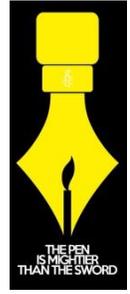




# Amnesty International

## Group 524

### November 2019



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**November Meeting: Tuesday, Nov. 19 – 7:00 p.m. – Providence Heights**  
**December Meeting: Monday, Dec. 9 – 6:00 p.m. – Calvary Episcopal**

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#### November and December Meetings

This month, as you can see above, we will meet on **November 19<sup>th</sup>**, at our usual meeting time and location. In December, as always, Group 39's annual Write for Human Rights event will take the place of our group's regular monthly meeting. That date is **Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>**. The Write for Human Rights event will run from 6:00 to 9:00, and will be held at the usual location – Calvary Episcopal Church in Shadyside.

The December issue of this newsletter will be sent out early, so that it can serve as a reminder about the Write for Human Rights gathering, which is the Pittsburgh component of Amnesty International's worldwide 'Write for Rights' action. See Page 2 for a snapshot of the poster which Group 39 created for this event.

For 'Write for Rights 2019', Amnesty sent out 10 cases for groups around the world to focus on. The target countries are: Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, Greece, Iran Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, and South Sudan. Last month the China case was our letter-writing opportunity. This month, we have the case which targets the government of Greece. The case sheet material can be found on Pages 3 and 4. On Page 5 is a model letter calling for the government to drop all charges against Sarah Mardini and Seán Binder, volunteer relief workers who are facing up to 25 years in prison for the "crime" of trying to help refugees in distress at sea.

#### Follow-up to October 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Angelina Nastasi of AIUSA was unable to attend our October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. That provided an opportunity for Kathy Herbst to introduce us to our group's new Vietnam case (see Page 6). Our good friend Eve Wider then introduced us to Squirrel Hill Stands Against Gun Violence (<https://www.squirrelhillstandsagainstgunviolence.org/>).

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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 Warren (jf.warren@verizon.net or 412-766-2506) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA website ([www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)) or the website of Amnesty International Group 39 ([amnestypgh.org](http://amnestypgh.org)).

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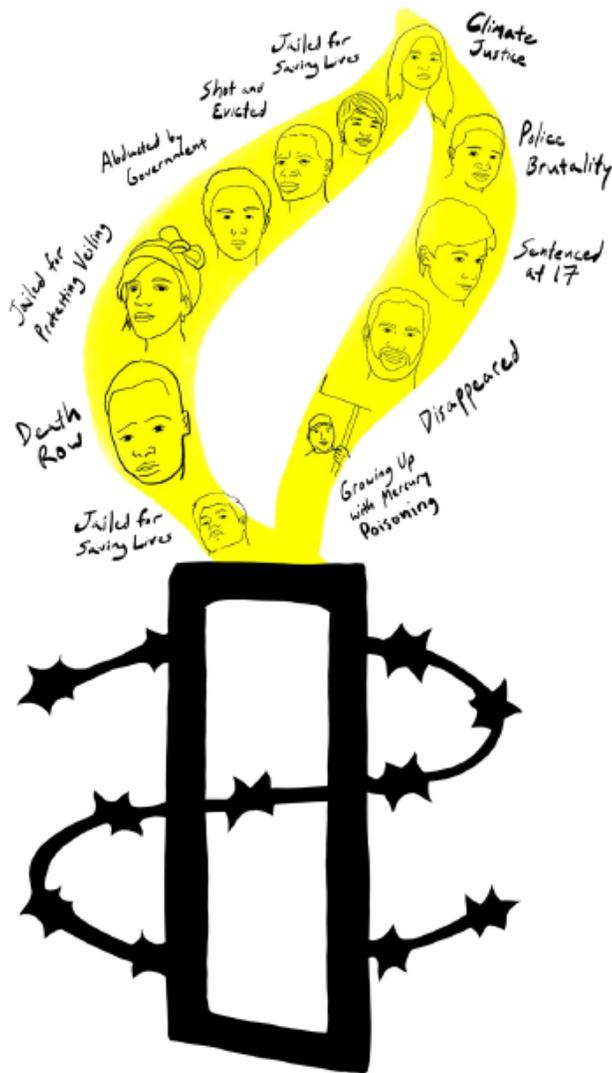


Pittsburgh: Group 39's Write for Human Rights Event

# Write for Human Rights

Last year, Pittsburghers joined together and wrote hundreds of letters to change lives.

**This year will you be one of them?**



Join Amnesty International Group 39 and other human rights groups for our 33rd Annual Write-a-thon and Human Rights Festival!

Write a letter. Change a life. Come for five minutes or the whole event. Light refreshments will be provided.

**Monday, December 9, 2019, 6-9pm**

**Calvary Episcopal Church, 315 Shady Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206**

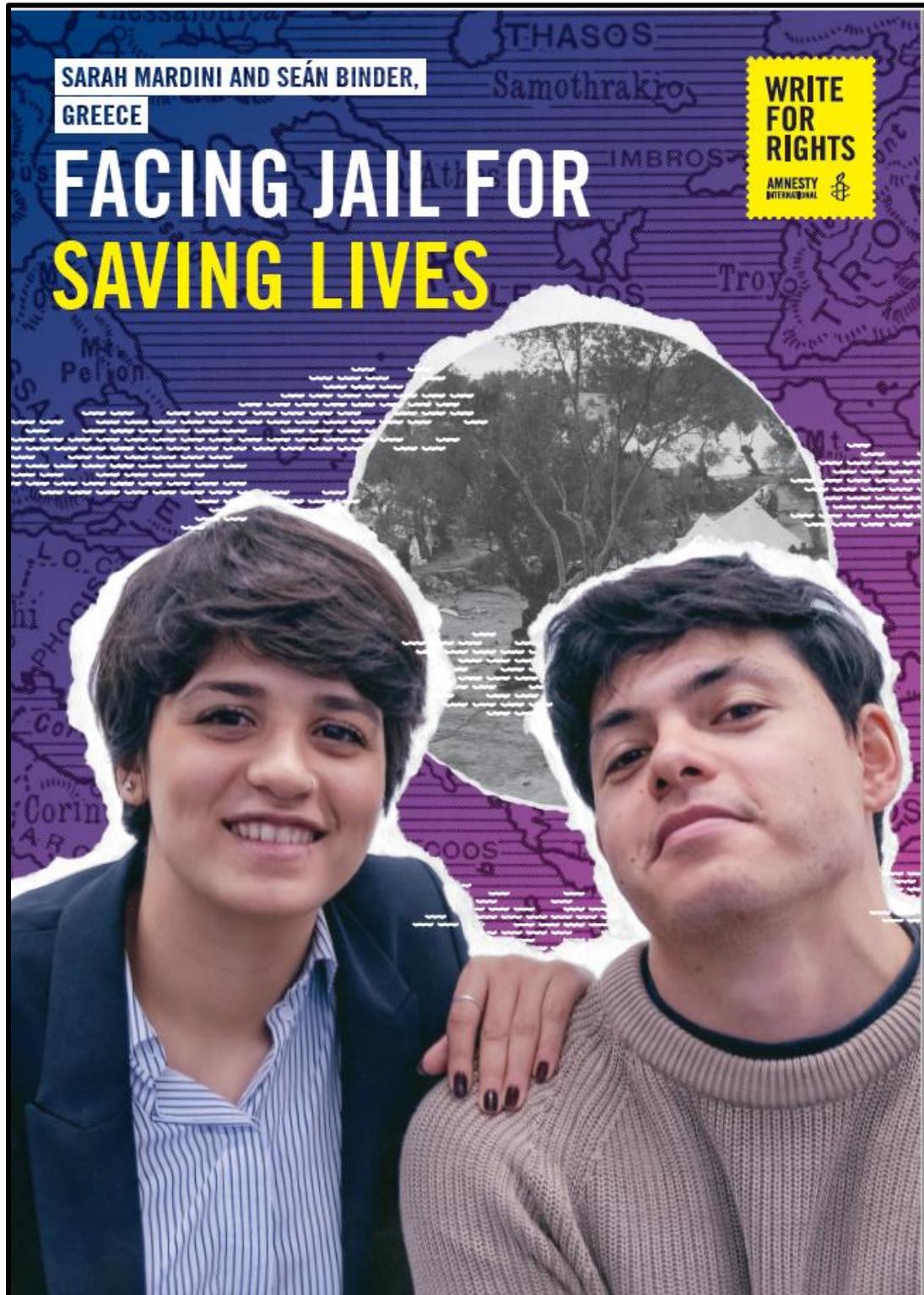
Please help us make this event happen with a donation at [amnestypgh.org](http://amnestypgh.org) or send to Amnesty International Group 39, P.O. Box 8112, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

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





Greece: 2019 Write for Rights Case



## Greece: 2019 Write for Rights Case (continued)

# SARAH MARDINI AND SEÁN BINDER

### GREECE

In Greece, you can go to jail for trying to save a life. It happened to Sarahardini, 24, and Seán Binder, 25, when they volunteered as rescue workers for an organization in Lesbos. Their job was to spot boats in distress at sea and to help refugees.

They are accused of spying, people smuggling and belonging to a criminal organization. If found guilty, Sarah and Seán could go to prison for 25 years.

They already spent more than 100 days in prison before being released on bail in December 2018.

Seán, now in Ireland, says the scariest thing about what happened to him "is not that it put me in jail, it's that this can happen to anyone". It happens when governments make criminals of people who try to help refugees instead of doing more to protect a refugee's right to find a safe place to live. When people need to escape conflict, torture or other abuses in their countries, they often have no option but to make highly dangerous journeys to reach safety.

Sarah, now in Germany, knows all about such dangers. In 2015 she fled Syria's war, crossing the Aegean in a dinghy which nearly sank. She and her sister towed the boat to the shores of Lesbos, saving the lives of everyone on board.

Tell Greece to drop all charges against Sarah and Seán.



### WRITE TO THE GREEK AUTHORITIES TODAY

Tell them to drop all charges against Sarahardini and Seán Binder.

**Michalis Chrisochoidis**  
Minister of Citizens' Protection  
Twitter: @chrisochoidis  
Email: minister@yptp.gr  
Salutation: Dear

### SHOW SARAH AND SEÁN YOU'RE WITH THEM

Send your messages of support to Sarah and Seán, and the refugees they have fought so hard to help.

**Sarah and Seán**  
c/o Amnesty International  
Europe Regional Office  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW  
UK

Report your letters at:  
[amnestyusa.org/w4r/report](https://www.amnestyusa.org/w4r/report)

**WRITE A LETTER  
CHANGE A LIFE**

December 2019  
Index: EUR 25/0753/2019 English  
Images: cover: © Fahrinisa Campana/PRI's  
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**Greece: 2019 Write for Rights Case (continued)**

*In early October, AIUSA made available to local groups the Write for Rights case material. As noted in our October newsletter, this enables our group to use one case per month in our Oct/Nov/Dec/Jan newsletters, in addition to the letters written at the Write for Rights event.*

*We have been unable to determine why AIUSA no longer includes a copy to the country's Washington embassy in the sample letters that are distributed, but the early release of the case material gives us plenty of time to make that addition to each sample letter. Here is the letter appealing to the government of Greece in behalf of Sarah Mardini and Sean Binder.*

Greek Minister of Citizen Protection  
Michalis Chrisochoidis  
Ministry of Citizen Protection  
P. Kanellopoulou 4, 101 77  
Athens, Greece

Dear Minister:

It is shocking that in Greece you can go to jail for saving lives. This is what happened to rescue workers **Sarah Mardini** and **Seán Binder**.

They volunteered for a sea search and rescue organization in Lesvos and helped people in danger at sea. But they ended up in prison charged with spying, people smuggling and belonging to a criminal organization, until they were released on bail in December 2018 while awaiting trial.

No government should ever make criminals of people helping refugees, instead of doing more to protect a refugee's right to find a safe place to live. When people need to escape conflict, torture, or other abuses in their countries, they often have no option but to make highly dangerous journeys to reach safety.

Please ensure that all charges against Sarah Mardini and Seán Binder are immediately dropped, and acknowledge the legitimacy of humanitarian actions and the activities carried out by people acting in defense of refugee and migrant rights.

cc: Ambassador Theocharis Lalakos  
2217 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20008



**Vietnam: Model Letter Calling for the Release of Tran Thi Nga**

*As you know from the September and October newsletters, our group has requested and received a third prisoner case from Amnesty.*

*For more than 14 years, we have signed petitions each month to the government of Laos, calling for the release, on humanitarian grounds, of **Sing Chanthakoummane**. For more than 9 years, we have been working with groups and individuals around the world, to free **Thich Quang Do**, Supreme Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, from the oppressive actions of that country's government.*

*At our October 15<sup>th</sup> meeting, Kathy Herbst, our group's case coordinator, introduced us to the additional Vietnamese prisoner case that she had obtained from Amnesty. That night, we signed a petition that Kathy had drafted in behalf of our new prisoner, **Trần Thị Nga**. As you can see from the text of the letter below, she has been sentenced to 9 years in prison for the "crime" of peacefully protesting the government's handling of an environmental disaster. Please join us in calling for her release, immediately and unconditionally!*

Nguyễn Xuân Phúc  
Prime Minister of Vietnam  
16 Le Hong Phong St.  
Ba Dinh, District  
Ha Noi  
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Your Excellency:

I write to ask your assistance in freeing **Trần Thị Nga**, who is serving a 9-year sentence in Gia Trung prison for "propaganda against the state". She was convicted for peacefully protesting the government's handling of the environmental disaster which occurred in the waters of the central coast of Vietnam, caused by a Taiwanese steel company.

Trần Thị Nga is a prisoner solely based on her exercise of her right to free expression. I ask for her immediate and unconditional release. During her time in prison, she should be treated humanely and provided with any medical care she needs. She should be allowed access to her family, friends and her lawyers.

Pending her release, she should be moved to a detention center located in her hometown, where her husband and small children can visit.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

cc: Ambassador Ha Kim Ngoc  
Embassy of Vietnam  
1233 20th Street, NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036