

IN SOLIDARITY IN DEFIANCE



Photo Credit: Meg Tall



@AmnestyFeminist

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ACTIONS 2023

FEMINISM.

[fem.i.nɪ.zəm] noun

*: political stance and commitment to change the political position of women and promote gender equality**

INTRODUCTION

The Rights of women are under constant attack, and to preserve them, and progress them, we act in solidarity with those who have their rights limited or denied on the basis of their gender identity, gender expression, sex or sexuality; and we act in defiance of any and all who would limit their rights.

This pack brings together information and actions from across the Amnesty International movement and, in doing so, connects the action you take with the hundreds of thousands of others taking action worldwide this International Women's Day.

There is so much to do. Thank you for being with us, and for being us.

Amnesty Feminists.

IN THIS PACK

1. Women. Life. Freedom - In solidarity with Iranian women protesters.
2. Vanessa Mendoza Cortés - Charged for advocating for Women's Rights in Andorra
3. Women and Girls in Afghanistan (Online Action)
4. Connect with the Amnesty Feminist Network



WOMEN. LIFE. FREEDOM.

The death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa (Zhin) Amini at the hands of Iran's "morality" police on 16 September 2022, sparked an unprecedented popular uprising that continues across the country. In response to nationwide protests, the Iranian authorities have extensively and unlawfully fired live ammunition, metal pellets and teargas at protesters and bystanders, and subjected many to severe beatings. Amnesty International has recorded the names of hundreds of protesters and bystanders unlawfully killed by security forces, including at least 44 children. Hundreds of others have been blinded or sustained other serious eye injuries due to security forces firing metal pellets. Thousands more have sustained injuries for which many did not seek medical care due to fear of arrest.

While the number of large-scale protests has decreased in recent weeks, there has been an increase in other acts of resistance by people in Iran, including writing slogans on public walls and spaces, installing banners or symbols, and chanting slogans from rooftops or windows at night in support of the end of the Islamic Republic establishment. Women and girls continue to bravely defy the compulsory veiling laws by appearing unveiled in public. The revolutionary slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom", which is the focus of this solidarity action, continues to be seen and heard across Iran.

Women and girls have been at the forefront of the popular uprising, challenging decades of gender-based discrimination and violence. They have defied Iran's discriminatory and degrading compulsory veiling laws which force women and girls – even those as young as seven – to cover their hair with a headscarf against their will. Women and girls who do not are treated as criminals by the state, and face daily harassment and violence, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and denial of access to education, employment and public spaces.

The so-called "morality police" and other law enforcement bodies place all women and girls under surveillance, but the policing of women's bodies is not confined to the state. Iran's abusive, discriminatory and degrading forced veiling laws enable other non-state actors to harass and assault women and girls on a daily basis in public.

Forced veiling laws violate a whole host of rights, including the rights to equality, privacy and freedom of expression and belief. They also degrade women and girls, stripping them of their dignity, bodily autonomy, and self-worth.

The following actions are inspired by the ongoing protests in Iran, and are in solidarity with the aims of those protests.



WOMEN. LIFE. FREEDOM.

Zeynab Jalalain

Iranian Kurdish woman Zeynab Jalalian, aged 41, was involved in activities aimed at empowering women and girls from the oppressed Kurdish minority. For her social and political activities, she has already been unjustly imprisoned for 15 years.

Zeynab Jalalian has been detained since March 2008 when she was arbitrarily arrested by security agents. She was subsequently convicted on charges of “enmity against God” (moharebeh) and sentenced to death in connection with her social and political activities with the political wing of the Party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK). Her involvement was aimed at the empowerment of women belonging to the Kurdish minority and Kurdish self-determination. In December 2011, her death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment after she was granted clemency by the Supreme Leader. In Iran, a life prison sentence means serving the full length of an individual’s life.

While there are a many women unjustly jailed in Iran for standing up for equality and denouncing repression, we are encouraging the focus on Zeynab Jalalian’s case because:

- She is one the longest serving women prisoners held for politically motivated reasons;
- Zeynab Jalalian is serving a life sentence with no current prospects for parole or temporary release; and
- Many activists in Iran and members of the Iranian diaspora are campaigning for Zeynab Jalalian’s release, and this way the action of Amnesty International acts in solidarity with this activism.



Take Action.

Zeynab Jalalain

Please adapt and post one of the following suggested tweets:

Kurdish woman #ZeynabJalalian has spent 15 yrs unjustly jailed for her social & political activism, including to empower Kurdish women. @khamenei_ir must release her NOW. Authorities have denied her healthcare, tortured & ill-treated her & sentenced her to life in prison #IWD2023

On #IWD2023 I/we join people in Iran in calling for the immediate release of #ZeynabJalalian, a Kurdish Iranian who has been unjustly jailed for 15 years, tortured and otherwise ill-treated to punish her for refusing to make false “confessions” #WomanLifeFreedom

Please tag the following Iranian officials on social media calling for Zeynab Jalalian’s release.

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei

- Twitter: https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/khamenei_ir/

Head of judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei

- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ejeii_org/

Solidarity protesters on death row

Amnesty Feminists also have a number of single sheet newspapers that detail the development of the recent protests in Iran, and guide readers to an online urgent action calling for the release of protesters acting in solidarity with the Women. Life. Freedom. movement who are currently under threat of execution for their legitimate Human Rights work.

These newspapers were designed to be handed out at train stations, from stalls, or at events.

You can order copies for your IWD events from the Supporter Communications Team at **sct@amnesty.org.uk**

VANESSA MENDOZA CORTÉS

Vanessa Mendoza Cortés is a psychologist and the president of the women's rights organization, Stop Violence, (Associació Stop Violències, in Catalan), which focuses on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive rights, and advocates for safe and legal abortion in Andorra.

Andorra, with a population of around 77,000 people, has a total ban on abortion. Andorra and Malta are the only European countries that have such draconian abortion laws. As a result, people in need of abortions are compelled to travel abroad, mainly to France and Spain to seek the healthcare they are entitled to. Those unable to travel because of the cost or due to their uncertain legal status face a heightened risk of human rights violations. Stop Violence support pregnant women and girls to access abortions abroad and speak out to demand access to safe and legal abortion in Andorra. Vanessa Mendoza Cortés is a well-known activist in Andorra and is the main spokesperson for the organisation.

In October 2019, Vanessa Mendoza Cortés attended the Fourth Periodic Review Session of Andorra of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW) where she spoke out about the harmful impact of the total abortion ban on women and girls in Andorra and other women's rights concerns. Shortly after, the Andorran government lodged a complaint before the public prosecutor's office arguing that Vanessa Mendoza Cortés' statements were undermining the "prestige and good name" of the government. In July 2020 the public prosecutor charged Vanessa Mendoza Cortés with 'slander with publicity' (article 172 of the Penal Code), 'slander against the co-princes' (article 320 of the Penal Code) and 'crimes against the prestige of the institutions' (article 325 of the Penal Code). These provisions carry heavy penalties, including a potential sentence of up to four years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to EUR 30,000 (circa USD 32,000). In 2021, the prosecutor dropped two of the charges involving prison sentences. In October 2022, a judge issued an indictment against Vanessa Mendoza Cortés for the alleged "crimes against the prestige of the institutions" involving a potential heavy fine and a criminal record if convicted.



VANESSA MENDOZA CORTÉS (CONT.)

The evidence presented by the public prosecutor's office against Vanessa Mendoza Cortés also included in the indictment refers to the content of the shadow report submitted by Stop Violence to the UN CEDAW in 2019. It also includes media statements made by Vanessa Mendoza Cortés expressing critical opinions about the position against the decriminalization of abortion of the Bishop of Urgell and Co-Prince of Andorra, and voicing concerns about government actions affecting women's rights. There is no date for the trial yet.

Amnesty International is concerned that the Andorran authorities are using defamation laws with the purpose or effect of inhibiting criticism of government or public officials, violating the right to freedom of expression guaranteed under Article 19 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Current defamation laws in the Andorran penal code that are designed to protect state institutions should be repealed in line with international human rights standards that establish that legal provisions to protect the right to honour and reputation are designed to protect individuals, not abstract values, or state institutions. Defamation and libel should never be criminal offences. However, in December 2022, the Andorran parliament (Consell General, in Catalan) voted against the repeal of article 325 of the Penal Code (crimes against the prestige of the institutions), currently used against Vanessa Mendoza Cortés.

Moreover, according to UN Human Rights Council's resolutions 12/2 (2009) and 24/24 (2013), acts of intimidation against those who seek to cooperate or have cooperated with the United Nations, its representatives, and mechanisms in the field of human rights, or who have provided testimony or information to them constitute acts of reprisals that should be halted and addressed. The prosecution of Vanessa Mendoza Cortés for exercising her right to freedom of expression and the concerted efforts to delegitimise her actions in defence of the human rights of women and girls, and in particular their sexual and reproductive rights, follow a global pattern of intimidation aimed at preventing women human rights defenders from challenging discrimination and promoting equality, particularly when their work defies traditional structures and patriarchal social norms.

In 2021, during the UN Universal Periodic Review, which assesses the human rights record of UN Member States, Andorra was asked to refrain from carrying out judicial harassment, reprisals and intimidation against human rights defenders, amend the defamation laws and decriminalise and make access to abortion safe and legal in the country.



URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST DEFENDING ABORTION RIGHTS FACES TRIAL

Woman human rights defender, Vanessa Mendoza Cortés, could soon stand trial for speaking out for women's rights in Andorra, including abortion rights, before a UN expert body in 2019. She faces a heavy fine and a criminal record if convicted. The authorities should drop the charge against Vanessa Mendoza Cortés, stemming solely from the exercise of her right to freedom of expression and advocating for women's rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, and take all necessary measures to ensure access to safe and legal abortion in Andorra.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL USING THIS MODEL LETTER

Attorney General Mr Alfons Alberca Sanvinces

Seu de la Justícia

Baixada del Molí, núm 2-4

Andorra la Vella, Andorra

Email: fiscalia@justicia.ad

CC: Andorra permanent UN mission in Geneva missio_onu_gva@govern.ad

CC: Embassy of Andorra in your country

<https://www.exteriors.ad/ca/representacions-diplomatiques>

Dear Attorney General,

I am writing to express my deep concern about the ongoing criminal prosecution of **Vanessa Mendoza Cortés**, a human rights defender and the president of Stop Violence (Associació Stop Violències, in Catalan), for exercising her right to freedom of expression and defending women and girls' human rights in Andorra and criticising the full ban on abortion in the country. If convicted, she could be fined with up to EUR 30,000 (circa USD 32,000) and would have a criminal record.

The prosecution of Vanessa Mendoza Cortés appears to be in retaliation for her actions to defend the human rights of women and girls, including their right to safe and legal abortion in Andorra. It is particularly concerning that the charges against her stemmed from her engagement with the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW), as part of the regular and vital exchange of information conducted between this UN body and human rights defenders around the world.

I am aware that in 2021 the prosecutor's office dropped two of the three charges initially brought against her, which carried potential prison sentences. However, it is disappointing that she remains accused of a crime 'against the prestige of the institutions' (article 325 of the Penal Code) and could be punished solely for exercising her right to freedom of expression.

State institutions should always be subject and open to scrutiny, comment, or criticism. Under international human rights law and standards, legal provisions to protect the right to honour and reputation should be designed to protect individuals, not abstract values, or state institutions. As such, article 325 of the penal code, which is being used against Vanessa Mendoza Cortés, should be repealed and, in the meantime, not used. I am also extremely concerned that this protracted judicial process can have a chilling effect on her and other human rights defenders in Andorra.

I therefore urge you to immediately drop the charges against human rights defender Vanessa Mendoza Cortés, who is being prosecuted solely for exercising her right to freedom of expression and must be allowed to continue her legitimate work defending the right to safe and legal abortions and other human rights of women and girls in Andorra, without fear of reprisals.

Yours sincerely,

OR TAKE THIS ACTION ONLINE:
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/VMCUA](https://tinyurl.com/vmcua)

WOMEN & GIRLS IN AFGHANISTAN

The rights of many women and girls in Afghanistan disappeared almost overnight when the Taliban seized power. Please join us in urging the UK government to act.

Afghan girls used to attend school and dream of future careers such as teaching, owning a business or being elected as an MP. But almost overnight, they were told they should stay at home.

When the Taliban seized control of the country in 2021, women and girls were immediately stripped of their rights. Now, girls over 11 are unable to go to school and women are banned from universities.

Even more worryingly, women and girls in Afghanistan now face increased threats of gender-based violence and further restrictions on their rights - including their ability to move freely and to choose what they wear.

Afghan women achieved significant progress over the last 20 years in the face of instability and conflict. Without support from Governments including the UK, they risk losing this progress under the Taliban.

Sign the petition to urge the UK government to act on their promises to Afghan women and girls.

TAKE ACTION NOW @:
WWW.AMNESTY.ORG.UK/ACTIONS/AFGHANISTANWOMEN



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