

# About Amnesty International

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**  
Aotearoa New Zealand



Amnesty International (AI) is a voluntary movement of people who campaign for human rights. Our vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all the human rights enshrined in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and other international standards. Our mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression and freedom from discrimination, within the context of our work to promote all human rights.



## The beginning

In 1961, British lawyer Peter Benenson read a newspaper story about two Portuguese students sentenced to seven years in jail. Their crime? Raising their glasses in a toast to freedom. On May 28th of that year, the London Observer carried a full-page story - An "Appeal for Amnesty, 1961"- written by Benenson in which he asked readers to write letters asking for the release of the students as well as other "prisoners of conscience". The response was so overwhelming that by the end of the year-long "Appeal for Amnesty" groups of letter writers had formed in a dozen countries. Amnesty International was born. In 1977 Amnesty International won the Nobel Peace Prize for having "contributed to securing ground for freedom, for justice, and thereby peace in the world."

## Today

More than 2.2 million Amnesty International members worldwide are leading the struggle to defend human rights and save lives.

Members in more than 150 countries create public pressure to stop human rights abuses by organising campaigns on specific issues and developing programs of action for specific countries. By writing letters, lobbying government officials, publicising abuses and organising events, AI members are actively fighting for human rights.

## Working for human rights

Amnesty International campaigns on a wide range of human rights issues worldwide, including stopping violence against women, ending the use of child soldiers, combating "war on terror"- related abuses, and controlling the trade in arms and economic resources that fuels armed conflicts. Other examples include supporting the establishment of the International Criminal Court, advocating for an adequate standard of living for refugees, the internally displaced, and people living under occupation, promoting access to treatment for HIV/AIDS, demanding corporate accountability for human rights abuses and working to defend environmental defenders all over the world.

AI members take action to protect individuals at risk of arbitrary detention, torture and ill treatment, death threats and execution.





***“Just to know that the 'outside' world had not forgotten me and was continuing to work for my release was an immense source of encouragement during those dark days. I know that Amnesty International played a leading role in these efforts...I owe you my freedom.”***

Thich Quang Do, Buddhist monk from Viet Nam

## How to get involved

AI has a large, growing and diverse membership. But without your interest, action and support our work cannot be as powerful. We need your help to ensure that the fundamental human rights of all people are protected.

Every day people turn to Amnesty International to protect their rights. And for more than 40 years, Amnesty International has been there.

Pressure from letters, faxes and emails written by our members has helped free more than 40,000 political prisoners worldwide. Amnesty International campaigns get the job done. Our campaign against torture led to the UN's adoption of the Convention Against Torture. Our pursuit of International justice spurred the arrests of former Chilean dictator Pinochet and the former Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic. AI has successfully campaigned for the rights of rape victims in South Africa to receive treatment for HIV/AIDS.

Amnesty International stands up for people in every country who are on the front lines of the fight against discrimination, repression, torture, abductions and killings.

There are many ways you can become involved: volunteer your expertise on a country; join a local group or one of our specialist networks focusing on such issues as children's rights, law, refugees, or environmental defenders.



*The overwhelming majority of our income comes from individuals. These personal and unaffiliated donations allow AI to maintain full independence from any and all governments, political ideologies, economic interests or religions.*

*We neither seek nor accept any funds for human rights research from governments or political parties and we accept support only from businesses that have been carefully vetted. By way of ethical fundraising leading to donations from individuals, we are able to stand firm and unwavering in our defence of universal and indivisible human rights.*

**Today Amnesty International stands not only for prisoners of conscience...but also prisoners of violence, and prisoners of poverty. Join us in our defence of human rights for all. You can make a difference. Write a letter, sign a petition or log on at [www.amnesty.org.nz](http://www.amnesty.org.nz)**



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