



# Amnesty International

## Group 524

## November 2021



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### No November Meeting December Write For Rights Event Returns Urgent Action- Leonard Peltier Write For Rights Cases Preview

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#### **Welcome**

The shift in weather has given us a taste of the coming winter. This month features an urgent action concerning Leonard Peltier, news of the December Write-athon and previews of the Write For Rights cases. The December newsletter will continue to highlight these cases and will be sent out early to coincide with the Write-athon.

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

Join Amnesty International Pittsburgh (Group 39) and many other inspiring Pittsburgh rights groups and community leaders on **Thursday, December 9, 2021, 7:00-8:30pm** at Calvary Episcopal Church for our annual Write-for-Rights event. Please see the details and changes that are included on pages 2 and 3.

#### **Urgent Action: Leonard Peltier**

Native American activist Leonard Peltier has been imprisoned in the USA for over 44 years, some of which was spent in solitary confinement, serving two life sentences for murder despite concerns over the fairness of his trial. Please see details on page 4 and a model letter on Page 5.

#### **Write For Rights Case Previews**

This year there are ten cases which are shown on pages 6 and 7.

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Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.  
Meeting Location: Providence Heights  
9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



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)) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site ([www.amnestypgh.org](http://www.amnestypgh.org)).

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

Join Amnesty International Pittsburgh (Group 39) and many other inspiring Pittsburgh rights groups and community leaders on **Thursday, December 9, 2021, 7:00-8:30pm** at Calvary Episcopal Church for the annual Write-for-Rights event.

This year marks the **36th annual** gathering in Pittsburgh! During the event you can contribute to writing hundreds of letters on important human rights cases of our time.

Stop in and stay as long as you can. Write letters. Talk to other activists. Check out information tables about local groups working in Pittsburgh on local, national and international issues. There will be a candle-lighting ceremony at about 7:45pm.

All attendees are required to wear face coverings and are requested to be vaccinated against COVID-19. In response to the pandemic, the event will be shorter than in past years and there will not be refreshments.

## **Success from the 2020 Write For Rights Campaign**

### ***Germain Rukuki Freed in Burundi***

Early one morning in July 2017, Germain Rukuki and his wife, Emelyne Mupfasoni – both NGO workers - were awoken when dozens of members of the security forces came to their home. Germain was arrested, found guilty of a slew of sham charges, including “rebellion” and “threatening State security,” and sentenced to 32 years in prison. In 2020 Germain was one of our Write For Rights priority cases, and nearly **437,000 actions** demanding his freedom were taken by Amnesty International members and supporters on his behalf. In June 2021, Germain Rukuki was released from prison and reunited with his family – including a now four-year-old son he had never met – following an appeal court’s decision to reduce his sentence from 32 years to one.



**These people need you.  
Your letters can change lives.**

## Amnesty International



## Write for Human Rights

Amnesty International Group 39 invites you to the 36th Annual Write for Human Rights event in the Pittsburgh Region!

Write a letter. Change a life.  
Come for 5 minutes or the whole event.  
Meet members of other human rights groups and concerned individuals.

**Thursday, December 9, 2021, 7:00-8:30pm  
Calvary Episcopal Church, 315 Shady Ave, Pittsburgh**

All attendees are required to wear face coverings and are requested to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

More info at [amnestypgh.org](https://amnestypgh.org).



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## **URGE CLEMENCY FOR NATIVE AMERICAN ACTIVIST**

Native American activist Leonard Peltier has been imprisoned in the USA for over 44 years, some of which was spent in solitary confinement, serving two life sentences for murder despite concerns over the fairness of his trial. He has always maintained his innocence. He is 77 years old and suffers from a number of chronic health ailments, including one that is potentially fatal. Leonard Peltier will not be eligible for parole again until 2024. His lawyers have submitted a new petition for clemency. President Biden must grant Leonard Peltier clemency on humanitarian grounds and as a matter of justice.

Representative Grijalva (AZ) and 10 other Members of Congress wrote a letter urging President Biden to grant Leonard clemency. After submitting the letter, four other members of Congress drafted their own letters. Representative Ruth Buffalo (ND) and 23 Native Legislators also drafted a similar letter.

We can urge our own Representatives to write similar letters or to sign on to Representative Grijalva's letter.

On the next page is an appeal to President Biden.

Group 524  
November 2021



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President Joseph Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

Leonard Peltier is a member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), which promotes Native American rights. In 1975, during a confrontation involving AIM members, two FBI agents were killed. Leonard Peltier was convicted of their murders but has always denied killing the agents.

There are serious concerns about the fairness of proceedings leading to his trial and conviction, including for example the prosecution's withholding of evidence that might have assisted Leonard Peltier's defense. In light of these concerns, the former US Attorney who supervised the prosecution team post-trial, James Reynolds, has since called for clemency.

Leonard Peltier is now 77 years old, has spent more than 44 years in prison, and has been repeatedly denied parole. There are serious concerns about Leonard Peltier's deteriorating health. His lawyers have recently submitted a new petition for clemency.

**I urge you to grant Leonard Peltier clemency on humanitarian grounds and as a matter of justice**

Yours sincerely,



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## **2021 Write For Rights Cases**

### **GUATEMALA: BERNARDO CAAL XOL**

#### **Jailed for defending a sacred river**

Bernardo Caal Xol has done everything he can to peacefully protect his people's land and natural resources from plunder and biodiversity loss. When the river they rely on for survival was threatened by the construction of two hydroelectric power plants, Bernardo and his people protested. He was publicly smeared with repeated and baseless accusations. In 2018, a judge sentenced Bernardo to more than seven years in prison, convicting him without any evidence.

### **CHINA: ZHANG ZHAN**

#### **Reporting on COVID-19 got her locked up**

When Wuhan went into lockdown, Zhang Zhan was one of the few citizen journalists to report on the unfolding Covid-19 crisis. Determined to get the truth out, the former lawyer travelled there in February 2020. She took to social media to report how government officials had detained independent reporters and harassed families of Covid-19 patients. She was later detained and sentenced to four years in prison to silence her.

### **EGYPT: MOHAMED BAKER**

#### **Locked away for defending freedom**

Human rights lawyer Mohamed Baker must do without his wife, cats, and everyone else he loves. Falsely accused of terrorism, he's in prison for defending the rights of some of the most marginalized people in Egypt. The prison authorities have treated him especially cruelly, refusing him a bed, mattress, outdoor exercise, even family photos. Defending people's freedoms should not cost him his own.

### **MEXICO: WENDY GALARZA**

#### **Shot while protesting violence against women**

For Wendy Galarza, helping to raise young children is the best way to create a fairer world. It's a goal she works hard for in Mexico, where women are often abused and killed for being women. In November 2020, she joined a march protesting the murder of a woman known as Alexis. During it, police red shots and Wendy was wounded. She launched a case against the police, but those responsible for the violence have not been brought to justice.

### **UKRAINE: SPHERE**

#### **Attacked for defending LGBTI & women's rights**

Sphere NGO have been championing LGBTI and women's rights since 2006, and are among the oldest organizations of their kind in the country. Founded by activists Anna Sharyhina and Vira Chernygina, they provide a safe space for women and LGBTI people in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. In recent years, however, they have suffered dozens of attacks by violent anti-LGBTI groups. Anna and Vira report these incidents, but the police have failed to hold anyone accountable.



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**ERITREA: CIHAM ALI**

**Taken at 15 and never seen again**

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Eritrea, Ciham Ali wanted to be a fashion designer. But at 15, her ambitions were cut short when she was arrested trying to re Eritrea – and never seen again. The authorities appear to have taken her in retaliation against her father’s suspected involvement in a coup attempt on the government. Nine years on and no one knows where Ciham is being held. Meanwhile, the US government has been silent on their citizen’s plight.

**NIGERIA: IMOLEAYO MICHAEL**

**Facing trumped-up charges for protesting police violence**

When young people took to Nigeria’s streets in October 2020, Imoleayo Michael joined them. They were protesting against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad – or SARS – a police unit notorious for violence. The young computer programmer promoted the protests on social media, using the hashtag #EndSARS. Two weeks later, armed men took him from his home and locked him in an underground cell for 41 days. He’s facing trumped-up charges and years in prison.

**OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: JANNA JIHAD**

**Harassed for exposing Israeli violence**

Janna Jihad just wants a normal childhood for herself and all other Palestinian children. But the 15-year-old Palestinian teen lives in the Israeli-occupied West Bank – and life under systematic discrimination is anything but normal. Having begun documenting military violations at the age of seven, Janna’s principled journalism has attracted unwanted attention. She’s been harassed and threatened with death, but she won’t give up – not until institutional racism against Palestinians ends.

**THAILAND: RUNG PANUSAYA**

**Facing a life sentence for peaceful protest**

Once a shy, quiet teenager, Panusaya – known as “Rung”, meaning “rainbow” – has become a leading voice in Thailand’s democracy movement. The university student, a vocal proponent for equality and the right to freedom of expression, opposes the use of the lèse-majesté law to silence government critics. In March 2021, the authorities jailed her for 60 days under this law. She went on hunger strike for 38 days and was released. Today, she faces dozens of charges against her and life imprisonment.

**BELARUS: MIKITA ZALATAROU**

**Teen beaten, electrocuted, and jailed**

Mikita Zalatarou was waiting for a friend when he was swept up in a crowd of protesters and straight into a nightmare. Within 24 hours, officers arrested the 16-year-old at his home, accusing him of throwing a Molotov cocktail at riot police. They locked him up and allegedly tortured him. Despite a lack of evidence, Mikita – who also has epilepsy – was convicted and jailed for five years.