

## Group 49 Hosts 29th annual Write-a-Thon for Human Rights in Providence

On Sunday December 11, at our annual day of writing letters for prisoners of conscience (our “Write-a-thon,” now often called “Write For Rights,” Amnesty members, people from the community, and members of the congregation of the First Unitarian Church of Providence came together during a long afternoon of writing letters. The event was Open House, with people welcome to come whenever they could, and leave whenever they needed to. We offered refreshments, and to enliven a serious afternoon, we held several drawings for prizes, with support from friends in our business community.



We wrote and mailed 380 letters, though the true number is larger than that because some people took letters with them to finish at home, and to mail themselves. Our letters went to many countries, on behalf of many prisoners of conscience and others at risk. We wrote appeals for Arzhang Davoodi, a prisoner of conscience in Iran for whom Group 49 has been sending appeals for nearly 10 years. We wrote appeals for Liu Feiyue a prisoner of conscience in China. He was the founder of a human rights website and has been imprisoned without access to a lawyer or to his family. We wrote for Mahmoud Abu Zeid, a photojournalist in Egypt, who was covering a peaceful sit-in in Cairo when police arrested him. He too is a prisoner of conscience. We wrote appeals for the safety of Maxima Acuna, a peasant farmer in Peru, who has refused to leave her land which is a large mining company is trying to seize. We wrote for Zeynab Jalalian, a political activist, arrested for supposed links to a Kurdish opposition group, tortured and enduring a life sentence, she is going blind and authorities are denying her medical treatment that will save her sight. We wrote letters of appeal for a total of 12 cases.

We also heard guest speaker Cherie Jimenez, who deals with human rights issues in our own area that often go unseen. Cherie Jimenez is a survivor of the sex trade, and now directs the EVA Center, a program that provides peer support, housing, counseling, and other help for girls and women seeking to exit the commercial sex industry. She addressed the factors that render young women and girls vulnerable to prostitution and being trafficked, and what steps we can take to help them.



Cherie Jimenez

We also heard from Detective Commander Michael E. Correia of the Providence Police Department, who spoke about the progressive new policies of Providence Police Department, which are intended to help victims of the trafficking and the sex trade, rather than further victimize them.



Michael E. Correia and Marcia Lieberman

In the New Year, we look forward to continuing our focus on prisoners of conscience, and to redouble our efforts for Arzhang Davoodi in Iran. A poet and educator, he was convicted for helping a Canadian journalist make a documentary about human rights abuses in Iran. Elderly and ill, he is now nearly the longest-serving prisoner of conscience in Iran.

We will continue to send you cases of prisoners of conscience who need support. We ask you to write, when you can. We know of many cases in which the letters we send have made a difference.

We wish you all, friends and supporters of human rights, a good new year, with hope that it may bring relief to prisoners of conscience, who are all unjustly detained, and that it may bring a peaceful end to the many conflicts across our severely troubled world.

On behalf of Group 49, Marcia Lieberman

## **Donors to 2016 Write-a-Thon**

**Group 49 thanks them for their generous donations and kind support for our yearly effort on behalf of prisoners of conscience and other victims of human rights abuse. We ask that you express your appreciation for their support when you visit them.**

	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Donation</b>
<b>Adlers Hardware</b>	173 Wickenden St, Prov RI 02903	<b>2 gal premium paint</b>
<b>Angell Nails</b>	15 S Angell St. Prov RI 02906	<b>manicure &amp; pedicure</b>
<b>Avon Cinema</b>	260 Thayer St, Prov RI 02906	<b>2 gift passes</b>
<b>L'Artisan Cafe &amp; Bakery</b>	9 Wayland Sq, Prov RI 0206	<b>gift certificate</b>
<b>Brown Univ. Bookstore</b>	244 Thayer St, ProvRI 02912	<b>6 books</b>
<b>CAV Restaurant</b>	14 Imperial Pl, Prov, RI 02903	<b>gift certificates</b>
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<b>Minerva Plaza</b>	20 S Angell St, Prov, RI 02906	<b>2 large cheese pizzas</b>
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<b>Starbucks</b>	468 Angell St, Prov RI 02906	<b>1 coffee gift bag</b>
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