



# LESEDI

*Lighting the way to justice*

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# LESEDI

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## It was the best of times... It was the worst of times...

Welcome to the first edition of *Lesedi* for 2019. We started the year with a sobering warning that the global assault on organizations working on human rights has reached crisis point. According to an Amnesty report governments across the world are increasingly attacking non-governmental organizations by creating new laws aimed at interfering with vital human rights work. What does this mean for human rights defenders? We need to be more innovative and agile as we push through these barriers and shrinking spaces to fight for a world where everyone is able to access their basic human rights.

In South Africa we continue with our work around growing the movement and having an impact on human rights and in this issue, we showcase some of our areas of work.

Let me start by welcoming the University of Johannesburg Amnesty Chapter into the fold. It is so wonderful to see our presence expand among the youth as we grow the movement in South Africa.

I am also thrilled to report that our Write for Rights campaign has had over half a million actions from around the world! Thank you to everyone who took action. You will recall our focus was on Nonhle Mbuthuma, a member of the Amadiba traditional community in the Eastern Cape, who are fighting against a mining company which wants to mine titanium on their ancestral land.

The campaign was so visible that it attracted the attention of the South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Lindiwe Sisulu, who took action by writing to her counterparts in the Ministry of Police and the Ministry of Justice and requesting them to look into the case.

We also shine a spotlight on the Right to Quality Education and the Right to Health in this edition. South Africa has a rights-based legal framework and is signatory to a number of international laws and treaties and yet delivery on the ground remain unequal and abysmal in both these critical areas.

Regionally we focus on Madagascar where research conducted by Amnesty researcher

Tamara Léger has revealed that a broken justice system means people, even women and children, end up spending months or years in detention before being charged with any crime.

We also look at the recent tragedy in New Zealand when an armed gunman killed 50 people and injured scores of others in mass shootings during Friday prayers at two mosques in Christchurch. As horrific as the incident was, especially as the killer streamed it live on Facebook, the beacon of light and hope at the end of a painfully dark tunnel was undoubtedly how Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, and her government handled the tragedy.

Ms. Ardern showed leadership and humanity and was a source of comfort for the families of the victims and the entire country who were reeling from this act of terrorism.

Our Global Communications Director, Osama Bhutta, shares his thoughts on the incident and explains why the world needs to take concerted action against this trend which is destabilising societies.

There are many other interesting articles in *Lesedi* which I hope these will inspire you to join our movement as a supporter, volunteer or member. The more people stand up against injustice the more chance we have of defeating it. In the meantime...

*Aluta Continua!* 🇵🇸



© Hagen Hopkins/Getty Images

# Global assault on NGOs reaches crisis point as new laws curb vital human rights work

*Amnesty International*

**G**overnments across the world are increasingly attacking non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by creating laws that subject them and their staff to surveillance, nightmarish bureaucratic hurdles and the ever-present threat of imprisonment, Amnesty International said in a new report.

*Laws Designed to Silence: The Global Crackdown on Civil Society Organizations* reveals the startling number of countries that are using bullying techniques and repressive regulations to prevent NGOs from doing their vital work. The report lists 50 countries worldwide where anti-NGO laws have been implemented or are in the pipeline.

“We documented how an increasing number of governments are placing unreasonable restrictions and barriers on NGOs, preventing them from carrying out crucial work,” said Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

“In many countries, organizations who dare to speak out for human rights are being bullied into silence. Groups of people who come together to defend and demand human rights are facing growing barriers to working freely and safely. Silencing them and preventing their work has consequences for everyone.”

In the past two years alone, almost 40 pieces of legislation that interfere with the right to association and are designed to hamper the work of civil society organizations have been put in place or are in the works around the world. These laws commonly include implementing ludicrous registration processes for organizations, monitoring their work, restricting their sources of resources and, in many cases, shutting them down if they don't adhere to the unreasonable requirements imposed on them.

## A global problem

In October 2018, Pakistan's Ministry of the Interior rejected registration applications from 18 international NGOs, and dismissed their

subsequent appeals, without giving a reason.

NGOs in Belarus are subjected to strict state supervision. Working for those NGOs whose registration request is rejected (often arbitrarily) is a criminal offence.

In Saudi Arabia, the government can deny licenses to new organizations and disband them if they are deemed to be “harming national unity”. This has affected human rights groups, including women's human rights groups, who have not been able to register and operate freely in the country.

In Egypt, organizations that receive funding from abroad need to comply with stringent and arbitrary regulations. This has led many human rights defenders being banned from travel, having their assets frozen and prosecuted.

Some could face up to 25 years in prison if convicted of receiving foreign funding.

“Amnesty International's offices around the world have also come under attack. From India to Hungary, authorities have abused our staff, raided their offices and frozen their assets in a further escalation of their attack on local organizations,” said Kumi Naidoo.

## Locked up for failing to comply

Many countries, such as Azerbaijan, China and Russia, have introduced further registration and reporting requirements for NGOs. Failure to comply means imprisonment, a punishment Azerbaijani human rights defender Rasul Jafarov, interviewed for the report, knows all too well.

“I was arrested in connection with activism and demonstrations carried out with my Human Rights Club,” said Rasul, who was released from prison in 2016, after being detained for over a year. “This created an awful atmosphere. Those not arrested or investigated had to close their organizations or stop their projects. Many left Azerbaijan to work abroad.”

This restrictive regulation means NGOs are under constant scrutiny by the authorities. In China, new legislation tightly controls the work of NGOs from registration and reporting to banking, hiring requirements and fundraising.

In Russia, the government has labelled NGOs who receive foreign funding “foreign agents” – a term synonymous with “spy”, “traitor” and “enemy of the state”. The government applies this legislation so broadly that even an organization supporting people with diabetes was heavily fined, put on the “foreign agents” register and forced to close in October 2018. Medical, environmental and women's groups have also come under fire.

## Ripple effect

The repressive policies of the Russian government have caused a ripple effect reaching several other countries.

In Hungary, a number of NGOs are being forced to label themselves as “foreign funded” as the government seeks to discredit their work and turn the general public against them. Organizations failing to comply with these rules face high fines and ultimately the suspension of their activities. Organizations working in support of migrants and refugees have been

purposefully targeted and their staff harassed after a new set of laws were passed in June 2018. “We don't know what is going to happen to us and other organizations, and what laws will be passed next,” said Aron Demeter, from Amnesty International Hungary.

“Several members of our staff have been subjected to online trolling, abuse and threats of violence. Some venues refused to host our events and there were schools that refused to hold human rights education activities for fear of repercussions.”

In some countries, the attack on NGOs is particularly targeted against organizations that defend the rights of marginalized groups. Those promoting women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, LGBTI rights, the rights of migrants and refugees and environmental groups are among the worst affected.

“No one should be criminalized for standing up for human rights. World leaders should be aiming to guarantee equality and ensure people in their countries have better working conditions, proper health care, access to education and adequate housing – not targeting those who demand them,” said Kumi Naidoo.

“Human rights defenders are committed to creating a better world for everyone. We're not going to give up the fight, because we know how important this work is. World leaders reiterated their commitment to provide a safe environment for human rights defenders at the UN Headquarters in December 2018 during the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on HRDs. They must now ensure it becomes a reality.”

Restrictive laws are also seen in many other countries, even those regarded as more open to civil society such as the UK, Ireland, Australia and the USA. According to CIVICUS, a global alliance of civil society organisations and activists, Amnesty International's report came at a pivotal time.

“This report is timely given the proliferation of restrictions on the legitimate work of civil society organisations,” said Mandeep Tiwana, Chief Programmes Officer from CIVICUS. “By shining a spotlight on the challenges, those who support civil society and human rights values can help stem the tide.”

## As students, we helped defeat apartheid. The climate strikers can win their fight too

*Kumi Naidoo, Amnesty International's Secretary General*

*Young people demanding action on climate change are building a mass movement like we South Africans did to end injustice.*

In 1980, at the age of 15, I led a student protest that got me expelled. Every day that I went to Durban city centre, I could see that the schools for white children were different to mine. Even though adults told us that we could not make a difference, once our eyes were opened to this injustice, there was no alternative. My friends and I were determined to make a stand against the glaring inequality in South Africa.

Those who lived under apartheid know exactly what it means to live with an inherent threat to your existence. But rather than give in to the fear that it was too big to take on, we had no choice but to trust in the power of our individual actions. There are many lessons here for the climate change movement.

I was devastated to have been expelled from my school, but it did not stop me from demanding change. I knew I was not alone.

Schools across South Africa became a powerful site for struggle after a student protest in Soweto in 1976 ended with extreme police brutality. Young people, who for all their lives had been told they were not equal and had no power, organized major protests and boycotts at their schools, which garnered national and international attention.

Throughout history, our societies have owed a debt to young people who have recognised that sometimes you need to



break the rules to create space for change. It was the strategy of civil disobedience, led by young people, that set South Africa on the path to ending apartheid. The “defiance campaign” of 1952 represents the best of this: 8,000 black South Africans – led by the likes of a young Nelson Mandela – deliberately broke discriminatory laws to court arrest. Their aim was to fill the jails to overflowing. While the authorities eventually crushed the campaign, it raised the visibility of this important justice movement and galvanised mass support.

Just like South Africa’s youth leaders did decades ago, I believe young people striking for climate action today are building exactly the kind of mass movement needed to pressure leaders into acting. There have been multiple misguided attempts by politicians to patronise, belittle or discredit the teenagers leading these strikes. But for all their attempts at deflection, nothing can hide the fact that our leaders are failing to stop climate change.

In fact they continue to spread lies, fund the fossil fuel industry and wrongfully claim that it will be too expensive to act.

Meanwhile, we have fully entered the climate crisis and left behind a stable environment that enabled humanity to thrive. The kind of warming we see today, where wildfires, heatwaves, floods, droughts and storms are getting worse and worse, is only the beginning. If you feel immobilised by fear at the thought of this, imagine how it must feel for a child. And yet, throughout history, young people have shown us that it is possible to overcome our fears by standing up for our rights. In August 2018, fires raged in forests of the Arctic Circle in Sweden, and [Greta Thunberg](#) decided to start her strike outside the Swedish parliament.

These school strikes for climate have snowballed and on Friday, 15 March, more than 1,300 strikes took place in nearly 100 countries around the world. We should be hanging our heads in shame that it has fallen on young people and children to miss school and take on the overwhelming burden of fighting this threat to human survival. But we have no time for that. We now have 11 years to halve our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and work towards bringing them down to net zero by 2050 to give us a chance for survival. This is not an invitation to procrastinate, but an impetus to act.

If our leaders and indeed other adults are still clueless as to what they can do, my one piece of advice is: act like the kids. 🇸🇪

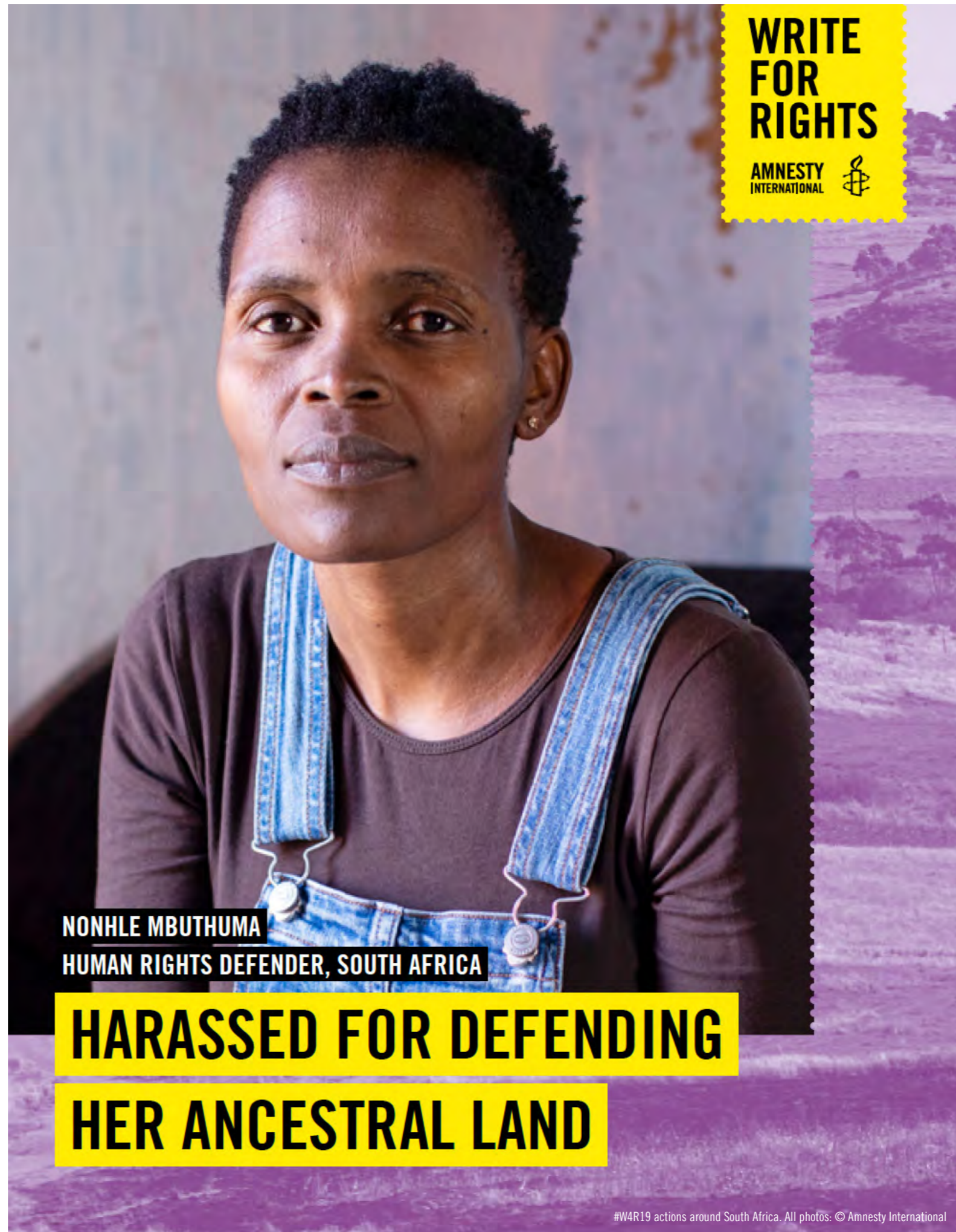
*This article first appeared in [The Guardian](#).*



All photos: © Amnesty International

**T**hank you for taking  
action 520,726 times!

That's over half a million!



**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



**NONHLE MBUTHUMA**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER, SOUTH AFRICA**

**HARASSED FOR DEFENDING**

**HER ANCESTRAL LAND**

#W4R19 actions around South Africa. All photos: © Amnesty International

“I want to thank Amnesty globally, the support they gave us is amazing and it makes a lot of difference.

The thousands of letters we have received shows that this struggle is not just about us, that we are not alone. It shows that the earth is important and not only in Africa because we have received letters from Germany, Sweden, Norway, and France and they want peace at the end of the day because without land there is no peace.”

– Nonhle Mbuthuma

Young learners on their way to class. © Amnesty International



## The next government's biggest job? Education

Shenilla Mohamed and Iain Byrne

On this Human Rights Day, just a few weeks away from the national elections and as South Africa celebrates almost 25 years of freedom, our thoughts turn to how South Africa is performing on rights protection and enjoyment. One of the areas where South Africa continues to face significant challenges is the right to education.

Legally we have a strong framework founded on Section 29 of the Constitution and supported by international treaties ratified by the government such as the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The importance of this fundamental right has been recognised by our Constitutional Court when it held that the right to basic education should be “immediately realisable” and not subject to progressive realisation – something all governments both national and provincial need to bear in mind.

Broadly, our legal framework is in line with international law with one important

exception. South Africa has exempted itself from the requirement to ensure that primary education is available free to all, and many state primary schools are permitted to still charge students fees. Last year the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights criticised the decision of the government to opt out of this obligation and to reconsider its position. Yet there is no indication that the current government is willing to do so.

Since the end of apartheid South Africa has made significant progress in certain areas of education. Access has increased considerably to the point where nearly 90% of 5-year-olds are now in school compared to about 40% fifteen years ago. Completion rates have also improved at both primary and secondary level, especially among black Africans, although the level of drop outs is still worryingly high.

However, the education system is still facing major challenges mirroring the country's deep socio-economic inequality. Outcomes vary greatly with very high percentages of children at Grade 4, the vast

majority from disadvantaged communities, not achieving basic literacy and numeracy.

During the last year Amnesty International has been conducting research to see what is happening on the ground. We visited many schools in some of our poorest communities across Gauteng and the Eastern Cape and spoke to hundreds of individuals – learners, parents, SGBs, teachers, activists, unions, academics and officials – to get a direct sense of the state of education and will be launching a major campaign on these issues soon. We heard uplifting stories of success even under the most adverse conditions.

Learners achieving top marks and going on to university from some of the poorest schools; inspirational teachers making a real difference to the lives of their students; communities supporting their local schools by giving time and what little money they have.

### Schools falling apart

However, we also saw first-hand schools that are literally falling apart – never renovated since they were built decades ago with collapsing and unsafe buildings; extremely overcrowded classrooms – up to 60-70 students in some cases; insufficient textbooks for all learners; lack of decent sanitation with the continued use of pit toilets and the absence of essential amenities such as libraries, laboratories and sports facilities that can enrich education and which are taken for granted in our wealthier institutions. Our evidence simply reinforces the government's own statistics that it is continually missing its own targets for vital infrastructure upgrading. It is clear that resources need to be not just increased but also allocated where they

are needed most to ensure that all children can receive a decent education. Although the government has spent a relatively high amount on education particularly compared to other areas of social spending since taking over power in 1994, the level of resources has not increased since 2012 and recently, like other public services, has been subject to significant cuts due to austerity measures.

The next government needs to make good on concrete promises to address ongoing education failings. It can start to do this by implementing the recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from last year, and improve school infrastructure including sanitation facilities and reducing school drop-out rates.

Beyond these immediate needs, the government should guarantee all children access to a decent, affordable education, including by ensuring all state primary schools are adequately resourced by the government and not reliant on fees from students to meet resourcing shortfalls.

The power of human rights as a concept is underpinned by both their universality – we all enjoy the same rights regardless of who we are or our circumstances – and ensuring accountability for their fulfilment.

As we celebrate this amazing idea, let us all recommit to ensuring that future generations of South Africans can both enjoy their right to a decent education and hold those to account who have it in their power to make it a reality. 🇿🇦

This article first appeared on [News24](https://www.news24.com).



All photos: © Amnesty International

## 'HIV testing was compulsory. If you didn't test, they wouldn't treat you.'

Shenilla Mohamed

**The struggle to survive pregnancy and death in a land of plenty and poverty hasn't changed much in the past five years – there are lives to prove it.**

**B**usisiwe lives in an isolated homestead in rural KwaZulu-Natal. When Amnesty International met her and her baby daughter and family more than five years ago, they were – like many South Africans – surviving on social grants. This despite the fact that Busisiwe, as we called her and who was then 18, had not been able to access one for her daughter.

She told our researchers then that she felt too ashamed as a young mother to face the civil servants at the payment office.

When she was four months pregnant, Busisiwe went to the antenatal clinic because she wanted to know whether she was HIV positive so that, if she was, she could get the antiretroviral medication needed to prevent transmission of the virus to her baby.

She walked to the clinic, a journey that takes between 60 and 90 minutes each way. When she arrived, healthcare workers insulted her publicly.

"They started to shout: 'Why are you pregnant? You are so young,'" she remembered.

"Every time [I went] they were shouting, saying: 'Your mother sent you to school and you are going to look [at] boys?'"

Frightened, Busisiwe left the clinic without being screened for HIV.

Instead, Busisiwe tested four months later through an NGO at her school where she says she was treated better.

But she didn't take her result to the clinic. She explained: "I dislike them, the way they treat me." Busisiwe was one of hundreds of women in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal

whom we interviewed in 2014 to uncover why the country's maternal mortality remained stubbornly high, especially among women living with HIV.

With about 141 women dying for every 100 000 live births in the country, too many women and girls were dying needlessly during pregnancy or labour or shortly after, according to Statistics South Africa's 2013 figures.

Our report unearthed three major barriers to the kind of adequate antenatal care needed to prevent these deaths.

The first was a lack of privacy and informed consent, especially about HIV testing. Many of the women and girls interviewed by Amnesty International said that their fears about lack of privacy and patient confidentiality in facilities put them off visiting their local clinic for sexual and reproductive health services and antenatal care.

In addition, pregnant women and girls feared that, if they refused an HIV test, they would be denied other antenatal care services.

"Testing was not optional, it was compulsory... if you didn't test, you didn't have antenatal classes. Everyone had to go through the tests," one KwaZulu-Natal woman told us

We also found that healthcare workers lacked information and training about sexual and reproductive health and rights. To boot, all 16 health facilities we visited then had either a shortage or total lack of printed information on contraceptives, abortion or antenatal care — much to healthcare workers' disappointment.

Finally, our report revealed a dearth of affordable, available transport to and from

health facilities for pregnant women.

When Busisiwe went into labour, she had to ask a neighbour to drive her to the hospital as she didn't have the R250 it would cost to hire private transport.

The neighbour took her only as far as the nearest clinic, where staff called an ambulance.

"I was feeling very worried and in pain but no one attended [to] me... [healthcare workers] showed me one of the beds and they said I must wait there for the ambulance and they left me there," she told us.

"They didn't come back again until the ambulance arrived."

Busisiwe explained that, because of how she had been treated at the clinic during the antenatal care visits, she was scared and didn't feel able to ask for help while she was in labour.

Emergency medical services took three hours to arrive.

Four years on, the latest audit of maternal deaths in the country has found that many of these barriers remain. The [report](#), which tracked maternal deaths between 2014 and 2016, has again found the lack of antenatal care to be a key contributory factor in preventable maternal deaths.

Almost 3 700 women and girls are reported to have died of pregnancy-related causes during this period. Almost a quarter of the deaths were linked to late or no antenatal care.

A Mpumalanga healthcare worker who did not want to be named recently told us that transport remains one of the biggest challenges women face.

Ambulances often arrive late, especially in rural areas, which can result in grave complications for the women giving birth.

But some things have improved since Amnesty's 2014 [Struggle for Maternal Health](#) report.

Currently, the South African government recommends that women and girls begin their antenatal care visits from 14 weeks into their pregnancies.

Appointments are free of charge and, in April 2017, the government increased the number of recommended appointments from four to eight.

Although a third of them won't seek care

until after 20 weeks or about midway through their pregnancy, the World Health Organisation says three out of four pregnant women go for at least four visits. As a result, the number of maternal deaths has reduced significantly since 2011, the latest maternal death audit shows.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the situation at one of the rural communities we visited in 2014, uThungulu district municipality, is also slightly better. Women in the area can now use state patient transport to take them to the hospital from their local healthcare facility for appointments. But an NGO volunteer says the service only runs on specific days.

It's an improvement from four years ago, she said, but ambulances are still unreliable.

"If you call an ambulance now in the late afternoon, it will only come tomorrow morning," she explained. Despite Busisiwe's ordeal and lack of adequate treatment, she eventually gave birth to a healthy baby but the obstacles she encountered are still faced by pregnant women and girls and are underpinned by one important factor – gender inequality.

The challenge is even greater for the women and girls who want to terminate their pregnancies because services are only offered by 7% of South Africa's 3 880 health facilities, a 2017 Amnesty [review](#) of government-listed facilities found.

Evidence about the barriers to maternal health and safe and legal abortion was part of Amnesty International's [submission](#) at a United Nations review of South Africa's progress in fulfilling the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights late last year.

The committee recommended that South Africa improve sexual and reproductive health services to ensure that care is accessible to all, particularly in rural areas. It also called for the National Health Insurance (NHI) to be expedited in order to address these inequalities. Quality, equitable healthcare is not only important for communities, it also ensures that women, including those living with HIV, have access to the medical attention and knowledge they need.

The NHI must deliver adequate health cover, especially on reproductive health, for all pregnant women and girls. 🇿🇦

This article was first published by [Bhekisisa Health Journalism Centre](#).

A woman and her child in awaiting trial in Madagascar's prisons. © Amnesty International



## IWD 2019: Women languish in abusive lengthy pre-trial detention in Madagascar

Tamara Léger

*In Madagascar, a broken justice system means that people, even women with children, end up spending months or years in detention before being charged with any crime.*

When Onorine's husband died, she decided she wanted to take care of his four children from another marriage. Onorine, who is 56 and from Antsirabe in Madagascar, took their birth certificates to court to make things official. But when she arrived there, police officers told her the certificates were fake, and arrested her. When I visited her in August 2017, more than two years after she was arrested, Onorine was still in detention waiting for a trial, and the children have been left to fend for themselves. When I spoke to her in Antsirabe prison, Onorine described her despair, after her attempt to keep the children safe backfired so badly:

"My husband's four children, as well as my own [five] children are in difficulty... They don't go to school, they're just vagabonds. I am alone here, I really suffer... I think it's because I'm poor that the judge never believed me," she said.

Across Madagascar, there are hundreds of women like Onorine who have spent years languishing in detention, suspected of minor crimes, often with no evidence against them. With no prospect of a trial any time soon and no access to lawyers, these women have no chance to defend themselves and can do nothing but wait in horrible, overcrowded conditions, wondering if they will ever get to go home.

Since visiting Madagascar's prisons I have found it difficult to get the stories from women I met there out of my head. In October 2017, out of the total 994 women prisoners in Madagascar, 696 were pre-trial detainees. This means that 70% of the total female prison population had not been charged with any crime. The scale of this injustice is staggering.

The majority of the women I spoke to in Madagascar had had no access to a lawyer. They did not have enough food or access to healthcare. Many women were pregnant, and others were struggling to care for their babies or young children. It was painful to watch children starting their lives in dark, unhygienic cells. Just as painful is the plight of women like Onorine, who are separated for prolonged periods from their children and live in constant fear for their well-being.

In a well-functioning criminal justice

system, people accused of committing crimes are detained only when absolutely necessary. They are given access to a lawyer, free of charge, if they cannot afford to pay, and granted a prompt trial. And, in decisions that affect children, those children's best interests must be the primary consideration.

But in Madagascar, a broken justice system means that people, even women with children, end up spending months or years in detention before being charged with any crime.

Most of the women I met in Madagascar had been arrested for petty offences like stealing chickens; others were in prison just because their husbands or relatives were suspected of crimes. As Onorine noted, pre-trial detention particularly affects people living in poverty and exacerbates societal inequalities. Women in detention lose their source of income and may risk long-term unemployment due to social stigma and lost opportunities, which has a knock-on effect on their families.

Onorine did not understand why she was in detention. But her demands for justice fell on deaf ears: when she saw the judge and asked for a temporary release, he extended her detention warrant.

In October 2018, an Amnesty International delegation met with the Malagasy government after launching the report, *Punished for being Poor*. The interim president, prime minister and Minister of Justice welcomed Amnesty's recommendations and committed to addressing the crisis. We will continue to call on President Andry Rajoelina to address the pre-trial detention crisis in Madagascar and show the world that he is committed to changing his country's poor human rights record.

Prisons are meant to hold people who have been found guilty of serious crimes, not to hold people in legal limbo, depriving them of their families and livelihoods for years on end.

Madagascar's justice system has failed badly and women's lives are on hold as a result. For the women in Madagascar's prisons, International Women's Day is another 24 hours of waiting for justice. 🇲🇵

*This article was first published by the [Daily Maverick](#).*



Night vigils in Australia following the Christchurch tragedy. © Jaimi Chisholm/Getty Images

## After Christchurch, how to beat Islamophobia and hate

Osama Bhutta, Amnesty International's Communications Director

Racists and bigots believe that diverse societies don't work. Frustrated that their howling at the moon wasn't enough, they're now picking up weapons in an attempt to prove themselves right. We can't keep expressing shock and then moving on until the next outrage. We watched in astonished horror last year when a Nazi entered a US synagogue and shot dead 11 worshippers. And yet after the initial alarm, the world carried on like before.

These haters are destabilising our societies and concerted action needs to be taken before things get even worse.

To be clear, this isn't just about western societies. Many Muslims see Christchurch as a small part of a global rising tide of Islamophobia perpetrated by insecure majorities. Let's take a whistle-stop world tour from east to west.

In Myanmar, decades of hate speech and persecution culminated in 2017 with over 700,000 predominantly Muslim Rohingya having to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh after a vicious campaign of ethnic cleansing. The implicated military in Myanmar has been given plenty of diplomatic cover by China, whose authorities are currently holding up to 1 million Uighurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in euphemistically titled "transformation-through-education" camps in Xinjiang.

It's one of the stories of our age, subjugation on an epic scale.

India's historic multi-faith character has taken a hit under the leadership of Narendra Modi, a man who was chief minister during the 2002 Gujarat pogrom, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Muslims. His brand of Hindu nationalism has led to divisiveness rather than unity, leading to growing phenomena such as "cow-related violence".

Many politicians across Europe have been gaining ground by peddling anti-Muslim messages. France's Marine Le Pen compared Muslims spilling onto pavements from packed mosques after Friday prayers to Nazi occupiers. A key message of the Brexit campaign was the "threat" of Turkey joining the EU. Arch-Brexiteer Nigel Farage once accused British Muslims of having "split loyalties".

The biggest beneficiary of ballot box Islamophobia though is Donald Trump with his campaign promise of a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States". He said that this ban would stay in place until the country's representatives "can figure out what the hell is going on".

Presumably, despite all his intelligence, he's still not got a grasp of it. Trump arrived on the back of a generation of Islamophobia which went hand-in-hand with the controversial wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq, which let us not forget, resulted in the still barely acknowledged deaths of hundreds of thousands of Muslims.


When the global picture is this grim, it's little wonder that many Muslims feel embattled. Especially when they are also being told that despite these tragic numbers, they are actually the aggressors.

This is not, however, a religious conflict. The millions of Muslims who have lost their lives, been put in detention, or repressed in other multifaceted ways, have not been treated this way as part of a religious war. These are not the new crusades. The perpetrators are too diverse and too disparate for this to be case. So are the victims. Christians are also repressed in China, Pakistan and Indonesia. Christian and Muslim Palestinians face violence and discrimination every day in the context of Israel's occupation of their territory. France and Germany reported disturbingly sharp rises in anti-Semitism last year; who can forget the distressing images of swastikas daubed across graves in Jewish cemeteries in Herrlisheim and Quatzenheim in eastern France? In light of the evidence, a 'War on Islam' thesis doesn't add up.

This is about how nation states treat their minorities. In this respect, Muslim-majority states are also often found wanting.

Infamously there are no churches in Saudi Arabia. Given these circumstances, it was no surprise to see Saudi Arabia's crown prince giving endorsement to China's treatment of Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

Harmony isn't going to be achieved if only we had more interfaith dialogue and more mosque open days. Tackling this threat effectively requires a radical rethink about how we talk about freedom, equality and respect for all. The strength of a nation lies in how well you treat all your people. It's a mark of strength when you celebrate everyone who lives alongside you. We move forward when everyone has the freedom to live their lives as they wish, to contribute to their society as they see fit and to be the people they want to be.

I grew up in Scotland and am proud of my nationality and my faith. We used to say that it takes many different coloured threads to make tartan, just as it takes many different types of people to make Scotland. Every culture around the world must find their language to bring people together, rather than to drive them apart. In 1945, the Nazis were defeated through war. This time, we'll beat the haters through the force of our love, compassion and shared humanity. 

*This was originally published in TIME.*

## Destination occupation

Jennifer Wells



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There are some 3 million Palestinians and around 600,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank, an area that includes East Jerusalem. Israel captured the West Bank, as well as the Gaza Strip, during a war with its Arab neighbours in 1967. These areas are known today as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Since 1967, it has been Israeli government policy to promote the creation and expansion of Israeli settlements in the OPT. Israeli settlements in the OPT are meant to be permanent places of residence or economic activity for Jewish Israelis and are built with the sole purpose of serving their needs.

This year marks 52 years since Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories, subjecting approximately 2 million inhabitants to collective punishment and a growing humanitarian crisis.

Fifty-two years on, the Israeli authorities are still intensifying the expansion of settlements and related infrastructure across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and severely restricting the freedom of movement of Palestinians.

Israeli forces unlawfully kill Palestinian civilians, including children, and unlawfully detain – within Israel – thousands of Palestinians from the OPT, holding hundreds in administrative detention without charge or trial. Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, including children, remains pervasive and are committed with impunity. Israel continues to demolish Palestinian homes in the West Bank and in Palestinian villages inside Israel, forcibly evicting residents. Conscientious objectors to military service are imprisoned.

This past January, Amnesty International launched a campaign calling on TripAdvisor, an

internet-based travel and restaurant company, to stop listing properties, activities and attractions located in illegal Israeli settlements or run by settlers in the OPT.

TripAdvisor lists more than 70 different properties, activities and attractions in illegal Israeli settlements in the OPT. By doing so, TripAdvisor is boosting the settlement economy and contributing to settlement expansion. The company's promotion of settlements as a tourist destination helps to 'normalise' and legitimise them to the public.

Settlements are illegal under international law – their creation amounts to a war crime. Settlements are on stolen Palestinian land. They should not be tourist destinations.

Settlements have a devastating impact on a wide range of Palestinian human rights, including their right to an adequate standard of living, to housing, to health, to freedom of movement and to education.

The existence of settlements also cripples the Palestinian economy. In driving tourism to the settlements, TripAdvisor is contributing to these human rights violations.

Continuing the campaign and in light of more changes by the US and their pro-Israel groupings, Amnesty International South Africa wants to re-energise our work on Palestine.

This May, we will be organising a week-long roadshow in which two of our colleagues from Amnesty International's office in Jerusalem will be meeting with key stakeholders, South African solidarity groups, government officials and youth groups to discuss and strategise around the situation on the ground.

At the end of the roadshow, Amnesty International intends to have a clear strategy on our future engagement on the OPT. Watch this space. 📄

Download the report here: ['Destination: Occupation'](#)

## Keeping it real at Kingsmead College

Jennifer Wells

Towards the end of February, Amnesty International South Africa was invited to Kingsmead College, Johannesburg, to give a presentation to Grade 9 learners on refugee rights in South Africa. Our team took over two one-hour classes of about 30 learners each and spoke to them about what it means to be a refugee or asylum seeker, what the refugee situation is in South Africa, why refugees come to South Africa and the challenges they face once here. The talk included activity work and time for questions.

### A takeaway from one of the students:

“People move to where opportunity presents itself. The men and women will flock to the city daily to find jobs. Men put on their best suits, their best shoes and they take taxis to the inner city. For the migrants and refugees, the line outside home affairs is long, and the possibility of being told to come tomorrow again is painfully high.

As a white girl, I’ve never experienced discrimination or oppression and I’ve never experienced true poverty, but I’ve noticed that most people will make the absolute best of what they have. They always laugh and they always smile.”



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## Amnesty International UJ: New kids on the block

Siyabonga Tshabalala

Amnesty International University of Johannesburg (UJ) launched in February this year. During registration week, we signed up over 100 UJ students to our chapter who are passionate about taking injustice personally.

We have received tremendous support from the Amnesty International South Africa office in getting our chapter up and running. Nthabeleng Mzizi, Membership and Growth Officer, helped with our constitution and registration, we were sent Amnesty International materials and promo posters were made for us.

We were saddened by the resignation of the (then) Deputy Chairperson, Siyabonga Matoti, who cited personal reasons as

the cause of his resignation. Siyabonga Tshabalala stepped in as Deputy Chairperson, Mosima Bambi (initially the Secretary) then took on the role of Treasurer, and Senamile Masuku joined us as the new Secretary.

Moving forward into the year, Amnesty UJ has committed to being part of Amnesty International South Africa’s on-campus research into sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Our initial scoping has found that there is a grey area in the University of Johannesburg’s Constitution regarding SGBV and we look forward to investigating this further, and presenting recommendations to the University to assist with policy development and implementation around SGBV on campus.

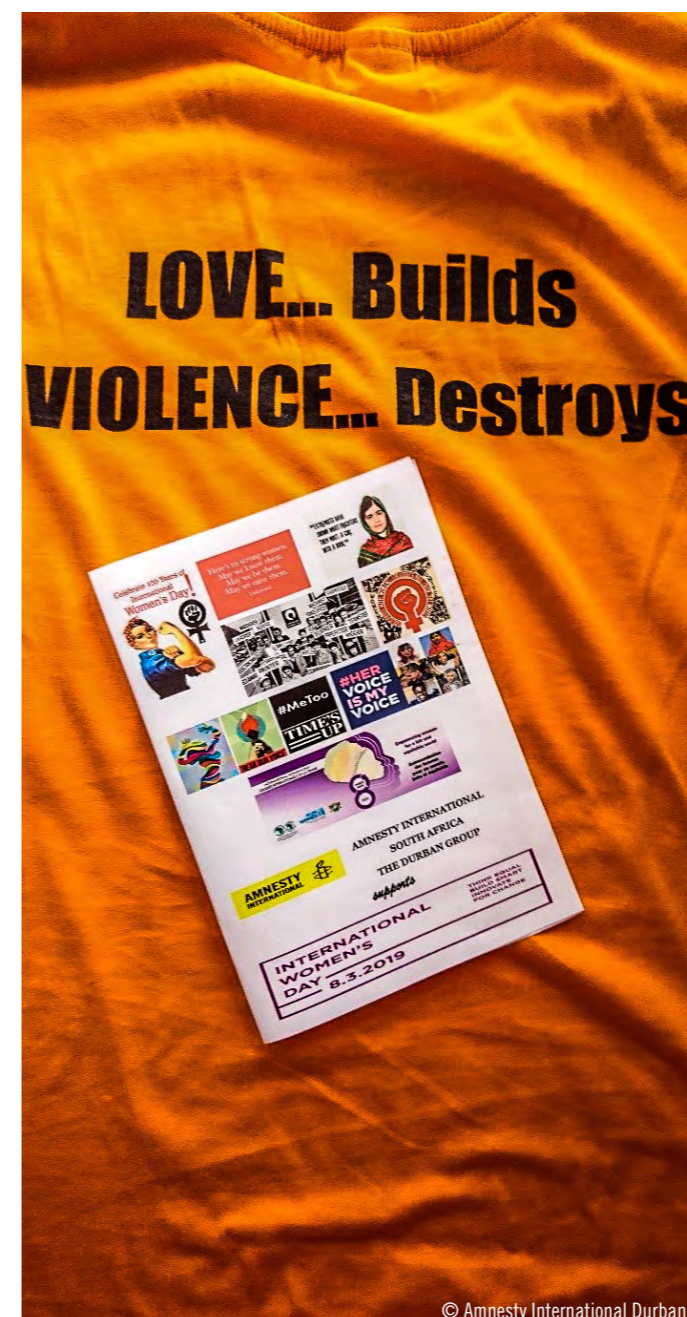




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## #TakingInjusticePersonally on International Women's Day

*Nthabeleng Mzizi*

The Amnesty International Durban Group commemorated International Women's Day by bringing awareness to the support available to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The group took to the streets and handed out informational brochures at Durban's North Beach Promenade on International Women's Day which were prepared by Inderan Govender, a committed member of the group.

International Women's Day is a global campaign commemorated across the world to highlight women's rights and to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity across the world.

Coral Vinsen, chairperson of the Durban Group, said, "The leaflet offered an address to anyone who has been abused, who needed help. The orange t-shirts we were wearing had the AI logo on the front and on the back was printed: 'Love builds... violence destroys'."

The group were able to reach 150 people with the message of support for sexual and gender-based violence survivors. 🙌

# Amnesty International UCT Jazz Evening

*Nthabeleng Mzizi*

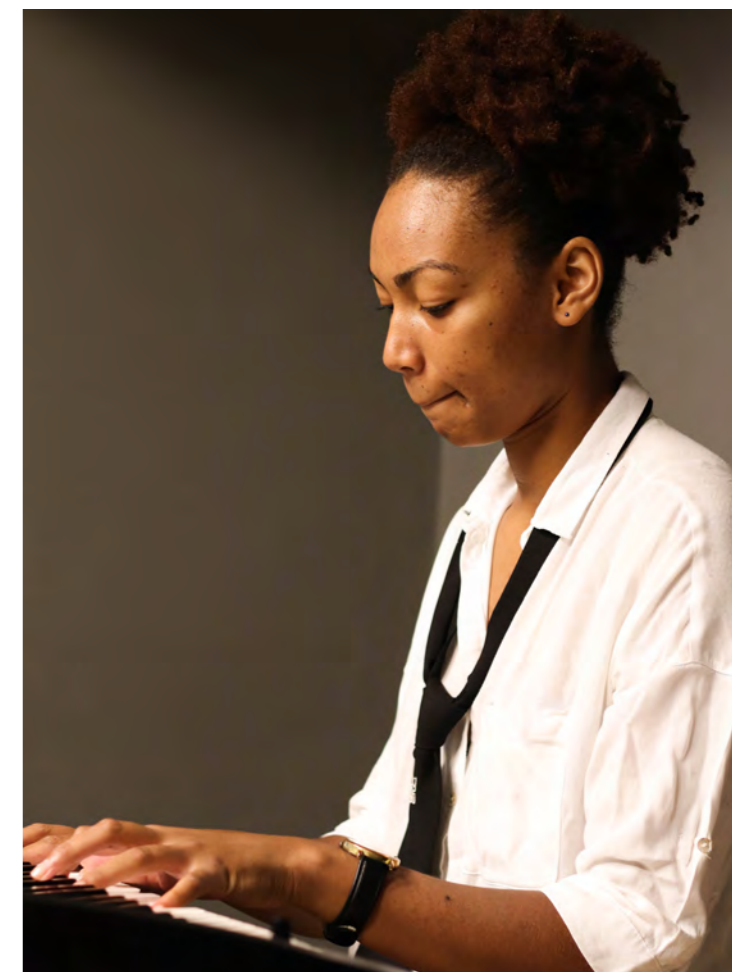
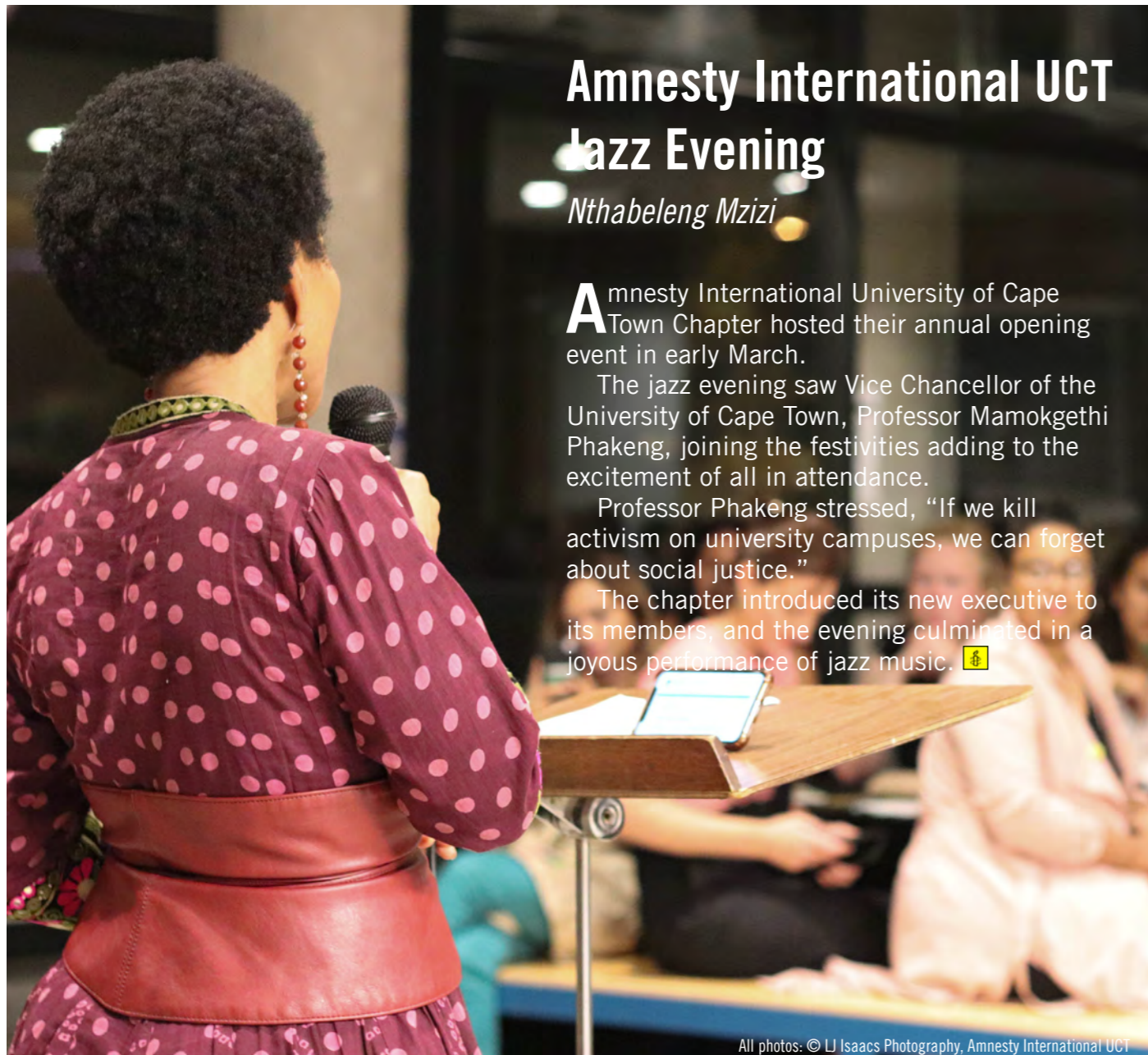
**A**mnesty International University of Cape Town Chapter hosted their annual opening event in early March.

The jazz evening saw Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, joining the festivities adding to the excitement of all in attendance.

Professor Phakeng stressed, "If we kill activism on university campuses, we can forget about social justice."

The chapter introduced its new executive to its members, and the evening culminated in a joyous performance of jazz music.

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## Volunteer corner:

**Paballo Njabulo Kganye**

**Q : How are you currently involved with Amnesty International South Africa?**  
 PNK: I'm currently a volunteer at Amnesty International South Africa.

**Q : Why did you want to join the movement?**  
 PNK: I wanted to join the movement because I believe that each of us can do our part in making sure that people are treated equally, regardless of who they are or where they come from. It's a movement of people that takes injustice seriously. That is why I wanted to join the movement.

**Q : What inspires you to continue the fight for human rights?**  
 PNK: As long as there are still people who's rights are abused because of their race, creed, gender and sexual orientation among other things, the fight for human rights must continue. That's what inspires me to continue doing my bit by volunteering at Amnesty International South Africa.

**Q : What is your favourite quote?**  
 PNK: "No matter how you feel. Get up, dress up, show up and never give up." – Unknown



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## Supporters Assembly

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.

**Find the full report [here](#).**

## Human Rights Diary

**16 April 2019**  
 Activate for Amnesty:  
 The Right to Education

**27 April 2019**  
 Freedom Day

**3 May 2019**  
 World Press Freedom Day

**8 May**  
 South African General Election

**25 May**  
 Africa Day

**28 May**  
 International Day of Action for Women's Health as well as the Anniversary of Amnesty's founding in 1961

**5 June**  
 World Environment Day

**16 June**  
 National Youth Day



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