

GROUP STARTING KIT

A SUGGESTION AS TO HOW THE GROUP MAY GET STARTED



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



GROUP STARTING KIT

The group starting kit was written to answer the questions of the groups as to why, what can be done and how to work within Amnesty.

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WHY

“THE GROUP IS THE ORIGINAL FORM FOR AMNESTY ACTIVISM”

Some groups have been active for 40 years, some less, but one thing is certain – a group does a lot of work for people whose rights have been violated. A group consists of 3-30 persons who meet on their own conditions and carry through activities for human rights. The group works within areas decided by the focus of the organization, the activist material that may be used, and the interest of the group.

Many groups concentrate on writing letters, but as many work with out-going activities – exhibitions, seminars, tables with literature, lotteries, festivals, films, street actions etc. As long as the group keeps within the framework of Amnesty work it may do almost anything!

WHY ARE AMNESTY GROUPS IMPORTANT?

To be a group is a way of contributing to the Amnesty organization and doing positive work. A group may make the organization and our work for human rights visible in places where we would not be seen otherwise. Over time a group contributes with knowledge to the organization and carries through advanced activities.

A member in an Amnesty group takes part in Amnesty work by:

- Bringing pressure to bear on authorities
- Spreading information and creating an opinion for human rights
- Recruiting members
- Collecting money

The work is done based on the information, material and instructions coming from Amnesty, but each group forms its own activities according to the knowledge, interests and ideas of its members. Regularly there are also meetings, courses and seminars for members and groups who want to develop their activity further. Be sure to send at least one representative to the various national and regional courses offered.

WHAT

1. JOIN A LONG-TERM CAMPAIGN

Within the Amnesty framework there are always prioritized global campaigns which your group may join. In 2014-2015 these were Stop Torture and My Body, My Rights. When your group chooses to join a long-term

campaign you will get monthly information about the campaign and its contents and



a possibility to act between the campaign days.

In 2016-2017 we will focus on two global campaigns. One deals with fighting for the human rights of refugees. The other works for defenders of human rights who get their own rights violated in various ways.

Fo find out what is happening at the moment and how to join, see aktivism.amnesty.se

“THEREFORE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT EVERYONE IN THE GROUP READS INSATS...”



2. TAKE PART IN CAMPAIGN DAYS

Amnesty is a strong campaigning organization. This means that we carry through a number of out-going activities each year, which your group may join. The Secretariat produces some material for these campaign days, which you can use at your local campaigning.

Information about action days is always presented in Insats, so it is very important for your group that you read Insats and keep updated with what happens with the campaigns.

3. ACTION CASES

Ever since Amnesty was started in 1961 the core of its work and a characteristic of the organization have been its work for individual cases. Nowadays we work not only with those who have been imprisoned for their points of view, i.e. prisoners of conscience, but also with people and groups

“ I thank Amnesty for my life. Now I use that life to work against death penalty and to heighten consciousness about human rights.”

Hafez Ibrahim, Yemen, who was sentenced to death as a child in a flawed trial. Free in 2007.

of individuals (including whole communities) who have got their human rights violated in other ways, for example through flawed trials, death penalty, indigenous peoples expelled from their areas because of land development, torture and maltreatment. Most work for these threatened persons or groups is made by our Amnesty groups and other activists. When a group wants to take on a case there is a list to choose from, where one can find short descriptions of current cases. After the group has made its choice it gets the case sheet by e-mail or ordinary mail.

Working with an action case is long-term and independent. This means that groups are supposed to work with the case until the goal is reached, which may mean several



years. Groups taking on a case are supposed to work not only from the outlines given in the case sheet but also to take initiatives of their own in order to inform about and draw attention to the case where appropriate. It is not only a question of regular letter writing to authorities and to the prisoner and/or his/her family or some other contact. It is also possible to write letters to the editor, to arrange an exhibition or letter writing evenings, solidarity actions, or manifestations on special days or to inform in other ways and to enable actions of others than group members.

The group may also contact other groups in the section or other sections working with the case and exchange ideas and material and carry through actions in common.

URGENT ACTIONS

Urgent Action is a form of action used by Amnesty for cases needing immediate action. They may deal with people threatened to their lives, prisoners who risk being tortured, or imminent executions. The Amnesty

” *You do not quite understand what impact your work has on people's lives. It is very important that you go on with what you are doing.*

Nabeel Rajab, human rights activist in Bahrain, imprisoned for having used his right to freedom of expression and association. He was released on bail in June 2012 after more than a month in prison. Later the same year he was sentenced to 3 years in prison and released in 2014.

information is sent to an international web with tens of thousands of people who then bombard responsible authorities with letters of appeal. Urgent Actions contain information on the particular case, relevant background information, a summary of Amnesty's requests, and addresses to authorities in the country concerned. As a group you may write letters of appeal at your meetings and send them directly, or you may make it a routine for different group members to prepare an urgent action letter for each meeting. You can find current Urgent Actions on Amnesty's home site. There you can also find a manual on how to write Urgent Actions.



4. OUT-GOING EVENTS

By arranging seminars, concerts, or other types of out-going activities your group may contribute to making Amnesty work visible. The aim of the activity may be clearly focused on our influential work, a wish to give public information about a problem and try to change the opinion on something. Another aim might be to make Amnesty visible and to collect money to the organization by giving a concert. Do not forget that it is possible to apply for activity funding from the section to cover the cost you might have for carrying through your activity.

5. EDUCATE YOURSELVES

Amnesty offers a basic course for all new Amnesty activists where you can learn about the organization and our work for human rights. There are also many other education opportunities within Amnesty locally as well as nationally. Before every extensive action



“BEFORE EVERY EXTENSIVE ACTION DAY THE SECRETARIAT ARRANGES CAMPAIGN EDUCATION WHICH WELCOMES ALL GROUPS WANTING TO TAKE PART IN THE ACTION DAY.”

day the secretariat arranges a campaign education welcoming all the groups who want to take part in the action day. There are also activist seminars, an annual meeting, leadership programs and district meetings. Watch out in Insats for these courses and meetings.

We know that there are a lot of varying competences and experiences in our groups, make sure to use these in your groups also internally. There are also many reports and much information from Amnesty that you may study and retell to the others, perhaps in connection with your action case or theme. It may be a good idea to arrange some education internally in the group a few times a year and make one of the group members responsible each time.



HOW

The basic structure of an Amnesty group should make it easy for everybody to take part on his/her own premises. Having regular meetings with agendas and minutes makes it possible for members to miss occasional meetings and still know what the group does or does not. The minutes also make it possible to check what tasks the group has taken on. Below you will find practical ideas about how to plan your activity and about other matters of importance.

PLAN YOUR WORK

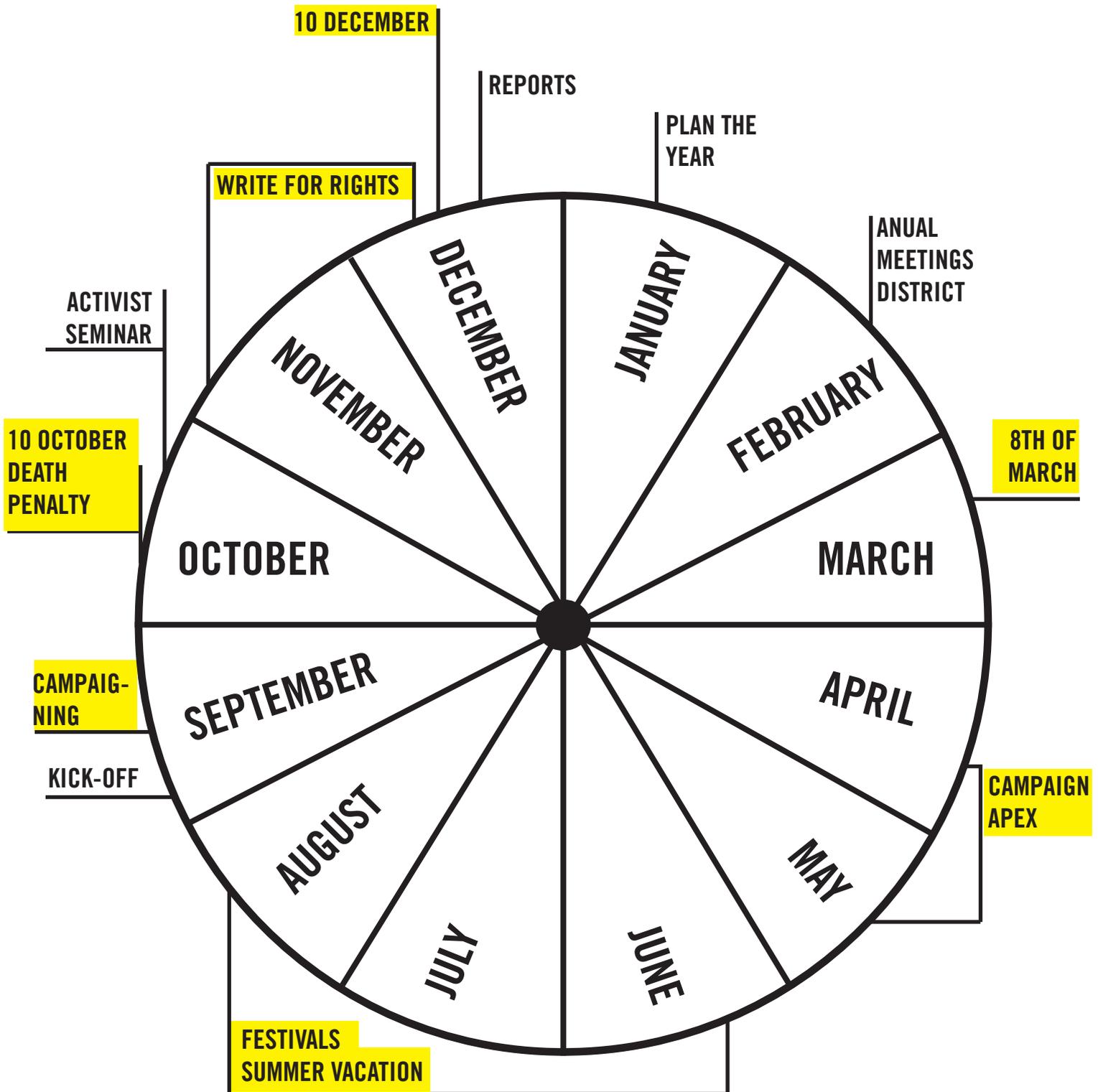
By breaking down the year into shorter periods and planning together what type of activity you are going to carry on you can create a general view as well as common goals for your work.

Your plan has to contain the following parts:

- How do we work with recruiting in the year to come?
- What out-going activities are to be carried through and when?
- The basic activity is specified by laying down the following general outlines in your plan of action:
 1. When do we apply for activity funds and who does it?
 2. When do we meet during the autumn?
 3. When and how do we account for ready money?
 4. If we work with an action case or an individual case, how do we distribute the responsibility?

THE AMNESTY YEAR

One way to make the work more structured is to divide the Amnesty year into months. Planning ahead is helpful for every activity as well as for a group. Do not forget to read Insats and to plan your activities well ahead.



FORMAL RULES AND REQUESTS

MEMBERSHIP

All the group members have to belong to Amnesty's Swedish section. This is stipulated in the regulation of the section. The membership fee is supposed to be the only personal cost for being active in an Amnesty group – the group is supposed to pay for all the activities.

CHOOSING GROUP STATUS

Before your group can be registered you have to choose whether you want to be a section group or an accounting group. This regulates what is demanded from the group as to formal structure, economy and accounting. The reason is that we need to be able to be open about who is responsible for our activity and how our money is used, something that is very important for Amnesty.

SECTION GROUP

Formally, a section group is not an association of its own but part of Swedish Amnesty. The group is to have a group secretary, who is the contact person of the group and has a coordinating function, and a treasurer who handles the money of the group and who writes an economic report each year. You are also to appoint an auditor who looks into the economic report and the bookkeeping each year. The account is kept within the group and does not have to be sent to Amnesty headquarters.

A section group has its expenses covered by an annual activity funding of SEK 2000, which is applied for from the section and which is supposed to cover expenses for stamps, education, meetings, travels, material etc. It is also possible to apply for activity funding if more extensive projects and activities are planned. Section groups may also work with fundraising, but since

they only have internal economic reporting in the group the money raised has to be sent on to the Swedish section or to an accounting Amnesty group. It must not be used in financing the group's own work.

ACCOUNTING GROUP

Formally, an accounting group is an association of its own, which means that the group has to accept standard statutes for accounting groups, available from the secretariat. You are also to appoint a board consisting of a head, who has a coordinating role in the group, a treasurer who handles the money of the group, keeps the books and writes an economic report each year, and at least one more member. You are also to appoint an auditor who looks into the economic report and the bookkeeping each year. The economic report has to be sent to Amnesty headquarters no later than 15 February each year.

An accounting group pays for its work by its own fundraising, so it cannot apply for funding. However, in addition it is possible to apply for activity funding when planning extensive projects and activities.

REGISTERING THE GROUP

When you have made yourselves familiar with Amnesty work, chosen status of the group and feel ready to register the group you have to contact one of the activist coordinators at the secretariat.