



Institutions - government, churches, industries, and the like - have properly no other function than to contribute to human freedom; and in so far as they fail, on the whole, to perform this function, they are wrong and need reconstruction.

(Charles Horton Cooley)

Prisoner of conscience (POC) is a term coined by [Peter Benenson](#) in a 28 May 1961 article ("[Prisoners of Conscience](#)") for the [Observer](#) newspaper. Most often associated with the human rights organisation [Amnesty International](#), the term can refer to anyone imprisoned because of their [race](#), religion, or political views. It also refers to those who have been imprisoned and/or persecuted for the [non-violent](#) expression of their conscientiously held beliefs.

Definition

The article "[The Forgotten Prisoners](#)" by [Peter Benenson](#), published in [The Observer](#) 28 May 1961, launched the campaign "Appeal for Amnesty 1961" and first defined a "prisoner of conscience".

[2]

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Any person who is physically restrained (by imprisonment or otherwise) from expressing (in any form of

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The primary goal for this year-long campaign, founded by the English lawyer [Peter Benenson](#) and a small group of writers, academics and lawyers including

[Quaker](#)

peace activist

[Eric Baker](#)

, was to identify individual prisoners of conscience around the world and then campaign for their release. In early 1962, the campaign had received enough public support to become a permanent organization and was renamed

[Amnesty International](#)

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Under British law, [Amnesty International](#) was classed as a political organisation and therefore excluded from tax-free charity status. [\[3\]](#)

To work around this, the "Fund for the Persecuted" was established in 1962 to receive donations to support prisoners and their families. The name was later changed to the "

[Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund](#)

" and is now a separate and independent charity which provides relief and rehabilitation grants to prisoners of conscience in the UK and around the world.

[\[4\]](#)

Amnesty International has, since its founding, pressured governments to release those persons it considers to be prisoners of conscience. [\[5\]](#) Governments, conversely, tend to deny that the specific prisoners identified by Amnesty International are, in fact, being held on the grounds Amnesty claims; they allege that these prisoners pose genuine threats to the security of their countries. [\[6\]](#)

The phrase is now widely used in political discussions to describe a [political prisoner](#) , whether or not Amnesty International has specifically adopted the case, although the phrase has a different scope and definition than that of political prisoner.

[7]

Current Amnesty International prisoners of conscience

Below is an incomplete list of individuals that Amnesty International considers to be prisoners of conscience, organized by country.

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[Azerbaijan](#) - [Anar Bayramli](#) ; [8] [Ramin Bayramov](#) ; [8] [Vidadi Isgandarov](#) ; [9] [Taleh Khasmammadov](#)

[8]

-

[Bahrain](#) - [Mahdi Abu Deeb](#) ; [10] [Yousef al-Mahafdha](#) ; [11] [Nabeel Rajab](#) ; [12] [Jalila al-Salman](#)

;

[10]

; [Mohammad Sanad al-Makina](#)

[13]

and the

[Bahrain Thirteen](#)

:
[Abdulhadi al-Khawaja](#)
,
[Hassan Mushaima](#)
,
[Abdelwahab Hussain](#)
, [Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja](#),
[Abdel-Jalil al-Singace](#)
, [Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad](#), [Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad](#), [Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri](#), [Mohammad Hassan Jawwad](#), [Mohammad Ali Ridha Isma'il](#), [Abdullah al-Mahroos](#), [Abdul-Hadi Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher](#),
[Ebrahim Sharif](#)
, [Salah Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja](#)
[\[14\]](#)

-
[Belarus](#) - [Mikalay Autukhovich](#) ; [\[15\]](#) [Ales Bialiatski](#) ; [\[16\]](#) [Zmitser Dashkevich](#) ; [\[17\]](#) [Iryna Khalip](#)

;
[\[17\]](#)
[Eduard Lobau](#)
,
[\[17\]](#)
[Uladzimir Niaklajeu](#)
,
[\[17\]](#)
[Pavel Sevyarynets](#)
,
[\[18\]](#)
[Mikola Statkevich](#)
[\[17\]](#)
[Anton Suryapin](#)
[\[19\]](#)

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[Cambodia](#) - [Yorm Bopha](#) [20]

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[Cuba](#) - [Antonio Michel Lima Cruz](#) ; [21] [Marcos MáiqueL Lima Cruz](#) [21]

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[Egypt](#) - [Alber Saber Ayad](#) [22]

-

[Eritrea](#) - [Aster Fissehatsion](#) ; [23] [Dawit Isaak](#) ; [24] [Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo](#) ; [23] [Petros Solomon](#)

;

[23]

[Haile Woldetensae](#)

[23]

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[Ethiopia](#) - [Eskinder Nega](#) [25]

-

[The Gambia](#) - [Ebrima Manneh](#) [26]

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[India](#) - [Binayak Sen](#) ; [27] [Soni Sori](#) [28]

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[Indonesia](#) - [Alexander Aan](#) ; [29] [Filep Karma](#) ; [30] [Tajul Muluk](#) ; [31] [Joni Sinay](#) ; [32]
[Johan Teterissa](#)
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[Iran](#) - [Bahman Ahmadi Amou'i](#) ; [34] [Zhila Bani-Yaghoub](#) ; [35] [Arzhang Davoodi](#) ; [36] [K ouhyar Goudarzi](#)

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[37]
[Mohammad Sadigh Kabudvand](#)

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[38]
[Zhila Karamzadeh-Makvandi](#)

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[39]
[Hossein Ronaghi Maleki](#)

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[40]
[Narges Mohammadi](#)

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[41]
[Parvin Mokhtareh](#)

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[37]
[Abdollah Momeni](#)

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[42]
[Sayed Ziaoddin \(Zia\) Nabavi](#)

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[43]
[Mansour Osanlou](#)

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[44]
[Jafar Panahi](#)

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[45]
[Isa Saharkhiz](#)

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[35]
[Mohammad Seifzadeh](#)

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[46]
[Reza Shahabi](#)

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[47]
[Abdolfattah Soltani](#)

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[46]
[Nasrin Sotoudeh](#)

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[48]
[Heshmat Tabarzadi](#)

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[\[49\]](#)

[Majid Tavakoli](#)

[\[50\]](#)

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[Israel](#) - [Ahmad Qatamesh](#) ; [\[51\]](#) [Bassem al-Tamimi](#) [\[52\]](#)

-

[Kuwait](#) - [Hamad al-Naqi](#) [\[53\]](#)

-

[Kyrgyzstan](#) - [Azimzhan Askarov](#) [\[54\]](#)

-

[North Korea](#) - [Oh Hae-won](#) ; [\[55\]](#) [Oh Kyu-won](#) [\[56\]](#)

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[People's Republic of China](#) - [Chen Wei](#) ; [57] [Dhondup Wangchen](#) ; [58] [Ershidin Israil](#) ; [59]

[Gao Zhisheng](#)

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[Guo Xiaojun](#)

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[Liu Xiaobo](#)

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[Mao Hengfeng](#)

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[Shi Tao](#)

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[Wang Junling](#)

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[64]

[Wang Xiaodong](#)

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[Russian Federation](#) - [Mikhail Khodorkovsky](#) ; [65] [Platon Lebedev](#) ; [65] members of [Pussy Riot](#)

;
[Maria Alekhina](#)

and

[Nadezhda Tolokonnikova](#)

[66]

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[Saudi Arabia](#) - [Raif Badawi](#) ; [67] [Mohammad bin Saleh al-Bajadi](#) ; [68] [Saud al-Hashimi](#) ; [69]

[Khaled al-Johani](#)

;

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[Hamza Kashgari](#)

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[Sudan](#) - [Ussamah Mohammed](#) ; [73] [Faisal Saleh](#) [74]

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[Syria](#) - [Ali al-Abdullah](#) ; [75] [Mazen Darwish](#) ; [76] [Shibal Ibrahim](#) ; [77] [Riad Seif](#) [78]

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[Thailand](#) - [Somyot Prueksakasemsuk](#) [79]

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[Tunisia](#) - [Ramzi Abcha](#) ; [80] [Ghazi Beji](#) ; [80] [Jabeur Mejri](#) [80]

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[United States](#) - [Kimberly Rivera](#) [81]

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[Uzbekistan](#) - [Azam Farmonov](#) ; [50] [Alisher Karamatov](#) ; [50] [Solijon Abdrahmanov](#) [82]

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[Vietnam](#) - [Cù Huy Hà Vũ](#) ; [83] [Le Cong Dinh](#) ; [84] [Nguyen Dan Que](#) ; [85] [Nguyen Van Hai](#) ; [86] [N](#)

[guyen Van Ly](#)

;

[87]

[Phan Thanh Hai](#)

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[88]

[Ta Phong Tan](#)

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[Vi Duc Hoi](#)

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A **political prisoner** is someone imprisoned because they have opposed or criticized the government responsible.

The term is used by persons or groups challenging the legitimacy of the [detention](#) of a prisoner. Supporters of the term define a political prisoner as someone who is imprisoned for his or her participation in

[political activity](#)

. If a

[political offense](#)

was not the official reason for detention, the term would imply that the detention was motivated by the prisoner's politics.

Various definitions

Some understand the term political prisoner narrowly, equating it with the term [prisoner of conscience](#)

(POC).

[Amnesty International](#)

campaigns for the release of prisoners of conscience, which include both political prisoners as well as those imprisoned for their religious or philosophical beliefs. To reduce controversy, and as a matter of principle, the organization's policy applies only to prisoners who have not committed or advocated violence. Thus, there are political prisoners who do not fit the narrower criteria for POCs. The

organization

defines the differences as follows:

[\[1\]](#)

AI uses the term "political prisoner" broadly. It does not use it, as some others do, to imply that all such prisoners have a special status or should be released. It uses the term only to define a

category of prisoners for whom AI demands a fair and prompt trial. In AI's usage, the term includes any prisoner whose case has a significant political element: whether the motivation of the prisoner's acts, the acts in themselves, or the motivation of the authorities. "Political" is used by AI to refer to aspects of human relations related to "politics": the mechanisms of society and civil order, the principles, organization, or conduct of government or public affairs, and the relation of all these to questions of language, ethnic origin, sex or religion, status or influence (among other factors). The category of political prisoners embraces the category of [prisoners of conscience](#), the only prisoners who AI demands should be immediately and unconditionally released, as well as people who resort to criminal violence for a political motive. In AI's use of the term, here are some examples of political prisoners:

- a person accused or convicted of an ordinary crime carried out for political motives, such as murder or robbery carried out to support the objectives of an opposition group;
- a person accused or convicted of an ordinary crime committed in a political context, such as at a demonstration by a trade union or a peasants' organization;
- a member or suspected member of an armed opposition group who has been charged with treason or "subversion".

Governments often say they have no political prisoners, only prisoners held under the normal criminal law. AI however describes cases like the examples given above as "political" and uses the terms "political trial" and "political imprisonment" when referring to them. But by doing so AI does not oppose the imprisonment, except where it further maintains that the prisoner is a prisoner of conscience, or condemn the trial, except where it concludes that it was unfair.

In the parlance of many political movements that utilize [armed resistance](#), [guerrilla warfare](#), and other forms of political violence, a political prisoner includes people who are imprisoned because they are awaiting trial for, or have been convicted of, actions which states they oppose describe as (accurately or otherwise)

[terrorism](#)

. These movements may consider the actions of political prisoners morally justified against some system of governance, may claim innocence, or have varying understandings of what types of violence are morally and ethically justified. For instance, French

[anarchist](#)

groups typically call the former members of

[Action Directe](#)

held in

[France](#)

political prisoners. While the French government deemed Action Directe illegal, the group fashioned itself as an

[urban guerilla](#)

movement, claiming a legitimate

[armed struggle](#)

. In this sense, "political prisoner" can be used to describe any politically active prisoner who is held in custody for a

[violent action which supporters deem ethically justified](#)

.

Some also include all convicted for [treason](#) and [espionage](#) in the category of political prisoners. Currently, there is still much controversy and debate around how to define this term and which cases to include or exclude.

[\[2\]](#)

Political prisoners can also be imprisoned with no legal veneer by [extrajudicial processes](#) . Some political prisoners need not be imprisoned at all. Supporters of

[Gedhun Choekyi Nyima](#)

in the

[11th Panchen Lama controversy](#)

have called him a "political prisoner", despite the fact that he is not accused of a political offense. He is held under secluded

[house arrest](#)

.

[\[3\]](#)

Political prisoners are also arrested and tried with a veneer of [legality](#) where false [criminal charges](#)

, [manufactured evidence](#)

, and unfair trials ([kangaroo courts](#)

, [show trials](#)

) are used to disguise the fact that an individual is a political prisoner. This is common in situations which may otherwise be decried nationally and internationally as a

[human rights](#)

violation or suppression of a

[political dissident](#)

. A political prisoner can also be someone that has been denied

[bail](#)

unfairly, denied

[parole](#)

when it would reasonably have been given to a prisoner charged with a comparable crime, or special powers may be invoked by the judiciary. Particularly in this latter situation, whether an individual is regarded as a political prisoner may depend upon subjective political perspective or interpretation of the evidence.

[4]

Notable Groups of Political Prisoners

In the [Soviet Union](#), [dubious psychiatric diagnoses](#) were sometimes used to confine political prisoners in the so-called

[hushkas](#)

"[psik](#)

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In [Nazi Germany](#) , ["Night and Fog" prisoners](#) were among the first victims of fascist repression.

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In [North Korea](#) , entire families are jailed in large [political prison camps](#) (called [Kwan-li-so](#)) if one family member is suspected of anti-government sentiments.

[\[5\]](#)

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Around 1000 British convicts sent to Australia in the 1700-1800s. [\[6\]](#)

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Political prisoners sometimes write memoirs of their experiences and resulting insights. See [list of memoirs of political prisoners](#)

. Some of these memoirs have become important political texts.

Famous historic political prisoners

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[Aung San Suu Kyi](#) led the opposition [National League for Democracy](#) which was victorious in [1990 general election](#). Under [General Zia ul Haq](#) . Under jail or house arrest for 15 out of the 21 years from 1990 to 2010. [\[7\]](#)

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[Benazir Bhutto](#) was a political prisoner for four years under [General Zia ul Haq](#) . [\[8\]](#)

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[Antonio Gramsci](#) was a leftist Italian writer and political activist who was jailed and spent 8 years in prison. He was released conditionally due to his health situation and died shortly after. [\[9\]](#)

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[Kim Dae Jung](#) served one term (1976–1979) and in 1980 was exiled to the United States, but returned in 1985 and became President of [South Korea](#) in 1998. [\[10\]](#)

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[Thomas Mapfumo](#) was imprisoned without charges in 1979 by the [Rhodesian](#) government in what is now [Zimbabwe](#) for his Shona-language music calling for revolution. [\[11\]](#)

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[Benigno Aquino Jr.](#) of the [Philippines](#) was imprisoned during the martial law regime of [Ferdinand Marcos](#)

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[Mahatma Gandhi](#) was imprisoned numerous times by the British both in South Africa and India.

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[Eugene Debs](#) , leader of the [Socialist Party of the United States](#) , was imprisoned by the Americans for his opposition to the First World War.

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tokyo university Daw Aung San Su Kyi's Lecture (tun wai tokyo)

{youtube}311BI-5PPyo{/youtube}

Υ.Γ.: η φωτό από [εδώ](#) και τα λήμματα από [εδώ](#) και [εδώ](#) .

