

'I DREAM OF A WORLD  
WHERE NO ONE IS LEFT  
BEHIND'

WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



Kyung Seok Park,  
South Korea

Human Rights  
Education  
Activity

## WRITE FOR RIGHTS

# WRITING LETTERS CHANGES LIVES

**When just a handful of people unite behind someone, the results can be amazing.**

More than 20 years ago, a small group of activists in Poland ran a 24-hour letter-writing marathon. In the years that followed, the idea spread. Today, Write for Rights is the world's biggest human rights event.

From 2,326 letters in 2001 to nearly 6 million letters, tweets, petition signatures and other actions in 2023, people the world over have used the power of their words to unite behind the idea that geography is no barrier to solidarity. In 2023 alone, more than 1.4 million people were engaged through human rights education activities. Together, our actions have helped transform the lives of more than 100 people over the years, by releasing activists from detention, securing justice for those whose rights have been abused and protecting people who advocate for change.

This year's campaign once again includes people from around the world. They are connected because their human rights have been violated simply for who they are or because they exercised their rights. Together, we can fight for them to receive justice. Through Write for Rights, each of the individuals will receive personalized messages of solidarity from thousands of people across the globe. The awareness that their situations are gaining public attention offers reassurance to them and their families that they are not forgotten. And, by writing directly to the authorities to demand that they end the injustice, we can create a more just and equal world.

Individuals and groups featured in the campaign in previous years report the difference that these actions make, and often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people care about them.

Often, there is a noticeable change in the treatment of these individuals and others in a similar situation. Charges may be dropped and people released from detention. People are treated more humanely, and new laws or regulations addressing the injustice are introduced.

*“From the bottom of my heart, this campaign has kept me alive, it's what has stopped them from killing me because they know that you are there.”*

Jani Silva, environmental defender, 2021

## BEFORE YOU START

This **human rights education activity** can take place in a variety of online or offline settings, such as a school classroom, a community group, a family or an activist group. As a facilitator, you can adapt the activity to best suit the context and group you are working with. For example, you may want to consider what knowledge the group already has about the issues discussed, the size of your group and how to best organize the activity to allow for active participation, the physical setting of your activity, delivering it in-person or online, and any limitations. When participants want to take action for an individual or group, discuss whether it is safe for them to do so.

The activities are all based on **participatory learning methods** in which learners are not merely presented with information; they explore, discuss, analyse and question issues relating to the individuals' stories. This methodology allows participants to:

**DEVELOP** key competencies and skills

**FORM** their own opinions, raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the issues presented

**TAKE CONTROL** of their learning, and shape discussions according to their interests, abilities and concerns

**HAVE THE SPACE** required for them to engage emotionally and develop their own attitudes.



Letter writing with friends in Czechia for Write for Rights 2023.

© Valerie Mirić

Read about the people we're fighting for: [amnesty.org/writeforrights](https://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights)

Contact the Amnesty team in your country: [amnesty.org/countries](https://www.amnesty.org/countries)

Tweet your support to @Amnesty using the hashtag #W4R24

If you are not familiar with participatory learning methods, look at Amnesty International's **Facilitation Manual** before you start: [amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ACT35/020/2011/en/)

Amnesty International offers online human rights education courses, including a short course about human rights defenders which introduces the **Write for Rights campaign**: [academy.amnesty.org/learn](https://academy.amnesty.org/learn)

# YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ACQUITTED

Rita Karasartova is a human rights defender and an expert in civic governance. For more than a decade she has dedicated her life to providing independent legal advice, helping people whose rights had been violated by a corrupt and unreliable legal system. Alongside 26 others, Rita was arrested for opposing a new border agreement giving control of a freshwater reservoir to Uzbekistan. Charged with attempting to “violently overthrow the government”, which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years’ imprisonment, Rita and at least 21 other defendants were acquitted on 14 June 2024.

*“I would like to express my huge, huge gratitude... Your timely actions – these letters, petitions, signatures, and the huge number of letters that went to the court, that went to the prosecutor’s office – it was all very powerful. In fact, it was very empowering to us all... Of course, the acquittal was totally unexpected. I don’t even know how to process it in my head. We had been playing with all sorts of scenarios, different outcomes in our heads, but we didn’t think we would all be acquitted!... I thank you all.”*

Rita Karasartova  
from Kyrgyzstan



© Private

*“I feel so relieved, and I thank you for the amazing Write for Rights campaign. I am forever indebted. It is like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Reading all the letters and cards made me feel so loved and appreciated.”*

Cecillia Chimhiri from Zimbabwe



## OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS FREED

Opposition activists Cecillia Chimhiri, Joana Mamombe and Netsai Marova were abducted, tortured and imprisoned after attending a protest in Zimbabwe. They were charged with “communicating falsehoods” and “obstructing the course of justice”. Netsai fled Zimbabwe following the attack. After being featured in Write for Rights 2022, Cecillia and Joana were acquitted by the High Court.



© Amnesty International Togo

Amnesty supporters in the Netherlands (far left) and Togo (left) at events for Write For Rights 2023.

# ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments and state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries to be met only when practicalities allow.



Write for Rights event in Benin in 2023.



© UN Photo

## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since its adoption on 10 December 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed to be bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world to abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up based on its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

 <p>Civil rights and liberties Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.</p>	<p><b>Article 1</b> Freedom and equality in dignity and rights</p> <p><b>Article 2</b> Non-discrimination</p> <p><b>Article 3</b> Right to life, liberty and security of person</p> <p><b>Article 4</b> Freedom from slavery</p> <p><b>Article 5</b> Freedom from torture</p>
 <p>Legal rights Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.</p>	<p><b>Article 6</b> All are protected by the law</p> <p><b>Article 7</b> All are equal before the law</p> <p><b>Article 8</b> A remedy when rights have been violated</p> <p><b>Article 9</b> No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile</p> <p><b>Article 10</b> Right to a fair trial</p> <p><b>Article 11</b> Innocent until proven guilty</p> <p><b>Article 14</b> Right to go to another country and ask for protection</p>
 <p>Social rights Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.</p>	<p><b>Article 12</b> Privacy and the right to home and family life</p> <p><b>Article 13</b> Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders</p> <p><b>Article 16</b> Right to marry and start a family</p> <p><b>Article 24</b> Right to rest and leisure</p> <p><b>Article 26</b> Right to education, including free primary education</p>
 <p>Economic rights Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.</p>	<p><b>Article 15</b> Right to a nationality</p> <p><b>Article 17</b> Right to own property and possessions</p> <p><b>Article 22</b> Right to social security</p> <p><b>Article 23</b> Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union</p> <p><b>Article 25</b> Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being</p>
 <p>Political rights Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion.</p>	<p><b>Article 18</b> Freedom of belief (including religious belief)</p> <p><b>Article 19</b> Freedom of expression and the right to spread information</p> <p><b>Article 20</b> Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way</p> <p><b>Article 21</b> Right to take part in the government of your country</p>
 <p>Cultural rights, solidarity rights Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.</p>	<p><b>Article 27</b> Right to share in your community's cultural life</p> <p><b>Article 28</b> Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized</p> <p><b>Article 29</b> Responsibility to respect the rights of others</p> <p><b>Article 30</b> No taking away any of these rights!</p>

## ACTIVITY

## RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## KEY CONCEPTS

- Rights of people with disabilities
- Discrimination
- Peaceful protest
- Rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly

## ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants will learn about challenges faced by people with disabilities, the importance of ensuring the rights of people with disabilities, and activism through Kyung Seok Park's story. The activity also explores police abuses against peaceful protesters, highlighting how excessive force undermines activists' rights and impedes the progress of social justice movements, encouraging reflection on these issues.

**AGE:** 14+

## TIME NEEDED

**60 minutes** – you may want additional time for the **Take Action** section.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **understand** the rights of people with disabilities and their importance.
- **identify** forms of discrimination and violations of human rights faced by people with disabilities.
- **recognize** the impact of police repression on peaceful protests.
- **learn** about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign.
- **write** letters in support of and showing solidarity with Kyung Seok Park.

## PREPARATION

- Print the handouts for each participant/group.
- Read the background information on page 10 and Kyung Seok Park's story on page 11.

## MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about human rights including the right to protest at the Amnesty Academy: [www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/online-courses/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/online-courses/)

## MATERIALS

- **Handout: CRPD** (page 9)
- **Handout: Kyung Seok Park's story** (page 11)
- **Large sheets of paper and marker pens**
- **Paper, pens and envelopes** (if sending letters)
- Optional: Template letters from [www.amnesty.org/writeforrights/](http://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights/)
- Optional: Videos of Kyung Seok Park and "Write for Rights: Take action" from [www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos](http://www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos)

## PRECAUTIONS

This activity discusses sensitive topics related to discrimination, police abuses and the exclusion and marginalization of people with disabilities. There are many forms of disabilities which may be visible or invisible. The discussion may evoke strong emotional responses for participants with lived experience of these issues. Facilitators should provide a safe space for participants to express their feelings and should offer support as needed.

## 1. RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Begin with a brief discussion of the rights of people with disabilities and why they are important. Use questions to engage participants:

- **What do you know about the challenges faced by people with disabilities?**
- **Do you think that people with disabilities can exercise their human rights to the same extent as other people?**
- **What about their right to access public transport, buildings such as schools, and public spaces?**

Ask participants to think about their normal day. Ask them to write down what they would normally do today. Now ask them to imagine they have a disability. (Bear in mind that some participants may already have a disability, which may be invisible.) What challenges would they face going about their daily activities? Put participants into pairs and ask them to share their thoughts.

Share in plenary the various challenges that were identified. Write the challenges on a flipchart. You may use these later in step three.

Ask by a show of hands how many people have heard of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Explain that this is one of various international human rights treaties and that it sets out specific rights intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Distribute the CRPD handout from page 9.

## 2. KYUNG SEOK PARK'S STORY

 15 MINUTES

Distribute handouts of Kyung Seok Park's story (page 11). Read the story together, highlighting key points about his life, his accident and his transition into activism. Discuss the following:

- What motivated Kyung Seok to become an activist?
- How has he faced discrimination?
- How have the authorities reacted to Kyung Seok and other activists' protests?
- What do you find impressive about Kyung Seok's actions?

Explain that Amnesty International is documenting and reporting widespread police abuses against peaceful protesters in many countries around the world. Ask:

- How does police repression of peaceful activists affect the movement for the rights of people with disabilities?

Take answers from a few participants and discuss in relation to Kyung Seok's story. Encourage participants to consider the following points: **the impact of police abuses on the lives of activists, how such abuses can deter others from joining or supporting their activism, and how public outrage can urge governments to respect their human rights.**

## 3. WHAT DOES DISABILITY INCLUSION LOOK LIKE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

 20 MINUTES

Divide participants into small groups and provide each group with large sheets of paper and marker pens. Ask them to focus on a particular area of public life in their community, such as school, joining the workforce, independent living or public transportation. Each group should consider what an inclusive society looks like and what is needed to ensure full accessibility to people with disabilities in these areas.

Ask participants to list what would be needed for an inclusive society. Participants can choose to present their ideas as an illustration or in another creative format. You may want to address some of the challenges identified in step one. Refer to the CRPD handout on page 9 for more information that participants can use for this activity.

Allow each group to present their ideas, explaining how they address the needs of people with disabilities and uphold their rights.

## 4. TAKE ACTION

 15 MINUTES

Explain about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign. Explain that Amnesty International is encouraging people to demand justice for Kyung Seok Park. You can give examples from last year's campaign (page 3) demonstrating how successful writing letters and taking other actions can be, or watch the "Write for Rights: Take action" video from [www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos](http://www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos)

If there isn't enough time for participants to take action within the time allowed, encourage them to organize how to do so afterwards or divide the actions among the groups. Encourage them to be creative.

Show participants the video of Kyung Seok Park which can be found here: [www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos](http://www.amnesty.org/w4r-videos) (available in English).



## WRITE A LETTER

Encourage participants to write to the Mayor of Seoul using the contact information on the right.

- Tell the mayor something about yourself to make this a personal letter.
- Tell them what shocks you about the story of Kyung Seok Park.
- Tell them why you think it is important that governments respect and uphold the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Urge the mayor to **ensure the right to freedom of peaceful assembly by stopping the use of unlawful force against Kyung Seok Park and SADD activists, dropping all litigation against them, and ending the media smear campaign** so activists may continue campaigning for a world where people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of life.

### Mayor of Seoul

6F, Seoul Metropolitan Government  
110 Sejong-daero  
Jung-gu  
Seoul 04524  
Republic of Korea

Email: [seoulcity@seoul.go.kr](mailto:seoulcity@seoul.go.kr)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/seoul.kr](http://www.facebook.com/seoul.kr)

X: [@seoulmania](https://twitter.com/seoulmania)

Instagram: [@seoul\\_official](https://www.instagram.com/seoul_official)

Hashtags:

#RidingSeoulMetroWithPark

#LeaveNoOneBehind #W4R24

#ProtectTheProtest

Salutation: Dear Mayor of Seoul

## SHOW SOLIDARITY

Show Kyung Seok Park that you support his activism. Write or draw messages of strength and hope to show Kyung Seok Park and SADD activists that they are valued and respected.

Then, mail your message to the address to the right.

### Kyung Seok Park

c/o Solidarity Against Disability  
Discrimination  
5F, 25, Dongsung-gil  
Jongno-gu  
Seoul 03086  
Republic of Korea

Instagram: [@sadd420](https://www.instagram.com/sadd420)

X: [@sadd0420S](https://twitter.com/sadd0420S)

Hashtags:

#RidingSeoulMetroWithPark,

#LeaveNoOneBehind, #W4R24

#ProtectTheProtest



## HANDOUT

# CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006, is a landmark international treaty. It aims to promote, protect and ensure that all persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others. This Convention changed the way people view and support the rights of persons with disabilities, moving from an approach based on providing assistance to one based on human rights and dignity.

The CRPD enshrines several important human rights, including:

- **Accessibility:** To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, making sure that physical environments, transportation, information and communication are accessible.
- **Non-discrimination:** Ensuring equal treatment under the law, without discrimination based on disability, and ensuring the provision of reasonable accommodations. This includes, among others, the rights to health, education, work, life, free expression, marriage, family life and deciding to have children.
- **Independent living and full inclusion and participation in the community:** Supporting the right to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.
- **Personal mobility:** Ensuring people with disabilities can move around as independently as possible. This includes facilitating affordable personal mobility in the manner and time that persons with disabilities choose.
- **Education:** Providing access to inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities where persons with disabilities live.
- **Health:** Providing access to the same range, quality and standard of health care available to others in the community, including services specifically needed because of a person's disability.
- **Employment:** Promoting the right to work on an equal basis with others.
- **Participation in political and public life:** Ensuring the right to participate in political and public affairs, including by forming and joining non-governmental organizations.
- **Participation in cultural life:** Making sure persons with disabilities can enjoy culture in accessible formats. This includes access to places including theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services.
- **Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse:** Protecting against all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse. This includes having laws and policies in place for authorities to identify, investigate and prosecute such instances.

*Kyung Seok Park surrounded by police and Seoul Metro employees during a protest. He is joined by Congresswoman Hye-Yeong Jang, showing her support for the protest.*



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY

As many as one in 10 people around the world lives with a disability. Discrimination on the basis of disability is a pervasive issue that denies individuals their human rights.

People with disabilities often face barriers to education, employment and healthcare, and are subject to social stigmas and exclusion from community life. In many societies, people with disabilities are ostracized and treated as objects of pity or fear. This form of discrimination perpetuates inequality and reinforces negative stereotypes, limiting opportunities and participation in society.

Ensuring accessibility, promoting inclusive policies and raising awareness are essential steps to combating this injustice.

# THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Peaceful protest is a dynamic and public way of exercising our human rights. Throughout history, protests have allowed individuals and groups to express dissent, opinions and ideas, expose injustice and abuse, and demand accountability from those in power.

When people engage in protests, whether individually or collectively, they are exercising a variety of rights which can include the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Without the ability to freely express opinions, public assemblies are simply mass gatherings of people without a message. And without the ability to freely assemble, people's opinions may lack the force of numbers to have their message properly heard.

Other rights are also essential in enabling people to protest peacefully, including the rights to life, privacy, freedom of association, freedom from torture and other ill-treatment or punishment, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, for example.

## WHEN GOVERNMENTS CRACK DOWN ON PROTESTS

Instead of addressing pressing concerns and promoting dialogue to find solutions to injustice, abuses and discrimination, governments often respond to protests by stigmatizing and cracking down on peaceful protesters. Governments often impose restrictions on protests based on national security or public order. But respect for human rights is part of national security and public order, and the right to protest is protected under international human rights law.

There are further barriers to protest: people who face inequality and discrimination – whether based on race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, disability, occupation, or social, economic, migratory or other status – are more likely to be affected by undue restrictions and repression, and less able to participate in protests. Yet, many advances in human rights around the world have been due to the courage of people who dared to fight for a more inclusive and equal society despite the risks and challenges they faced. It is therefore crucial that everyone can protest safely and without discrimination.



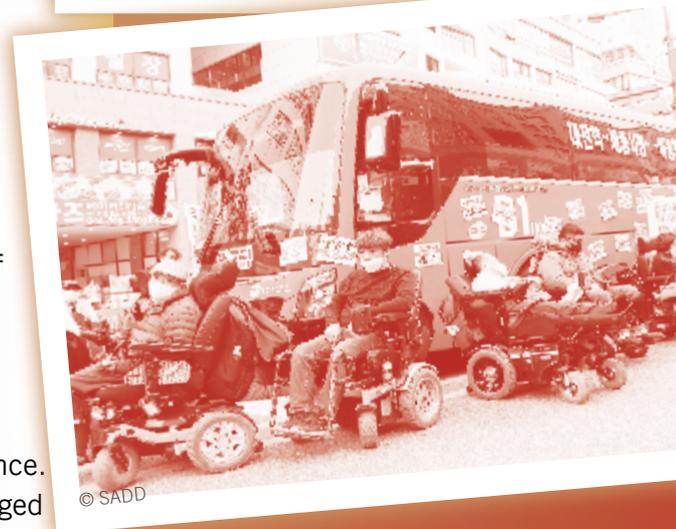
## KYUNG SEOK PARK'S STORY

Before Kyung Seok Park developed paraplegia following a hang-gliding accident in August 1983, he never thought about the lives of people with disabilities. He was 22 years old and busy studying at university, playing guitar and having fun with friends. After his accident, he soon found daily life for people with disabilities in South Korea was unacceptably difficult, even dangerous. His life as an activist began.

Representing Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination (SADD), a movement campaigning for the rights of people with disabilities, Kyung Seok focuses his activism on public transportation. Without measures to eliminate obstacles and barriers to access public transport, people with disabilities are cut off from being able to participate fully in all aspects of life – including travelling to work or school and living independently. For example, numerous wheelchair users in the capital, Seoul, have been killed or injured using unsafe wheelchair lifts at train and subway stations.

To demand an increase in the public budget for the rights of people with disabilities, in 2021 Kyung Seok and other SADD activists began organizing peaceful protests during which many wheelchair users simultaneously boarded and disembarked subway trains during busy commuting hours. Authorities in Seoul reacted negatively, including with violence. The protests have been repressed and activists forcibly dragged out of stations by police. Politicians have conducted smear campaigns, painting disability activists as a public nuisance. Seoul Metropolitan Government has filed multiple “blockade lawsuits” against peaceful protesters, further attempting to quash their activism. Nevertheless, the actions led to elevators being installed in 95% of Seoul’s subway stations in 2023.

Despite being almost strangled by police and Seoul Metro staff during a peaceful protest, and facing multiple lawsuits because of his activism, Kyung Seok continues to fight, declaring: “We refuse to wait any longer. We demand a world where no one is left behind.”



From the top: Kyung Seok Park; Solidarity Against Disability Discrimination (SADD) activists block a bus in April 2021 in Dodam-dong, Sejong City, South Korea.

# ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice, change oppressive laws, and free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

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