

**Amnesty International**

**Group 524**

**December 2025**



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## **December Write For Rights Event**

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### **Welcome**

The focus this month is the annual Write For Rights action where we attend Group 39's letter writing event on **December 10** (see flyer on page 2). Please note the **new location** (Rodef Shalom). This event will take the place of our regular December meeting on the third Tuesday. Regular meetings will start again in January. We hope to see you on **December 10**.

### **December Write For Rights Event**

Group 39 will sponsor the **40th** annual Write For Rights event on December 10. **Please note the new location; Rodef Shalom on Fifth Avenue.** The cases for this event are featured on pages 3-7. Sample letters and address labels (which include foreign, domestic and solidarity card labels) will be sent as separate attachments to this newsletter.

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Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights  
9000 Babcock Blvd.



Contact John Belch ([joheb@aol.com](mailto:joheb@aol.com) or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site ([www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org))

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# Write for Human Rights



*Shine some light  
in their lives  
with your pen!*

Join Amnesty International Group 39 and other human rights groups and community leaders for our **40<sup>th</sup> Write for Human Rights event.**

**December 10, 2025  
6:00-8:30pm  
Rodef Shalom  
4905 Fifth Ave,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213**

Write a letter. Change a life.  
Come for five minutes or the whole event.  
Case information, letter writing materials and  
light refreshments will be provided.



Contact: [amnesty39@gmail.com](mailto:amnesty39@gmail.com)



## MOTHER NATURE CAMBODIA CONVICTED FOR PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT CAMBODIA

Chandaravuth Ly, Keoraksmei Phuon, Kunthea Long, Leanghy Yim, [Sun Ratha](#) and Thun Ratha share a love of coffee, books and hiking. Above all, they share a deep love for nature. With their campaign group, Mother Nature Cambodia, they have courageously defended the environment from the harmful actions of companies and the government.



In 2015, the group successfully halted the development of a hydroelectric dam, which would have resulted in massive deforestation. In 2016, they were behind a ban on sand exports, protecting coastal areas from environmental degradation. Their commitment to the environment has inspired young people throughout the country. But their activism has come at a high cost.

The authorities have repeatedly targeted the group with arrests and prosecutions. In 2020, three of the activists were arrested for peacefully demonstrating against the infilling of a lake. A year later, three more activists were arrested while investigating the pollution of a river. In June 2024, the activists were sentenced to between six and eight years in prison. Their crime? Protecting the environment they love so dearly. Ratha Sun fled Cambodia to continue their work, but the remaining five activists are enduring harsh prison conditions.

## GUERRERAS POR LA AMAZONÍA FIGHTING TO PROTECT OUR AMAZON, AND YOUR FUTURE ECUADOR



The Guerreras por la Amazonía (Warriors for the Amazon) are a group of activists aged 10 to 20 years. They are fighting alongside the Union of People Affected by Texaco's Oil Operations (UDAPT) and the Eliminen los Mecheros, Enciendan la Vida (Remove the Flares, Ignite Life) collective, to protect their communities from the toxic fumes and physical devastation caused by gas flares. Used in the process of extracting oil, gas flares are one of the largest

contributors to the climate crisis.

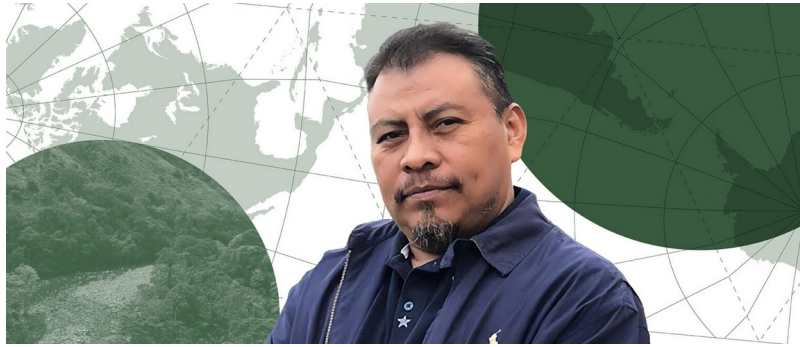
With the support of UDAPT, the Guerreras por la Amazonía joined a lawsuit against the Ecuadorian state in 2020. And won. In 2021, a landmark ruling required the government to eliminate the use of gas flares.

Nevertheless, the "fire monsters" continue to burn. Instead of being celebrated for their bravery, the young defenders face stigma and violent intimidation. Rather than investigating the threats against them, the Ecuadorian authorities told the group that they will only provide them with protection if they stop their activism.



## **JUAN LÓPEZ** **DEFENDER OF RIVERS AND FORESTS MURDERED** **HONDURAS**

[Juan López](#) was a loving father and husband. A spiritual leader, he practiced his faith by serving his community, always supporting the most vulnerable. He loved chatting with friends over coffee, dancing and spending time by the sea with his family. Friends described him as a dreamer. Since 2015, Juan tirelessly defended his local



environment in northern Honduras from mining and energy projects which have threatened local rivers, forests and the Carlos Escaleras Mejía National Park. Local communities fear that the projects put the surrounding ecosystem and water quality at serious risk.

Juan and fellow activists founded the Tocoa Municipal Committee for the Defence of Common and Public Goods to peacefully challenge the legality of the projects. But their efforts have been met with harassment, threats and criminalization. Many committee members have been arrested and imprisoned. Some have been killed.

On September 14, 2024, Juan was shot dead in his car by a masked gunman as he left church. The alleged shooter and two alleged accomplices have been charged with murder and are being held in pretrial detention. Those who ordered Juan's murder have not been held accountable.

## **DAMISOA** **DISPLACED BY DROUGHTS AND FACING STARVATION** **MADAGASCAR**



In 2021, Damisoa and his family were forced to leave their home in the Androy region, southern Madagascar. Droughts worsened by climate change meant there wasn't enough food to survive. After a challenging four-month, 1,500 km journey, they reached Boeny in the northwest, hoping for a better life. But conditions remained harsh.

In 2023, they were allocated a tiny 5m<sup>2</sup> hut at a resettlement site. Each rainy season the nearby Kamoro River swells, encircling the site with often fast, crocodile-infested waters. This makes it dangerous for residents to leave. The site's land is barren, and access to food, clean water, and healthcare is limited. In early 2025, Damisoa's newborn niece died after her mother, weakened by hunger and thirst, could no longer breastfeed.

As the government-appointed site manager, Damisoa spends much of his time advocating for the site's residents who are living in degrading conditions. However, his pleas have gone unanswered. People displaced by famine and now living in Boeny, including Damisoa and his fellow residents, urgently need humanitarian assistance. But aid is currently almost exclusively concentrated in drought-stricken southern Madagascar.



## SAI ZAW THAIKE LOCKED UP AND BEATEN FOR HIS JOURNALISM MYANMAR

Journalism is an extremely dangerous profession in Myanmar. More than 200 journalists have been imprisoned by the military since they took power in 2021. At least seven have reportedly been killed. Media outlets have been banned and forced into exile.



Despite this danger, when Cyclone Mocha slammed into Myanmar in May 2023, photojournalist [Sai Zaw Thaïke](#) travelled undercover to Rakhine State, determined to report on the devastation. He embedded himself with a relief team. But after a week there, Sai Zaw was arrested. He was interrogated, beaten, and in September 2023, sentenced by a military tribunal to 20 years in prison with hard labor. His trial lasted just one day.

Sai Zaw should be able to report freely. He should also be at home, spending time with his family and doing the things he loves, like playing football, watching Manchester United and seeing friends. He should be caring for his cats, whom he adores. Instead, he is locked up. He has endured beatings by prison staff and periods of solitary confinement.

## ELLINOR GUTTORM UTSI FIGHTING TO PROTECT THEIR ANCESTRAL LANDS AND CULTURE NORWAY



[Ellinor Guttorm Utsi](#) is an Indigenous Sámi woman and a passionate leader fighting to protect her community's ancient reindeer-herding way of life in northern Norway. As a spokesperson, she speaks out for her family and her people, who have followed seasonal migration routes across the Arctic for generations. They rely on summer grazing lands in Čorgaš, lands now under urgent threat.

Reindeer herding is central to the Sámi food system, which depends on migratory grazing across the Arctic landscape to produce sustainable food, clothing and crafts. Ellinor leads efforts to defend her community's rights to land and culture, highlighting the ongoing struggle of Indigenous Peoples caught between climate change, land rights and renewable energy development.

In 2023, several hundred wind turbines were suddenly proposed across Sámi territory, with many planned directly on Ellinor's summer grazing lands. These huge projects would bring hundreds of turbines, roads and power lines that would break up the land, disrupt reindeer migration and destroy a way of life deeply connected to nature. Despite fierce opposition, Norwegian authorities are rushing approvals. Ellinor is tirelessly working to ensure Sámi voices are heard and their rights respected, but time is running out.



## UNECEBO MBOTENI LOST HIS LIFE WHERE HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SAFE SOUTH AFRICA

[Unecebo Mboteni](#) was a lively three-year-old boy who enjoyed making friends and playing with his toy cars. You could always tell when he was in the room. On April 18, 2024, Unecebo fell into a pit toilet at his pre-school in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. He died the next day. Two other children have also died after falling into pit toilets in the Eastern Cape since 2018. However, the tragic loss of these young lives hasn't been enough to ensure the eradication of all pit toilets in schools, including day care centers.



Sadly, a child's experience of education in South Africa still depends on where they are born, their wealth, and the color of their skin. As Unecebo's father said, "My son died in a death trap set up for poor people." One year on, and the family has had no word from the pre-school or Department of Basic Education about whether the pit toilet that Unecebo fell into has been removed, let alone any progress on the investigation into his death.

Instead of answers about how this tragic incident happened, Unecebo's family has been met with silence. Unecebo lost his life in a place where he should have been safe. His family deserves answers.

## SONIA DAHMANI LOCKED UP AND SILENCED FOR SPEAKING OUT TUNISIA



Sonia Dahmani loves the sea, long days at the beach with friends and quiet evenings spent watching movies. She has a deep appreciation for art in all its forms, from paintings and exhibitions to theater and music. But what matters most to Sonia is her family, including her beloved dog, Carla. Sonia is a lawyer and media commentator who has dedicated her life to defending human rights, standing up for the marginalized, and saying what others are afraid to,

no matter the cost. She is a vocal critic of inhumane prison conditions and racism, regularly addressing these issues on television and radio shows.

On May 11, 2024, masked policemen violently raided the Tunisian Bar Association in Tunis and arrested Sonia. They detained her in Manouba prison, where she has been held ever since. The Tunisian authorities have convicted and sentenced Sonia for "spreading false news," with more politically motivated investigations still pending.

She faces many years in prison for speaking out against injustices. Her imprisonment is a clear attempt to silence her. Sonia is being held in inhumane conditions. Her cell is rat-infested. She has endured degrading treatment by prison authorities. She is being denied medical care, including the medication she needs.



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**LEQAA KORDIA  
RELEASE DETAINED PROTESTOR  
UNITED STATES**

Leqaa Kordia is a 32-year-old Muslim Palestinian woman living in the United States. She has been detained by U.S. immigration authorities since March 13, 2025.

Since 2023, she has actively participated in several protests in New Jersey and nearby areas, advocating against Israel's genocide in Gaza, in which she has lost approximately 175 family members.



At the time of her detention, Leqaa was in the process of securing legal residency. During a voluntary meeting with immigration officials at the Newark ICE Field Office, where she was accompanied by her attorney, Leqaa was immediately detained, despite being found to present a low risk to public safety, flight or criminal history. She was transferred to the Prairieland Detention Facility in Texas. This facility is located far from her attorney and family, and it has a documented history of human rights violations.

Leqaa has experienced repeated violations of her religious rights in detention. She has received only one halal meal in detention and instead has been provided with meals that often do not meet her religious dietary restrictions. As a result, she has lost a significant amount of weight. She has also not been provided with clothing that adequately covers the body for prayer or a clean place to pray as required by her religion. Staff have also repeatedly ignored her requests to provide notice when male staff enter her dorm area when she is without her hijab.