Cup in 2018 have been used by the Russian authorities as an excuse to introduce more severe restrictions on public assemblies.

The rights of LGBTI people are trampled upon daily and the authorities continue to refuse to investigate the horrific purge of the community in Chechnya. The World Cup has come and gone, but the suppression of freedoms and shrinking of civil liberties continues unabated.

It's a similar story in **India** where HRDs are consistently under threat, attacked and threatened, often from security forces. India has witnessed horrific instances of alleged extrajudicial executions by security forces for years as police and federal forces have effective immunity from prosecution.

In the North-Eastern state of Manipur, HRDs who have lost their loved ones in alleged extra-judicial executions and are now campaigning for justice, face unprecedented attacks. Salima Memcha, a widow who lost her husband to an alleged extrajudicial execution, was verbally threatened by security personnel. Her house was also vandalised by them. Three other HRDs in Manipur have faced similar reprisals for campaigning for justice for their loved ones.

In **China**, the government continues to enact repressive laws under the guise of "national security" that present serious threats to human rights. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo died in custody

whilst other HRDs are detained, prosecuted and sentenced on vague charges such as “subverting state power”, “separatism” and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”. Controls on the internet have been strengthened and freedom of expression and freedom of association are under attack.

In the host nation, **South Africa**, nearly a quarter of century after adopting arguably one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, the country is bedevilled by profound inequalities, which persistently undermine economic, social and cultural rights. Failures in the criminal justice system continue to present barriers to justice for victims of human rights abuses and violations,

including the state’s failure to hold perpetrators accountable for the killing of 34 striking mineworkers in Marikana in 2012 by the South African Police Service. Access to sexual and reproductive health services remain a human rights issue as does the provision of quality education.

Given these glaring human rights violations happening within the bloc, the summit in Johannesburg should have been an opportunity to place human rights at the forefront of discussions.

Leaders should have put their strength and influence to good use by leading the human rights charge at home and on the global stage.

The question now is, when will they? ■



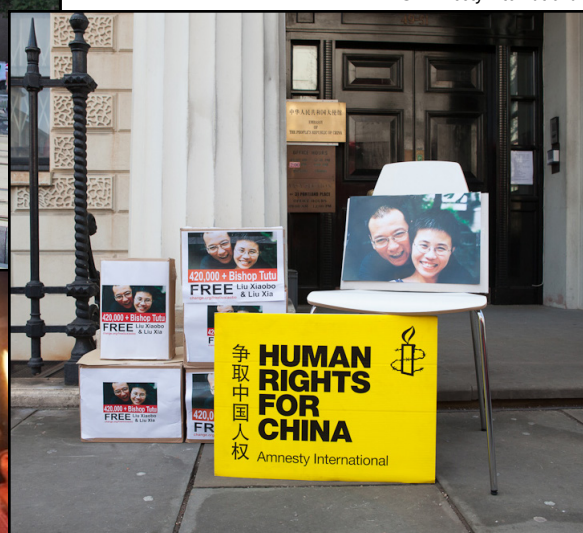
Brazil: It has been over 160 days since Marielle Franco was killed, and still no justice.
© Fábio Caffé/Amnesty International Brazil



India: Salima Memcha with supporters.
© Amnesty International India



Russia: HRD Oyub Titiev on trial in Chechnya. © Amnesty International



China: The petition for Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia.
© Amnesty International



Jennifer Wells
Justice & Accountability Intern
Amnesty International South Africa



“WHEN WE CONVERSE AS A COMMUNITY, WE CREATE THE ENERGY TO CONSTRUCT CAUSES FOR CHANGE.”

Bongiwe Bongwe reflects on Amnesty International South Africa's Public Dialogue on Enhancing the Protection of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in South Africa.



On Tuesday 3 July 2018, the Women's Jail at Constitution Hill acted as a safe but brave space for Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) to host a public dialogue. The event entitled 'Enhancing the Protection of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in South Africa' raised central issues that contribute to the insecurity of refugees and asylum seekers today.

The evening of conversation revealed the deep hurt and layered pain created institutionally by governments and systems of oppression across the African continent. This includes the hurt that lies in the South African government's inconsistent treatment of black South Africans and black Africans living in South Africa.

Three audience members from Zimbabwe, the DRC and Cameroon, who are living as refugees and migrants in South Africa, shared their personal stories and highlighted the effect that the inability to access the correct documentation has on their lives. Furthermore, they spoke of the abuse their communities face when applying for documentation at the Department of Home Affairs as well as the fear and helplessness they are overwhelmed with when trying to attain a "better" life in South Africa.

Panelist Dr Zaheera Jinnah shared her expertise on labour migration, gender, and livelihoods through her research at the African Centre for Migration and Society, at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Dr Jinnah spoke to the usefulness of categorising the ways in which people come to South Africa in search of security and economic sustainability as it allows for governmental processes to have more clarity and efficiency.

However, the evening's discussions brought to light the ways that the government's low capacity to provide services affects those living within its borders.

"The definitive categorisation of migrants makes sense arbitrarily, however, in the minds of the public, the distance between criminal and migrant is very close," said panelist Bishop Paul Verryn, who was

"The greater their silence, the greater the issues of imbalance and injustice the government will inadvertently create."



Diverse voices were heard from Zimbabwe, Cameroon, the DRC and Rwanda, to name a few.
© Reatile Moalusi



instrumental in opening church doors to refugees in 1997, and supporting the migrant community during the 2008 xenophobic crisis. “This happens on top of the fact that economics in South Africa is a profoundly political issue as it forces people into poverty, and poverty can be as traumatising as torture.”

Aurelie Kalenga, a news anchor and reporter for Eye Witness News, was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and raised in South Africa. She reminded the audience that the reasons why someone would leave their home country differ dramatically. She rejected the assumptive nature of dialogue around this topic, emphasising that it is laced with racial overtones, which suggest that it is only white people who can come to this country as immigrants, whilst black Africans are unable to move just because “they fell in love with South Africa”, they can only move out of desperation and not in search of a better economic or secure life. Thus, the conversation about the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers in South Africa is a racial one and that must be brought into the light and addressed.

The dialogue’s moderator Shenilla Mohamed, AISA’s Executive Director, spoke to the complex history that exists between South Africa and the countries neighbouring it as well as others on the continent who played a pivotal role in South Africa’s liberation struggle by providing asylum as well as support.

She posed the question: “To what extent does South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign and domestic policy on foreign nationals neglect this historic relationship?”

“The government needs to address this relationship and its systematic failures in ensuring safety for sub-Saharan African people in this country,” said panelist, Gaudence Uwizeye, originally from Rwanda, who works for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) with a focus on communities in the inner city of Johannesburg, Marikana and Orange Farm.

She added: “The greater their silence, the greater the issues of imbalance and injustice the government will inadvertently create.”

The relationship between the government, its citizens as well as migrants and asylum seekers is problematic and needs deeper conversations, which will continue to reveal the harsh realities faced by migrants and asylum seekers in the country.

The evening concluded with the challenge lying in how best we fill the discussion with commonalities, not differences, and protect those with whom we share this country. Watch this space as AISA’s research continues. 📺

Bongiwe Bongwe
Volunteer
Amnesty International South Africa



A VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME FOR THE PASSIONATE

by Bongiwe Bongwe

Amnesty International South Africa (AISA), launched its new volunteer programme in May 2018 at Activate with Amnesty: Open Door. Ordinary people from all backgrounds, geographies, genders, ages and races answered the call of *thuma mina* and joined the Amnesty movement as volunteers.

If you are a passionate person who upholds the Amnesty International values of respect, accountability, innovation and diversity, and you are committed to problem solving, this is the volunteer programme for you.

“The time is now. Our office doors are open,” said Nthabeleng Mzizi, AISA’s Membership and Growth Officer. “We want to use this programme to build relationships and to equip human rights defenders with skills and ongoing support.”

Nthabeleng Mzizi and Alicia Jooste, as AISA’s Membership and Growth team, worked hard to create the flagship programme, which intends on growing the Amnesty movement in South Africa and nurturing activist talent.

Alicia believes that “people will come for the cause, but stay for the relationships, strengthening the movement and making Amnesty’s actions in South Africa far-reaching and sustainable”.

Members of the volunteer programme come to the Amnesty offices in Johannesburg for six hours a week, and learn the behind-the-scenes dynamics of human rights advocacy and campaigning work. Various volunteer positions are available, each vital to the movement.

“It’s very important for me to be a part of this volunteer programme because I wish to make human rights advocacy my life’s work,” said Sophie Kanza, 26, who is from Kinshasa and Johannesburg. “It is a privilege for me to be in the Amnesty space and learn from experts who do this every day.”

AISA recognises that not all interested human rights defenders may have the time to come into the office for six hours a week for three months, so a ‘tag team’ has been created for those who still wish to get involved in the movement. Alicia Jooste describes it as “a team of passionate people we can call on when we need extra hands on deck”.

She gave the example of the Write4Rights campaign as a time in which AISA needs extra help to deliver the over five million letters Amnesty receives and delivers.

For the ten volunteers and seven tag team members it is exciting that they are able to take part in projects, campaigns and conversations that are collectively powerful at national, regional and global levels.

Andrew Chinnah, 47, from Grahamstown, believes that this programme allows current and aspiring human rights defenders to “get a better idea of what activism means from a practical perspective”.

Another volunteer, Edward Murambwa, 28, from Harare, emphasized that the brilliance of this programme is that it makes human rights engagement accessible. “Whatever size your contribution, or your time spent, by volunteering at Amnesty you become an instrument for change and transformation.”

Although the programme is at its participant capacity for the time being, applications are rolling in, and Amnesty encourages interested members of the community to apply through the new AISA website. See details below.

The Amnesty Growth and Membership office intends on hosting Activate with Amnesty: Open Door quarterly to keep members of the advocacy and campaigning community up-to-date with how they can get involved with their local community and join our global movement of human rights defenders. ■

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO
VOLUNTEER FOR
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
SOUTH AFRICA?**

Sign up [here](#).



Bongiwe Bongwe
Volunteer

Amnesty International South Africa

Bongiwe is studying International Relations with a minor in Media and Communications at Drew University, New Jersey, USA.

MEET OUR VOLUNTEERS

Q&A with Sophie Kanza of the [Sophie Kanza Foundation](#) by Kuvaniah Moodley

Sophie Kanza, 26, is an asylum seeker from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) based in South Africa. She is an International Relations and Diplomacy student at the University of South Africa and is a co-founder of the Sophie Kanza Foundation with her sister, Louise. The non-profit organization is a youth-led initiative focusing on social cohesion and inclusion through volunteerism and activism projects.

🗣️: *Why are human rights important to you?*

SK: Human rights are violated every single day and most of us don't even know that we are being violated. The biggest struggle, I find, is that people don't respect each other's humanity. We must be taught about our human rights, so that we know that we deserve better, and we deserve to be treated equal on a fundamental scale.

🗣️: *Are there any human rights issues you feel passionate about?*

SK: Sexual and reproductive health especially for migrant women. I've witnessed so many times in clinics where women have been told "well, you can't speak English, so we can't help you".

These women are just trying to get a contraceptive. In the maternity ward, a nurse will say: "You Congolese women have too many children." A lot of women just get turned away because of language barriers or the customary prejudices that healthcare professionals have, and they don't know how to separate these issues from their duty to do their job.

The right to travel! This is a big one for me. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that movement is a human right.

In South Africa you can be on an asylum seeker permit for 15, 20, 30 years. I've been on it (asylum seeker permit) since 1999. Almost 20 years... But I always tell people that we are lucky that we are the way we are. But, we are the exception, not the norm. We were lucky we could find jobs even though we have asylum seeker permits that have to be renewed all the time.

People don't understand the process of getting citizenship, we need our papers. We received an invite to go to the UN but we couldn't go because we didn't have the right papers. We must get our permits, because of the nature of our work, we need to travel.




🗣️: *What do you think young people need most to realize their human rights?*

SK: Research. And we need to let go of hearsay. Hearsay is a big problem in our generation, and it doesn't make sense because it's a generation that has information at our fingertips. I always tell people: "Google is your friend. You should Google and know, 'What are my rights?'" Teach your siblings, cousins, because sometimes parents are just too busy." I think if we can't be leaders in our communities at least we should try to be leaders in our families.

🗣️: *If you had the power to change one thing in the world today, what would you change?*

SK: Disruptive conflict. I say disruptive conflict because conflict is sometimes good. I believe if there was no disruptive conflict then we wouldn't have refugees and asylum seekers.

We'd all be expats and go back to our homes and we wouldn't feel like this. Going back home to the Congo is a dream that keeps me up at night. 

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES?

Amnesty International has launched its **Human Rights: The Rights of Refugees** online course.
Enrol [here](#).

Kuvaniah Moodley
Digital Content Intern
Amnesty International South Africa



ADVANCING THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

by Samson Ogunyemi

On 21 June 2018, the Minister of Health gazetted two bills and opened them for public comment.

These bills are the *Medical Schemes Amendment Bill* and the *National Health Insurance Bill*. The department of health believes that the amendment of these bills will advance the right and access to healthcare for all South Africans and legal long-term residents. For them, this is the first step in a series of efforts that will see the amendment of related legislations pertaining to healthcare in South Africa.

The proposal to implement the National Health Insurance (NHI) in South Africa gained momentum at the 2007 ANC policy conference in Polokwane. Since then, National Treasury has sought to establish a funding model to facilitate this proposition. To kickstart the process, the government allocated R1 billion for the pilot programmes across ten districts. Added to that, in his budget vote speech 2018, Minister of Health Aaron Motsoaledi pointed to the provision of R4.2 billion over the Medium Term Expenditure Framework mainly for the NHI, Health Planning and Systems Enablement programme, financed through downward adjustments of the medical aid tax credits and rebates.


“The proposition of the NHI is hinged on the principles of justice, fairness, solidarity, healthcare as a public good, efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, affordability, equity, social security and the right to access healthcare.”

To get a better sense of how the NHI will impact on the lives of people, especially the marginalized, Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) will be organizing two sets of meetings: one in September and one in October.

The event in September, a roundtable discussion, will involve key policymakers, researchers, healthcare workers and civil society organizations. Our aim is to get into the minds of the policymakers to understand the rationale and

feasibility of the NHI proposition. We also aim to highlight some of the practical challenges people encounter in trying to access their right to health as uncovered by researchers and health rights activists. We hope this event will improve civil society and academia engagement with government, and help AISA identify key advocacy points and strategies.

In October, AISA will organise a ‘townhall’ meeting to interact with policymakers, health rights activists, our movement, the media and the general community. The townhall meeting will be an opportunity to hear the views and challenges of people who use health facilities, especially in the public health sector. We will collate these experiences, and present them to the relevant government officials to contribute to policy reframing around the right to health.

Any policies by the State to make healthcare more accessible and affordable is welcome. The proposition of the NHI is hinged on the principles of justice, fairness, solidarity, healthcare as a public good, efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, affordability, equity, social security and right to access healthcare. In the spirit of taking action and mobilizing the movement, AISA invites you to join in the feedback process to provide input on the *NHI Bill* and *Medical Schemes Amendment Bill* within three months ending in September 2018. 

WRITE TO:

The Director-General of Health:
Private Bag X 828, Pretoria, 0001

Attention Of:
Deputy Director-General: NHI, Dr Anban Pillay

or email: Anban.Pillay@health.gov.za

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US!

samson.ogunyemi@amnesty.org.za

+27 (0) 11 283 6000

Samson Ogunyemi
Economic, Social & Cultural Rights Officer
Amnesty International South Africa



“MOBILIZE AND ORGANIZE.”

As we bid farewell to Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s former Secretary General, Shenilla Mohamed, Amnesty International South Africa’s Executive Director, caught up with him in Warsaw, Poland.

SH: *After eight years of being at the helm of Amnesty, what are the key lessons you can share with us around human rights and ensuring that people are able to access their basic human rights?*

SS: I think the last eight years, which happens to be the period where I’ve been leading Amnesty, have been a rollercoaster as far as human rights are concerned. You have governments what don’t really know how to deal with people’s aspirations and expectations. People have become more conscious of their rights, more educated, more demanding. The internet has created a huge possibility to organize and governments don’t know how to handle this, so they become more repressive and there are more attacks on the basic freedoms of people. Then you’re in a vicious circle, you know, and people are resisting more. So, we’re in this situation where you have both repression and resistance increasing in a very serious way.

SH: *You’ve talked about repression, you’ve talked about governments clamping down, and there has been a shift in the past couple of years in global economics and politics. What do you think we, as a human rights movement, need to be aware of?*

SS: I think we need to break it down, because it is a very complex situation. It’s difficult to generalize and at the end of the day you have the legal side, which is what human rights is often mixed up with. But, in the end, I think it’s a political process, which determines whether rights are being respected or not. Politics is not impossible. It’s true that geopolitics cause effects on smaller countries, so I say in the African countries... the developing world... the global south context... we have to mobilize and organize a lot more. For an organization like Amnesty, people are organizing and mobilizing. I mean, if you take Africa (as an example), young people have mobilized in the last decade like never



© Amnesty International

before. That's been exceptional. So, the question is: Is Amnesty supporting them, building them, being part of them, or standing outside and watching?

That's the challenge we have.

JS: Do you think that Africa is stepping up to the plate or is there something that we should be doing as Amnesty Africans?

SS: You know, forget about 10 years or eight years, just think in the last four months. We've seen incredible change. We've seen what's happened when young people in West Africa stand up for change, and young people in Ethiopia... because of people standing up we've seen changes.

South Africa, as well, is not unconnected with young people. Protests that we've seen – #FeesMustFall – each of these things... they add up.

So, I think that it's happening. We have to be much, much sharper in partnership with social movements and support them.

The speed at which we respond is just incredibly slow and the African part of Amnesty has to become not just aligned with the external reality in Africa but it also has to be much more confident and articulate when speaking up globally.

I think one very concrete thing in the Amnesty context is that we have to build our membership and constituency. You can't keep complaining, you've got to do it and also raise resources. It's not a good idea to keep saying we need capacity building, we need resources from outside. We know that there are constraints, but at the same time it's not as if there are no resources. You're never going to be legitimate and recognized if you don't have membership and money from within the continent.

JS: Most of my team at Amnesty South Africa never had the pleasure of meeting you. They are a young and enthusiastic bunch. What would you say to them as we move from picking ourselves up to really racing ahead?

SS: I'd say first of all South Africa is at such an important junction in our history. We now have a new president, we have a new possibility. It's not as if presidents change the country and the underlying issues, but there is, you know, a set of opportunities now that allow young people at Amnesty to speak up.

On the other side, in terms of the Amnesty side itself, much as we are self-critical and we need to do more, it is also fact that there is nothing else like Amnesty. It is a global people's movement for human rights.


We're just unique and we can do a lot more to strengthen ourselves within Africa, within South Africa, and the global south, and we are exceptional.

I always say, I was deeply privileged to work at a place like Amnesty and I hope that your colleagues along with you feel the same, and you feel that you can contribute and make a difference.

For that person who's rights are being violated, who doesn't see hope, Amnesty – that candle that's lighting up the place – offers a unique, unique light.

JS: Where to from here? Are you still going to be part of our Amnesty lives?

SS: I'm going to Bangalore, which is home for me in India, and I want to be more in the political, electoral outcome side.

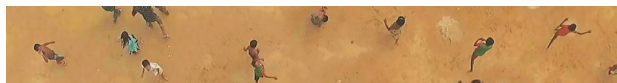
But, you know, in terms of Amnesty, we always say: You may leave Amnesty, but Amnesty never leaves you, so we're together. 

Watch Salil's interview [here](#).

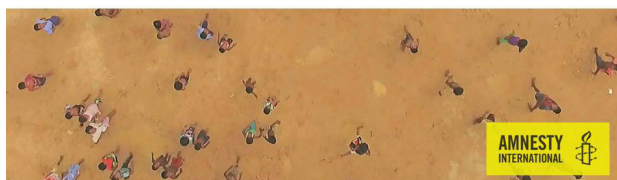
Shenilla Mohamed
Executive Director
Amnesty International South Africa



EVENT



**ACTIVATE WITH AMNESTY:
REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKER RIGHTS**



**JOIN US FOR ACTIVATE WITH AMNESTY:
REFUGEE RIGHTS!**

Together we can create safer communities for refugees and place pressure on the system violating their rights in South Africa.

6pm, Wednesday, 22 August 2018
97 Oxford Road, Johannesburg

Register [here](#).

ALIGNING FOR ACTION

The safe abortion and HIV movements unite for the right to health by Shenilla Mohamed

On 21 July 2018, following the opening of the 22nd International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) joined with safe abortion and HIV advocates from around the world to share lessons learned, identify areas of convergence for combined efforts, and declare our commitment to work together to advance women's access to safe abortion care and to end AIDS.

Referred to as the 'Our Bodies, Our Fight' partnership, the Amsterdam meeting, which was convened by Global Health Strategies, was built on a broader initiative to increase women's access to safe abortion in Brazil, India and South Africa.

Together, the 'Our Bodies, Our Fight' partners called on all countries to:

- End stigma, discrimination, criminalization and other social barriers that limit women's access to safe abortion and HIV prevention and care.
- Provide access to the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health and rights services, including safe, voluntary abortion services, for all women, including young women and women living with HIV.
- Make available essential medicines for medical abortion and to prevent and treat HIV for all who need them, including misoprostol, mifepristone and methotrexate and antiretroviral drugs.
- Facilitate the full and equal participation of all women in decisions regarding their health, including those that impact their sexual and reproductive health and the prevention and treatment of HIV.

The meeting also stressed the need to address stigma, discrimination and other social barriers in order to advance access to safe abortion and HIV care. Participants said the lack of access to family planning, including safe abortion and HIV services,


**OUR BODIES
OUR FIGHT**

was not just a women's issue and that unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and HIV impacts families, communities and societies throughout the world.

Building stronger links between HIV and sexual and reproductive health rights, including safe abortion, was critical for continued progress in both fields.

The Amsterdam event included a panel discussion on 'Harnessing the Power of the Media to Spur Change', which was moderated by Amnesty International South Africa Executive Director Shenilla Mohamed.

The panel explored the media's role as an agent of change and discussed how advocates could work with the media to share stories and data to promote accurate and comprehensive reporting.

It also considered the challenges faced by journalists and editors when reporting on abortion and HIV/AIDS. 

Shenilla Mohamed
Executive Director
Amnesty International South Africa



Learn more about
Our Bodies Our Fight
[here.](#)



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ADOPTS NEW POLICY POSITIONS ON ABORTION AND DRUG CONTROL

Amnesty International adopted new proposals to tackle the devastating human rights consequences of misguided attempts by countries to criminalize and restrict abortion and to punish people for using drugs.

Delegates from around the world gathered in Warsaw, Poland, from 6 to 8 July 2018 where they green-lit motions on the organization's positions on safe and legal abortion and how States control the production, sale and use of drugs.

"We want to make sure we are well placed to fight for the human rights of millions of people whose lives are impacted by how governments criminalise or restrict access to abortion and by the prohibition of drugs.

"Both issues require a much more compassionate approach from governments to protect the rights of the people who are most at risk," said Tawanda Mutasah, Amnesty International's Senior Director for Law and Policy.

Access to abortion

Representatives voted to adopt an updated position on abortion that calls on States not just to decriminalize abortion, but to guarantee access to safe and legal abortion in a broad way that fully respects the rights of all women, girls and people who can get pregnant.

It will replace Amnesty International's current position on abortion, which calls for the decriminalization of abortion, and access to abortion in a limited set of cases, which was adopted in 2007. Unsafe abortions continue to be one of the leading causes of maternal death worldwide, with an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions estimated to take place each year.

Drug control

Representatives voted to adopt what will be the organization's first ever position on how States should address the challenges posed by drugs from a human rights perspective. The proposed policy calls for a shift away from the current "scorched-earth" approach of heavy-handed criminalization, to an approach where protection of people's health and rights are at the centre.

Amnesty International has already conducted research in many countries that have been torn apart by drug prohibition and the so-called "war on drugs", from [Brazil](#) to the [Philippines](#) and the [USA](#), that shows the devastating human rights cost of current drug control methods.

The key points of what will form the policy positions were voted on at Amnesty International's governance and decision-making forum, the Global Assembly. Held annually, the meeting is an opportunity for Amnesty representatives from around the world to meet and democratically vote on the direction of Amnesty's work.

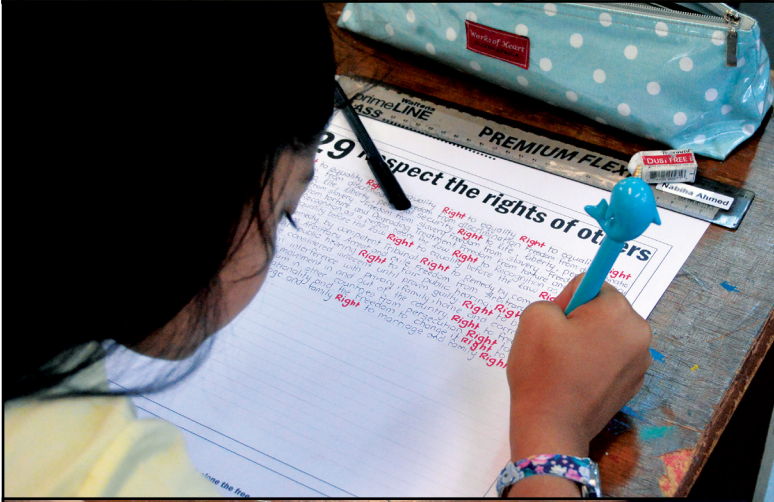
Amnesty International will now develop detailed policies to guide its advocacy and campaigning. This will involve further consultations across and beyond the Amnesty movement on specific details of the abortion and drug control policies. [5](#)

Argentina's Senate voted against legalizing abortion during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy on 8 August 2018. Our advocacy continues.
© Amnesty International



CELEBRATING MANDELA DAY WITH THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Danville Park Girls' High's Amnesty Action Club spent their 67 minutes on Mandela Day creating art, and learning more about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



SOUTH AFRICA

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



LESEDI

JULY/AUGUST 2018

EDITION 3 - YEAR 1