



**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SOUTH AFRICA  
SUPPORTERS ASSEMBLY 2018  
8 DECEMBER**

GEORGE BIZOS GALLERY – APARTHEID MUSEUM

MCs: Sophie Kanza

Rapporteurs: Susan Tolmay & Jenny Wells

Security: James Jairoso

## Executive Summary

The Amnesty International South Africa (AISA) Supporters Assembly was held on 8 December 2018 at the George Bizos Gallery – Apartheid Museum.

Under the theme *Being Brave in Shrinking Spaces*, the assembly highlighted the work being done by activists and human rights defenders in the movement.

Samkelo Mokhine, Chairperson of AISA opened the assembly with a reflection on what Amnesty International stands for and the continued struggles across the globe and the need for ongoing vigilance in a challenging human rights context.

Nonhle Mbuthuma, woman human rights defender and chairperson of the Amadiba Crisis Committee, gave an inspiring keynote address, highlighting the struggles her and her community have faced in resisting and standing against mining in the Xolobeni community.

Members of the recently established Refugee Rights Network (RRN) introduced the Refugee Rights Campaign that the team has been designing for next year.

The panellists on the Youth in Action Panel Discussion #young&brave spoke about what shrinking space means to them in their context. They highlighted the challenges they face as University students and LGBTI activists, and some of the challenges they face in growing and sustaining their movements. The discussion ended with some suggestions on some of the ways we can be better activists and mobilisers.

Andrew Chinnah led us on his activist journey and volunteering with AISA, as one of the inaugural volunteers at Amnesty South Africa.

The membership and growth team presented on this year's Write for Rights Campaign, hearing from the chapters what they have been doing or plan to do, as well as encouraging all supporters to host activities and write for change.

Samkelo Mokhine introduced the Transitional Advisory Group, explaining the process of nomination and selection, the composition and purpose of the team in helping to build AISA and take us to Section status in the next two years. The four members present introduced themselves.

Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of AISA presented on the current context in which we work and some of the challenges we need to overcome. She gave a flavour of the upcoming work for AISA in 2019 and spoke about the importance of fundraising and of growing the movement in South Africa.

De prose Muchena, Director of Southern Africa regional office, thanked everyone for coming, for the rich discussion and debate, and closed the meeting.

## Introduction

**Samkelo Mokhine** opened the meeting with a moment of silence to consider the Amnesty symbol, the candle with the barbed wire around. To think about our continued fight for human rights with a sense of light from the candle, but held back by the barbed wire, being corruption, corporates trying to take people's ancestral land or the fight for land now in South Africa. Think about people in Mexico on the border, think about people in China, people in South America, South East Asia, all over the world. Amnesty is an international organisation, so when we think about victims of human rights abuses, and people who have ceased to be victims and are victors against the abuses, we think about it on the international level. It is a world full of both rights violations and victories. And, as we stand here today that must be our focus. If you



join and work with Amnesty, and as some of you start your journey's with Amnesty, it is a long journey ahead. The world is not a good place with people like Donald Trump around and it's a long fight, which requires us to be vigilant, and when we achieve victory we must still be vigilant because sometimes there is roll back. We want to achieve victories and consolidate victories.

He welcomed the delegates to the Supporters Assembly, it being nice to see the diversity and little people, because we are part of a movement - students, mothers, activists are all welcome. He thanked to everyone for coming.

A special welcome to the staff from AISA and the regional office, Deprose and Muleya. Let me explain, we have a South Africa office, which is the national office and the one you would normally deal with and there is a regional office that deals with the countries in the SADC region.

He wished delegates an informative and productive time today.

## Keynote address

**Samson Ogumenyi**, introduced Nonhle Mbuthuma, saying it's a privilege to have her in the room, she is a woman human rights defender standing in defence of her community Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape, fighting for their rights to say No, and determine their own way of life.

Nonhle was brought up in Sigidi village and she finished her Matric at Mdatya High School in 2001. Mdatya and Sigidi are two of the five rural villages that constitute the Umgungundlovu community, also known as Xolobeni. She is the current Spokesperson of Amadiba Crisis Committee, a committee that was set up by the people of that village to work against the mining company, MRC, as well as the state from imposing the mining of Titanium. Nonhle has been in this fight to defend her community for some time, this started in 2008 and if you follow the news you will have seen that on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November the court ruled in favour of

the community; that first the community has a right to say No, and second that the community will be given due recognition for free, prior and informed consent. But the Minister has been trying to renegotiate with the community. This is a struggle that has not been without its own fatalities, in 2016 the former chairperson of the Amadiba Crisis Committee, Siphukazi, affectionately known as Bazooka, was murdered as part of this fight. People are being gunned down for standing for their rights. This is what we call shrinking spaces for human rights defenders, not only in South Africa but across the world. The fight needs to continue, to stand up for the rights of the marginalised.

Please give a warm welcome to Nonhle Mbuthuma.



**Nonhle Mbuthuma**, thanked everyone for this opportunity to speak to you after a rough time in the struggle in her community, sending gratitude from her community for the support Amnesty has given, it was amazing.

When you fight you cannot fight alone you need people to support you, to be a shoulder to cry on when you have to fight. Amnesty has always been there for us. This is not an easy struggle, it is about life and death, when sometimes you must leave your home unexpectedly. Today if I stay in my home, I won't see the sun tomorrow.

The struggle where I come from is for our livelihood, homes and land. The Mining company (MRC) discovered titanium where we have lived for centuries. We have not come from nowhere, I am the fourth generation of my family, my parents and great-great grandparents lived on this land. But now they discovered the mineral and they tell us we must move. But we said this development is not good for us and we are not willing to move. They offered compensation and said they will build houses and pay us money. But it is not enough for us to live. Where we live nobody can compensate us. We utilize the land to sustain ourselves, because we have land and we've used it in a sustainable way, for many years. If the land is taken away from us, it means we will live in shacks, like in a squatter camp.

These days everyone is talking about modernization. They say we are old fashioned, but we said we can't afford modernization, it comes at a cost. That is why we said No from the beginning. But the mining company pushed by all means to ensure the mining takes place. They went to the King and he said that the people own the land and not him. They failed because the King was not selling the land on behalf of the community. They then went to the state who agreed for them to come and do prospecting without even talking to us. We thought we are in a democratic country, but then you wake up and see people with big trucks on your land, driving over your fields and graves, because they get authorization from the state. They said they had permission from the state, but they only got prospecting rights from the state. We didn't give up, we just chased them away from our land, we said this is our land, the state does not own us. They kept on coming back to do consultation. That's when we realised that the law is more in favour of the elite instead of the community, no matter that we say No, they continue coming back to consult. We spoke to lawyers and asked why

we are not allowed to choose our own development, the development that we want. Can we test our laws in South Africa?

We have the most beautiful constitution in the world, which contains many rights. Those rights should be implemented because we know that those rights are there to protect us. So why does it not protect us? We then asked Lawyers to help us in court. But it takes a very long time for high court to agree. On 23rd April in the high court in Pretoria and we were hoping that the court would protect the citizens. We went everywhere to seek support and solidarity from other affected communities. We were surprised to see that many affected communities stood with us in solidarity at the court, saying it's enough now. The mining in their communities is not benefiting the communities, it just benefits disease and poverty, so why would we continue with this kind of development?

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November the judge passed down the judgement, which stated that the people of Pondoland have the right to give consent for the mining to take place. A survey found that 72 households would need to be removed but in the application the mining company said no households would be removed, which is how they tried to escape. The court stated clearly that the affected, not just any communities, have to give consent for the mining.

But the Minister of Minerals and Energy, Gwede Mantashe, is not satisfied about the judgement, not happy at all. He was commenting from day one, that this judgement has put the economy in a difficult position, because there will be no money in South Africa, which is not true, we know that there is a lot of money in South Africa. If they are doing the right thing, they should fix the problems of mining that are already there. There are quite a lot of environmental issues that are not being addressed. Right now, if you look at the Department of Minerals and Energy, as a regulator, it is not regulating, but rather promoting the mining, and it is clear, which is why we have such problems.

Recently in the West Coast, where the same company already has the mining rights and they are mining there, the mountain has collapsed straight down into the ocean. Where is the law enforcement, it is nowhere to be found, which is why we say they are promoting instead of regulating. If we continue to destroy the environment as much as possible, we put our lives at the end of the cliff. It is our duty as human beings to protect nature and the environment. That is why at Xolobeni we said No! But the Minister has not given up, he is still pushing for the mining to take place. He is pushing in the community right now, on 23 September he didn't tell the community he was coming, but he told politicians and bused in people from other communities to support and be a majority. Our politicians forget that we are talking about land, not a political party. They are pushing for a referendum, but you can't vote for the land. If I got back to history of Pondoland, the British were invading Pondoland, and our government is using the very same tactics, pushing the same system that they were pushing in the 1950s. But for land you don't vote, you discuss until you reach consensus. Mantashe is the fourth minister to engage with this issue in Xolobeni. He keeps saying that he wants to finish this issue and give a direction. We have told the minister we don't want the mining, but he keeps on pushing.

This has been going on since 2007, and as Samson said, on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2016, the day after Human Rights Day, Bazooka, the leader of the Amadiba Crisis community was murdered. And you ask if there was an investigation, there was no investigation and arrests. And who makes sure there's no arrest? It is the government, nobody else. They don't want the investigation to go ahead. Right now, we are staying in hiding but we won't hide forever.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> December the Minister said he was coming to Xolobeni again for consultation. We



said there is no need for more consultation because the court has already passed judgement. Consultation was already done properly. We asked who actually wants the mining? Is it the Minister himself and the government, or just the Australian company. Who are the shareholders? I think it is about the state, maybe some of them are shareholders who have invested money in this. But if they are state, they are the state, and if they are business, they are business, they can't play both. It doesn't matter if you're black, blue, red, yellow, you will not mine. It is not just because it's Australian, it's about the mining.

Our own state must respect our right to say No!

Poem by **Antionette Ntuli**

### **Shrinking spaces**

Sun dappled dried plains refresh our eyes  
Sweet smelling grasses rustle our nostrils  
Soft breezes caress our hearts  
Our souls stretch through roots deep, deep within the earth  
Miles below, miles beyond your vision  
Thunderous roars, trailing violent dusts  
Careen across my mother's grave  
Your unice's tombstone  
Her sister's babies resting place  
They come again, and back again  
We have no rest,  
We have no peace  
We emerge in unity  
Our hands joined  
Our voices one  
Our love for our land filling our feet  
Standing firm with the weight of history  
Still they roar  
Louder and louder  
Closer and closer  
Fortified with the pomposity and power of state  
Leaning on the detritus of exploitation  
Trying their best to divide us  
We are resolute  
We reject your false swords of modernisation  
We know our land, without which we have no dignity  
We know our people, and we will not be moved  
We will not be moved!

Video screened



## Q&A

**Shenilla Mohamed**, Executive Director of AISA, welcomes Muleya Mwananyanda because what we want to put forward is, that while Nonhle's case is quite horrific, this is happening all around the country and region.

**Q: Do you still feel like your life is being threatened, do you feel unsafe?**

Nonhle: Yes, I still feel unsafe, because recently the Minister indicated that he is not going to give up and some politicians have personal interests, and to get hold of the minerals, they will get rid of the leaders in the communities. It is old style and surprising in our democracy they are using the same tactics, when you want something you get rid of the leaders. I have a child, five years old, and I know sometimes I put his life in danger, because sometimes when the enemy fails to get to you, they go for your children. But I risk everything because I am not just fighting for my own children, I am fighting for all children and all women and I don't want to see them suffer as they are suffering right now. What is the cause of poverty? They are pushing us to poverty. In order to protect women and children we need to protect the land, as it is freedom. Without land we don't have freedom.

**Q: This is a really sensitive matter, the question of land, speaks to how we identify ourselves as people, our dignity and to have someone else come and tell you that you don't deserve it. To have someone come and tell you that there is something more important than your dignity, past and future is horrendous. How can we help?**

Nonhle: We need all kinds of help, the struggle we are facing is like walking in a river against the current, now we are staying with the current so as not to be washed away. We need to expose the government, to get information about the shareholders, they don't want to tell us, it might be the minister and politicians who are the shareholders. Also write letters, write for rights, to put on pressure. In order to expose them we need all your support. We post everything on our Amadiba Crisis Committee FB page, whatever they do we post it there. We need solidarity, we need to visit other communities where mining is already being done, to share the knowledge. Without sharing knowledge, it is difficult to deal with this. Communities are fooled in the name of jobs, they are told there will be jobs, but there are no jobs. If we visit communities and spread the word, we can protect communities.

**Q: In the Matskima local municipality where they are doing mining, they make 750 million rand, 150 million net profit, but none of that money is put back into the community. Why is the government not looking at that?**

Comment: I want to commend you for being a brave strong woman for standing up and speaking your truth. We have the same issue in my community, an Australian Mining company, Wits Mine Corp, has come in and just started mining. Our community stood up and they also bussed in people from other communities who signed the petition and they say they got the permission from then community. We are a small community of 400 people, and they are now mining there, you can see the dust every day and we are asking ourselves what we can do. You have set an example and I will take it back to my community to see what we can do.

**Q: At the Durban Film festival some years ago, there was a screening of a film about the Xolobeni community and the strategy at that time was to divide the community – those who were given some privileges and those who were standing up for there land rights. So, I am asking whether that division still exists in Xolobeni?**

Nonhle: Most of the time our community is not divided. But the state is dividing us. If we are divided it's 50:50, but the state is playing a role in between, to divide as much as possible. The state only goes in the direction of the people who want the mining. For example, in my community there is no electricity, so they gave solar panels only to the community that wants the mining, and they brought in tractors, but only for the one side. State is promoting that division. That's why Mantashe is pushing for a survey, he says we are shadowing those who want the mining. They can't argue that without land there is no dignity. We have said that land is our dignity, without land there is no identity or dignity. Everyone has the right to raise their own concerns. Only few ANC politicians get the services.

Comments by **Dick Forslund** there are two things, it is obvious that the government wants to hide the content. The mineral regime in South Africa has changed, government thinks it is important not to inform the population about what's going on and that they have the right to say No to the mining.

In terms of the investigation of the murder of the community leader, there's been a private investigation into the murder, ever since it became clear that the investigation was blocked, it started in September 2016 and made some progress for a few weeks and then it was blocked. The Police tried to stop an autopsy of the body. Many mysterious things are happening in the community. Sometimes there'll just be a new brigadier. There's a private investigation happening now, going for an inquest, and we are collecting evidence and affidavits, so we have quite a good picture now of what's going on and who's behind the murder but lack cooperation from SAPS and Hawks, and the NPA is refusing to cooperate too. We will start a new initiative with new recently appointed director of the NPA. We will see how we can work with Amnesty South Africa on this, to pursue this and the culture of impunity that exists.

**Muleya Mwananyanda**, I want to contextualise what is happening on Nonhle's case. It is a microcosm of what's going on everywhere around the world. Many of you may remember that two years ago Berta Cáceres was murdered in Honduras for being an environmental activist,



like Nonhle. It is real that people get killed. The W4R case has been recognised by the whole movement. The level of solidarity required is not just from South Africa, but all around the world.

At Amnesty we have a program on business and human rights, and we work on this issue all around the world. Here in Southern Africa Amnesty has worked on a number of cases that are similar to Nonhle's. Some may recall the work on Marikana, looking at how mining corporations had destroyed the land, and paid nothing to the communities and we saw what happened to the people who stood up against the mining company to ensure things were done, they were killed,

with little or no justice for this up until now. We are seeing this across the region in several countries, Zambia, Zimbabwe and recently in Mozambique, we did another piece of work on a Chinese Mining Corporation doing heavy sand mining in Nampula province, where the



community was left for dead because the mining activities caused a flood that completely destroyed their home and the ecosystem.

These issues are happening in our communities in a particular context of increasing unemployment, poverty and inequality, which, in countries in Southern Africa are major problems. Nonhle's is not an isolated case and we need to think broadly. Three years ago, we were with Nonhle and were talking with our global team of human rights educators who were very touched by her story. This year it's a Write for Rights case. Please write those letters but also work in solidarity with the other sections within Amnesty. For example, Amnesty Australia is heavily seized with Nonhle's case and they have asked her to go to Australia to talk about what is happening in South Africa and in her community. So, we need to think broadly beyond South Africa and beyond Southern Africa because the bigger we are the better.

## TEA BREAK

### Refugee Rights Network presentation on the Campaign

Members of the AISA Refugee Rights Network introduced the Refugee Rights Campaign that the team has been designing for next year.

Tee is a transgender man, from Zimbabwe founder of Fruit Basket, working with Amnesty on the refugee rights

George is Kenyan LGBTI activist and artist in SA in exile

Cedric is from Democratic Republic of Congo, and a refugee

Kaylin, joined the RRN because wanted to learn more about the issue and understand the challenged faced by refugee.

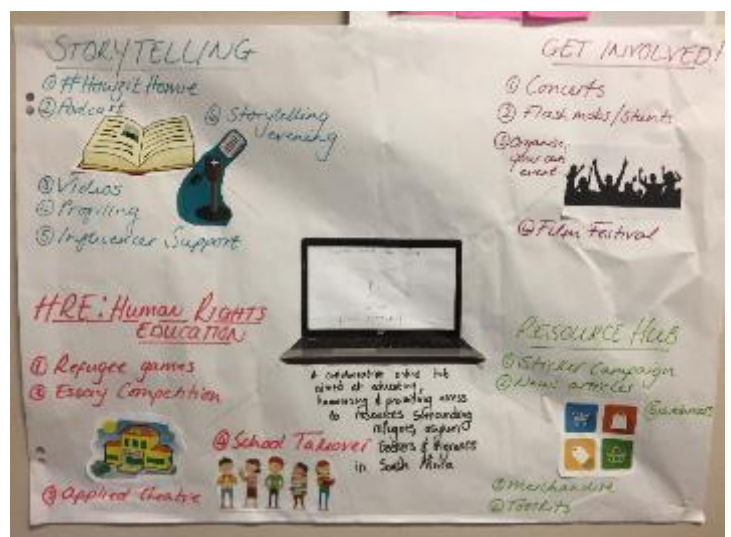
We have been working in this campaign for the past two months, and the challenges faced are a microcosm of the bigger issue in our country, of people operating from a place of fear and greed.

This campaign, and understanding these challenges, is an opportunity to celebrate our diversity and to activate our hospitality as South Africans.

What we came up with is a campaign that will be collaborative, we want to activate as many people as possible, working with other organisations and individuals, to highlight the challenges that refugees and asylum seekers face, explained the story board, see adjacent image.

The overarching mood of the campaign is going to be really positive, we want to make the campaign something that people want to be a part of and to learn more. We want to create something that is homey, a place that you can thrive and feel safe.

The purpose is to hold people accountable for all that they are doing wrong, we have Ministers who stand up and say words that instigate xenophobia, and nobody does anything



about it. We are the ones that suffer, we are the ones at the receiving end of it. If one person in power can say words that instigate violence and cause so much damage, what if two people in power can stand up and speak against or counter the words of that person?

We want to hold people accountable, so all of this can end, so people know that we are in the country, not to cause damage or take anything away from you or hurt you, but because we are running away from something in search of freedom. If we can just teach communities that we are as human as you are. We didn't leave our countries to cause trouble, we just want to search for peace and be happy. The reasons for us leaving our country could happen to you tomorrow. There is abuse of power everywhere because people have not felt the impact of this on you. Not that we wish that, but it could be you tomorrow. We want to show our point of view. How would you feel if it was you? Our vision is for a South Africa that guarantees the safety of the migrants once they settle here.

### Youth in Action Panel Discussion #young&brave

Facilitator: Lehlogonolo

Panellists:

1. Tee: LGBTIQ and human rights activist.
2. Zandile: from Nelson Mandela University chapter
3. Ethan: Deputy chair of AI UKZN chapter
4. Yonela: Nelson Mandela University



What does it mean to be a human rights defender in a shrinking space?

Tee: For me it's fighting for what I believe in, to give everything I've got to fight for the rights of the marginalized, for the minorities, for those who can't fight for themselves. I am an economic and LGBTI migrant. When I got here, I went for information and assistance to just start living life properly here. I approached many organisations, but they were not able to help. But if you want something done right, do it yourself, so the Fruit Basket was born, I decided to do it myself, for people like myself.

Zandile: Having an honest conversation with yourself and society, even though we are a democratic country, we still have injustices. It is up to us as a society to fight and identify, and we need to make sure we hold people accountable, it's important that we are an example even for generations to come. It means you put people before yourself, you give a voice to voiceless people, you fight for people who cannot fight for themselves. In that way we create a platform and journey for generations to come and to look up to, and to see that it is possible to fight injustice, though we still have a long way to go to fight these injustices. But if we come together as a society and we join together to fight these injustices then we will definitely progress as a country.

Ethan: On shrinking spaces, the more things change the more things stay the same, and this resonates on university campuses. In trying to get students to mobilise, they ask, is it worth marching to vindicate my rights if it means I can be suspended from university, or get beaten up by a private security guard, or face disciplinary action? It almost reflects practices from 50 years ago when the same kind of actions were being taken by the state actors.

Yonela – The challenges as activists in higher education, it's obvious victimization by the institution and government itself. There is an inability of sectors of the student community to mobilise national attention. As an activist your cries will not be prioritised unless there was a façade before that, for example needing to join particular organisations to be heard. You have to associate with certain bodies to be heard, can't be heard as a lone activist.

**In the aftermath of Fees Must Fall, would you say that one of the reasons why fees must fall happened was that the youth were fighting to have an identity, to expand the space that they were all forces to fit into? Are there other tools youth can use in their schools or communities to expand the spaces that could be limiting them?**

Zandile: It's really important to identify the issues. Youth are often faced with issues of doubt and risk. When it comes to student activism in universities, there is the risk of being in jail, and having a criminal record, you face the risk of backlash from the institution itself. It's these conversations that we need to have. We need to make students aware that even though there are risks, we are doing this to improve our future. When you stand as an activist, you stand with risks, but you stand with an end goal, which is to improve our education system, like fees must fall. And in so doing we need to stand together to motivate each other, to not discourage each other to stand up to these issues. When students discourage other students, then there's less attention to the problem, we need to unite as youth for change to happen.

**How do we unite as a society and youth, when students are scared of the backlash?**

Zandile: We need to educate them on the problems and how they affect our society, we are bound to face backlash, but we should stay strong, and find ways of fighting the backlash and injustice regardless of the backlash on social media and from our government and institutions. Because our end goal is to fight injustices, lead by example. It is up to us to show our society that we can fight injustices, it takes one action to show that it is possible.

Yonela: In terms of organization, one of the things is, that sometimes as student activists we assume a saviour role. Once you do that you tend to alienate yourself from the people because people don't want saviours and heroes. It is when you equip people with skills to fight their own cause, where you will see change. Organisations sometimes go on a tangent by assuming this saviour role by assuming they know all the answers. It is important to be in touch with your membership, to understand what your membership wants and get a mandate, to understand what people on the ground want.

Ethan: The one strategic downfall in mobilizing the masses is that CSOs tend to focus on problems, rather than showing how mobilisation has solved problems, people get tired of protesting and fighting. In the wake of FMF, we've had a severe lack of mobilisation because students are tired of protesting and risking their academic careers for a goal they don't see happening. What we need to do is show the success stories to show that fighting can lead to victory.

**What are the challenges for women and LGBTI activists? How have you been able to move forward to achieve your ultimate goals?**

Tee: As a transgender person it's difficult for people to take you seriously. I have to make people see me as a person first, because I get asked a whole lot of questions about my sexuality, and this is a big challenge. If I go somewhere very religious, they don't pay attention to me at all, because I am the opposite of everything they believe in. I have to make them understand me, which is a very difficult task. But we just have to keep pushing and fighting.

Nonhle: To be a woman and an activist at the same time is not an easy task, we still say that patriarchy does not exist. But we are lying to ourselves. You have to fight for your space, otherwise there will no space for you at all. The other day in an interview on the radio, instead of going straight to the facts he attacked my personal life. But I'm not intimidated and if I married a white guy, that's my choice, everyone has the choice, and we need to respect that. If it was a man it wouldn't be a problem, but if it's a woman it becomes a problem. We have to fight as women otherwise they push us down. Who are they to tell us that we can't because we're women. At the end of the day we are all human. As long as we are fighting for the right cause. Other people don't have voice. Police came to her home and pushed her on the ground because the man was stronger. I may not have muscles, but I do have a voice. I call all other women to do the same thing, to not allow men to pull you down. And it's important for women to balance family life and your struggle. When I was watching fees must fall, I saw women at the forefront. But the state was very strong against fees must fall, using all the power they have to make sure fees must fall was not going anywhere.

Tee: Another example of the challenges that LGBTI migrants face, especially in relation to the documentation process. I have LGBTI migrants coming to my organisation asking how they can get documented, and that they have been treated unfairly by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). So last year I went to DHA to see what really goes on there. It was the worst experience of my life. From the moment I got there from 5am until 5pm, I was harassed and abused for who I am, by the home affairs officials. The DHA official asked me 'what are you? Why do you look like that? Are you man or a woman?' And because I needed help from them, I couldn't speak up. Another DHA official asked me to stand up, attacking me, asking why do you look like that? who are you? why are you here? These are stories of LGBTI people, they ask you why you are gay or a lesbian. You have to prove that you're gay/lesbian/transgender etc. We are being silenced, we are not able to speak about this. But if you keep silent in instances of human rights abuses, your silence is agreement, so you are just as bad as the other. If you see injustices happening, just stand up because whatever Tee is going through today, is something that you could go through tomorrow. As a community, we are facing many challenges in the country, and we need your help as the community to stand and fight for us.

Lehlogonolo: We are all humans, despite your gender or orientation and this is also what we need to make people understand. Amnesty prides itself of aligning its values with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that regardless of how you identify, we are all human. It is important to have groups fighting for the voiceless, putting ourselves on the line with judgement and exclusion, but we applaud people fighting in all the different spaces, because without these voices we wouldn't be here.

**Is it possible to view shrinking spaces as a positive thing? How can we become better activists and use technology and other tools more effectively?**

Ethan: Technology has allowed us, including the university chapters, to be a constant presence to those facing injustice, it offers a voice and solidarity. When you are going through an injustice yourself and for example you see something on Amnesty Facebook that is similar

to your situation, it shows that you are not alone, that there is an organisation that will get behind you, which is a really great thing. Having a constant presence in these spaces is invaluable.

Zandile: In most shrinking space we have uncomfortable topics that lead to uncomfortable conversations. Social media platforms break those barriers and open the space to address these topics, as well as to create awareness of the issues. It also provides a solution to dealing with injustices as it allows society to engage on issues the best way they can. Opens up society to participation, for everyone to engage and tackle the issues.

Comment: Saying that social media provides access to everyone is quite elitist, because when you go into the communities many people don't have access and that also what we need to look at changing. Being part of a University Chapter is a privilege, so how do we go into communities and support people who don't have the privilege?

Lehlogonolo: Amnesty can support community outreach, I know if I go to Shenilla and say that there is an issue in my community, I will get support.

Comment: Amnesty needs to have a soapbox where anyone can come to that space and state their views.

## Volunteer Presentation

Andrew Chinnah led us on his activist journey and volunteering with AISA. "Let me tell you what peanut butter means to me. I've always been a passionate person when it came to human rights. In 1976 I lived near Everton there were a lot of protests, bullets flying around. I lived in a house with a high fence, which separated me from the people struggling and people fighting against the Afrikaans regime. One day I was having a peanut butter sandwich, and then went back inside for another and my mother wondered how such a skinny boy could eat so much. So, she followed me and what she found was me passing the sandwiches through the fence to young kids, oblivious to the bullets and protest. She said that was when she realised, I would be a passionate human rights activist.

I was invited to first Activate Amnesty session, so I went to find out what this organisation is about, and found a very passionate team, dedicated to the cause. I decided to join the Human Rights Education (HRE) team of volunteers. At first, I thought why do we need to do that? Surely everyone should know about human rights. What I found is that there is a real need for HRE. For example, in the police, I laid a complaint of harassment and said I would drop it if they agreed to getting HRE, because even the police don't understand this. My son goes to a very prestigious school, and I approached the school about doing HRE with the students. But despite having pictures posing with Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, they were not at all open to this.



The conversation around HRE is absolutely essential, there is a passionate team in Rosebank, but they need people like us on the ground to be having these conversations with people and to tell them more about human rights.

We started off trying to talk about Human Rights, but it seems like a difficult subject, so we approached it from the Write for Rights angle. We got very under privileged children, who have had terrible trauma and experiences to write letters and post cards to Nonhle. If people from that traumatic background can write letters, then we need to educate more people to do those simple actions.

You can be a young person and educate anybody. As the Human Rights Education volunteer, we are educating schools.”

### Membership and Growth, Write for Rights

The Write for Rights (W4R) campaign is based on the premise that writing letters can change lives. We know this works, this is a global campaign and every December we get together to write letters or take some kind of action for human rights defenders who have been harassed, even for something as small as putting something on Twitter, or in Nonhle’s case to make sure her land is protected.

How many people have taken a Write for Rights action this year, or are planning an activity or action?

Xola from Stellenbosch University Chapter – We had a campaign - 20 Years Later - looking at how we have come in terms of our Constitution, what is working and what not. One of the focuses was the W4R Campaign, and Thuli Madonsela was with us and wrote a letter. A lot of people were keen on writing letters.

Nicole from the UCT Chapter – As part of our HRE program, we partnered with Shawco and conducted sessions at their leadership camps people. Initially we had students write letters to welcome Kimi Naidoo as the Amnesty Secretary General and to tell him what their view for a Brave New World was. And then we also got them to participate in W4R campaign and write letters with practical solutions to the HRDs.

Coral from the Durban Group – It has been a ground-breaking year because we were able to start six new amnesty groups in Durban high schools, as well the law department at UKZN and the Nelson Mandela Medical School. Every year on the 26 June, International Day in Support of Victims of Torture we write letters as well as on the 10 December which is the W4R day. People should write letters on other days as well, because we need to also stop torture, which continues to happen in the country.

The common theme here is, how easy it is to organise and even where people come together to write letters. And we know that people really want to get involved, we know this campaign sees change and we are excited to see thousands of South Africans rally around Nonhle’s case, and hopefully we’ll see some positive change early next year.

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December is the key day for W4R and all you need to do is write a letter to the government to hold it to account or to the human rights defenders in solidarity.

For University Chapters, this campaign is ongoing through *O Week* and is a great opportunity to get new supporters on board because these issues do resonate with supporters.



If you are hosting an event, share it, let us know so we can share with the global movement what we are doing here in South Africa.

### Introduction of Transitional Advisory Group (TAG)

Samkelo: Many of you may or may not have seen this year the call for nominations, as part of AISAs development. Until now AISA has been an International Secretariat managed office, meaning we are not a fully-fledged independent office in South Africa. But we aim, in the next two years, to become what is called a Section. In terms of process, we put out a call for nominations for the TAG, encouraging people with similar values and good experience in various sectors who could participate on an interim advisor body. We looked at all the nominations that came in and set up a number of interviews, which we then reduced to six candidates, four are here today.



The process that we underwent, including having interviews, looking at the qualities and experience each of the candidates had. We needed to look at the team, to use a soccer analogy, we didn't want six Ronaldo's, with the same experience, and in the end they are not a team that delivers. We went through the interviews with the team in mind and were looking for people with complimentary skills to take us through the next two years as we become a Section. There is a good balance on the TAG of youth, with three members and experience.

We are therefore glad to announce the new members of the TAG.

Two members are not here,

Cynthia Stimpel worked for South African Airways for a long time and was a whistle blower for corruption in SAA. She is very experienced in terms of governance. Her responsibility going forward will be to purely look at governance issues, not just within Amnesty, but within respective groups as well, to ensure systems and reporting to the office and members.

Nicholas Maweni has worked in government and is now a CEO of a corporate. He has a lot of experience in marketing, so we will gain a lot from him in terms of marketing output.

Four present members introduced themselves,

Alexandre Maaza was chair of the UCT Chapter in 2017. Noticed how being part of the youth chapter really empowered me and the people that I worked with. I hope that as part of the TAG I will be able to help institutionalise the youth aspect on Amnesty South Africa and integrate it into how the organisation works.

Antoinette Ntuli, my background is in health, in the promotion of equity and access. Also does anti-racist training, which she has done a lot of in the UK.

A poem about her vision for the future:

I see future, a world babies, infants and children  
Free, fair, festive and fabulous  
Loved by family and friends  
Nurtured and blessed  
Grown to maturity with spirit and hope untarnished, unrestrained  
I see a future where the demons of greed and lust are vanquished  
Conquered by pure human love and delight  
I see a future, where you and I and everyone can be themselves  
Grow their hair or cut it  
Wear traditional dress or don't  
Love another man or woman as you please  
Without borders, where we can move freely from one country to another  
I see a future without hunger or violence  
Without prejudice and discrimination  
Where families can grow their own food and till their own fields  
In this future we are washed by moonlight and starlight  
Caressed by ocean breezes  
We dance inspired by love, by justice, by respect, by songs and poems  
By the gentle caress of rustling leaves, led by Amnesty International.

Elena Angello, my passion is storytelling. I am a mother of two young children and I envision children's books where children can read about Nonhle and her story, and that our vision can change. Visibility and representation in children's books are really important, if we can plant the seeds in children when they're really young, that they can stand up for and know their rights and they can admire people who stand up for rights.

Lehlogonolo Muthevhuli, I am the youngest on the TAG. I served for two years on the executive of the WITS Chapter, as the vice-chairperson and treasurer. I am excited to be part of the Amnesty TAG to expand my career and to help them achieve all of their goals and to reach section status.

### **Executive Director's Address – Shenilla Mohamed**

The great thing about this year's W4R campaign this year, as well our annual Human Rights Annual Report, is that we are focusing on women. It is such an important message because in our societies, women often bear the brunt of human rights abuses.

Thank you to everyone for coming here and for being human rights activists.

#### Short film on AISA

I'd like Coral to come up. One of the things I want to do today is to recognise Coral, please stand up and give her a standing ovation. Coral is someone I look at with a huge amount of respect and admiration. Coral stood fast in Durban, throughout the times when Amnesty South Africa was going through its challenges, yet the Durban continued without faltering to work on human rights. And that is what we are looking for you all to be able to do. That at some point, with or without Amnesty, you are still fighting for human rights, you are still doing what is right, because it's not just about Amnesty or AISA, it's about living up to being the people who take injustice personally.

Want to use this opportunity to say thank you to Coral, who is in her eighties and continues to work tirelessly for human rights. You are an example of someone who has never stopped working to make the lives of others better.

Coral – once you start on this path, you will stay there and feel that you are able to contribute to something that is really valuable in the world and we need it. And to all young people, keep going, we need you.

### ED's Report

We deliberately left the admin until the afternoon, because we really wanted your day with us to be a lot more about the excitement of what is possible. The fact that Antionette was inspired to write two poems, that we have Nonhle with us, and to have every single one of you here, is humbling for us because you are the movement, we are here to be part of you as you are part of us.

In my presentation I will give you an idea, as to what we are thinking, where we are going and how we are going as Amnesty South Africa.

Start with a quote from the new Secretary General Kumi Naidoo, “My final advice for young people, is not to wait for leadership from adult politicians, step forward today because our current leaders are denying the dire reality we are facing. Leadership can come from anywhere.”

This correlates to what was being said in the video, about us creating a new type of thinking, where every single one of us can be leaders in our own right. We don't have to rely on our so-called leaders to change our situation, we can take control of it and do that ourselves. Which is what Amnesty is about, it is a movement of people who take injustice personally and who take actions to deal with that injustice.

A bit of context, which you all know about, we know that in South Africa there as been an erosion of public confidence in the state, factors include, unwillingness to tackle human rights violations, corruption, lack of respect for the rule of law. South Africa has among the highest inequalities in the world, which is extremely disturbing, that over two decades after democracy inequalities seem to worsen. Corruption is at alarmingly high levels from the top to the low levels of government. State capture, fraud, corruption, theft, misuse of the judiciary, the list is endless. Elections are happening next and all the political parties are rushing around saying the right things trying to get people to vote for them, when really, it's about trying to hold on to power, we know the ANC is trying to hold on to power to the detriment of everything else. Cyril Ramaphosa says all the right things, but let's see what he delivers. There have been the political assassinations in Glebelands, the shrinking space for the media, we've seen attacks on the media, we've seen things happening in the country that Madiba would be astounded at, things that he fought for and spend 27 years in jail.

There are high levels of violence against women and children, high levels of human trafficking in the country. When we asked students what one of the biggest challenges you are facing on



campuses, all said violence against women. Every day we hear about this violence, and it cuts across all sectors and communities.

Xenophobia, there are a lot of people in the room who come from other countries, who have attested to what has happened to them. We are just completing a piece of research that is looking at the situation for refugees and migrants in South Africa. The problem is that there is very little accountability and now we even have a situation where foreigners are being blamed for lack of delivery by government. For example, Aaron Motsoaledi blaming foreigners for the fact that the health system is not operating as it should. Herman Mashaba consistently blaming foreigners for various things, stirring up xenophobia.

There is lack of accountability for Marikana, even though there was a commission and a whole lot of recommendations about holding those who fired the shots, to account, but very little has been done. The Life Esidimeni tragedy where 94 people died. The fact the South African foreign policy no longer puts human rights at the centre, recently at the UN, South Africa did not join the condemnation for the rights violations in Myanmar, though we have heard that it will reverse this decision. South Africa also takes decisions at the human rights council that go against its Constitution for example in negotiations on the global compact on Migration and LGBTI rights, showing a schizophrenic approach to South Africa's foreign policy and voting record at the UN.

But there are some positives, those being that we have a strong Constitution and legal framework, as well as a vibrant civil society. There are very few other African countries where citizens can go out into the streets and do the things South Africans do because the laws protect you and you have the legal framework, even though there is tear gas and rubber bullets you do have the right to do that, and in many countries that space is not there.

We have youth movement that has the potential to make a difference and influence the future direction of the country. We saw the Fees Must Fall campaign. We want to work with partners and student chapters to see how we can keep on talking about the issue of quality education, the right to education, the right to be able to protest without being shot.

Despite having some of the most progressive legislation on LGBTI issues if you ask anyone from that community, the reality on the ground is very different. We have the situation where lesbians are being killed and raped.

In terms of the internal context, AISA has faced a number of challenges over the years, and this has resulted in the erosion of many of the gains. Where we are now, is that all of those challenges have now been dealt with. AISA is now fully functional, fully staffed and ready to grow the movement in South Africa. As Samkelo mentioned we are an IS managed national office and we have a plan to move to section status within the next two years. Section status is part of increasing our focus and impact on human rights. We have a highly skilled team and we follow a strong performance management process. We are very careful about how we spend movement money. We have systems, policies and procedures in place and a member of the TAG who is also experienced in financial governance. We have set up a financial hub that services both the national and regional offices, to ensure accountability, transparency and value for money. We have a lot of systems in place that safeguard Amnesty.

We plan to reach section status in two years. We are proud to say we have a TAG team in place. In order to get to section status we need to have a governance structure in place, which means having a board, and there are various other things we have to do to get to

section status. Section status means that instead of reporting to the International Secretariat, we would report to the board instead, and it would be the board and Executive Director who would make decisions that would govern and run AISA. We will still be part of the Amnesty fold and would still be accountable to the movement. The most important thing about section status is, that in the Amnesty movement we would be able to influence the decisions taken by the movement, because we would be able to utilise the one-section-one vote. At the moment we don't have a vote in the movement. This is why it is so important to get to section status, because then our voice as Amnesty South Africa can be a powerful voice in influencing the way the movement take decisions.

The TAG will help me as the Executive Director and the team to put in place everything we need to get us to section status including increasing our supporter and membership base. The bigger the movement the more powerful it is.

AISA's vision is high impact, results driven, visible. We are an accelerator country - we have the ability to bring in and grow its member and supporter base. At the moment we are getting support from the IS, including from Deprose and Muleya, and our membership and growth team at the IS. Our goal is to be recognised as a mover and shaker in the human rights field within the movement in Africa and globally. South Africa plays a role and has a big impact in the region and on the continent, so we need to be able to influence South Africa and what it does at all the different levels.

A flavour of what we are doing at the moment,

We have a piece of research on the right to quality education, we are hoping will come out on the 21<sup>st</sup> March, and the basis of the research is not about access but rather the quality of education. Along with the research there is an Advertising Campaign to be launched around same time. We will love to get your reactions because it's a little controversial.

Develop a sustained campaign on the impact of mining on communities. We have worked on Nonhle's case, and on Marikana and we want to look at what is happening under business and human rights.

There is a refugee and migrant rights piece of research coming out.

We focused a lot of our work on abortion rights this year. We partnered with a number of organisations, to push the issue of access to safe and legal abortions and this work will continue, based on a piece of research that was done.

A new and exciting project called Fairer Force, which is a joint project with three Amnesty teams – South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. In these three countries the police force uses excessive violence dealing with communities, protestors and citizens, so we decided on the joint project looking at these three countries. It will look at how we can get the police to deal with communities in a fair and just way, and not use excessive violence.

Sexual and gender-based violence in Universities research will start moving forward in the new year.

Regarding growth and membership, this is a really important area and I really want to stress that this is the area where every single one of you should give some thought to because we need everyone, including the Chapters, to be thinking about how to increase their supporter and member targets. At the moment, globally, we have 9 million members, with a target of 25 million by 2020. Please think about how you can increase your supporter base, how can

we help you, have the conversations with us, come up with new ideas, tell us what you want to do. If we can't help, we will tell you, otherwise we will do everything we can to help. It doesn't have to be only paying members, supporters are counted, people who come and take action. Let's think about how we build the movement in South Africa, so that this time next year the size of this room is more than double.

Eighteen months ago we didn't have many supporters or members, but we are proud to say that we have been able to reach and exceed our annual target of 5000 supporters, we now have 5100, only 28 paid members, but the hope is that we will convert supporters into paying members. How do we get rich communities to subsidise poorer communities? Thanks to Coral and her team we have the new Chapters at UKZN, the medical school and law school. Recently we got the University of Johannesburg on board as well, so in total we have 10 youth focused chapters. But it's not enough, we really need to get the youth on board, so if you know of institutions reach out to them, send them to us so we can see how we can increase this. Thanks to Coral, they have set up Human Rights clubs in six high schools in Durban and we are proud to now have Sizwile School of the deaf also as part of our Human Rights friendly schools.

The volunteer program is also something new we did this year, Andrew and Sophia and a number of you are volunteers. It was launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> June at the first Activate with Amnesty Open Door Session. The goal of the programme is to create meaningful spaces for people to get involved in the movement, one that is dynamic and harnesses the passion and skills of our volunteers. To date volunteers have contributed over 300 hours of their time, either building relationships with schools, as human rights educators, as writers capturing key moments in the movement to share with supporters or assisting with various administrative tasks. The vision for the programme is to inspire the kind of commitment that sees our volunteers stepping into leadership roles both in and outside of the office and taking ownership of driving the human rights change we want to see at the community and national levels.

What I, as the Executive Director, have to do is bring more money into the movement. Currently we get our money from the movement. In a survey on donor behaviour, they said they are most likely to give money because they believed they could make a difference because they wanted to help those less fortunate than themselves. Amongst the donors who participated in the survey the typical median donation was R500. This was targeted at the high-end donors. The most common way of donating was via a donation box in a supermarket or shop, of which 40% of donors use; Six in ten people said they had volunteered in the past 12 months – 49% did so for Churches or religious organisations, 45% for an NPO or charity and 45% for a community organisation. This shows there are people out there willing to give of their time and money and we need to start tapping into this. Amnesty is very careful about who we take money from, so people have to go through screening processes, so I'm not saying we should go out take money from anyone. We must start thinking about how we fundraise. For the first time ever, we are selling things rather than giving them away. Those who can afford, buy it. I see Amnesty as not on fundraising to contribute to the movement but also contributing to smaller sections and other offices in Africa, so that Africa can be a more powerful voice.

This is what I wanted to share with you about Amnesty South Africa. I am proud of the things that have happened this year, the progress, the newcomers, what we have been able to do as a small team, with the support of the IS and movement as a whole. This time next year I



hope I will have many more exciting things to report back to you on. A massive thank you to you all for the year for all your participating and patience and for stepping up and continuing to be supporters and members of Amnesty South Africa. Thank you.

### Closing by Deprose Muchena

Mine is a simple task. It has been a terrific day. A disciplined human rights movement spends one day of the year, sitting down together, sharing stories, thinking strategy, meeting new people and deciding the path of travel into the future. If we do that we become a much more effective movement, efficient at what we do and highly impactful in the kind of work that we do. We met new people, returning people, students who have graduated from Universities and are still connected.

Two points, firstly, we need to know who we are, in order to defend who we are. So, we are part of a global movement of people committed to defending human rights into the future. It is very important that our identity is reflected in our values, in how we talk to one another, in how we connect and conduct ourselves in our communities. Let's know who we are and let's get the identity of human rights advocates. The war is outside, the enemy is outside there, the enemy is not in here. That's very important if we are to succeed, 9 million people globally are taking action every day, 78 national sections that are part of the Amnesty movement globally are taking action every day.



The International Secretariat has now been distributed across the world, it is no longer sitting in London, London is no longer the head office. There are ten regional offices of the IS located in the global East, South, Northern Europe and the America's. All these are bringing the work of activists internationally to have a human rights impact. We want to be part of that, when you meet someone from Amnesty Nepal for example, they should be able to talk about the work being done by the Amadiba Crisis Committee; if you meet someone from Durban they should be able to talk about death and therefore accountability of Berta Cáceres in Honduras. When you meet someone from Amnesty Kenya, they should be talking about problems in Brazil. That is how Amnesty survived so far, because it's not internally focused, it's externally focused. It's vibrant and keeps reinventing itself.

Thank you for coming and listening to stories and debates and insights we have learned about today. We are grateful that Nonhle spent all of the day with us, we know that Nonhle is one of the most sought-after people these days because of the important work she is doing, not just for her community, but for South Africa, and for the African continent that continues to be rich in natural resources, but very poor on human development. Her work is critical, and we must acknowledge it. A round of applause.

I also want to thank the University Chapters that are here, you are amazing. You've got style and you are the people we need to build an Amnesty of the future and the future of Amnesty. A round of applause.

Thank you for the professionals and executives in the room who have offered to work with Amnesty South Africa to make sure that their members are developed and are developing. A round of applause.

Thanks to the Transitional Advisory Group, who are transitioning the movement towards a particular space we want to belong, and it is important that they are supported in their building role. They bring different skills, acumen and experiences and we really hope they are going to lead us to where we want South Africa to be, which is a fully-fledged section.

Thanks to everyone who has come, and to the instant poets in the group. And to our veteran from Durban Coral, thanks you very much for your selfless contribution to the movement for the longest time, you continue to be young at heart and active and we hope you can inspire those who have just recently joined.

Lastly to thank Amnesty South Africa staff, these colleagues work day in day out trying to build this movement. They are a young group of committed people led by Shenilla. Round of applause.

The meeting is now over.

