

ACTIVE



Amnesty student activists in good heart



This year's Freedom Challenge theme of "Be a life saver: Keep the heart beat for human rights" saw the Youth Network walking the walk to keep that heart beating.

From speed dating to sky shooting, from letter-a-thons to hug-a-thons, bake sales to art sales our students went all out to raise awareness and make their voices heard.

The two main causes that we campaigned for this year were Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, Colombia. The petitions are still coming in but for now we have got a total of 2117 signatures for WOZA and 507 for the Peace Community. Other teams have sent directly.

Freedom Challenge money raised to date is \$15,778 (and counting). Great job folks!

But we know there's more letters and cash still to come so please make sure you update the enclosed review form and return it before the end of this term!

Pictured above: The Supreme winner in Auckland Girls' Grammar "The Art of Freedom" exhibition, Shaunna Bartlett with her painting of a dove escaping a cage, above a Chinese proverb "It is the beautiful bird which gets caged" Full story Page 4.

Check out some of this year's highlights:

Wellington High and Wellington East Girls' High, Tauranga Girls' College, Green Bay High, Craighead Diocesan in Timaru and Waitaki Girls' High in Oamaru all got some amazing media coverage.

Students at Marist College, Auckland, made the largest possible envelope addressed to WOZA (the Zimbabwe Government definitely can't give an excuse that they've misplaced this one!) and had a petition signing table. Their Freedom Challenge week was packed with signing days and performances to raise awareness about our two communities. To wrap up the events the students held a screening of the movie 'Holly' about trafficking.

Ellis Byrne, the leader of the Amnesty International Section of the St Catherine's College Mercy Crew, Wellington, said they hosted a letter-a-thon which went really well.

"There was a turnout of between 15 - 20 and we wrote 156 letters. We started it at 9am during school time so only a few were writing until school finished but it meant that it was much more visible. It was a lovely day so they were outside with a giant sign."

Auckland Grammar School held a fun team quiz night where the guys put together a stall featuring information, petitions and merchandise for donations. They also made a 'heart of hands' - an African inspired collective art work which they plan to auction off this term.

A bake sale at Tawa College, Wellington, proved a real winner - as did being caught 'red handed' - painting palms with red paint to make a stop child soldiers banner.

"We have really enjoyed working on this and our entire group is proud of what we



Epsom Girls' Grammar School, Auckland, in skyshoot action. This peace sign is the message of peace they sent to Colombia's Peace Communities

have accomplished together," Amnesty co-leader Rosie Duxfield said.

Craighead Diocesan School, Timaru, formed a love heart and threw paper roses in the air "We really enjoyed taking part in the Freedom Challenge this year," says Emily Watson, the school's AI leader.

Senior College, Auckland, held a cage day and got students (and even a teacher!), imprisoned while others had to raise a certain amount of money or signatures to get them out.

New Plymouth Girls' High raised \$874.00 by celebrating Amnesty International's 50th birthday and focussing on the WOZA campaign.

"Following a moving school assembly where the group spoke about the history of Amnesty International and its achievements over the past fifty years, a week of fund raising commenced. We had a bake sale, selling of red heart balloons, origami red roses, AI badges, tattoos and stickers, and petition signing for WOZA," says, Carol Curtin, Teacher in Charge of the Amnesty International Group.

"As part of a unit of study in their Social Studies classes, several teams of Year 10 students were involved in initiating and conducting these fund-raising and awareness activities. One group comprised of some excellent musicians organised an off-site event where they got local bands to play at a youth centre. Tickets sold at \$10.00 each and they raised over \$500.00," added Carol.

Papatoetoe High School, Auckland, made the yummiest looking Rubik cube cake ever and held a raffle draw to give it away. It was double the treat for anyone buying a ticket as they went home with a lollipop. Sweet!!!!

It was hug me MAYBE one more time at Wellington East Girls' College, when the girls went around town and held a hug-a-thon to support WOZA. A brave public action from this first year Amnesty group that deservedly got a media mention!

The regional Dunedin School groups turned the Octagon into a temporary graveyard in August. Around 170 crosses were erected to represent the people who died or disappeared from the peace communities. The group organised their own Peace Community, which was surrounded by students dressed up as military figures to represent the plight of the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado.



“ ..our entire group is proud of what we have accomplished together ”

Roxie Duxfield, co-leader Tawa College Amnesty group.

A BIG THANK YOU to all of you for making FREEDOM CHALLENGE 2011 a great success. Three cheers for your amazing activism!!!



McAuley High School, Auckland, collected the most signatures for WOZA with 417, while fellow Auckland school **St Cuthbert's** collected the most number of signatures for the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado with 337 students signing the petitions. Great job folks!

Your petitions have been forwarded on to the respective governments – along with the media coverage generated. Those signatures and that media coverage really builds pressure.

Keeping their hearts beating literally were the students of **Massey High**, Auckland who had a live St John's First Aid demonstration. The students followed this up with an information session where they talked about Amnesty International and how students themselves could become the lifesavers.

Christchurch Girls' High School had a child soldier's action and handprint poster resulting in lots of signatures being gathered school wide. "We had so much fun doing it", says Sandy Chan leader of the Amnesty group.

Aorere College, Auckland, made a huge poster in support of the Peace Community of San Jose. Students had their mouths gagged and went around collecting money by selling cupcakes

Waitaki Girls' in Oamaru picked up coverage in the Oamaru Mail when they took action on behalf of Colombia's Peace Community. They also collected solidarity messages on behalf of WOZA members all this despite a windy day that failed to defeat their spirits or activism.

Of the \$15,778 advised to us to date

during Freedom Challenge a staggering \$4899.50 came from **Avondale College**, Auckland.

When asked what the secret behind raising so much money was, student leader Isabella Wilson said: "It's no secret! We just held a mufti day, bake sale and sausage sizzle and all our funds came straight from those three events!"

Doing the simple stuff but doing it well has ensured that for the fourth year in a row Avondale College has collected the most money! Big ups to every single one of those 2,700 students – sometimes size does matter!

Mufti days at neighbouring **Green Bay High School** raised \$874.80, while at the other end of the country **Kaikorai Valley College**, Dunedin raised \$509.80.



Art of freedom, outrage and hope!

Striking imagery was to the fore at the Auckland Girls' Grammar Freedom Challenge art exhibition.

Schools from around the region from primary through to high school provided a roomful of sculptures, masks, paintings, song lyrics, posters and photography within its Art of Freedom art competition.

The Supreme award went to Shaunna Bartlett for her perfectly executed painting of a dove escaping a cage. It's pictured on our front page.

Shaunna says, "It was while I was looking at topics to determine my theme that I found an image of a dove escaping a cage. I felt that this strongly supported the idea behind many of the issues in the world - the idea of freedom not only in the literal terms but in the physical and mental.

"I believed that I could work on the idea to further its meaning, stressing its dramatic effect with the black isolated background. When I found the quote I just knew I had to use it as its metaphorical implication was

clear and it flowed with the rest of the artwork. The theme that I tried to emphasize was the exploration on the meaning behind 'freedom of expression.'"

Fellow winner, Jamie Dionisio drew on her photographic skills to present a stark, beautiful shot that was her protest to illegal child trafficking. It's an image that demands a reaction and challenges the people who participate in this inhumane trade of innocent children.

She calls her work "Demand and Supply" - and it's pictured below. It's a turning on its head of the phrase 'Supply and demand' which is an economic model of price determination in the market.

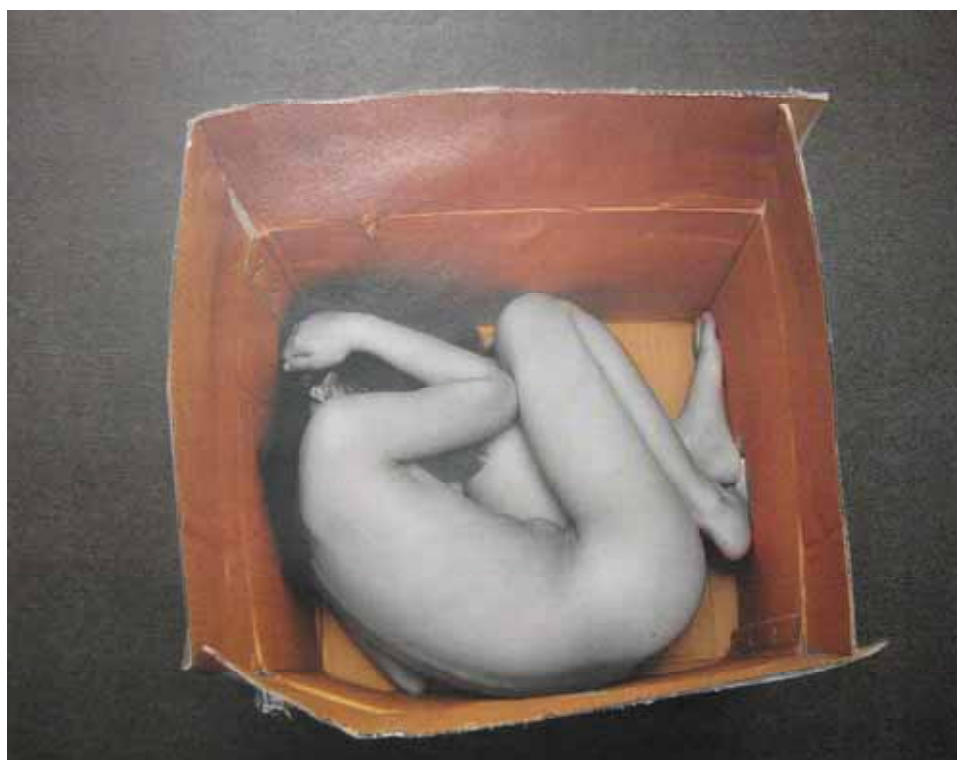
"I used this for the title because of the existing market of child trafficking in our society. Children are sold off as commodities for trading. The thin, naked girl in the picture, which is in grayscale, is curled up in a box while covering her face with her hair and arm. This represents how children are stripped of their clothes, colour, identity, rights and humanity. They are forced to lose everything



Caption: Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei inspired the art exhibition. The world-famous artist and outspoken critic of his government is regularly targeted but continues to speak out and create amazing art works. Auckland Girls' Grammar students are proudly standing in support of his right to freedom of expression by wearing a mask of his face.

servicing others to their satisfactions. They are deprived of their future and their freedom to be children, to express, and to live," says Jamie.

She adds, "The girl is placed in a box like objects, or parcels are put up in boxes whenever they are being sent to buyers. This illustrates the kind of treatment children are receiving from the people, as nothing more than objects."



Art for Amnesty

Thirty-one Dunedin high school students provided art works within the Art for Amnesty competition held in September.

Photography, montage, paintings and sketches were all featured in an exhibition that celebrated Amnesty's 50th birthday. The artworks were the inaugural display at a new Teen Space exhibition area at Dunedin Public Library.

Prizewinners were - **Year 9 - 10 category** (all from Logan Park High School) (LPHS):
 1st: Xanthe Naylor; 2nd: Michael Rose;
 3rd: Nada Crofsky-Rayner.
Year 11 - 13 category: 1st: AJ Bowen, LPHS; 2nd: Shirley Zhang, Otago Girls' High School; 3rd: Aiden Braid, LPHS

Freedom Challenge continues!

A lot more has been going on than we can fit into ACTIVE and a number of institutes and schools are still to host their Freedom Challenge. Where we get updates we'll alert you via the Youth Network e-newsletter. (If you've not getting those emails it's because we don't have your details – simply email Sunitha on youth.intern@amnesty.org.nz and we'll do the rest).

THANK YOU very, very much for putting in so much dedication and enthusiasm into Freedom Challenge. Many of you went out of your way to get an extra signature, or sat up all night making posters, or spent hours baking cupcakes and cookies, or chased the media and got coverage or chased the media and didn't get coverage even though you deserved it!

The money you've raised will contribute to our on-going campaigning. The creativity you've brought to your campaigning and the results you've generated has seen Amnesty NZ commit to prioritising both the Peace Community and WOZA within December's Global Letterwriting Marathon (More details page 12). So if you want to keep campaigning on these cases GO FOR IT!

What Next?

We have yet to receive review forms, petitions and letters, and fundraising totals or cheques from many teams. Please make sure you get back to us with these, or let us know if you have sent off the letters yourselves, along with a rough number of how many you gathered. If you've banked directly into our bank account please do let us know when and how much so we can attribute the funds raised and get a receipt out to your team. We've enclosed a review sheet and reply paid envelope to make it easy for you to do that in one document.

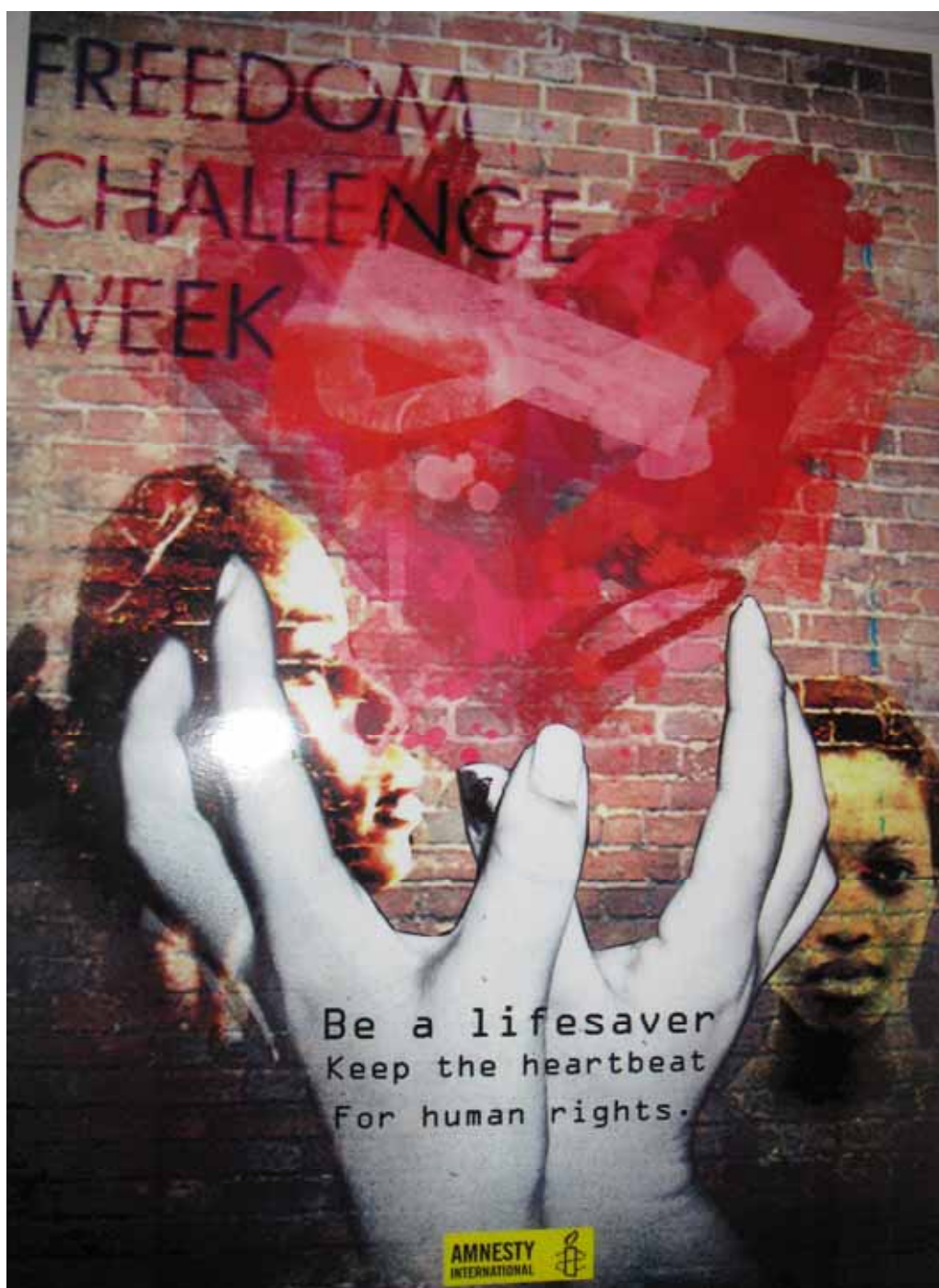
Included in this issue of ACTIVE is a team participation certificate. However, if you're leaving school this year we'd like to send you your own certificate which details the amazing human rights leadership you've shown.

Once we get your full contact details on the form attached to the cover letter or emailed to Sunitha Bimal youth.intern@amnesty.org.nz, we'll send that certificate out along with a year's free membership.

The photos we've used in this issue of ACTIVE have largely come from you – make sure they feature in your school's Year Book entry for the Amnesty International Group too. What you do is extraordinary – and that's a great story to tell as widely as possible.

And for those forward planners amongst you remember to put Freedom Challenge in your diary for next year. It's always the first week of August!!!!

And if you can, book a mufti day for Amnesty next year **NOW**.



A Freedom Challenge poster designed by Julie Lee Year 12, Westlake Girls' High School, Auckland

Somalia - Words are not enough ...

“

There is a place where they keep children, where al-Shabab tried to make me go. They used to come to the blocks where we were living and they would take children so that they could keep them and make them fight. [...] Al-Shabab told me that they would kill me if I didn't come with them. They asked me three times to go with them but I refused to go. I stopped going to the playground because I was scared they would try and force me to go with them. They took my brother. He was recruited by al-Shabab when he was eight years old. He was taken while he was playing football. We went to the place where we know that they make them fight and we found his dead body there..

”

Ahmed, 15 year-old boy who fled Mogadishu in January 2010



This is just one of the 200 testimonies from refugees who had fled southern or central Somalia, which form the basis for Amnesty International's report, *"In the line of fire: Somalia's children under attack"*. Many families gave the risk of their children being recruited by armed groups, particularly al-Shabab, an armed Islamist group opposed to the Somali transitional government, as the reason why they fled.

Recruitment of children has been a serious problem in Somalia for many years, with Somalia's Transitional Government (TGF) being on the UN's list of shame as a party recruiting, using, killing and maiming children in armed conflict. Boys over 15 years old are often considered to be adults and, in a country which has been torn apart by conflict for decades, have been expected by some to defend their clan and family. However, the intensification of armed conflict since the end of 2006 has fuelled an increase in recruitment and use of children. This has particularly been carried out by armed Islamist groups, who have been systematically recruiting children to fight in the *jihad* (holy war) against the TGF.



Transitional Federal Government (TFG) child soldier and commander, part of a security cordon for visit by Ethiopian Foreign Minister, 27 May 2007. © Private

Refugees tell of different recruitment methods by al-Shabab. They range from luring children to join them by promising phones and money, preaching in mosques, and using children previously recruited as recruitment agents. But there are also more aggressive techniques such as threats to children and their relatives, raids on schools, and abductions in public areas and from vehicles departing Somalia. Children who have opposed recruitment by al-Shabab have been beaten, abducted and deprived of liberty or even killed, and their relatives similarly targeted.

Once recruited, the children are taken to camps and trained in how to use firearms and handle grenades and improvised explosive devices. According to one child who was recruited by al-Shabab, recruited children are divided up into several groups and trained for different purposes

Some are trained for "assassination" missions, others for the planting of grenades, roadside bombs and other explosive devices on streets regularly used by patrols or vehicles belonging to the TGF and to the African Union peace support operation in Somalia (AMISOM). Others are used to beat up people not obeying al-Shabab's rules or abducted by the armed group. Girls are recruited to cook and clean for the armed groups, transport weapons and collect intelligence.

Since Amnesty International's report was published in July this year, the TGF has twice re-stated its commitment to ending the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict. Amnesty International has welcomed these statements but words are not enough. It is time for the TGF to work with the UN to finalise, sign and implement an action plan with the UN to end abuses against children in the armed conflict by its own forces and by armed groups, including the killing, maiming and recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict.

But words can help - write a poem for the children of Somalia

Poetry is an important tradition in Somalia. We invite you to write a poem about the human rights situation in Somalia and calling on the international community to do more to help Somalia's children. We'll forward your poems to the Somali research team so they can use them at an international event next year.

Some points to consider:

- Children born since 1991 have never known human rights, peace, and the rule of law. Plagued with two decades of armed conflict, combined with one of the worst droughts ever, people are dying, barely able to access food, water and other basic amenities.
- As a child in Somalia, you risk death all the time: you can be killed, recruited and sent to the frontline, punished by al-Shabab because you are caught listening to music, 'wearing the wrong clothes', be forced to fend for yourself because you have lost your parents or die because you don't have access to medical care.
- Education has suffered in Somalia because school buildings have been destroyed or damaged during indiscriminate attacks in urban areas. Many schools have closed because children and teachers fear being killed and injured on their way to school – or abducted by al-Shabab.
- Al-Shabab, the main opposition group, has imposed severe restrictions on the right to education, preventing some girls from attending school, banning certain subjects from being taught, or using schools to indoctrinate children into participating in fighting.
- Children have been subjected to floggings and witnessed other horrifying human rights abuses, including stonings, amputations and killings carried out by armed Islamist groups.

Send your poems before the end of the term to Youth Intern, Sunitha Bimal, youth.intern@amnesty.org.nz or to her care of Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand, PO Box 5300, Wellesley Street, Auckland.



Transitional Federal Government (TFG) child soldier killed by insurgents, 27 January 2008. © Private



Somali children playing war games, Mogadishu, 10 August 2008. © Private

Take Action!

1. Photocopy, circulate, sign and send the enclosed pre-written letter, or
2. Write your own politely-worded letter to the Prime Minister of the TGF.

In your letter, mention that you are a student who would like to see Somali children have the same rights as you do.

- Express your concern at the situation of children's rights in Somalia;
- Acknowledge that the TGF is working in a very difficult environment;
- Remind him that the TGF has the responsibility for positive improvements in the lives of the country's children;
- Welcome the TGF's stated commitments to preventing the use of children in armed conflict;
- Call on him to follow-up on those commitments by:
 - >> appointing a member of the TGF as a focal point for human rights and child soldiers;
 - >> issuing clear instructions prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in TFG security forces and systematically screening all TFG units to verify that no children are being used and to release any found to be present;
 - >> finalising, signing and implementing an action plan with the UN to stop the killing and maiming of children by TFG and allied forces and to secure and verify the release of child soldiers;
 - >> immediately ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Send your letters to:

The Honourable Abdiweli Mohamed Ali
Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia
c/o The Embassy of the Republic of Somalia
Rue du Valais, 9
1201 Geneva
SWITZERLAND

Pacific Island Forum – the wrap up!

Thank you to every single one of you who stood with us courtesy of the 21,000+ signatures we collected together to present to Pacific Island leaders in Auckland attending the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) in September.

The Forum provided the focus for much campaigning and discussion to ensure the region’s leaders take seriously the grave levels of sexual and gender based violence in their region.

Special thanks to the wonderful students from **Auckland Girls’ Grammar** who braved the September chill to come and support us during our daily vigils. (Pictured, below right)

The Forum’s final document prioritised sustainable economic development for the region – but Amnesty reiterated that until such time as Pacific leaders fully recognised the rights of their women that development will be limited. Of the 16 Pacific PIF countries only Vanuatu and Fiji have specific legislation to address sexual and gender-based violence. Introducing concrete legislation and holding abusers to account is key if real protection is to become a reality for Pacific women.

The meeting also endorsed the need for gender equality and committed to ensure women are included in all levels of decision making and including representation within the legislature.

The Solomon Island’s has one of the highest levels of sexual and gender based violence in the region and within its “Where is the Dignity in that” report, launched at PIF, Amnesty International has detailed the impacts of that violence. It is made worse when women live in informal settlements where there is a lack of clean water and adequate sanitation – and such settlements are a growing concern.



Jocelyn Lai from Solomon Islands YWCA was in New Zealand in September to launch Amnesty’s report on human rights issues facing the Solomon Islands.



Patrick Holmes, AIAZ’s Chief Executive hands over the 21,000 signatures to Kiribati’s President Anote Tong on 8 September 2011.

“*The absence of laws addressing gender-based violence is an issue throughout the Pacific.*”

— Jocelyn Lai from the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) in the Solomon Islands

Jocelyn Lai, Amnesty’s guest from the Solomon Islands, and who works to address SGBV as a member of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), confirmed that “the absence of laws addressing gender-based violence is an issue throughout the Pacific.”

Amnesty will continue to keep the pressure on Pacific Island leaders. To take further action see our White Ribbon campaign appeals on Page 9-10. We’re particularly focusing on the Solomon Islands.





16 days of activism against gender violence and White Ribbon Day

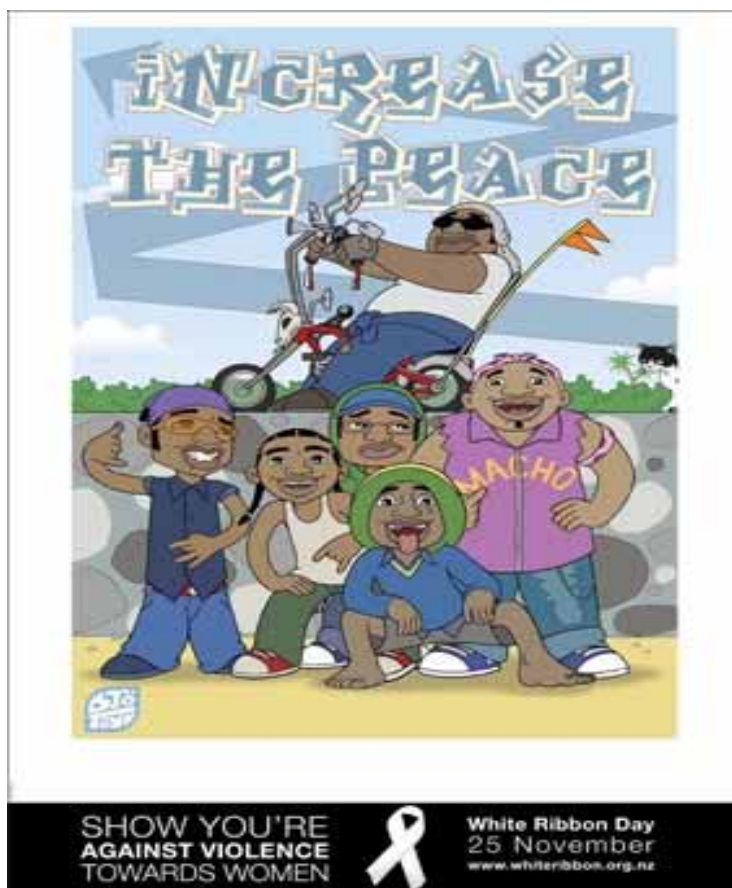
White Ribbon Day (November 25) always launches our 16 days of activism to end gender violence.

The date actually marks the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women – and nationally many organisations including Amnesty International hand out white ribbons as a visible sign that we say no to gender violence.

Because there will be lots of attention in the media on White Ribbon Day this is an easy campaign to host – and particularly if senior leaders of the group are on study leave or undertaking exams. And remember if the date doesn't suit – pick a date that does. We'll be able to provide you with white ribbons and actions to use on the day that works best for your institute.

This year we'll be continuing our campaigning focus on the Pacific and maintaining the pressure on Pacific Island leaders for positive change. Or as the image above highlights we are calling for Pacific Leaders to change the lights on women's rights from stop and start to GO!

During the Pacific Island Forum in Auckland in September not only did we present 21,000 signatures from our Eliminate Sexual and Gender-based Violence in the Pacific petition, but we also launched a report on informal settlements in the Solomon Islands.



Report highlights impact of sexual and gender based violence

The report, 'Where is the dignity in that?' **Women in Solomon Islands denied sanitation and safety** highlights the impact that informal settlements can have on the issue of sexual and gender-based violence and how a lack of official action affects women in the Solomon Islands, who face harassment, attack or rape while carrying out their everyday household duties.

Women and girls are often attacked while walking long distances from "slums" or informal settlements in the Islands' capital, Honiara to collect clean water for cooking and cleaning, or to visit toilets. Their journeys often take them through remote and poorly lit areas. They are particularly vulnerable on the return journey when they are carrying heavy loads of water.

"Women and girls in the Solomon Islands are forced to risk their personal safety for something most of us take for granted – clean water and basic sanitation," says Patrick Holmes, Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand's Chief Executive.

Amnesty International spoke to women in Honiara's slums who said they were physically or sexually abused by men outside their household, but were too frightened to make formal complaints to the authorities for fear of reprisals from their attackers. Others said their complaints were ignored.

Almost 65% of women and girls in Solomon Islands between the ages of 15 and 49 experience physical and/or sexual violence by their partners or other family members.

The Solomon Islands government has acknowledged how widespread violence against women is and last year it introduced a draft legislation to address the issue. In response to Amnesty International's concerns, within its statement to the Human Rights Council during its Universal Periodic Review, it also confirmed its commitment to:

- criminalize violence against women, including spousal rape;
- assist in the reporting, investigation and prosecution of domestic violence cases;



Women wash in a stream, Honiara, Solomon Islands © Amnesty International

- establish a National Human Rights Institution; and
- ensure a supply of good quality water to all informal settlements.

However, violence within the family continues to be seen as a private issue and the police can be reluctant to intervene.

Amnesty International's investigations revealed that lawyers in the Public Solicitors Office have, for instance, refused to represent victims of domestic violence seeking a restraining order unless the victim had visible injuries to her body.

Take Action!

We are asking you all to either use the enclosed letter or draw on it to write to the Solomon Islands government to commend their efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence. But also to highlight that until laws are in place and enforced to provide real protection to women, they remain at risk of grave human rights abuse. We ask you to call on the Solomon Islands government to:

- immediately enact legislation to specifically address sexual and gender-based violence;
- repeal legislation which discriminates against women; and
- ensure the full and effective implementation of the Gender Equality and Women's Development Policy and the National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women.

History behind November 25

November 25 is International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women.

The date was chosen in honour of the Mirabal sisters (pictured), political activists from the Dominican Republic who were assassinated on the same day in 1961.

The three sisters were murdered for their efforts to oppose dictatorship in their country, and their legacy of bravery and compassion has made them national and international heroines.

All letters should be addressed to:

Hon Danny Philips,
Prime Minister
PO Box G1
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Take Action!

Enclosed is a ready written letter which you can use or draw on when you write your own letters.

Call on Guatemala's Fiscal General to maintain the pressure on those who threaten human rights defenders by ensuring those making threats are brought to justice.

In particular in the case of Norma Cruz call for those who threatened her and her family last year to be investigated and prosecuted.

Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey
Fiscal General de la Republica
Ministerio Publico
15a Avenida 15-16
Zona 1
Barrio Gerona
Ciudad de Guatemala
Guatemala

Pressure on Guatemala

We are joining the global Amnesty movement in campaigning on behalf of Guatemalan Human Rights Defender Norma Cruz.

Norma leads a women's rights organisation, Survivors Foundation (Fundación Sobrevivientes), based in Guatemala City. As a result of her work documenting cases of violence against women and fighting for justice, she has been repeatedly threatened with death since at least 2008. Some of her relatives have also suffered threats and attacks.

In spite of repeated calls for justice, many of the perpetrators of these abuses have not been held to account for restricting Norma's freedom of expression. However, last month we heard that the person accused of making threats against her in 2009 was tried, found to be guilty and sentenced to a fine. Failure to pay this fine will result in a three year prison sentence.

This is a great result as threats against Human Rights Defenders are rarely effectively investigated in Guatemala, let alone prosecuted. International pressure around the case of Norma Cruz contributed to the investigation into the threats and eventual



Norma Cruz visiting Amnesty International Switzerland . © Amnesty International

trial taking place.

We now need to step up the campaign to put pressure on the Guatemalan authorities to effectively investigate and prosecute those responsible for the threats that Norma received in 2010. A positive result in these cases would create a precedent in Guatemala for future investigations into threats against Human Rights Defenders, and would be a step in the right direction towards guaranteeing Norma Cruz' safety and that of her family and colleagues at Fundación Sobrevivientes.

Dedicated white ribbon action stations

If preferring to undertake the action on line please:

- Book the computer suite or dedicated computers before school and during the lunch-break on Friday November 25 or the day you plan to take action.
- Ask that the Amnesty white ribbon day home pages www.amnesty.org.nz become the school/institutes home page for the day.
- Have a box of white ribbons beside each computer so that those taking action can wear a ribbon as a sign that they have taken action.

Take Action!

1. Place your white ribbon request with Youth Intern Sunitha Bimal by emailing her on youth.intern@amnesty.org.nz or phoning her on 0800 266 378. If you are calling from Auckland phone 303 4520. Please detail how many white ribbons you'd like and when you'd need them by.
2. Check in with other groups at your school or institute and see if they are hosting white ribbon events and, if so, keep them informed about your plans. You may be able to work together on this issue and encourage them to take action on our appeals.
3. Use the white ribbon logo to grab attention to your action by:-
 - >> chalking white ribbon logos on the ground;
 - >> getting actual signatures on a length of white ribbon which can be sent to both the Solomon Islands and Guatemalan governments with a cover letter;
 - >> wrapping your school/institute in a giant white ribbon as a visible commitment that gender violence will not be tolerated. Check in with relevant authorities and ask them to formally commit to making the school/institute violence free every day and not just on White Ribbon Day.

We'll be offering e-actions on both these cases so you'll have the to take action on line. With regard Norma's case the global action will automatically send a message to the fax machine of the Attorney General of Guatemala, translated into Spanish so that your personal call to protect freedom of expression cannot be ignored.

Write for Rights Global Letterwriting Marathon – December 3-17

Writing letters that save lives!

Writing letters that set human rights defenders free and gives hope to those who remain detained is something that Amnesty members are experts at.

It's why in our 50th birthday year we are keen to ensure that every single member uses the power of the pen to shine a light on a bad situation or to lessen the suffering in a prison cell.

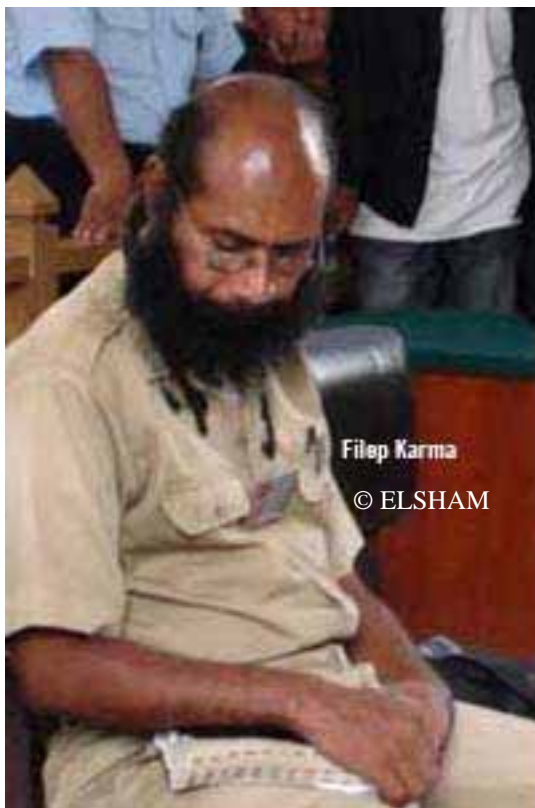
With the recent releases in Myanmar, including that of Zarganar, Su Su Nway and Zaw Htet Ko Ko – it highlights the impact of global pressure on even the most intransigent government.

Our global Write for Rights Letterwriting Marathon (LWM) features cases from around the world that will allow you to write on behalf of or send solidarity messages to prisoners of conscience and individuals and communities at risk.

While the Marathon officially takes place December 3-17 we have cases and LWM kits ready to go anytime in Term 4 to allow you to organise what is likely to be the last action of the year. You can also undertake letterwriting challenges and seek sponsorship in return for letters written.

And because our student members have had an extraordinary year of activism – we think any event you organise should be a celebration.

So make sure that when you write in support of freedom—you take the time to toast freedom - particularly as your activism is contributing to freeing others.



Filep Karma's only "crime" is that he raised the banned "Morning Star" independence flag in Papua Province in 2004. He's been in prison ever since.

Jean Claude Roger Mbede has been imprisoned because he's a homosexual. In the Cameroons it's illegal to be gay!

Turkish conscientious objector Halil Savda is opposed to military service – but his right not to fight has been taken away from him along with his freedom.

It's Individual's at risk like this we're working on this year. Mass global pressure is seen at the best way to impact positively on some 15 cases which we'll be working on.

So how about committing to any of the following:

- Toast to Freedom – offer a toast breakfast in return for getting a team sitting down and taking action before school.
- Organise an AmnesTEA – a chance to drink tea or coffee and chat – but at the same time get letters written during the lunch-hour and after school.
- Draw on the Rangitoto College AI Group’s idea of adding solidarity messages to a Christmas Tree so people get a sense of just how many letters and messages are being signed and sent. Solidarity messages can be created in the shape of hearts or small gift cards.
- Passing on your letter-writing expertise by offering to take on a class on “Letterwriting that saves lives” – a practical exercise in taking action.
- Set up a letterwriting challenge and get sponsorship for every letter written. It’s easy via <http://myamnesty.org.nz/fundraiseonline/>

And you can also take action individually too.....

- Set up a letterwriting space at a favourite cafe and ask your friends and family to come along while you get your caffeine fix. (You’ll need to organise this with cafe owners first)
- Set up a letterwriting table outside your post office, church, temple or mosque following services
- Again seek sponsorship for every letter written.

To get you started...

We can provide you with a Write for Rights Letterwriting Marathon Kit that comes complete with cases, posters, a sponsorship form, and a letterwriting guide.

All you need to do is let us know your plans and how many cases you’d like. If your event is open to the public let us know and we can help you advertise that too.

Please confirm your involvement with Youth Intern Sunitha Bimal at youth.intern@amnesty.org.nz or by phoning her on 0800 266 378. If calling from Auckland phone 303 4520.

Our website www.amnesty.org.nz will shortly be updated with all the cases and resources you need to participate. We’ll alert you to that site when it goes live.

Letter writing does make a difference

Some 200 political prisoners have been released so far in Myanmar, this year.

For years we’ve campaigned for these releases and the early October decision highlights how together we can help liberate such human rights defenders as **Zarganar, Su Su Nway and Zaw Htet Ko Ko**.

The three are amongst those that Amnesty New Zealand has particularly focused on - but others are amongst the 1800 prisoners of conscience who remain behind bars there. We’ve heard comments from senior government officials that more releases may be planned – and so we are keeping the pressure on for the release of all prisoners of conscience via a global petition.

Their eyes of the world are on Myanmar right now in the build up to key international meetings and because of these releases. Please help us free more human rights defenders by signing our petition on line at www.amnesty.org.nz until November 5.



Zaw Htet Ko Ko



Zarganar



Su Su Nway

The parcel of activism

Youth Intern Sunitha Bimal was "astounded" as she came in to work one day to receive a massive package, named as 'the parcel of activism' from then on.



Hamilton Girls' High School students undertook an amazing array of activism on issues including unfair trials for women in Iran, the death penalty, Inadequate housing in Nairobi, Kenya, Human Trafficking in China. They also sent in tags and T Shirts with signatures to be forwarded to embassy officials – and which are guaranteed to grab attention on opening!

Meet Shortland Street's Sophie McKay



A one on one session with one of New Zealand's top actresses on prime time television – could be just a bid away.

As a spin off from our grand TradeMe Auction in September, we are presenting you with the opportunity to meet Kimberley Crossman. You may know her as Sophie McKay on *Shortland Street*, or as a presenter that travels around the world to interview stars like Selena Gomez on TV2's *Erin Simpson Show*.

If you are an aspiring television star or think this would make the perfect Christmas present for somebody you know, get bidding now. Kimberley will share her experiences in the entertainment business, give personalised advice for budding actors, and answer all the questions of the winning bidder.

The money goes to saving lives at Amnesty International and you can bid <http://www.trademe.co.nz/travel-events-activities/other/>

<< AIANZ interns Sunitha Bimal and Renee Moore at the conference.

Multicultural Youth New Zealand Conference 2011

The Shakti Youth Unit organised their second annual MYNZ conference on 29 September.

This year's theme was 'Know your rights. Step up against What's Wrong.' And Amnesty International was there.

Youth Intern Sunitha Bimal presented at the conference and she said "Attending the conference was an insightful experience for me. Being a non New Zealander who has had some amazing experiences in this country, it was good to hear a different perspective from some people who have been 'victimized' because of their ethnicity.

"Another remarkable aspect of the conference was the overwhelming number of students who were interested in learning more about Amnesty International, we had over a dozen students signing up to join the Amnesty group in their respective schools and two new schools interested in starting their own Amnesty groups"

The conference formed a platform for young New Zealanders from different ethnic backgrounds to come together and share their diverse stories, growing up experiences as well as discuss the issues they face as migrants or refugees who would prefer to be addressed as 'multicultural' New Zealand. The Shakti Youth Unit is an emerging branch of its parent organization Shakti Legal Advocacy & Family Social Services Inc, Youth.



The power of silence

The Year 6 students at **Cockle Bay School, Howick** carried out a silent protest during school lunch time and raised \$166.20.

Says Vanessa Bentley the Year 6 Team Leader, "We have looked at the role of Amnesty International and learned that you don't need to be an adult to make a difference and have a voice. We held a lunchtime silent protest for children who cannot speak for themselves. It was a wonderful experience," she added.

Zimbabwe: Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) leaders

Some great news for all of us who coaxed getting that one extra signature on the WOZA petitions, Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, WOZA co-leaders have been released from prison on bail on 4th October.

This is the third time this year the pair have been arrested or have been forced to go into hiding to avoid arrest. And each time WOZA activists have been targeted - including Jenni and Magodonga - Amnesty has been there.

Most recently charged with kidnapping and theft, both women were detained for 13 days without any access to necessary medication despite both recovering from recent surgical operations. Ten other WOZA activists were also detained along with them but were later released because the prosecutors just wouldn't prosecute them!



Leaders of Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu, 16 August 2008. © Private



Iran: Student activists freed

Two Iranian prisoners of conscience, Mohammad Pour Abdollah and Milad Asadi were released from prison on 27 August, following a pardon by the Supreme Leader.

Arrested from his home in Tehran on 12 February, 2009 Mohammad Pour Abdollah was charged with 'gathering and colluding with the aim of harming national security.' His six year prison term was later reduced to three years on appeal.

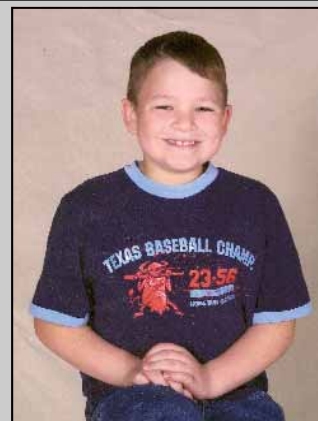
Milad Asadi an electrical engineering student was arrested shortly before Students Day

demonstrations on 7 December 2009. Sentenced to seven years in prison on charges that included insulting Iran's leaders and acting against national security Milad was held for weeks in solitary confinement before being transferred to a prison.

Prominent student activists in their respective universities, both of them were members of student organisations that called for an end to the military presence in Iranian universities and also for major political reforms throughout the country.

USA: Jordan Brown to be tried in juvenile court

A Pennsylvania court has transferred the murder trial case of 13 year old Jordan Brown to a juvenile court avoiding a potential violation of International Law.



In welcoming this decision Amnesty International commented that sentencing children to life imprisonment without parole serves neither the public interest nor the best interests of the child.

Jordan Brown's lawyers sent the following message: "On behalf of Jordan Brown we want to thank all the many people, who in connection with Amnesty International, have worked so hard and so diligently to raise people's awareness of this situation and to encourage our public officials to send this matter to Juvenile Court."

Aged 11 at the time of the crime, Jordan Brown had been charged with two counts of homicide because his victim, Kenzie Houk, was eight-and-a-half months pregnant and her unborn child also died.

Uganda: Sexual identity rights activists honoured

A prestigious global human rights award was presented in Geneva to a Ugandan woman who has fearlessly defended the rights of her country's threatened lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera is the winner of the 2011 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, awarded annually by 10 of the world's leading human rights NGOs, including Amnesty International. She is the founder and executive director of the LGBT rights organization Freedom and Roam Uganda.

"This award recognises Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera's tremendous courage in the face of discrimination and violence against LGBT people in Uganda," said Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International's Deputy Africa Programme Director.

The situation for Uganda's LGBT community is extremely difficult, with numerous documented cases of discrimination, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, torture and other ill-treatment based solely on sexual orientation and gender identity. Activists who work to expose such abuses are frequently targeted.

"I've lived my life fighting openly for gay rights in Uganda, and I've had to pay a price for that," Nabagesera previously told Amnesty International.

"I've been evicted from house to house; my office has been evicted; I can no longer move on the streets openly; I've been attacked."

Despite the ongoing intimidation and threats against her, Nabagesera has continued to advocate publicly and in the media on behalf of Uganda's LGBT community, both at home and abroad.



Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera speaking at Amnesty International's International Council Meeting, the Netherlands,



New Zealand: Serious violations of children's rights now criminalised

New Zealand last month ratified a treaty at the United Nations which criminalises serious violation of children's rights.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography emphasises criminalising these serious violations of children's rights, and stresses the need for international cooperation to combat these violations and for public awareness campaigns. It was adopted in 2000.

New Zealand joins 157 other countries that have ratified the Optional Protocol.

Libya: Prisoner of Conscience released

Jamal al-Hajji, a long term critic of Colonel Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi was freed from prison, on 24 August, following seven months of detention for demanding reform.

"It is incredible to see at what lengths some leaders go to remain on the throne. We must support all people who call for greater freedoms and human rights. When the rights of innocent people are being violated anywhere, we must all stand up everywhere in their defence," Jamal told Amnesty International.



Jamal al-Hajji and his wife after his release from detention, Libya, September 2011.

"Words cannot express my gratitude for Amnesty International's support. I want to thank all Amnesty staff and members who highlighted my plight throughout the year."

Indonesia: Court acquits four students in Papua province

Four of five students arrested in Papua province for their involvement in a peaceful protest were acquitted by an Indonesian District Court on September

27. The fifth student, was found guilty of 'rebellion' and sentenced to nine months and 17 days imprisonment. He is due for release soon.

Amnesty International welcomed the

Court's decision and added that they hoped this was an indication of greater respect for freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in the province.