

International Youth Day - winging it for freedom

Young people from across the globe have joined Amnesty International (AI) in a creative celebration of International Youth Day to demand freedom of expression in Belarus.

AI Youth activists from South Africa to South Korea came together at the organisation's International Council Meeting in Mexico to create a symbolic representation of freedom to support prisoner of conscience Zmitser Dashkevich.

The youth opposition leader, who was imprisoned for expressing his views, has come to symbolise the problems of harassment and intimidation faced by young activists around the world.

Young people like Zmitser Dashkevich, at the forefront of social activism, are often the first to be silenced. In Belarus, AI has observed an increasing number of arrests of youth activists. Many students were expelled from universities as a result of their political activities during and after the last presidential elections.

The Youth delegates crafted an origami bird of peace nearly two metres in length. The paper bird will soon be winging its way to Minsk calling for Zmitser's release from prison. The action is part of a campaign that has seen 6,500 paper birds already sent to Belarus.

Young people are a powerful voice with a key role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights. Young people bring renewed creativity and energy to campaigning.

This action, based around the simple act of turning folded paper into a powerful symbol, has created a global consciousness among young activists of their unique potential to create change.

This is one of many youth-led actions taking place across the world on 12 August: a celebration of positive action for human rights by young people, for young people.

AI Youth activism around the world

■ [AI Peru: gun swap facility where children swap their violent toys with non-violent toys](#)

■ [AI Netherlands: anti-discrimination video in solidarity with Riga and Warsaw Pride](#)

Take Action:

[Free Zmitser Dashkevich](#)