



March 2022

**Our Next Meeting:
March 10th on Zoom**



A man stands in front of a residential building damaged in a shelling in the city of Chernihiv on March 4. Dimitar Dilkoff—AFP/Getty Images Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)

RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE IS AN ACT OF AGGRESSION AND A HUMAN RIGHTS CATASTROPHE

Amnesty International Press Release -- March 1, 2022

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a manifest violation of the United Nations Charter and an act of aggression that is a crime under international law, said Amnesty International as it called for all those involved in this crime to be held accountable for those violations. Their personal, individual, and collective liability should be invoked for that, and for all the many crimes that have characterized their invasion of Ukraine thus far.

Emphasizing the gravity of the Ukraine crisis, the organization called on UN member states to uphold and defend the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. It noted that the only exceptions to those provisions are self-defense and such use of force as is authorized by the UN Security Council – neither of which applies to this crisis.

Amnesty further stressed that, under international law, it is incumbent on all states to settle international disputes by peaceful means and in such a manner that international peace, security, and justice, are not endangered.

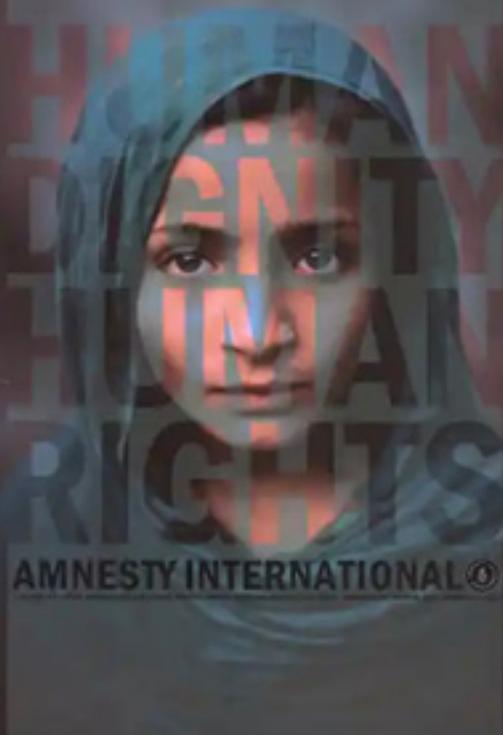
“Russia's invasion of Ukraine is grave, severe and defined by one characteristic only: aggression. Russia is invading into the heart of Ukraine, seeking to depose its lawfully elected government, with a real and potential massive impact on civilians' lives, safety and well-being; its acts cannot remotely be justified on any of the grounds that Russia has offered. Yet all of this is being committed by a permanent member of the UN Security Council,” said Agnes Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

“Russia is in clear breach of its international obligations. Its actions

Images courtesy Amnesty International or in the public domain unless otherwise indicated.

**“There is no flag large
enough to cover
the shame of killing
innocent people.”**

--Voltaire



are blatantly against the rules and principles on which the United Nations was founded. All members of the United Nations should condemn that conduct unequivocally. Russia's flagrant disregard cannot be allowed to embolden others to follow suit and nor should the UN's ability to contain such behavior be undermined."

Since the Russia invasion began on February 24, Amnesty has been documenting the escalation in violations of humanitarian and human rights law, including deaths of civilians resulting from indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas and infrastructure. Strikes on protected objects such as hospitals and schools, the use of indiscriminate weapons such as ballistic missiles and the use of banned weapons such as cluster bombs, may all qualify as war crimes.

Amnesty International urged UN Member States to stand together in condemnation of Russia's crimes of aggression, in providing relief and assistance to the citizens of Ukraine including those fleeing the conflict, and to ensure the consequences of Russia's aggression are not allowed to push the world closer towards an abyss of violence, violations and insecurity.

"In less than a week, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered a massive human rights, humanitarian, and displacement crisis that has the makings of the worst such catastrophe in recent European history. Russia is not only breaching the sovereignty of a neighbor and its people, it is also challenging the global security architecture and exploiting its frailty, including a dysfunctional UN Security Council. There are long-lasting consequences from this for us all. We must not allow aggression and violations of international law to be their architect," said Agnes Callamard.

Yesterday's welcome announcement by the ICC Prosecutor that his office will seek to open an investigation in Ukraine puts all perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine – including those in senior positions and most responsible – on notice that they will be held individually accountable.

"Amnesty International calls on all states parties to the ICC and the international community at large to cooperate with the ICC's investigation. The ICC's

investigation cannot take place alone. Comprehensive accountability in Ukraine requires the concerted and innovative efforts of the UN and its organs, as well as initiatives at the national-level pursuant to the principle of universal jurisdiction," said Agnes Callamard.

"At this early stage, the collection and preservation of evidence is crucial to successful future investigations. Above all, we must ensure that the tragically increasing number of victims of war crimes in Ukraine hear a message that the international community is already determined to secure redress for their suffering."

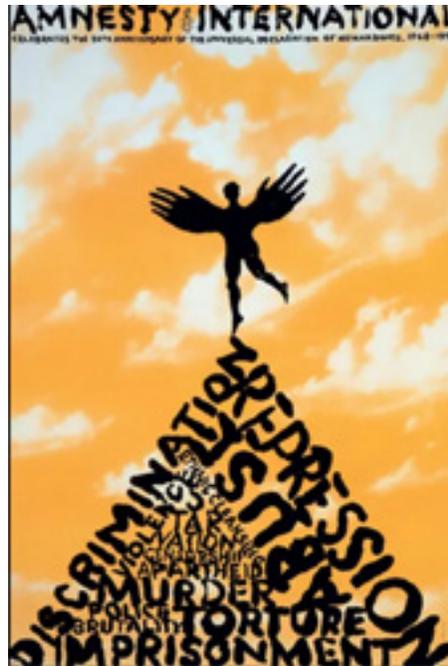
Background

Serious violations of the rules of conflict constitute war crimes. Some of those are codified as such by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The ICC would have jurisdiction over war crimes committed in Ukraine, which made a declaration in 2015 accepting ICC jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory since 20 February 2014. Russia signed the Rome Statute in 2000 but withdrew its signa-

ture in 2016.

The military intervention appears to meet the definition of aggression under the Rome Statute of the ICC. Art. 8bis(1) of the Rome Statute defines, in relevant part, a "crime of aggression" as "an act of aggression which, by its character, gravity and scale, constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations." Although the Court, barring an unlikely Security Council referral, will not have jurisdiction over the crime of aggression in this situation a number of states, including Ukraine, have domestic laws that would allow prosecution of those responsible for this crime.

The invasion of Ukraine has already resulted in indiscriminate strikes on residential areas, medical institutions, social infrastructure and other civilian objects and infrastructure, and produced civilian deaths and injuries. It has led to mass displacement and destruction of civilian housing. In the fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk, particularly in 2014-2015, there have been extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, and unlawful deprivation of liberty.



TEMPORARY PROTECTION IS NEEDED FOR EVERYONE FLEEING UKRAINE

March 3, 2022 Reacting to the Council of the European Union's activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), which will grant immediate protection in EU countries to people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, Eve Geddie, Director of Amnesty International's EU office said: "Everybody fleeing conflict must be provided with protection and help to establish themselves and we welcome that Ukrainians will be swiftly protected. But by restricting that assistance principally to Ukrainians fleeing conflict, the Council has also exposed the limitations of Europe's solidarity."

"Today's decision means that Ukrainians seeking safety in the EU will quickly get residence permits, be able to work, and be provided with suitable accommodation, welfare assistance, medical assistance, and education. It is now up to member states to decide if they will extend that to others fleeing Ukraine. We call

on them to treat everyone fleeing this conflict equally.

"The Council's decision today is a reminder that Europe has long had the tools to protect people fleeing war and help new arrivals, and the usual 'Fortress Europe' approach is a politically motivated choice. That this is happening for the first time but principally for displaced Ukrainian nationals shows that the EU's approach is riddled with double standards."

The TPD was created in 2001, in the aftermath of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, when, for the first time since the Second World War, Europe was confronted with mass displacements of people resulting from a conflict in Europe. However, it has never been activated. Amnesty International has repeatedly called for its activation, most recently in the framework of the EU response to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE MUST BE PROTECTED FROM PUBLIC CURIOSITY UNDER GENEVA CONVENTION

March 7, 2022 Prisoners of war in the Russian invasion of Ukraine must have their rights respected under the Third Geneva Convention, Amnesty International said today.

In recent days, the Ukrainian authorities have brought Russian prisoners of war to press conferences to discuss their roles in the military invasion, and videos on social media have also shown captured soldiers contacting family members in Russia.

Videos of captured Ukrainian soldiers have also appeared on social media, though it is not yet clear if these have official sanction.

As the conflict continues, it is essential that all parties to the conflict fully respect the rights of prisoners of war," said Joanne Mariner, Director of Amnesty International's Crisis Response Program.

"Any public appearances can put prisoners of war at risk when they are returned to their home country, and also prove problematic for their families whilst they are detained.

"Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention explicitly states that prisoners of war must be protected at all times, particularly from public curiosity. It is duty of the detaining power to ensure these prisoners' rights are properly respected from the moment

they are captured."

Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention states: "Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated. Any unlawful act or omission by the Detaining Power causing death or seriously endangering the health of a prisoner of war in its custody is prohibited, and will be regarded as a serious breach of the present Convention. In particular, no prisoner of war may be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital treatment of the prisoner concerned and carried out in his interest. Likewise, prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity."

The authoritative commentary by the International Committee of the Red Cross specifies that "any materials that enable individual prisoners to be identified must normally be regarded as subjecting them to public curiosity and, therefore, may not be transmitted, published or broadcast"

Amnesty International has previously called for international humanitarian and human rights law to be respected as the conflict in Ukraine continues to escalate.

Urgent Action: China Imprisoned Bookseller at Risk of Ill-Treatment

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:

Gui Minhai (he/him)

Bookseller Gui Minhai was sentenced on February 24th, 2020 to 10 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for five years, on the charge of "illegally providing intelligence to foreign entities." Since then, he has been denied access to his family and, having obtained Swedish citizenship in 1996, to Swedish consular assistance. There are grave concerns over Gui Minhai's poor health, and that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The Chinese government must release Gui Minhai immediately; pending his release, he must be granted access to his family, lawyers of his choice, consular support, and adequate medical care.

Gui Minhai was one of the five Hong Kong-based publishers and booksellers who disappeared in 2015 after printing books critical of the Chinese government. Mighty Current Media and the Causeway Bay Bookstore that Gui Minhai led were known for their books on Chinese leaders and political scandals, which are banned in mainland China but are popular with mainland Chinese tourists visiting Hong Kong. The detention and disappearance of Gui Minhai and the other booksellers had a chilling effect on the climate for freedom of expression and publishing in Hong Kong and the Chinese-speaking world.

Gui Minhai's case drew international attention after he first went missing in Thailand on October 17th, 2015, about the same time that three of his company colleagues also went missing. Another associate, Lee Bo, was taken away from Hong Kong on December 30th, 2015. Gui Minhai later appeared on Chinese state television in January 2016 to give a choreographed "confession" regarding an alleged traffic incident that took place in 2003. Many believe that the drunk driving charge was simply a pretence to detain Gui Minhai and shut down his publishing business.

In October 2017, Gui Minhai was "released" after he had, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "completely served the sentence imposed for a traffic offence"; however, his daughter Angela Gui has since raised concerns that Gui Minhai remained under state surveillance and monitoring after his supposed release. On 20 January 2018 while on a train from Ningbo to Beijing and accompanied by two Swedish diplomats helping him to get medical care, Gui Min-

hai was suddenly taken away by approximately 10 plainclothes officers. He has not been seen since. On 25 February 2022, Angela renewed her call for the immediate release of her father after Olympic speed skating champion Nils van der Poel handed her his Beijing 2022 gold medal in protest of human rights violations in China.

In China, dissidents including writers, academics and journalists are systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest, and prosecution. The Hong Kong National Security Law enacted on 1 July 2020 has also given the Hong Kong government free rein to crack down on freedom of expression in an unprecedented manner. Numerous [or give the figure] activists have been charged under the law for their peaceful activities. Many civil society organizations, trade unions and news organizations have closed under the threat of the NSL. In a major censorship purge, numerous books were removed from the city's public libraries. Three speech therapists were charged with conspiring to publish and circulate seditious material after publishing children's books mocking the government.



Sample letter

Dear President Xi,

I am writing to express my concern for Gui Minhai, who was sentenced on 24 February 2020 to 10 years' imprisonment and deprivation of political rights for five years, on the charge of "illegally providing intelligence to foreign entities".

Since his imprisonment, the authorities have



rejected the Swedish consulate's request to read the verdict and meet Gui Minhai, who obtained Swedish citizenship in 1996. It is distressing to learn that he has not been able to see his family members and consular officials, or even speak to a lawyer of his own choice since 2018. There is no way to verify his wishes or conditions. Given his poor health, which requires regular and urgent medical care, his family is particularly concerned about his wellbeing. Gui Minhai was tried and convicted in secret. Despite the authorities' claim that he was prosecuted for handing over 'intelligence' to overseas parties, it appears that his conviction is primarily based on his attempted trip with two Swedish diplomats in January 2018. Gui Minhai was suddenly taken away by approximately ten plainclothes officers whilst travelling on a train with two Swedish diplomats to Beijing for urgent diagnosis of what is believed to be ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease).

Without any further information provided, a court notice announcing Gui Minhai's conviction and sentence in 2020 stated that he had reapplied for Chinese citizenship in 2018, which would nullify his Swedish citizenship under Chinese law. As he has been held in custody since 2018 without access to his family or lawyers, the veracity of this information is highly questionable.

I therefore call on you to:

- Release Gui Minhai and drop the charges against him, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with

international standards;

- Grant Gui Minhai prompt, regular and unrestricted access to lawyers of his choice and to his family
- Grant Gui Minhai access to medical care on request or as necessary; and
- Grant the Swedish consulate access to Gui Minhai.

Yours sincerely,

TAKE ACTION:

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

**President of the People's Republic of China,
Xi Jinping**

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Xichangan'jie
Xichengqu, Beijing Shi 100017
People Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 6238 1025
Email: english@mail.gov.cn

Please take action as soon as possible until
April 22nd, 2022.

Urgent Action: Russian Federation

Activist's Trial Under False Charges Resumes

NAME AND PRONOUN: Yulia Tsvetkova (she, her)

The criminal court hearing against Yulia Tsvetkova, an artist and activist from Komsomolsk-on-Amur in the Russian Far East, resumes on March 14, 2022. She is facing up to six years in prison if convicted under the absurd charges of “production and dissemination of pornography” for posting online her body-positive drawings of the female body.

Yulia Tsvetkova, an artist and stage director from Komsomolsk-on-Amur (Russian Far East), was arbitrarily detained on November 20, 2019 and put under house arrest two days later after being accused of “production and dissemination of pornographic materials” (Article 242(3b) of the Russian Criminal Code). These absurd charges were brought against her in connection with her drawings of the female body, including body-positive pictures of female reproductive organs, which she posted on social media as part of her women empowerment campaign. On the day of her detention, searches were carried out in her apartment and in the children's educational club where she had worked previously. The police seized her electronic devices, documents, and brochures on gender issues. Yulia Tsvetkova recalled that during the search the police officers stated that she was a “lesbian, sex trainer and propagandist leader”.

Yulia Tsvetkova has been the target of an overtly homophobic campaign since March 2019, when she had to end her cooperation with the youth amateur theatre company Merak after the police had launched an investigation into her alleged “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors” on account of her anti-bullying and anti-discrimination play “Blue and Pink”. Also, the theatrical group she had founded in 2018 was forced to cease its activities.

On December 11, 2019, Yulia Tsvetkova was found in violation of Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences (“propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors”) and fined 50,000 Rubles (US\$ 780) for being the administrator of two LGBTI-themed online communities on the popular Russian social media, VKontakte. Both online communities were marked “18+”, as required by Russian law, making the fine imposed on her unfounded even

under the homophobic “gay propaganda” legislation (this “offence” only arises if the “propaganda” material is targeted at persons under 18).

On January 17, 2020, Yulia Tsvetkova informed the media that administrative proceeding had been opened against her once again, under the same Article, this time for posting her drawing “Family is where



love is. Support LGBT+ families” (depicting two same-sex couples with children) on social media. She had published the drawing in support of a same-sex couple who had had to flee Russia with their adopted children because the authorities had threatened to take their children away from them. On July 10, 2020 she was fined 75,000 Rubles (US\$ 1,050) for this “offense”.

During 2020, the criminal case against Yulia Tsvetkova was referred back and forth between the investigator and the prosecutor five times. Only in January 2021, the Prosecutor's Office in Komsomolsk-on-Amur approved the case, and her trial started but was adjourned in November 2021 until February 2022.

In September 2021, Yulia Tsvetkova successfully appealed the authorities' decision to block her online group Vagina Monologues where she had posted her drawings of the female body and which, in turn, have

been used to open the criminal proceedings under the “pornography” charges against her. However, in February 2022, the decision on the online group Vagina Monologues was reviewed in court, and it was blocked once again on arbitrary grounds, thus resulting in a prejudicial decision which has important and worrying implications for the criminal case against the activist.

Sample Letter

Dear Prosecutor,

I am writing to urge you to stop the prosecution of Yulia Tsvetkova under false charges of “production and dissemination of pornography” (Article 242(3b) of the Russian Criminal Code). The court hearing in her case will resume on March 14, 2022. Yulia Tsvetkova’s has committed no recognizable criminal offence, and her only “crime” has been her artistic drawings of the female body as part of her activism for women’s rights.

An artist and activist from Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Yulia Tsvetkova has been continually targeted for her activism for women’s rights and the rights of LGBTI people. Since 2019, she has been prosecuted for her drawings, and faced harassment by police, and repeated house and workplace searches. She spent almost four months under house arrest until March 2020 and was deprived of access to the medical care she required. She has been under travel restrictions since. Yulia Tsvetkova has also repeatedly faced administrative proceedings and fines under the homophobic “gay propaganda” legislation (Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences). She has also faced homophobic threats, abuse, and harassment, over the phone, via social networks, and by mail, as has her mother.

Yulia Tsvetkova is facing reprisals for her human rights activism and for exercising her right to freedom of expression, which violates both Russia’s Constitution and its obligations under international human rights law.

In the light of the above, I urge you to immediately drop the criminal case and end all administrative proceedings against Yulia Tsvetkova.

Sincerely,



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 138.20. 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.

Boris Viktorovich Kononenko

Prosecutor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur
34 Krasnogvardeiskaya street
Komsomolsk-on-Amur, 681013
Russian Federation
Email: kms@phk.hbr.ru
Dear Prosecutor,

Ambassador Anatoly Antonov

Embassy of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Ave. NW,
Washington DC 20007
Fax: 202 298 5735
Email: rusembusa@mid.ru
Twitter: @RusEmbUSA
Facebook: @RusEmbUSA
Instagram: @RusEmbUSA
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible until April 13, 2022. Check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

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URGENT ACTION: Nigeria **60,000 FORCIBLY EVICTED IN PORT HARCOURT**

NAME AND PRONOUN: Rivers State Waterfront residents (All genders
– They/their)

Rivers State authorities have forcibly evicted thousands of residents of waterfront communities from their homes in the Diobu area of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, in southern Nigeria. The area is home to an estimated population of 60,000 people. The Governor must halt any plans for further demolitions and urgently provide relief and ensure access to justice and effective remedies for all those already affected.

Port Harcourt is the capital and largest city of Rivers State, Nigeria. It is a metropolitan city with a population of over 3 million people. It lies along the Bonny River. Despite being an oil producing region of Niger Delta, thousands of people in the region live below the poverty line amidst inadequate and affordable housing. The forced evictions in Port Harcourt across waterfront communities has affected the lives and livelihood of its residents. The forced evictions followed an announcement by the Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike, in his 2022 New Year message, that the state government would, from the second week of January, commence the demolition of all shanties and makeshift structures in criminal hotspots in Port Harcourt.

Under international law, evictions may only be carried out as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives to eviction have been explored and appropriate procedural safeguards have been put in place. Such procedural safeguards include provision of adequate notice, opportunities for genuine consultations and access to legal remedies. Governments must also ensure that no one is rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights as a consequence of eviction. In cases where evictions may be justifiable, it is incumbent upon the relevant authorities to ensure that they are carried out in a manner warranted by law and which is compatible with international human rights laws and standards.

Although the Nigerian Constitution directs the state to ensure that adequate shelter is provided for all citizens, this provision is in the Constitution's 'directive principles' and therefore not enforceable in Nigerian Courts. However, Nigeria is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international and regional human rights treaties which require states parties to realize the right to adequate housing, and to prevent and refrain from carrying out forced evictions.

Sample Letter

I am writing regarding the deeply concerning mass forced evictions in the Diobu axis of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, which have left thousands homeless in 10 communities namely: Elechi Phase 1, Urualla, Ojike, Akwuzu, Afikpo, Abba, Akowka, Nanka, Egede and Soku. When the evictions started on January 29, 2022, 2,000 people in Elechi Phase

I were rendered homeless while their properties and livelihoods were destroyed. By February 3, 2022, the authorities had expanded the demolitions to the other nine waterfront communities. The ten communities are home to an estimated 60,000 people.

On January 19, 2022, a Rivers State Government Task Force visited several waterfront communities in Port Harcourt and marked homes for demolition. According to the residents, task force officials told residents to vacate their homes within 7 days, that is by January 26, 2022. On January 29, 2022, the Rivers State Task Force and security agents, including members of the Rivers State Police Command, began demolishing homes belonging to the Elechi Phase 1 waterfront community, some with excessive use of force – beating up residents and leaving many injured. The forced evictions have made thousands of women, men, and children homeless, forcing them to live in deplorable conditions without access to water and sanitation among other essential services.

The forced evictions have not only violated people's right to adequate housing, which the Nigerian government as a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, has a duty to respect, protect and fulfil, but also negatively impacted other human rights such as their rights to education and health, having left residents in a position of increased vulnerability to Covid-19. Access to adequate housing in times of a global pandemic is critical in protecting people from Covid-19, stopping its spread; and recovering from it. Furthermore, under international human rights law, evictions may only be carried out as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives to eviction have been explored and appropriate procedural safeguards have been put in place. Governments must also ensure that no one is rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights as a consequence of eviction.

I urge you to immediately halt further demolitions and provide emergency relief, alternative housing, and effective redress (including adequate compensation) for all Port Harcourt residents who have already been forcibly evicted.

Sincerely,



TAKE ACTION:

1 Write a letter in your own words or using the sample 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 10.22. 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.

Governor Nyesom Wike

Office of the Governor
Government House, Port Harcourt
Rivers State, Nigeria
Twitter: @GovWike
Salutation: Your Excellency,

Ambassador Uzoma Emenike

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Please take action as soon as possible until
April 12, 2022