

**YASAMAN ARYANI,**

**IRAN**

**WRITE  
FOR  
RIGHTS**

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



# LOCKED UP FOR HOW YOU DRESS



**LEARNING ABOUT  
OUR HUMAN RIGHTS  
ACTIVITIES**



## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments as well as other powerful groups such as companies, making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in the defence of activists on the frontline. We support people to claim their rights through education and training.

Our work protects and empowers people – from abolishing the death penalty to advancing sexual and reproductive rights, and from combating discrimination to defending refugees' and migrants' rights. We help to bring torturers to justice. Change oppressive laws... And free people who have been jailed just for voicing their opinion. We speak out for anyone and everyone whose freedom or dignity are under threat.



*Amnesty International members protesting at the Turkish embassy in Paris, July 2017.*  
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*Letter writing for W4R in Algeria.*

## WRITE FOR RIGHTS

Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign takes place annually around 10 December, which is Human Rights Day (commemorating the day when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948). Write for Rights aims to bring about change to the lives of people or communities that have suffered or are at risk of human rights violations. Among the many actions that take place as part of Write for Rights, Amnesty raises individual cases with decision-makers who can change the situation, gives visibility to those cases by organizing protests and public actions, and brings international attention through media and internet exposure.

A major part of the Write for Rights campaign consists of a letter-writing marathon and involves millions of people around the globe. As a result of the international call to action, public officials are bombarded with letters. Victims of torture, prisoners of conscience, and people facing the death penalty

or other human rights violations receive messages of solidarity from thousands of people in far-off corners of the globe. Those suffering the violations know that their cases are being brought to public attention. They know that they are not forgotten.

The results of similar campaigns in previous years have been striking. Individuals affected by the violations report the difference that these letters make, they express their gratitude to those who have written, and they often describe the strength they derive from knowing that so many people are concerned about their case.

Often there is a noticeable change by officials towards these individuals: charges are dropped, treatment becomes less harsh, and laws or regulations addressing the problem are introduced.

HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE 2018 CAMPAIGN

## ARRESTS IN BRAZIL

In March 2019, two ex-police officers were arrested for killing Marielle Franco, the charismatic local politician and defender of the poorest in Brazil. It was a small step towards justice. People worldwide wrote over half a million messages demanding: "Who killed Marielle Franco?"

**"It helps me to get up in the morning... knowing that there is this big global network of affection."**

*Monica Benicio, Marielle's partner*



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## DISABILITY RIGHTS WIN IN KYRGYZSTAN

Gulzar Duishenova had been championing disability rights in her country for years. In March 2019, her persistence paid off when Kyrgyzstan finally signed up to the Disability Rights Convention. Supporters wrote nearly a quarter of a million messages backing Gulzar.

**"I am grateful for all the support and solidarity from so many of Amnesty International's activists who care about our rights despite being from a different country."**



© Svetlana Zelenskaya/Amnesty International

## VITAL HEALTH CARE RECEIVED IN IRAN

Jailed for handing out leaflets criticizing the death penalty, Atena Daemi has endured physical attacks while in prison. She needed specialist medical care urgently, and thanks to the more than 700,000 actions taken by people worldwide, Iran finally gave her the treatment she needed.

**"I am wholeheartedly grateful to all people around the world who have showered me with compassion and kindness and spared no effort in supporting me."**



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Adrián Vasquez Lo  
Asociación Amnistía  
Luz Saviñón 549  
Cbd. Beacho Toluca,  
México D.F.

Adrián Vasquez Lagunes  
46 Avenida Zuharraz  
519  
Vallé,  
México D.F.

Adrián Vasquez Lagunes

## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that belong to every single one of us. They are based on principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect – regardless of age, nationality, gender, race, beliefs and personal orientations.

Your rights are about being treated fairly and treating others fairly, and having the ability to make choices about your own life. These basic human rights are universal – they belong to all of us; everybody in the world. They are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from us. And they are indivisible and interdependent – they are all of equal importance and are interrelated.

Since the atrocities committed during World War II, international human rights instruments, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have provided a solid framework for national, regional and international legislation designed to improve lives around the world. Human rights can be seen as laws for governments. They create obligations for governments or state officials to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of those within their jurisdiction and also abroad.

Human rights are not luxuries that can be met only when practicalities allow.



W4R activists in Togo.



## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

The UDHR was drawn up by the newly formed United Nations in the years immediately following World War II. Since 1948, it has formed the backbone of the international human rights system. Every country in the world has agreed that they are bound by the general principles expressed within the 30 articles of this document.

The UDHR itself is, as its name suggests, a declaration. It is a declaration of intent by every government around the world that they will abide by certain standards in the treatment of individual human beings. Human rights have become part of international law: since the adoption of the UDHR, numerous other binding laws and agreements have been drawn up on the basis of its principles. It is these laws and agreements which provide the basis for organizations like Amnesty International to call on governments to refrain from the type of behaviour or treatment that the people highlighted in our Write for Rights cases have experienced.

## HUMAN RIGHTS INTRODUCTION

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



### CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Right to life, freedom from torture and slavery, right to non-discrimination.

Article 1 Freedom and equality in dignity and rights

Article 2 Non-discrimination

Article 3 Right to life, liberty and security of person

Article 4 Freedom from slavery

Article 5 Freedom from torture



### LEGAL RIGHTS

Right to be presumed innocent, right to a fair trial, right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention.

Article 6 All are protected by the law

Article 7 All are equal before the law

Article 8 A remedy when rights have been violated

Article 9 No unjust detention, imprisonment or exile

Article 10 Right to a fair trial

Article 11 Innocent until proven guilty

Article 14 Right to go to another country and ask for protection



### SOCIAL RIGHTS

Right to education, to found and maintain a family, to recreation, to health care.

Article 12 Privacy and the right to home and family life

Article 13 Freedom to live and travel freely within state borders

Article 16 Right to marry and start a family

Article 24 Right to rest and leisure

Article 26 Right to education, including free primary education



### ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Right to property, to work, to housing, to a pension, to an adequate standard of living.

Article 15 Right to a nationality

Article 17 Right to own property and possessions

Article 22 Right to social security

Article 23 Right to work for a fair wage and to join a trade union

Article 25 Right to a standard of living adequate for your health and well-being



### POLITICAL RIGHTS

Right to participate in the government of the country, right to vote, right to peaceful assembly, freedoms of expression, belief and religion

Article 18 Freedom of belief (including religious belief)

Article 19 Freedom of expression and the right to spread information

Article 20 Freedom to join associations and meet with others in a peaceful way

Article 21 Right to take part in the government of your country



### CULTURAL RIGHTS, SOLIDARITY RIGHTS

Right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

Article 27 Right to share in your community's cultural life

Article 28 Right to an international order where all these rights can be fully realized

Article 29 Responsibility to respect the rights of others

Article 30 No taking away any of these rights!

## ACTIVITY

# LOCKED UP FOR HOW YOU DRESS

### KEY CONCEPTS

- Freedom of expression
- Peaceful protesting
- Non-discrimination
- Women and young human rights defenders
- Gender-based discrimination – forced veiling

### ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Participants learn about the right to liberty and the right of freedom of expression, specifically the right of women to choose what to wear. They will learn how compulsory dress codes in Iran target women and frequently reflect and reinforce gender inequality and violate women's rights.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants discuss the right of women to freedom of expression, including through choosing their clothes.
- Participants understand how gender-based discrimination and stereotypes restrict women's rights.
- Participants understand how human rights defenders are at greater risk of persecution.
- Participants know about Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign and are ready to take action in support of Yasaman Aryani.

### PREPARATION AND RESOURCES

- Coloured pens and papers
- Simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) page 5
- Cut and copied sets of Matching Cards

### TIME NEEDED:

60 minutes

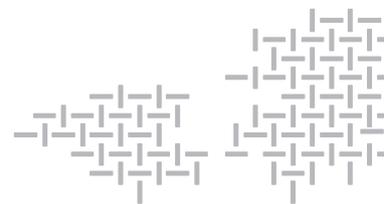
AGE: 12+

## INTRODUCTION:

### EXPRESS YOURSELF!

1. Distribute paper and pens. Ask the participants to draw several items or representations of what they wear, or would like to wear, in order to express themselves and their identity.
2. Let the participants share their drawing with a partner. Ask the participants to discuss the following questions:
  - What items or other things did you draw?
  - Why are they important to you? How do they make you feel?
  - Which of these items or other representations are most important to you?
3. As a group, collect some examples of their most important or favourite items. On a board or flipchart, create two columns: one for items stereotypically associated with boys, one for items stereotypically associated with girls. Ask participants to write down some of their responses that fit in the corresponding column and why.

 15 MINUTES



## SHADES OF OPPRESSION

🕒 15 MINUTES

4. Invite the participants to take a look at the columns for a minute. Ask them to find a different partner and invite them to discuss the following questions:

- Are there significant differences between the columns? Why or why not?
- How much do other people get to decide what you wear? Why do you think that is?
- How much do you think society expects girls or boys to dress a specific way?
- Are there places where people are not expected to dress a specific way based on their gender expression? What would it be like if you could really dress how you liked, where you don't need to conform to any preconceived ideas of dress? Is there a place or occasion where this happens?
- Looking back at your favourite or most important items, how would you feel if those would be forbidden and if you risked being thrown in prison for them? What would you do?

5. As a group, invite participants to share their reflections. Continue the discussion with the following question:

- Are there differences in what people are expected to wear on the basis of certain traditional, historical, religious and/or cultural attitudes in your community? Why or why not?

## INTRODUCING YASAMAN

🕒 20 MINUTES

6. Introduce Yasaman to participants. Yasaman Aryani is a young woman from Iran who is fighting for the freedom to choose what to wear. Yasaman is one of the cases in this year's Write for Rights campaign. Read her story out or distribute her case card. Collect initial reactions to her story from participants. Encourage them to reflect on the previous discussions.

7. Split the group into small groups. Hand out a set of the Matching Cards to each of the groups. Explain that they will match what happened to Yasaman to the equivalent human right from the UDHR, that has been violated and then collectively discuss the answers.

<p><b>Article 1</b> Freedom and equality in dignity</p>	<p>Yasaman is forced to wear a veil against her will and would be treated as a criminal under the laws of her country if she appears in public without a headscarf covering her hair.</p>	<p><b>Article 2</b> Non-discrimination</p>	<p>Yasaman is forced to wear a veil because she is a woman. The forced veiling law does not apply to men.</p>	<p><b>Article 3</b> Right to life, liberty and security of person</p>	<p>Yasaman was kept in solitary confinement for days, without access to her family and lawyer.</p>
<p><b>Article 5</b> Freedom from torture</p>	<p>Yasaman and other women in Iran are regularly subjected to verbal harassment and physical assault at the hands of morality police and paramilitary forces enforcing compulsory veiling laws. There are countless testimonies from women saying that these cruel practices damage their dignity.</p>	<p><b>Article 9</b> Protection from Arbitrary arrest and detention</p>	<p>Yasaman has been sentenced to 16 years in prison on vague and broadly worded national security charges. Her conviction stems directly from her peaceful campaigning against compulsory veiling laws.</p>	<p><b>Article 10</b> Right to a fair trial</p>	<p>Yasaman was threatened and pressured into giving forced "confessions", retracting her opposition to forced veiling, and expressing "regret" for allowing herself to be "incited" by "anti-revolutionary opposition agents" outside the country.</p>

**Article 18  
Freedom  
of belief  
(including  
religious  
belief)**

Yasaman challenges and questions the adoption and implementation of laws stemming from strict religious interpretations that dictate how she and other women should or should not dress.

**Article 19  
Freedom of  
expression  
and right  
to spread  
information**

Yasaman was arrested because she speaks out on a cause she believes in and she challenges the status quo for women in her country.

**Article 20  
Freedom of  
association  
and  
assembly**

Yasaman met up with others in public space to demonstrate peacefully and because of this, she got arrested.

## TAKING ACTION

 5 MINUTES

Confirm that Yasaman's case is about the right of Iranian women to freely choose what they wear. It is important to note that some Iranian women who choose to wear the hijab have participated in the campaign against forced veiling laws in Iran. The peaceful women's movement in Iran is not a campaign against women's right to wear the hijab; rather, it is a campaign against compulsory veiling laws that force women and girls to wear veils, against their will and in violation of their human rights. Use the background information to explain more about forced veiling in Iran and elsewhere.

6. Use the information on page 2 to give the participants some information about the Write for Rights campaign. Tell them that Amnesty International is calling on people around the world to write letters to support Yasaman.
7. Allow participants to plan how they would like to take action in support of Yasaman's case as a follow up activity demanding her release. Letter writing tips are included below for distribution or use in a following activity.

*Optional:*  
You could use the short course available at [academy.amnesty.org](https://academy.amnesty.org) to introduce the Write for Rights campaign.

## WRITE FOR RIGHTS INSTRUCTIONS

### WRITE A LETTER – SAVE A LIFE

1. Encourage participants to write to the Iranian Authorities asking them to release Yasaman unconditionally and immediately.

Encourage students to write to relevant administration at the following address:

**Head of the Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi**  
c/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN  
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28  
1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Students can use the template letters at [www.amnesty.org/writeforrights](https://www.amnesty.org/writeforrights), or you can give them the following guidelines to write a more personal letter:

2. Tell the Head of Judiciary something to make this a personal letter.

- ▶ Tell him something about yourself
- ▶ Tell him what shocks you about the case

#### Demand that he ensures that they

- ▶ release Yasaman Aryani and her mother Monireh Arabshahi from prison immediately and unconditionally as they are all prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for their human rights work, and quash their convictions and sentences.
- ▶ release all other women's rights defenders detained for peacefully campaigning against forced veiling immediately and unconditionally.
- ▶ Stop criminalizing the work of women's rights defenders, and ensure that they are able to carry out their important human rights work, including by campaigning against forced veiling laws.
- ▶ Abolish forced veiling laws.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# ENFORCED COMPULSORY VEILING AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Everyone has the rights to freedom of expression and freedom to manifest their religion or beliefs. As a general rule, these rights entail that all people should be free to choose what – and what not – to wear.

Frequently, dress codes are underpinned by ideas and stereotypes about gender identity and roles, and reflect discriminatory attitudes and a desire to control women's sexuality, objectifying women and denying their personal autonomy.

States have an obligation to respect, protect and ensure every individual's rights to personal autonomy and to express their beliefs or personal convictions or identity. States should allow every person to make that choice free of discrimination or coercion. This means that States must not impose compulsory requirements that women dress or do not dress in a certain way, and they must protect women from being coerced to dress in specific ways by family members, community, religious groups or leaders or any other third party. This applies whether women are being compelled to wear a headscarf or veil, or are prohibited by law from wearing it.

Iranian legislation on forced veiling constitutes a clear violation of women and girls' human rights. In compelling women and girls to cover their hair, including through violent and humiliating acts and arbitrary arrests and detention, the authorities also violate women's dignity and perpetrate in legal terms cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which is prohibited under international law. Where they cause severe pain or suffering, whether mental or physical, such acts amount to torture.



*A woman hijab protestor stands atop a raised structure in the city of Karaj, Alborz Province, and places her headscarf at the end of a stick in a peaceful protest against forced hijab (veiling).*

© White Wednesdays Campaign

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# IRAN'S COMPULSORY VEILING LAWS

Under Iran's compulsory veiling laws, women and girls are forced to cover their hair with a headscarf whether they wish to do so or not. Women who do not are treated as criminals by the state and may be arrested, prosecuted and sentenced to a prison term, flogging or a fine – all this for the “crime” of exercising the right to choose what to wear.

Iran's “morality police” place the entire female population – 40 million women and girls – under surveillance. These state agents drive around and have the power to stop women and examine their dress, scrupulously assessing how much hair they are showing, the length of their trousers and overcoats, and the amount of make-up they are wearing.

There are countless stories of the “morality police” slapping women across the face, beating them with batons and throwing them into police vans because of the way they are dressed. The laws also enable vigilantes to harass and assault women in public with impunity. On a daily basis, women and girls face random encounters with such strangers, who beat and pepper-spray them, call them “whores” and make them adjust their headscarves.

In the last few years, a growing movement against forced veiling laws has emerged inside Iran, with women and girls performing courageous acts of defiance. They stand in public places, silently waving their headscarves on the ends of sticks or share videos of themselves walking down the street with their hair showing.

Men have joined this movement, too. So have women who actively choose to wear hijab – because the movement is about choice: a woman's right to choose what to wear without fear of harassment, violence, threats and imprisonment.

In response to the strength and power of this movement, they Iranian authorities have arrested dozens of women's rights defenders, including at least four men. Some have been tortured and sentenced to prison terms or flogging after grossly unfair trials. In an official statement on 23 February 2018, the police warned that protesters would now be charged with “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution”, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. Yasaman Aryani and her mother Monireh Arabshahi have been convicted of this offence.

Making criminals of women and girls who refuse to wear the hijab is an extreme form of discrimination. Forced veiling laws violate a whole host of rights, including the rights to equality, privacy and freedom of expression and belief. These laws degrade women and girls, stripping them of their dignity and self-worth.



*Yasaman Aryani and Saba Kordafshari (right) in a still from their White Wednesday video.*

© White Wednesdays Campaign

# YASAMAN ARYANI

## IRAN

A white flower generously shared, a scarf gently removed: two simple gestures that Yasaman Aryani dared to make on a public train in Iran. It was International Women's Day 2019 and Yasaman, an actor who loves mountain climbing, stood up to Iran's forced veiling laws in a brave act of defiance.

With her mother, she walked through a women-only train carriage, hair boldly uncovered as she handed out white flowers. She spoke of her hopes for a future when all women would have the freedom to choose what to wear so that one day they could walk together "me without the hijab and you with the hijab". These moments, captured on video, went viral in March 2019.

On 10 April, Iran's authorities arrested Yasaman, holding her alone in a cell for days while interrogators questioned her. They told her to "confess" that foreign elements were behind her activism and to "repent" her actions. If she didn't, they said they would arrest her friends and family. On 31 July, Yasaman learned to her shock that she has been sentenced to 16 years in prison. She must serve at least 10 years.

Yasaman's cruel punishment is part of a wider crackdown on women campaigning against forced veiling laws in Iran. Since 2018, dozens of women, including Yasaman's mother, Monireh Arabshah, have been arrested. The Iranian authorities must not be allowed to rob Yasaman of the best years of her life – simply because she believes women should have the right to choose what they wear.

**Tell Iran to free Yasaman now.**



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**Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.**

**Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.**

**We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and public donations.**

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**  
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

**e:** [contactus@amnesty.org](mailto:contactus@amnesty.org)  
**t:** +44-20-74135500  
**f:** +44-20-79561157

Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton  
Street, London WC1X 0DW,  
United Kingdom

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