

Making Sense of Human Rights Diplomacy

Symbolism or Concrete Impact?

Online Appendix

Rachel Myrick

Jeremy Weinstein

Duke University

Stanford University

rachel.myrick@duke.edu

jweinst@stanford.edu

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I. #Freethe20 “Short List” and “Long List”

This appendix contains a “short list” of the women featured in the #Freethe20 campaign and a “long list” of women considered for inclusion in the campaign. The tables indicate the country in which the women were imprisoned (the “target country”), and each woman’s occupational background and status three years after the launch of the campaign (in September 2018).

Women Featured in #Freethe20 (“Short List”)

Name	Country	Background	Status at 3 years
Khadija Ismayilova	Azerbaijan	Investigative journalist	Released
Leyla Yunus	Azerbaijan	Human rights activist	Released
Liu Xia	China	Poet, writer	Released [†]
Gao Yu	China	Journalist	Released
Wang Yu	China	Human rights activist	Released
Sanaa Seif	Egypt	Student activist	Released
Aster Yohannes	Eritrea	Wife of opposition leader	Not Released
Meron Alemayehu	Ethiopia	Opposition party member	Released
Blen Mesfin	Ethiopia	Opposition party member	Released
Nigist Wondifraw	Ethiopia	Opposition party member	Released
Bahareh Hedayat	Iran	Student activist	Released
Phyoe Phyoe Aung	Myanmar/Burma	Student Activist	Released
Naw Ohn Hla	Myanmar/Burma	Human rights activist	Released
Unnamed Woman	North Korea	N/A	N/A
Nadiya Savchenko	Russia	Pilot	Released
Rasha Chorbaji	Syria	Wife of opposition member	Released
Matlyuba Kamilova	Uzbekistan	Human rights activist	Released
Maria Lourdes Afiuni Mora	Venezuela	Judge	Not Released [†]
Bui Thi Minh Hang	Vietnam	Activist, blogger	Released
Ta Phong Tan	Vietnam	Activist, blogger	Released

[†] Indicates woman was on house arrest

Women Considered for #Freethe20 (“Long List”)

Name	Country	Background	Status at 3 years
Khadija Ismayilova	Azerbaijan	Investigative journalist	Released
Leyla Yunus	Azerbaijan	Human rights activist	Released
Gheda Jamsheer	Bahrain	Author, blogger	Released
Jaleela al-Sayeed Ahmed	Bahrain	Blogger	Not Released
Odile Niyonkuru	Burundi	Opposition party member	Not Released
Liu Xia	China	Poet, writer	Released [†]
Gao Yu	China	Journalist	Released
Wang Yu	China	Human rights activist	Released
Tania Bruguera	Cuba	Artist	Released pre-F20
Sanaa Seif	Egypt	Student activist	Released
Yara Sallam	Egypt	Student activist	Released
Aster Fashatsion	Eritrea	Opposition party member	Not Released
Aster Yohannes	Eritrea	Opposition party member	Not Released
Meron Alemayehu	Ethiopia	Opposition party member	Released
Reyot Alemu	Ethiopia	Writer, editor	Released pre-F20
Mehlet Fantahum	Ethiopia	Zone 9 Blogger	Released pre-F20
Edom Kassaye	Ethiopia	Zone 9 Blogger	Released pre-F20
Blen Mesfin	Ethiopia	Opposition party member	Released
Nigist Wondifraw	Ethiopia	Opposition party member	Released
Irom Sharmila	India	Activist, poet	Not Released
Bahareh Hedayat	Iran	Student activist	Released
Wagae Charaf	Morocco	Human rights activist	Released
Phyoe Phyoe Aung	Myanmar/Burma	Student activist	Released
Naw Ohn Hla	Myanmar/Burma	Human rights activist	Released
Aasia Bibi	Pakistan	Accused of blasphemy	Not Released
Nadiya Savchenko	Russia	Army aviation pilot	Released
Zarema Bagavutdinova	Russia	Human rights activist	Released
Victoire Ingabire	Rwanda	Opposition party member	Not Released
Rania Alabassi	Syria	Dentist	Not Released
Rasha Chorbaji	Syria	Wife of opposition member	Released
Razan Zeitouneh	Syria	Human rights lawyer	Not Released
Safaa Lala	Syria	Mother/grandmother	Not Released
Asma Khalifa al-Suwaidi	United Arab Emirates	Sister of political activist	Released pre-F20
Mariam Khalifa al-Suwaidi	United Arab Emirates	Sister of political activist	Released pre-F20
Alyaziyah Khalifa al-Suwaidi	United Arab Emirates	Sister of political activist	Released pre-F20
Diloram Abdukadirova	Uzbekistan	Witness to massacre	Not Released
Matlyuba Kamilova	Uzbekistan	Human rights activist	Released
Maria Lourdes Afiuni Mora	Venezuela	Judge	Not Released [†]
Bui Thi Minh Hang	Vietnam	Activist, blogger	Released
Ta Phong Tan	Vietnam	Activist, blogger	Released

II. Discussion of #Freethe20 “Short List” selection process

For the first comparison group, we compare outcomes of women featured in #Freethe20 to a longer list of women initially considered by the US State Department to be featured in the campaign. This section provides more detail on this selection process. Overall, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that government officials wanted to feature a range of different cases and did not simply select the “easiest cases.” However, case selection was not random, and we cannot rule out the possibility that certain cases were excluded from the short list on the basis of the U.S. government’s bilateral relationship with the target country.¹ Below we identify and discuss the main potential selection concerns in narrowing the “long list” to a “short list”:

Relative to the “long list”, did the #Freethe20 “short list” only feature women...

- **From a certain region of the world?**

Both the short and long lists featured women from four regions of the world: Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa. Government officials emphasized that in producing the short list they “were looking for diversity in terms of regional balance” (Interview 1). In many cases, one or two women from each country were selected from a longer list. Half of the countries ultimately targeted in the #Freethe20 campaign—Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Russia, Syria, and Uzbekistan—appeared on both lists. A key difference, however, between the short and long list was that a higher percentage of women on the “short list” were from Asian countries relative to the “long list.” This is likely due to the fact that the campaign featured three political prisoners from China, because #Freethe20 was initially conceived as a way to highlight recent arrests of female activists in China in the lead up to the Beijing+20 congress in fall of 2015. As one of our interviewees noted, “In the early conversations, our discussion was about whether or not the campaign would specifically target the Chinese or expand more broadly. For a variety of reasons... we decided to broaden the aperture of the campaign” (Interview 2).

- **From countries with weak/less powerful states?**

Another selection concern we might have is that the United States selected cases from “weaker” states that they were better able to coerce these states into releasing political prisoners. This does not appear to be the case from looking at the list of #Freethe20 target countries, which includes powerful countries like China and Russia. A more objective way to assess relative state power in international relations is to use the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC), an index of state strength based on military and economic indicators (Singer and Stuckey 1972). Looking at the average CINC score of countries on the short list (0.028) and countries on the long list (0.012) reveals there is not a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.44$) between the two. If anything, countries on the #Freethe20 short list seem to be slightly more powerful on average, although it is difficult to draw inferences from this small sample.

¹For this reason, we construct a second comparison group based on Amnesty International reports. This second group identifies female political prisoners from the same countries targeted by #Freethe20 (see manuscript and Appendix Section III-V).

- **From highly autocratic countries?**

In narrowing from the long list to a short list, another concern we had is that the United States was only targeting highly autocratic countries, which are easier to “name and shame” without pushback from the international community. Our interviewees expressed that this was unlikely: “We wanted to hit some countries that weren’t consistently being showcased in terms of their crackdown on political prisoners. We were looking at some of these countries that had negative human rights records but weren’t always in the spotlight for it. We also couldn’t leave off certain countries, like Syria and Iran, who were some of the worst that we continued to highlight” (Interview 1). The fact that countries like Myanmar/Burma, Russia, and Venezuela made the “short list” shows that the campaign did not only highlight pure autocracies. To more systematically compare how autocratic countries on the short and long list are, we look at the average Polity score in each group in 2015 (Marshall and Gurr 2018). Polity scores measure regime authority on a scale from -10 (completely autocratic) to 10 (completely democratic). While the average #Freethe20 target country was slightly more autocratic than the average country on the long list (an average Polity2 score of -4 vs. -3.2), this difference is not statistically significant ($p = 0.75$) and is not substantively large in magnitude.

- **From countries with whom the U.S. had no meaningful diplomatic relationship?**

It is also thought to be much easier politically to “name and shame” countries with which a country has little to no meaningful diplomatic relations because there are not concerns about competing economic and security interests. There were certainly countries on the #Freethe20 short list, like Iran and Syria, that fit this criteria. Yet there were also countries, like Ethiopia and Vietnam, on the list with which the U.S. had a more productive bilateral relationship.

However, it is clear from our interviews that featuring some countries in #Freethe20 was met with dissent in the “internal policymaking conversation” (Interview 6). As one interviewee noted, “There was a clear bureaucratic component of this that we can’t ignore. Embassies have other equities, so this is something that we [had to balance]” (Interview 2). For example, cases in Bahrain were likely not included in the short list due to the strategic importance of Bahrain in U.S. military presence in the Gulf Region. In some instances, however, policymakers were able to effectively push back against internal resistance. One such example is the case of Sanaa Seif in Egypt, which was ultimately featured as part of #Freethe20 despite competing equities in the US-Egypt bilateral relationship. However, our concern that competing equities may prevented some prisoners from being featured in #Freethe20 is the primary reason why we pursue a second strategy of assembling a database of female political prisoners based on reports from Amnesty International. Using this second strategy, we are able to hold fixed the set of target countries.

- **From countries where there was recently a high-level meeting between the United States and the target country?**

Another possible selection concern is that high-level diplomatic meetings between senior US officials in the summer prior to the launch of the #Freethe20 campaign could have informed which “long list” countries were ultimately targeted in the “short list.”² Although we cannot fully rule

²We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

out this concern, we do not find any evidence that high-level diplomatic meetings during the planning period for #Freethe20 (June 1, 2015 through September 1, 2015) were correlated with the likelihood that a state was featured in the campaign.

The State Department website reports travels of the president and the secretary of state, as well as visits from foreign heads of states.³ According to these travel logs, in the summer of 2015, President Obama traveled to Ethiopia (July 24), Kenya (July 24-26), and Germany (July 28). Secretary of State John Kerry met with the Iranian foreign minister in Austria (June 26-July 14), and met with other foreign ministers in Egypt (August 2-3), Qatar (August 3), Singapore (August 4), Malaysia (August 4-6), Vietnam (August 6-8), and Cuba (August 14). During the same time period, heads of state visited the United States from the Netherlands (June 1), Brazil (June 29-30), Ukraine (July 13), Nigeria (July 20-21), Saudi Arabia (September 4), and Spain (September 15).

Five of seventeen countries involved in these high-level visits were featured on either the “short list” or “long list.” For two of the countries (Ethiopia and Egypt), women were featured on both lists. Therefore, any potential selection concerns lie with the three other countries that appear only on one list: Iran (short list), Vietnam (short list), and Cuba (long list). Since the meetings with the Iranian delegation in Austria occurred in the context of negotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), we think it is highly unlikely that political prisoners were a talking point during these meetings. The JCPOA negotiations were strictly focused on Iran’s nuclear program rather than on other issue areas like transnational terrorism or human rights abuses (Sherman 2018). It is possible that political prisoner cases were raised in private during US high-level meetings in Cuba (August 14) and Vietnam (August 6-8). However, the “long list” case in Cuba (Tania Brugera) was largely resolved prior to the high-level meeting, when her passport was returned in July 2015 (Miranda 2015). This is why we exclude the Cuban case from Comparison Group #1, since the “release” occurred prior to the #Freethe20 launch. The Vietnam cases are in our analysis because they were not resolved until September 2015 (Ta Phong Tan) and February 2017 (Bui Thi Minh Hang). However, the results in the paper are robust to their exclusion.

- **Whose cases were “easy” to resolve or already had a lot of international attention?**

A final concern is that policymakers selected cases to feature that were more likely to be resolved and/or already were receiving much more international attention. When we pressed this point with interviewees, they did not believe their selection process was designed to focus only on “easy cases.” As one government official noted, “I don’t think we just went after low-hanging fruit in terms of who was already being profiled” (Interview 1). Setting aside the country of origin, there do not seem to be systematic differences in the backgrounds of women featured on each list. On both the short list and the long list, roughly half of the women were activists and roughly one quarter were political figures (e.g., members of an opposition party). Both lists also feature a handful of artists, writers, and bloggers.

In terms of prior attention, all of these cases considered were already being tracked by one of the regional offices within the US State Department and—to varying extents—by other non-

³This data is available on the US State Department website at: <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels>.

governmental organizations working on political prisoners such as Freedom Now, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. However, there was variation on both the long and short list about how much public attention the cases had previously received. Both lists featured “high profile” cases and relatively unknown political prisoners. The mix of cases on the short list ensured that #Freethe20 highlighted some “cases of individuals...who were not on anyone’s radar” (Interview 1).

III. Coding Rules: Individuals in Urgent Action Reports

Step 1: Subset database of Urgent Actions from 2000-2015 (source: Kelley and Nielson (2015)) to #Freethe20 countries: Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Myanmar, Russia, Syria, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

Step 2: Using the **top_url** field, find the associated “Urgent Action” text on Amnesty International’s website that corresponds to the relevant index number (**id_no**).

- Each report is associated with a unique index number, and each case is associated with a unique UA number (**ua_no**). When an individual appears multiple times in the dataset, there are typically multiple unique index numbers but only one UA number.
- The **top_url** field navigates to a short description of the Urgent Action (see Sample 1). On *Sample 1*, the index number is MDE 13/063/2008 and UA number is visible on the attached PDF.

Step 3: Identify whether individual listed in urgent action is a male or female. To determine gender of the individual:

- UAs sometimes include an (**f**) for female or an (**m**) for male next to each name.
 - In the easiest case, this is listed in the title of the UA. Otherwise it may be listed in the short description of the UA (**top_url**) or within the PDF attached to the document.
- Where not coded, the gender of the individual may be otherwise evident from the pronouns in either the short description or the full PDF text. (Ex: *Sample 1*, *Sample 2*)
- If none of these strategies work, search for political prisoner’s name online to determine gender. (Ex: *Sample 3*)

For each entry:

- If male, input a “0” in the **female** column and add full name to **name** column. If female, input a “1” in the **female** column and add full **name** to name column.
- If individuals are unnamed, leave **female** column blank and add “Unnamed” to **name** column. (Ex: *Sample 4*)
- If there are multiple individuals listed in the UA, duplicate the full row in the spreadsheet, adding an additional row for each name (Ex: *Sample 2*, *Sample 3*).

Step 4: Update Urgent Action data from January 1, 2015 through September 15, 2015 (announcement of #Freethe20). Search for recent Urgent Actions in the “Campaigns” section of Amnesty International’s website: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/>. Subset search to Free the 20 countries and collect recent UAs for these countries from January 1, 2015 through September 15, 2015.

Step 5: Update data with new entries for these more UAs. Consistent with original database from Kelley and Nielson (2015), further code the following binary variables based on the PDF report for each UA:

access_to_medical: in need of access to medical care
denial_medical: denial of medical care
amputation: amputation
arbitrary_arrest: arbitrary arrest
death_penalty: death penalty
death_threats: death threats
death_detention: death in detention
deportation: deportation
detention_notrial: detention without trial
displacement: displacement
enforced_disappearance: forced disappearance
fear_safety: fear of safety
fear_execution: fear of execution
fear_flogging: fear of flogging
fear_force_return: fear of forced return
fear_unfair_trial: fear of unfair trial
free_expression: arrested/detained/held for free expression
flogging: flogging
harassment: harassment
harsh_prison: harsh prison conditions
health_concern: health concerns
imminent_execution: imminent execution
forced_eviction: forced eviction
incommunicado: incommunicado
intimidation: intimidation
legal_concern: legal concern
medical_concern: medical concern
no_medical: no medical treatment
other_ill: other illness
poc: prisoner of conscience
poss_death_incust: possible death in custody
poss_poc: possible prisoner of conscience
poss_unfair_trial: possible unfair trial
stoning: stoning
transgender: transgender
unfair_trial: unfair trial
unlaw_killing: unlawful killing
fear_of_torture: fear of torture
torture: torture

IRAN: FURTHER INFORMATION ON PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE/FEAR OF TORTURE OR OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

14 April 2008, Index number: MDE 13/063/2008

Women's rights activist **Ronak Safarzadeh**'s trial began on or around 13 March 2008, in a session **her** lawyer attended, where the charges against her were set out. **She** is accused of being mohareb (at enmity with God), which can carry the death penalty. No further court dates have been announced.

Choose a language to view report

English ▼

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Figure 1: Amnesty International Urgent Action Sample 1

Further information on UA: 82/14 Index: ASA 16/023/2014 Myanmar

Date: 3 October 2014

URGENT ACTION

IMPRISONED MEDIA WORKERS' SENTENCES REDUCED

Five media workers from *Unity* newspaper in Myanmar had their sentences reduced on appeal to seven years' imprisonment. They were jailed in connection with their journalistic activities and are prisoners of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

On 2 October 2014 the Magwe Regional Court in central Myanmar reduced the sentences of *Unity* journalists **Lu Maw Naing, Yarzar Oo, Paing Thet Kyaw, Sithu Soe** and the newspaper's chief executive officer **Tint San** to seven years' imprisonment each. They will all lodge an appeal against their convictions at the Supreme Court in Myanmar's capital, Nay Pyi Taw.

The media workers had been arrested between 31 January and 1 February 2014 after *Unity* published an article on 25 January about an alleged secret chemical weapons factory in Pauk Township, Pakokku District in Magwe Region. They were all charged with "disclosing State secrets, trespassing on the restricted area of the factory, taking photographs and the act of abetting" under Article 3(1) A/9 of Myanmar's Official Secrets Act. On 10 July the Pakokku District Court sentenced them each to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour.

All five men are currently detained at the Pakokku prison in Magwe Region.

Figure 2: Amnesty International Urgent Action Sample 2

Health concern: six imprisoned human rights defenders

Syria

Summary

Amnesty International (AI) is concerned about the health of **Mamun al-Humsi, Riad Seif, ‘Aref Dalilah, Muhammad Ra’dun, Nizar Ristnawi, and Mas’oud Hamid**, human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience in Syria. In addition to their imprisonment solely on the basis of the peaceful expression of their beliefs, the organization has the following concerns:

- **Hunger-strikes:** Mamun al-Humsi and ‘Aref Dalilah have been on hunger-strike since 5 July and 12 July respectively.
- **Incommunicado detention:** Mamun al-Humsi is reportedly held incommunicado at Tishrin Military Hospital. Nizar Ristnawi has reportedly been held incommunicado in Sednaya Prison since his arrest on 18 April 2005. They may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment in incommunicado detention.
- **Lack of medical treatment:** AI is calling for access to full independent medical examinations for Muhammad Ra’dun and Mas’oud Hamid and appropriate treatment (see case details below).

AI calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the six men named above, for access to appropriate medical care where needed and an end to the practice of incommunicado detention.

Figure 3: Amnesty International Urgent Action Sample 3

PUBLIC		AI Index: EUR 46/033/2004
UA 203/04	<u>Fear for safety/Torture and ill-treatment</u>	18 June 2004
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	People of Roma ethnicity in St Petersburg and Pskov regions	
<p>In May 2004 police launched an operation targeting Roma in St Petersburg leading to violations of Roma human rights. In addition, threats of skinhead attacks in Pskov region in north-western Russia have forced Roma to leave their homes due to alleged police failure to protect them. Amnesty International is concerned that Roma people in the area are in serious danger.</p> <p>On 20 May, the St Petersburg police launched "Operation Tabor" ("Operation Gypsy Camp") ostensibly to crack down on theft and begging and make the streets safer for tourists. Police are carrying out checks of registration papers (proof of identity and abode, which all citizens have to carry and which many Roma do not possess), and several hundred people have reportedly been detained. Reportedly, they are mainly Roma, but include some Tajiks and Ukrainians. Amnesty International is seriously concerned that this operation may lead to disproportionate numbers of Roma people being arrested: in custody they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment. A similar operation was launched in Moscow in March 2002, also called "Operation Tabor", in which police detained 140 Roma without registration papers and expelled them from Moscow Region. According to Russian newspapers, from 10-24 July 2002 a further 1,695 Roma without registration documents were detained in an operation called "Tabor-2".</p>		

Figure 4: Amnesty International Urgent Action Sample 4

IV. Coding Rules: Arrest and Release Information

For each female individual in the database described in Section II, we researched and coded arrest and release information using the following six variables and coding rules. Whenever outside research (i.e. beyond what was provided in the Amnesty International Urgent Action(s)) was used to determine arrest or release information, we downloaded and saved the corresponding webpages in PDF files.

prisoner

- Code as a 1 if:
 - The UA reports a detention, arrest, abduction/enforced disappearance, or house arrest of the individual, and the detention lasts more than 2 months.
- Code as a 0 if:
 - The UA does not involve a detention, arrest, disappearance, etc. (ex: a journalist reports threats of violence).
 - The UA involves an arrest or detention that lasts for a few days or weeks (ex: an activist is illegally detained for questioning for 3 days).

start

- Code the month and year when the individual was first detained or arrested. Sources are prioritized in the following order:
 - Information directly from Amnesty International Urgent Actions (this will be almost all cases)
 - Information from reliable sources (official government documents, human rights organizations, newspapers, etc.)
 - Information from less reliable sources (blogs, social media, etc.)
- If available, code a more detailed start date in **start2**.

end

- Code the month and year of the release date. As opposed to the start date, this information will typically require outside research. Sources should be prioritized in the following order.
 - Information directly from Amnesty International Urgent Actions (this is typically in the form of a “Further Information” update that announces the release).
 - Information from reliable sources (official government documents, human rights organizations, newspapers, etc.)
 - Information from less reliable sources (blogs, social media, etc.)
- If the individual is still in prison, died while in prison, or is disappeared, this should be left blank.

- If the individual is detained for less than 2 months, code the corresponding start and end months, but code the **prisoner** variable as 0.
- If available, code a more detailed end date in **end2**.

early_release

- If the individual has a fixed sentence and was released early from that sentence, code a 1.
- If the individual has a fixed sentence and served that full sentence, code a 0.
- If no fixed sentence can be determined, leave this field blank.

not_released

- If the individual is still in prison or is “disappeared”, this should be coded as a 1.
- If the individual has been released, including a release from prison to house arrest, this should be a 0.

any_uncertainty

- If the current state of the individual is uncertain in any way, code as a 1. This may be a case when:
 - The individual is presumed still to be in prison (i.e. there is a fixed sentence, the sentence is not yet completed, and there is no information about an early release). *Note that this will be almost all individuals still in prison unless a very recent article was written about the individual.*
 - The individual is presumed to be released (i.e. presumed to serve a fixed sentence; presumed to be released with a large group of individuals during a presidential pardon), but there is no clear supporting source information. In these cases, include a best estimate of the end date, but code uncertain as 1.
 - The individual is presumed “disappeared” or held in an unknown location (end should be left blank).
- If release dates are coded and supported with either information from the UA or with additional PDFs, this should be a 0.

no_info:

- When there is no information at all on a case (ex: UA only lists the first name of the individual and there are no UAs that provide further information), code as 1. These cases will be excluded from analysis.

V. Comparison of #Freethe20 and Amnesty UA sample

For the second comparison group, we compared outcomes from #Freethe20 with outcomes from political prisoners in the same 13 target countries between 2000 (the earliest case considered by the State Department) and 2015 (the launch of #Freethe20). We compiled data on this group from Amnesty International Urgent Action reports (UAs), using codes from the base dataset (Kelley and Nielson 2015) to categorize the content of the Urgent Actions. **Table 1** shows how the content of UAs differed in the #Freethe20 cases versus the rest of the Amnesty cases.

Table 1: Comparison of #Freethe20 to Amnesty UAs

	Mean (F20)	Mean (Amnesty)	P value (t-test)
Number of UAs	1.84	2.02	0.67
Prisoner of Conscience	0.32	0.21	0.34
Torture Concerns	0.26	0.75	0.00
Death Penalty Concerns	0.00	0.39	0.00
Trial/Legal Concerns	0.21	0.14	0.51
Medical Concerns	0.26	0.14	0.28

The regression analyses in the manuscript control for these different characteristics of the two groups, but it is useful to descriptively show the similarities and differences. Some things to note:

- The primary thing we were interested in is how often a given case appears in Urgent Actions, which could be considered a proxy for international attention to the case. A threat to inference, for example, would be if #Freethe20 women received significantly more international attention prior to September 2015 than comparable political prisoners. However, this does not appear to be the case. There is no statistically significant difference between the two groups with respect to the number times women appeared in Urgent Actions and, if anything, it appears that #Freethe20 cases got less ex-ante international attention.
- There is no statistically significant difference between the two groups with respect to certain elements of their cases, such as trial or legal concerns, medical, or whether or not the cases were labeled as prisoners of conscience.
- Women featured in #Freethe20 were less likely, on average, to be reported as connected to concerns about torture or the death penalty. This is most likely due to the number of Iranian cases in the sample, which were more likely to be reported with death penalty concerns. One woman from Iran is featured in #Freethe20 (roughly 5% of the sample), but 89 women (roughly 15% of the sample) identified as political prisoners via Amnesty UAs are from Iran.

VI. Robustness Checks: Logistic Regression Models

This section contains four robustness checks for our analyses of Comparison Group #2 (the Amnesty International Urgent Action sample) in the manuscript. Based on the imbalances discussed in the previous section, **Table 2** and **Table 3** exclude cases in which there were reports of torture or death penalty concerns, respectively. Finally, **Table 4** adds country-fixed effects to the models to account for unobserved confounders at the country level. Consistent results across all models increase confidence in our conclusion that women featured in the #Freethe20 campaign were more likely to be released relative to comparable female political prisoners imprisoned in the same locations during the same period.

Table 2: Were #Freethe20 women more likely to get released? (No Torture Cases)

	Dependent variable: Release = 1				
		<i>In prison 2000-2015</i>			<i>In prison in 2015</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
#Freethe20	0.653*** (0.126)	0.278** (0.107)	0.488*** (0.139)	0.291** (0.110)	0.586*** (0.121)
Prisoner of Conscience		0.187 (0.123)		0.159 (0.131)	0.105 (0.159)
Any Torture Concerns					
Any Death Penalty Concerns		-0.631*** (0.098)		-0.645*** (0.118)	-0.508*** (0.112)
Any Legal Concerns		-0.164 (0.129)		-0.231* (0.134)	-0.153 (0.136)
Any Medical Concerns		0.012 (0.167)		0.070 (0.170)	0.111 (0.146)
Africa			-0.333 (0.234)	-0.249 (0.182)	0.142 (0.201)
Asia			-0.051 (0.196)	0.039 (0.150)	0.351* (0.179)
Middle East			-0.389** (0.187)	-0.027 (0.156)	0.382* (0.196)
Constant	0.276*** (0.056)	0.659*** (0.084)	0.589*** (0.180)	0.700*** (0.141)	0.131 (0.203)
Observations	72	72	72	72	61
Log Likelihood	-40.172	-15.034	-35.578	-13.077	-0.629
Akaike Inf. Crit.	84.345	42.069	81.157	44.155	19.258

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Were #Freethe20 women more likely to get released? (No Death Penalty Cases)

	Dependent variable: Release = 1				
	<i>In prison 2000-2015</i>			<i>In prison in 2015</i>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
#Freethe20	0.402*** (0.118)	0.253* (0.131)	0.499*** (0.118)	0.337** (0.131)	0.589*** (0.097)
Prisoner of Conscience		0.174** (0.086)		0.104 (0.087)	0.068 (0.075)
Any Torture Concerns		-0.205** (0.103)		-0.218** (0.101)	-0.310*** (0.082)
Any Legal Concerns		0.194* (0.116)		0.134 (0.116)	0.229** (0.096)
Any Medical Concerns		0.040 (0.112)		0.093 (0.111)	-0.033 (0.092)
Africa			-0.185 (0.158)	-0.143 (0.159)	-0.027 (0.111)
Asia			0.086 (0.128)	0.098 (0.126)	0.057 (0.094)
Middle East			0.262** (0.128)	0.253** (0.126)	0.117 (0.101)
Constant	0.493*** (0.041)	0.589*** (0.098)	0.361*** (0.115)	0.483*** (0.143)	0.277** (0.120)
Observations	157	157	157	157	96
Log Likelihood	-108.777	-102.388	-101.881	-96.945	-11.126
Akaike Inf. Crit.	221.555	216.776	213.762	211.890	40.252

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Were Freethe20 women more likely to get released? (Fixed Effects Specifications)

	Dependent variable: Release = 1					
	<i>In prison 2000-2015</i>			<i>In prison in 2015</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
# Freethe20	0.457*** (0.116)	0.488*** (0.128)	0.446*** (0.125)	0.542*** (0.135)	0.676*** (0.085)	0.820*** (0.093)
Prisoner of Conscience			0.178** (0.075)	0.128* (0.076)	0.042 (0.065)	-0.008 (0.065)
Any Torture Concerns			0.113 (0.074)	0.187** (0.082)	-0.115** (0.056)	-0.006 (0.067)
Any Death Penalty Concerns			-0.112* (0.067)	-0.198*** (0.074)	-0.102* (0.054)	-0.237*** (0.060)
Any Legal Concerns			0.146 (0.089)	0.077 (0.089)	0.252*** (0.072)	0.262*** (0.074)
Any Medical Concerns			-0.007 (0.090)	-0.018 (0.090)	-0.080 (0.076)	-0.142* (0.075)
Constant	0.438*** (0.032)	0.512 (0.358)	0.334*** (0.073)	0.113 (0.374)	0.183*** (0.055)	0.134 (0.233)
Country FEs	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	252	252	246	246	156	156
Log Likelihood	-175.927	-163.341	-161.627	-146.322	-23.383	-4.696
Akaike Inf. Crit.	355.853	352.682	337.254	328.643	60.766	45.392

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

VII. Sensitivity analysis for logistic regression models

While country fixed-effects can help us account for potential confounding variables at the country-level, there may be individual-level differences between the women featured in #Freethe20 and the comparison group. Since specific details on political prisoner cases in repressive societies are very limited, the only individual-level characteristics we can collect across all cases are those discussed in Amnesty International Urgent Action Reports. These include the name of the individual, their gender, their country of origin, and any notable concerns around their case (e.g., pending trial, medical concerns, reports of torture, etc.). We can control for those characteristics in the regression analyses, but what about unobserved individual-level confounders?

To understand how sensitive our results are to omitted variables, we use a sensitivity analysis method from Cinelli and Hazlett (2020). To make the substantive interpretation of the robustness of results more concrete, Cinelli and Hazlett (2020) compare an unobserved, hypothetical confounder with an observed covariate that has a statistically significant association with the treatment. In this case, we use the indicator for whether or not the case reported concerns about the death penalty, which has a significant and substantively large association with release outcomes. Political prisoners facing the death penalty are much less likely to be released relative to prisoners who are not facing the death penalty.

Figure 5 shows how the magnitude of the #Freethe20 coefficient in the full model (Table 3, Model 4 in the manuscript) would change with the introduction of a hypothetical confounder. This figure shows that even if we identified a confounder *three times* as strong as the death penalty, it would not invalidate our results. A confounder of this magnitude would decrease the point estimate on the #Freethe20 coefficient to 0.34, which would still be statistically significant at conventional levels. We struggle to think of a plausible individual level confounder that, given perfect information, we could systematically code across all cases that could come close to this in magnitude. This suggests that our overall conclusion—that women featured in #Freethe20 were more likely to be released than comparable female political prisoners featured by Amnesty International in the same locations—is likely not very sensitive to unobserved confounding variables.

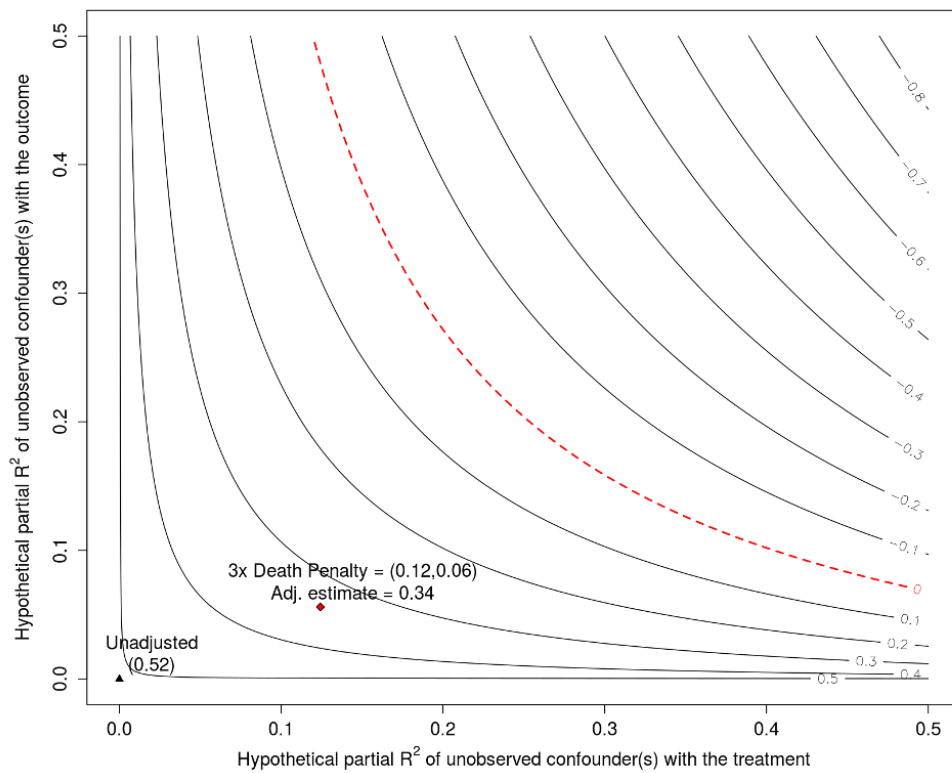


Figure 5: Sensitivity Contour Plots with Hypothetical Confounder

VIII. Robustness Checks: Survival Analyses

This appendix uses alternative semi-parametric and parametric survival analysis as a robustness check for the Weibull models presented in the manuscript. Cox models are “semi-parametric”; a core assumption made in the model is that the effect of the covariates on survival time (also conceptualized as “time to event,” which, in this application, means “time to release from prison” in months) is constant over time. In the manuscript, we opt to use a Weibull model rather than a semi-parametric Cox proportional hazard model because this assumption is violated in our data.

As a robustness check, **Table 5** presents the results from Cox models. Cox proportional-hazard models are useful when researchers are interested in controlling for other covariates but don’t wish to impose a specific functional form on the data. In Cox models, positive coefficients are associated with a higher likelihood that the event will occur (in this case, that an individual will be released from prison). In these models, the coefficient on #Freethe20 is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Table 5: Were #Freethe20 women released at a faster rate? (Cox Models)

	DV: Time Since Arrest				Time Since F20
		<i>In prison 2000-2015</i>		<i>In prison in 2015</i>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
#Freethe20	0.968*** (0.265)	0.784** (0.308)	1.090*** (0.280)	1.034*** (0.325)	2.596*** (0.570)
Prisoner of Conscience		0.549*** (0.213)		0.470** (0.214)	0.674 (0.531)
Any Torture Concerns		0.198 (0.251)		0.289 (0.256)	-0.907* (0.545)
Any Death Penalty Concerns		-0.669*** (0.236)		-0.796*** (0.249)	-1.212* (0.642)
Any Legal Concerns		0.486* (0.254)		0.465* (0.256)	0.990** (0.478)
Any Medical Concerns		-0.222 (0.278)		-0.223 (0.281)	0.100 (0.632)
Africa			-0.263 (0.490)	-0.193 (0.512)	0.051 (0.838)
Asia			0.369 (0.380)	0.500 (0.381)	0.051 (0.619)
Middle East			0.358 (0.374)	0.709* (0.384)	0.942 (0.702)
Observations	252	246	252	246	156

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6 and **Table 7** present results from two additional parametric models, the Log-Normal and Log-Logistic models, respectively. In Log-Normal and Log-Logistic models, a negative coefficient indicates a shorter time to event (in this case, a release from prison). In these models, the #Freethe20 coefficient is negative and statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level. Substantively, this indicates that, on average, #Freethe20 women were released at a faster rate relative to comparable female political prisoners.

Table 6: Were #Freethe20 women released at a faster rate? (Log-Normal Models)

	DV: Time Since Arrest				Time Since F20
	<i>In prison 2000-2015</i>				<i>In prison in 2015</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
#Freethe20	-1.599** (0.622)	-1.408** (0.632)	-1.941*** (0.650)	-1.822*** (0.640)	-2.958*** (0.718)
Prisoner of Conscience		-0.934** (0.390)		-0.787** (0.386)	-0.514 (0.538)
Any Torture Concerns		-0.825** (0.418)		-0.854** (0.410)	1.044** (0.471)
Any Death Penalty Concerns		1.310*** (0.372)		1.500*** (0.377)	1.281** (0.562)
Any Legal Concerns		-0.514 (0.469)		-0.436 (0.465)	-1.091* (0.560)
Any Medical Concerns		0.226 (0.478)		0.061 (0.475)	0.037 (0.645)
Africa			0.379 (0.899)	0.009 (0.827)	-0.011 (0.948)
Asia			-0.768 (0.749)	-1.047 (0.672)	-0.175 (0.824)
Middle East			-0.904 (0.729)	-1.426** (0.667)	-1.189 (0.894)
Constant	5.054*** (0.214)	5.401*** (0.426)	5.755*** (0.704)	6.425*** (0.716)	5.534*** (1.028)
Observations	252	246	252	246	156

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 7: Were #Freethe20 women released at a faster rate? (Log-Logistic Models)

	DV: Time Since Arrest				Time Since F20
	<i>In prison 2000-2015</i>			<i>In prison in 2015</i>	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
#Freethe20	-1.669*** (0.568)	-1.363** (0.601)	-1.938*** (0.606)	-1.805*** (0.628)	-2.754*** (0.689)
Prisoner of Conscience		-1.056*** (0.388)		-0.882** (0.387)	-0.603 (0.525)
Any Torture Concerns		-0.691 (0.424)		-0.789* (0.419)	1.022* (0.540)
Any Death Penalty Concerns		1.323*** (0.385)		1.585*** (0.398)	1.254** (0.634)
Any Legal Concerns		-0.575 (0.458)		-0.533 (0.454)	-1.060* (0.549)
Any Medical Concerns		0.290 (0.502)		0.188 (0.502)	-0.174 (0.634)
Africa			0.511 (0.921)	0.066 (0.860)	0.024 (0.926)
Asia			-0.754 (0.740)	-1.097* (0.658)	0.042 (0.773)
Middle East			-0.774 (0.728)	-1.545** (0.668)	-0.872 (0.848)
Constant	5.043*** (0.210)	5.297*** (0.432)	5.656*** (0.697)	6.417*** (0.743)	5.254*** (1.013)
Observations	252	246	252	246	156

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

IX. Robustness Checks: Media Coverage Analyses

This appendix provides robustness checks for the media coverage analyses in the manuscript. The unit of analysis in these tables is the individual-month. Women enter the dataset during their month of arrest and exit the dataset the month after their release. These tables illustrate that online search interest and media coverage of the individual women featured in #Freethe20 generally increased during the launch of the campaign in September 2015. However, it did not seem to persist long after that month.

The robustness checks in this appendix consider whether the results differ if: (1) using an alternative dependent variable, and (2) using a count model instead of a linear regression model.

Table 8 and **Table 9** are linear regression analyses with year fixed-effects, individual fixed-effects, and robust standard errors. The coefficient plots in the main article are based on Model 2 in **Table 8** and **Table 9**.

Table 8 evaluates whether online searches of #Freethe20 women increased during the campaign launch in September 2015. In Model 1, the dependent variable is the maximum Google Trend Value for the month. In Model 2, the dependent variable is equal to the log of 1 + the maximum Google Trend Value for the month.

Table 9 repeats this analysis for media coverage. In Model 1, the dependent variable is the total number of articles on LexisNexis that name the individual featured in #Freethe20. In Model 2, the dependent variable is equal to the log of 1 + the total number of articles for the month.

Table 10 models the data using negative binomial models. A negative binomial model is a count model used when there is over-dispersion or under-dispersion in the data. In Model 1, the dependent variable is the maximum Google Trend Value per individual-month. In Model 2, the dependent variable is the total number of articles that mention a given #Freethe20 woman's first and last name on LexisNexis.

Table 8: Did #Freethe20 increase online searches of the featured women?

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	GTV	ln(1+GTV)
	(1)	(2)
July 2015	3.044 (8.525)	0.040 (0.408)
August 2015	1.338 (5.013)	0.069 (0.378)
September 2015 (F20)	19.838*** (6.753)	1.025*** (0.312)
October 2015	7.282 (7.870)	0.507* (0.286)
November 2015	6.782 (4.829)	0.464 (0.292)
Arrest	6.528 (7.847)	0.339 (0.525)
Release	34.015 (22.505)	1.061* (0.597)
Year Fixed-Effects	✓	✓
Individual Fixed-Effects	✓	✓
Observations	319	319
R ²	0.456	0.272
Adjusted R ²	0.414	0.215

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 9: Did #Freethe20 increase media coverage of the featured women?

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Total Articles	ln(1 + Total Articles)
	(1)	(2)
July 2015	1.056 (3.413)	-0.098 (0.164)
August 2015	5.395 (4.696)	0.006 (0.200)
September 2015 (F20)	6.626 (4.455)	0.496** (0.219)
October 2015	0.496 (4.463)	0.056 (0.205)
November 2015	-0.413 (4.712)	-0.114 (0.200)
Arrest	31.411** (12.519)	0.972** (0.384)
Release	16.933 (21.714)	0.639 (0.838)
Year Fixed-Effects	✓	✓
Individual Fixed-Effects	✓	✓
Observations	513	513
R ²	0.339	0.650
Adjusted R ²	0.297	0.628

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 10: Negative Binomial Models of Online Searches and Media Coverage

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Max GTV	Total Articles
	(1)	(2)
July 2015	0.220 (0.331)	-0.389 (0.476)
August 2015	0.031 (0.333)	0.081 (0.458)
September 2015 (F20)	0.796** (0.327)	0.827* (0.434)
October 2015	0.206 (0.359)	0.049 (0.497)
November 2015	0.153 (0.360)	-0.173 (0.507)
Arrest	0.371 (0.390)	1.578*** (0.400)
Release	1.550***	1.332*
Year Fixed-Effects	✓	✓
Individual Fixed-Effects	✓	✓
Observations	319	513
Log Likelihood	-1,176.351	-1,021.218
θ	0.980*** (0.085)	0.627*** (0.064)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,400.701	2,104.436

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

X. Expert Interview Details and Questionnaire

In order to understand diplomacy around the #Freethe20 campaign, we conducted 10 in-depth interviews (30 minutes - 1 hour) between September 2018 and January 2019 with current and former U.S. government officials and members of civil society that worked closely on the campaign. All interviews were conducted “on background,” so the interview excerpts in the manuscript are anonymized. This interview process was reviewed by the Stanford University Institutional Review Board (Protocol No. 47279) and exempt from additional review. We started with the officials who worked most closely on the campaign and then used snowball sampling to find contacts who had detailed knowledge of individual cases. These interviews were semi-structured, so the exact questions varied depending on the interviewee and the nature of their expertise. To supplement these more in-depth interviews, we corroborated case-level details with an additional 15 current and former U.S. government officials via email and telephone.

Here is a sample questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews:

I. Background of Interviewee

- Can you walk us through your role in government at the time of the #Freethe20 campaign (2015-2016)?
 - *If necessary, clarify details of specific positions*
 - *If relevant, clarify specific role with respect to #Freethe20*
- *For those from NGOs:* Can you walk us through the advocacy work [relevant organization] does for political prisoners?

II. General Discussion of #Freethe20 Campaign

- *For those involved in initiation:* How was the #Freethe20 campaign conceived?
 - What were the key elements of the strategy?
 - How were the specific cases selected?
 - What kind of coalition did you build in support of the effort? Inside government? With outside partner?
- *For those involved in implementation:* When did you first hear about the #Freethe20 campaign?
 - *Follow up:* How were you first informed about it? What did you view your role as in the campaign?
- How did the campaign unfold? How did it launch and what happened subsequently?
- What steps did you take inside government for each case? What did you do with the media?
- What reactions do you recall getting from governments with prisoners on the target list?

- How did President Obama's involvement come about? What was the impact of his attaching himself to the campaign?

III. Knowledge of Specific Cases

- *For those with case specific knowledge:* Can you walk us through what happened after the launch of #Freethe20 in [specific case]?
- Follow up with relevant questions:
 - Prior to the campaign, had there been any outreach to the [target government]?
 - Prior to the campaign, what was the media environment around her case like?
 - During the campaign, what was the media environment like around [case]?
 - Did you hear anything about the response from [target government]?
 - What was the response of the U.S. embassy in [location]?
 - Were there other parts of the U.S. government that engaged?
 - Did you engage directly with local civil society organizations on the case?
 - Are there any particular examples of outreach or private diplomacy that you are able to discuss with us?

IV. Broader Human Rights Diplomacy

- Overall, how would you summarize the relative effectiveness of different strategies? Are there any broader patterns you could identify retrospectively?
- If you were advising others conducting a similar human rights campaign, what would be the key takeaways based on what you learned from the #Freethe20 campaign?
- Can you think of other human rights issues in [target country] where the U.S. government engaged in similar strategies of public pressure and private outreach?
- Can you talk to us about examples in which these strategies have been more or less successful?
- Are there particular ways in which these strategies may backfire?

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