

# Resist Repressive Regimes

*The following is available as a leaflet and is designed to alert people to how they can personally act to oppose military coups and repression in other countries. If you are able to distribute copies, we are happy to send up to 100 free. (You are also welcome to reproduce it.) Please let us know others to whom we should send copies.*

*Schweik Action Wollongong is a member of the International Social Defence Network. Schweik, the clever anti-hero of Hasek's classic novel, caused havoc in the Australian army during World War One by pretending to be extremely stupid. We welcome your comments. Yours, Schweik Action Wollongong.*

You've heard about the latest military coup or crackdown in a foreign country. Is there something you can do to help? Does it matter? Yes! People in these countries need your help. You can Resist Repressive Regimes.

Military governments can be overcome. Nonviolent resistance is a better way of taking action. It takes you to do it. You can help, as an individual or in a group.

Most people in the world live in countries whose governments were or are repressive. Repression can mean violation of free speech and free assembly, or imprisonment, torture and killings.

Freedom and democracy do not happen by themselves. People must act to gain and protect them, and decide what they want them to mean.

There are many things people in one country can do to say NO to repression and to oppose military coups in another country.

You can write letters. This is simple but influential. Letters to repressive governments or their embassies in your country, stating your concerns, can have an impact, as demonstrated by Amnesty International's letter-writing campaigns against torture.

Letters to local newspapers are an effective way to get your message to the public. Letters to opponents of repressive regimes can provide valuable information and moral support.

You can organise discussions. This can range from informal conversations between two people to large public meetings. Discussions and meetings are vital for sharing the information, insights and skills necessary to stimulate and organise effective action.

You can make public statements. This can be done individually or as a group. You can produce and wear a T-shirt, pin up a poster, organise or sign a petition, make statements to the media and organise small rallies.

You can support trade union actions. This is of symbolic and economic importance. This action can be initiated or promoted by individuals in unions or by several unions as a group.

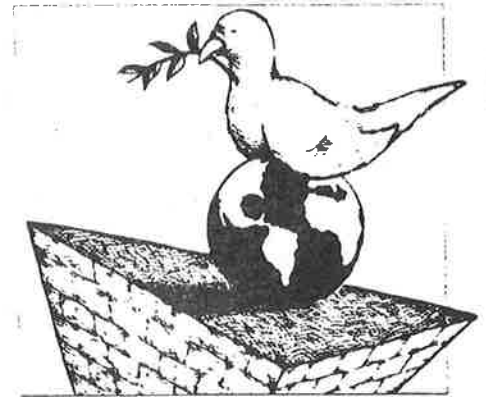
Trade union bans and public statements have been very important in challenging military power in the Philippines.

You can support action through organisations. Religious, sporting, artistic, women's, youth and many other groups can have an impact by distributing information to members, making public statements and instituting bans.

You can join boycotts. Don't wait for governments to do it. Your shopping dollar makes a difference. Boycott South African goods and other such exports.

You can communicate through organisations. Churches, diplomatic services, banks and other corporations often make regular contact across national boundaries, for example through phone calls and computer links. These channels can be used to pass other information in the course of normal business.

You can communicate via visitors. Both personal and official visitors provide another means of getting information to and from a country.



You can refuse to be a tourist. Instead, write to the foreign government saying you won't visit until democracy is restored. This has been of symbolic and economic importance in the case of Fiji.

You can sponsor migrants escaping repression. Australia has frequently provided a haven for people escaping countries such as Chile and Vietnam. Sponsoring a migrant is a large personal commitment. It can be very important.

You can communicate via short-wave radio. Repressive governments often cut off communications, especially just after a coup, such as in East Timor after 1975 and in Poland in 1981. Short-wave radio allows people to communicate directly over long distances, outside government control.

Repressive governments can be toppled. The ruthless military regimes in Greece and Argentina were replaced by parliamentary democracies in recent years. Nonviolent resistance played a big role in these cases.

Even the most repressive government depends on support or acceptance from most of the population. Nonviolent resistance offers a better chance of avoiding mass killing or the creation of a new repressive regime.

It is important that people take personal initiatives rather than relying on governments. Political and economic pressures regularly override governmental concern about human rights, as in Kampuchea in 1975-1979.

Nonviolent action needs to be carefully thought out and planned. It is important that people communicate with each other, both within and between countries, in order to ensure that the most effective action is taken in each situation. Seek advice from those we want to support so that we do what they want us to do.

**Further reading:**

Anders Boserup and Andrew Mack, *War Without Weapons* (London: Frances Pinter, 1974).

Jaroslav Hasek, *The Good Soldier Schweik* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1930).

Jacki Quilty et al., *Capital Defence* (Canberra Peacemakers, GPO Box 1875, Canberra ACT 2601, 1986).

Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

**Some Australian contacts:**

Amnesty International Australia  
PO Box A159  
Sydney South NSW. 2000.  
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Asia Bureau Australia  
173 Royal Parade  
Parkville Vic. 3052.  
Phone (03) 3478595.

Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific  
PO Box A391  
Sydney South NSW. 2000.  
Phone (02) 2813234.

Groundswell  
(nonviolent action training network)  
Diana Pittock  
38 Yackatooon Avenue  
Aspendale Vic. 3195,  
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Australian Council for Overseas Aid  
Human Rights Office  
124 Napier Street  
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# Sri Lanka Report: towards a decade



*The NVDAG is conducting a considerable number of projects in the Jaffna district of northern Sri Lanka, the scene of a long running secessionist movement and considerable violence. To continue this work, international financial support is required and this year, NVDAG is attempting to raise \$US 38,829. Much of the effort necessarily has to go into rehabilitation of victims of the war, but in the midst of this devastation, NVDAG is continuing to build a no poverty, nonviolent society, as they have been doing since 1979. Projects (in forty villages) cover a wide range of activities, including education for adults and children, publishing, tree planting, job creation, library provision and a community house. All donations will be gratefully received and put to very good use.* Eds.

Nonviolent Direction Action Group is the Sri Lanka Section of the War Resisters' International (WRI); and affiliated with International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR); Movement for a New Society (MNS); Transnational Collective (TC), International Organisation of Good Templars (IOGT); A.J. Muste Memorial Institute ; Church and Peace.

Nonviolent Direct Action Group is a social, voluntary, non-government organisation committed to social change through the application of nonviolence and peace. It was founded on the 25th of February 1979, at the Kaithady Hindu

Orphanage, after a three days training programme on nonviolence, organised by the Thanthani Chelva Memorial Trust.

Men and women who took part in the training programme determined collectively to work for social change in the Tamil community in the country.

Since the inception of the organisation, it has been involved in numerous activities in the areas of operations and has assisted several thousand people.

The organisation is also involved in much grass-root level development work in forty villages in the Northern part of the country and its activities are always towards basic change in the community.

Humanitarian service of the organisation has been greatly welcomed and appreciated by all sections of people and the name of the organisation, has become a household in the hearts and minds of the people.

The organisation has successfully completed its ninth year of service and going towards a decade in 1989.

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