



We will not be meeting in July. Details about our annual picnic, happening in the last weekend of August, will be sent out by Ron in the coming weeks.



Maria Teresa Rivera

Maria Teresa Rivera collapsed in a bathroom and was bleeding heavily and nearly unconscious when her mother-in-law found her and called for an ambulance. She was having a miscarriage. Later, when Maria was recovering in the hospital, she was arrested and charged with “aggravated homicide.” She was accused of having an abortion, which is illegal in El Salvador in all circumstances.

Maria was convicted and sentenced to 40 years in prison. While attorneys fought to overturn her wrongful conviction, Amnesty International mobilized thousands of people in the United States and around the world to press for her freedom.

In 2016, after serving four years in prison, Maria’s conviction was overturned and she was freed. Every year, an unknown number of other women are prosecuted under the country’s abortion ban, and Amnesty International is working with local organizations to repeal the law once and for all.



Urgent Action: China

Tibetan Monk Jailed for Online Messages

Name and pronoun: Rinchen Tsultrim (he, him)

Tibetan monk Rinchen Tsultrim was sentenced to four years and six months in prison in March 2020 without a fair trial. His family members only learned of the sentencing a year later when they were officially informed he was being held in an unnamed prison in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. No other information about his condition or even the charges against Tsultrim Rinchen have been shared to date. His family believes he has been imprisoned for expressing political views on his WeChat account and personal website. Without access to family and legal representation, there are grave concerns for Rinchen Tsultrim’s condition and wellbeing.

Rinchen Tsultrim, age 29, was a monk at the Nangshig monastery in the Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. After a wave of Tibetan unrest in 2008, he began expressing his views through WeChat and a personal website titled “Scepticism on Tibet” (in Tibetan). In 2018, the local public security bureau twice warned him to stop expressing opinions critical of Chinese policies online. He was closely monitored and his personal website was shut down.

Severe and wide-ranging restrictions on and repression of ethnic minorities has been carried out under the pretence of “anti-separatism”, “anti-extremism” and “counter-terrorism” in Tibetan-populated areas and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang). Access to and from Tibetan-populated areas remains highly restricted, particularly for journalists, academics and human rights organizations, making it extremely difficult to investigate and document the human rights situation in the region.

In June 2020, 50 independent UN human rights experts strongly criticized

China for the repression of religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, among others. On October 6th, 2020, 39 UN member states issued a joint statement expressing grave concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet, Xinjiang and other regions. 44 UN member states issued another joint statement expressing the same grave concerns on June 21st, 2021.

Regulations, effective as of February 1st, stipulated that religious groups must “follow the leadership of the Communist Party of China... persist in the direction of sinicization of religion, and practise core socialist values”. The government sought to bring religious teachings and practices in line with state ideology and to comprehensively strengthen control over both state-approved and unregistered religious groups. Reports documented the destruction of thousands of cultural and religious sites, particularly in the north-west of China. The state’s repression of religion in Xinjiang and Tibet remained severe. People were arbitrarily detained for ordinary religious practices.

Sample Letter

Dear Director Chen:

I am writing to express my concern about Rinchen Tsultrim, a Tibetan Monk who was sentenced to four years and six months imprisonment in March 2020 without any known trial.

It is distressing to learn that Rinchen Tsultrim’s family members only learned about his sentence when the Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture Public Security Bureau informed them in March 2021 that he was in a prison in Chengdu. In March 2020 his family received official information that he was suspected of “inciting separatism”. However, no other official information about his condition or even the charges he was convicted of have been shared with his family to date.

Rinchen Tsultrim’s family believe that his imprisonment is related to his expression of his political views on his WeChat account and personal website. According to international

TAKE ACTION:

Write an appeal in your own words or use the model letter.

Director Chen Zhilin

Sichuan Province Prison Administration Bureau
No. 1, Binjiangzhong Lu, Chengdu
610020 Sichuan Province
People’s Republic of China

Please take action as soon as possible
until August 25th, 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office if you wish to send
appeals after the deadline.

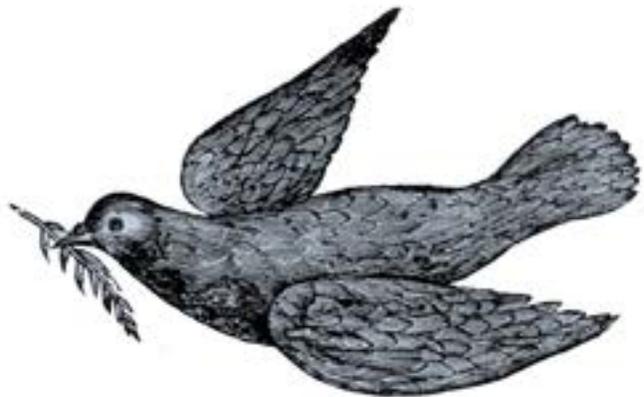
human rights law and standards, no one should be imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

I am alarmed to learn that Rinchen Tsultrim appears to have been held incommunicado since August 1st, 2019. Without regular access to family and legal representation, I am gravely concerned about his condition and wellbeing.

I therefore call on you to:

- Release Rinchen Tsultrim unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that he committed an internationally recognized offense and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;*
- Pending his release, disclose Rinchen Tsultrim’s whereabouts and ensure that he has regular, unrestricted access to his family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected further to torture or other ill-treatment.*

Yours sincerely,



Urgent Action: Republic of Congo

Human Rights Activists Arbitrarily Detained

Name and Pronoun: Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana (He/Him/His); Christ Dongui (He/Him/His)

Congolese human rights activists, Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui, are being arbitrary detained in connection to their human rights work and criticism of the government. In March, they were both arrested in front of their house by unidentified men, forced into vehicles and taken to the Central Intelligence and Documentation Center. They were eventually presented to a prosecutor and charged with breach of State security and sent to Brazzaville central prison where they remain held in pre-trial detention solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arrest and detention of those peacefully exercising their human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly, and crackdown on peaceful dissent are contrary to international human rights standards. Although the CID is empowered to arrest and hold individuals in custody, it is compelled to act in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code. In article 48, the Code provides that people should be presented to a prosecutor within 72 hours of their arrest, which can be extended by 48 hours with a written decision from the prosecutor. This was not followed for Alexandre Dzabana and Christ Dongui who were held for 29 and 15 days respectively before being presented to the prosecutor. The lack of legal basis to detain them renders their detention at the CID illegal and further arbitrary. The Republic of Congo hence violates its own Constitution which provides in its art. 9 that “ Nobody can be arbitrarily accused, arrested or detained”. The country also contravenes the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has determined that those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights must be immediately released. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has called on all member states, in its resolution 466 on prisons and conditions of detention in Africa, to release different groups of detainees amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, including human rights defenders, “in order to reduce overcrowding in prisons and curb the spread of the Coronavirus”.

Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui’s detention comes amidst a general crackdown on all who denounced the management and governance that worsened the situation of economic and social rights including those who did not comply with the Covid-19 restriction measures. More information can be found in Amnesty International’s 2021 report, On the back of the crisis. Violations of the right to health and repression of economic and social rights defenders in the Republic of Congo.

AIUSA Group 48

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Within the United States
\$0.55 - Domestic Letter up to 1oz
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International Postage
\$1.20 - Up to 1 oz

Sample Letter

I am writing to you to express concern about the cases of human right activists Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui who are currently held in pre-trial detention at the Brazzaville central prison, in the capital. Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana is the president of the movement M22 and coordinator of the Congolese Platform of NGOs of Human Rights and Democracy, and Christ Dongui, the vice-president of the association Ras le Bol.

They were both arrested in front of their house by unidentified men, on March 11 and March 25 2021, respectively, and taken to the Central Intelligence and Documentation Center (CID) in Brazzaville. During their detention at the CID, they were denied access to their families and lawyers. On April 9, 2021 they were brought before a prosecutor and charged with breach of State security. They were sent to Brazzaville central prison where they remain held in pre-trial detention. The date of their trial is still unknown.



Ras le Bol advocated for fair and transparent elections ahead of the March 21, 2021 presidential poll. On March 24, 2021, the day before his arrest, he attended a press conference to denounce alleged irregularities in the presidential poll. Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana is a well-known critic of the regime. He participated in the organization of a demonstration calling for “an inclusive national dialogue” between the government, the opposition parties and civil society organizations and the release of political prisoners on March 6, 2021. The demonstration was banned by authorities.

Therefore, Amnesty International is concerned that Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui’s arrest and detention are linked to their peaceful human rights and political activism which are in accordance with the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana, who is 77 years old, suffers from high blood pressure that makes him more vulnerable to Covid- 19. It is thus even more important that the authorities comply with Resolution 466 – 2020 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which calls states to release human rights defenders as part of wider measures to reduce overcrowding in prisons and other places of detention.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 63.21. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Minister of Justice, Ange Aimé Bininga

Ministre de la justice et des droits humains et de la promotion des peuples autochtones
Avenue Charles de Gaulle, B.P.1375,
Brazzaville, Congo
Email: mariegabrielophoyo@gmail.com

Ambassador Serge Mombouli

Embassy of the Republic of Congo
1720 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009
Phone: 202 726 5500 I Fax: 202 726 1860
Email: info@ambacongo-us.org
Twitter: @AmbaCongoUS and @Serge_Mombouli_
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible until August 13th, 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

In this regard, I urge Your Excellency to immediately and unconditionally release Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui who are being detained solely in connection to their peaceful activism. Pending their release, the two activists must have regular and unfettered access to their lawyer and families and be protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

Sincerely,

Urgent Action: United States

Free Trans Woman From Indefinite Detention

Name and Pronoun: Maura [she/her/hers]

Maura, a transgender woman, has spent half her life living in the United States of America. Years ago, she sought safety in the US after experiencing relentless transphobic violence in Mexico after she left Nicaragua at a young age. Authorities in the USA have been holding her for over two years at an immigration detention facility in California, where she has experienced abuse and a lack of adequate medical care. We demand authorities free Maura immediately.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Despite taking welcome steps to roll back some discriminatory and xenophobic policies of the past, President Joseph Biden and his administration in the USA have yet to follow through on a number of immigration reforms pledged and must immediately change course on immigration detention. Shortly after he took office, ICE had detained 13,860 people in early February. As of June 2, 2021 this number has skyrocketed over 66 percent to 23,107. Furthermore, thousands of others are being summarily expelled without being given the opportunity to request protection. Black and brown immigrants and asylum seekers make up the overwhelming majority of those detained, and they have long faced added discrimination and human rights abuses at the hands of ICE.

Amnesty International is calling on the Biden administration and its relevant agencies to release people in immigration detention through an affirmative file review process with a presumption of liberty, phase out ICE contracts with private prison companies and county jails, and end family detention. Instead of immigration detention, the presumption should be liberty, with asylum-seekers and immigrants allowed to live in the community, supported by sponsors, community-based services, and case management programs.

Detention of asylum seekers should only be a measure of last resort, after other non-custodial alternatives have proven or been deemed insufficient in relation to the individual. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the detention of

asylum-seekers solely on the base of their immigration status can “very quickly, if not immediately” constitute ill-treatment against individuals in situations of increased vulnerability, specifically including women, older people, persons with medical conditions, or social minorities including LGBTI persons.

Under international law, the USA government has an obligation to ensure that the human rights of migrants and asylum seekers are respected, protected, and fulfilled. In its July 2017 report on a country visit to the US, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said that: “the mandatory detention of immigrants, especially asylum seekers, is contrary to international human rights and refugee rights standards.

[...] The Working Group has observed that the current system of detaining immigrants and asylum seekers is, in many cases, punitive, unreasonably long, unnecessary, costly when there are alternative community-based solutions, [...] not based on an individualized assessment of the necessity and proportionality of detention, carried out in degrading conditions, and a deterrent to legitimate asylum claims.”

The United States of America government is under an obligation not to return individuals to a situation in which

they would be at risk of torture or other serious human rights abuses: the principle of non-refoulement. Such safeguards are imperative for protecting refugees fleeing violence and persecution. Persecution of LGBTI people in Nicaragua has been consistently observed and documented by Amnesty International and virtually every other organization that closely reports on the conditions of the country, including the USA Department of State.

For at least the past 10 years, the US Department of State’s Nicaragua Country Reports have highlighted the widespread “attacks against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons” Among the findings of the Inter- American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) report was that persecution of the LGBTI people in Nicaragua led to their forced migration; LGBTI organizations in Nicaragua experience a number of attacks; and LGBTI people from the Atlantic Coast were subject to “debasement, humiliation, and instances of stoning.” Nicaragua



has a history of systemic persecution of the LGBTI community and this has accelerated since the Spring 2018 protests. Maura's status as a transgender woman puts her at risk of violence and persecution at the hands of Nicaraguan authorities if she is returned to Nicaragua.

Sample letter

Dear Field Office Director Archambeault,

I write to urge you to immediately release Maura, a 41-year-old transgender woman from Nicaragua. She has been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Otay Mesa Detention Center in California since April 2019, where she has suffered abuse and lacks adequate medical care. ICE has the legal and discretionary authority to release her.

Maura is now seeking protection because she fears for her life if returned to Nicaragua as a transgender woman. Nicaragua is not safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, particularly trans women.

Maura's continued detainment is harmful, unnecessary, and undermines President Joseph Biden's stated commitment to upholding racial justice and human rights.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample letter as a guide. You can also email.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 67.21.

Gregory J. Archambeault

San Diego Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) ERO Field Office Director
ICE Field Office
880 Front Street #2242
San Diego, CA 92101
Email: Gregory.J.Archambeault@ice.dhs.gov

Please take action as soon as possible until August 3, 2020. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

I urge you to release Maura while she pursues her right to seek protection in the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Belarus: Student arrested over graduation speech must be immediately released

July 2nd, 2021 --Reacting to the news that Katsyaryna Vinnikava, a student of the Law Faculty of the Belarusian State University, has been sentenced to 15 days' arrest by the Belarusian authorities after giving a graduation speech in which she honoured past staff members and graduates who have faced reprisals for their support of peaceful protesters and opposition to political repression, Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, said:

"The Belarusian authorities have once again shown their determination to stifle all dissent. The latest target is a young woman whose supposed crime was to profess respect for rights and justice in front of her university peers."

On June 29th, Katsyaryna Vinnikava gave a graduation speech which included the words: "I wish each of us to love, defend and stand up for the rule of law with the honour and dignity of a real lawyer, regardless of the current difficulties and the difficulties that are to come. Know the law, believe in the law. [...]"

Please remember that law is the art of kindness and justice. always win."

She also honoured former faculty staff members and lawyers that have "shown by their example who a lawyer was and what law was", including former professors Alena Basalay and Alena Layeuskaya, sacked for their views, and lawyer Maksim Znak, who was arrested in September 2020 under charges of "conspiracy to seize power" and "creation of an extremist group."

According to Katsyaryna Vinnikava's friends, on June 30th, she was summoned to the Leninsky District Department of Internal Affairs in Minsk, interrogated for seven hours, and detained the following morning. She was not allowed access to her lawyer. Katsyaryna Vinnikava was charged with "holding an unauthorized rally" (Article 23.34 of the Code of Administrative Offenses). On July 2nd, a court in Minsk sentenced Katsyaryna Vinnikava to 15 days in administrative detention. She is held at the notorious detention center known as Akrestsina.

Hong Kong: National Security Law has created a human rights emergency

June 30th, 2021 --Hong Kong's National Security Law (NSL) has decimated the city's freedoms and created a landscape increasingly devoid of human rights protections, Amnesty International said in a new research briefing released today. [‘In the Name of National Security’](#) details how the law enacted on June 30th, 2020 has given the authorities free rein to illegitimately criminalize dissent while stripping away the rights of those it targets.

“In one year, the National Security Law has put Hong Kong on a rapid path to becoming a police state and created a human rights emergency for the people living there,” said Yamini Mishra, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Regional Director.

“From politics to culture, education to media, the law has infected every part of Hong Kong society and fomented a climate of fear that forces residents to think twice about what they say, what they tweet and how they live their lives.

“Ultimately, this sweeping and repressive legislation threatens to make the city a human rights wasteland increasingly resembling mainland China.”

Based on analysis of court judgments, court hearing notes and interviews with activists targeted under the NSL, Amnesty’s briefing shows how the legislation has been used to carry out a wide range of human rights violations over the past 12 months.

In this time, the government has repeatedly used “national security” as a pretext to justify censorship, harassment, arrests and prosecutions. There is clear evidence indicating that the so-called human rights safeguards set out in the NSL are effectively useless, while the protections existing in regular Hong Kong law are also trumped by it.

On July 1st, 2020, the first full day of the law being in force, police arrested more than 300 protesters, including 10 on suspicion of violating the NSL. Since then, the government has continued to arrest and charge individuals under the NSL solely because they have exercised their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Worse still, people charged under the law are effectively presumed guilty rather than innocent, meaning they are denied bail unless they can prove they will not “continue to commit acts endangering national security”.

Consequently, defendants are being held in extended periods of pretrial detention. 70% of those officially prosecuted under the NSL are currently being held in custody after having been denied bail. The presumption of innocence is an essential part of the right to fair trial.

The briefing also outlines how authorities have used the NSL to crack down on international political advocacy, arresting or ordering the arrest of 12 individuals for “colluding” or “conspiracy to collude” with “foreign forces” because they were in contact with foreign diplomats, called for sanctions from other countries or called for other countries to provide asylum for those fleeing from persecution. Others were targeted for their social media posts or for giving interviews to foreign media.

The NSL expands powers for law enforcement investigators – including giving the Hong Kong Police’s national security unit the ability to search properties, freeze or confiscate assets and seize journalistic materials, such as in the two raids on pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily during the year. Such unchecked powers leave little room to prevent potential human rights violations during the investigative process.

“The Hong Kong government must stop using its excessively broad definition of ‘endangering national security’ for the blanket restriction of freedoms. As a start, it must drop all criminal charges against those currently facing prosecution for exercising their human rights,” said Yamini Mishra.

The NSL was unanimously passed by China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee and enacted in Hong Kong on June 30th, 2020 without any formal, meaningful public or other local consultation.

The law targets alleged acts of “secession”, “subversion of state power”, “terrorist activities” and “collusion with foreign or external forces to endanger national security”.

This sweeping definition of “national security”, which follows that of the Chinese central authorities, lacks clarity and legal predictability and has been used arbitrarily as a pretext to restrict the human rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association and liberty, as well as to repress dissent and political opposition.

The NSL’s arbitrary application and imprecise criminal definitions effectively make it impossible to know how and when it might be deemed as violated, resulting in an instant chilling effect across Hong Kong from day one.

Between July 1st, 2020 and June 23rd, 2021, police arrested or ordered the arrest of at least 114 people under the NSL. As of June 23rd, 2021, 64 people have been formally charged, of whom 45 are presently in pretrial detention.