



STUDENT GROUP STARTER GUIDE

FALL 2017
Everything you need to get started



WELCOME TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA!

Across the globe, young people have always been at the forefront of social change – and student activism is at the heart of Amnesty International. In 1961, as young people across the southern United States were leading sit-ins and nonviolent protests to end racial segregation, two students in Portugal were arrested for raising their glasses in a toast to freedom. This wrongful imprisonment ignited the flame that fires our work, and built Amnesty International into what it is today.

Amnesty International is effective because of people like you. By joining Amnesty International, you join a community of individuals who care passionately and act fiercely. We are a movement of everyday people who take injustice personally – and together we change the world.

The fight for justice begins with building the human rights movement in your community and

on your campus. By building a strong team, learning about human rights issues, and developing your skills as an activist and organizer, you'll mobilize your community to be a powerful force for dignity and justice.

We commit to helping you along your path as a leader for human rights. By committing to being an active Amnesty member, you'll gain valuable skills and tangible leadership experience through training and mentorship. You'll be part of a movement of millions of young people raising their voices around the world, and we're here to guide and support you. This guide will get you started and offers you steps to getting your group off the ground. Thank you for joining us, and welcome to the Amnesty International family!

Amnesty International USA Youth & Student Program
youth@aiusa.org



ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

We've been fighting bad guys since 1961.



Amnesty International is a global movement of millions of people demanding human rights for all people – no matter who they are or where they are. We work to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth, and dignity are denied.

Our vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other internationally recognized human rights standards. We are funded by members and people like you, and we are independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion. No government is beyond scrutiny. No situation is beyond hope.

Amnesty International uses a three-prong method to effectively protect human rights:

Research: Our crisis response teams and researchers travel to affected areas around the world to uncover individual human rights abuses.

Mobilization: Our campaign teams use this research to educate the public and give activists the information and tools they need.

Advocacy: Our staff and volunteer leaders engage in direct advocacy with policy makers in the U.S., while we rally grassroots activists from all 50 states to demand protection for human rights in the U.S. and around the world.

10 STEPS TO STARTING AN AMNESTY STUDENT GROUP

1. REGISTER YOUR GROUP

- Registration is simple, quick, and essential. When you register, you gain access to the resources and support that will help you succeed, including group orientation and materials, support for working on priority human rights issues, and information on regional and national conferences. If you haven't already, go to amnestyusa.org/register and fill out the registration form. If you need to update any of your contact information throughout the year, email youth@aiusa.org. Remember, re-registration happens every spring!

2. GET CONNECTED

- When you register your group, you'll be contacted by an AIUSA Field Organizer. Field Organizers are staff members who have a wealth of experience in grassroots organizing, and they'll help you get in touch with other member leaders in your area who will offer you the support that you need to make a difference for human rights. Make sure to connect with your Field Organizer and other local leaders regularly for mentorship, training, country and issue expertise and legislative advocacy support.

3. RECRUIT A FACULTY ADVISOR

- Find a teacher, professor, or other faculty member who you know cares about human rights, and ask them to be a part of your group. A strong Faculty Advisor can help you interact with your school's administration, recruit new members, and be a valuable member of your team.

4. GET RECOGNIZED

- Getting recognized by your school as an official Amnesty International group can help you organize events, raise money, and more. Every school has a different set of rules for how to create a student group, so work with your Faculty Advisor to find out what your school's policies and procedures are. Ask your Field Organizer for support if you run into challenges or need anything, such as sample constitutions or tips for navigating your school's policies.

5. BUILD YOUR GROUP

- Reach out to your network to find allies and people interested in human rights. Ask professors and teachers to announce the group, especially those who teach related courses. Ask your friends and classmates to join you, and promote the group by putting up posters, sending messages to email lists, and using social media (ask your Field Organizer for the logo and AI graphics, which will help grab attention). One of the best ways to inspire others is to share what has you fired up and why you're inspired to take action!

6. SCHEDULE YOUR FIRST MEETING

- Pick a date, reserve a room, and start promoting! Your first meeting is your opportunity to tell as many people as possible why you care about human rights, why you chose to be a group leader with Amnesty International, and to motivate them to join you in our mission to change the world. This meeting should be at a time that works for a large number of people on campus and should introduce people to Amnesty International, the issues we work on and how their involvement can make a difference.

7. CREATE YOUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

- At Amnesty, we believe that one person can make a difference, and when we join together with other activists we change the world. Find other students who care about human rights and justice, ask them to come to your first meeting, and create a plan for sharing leadership. Including others from the start and constantly looking for leadership qualities in others will not only help you succeed this year, it will also ensure that your legacy lasts and your group stays strong long after you graduate.

8. LEARN ABOUT THE ISSUES

- Spend some time with your leadership team to learn about AIUSA's priority campaigns and programmatic areas. You can find information on the website at www.amnestyusa.org/our-work.

9. PLAN YOUR YEAR

- What is your vision for the human rights movement on your campus? In your community? Throughout the world? If you're strategic about mapping out your year, you can make that vision a reality. Work with your Field Organizer to learn more about AIUSA's priority issues and campaigns, tools and resources available to you, and key calendar dates (including state, regional and national conferences!), and you'll be successful as you organize for human rights.

10. STAY IN TOUCH!

- AIUSA student groups are part of the Amnesty family. Stay connected to your Field Organizer, and let us know what you're working on and what we can do to support you!



THE POWER OF MEMBERSHIP

For \$15, you become an individual dues-paying member of the organization – and as a member, you can shape how it runs. Your annual dues allow you to vote on what issues you think Amnesty should focus on and other policy decisions, as well as vote for the Board of Directors. Be part of the movement today – join us at www.amnestyusa.org/join and have your say!



YOUR FIRST MEETING

Your first meeting is a chance to excite and inspire potential members of your group, and find out who is interested in joining you.



Promote your first meeting far and wide - this is the time to introduce people to AIUSA. Here's a sample meeting agenda:

1. Welcome to Amnesty International! (20 min)
 - Start off with something exciting and inspirational, like [this video](#).
 - Introduce yourself and why you wanted to start a group. Ask folks to introduce themselves and what inspired them to come.
2. What is Amnesty International (15 min)
 - Use the AIUSA website (www.amnestyusa.org) to introduce what AIUSA is working on. Review our key areas of work with the group.
 - Explain what AIUSA student groups do. Your Field Organizer can help you prepare for this ahead of your first meeting.
 - Share the current Activism Guide with the group and talk about what's coming up on the calendar.
3. Make a Plan (20 min)
 - Which issues are folks excited to work on? Consider breaking out into smaller groups for discussion (and then sharing back with the bigger group). Try to keep this part engaging and hear from as many people as possible.
 - Decide when you'll meet next, and make a list of anything that needs done before then. Remember to delegate – shared leadership is the foundation to a strong group.

GET IT SCHEDULED

Pick a day and time that you know will work for a lot of people, reserve a room, and then begin planning and outreach. Use your school's bulletin board or events calendar, put up fliers and posters, and talk it up!

BRING FOOD

Lure people with food, and then captivate them with your passion to fight for human rights.

FIND FACULTY ALLIES

Ask teachers who might be interested to promote your meeting, and ask if you can speak in their class for a few minutes. Faculty members and teachers at your school can even offer extra credit for attending Amnesty meetings - ask them.

GATHER MATERIALS

Your Field Organizer can help you get materials, and don't forget a sign up sheet!

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

A culture of shared leadership – where everyone has a role to play – helps create a sense of ownership for the group’s success.



Once you have a core group of members, it is time to start creating the leadership structure that will work for your group. There are many different leadership structures, and you should make changes and adjustments that fit your group. The important thing is to make sure roles are well-defined and that key tasks are getting done. Here are some suggested roles for your group, and keep in mind that each leadership role could have a team working with them. This gives all members a way to be involved in the group’s success.

- Group Coordinators / Co-Coordinator are responsible for organizing, leading and maintaining the group. Group Coordinators are the primary liaison between the group, the school, and AIUSA.
- Urgent Action Coordinators are responsible for receiving [Urgent Actions](#) and bringing them to the group.
- Treasurers manage the group’s finances, apply for funding, and spearhead fundraisers for the group.
- Secretaries take notes at meetings, send out email updates and reminders, and support group logistics.
- Publicity & Outreach Coordinators promote the group on campus using fliers, student newspapers, social media and other outlets. They announce meetings, invite new members and advertise events and actions.
- Campaign Coordinators focus on an AIUSA campaign or issue. They educate the group about the role and coordinate actions. This role could be ongoing or short-term.

MAKE DECISIONS TOGETHER

From leadership roles to issue selection, your group will have a lot to decide on. As a group, discuss different ways of making decisions and come to an agreement. Empower group members to share their perspectives, encourage equitable participation, and check in regularly to see if the process is working for the group.

SHARE LEADERSHIP

Part of leadership is letting other people lead. Make it a point to share leadership not only among the official roles, but with all group members. For example, the Publicity & Outreach Coordinator can work with a team of members who all support publicity and outreach. Or, the Urgent Action Coordinator role could rotate among different members each month. Every meeting, event and action is an opportunity for a new leader to be building their skills, and these leaders will be needed when you move on.

**"WHEN THE
WORLD IS
SILENT, EVEN
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BECOMES
POWERFUL."**

**MALALA
YOUSAFZAI**