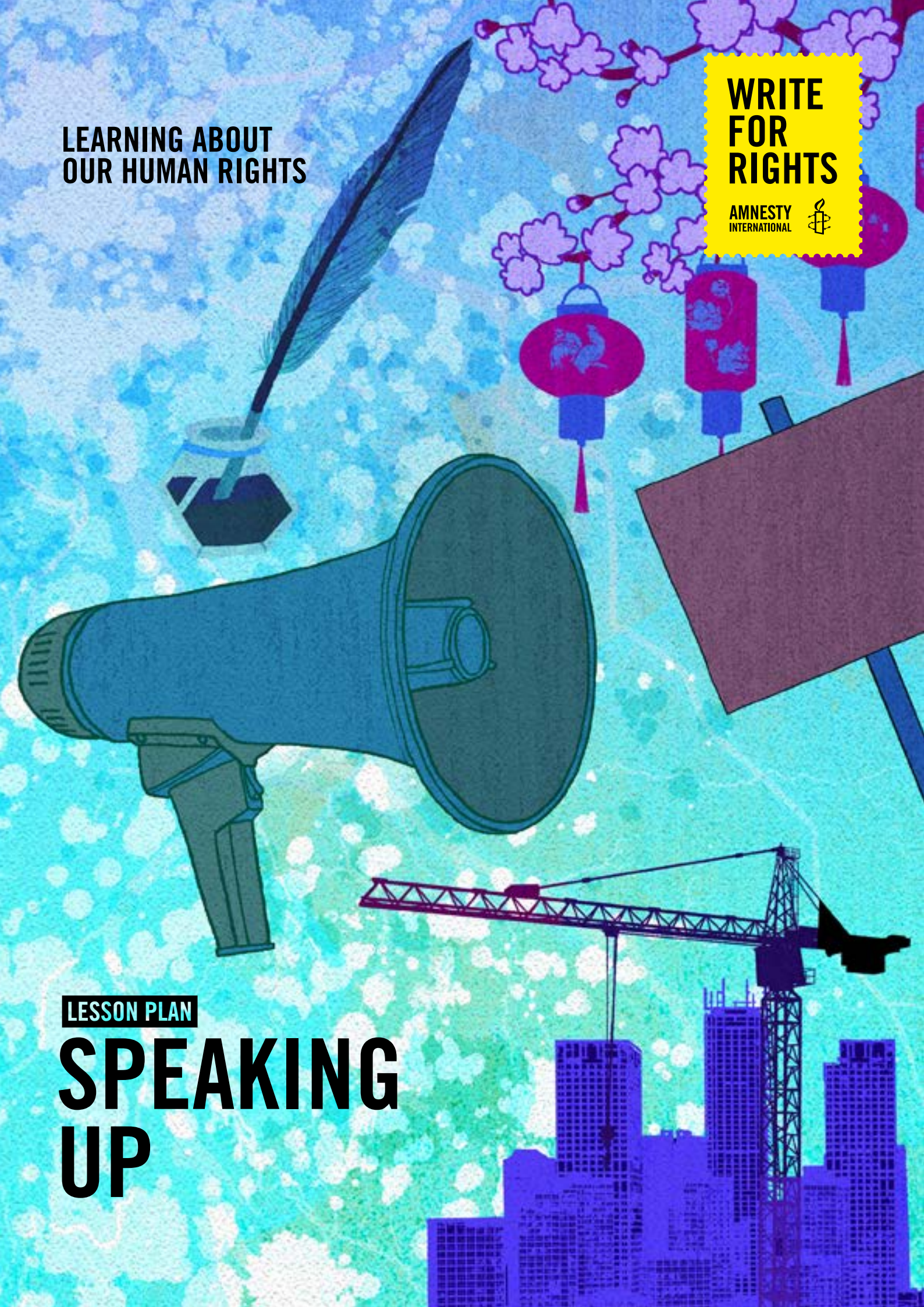
LEARNING ABOUT
OUR HUMAN RIGHTS
WRITE
FOR
RIGHTS
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
LESSON PLAN
SPEAKING
UP

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice. Change oppressive laws… And free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.

Demonstration outside the Turkish Embassy in London, UK. 12 July 2017.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign takes place annually around 10 December, which is Human Rights Day (commemorating the day when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948). Write for Rights aims to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises individual cases with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organizing protests and public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure.

A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As a result of the international call to action, public officials are bombarded with letters. Victims of torture, prisoners of conscience, and people facing the death penalty or other human rights violations receive messages of solidarity from thousands of people in far-off corners of the globe. Those suffering the violations know that their cases are being brought to public attention. They know that they are not forgotten.

The results of similar campaigns in previous years have been striking. Individuals affected by the violations report the difference that these letters make, they express their gratitude to those who have written, and they often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people are concerned about their case.

Often there is a noticeable change by officials towards these individuals: charges are dropped, treatment becomes less harsh, and laws or regulations addressing the problem are introduced.

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE 2016 CAMPAIGN

FREED IN UZBEKISTAN

Muhammad Bekzhanov *[right]*, one of the longest-imprisoned journalists in the world, was freed in February 2017 after spending 17 years behind bars. Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide wrote to demand his freedom.

"Receiving your letters really comforted me when I was in prison. Thank you!"

RELEASED IN THE USA

Whistleblower Chelsea Manning *[left]* walked free in May 2017, after her 35-year prison sentence was cut short by outgoing US President Barack Obama. More than a quarter of a million people wrote for her release.

"I wish I had the time and ability to thank each one of you for giving me a little bit of joy with each letter and card."

CHARGES DROPPED IN PERU

Criminal charges against Máxima Acuña *[right]*, a peasant farmer who is defying one of the world's biggest gold mining companies, were dropped in May 2017. More than 150,000 people had sent her solidarity messages.

"Keep on supporting, helping, and not just me, ok?"

You can see more success stories at amnesty.org/WriteForRights

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments or state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries that can be met only when practicalities allow.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN acknowledged that people who stood up for human rights were in need of support both from institutions and from individuals. In December 1998, the UN General Assembly adopted "The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" – commonly known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. It defines a human rights defender and sets out the responsibilities of governments, civil society and individuals to support and defend them.

The Declaration is an international instrument for the protection of the right to defend human rights. It does not create new rights, but reaffirms existing rights that are instrumental to the defence of human rights. These include the rights to freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to access information relating to human rights, as well as the right to provide legal assistance and the freedom to develop and discuss new ideas in the area of human rights.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.	Article 1	Freedom and equality in dignity and rights
	Article 2	Non-discrimination
	Article 3	Right to life, liberty and security of person
	Article 4	Freedom from slavery
	Article 5	Freedom from torture
LEGAL RIGHTS Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.	Article 6	All are protected by the law
	Article 7	All are equal before the law
	Article 8	A remedy when rights have been violated
	Article 9	No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile
	Article 10	Right to a fair trial
	Article 11	Innocent until proven guilty
	Article 14	Right to go to another country and ask for protection
SOCIAL RIGHTS Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.	Article 12	Privacy and the right to home and family life
	Article 13	Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders
	Article 16	Right to marry and start a family
	Article 24	Right to rest and leisure
	Article 26	Right to education, including free primary education
ECONOMIC RIGHTS Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.	Article 15	Right to a nationality
	Article 17	Right to own property and possessions
	Article 22	Right to social security
	Article 23	Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union
	Article 25	Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being
POLITICAL RIGHTS Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion	Article 18	Freedom of belief (including religious belief)
	Article 19	Freedom of expression and the right to spread information
	Article 20	Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way
	Article 21	Right to take part in the government of your country
CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.	Article 27	Right to share in your community's cultural life
	Article 28	Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized
	Article 29	Responsibility to respect the rights of others
	Article 30	No taking away any of these rights!

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

LESSON PLAN

SPEAKING UP

KEY CONCEPTS
- Human rights defenders
- Apathy
- Courage
- Right to housing
- Freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment
- Freedom of expression

ABOUT THIS LESSON:
Students practise their skills of communication and persuasion using the case of a human rights defender in China.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
- Students understand the commitment and courage of human rights defenders
- Students improve their communication skills
- Students know about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign, and are prepared to write a letter in support of one of the people the campaign is focusing on.

PREPARATION AND RESOURCES:
Make copies of the information on Ni Yulan from page 10. You will need at least one copy for every two students

TIME NEEDED:
45 minutes

AGE: 14+

DISCUSSION: 'I DID NOT SPEAK UP...'

15 MINUTES

1. **Read the class the short poem by Pastor Martin Niemoller on page 9.**
2. **Ask for brief reactions from students:**
   - When do you think the poem was written?
   - What is it about? What was the author trying to say?
3. **Give them some information about the poem (page 9). Then ask:**
   - Why do we not always speak up when others are being oppressed, or having their human rights violated? What stops us?
   - Can you think of any examples of this happening, perhaps from your own lives?
   - Can you think of examples when you, or others, did speak up for others?
4. **Give students some brief information about the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Explain that sometimes it is hard to speak up for rights, and those who do so need added protections to make sure they do not suffer themselves. The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was introduced with this aim in mind. (See page 4 for further information.)**

INTRODUCING WRITE FOR RIGHTS

5 MINUTES

5. **Give students some information about the Write for Rights campaign (page 2), and introduce Ni Yulan as one of the human rights defenders that Amnesty has selected for this year's campaign. Tell them that Amnesty is asking people around the world to "speak up" for Ni Yulan – just as she has been speaking up for other human beings.**

6. **Use the information from page 3 to tell students about some of the success stories in past Write for Rights campaigns. Explain that these successes are mainly a result of the very large number of people who spoke up – and wrote for rights. Tell them:**

   If all students in this class can write a letter, and persuade just one other person to write a letter – that will be around 50 letters to the Chinese authorities!

Optional:
You could show the video at amnesty.org/WriteForRights, which features some success stories from previous campaigns

ACTIVITY: PITCHING FOR RIGHTS

20 MINUTES

7. **Divide students into pairs and hand out the information about Ni Yulan. Tell students that each pair needs to write a short "pitch" to persuade one other person to write for Ni Yulan's rights.**

8. **After 15 minutes, bring the group back together and ask if some of the pairs would like to read out their pitch to others in the class.**

9. **Conclude the lesson by asking the class if they would be persuaded by the "pitches" of other students.**

   - Which arguments were most convincing, and why?
   - Do you intend to try them out?

   Encourage students to try out their pitch on as many people as possible. You could even have a small competition: who can persuade the largest number of people to write letters?

Optional:
You could also use the short video about Ni Yulan at amnesty.org/WriteForRights

10. **Arrange for a follow-up lesson during which students can write letters supporting Ni Yulan. Remind them that Amnesty is calling on people around the world to write two letters to help her:**

    - A personal letter of solidarity to Ni Yulan herself, so that she knows that people around the world support her in her struggle for justice.
    - A letter of protest to the Director of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau.

    You can find more information on addresses and recommended content below.

Optional:
You could direct them to the website at amnesty.org/WriteForRights and encourage them to write for the rights of other human rights defenders in the campaign.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS INSTRUCTIONS

WRITE A LETTER – SAVE A LIFE

1. **Encourage students to write to Ni Yulan expressing their solidarity, admiration or anything else they feel towards her. Ask them to think about what she might want to hear at this difficult time.**

   Since Ni Yulan has no permanent place of residence, messages of solidarity should be shared on social media with the hashtag #NiYulan.

2. **Encourage them to write to Wang Xiaohong, the Director of Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, at the following address:**

   No.9 Dongdajie
   Qianmen, Dongchengqu
   Beijingshi 100740
   People's Republic of China

   You can give students the following guidelines to help them write their letters:

MAKE YOUR LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR PERSONAL:

- Tell him something about yourself
- Tell him what shocks you about Ni Yulan's case
- Urge him to stop the harassment of Ni Yulan and her family and allow them to find adequate accommodation in Beijing.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

‘FIRST THEY CAME...’

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist

Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist

Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist

Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me

Pastor Martin Niemoller (1892–1984)
There are various versions of Pastor Niemoller’s poem, but all contain the essential idea of human apathy in the face of gross human rights violations, except when an individual is directly affected. The immediate context for the poem was the Nazi treatment of socialists, trade unionists, Jews and others.

Pastor Niemoller himself had somewhat contradictory beliefs, and even supported Hitler’s initial rise to power. However, he later withdrew his support and after opposing the regime, spent 1937 to 1945 in different concentration camps.

WRITE FOR RIGHTS
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CASE CARD

NI YULAN

In the run-up to the Beijing Olympic Games of 2008, entire sections of the city were razed to the ground in order to make way for new construction. Ni Yulan was a lawyer, and she offered legal advice and support to many of the residents who had lost their homes. She also watched her own home being demolished by the Chinese authorities just before the Games.

For many years now, Ni Yulan has stood up for human rights, notably by defending others against eviction. But she and her family have paid a heavy price. For nearly 20 years, Ni Yulan has been subjected to surveillance, harassment and restriction of movement by the Chinese authorities; she has been expelled from her home at least seven times, has served five and a half years in prison, and as a result of the torture she was subjected to while in detention, she now uses a wheelchair.

"We will not yield to this pressure because we will not be able to survive in this world if we don't defend our rights. Facing (state) violence, we have to exhaust all legal means to fight for our rights."

THE LATEST EVICTION

In April 2017, groups of unidentified individuals entered Ni Yulan's apartment on three different occasions. They first broke all the water pipes and cut off the electricity and internet; then they removed the windows and doors from the apartment; and then, on the third visit, dragged Ni Yulan, her husband and daughter out of the apartment and forced them into two vans. The family were driven around the city for hours and then dumped far away from their apartment at around 1am.

When they returned to their home, they found that the lock of the main door had been changed. Since then, Ni Yulan and her husband have been forced to camp out, moving from place to place and relying on supporters to provide food and other necessities.

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Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

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