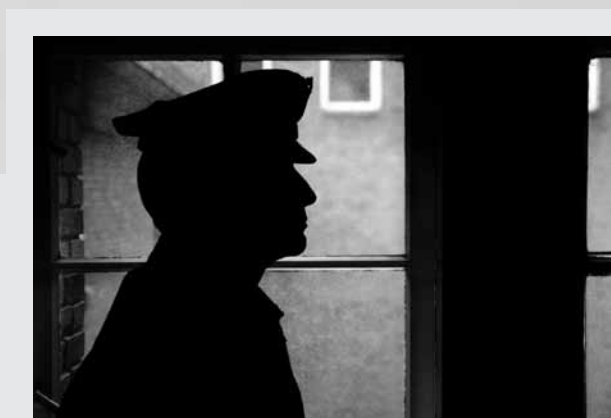


# ASSEMBLY SCRIPT

## A LIFE FOR A LIFE



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### CHARACTER BACKGROUND

These notes should help the performers with speaking parts to prepare their roles. Teachers may also want to look more closely at the information supplied by the lessons plans and film in the pack. It's important to create real characters and not to use accents so as not to detract from the content or cause offence.

### NARRATOR(S)

One person or a few people taking separate lines or speaking together can play this part of a well-informed and enthusiastic Amnesty International youth member. The narrators need to be clear and able to project their voice to ensure the audience can understand the context of the play. They should be able to read from the script. Sometimes it helps their confidence if they are able to stand behind a lectern as they read.

### NAZIM – THE PRISON WARDER

A dour, rather miserable and vengeful character who believes he is 'just doing his job'.

### MARIAM – THE PRISONER

A pleasant 17-year-old girl who cannot understand what she has done wrong and feels alone and scared.

### RAMI – THE DETECTIVE

Rami is a powerful, aggressive man who is certain of his own position and opinions.

### MARIAM'S MOTHER

A quiet woman. She does not know what she can do to help her daughter. She feels powerless and at the mercy of the authorities.

### SAMIR – THE VICTIM'S SON

The son of the dead man, he is angry and exasperated and wants revenge for his father's murder.

### NABIL – THE LAWYER

A fair, serious man who has more clients than he can cope with. He has a strong sense of justice and wants to do what is right.

# MAIN SCRIPT



Show slide 1

## NARRATOR

The play you are about to see comes to us from Amnesty International. It's the story of a 17-year-old girl called Mariam. Although made up, it is based on real and recent events.

Amnesty is a global human rights organisation campaigning to stop the abuse of human rights around the world. One of Amnesty's key campaigns is the worldwide abolition of the death penalty.



Show slide 2

## NAZIM

I am a prison guard here on death row. I'm like a zookeeper. I look after some of the wickedest people in the world – murderers and the morally corrupt. We keep them locked up. Then we hang them. Last year in my country we got rid of at least 350 prisoners – not enough in my opinion.



Show slide 3

Hey! Prisoner 2794. Open up. Here's your food – bread and watery soup. Lovely. Eat up. It might be your last meal in this world.



Show slide 4

## MARIAM

My name is Mariam. I sit in this cell. I stare at the stone walls. I try not to look out through the prison bars at the hangman's noose swinging, waiting for me. In my mind is darkness and terror.



Show slide 5

## NAZIM

Prisoner 2794. That's her in the cell – always crying.

Never speaks. She is young. She looks innocent enough. But, believe me, she is truly evil. She stabbed a man to death – a prominent local citizen with a wife and three children. And any day now she is going to pay for her crime.



Show slide 6

### NARRATOR

Prisoner 2794 is a girl called Mariam. Let me tell you what Amnesty knows about her. Two years ago, when she was 15 years old, she went to see her favourite pop group Arian playing at the local football stadium. Mariam went to the concert with her young cousin Yousra who was celebrating her 13th birthday.

After the show, the girls walked home through a park. Suddenly they were surrounded by a group of men shouting abuse. One man pulled Yousra to the ground. Another tore off Mariam's veil. The girls started to scream. Mariam ran at Yousra's attacker with all her might.



Show slide 7

### MARIAM

Somehow I managed to knock the big man over. But he stood up and came for me. He was clutching a knife. I felt in my bag for the bottle of Pepsi I had, and managed to smash it. I held it by the neck and tried to fend the man off, covering my eyes and face with my other hand. He lunged at me. Then I felt the blade of his knife slash my arm. Blood poured over my face. I couldn't see. I struck out blindly and in panic. I felt the man's heavy body slump against me. Suddenly we heard the sound of police car sirens and the screech of brakes. 'Help us', I shouted. 'Help us!'

### NARRATOR

The other men quickly scattered. But the big man lay at her feet with blood pouring from his neck. Mariam told the police what had happened and handed over the broken bottle and knife. One police officer said: 'Don't worry, we'll get you cleaned up. This brute won't bother you girls anymore.'

### MARIAM

Then they drove us to the police station. We begged them to call our parents.



Show slide 8

### RAMI

I'm Rami, senior detective. I remember interviewing Prisoner 2794. At a guess, she was at least 21 years old. When I questioned her, she poured out a stream of lies.

It was clear to me that both the women were out in the park looking for someone to rob. The accused was not wearing a veil. Her hair was on display. I informed her that she had just stabbed a respected local businessman to death. I wrote down a statement of what happened and asked her to sign it.



Show slide 9

### MARIAM'S MOTHER

I am Mariam's mother. For days we were kept in the dark about what had happened that dreadful night. We didn't even know where our girls were. The police never called us. In the police station they hurt Mariam and made her sign things that weren't true.



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### MARIAM

I wouldn't sign his paper. I didn't trust him. I said I wanted my mum. He slapped me really hard and said I had to sign or he'd keep little Yousra and me in the police station until we rotted. We were locked up for days. He beat me again several times. Eventually I signed his false document. Then they let Yousra go.



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### SAMIR

My name is Samir. I am 17. My father was an honest man and ran his own business. I remember that evening in May. A group of Dad's friends came round to our house. They said some woman had attacked Dad in the park and killed him. I couldn't believe it. Dad was a big tough man. He had been in the Army and he carried a knife. But he was murdered in cold blood.

The police caught the killer and she confessed, but my beloved father is gone. My mother is alone now, a widow. I want revenge. That evil killer must die.



Show slide 12

### MARIAM'S MOTHER

We are a poor family. We couldn't afford a lawyer. But we went to the court for Mariam's trial. Their whole case rested on the pack of lies and a false statement they had forced her to sign. Then that judge passed the sentence of death. He said he wanted to come down to the jail to do the hanging himself.



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### NABIL

My name is Nabil. I am a lawyer. I campaign to stop child executions. Thousands of people in this country have signed our petition against the use of the death penalty for under 18s.

I am the lawyer for lots of young people who are on death row for crimes committed when they were still children. I have now taken up Mariam's case.

### NARRATOR

Around the world most countries have abolished the death penalty. It has virtually disappeared from Europe and South America. Many Muslim majority states like Turkey and Senegal have abolished executions. Across North and West Africa to the Middle East and Central Asia many more countries have not carried out an execution for years.

In the past five years, five countries executed juvenile offenders, even though executing under 18s goes against international law.



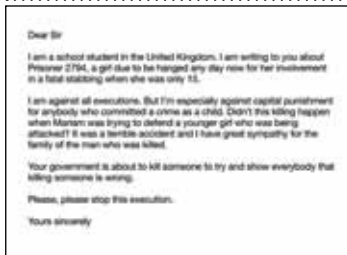
Show slide 14

### MARIAM

I told my lawyer what really happened that night. I was scared stiff, panicking and trying to protect my cousin. I am sorry for the man's family but I hope they will realise that the killing was an awful accident.

## NARRATOR

When we heard about Mariam's story in our school, our Amnesty International group sent letters about her case to the head of her country's legal system.



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I wrote this to the Head of the Judiciary.

Dear Sir

I am a school student in the United Kingdom. I am writing to you about Prisoner 2794, a girl due to be hanged any day now for her involvement in a fatal stabbing when she was only 15.

I am against all executions. But I'm especially against capital punishment for anybody who committed a crime as a child. Didn't this killing happen when Mariam was trying to defend a younger girl who was being attacked? It was a terrible accident and I have great sympathy for the family of the man who was killed.

Your government is about to kill someone to show everybody that killing someone is wrong.

Please, please stop this execution.

Yours sincerely...

## PAUSE



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## NAZIM

The other day the order came to prepare Prisoner 2794 for execution.

I tied her hands behind her back. I took her out into the execution yard. She had to climb up on this high stool. I put the black cloth bag over her head. I put the noose round her neck. Then I waited for the order to kick the stool away from underneath her.



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## MARIAM'S MOTHER

We were only told about Mariam's execution a few moments before she was to be killed. We had no time to say our final goodbyes. My daughter, to be hanged!

Then all of a sudden we heard that the Head of the Judiciary had ordered the postponement of the execution.

Lawyer Nabil had taken on Mariam's case for free. He is doing his best to organise an appeal.



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## NABIL

Under our country's law the family of the victim can choose what happens to the killer. They can ask for the death penalty. Or they can forgive the murderer if they pay a large sum of money as compensation. They call this blood money.





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**MARIAM**

My fate depends on whether the family can forgive me and accept the blood money. I expect forgiveness is the very last thing on their minds.



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**SAMIR**

That killer’s mother and cousin actually had the nerve to come to our home with a lawyer to plead for her life. ‘Show mercy and forgiveness,’ they said. What mercy and forgiveness did she show when she took the life of my Dad? We want justice. An eye for an eye! A life for a life! Death for the murderer!



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**MARIAM**

The lawyer asked if I had a message for the dead man’s family? I said to say that I was a child when it happened. I said the man’s death was a terrible accident and I am so sorry. I did something dreadfully wrong but so did he. I know his family must be suffering. They have lost their father. But please forgive me, please forgive me...

**PAUSE**

**MARIAM’S MOTHER**

‘Hello, hello, is that Nabil? Have you any good news about Mariam’s appeal?’

**NABIL**

‘I’m so sorry, but I bring you very bad news. Despite all our efforts...’

**PAUSE**

**NAZIM**

At 6pm yesterday evening Prisoner 2794 was hanged.

**PAUSE**

**NARRATOR**

Amnesty International says juvenile offenders remain on death row in several countries around the world including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, Burma, Nigeria and Uganda. Since the beginning of 2005 at least 44 juvenile offenders have been executed. It keeps happening.



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But there is hope. Hafez Ibrahim was convicted of a murder that took place in Yemen when he was 16. Hafez spent seven years in prison but was released from death row in 2007 with the help of Amnesty and other organisations.



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People like me are taking action against governments that still put under 18s to death. Perhaps you would like to take action too? Find out more information from your teacher or on Amnesty International’s website [www.amnesty.org.uk/lifeanddeath](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/lifeanddeath)

Thank you for listening today.

