

## Activity 11

### Human rights and human wrongs

– message and campaigns

#### Summary

Young people engage in a campaign, either as an exercise or (preferably) for real, for the protection of human rights worldwide. They start by viewing a recent film produced for young people by Amnesty International about injustices surrounding Guantanamo Bay. They may continue with specific cases which they research through the Amnesty website, or else with cases presented on the website of Cageprisoners. They should also look at the Liberty website. They may write letters to key figures, including their own MPs and ministers, and engage in fund-raising and publicity.

#### Why?

The benefits that young people gain from this exercise include the following. They:

- gain a deeper understanding of human rights by getting involved in campaigns to protect human rights of certain specific individuals and groups
- appreciate that individuals such as themselves can make a difference
- see themselves as citizens of the world, not just as citizens of one country
- gain an overview of human rights – ‘the big picture’ – and as a result are better able to place and make sense of details that would otherwise appear random and disconnected
- develop knowledge and understanding of concepts such as rule of law, due process and anti-discrimination legislation
- develop knowledge of the principles underlying successful campaigns, projects, movements and struggles for justice and equality

- use their imaginations to consider other people’s experiences in order to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are different from their own
- gain in readiness to take responsibility for upholding structures and procedures of fairness and democracy, and for strengthening and enhancing them.

#### Preparation

You need some short descriptions of real campaigns organized by an organization such as Amnesty International. There are several examples in Handout 21. You can use these as they stand or you can find more up-to-date alternatives at the Amnesty website

#### Procedure

Young people watch three short films produced by Amnesty International. Informative and inspiring excerpts can be viewed on YouTube through <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=11023>. The complete films can be obtained free of charge. They are as follows.

##### *Justice For Dad*

The families of UK residents who were imprisoned in Guantanamo tell the stories behind the campaign to close the US military prison and get a fair trial or release for all those detained there.

##### *Over To You*

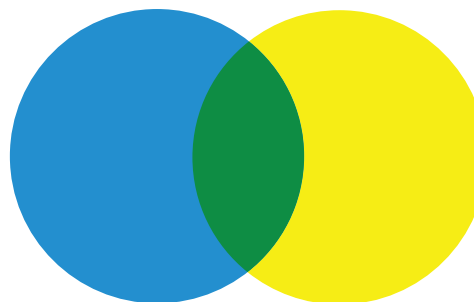
Follow three Amnesty youth groups getting creative as they campaign across the UK. Computer heads march through the streets of London, a Guantánamo jump-suited group stage a school ‘take-over’ in Edinburgh, and trafficked people for sale in shop windows bring a town centre in Somerset to a standstill.

**Human Rights, Human Wrongs**

A thought-provoking studio debate with young people, including Amnesty youth group members, discussing human rights and Amnesty International. What are human rights? Should everyone have the right to express their opinions? Why do we campaign to Stop Violence Against Women, not men?

Young people then decide what they themselves might do by way of response. The first step might be to consider some of Amnesty's current campaigns. Ten such campaigns are listed in Handout 21. Which of these sounds most important for the young people themselves? Why? They could then, at the least, write letters to key figures, as recommended and explained on the Amnesty website. More elaborate campaigning ideas are also outlined on the Amnesty website.

Instead or as well, young people can go to the Cageprisoners or Liberty website. The Cageprisoners website has a wealth of information about the injustices of Guantanamo Bay and the Liberty website has information on many campaigns in the UK. There are also suggestions on both of these websites for what people may do in response. A flavour of information on the Amnesty website is given in Handout 21.



## Identity, Empowerment and Change, Handout 21

### Human Rights Around The World

**Cambodia**

Forced evictions are one of the most widespread human rights violations affecting Cambodians in both rural and urban areas. At least 150,000 Cambodians across the country are known to live at risk of being forcibly evicted because of misguided development projects, land disputes and land grabbing.

**Columbia**

Numerous members of trade union and human rights organizations have received death threats against holding marches and demonstrations on International Workers' Day

**China**

The Tiananmen Mothers is a group of Chinese democracy activists promoting a change in the government's position over the suppression of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.

**Egypt**

In 2007, Egyptian blogger Karim Amer was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for the 'crime' of publishing on the internet material critical of Islam and President Mubarak.

**Honduras**

Journalist Dina Meza, a former member of the Association for a More Just Society (Asociación para una Sociedad Más Justa, ASJ), is at risk of attack because of her human rights work with the organization.

**Iran**

Iranian Kurdish human rights defender Farhad Haji Mirza'i is being held in Tehran's Evin Prison, and is believed to have been mentally and physically tortured. Reports suggest that he may have been sentenced to death.

**Macedonia**

The Macedonian Government has failed to uphold the rights of Romani women and girls in Macedonia who face double discrimination on the basis of race and gender resulting in violations of their rights to education, to the highest attainable standards of health care, to work, and the right to freedom from violence.

**Palestine**

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) considers Palestinians, especially those at the al-Tanf refugee camp, to be among the most vulnerable of the two million refugees who have fled Iraq.

**Sierra Leone**

Between 1991 and 2002, all parties to the conflict in Sierra Leone perpetrated rape, sexual slavery and other violent crimes. The government has failed to provide reparations to the women affected.

**United Kingdom**

The UK has tried to justify extraditions and other transfers of individuals to Algeria, a country with a known record of torture and ill-treatment.

*Source: from the website of Amnesty International, Summer 2008*

