

Amnesty International

Group 524

November 2020



No November Meeting Write For Rights 2020

Next Meeting: Our November 17th meeting has been cancelled

Group #39 Pittsburgh has been holding virtual meetings on the Zoom platform. If any of our members would like to try meeting by Zoom or attending Group #39's please let me know.

Write for Rights 2020 Write-athon:

Plans for our local efforts in the annual Write For Rights action are detailed on page 2. They will be held virtually on two evenings, December 10 and December 15. Members are welcome to participate in these events and/or to write the case letters. This year there are 7 cases from countries such as Burundi, Saudi Arabia to the USA. Two cases are featured this month. I am sending the model letters and mailing labels as separate attachments both this month and next. Please contact me if you have any questions or need assistance for these letters. At the December 15 event we can report our letter total, so if you can't make the event please let me know your letter count and I will add them to our total. Also on that evening there will be the traditional candle-light ceremony with one of the candles lit in memory of our late group leader John Warren.

Amnesty International Group #524 30 Years of Human Rights Activism

Although we were not able to commemorate our anniversary in person this year or view our history on DVD like in 2010, the December newsletter will feature a tribute to our decades of work.

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 or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).



Amnesty International



Write for Human Rights

Amnesty International Group 39 invites you to the 34th Annual Write for Human Rights event in the Pittsburgh region – **this year virtual!**

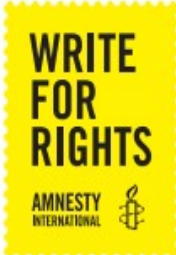
Write a letter. Change a life.

Kick-off: Thursday, December 10, 7pm via [Zoom](#) (Meeting ID: 886 0972 2933, Passcode: 39)

Report your letters: Tuesday, December 15, 7pm via [Zoom](#) (Meeting ID: 817 6996 5828, Passcode: 39)

includes a candle lighting ceremony and celebration of human rights

More info at: amnestypgh.org/?page_id=35880



JOIN US:
Write For Rights is Amnesty International's largest annual human rights campaign, held in the fall to mark Human Rights Day on December 10th. This year's 7 cases all involve individuals at risk.



BURUNDI:
GERMAIN RUKUKI

Jailed for 32 years for defending human rights



TURKEY:
MELIKE BALKAN & ÖZGÜR GÜRANI

Prosecuted for celebrating LGBTI rights



COLOMBIA:
JANI SILVA

Threatened with death for defending the Amazon



USA:
ANA & VICTORIA

Detained by ICE after fleeing from danger



PAKISTAN:
IDRIS KHATTAK

Abducted for exposing disappearances



USA:
TEYONNA LOFTON

Shot while waiting outside of a gas station



SAUDI ARABIA:
NASSIMA AL-SADA

Jailed for defending women's freedom



JANI SILVA, COLOMBIA

Born in the heart of the Colombian Amazon, Jani Silva has dedicated her life to defending the trees and land that are everyone's lifeblood. From the age of 16, she's been standing with the *campesino* farmers of Putumayo, a region nestled in the south of the country and brimming with unique biodiversity.

Jani co-founded the Association for the Integral and Sustainable Development of the Amazonian Pearl (ADISPA) in 2008. Through it, she protects the environment and rights of those living in the Amazonian Pearl, a *campesino* reserve in Putumayo.

Her work placed her at loggerheads with the Ecopetrol oil company, which won a license to operate in areas overlapping with the reserve in 2006. In 2009 the license was transferred to the Amerisur oil company. Since then, at least two oil spills have poisoned the water sources that local communities depend on.

Defending the territory has had terrifying consequences for Jani. She's been followed, intimidated by unknown aggressors, and threatened with death. COVID-19 has made matters worse, convincing activists to their homes and limiting their protection.

Still, Jani remains undaunted. "Because I defend my territory, people have put a gun to my head to kill me", she says. "However, I stay ... because ... we cannot run away or let ourselves be won over by fear."



IDRIS KHATTAK, PAKISTAN

Described by his daughters as an “enthusiastic but terrible” cook, Idris Khattak is a man of many interests. He speaks Russian, reads voraciously, and breeds chickens that he loves to chat to.

Idris is also Pakistan’s expert on enforced disappearances. He’s spent years documenting this crime under international law for Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. But in a cruel twist Idris, too, disappeared.

It was 13 November 2019 and Idris was on his way home from the capital, Islamabad, when his rented car was intercepted. He hasn’t been seen since. In Pakistan, the authorities use enforced disappearance to silence human rights defenders like Idris, and other critics.

With Amnesty’s help, Idris’ 20-year-old daughter, Talia, began fighting for her father’s return, despite being warned not to. Her bravery paid off. In June, the authorities admitted they had Idris in their custody and that they would be charging him under the Official Secrets Act. They still haven’t disclosed where he is.

Idris’ family fear he could be charged with espionage. If convicted, he could be jailed for 14 years or even sentenced to death.

“I look at pictures of Papa, and only dream of him walking into the room to be with us again,” says Talia. “We deserve answers and he deserves the protection of the law.”