



Internationale Gesellschaft
für Menschenrechte (IGFM)

WHAT CAN I DO



Become a Member in one of ISHR's Sections

The ISHR arose in 1972 out of a group of 13 Frankfurters, who did not want to watch the injustice behind the Iron Curtain without taking action. This resulted in 3,000 members today in Germany alone. In many successor states of the former Eastern-Block, ISHR country sections established by human rights activists were built up. The cooperation was successful. Communist dictatorships in Eastern- and Central-Europe are overcome, but still many challenges remain today: the deprivation of freedom of opinion and press, the persecution of Christians and religious fanaticism, the hardship of children in Eastern-Europe, only to name some. With combined forces we can help. Even if you only have little time to spare - support us and make us stronger. Become a member, too!

International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)
Borsigallee 9, 60388 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
Phone: 069-420 108-0 | Fax: 069-420 108-33 | email: info@ishr.org



Support our Work through your Cooperation

The more people participate in actions, the larger their outcome. You can find suggestions for actions on this page under the topic "Appeals".

Are you fluent in several languages? We would be glad, if you could occasionally support our work through translations. Please send us an email.

Do you work in a professional field dealing with human rights aspects? Do you occasionally travel to a country that is violation human rights? We would like to encourage you to contact us for specific questions. Please write a letter or an email to us.

Support our Work financially

Research, support for prisoners of conscience, public relations and humanitarian aid, all cost money. For ISHR to keep up its independent, non-party and critical work towards governments, we need your financial support. We are aware that we cannot help all people in need. But each donation - as little as it may seem - helps save lives, overcome suffering or fight injustice. We cordially invite you: Please help!

Stay informed

Injustice can only be fought successfully if



awareness and attention are raised in the public. Therefore, please stay informed in order to be able to fight for human rights. Form your own opinion on topics which are not part of the mass media's main focus but nevertheless concern thousands of people. Create your own picture, independent for the incomplete and euphemistic presentation as portrayed by a number of interest representatives.

Inform others

The largest enemy for all human rights violations is an informed and critical public. Therefore we try to inform a large audience through our active press work about injustice and its initiators.

- Please also give our info material to friends and colleagues.
- Tell other interested people about our offers and our work. Do you know anybody who could be interested in our e-mail newsletter? You are very welcome to forward **our newsletter**.
- Are you a teacher? Speak about human rights violations in your class.
- You are a journalist or an editor of a student newspaper? Please **contact us**.

Write a Letter of Appeal

Letters to decision makers are among the most efficient means, to help prisoners of conscience. With little practice you can quickly and easily write a letter of appeal.



There are only few rules you should consider.
Informations how to write ...

Write a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an efficient mean of PR-work. They are among the most read columns in a newspaper, since readers as well as editors pay attention to them. Through letters to the editor you not only state your own opinion but you can also start a discussion or further research on the topic. Letters to the editor should represent a witty opinion and they have to be short in order to have a chance to be printed. **Informations** how to write ...

Write a letter to a political prisoner

Many prisoners of conscience emphasised after their release, how much the letters they received in prison helped them. How they could keep up hope and confidence - even if they didn't know the author or didn't speak his or her language.

In many countries those in power want to create an atmosphere of helplessness and solitude in order to break the prisoner's resistance. But every letter from the outside helps prisoners to cope with their situation and gives them the feeling of not having been totally forgotten.

Letters to prisoners even help if the prisoner never receives them because his treatment depends on the prison guards. If the guards realise that a prisoner often receives mail



from abroad, they regard him as an important person that could be influential and dangerous later on. Many former political prisoners got into high level state positions after their release, think of Vaclav Havel. Especially in dictatorships these cases are well known. Therefore: Write a letter to a prisoner of conscience! Your efforts will be rewarded. A postcard is sufficient!

Participate in email Urgent Actions

Email is a quick and cheap medium. If a prisoner of conscience is in direct danger, a large number of people can be reached and mobilised. These can then write a letter of appeal e.g. to the head of state of the respective country by email or normal mail. Furthermore the recipients of such an email receive additional background information on the case.

Do you want to participate in an email urgent action? Then please subscribe to our email newsletter which is published once or twice per month and shortly refers to our reports and cases of appeal on our homepage.

Participate in a Postcard Action

Postcards of protest can effectively support action for political prisoners and other human rights concerns. They have the same effect as pre-printed letters but cost less postal charges and can be produced cheaply. You can also create your own appeal postcards with a graphic computer programme and then photocopy your printed version on 160g



paper. Be creative!

Write to your Member of Parliament or your Government

National governments can effectively work for human rights, e.g. in bilateral talks or international committees. Point out human rights violations to your government representatives and urge them to take action. Inform your members of parliament, party representatives and committee members!

Note: Public authorities – e.g. in Germany – have the obligation to answer to citizens' questions. Link your appeal to a question, e.g. how the Foreign Ministry is planning to take action in a certain case or, how the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is going to consider human rights violations in its development aid etc. – You will receive an answer.

Adopt a Political Prisoner

Human rights work affords a long breath for the solution of the case. Through supporting a case you take over responsibility. Always remember how little it costs to send a letter or to appeal to a politician, but how much hope the prisoner gains from your efforts. Even if you don't receive an answer, be sure that each appeal has an impact. Many regimes ignore prisoners of conscience until they become uncomfortable because of international pressure, e.g. in talks with politicians who raise the topic of these cases.



Therefore adopting a prisoner does not mean to write one single letter, but to keep on fighting for him or her! Write to authorities, representatives of state, Embassies and to the prisoner! Then you can make a change! You can find some examples of individual fates in the rubric “appeals”.

Collect Signatures

Signature-lists are a successful mean to step in for political prisoners. Contact us for lists for different cases, which you can print and e.g. lay out for signature in your community. We are looking forward to receiving the completed or almost completed lists in Frankfurt. Together with an appeal we will then forward them to the main recipient – usually the president of the respective state – and in certain cases we will also send a copy to the respective Embassy or another representative. Do you want to create own signature-lists? Be aware that according to Press Law the signatories have to be named with their address.

Add our link to your Homepage

Please help raise as much attention for human rights violations as possible. We would be glad, if you add our link to your homepage. You can download ISHR’s logo [here](#).

- www.ishr.org or
- www.igfm.de or
- humanrights-online.org



Why Human Rights Work? **Experience shows: Human Rights Work helps!**

Since its foundation in 1972, ISHR has supported non-violent prisoners of conscience - in the past mostly in Eastern-Europe, today in Vietnam, Pakistan, China und numerous other countries. Even if not all prisoners that were supported by ISHR have been previously released from prison, the number of successes is very high. Others were granted better conditions of imprisonment or better medical care.

Nevertheless, the general goal is: If through this work only one life can be saved or if for one person abuse is stopped and he wins back his hope and dignity, if only one single person re-gains his or her freedom - then it was worth it.

The Efforts are worth it

Even dictatorships can be influenced through public opinion in other countries. One example is the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, where at the beginning of the 1980s thousands of political prisoners were maltreated and tortured in camps. The Communist Party still rules Vietnam but not at last through international protest and pressure, did the powerful introduce more subtle methods of exerting their power. The number of abuses has decreased tremendously.

Also the folders of the BStU (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the National Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic) show that human rights work can have a real impact. They demonstrate how a totalitarian regime like the GDR feels insulted by the publication of the conditions in their prisons. They also show that the emergence that the discrimination of people wanting to leave the GDR was ordered by the state, was extremely embarrassing for GDR-leadership. The peaceful revolution in the former GDR is one of the best proofs that citizen's efforts can really change something. Join us!