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# Amnesty International

## CAMPAIGN ROUNDUP

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK  
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## My Body My Rights

Over the past 2,5 years AIUK have been working on the My Body My Rights (MBMR) as one of its priority campaigns. At the heart of the campaign is that everyone's should have the right be able to make decisions about our health, body and sexual and reproductive lives. This means being able to choose who to love, for instance or if and when to marry and have children and to be able to make these decisions without fear, coercion, violence or discrimination.

The aim of the MBMR campaign and work has been to defend these Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRR) for all. Focusing on some priority countries where states encroach on these rights through control and criminalisation including Ireland (north & south), El Salvador and Burkina Faso as well as working on Individuals at Risk cases and reactive campaigning relating to Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) Chile, Argentina. Peru and Spain. Within the campaign we have been calling on governments to:

- Decriminalise abortion  
Seeking an abortion – or helping someone get one- should not make anyone a criminal.
- Increase access to sexual and reproductive health services (including information and contraception) and call for an end to child marriage
- Address discriminatory laws and gender based violence  
Criminal law should not be used to regulate sexuality and reproduction, or to hand control of our decisions on these matters to third parties.

### End of My Body My Rights global Campaign

MBMR as a global Amnesty campaign will come to an end June 2016 marking two and half years of campaigning, giving way for new global campaigns focusing on Refugees and Human Rights Defenders. This does however not mean that Amnesty globally and AIUK won't be working on women's rights and Sexual and Reproductive rights.

At AIUK the end of the global campaign means that we will no longer have a priority campaign focusing on this body of work but will take work forward through specific projects, Individuals at Risk campaigning and Country Coordinator led work.

As the campaign is coming to an end we want to share some of the successes and impact of the campaign to date, but also which areas will continue within Amnesty's work.

Please see more information on page 7 on how you can continue to be involved and stay up to date on Amnesty's work in the area of Women's Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

### My Body My Rights - Campaign successes

With the MBMR campaign we have seen changes in policy, law and public opinion thanks to the campaign. We have also seen change and positive impact in people's lives.

## Burkina Faso

Over the past year AIUK supporters and activists have campaigned hard for the rights of women and girls in Burkina Faso and over the past year we have seen the government in Burkina make some significant steps and commitments to improve the rights of women and girls there. In November 2015 the Ministry of women adopted a three-year action plan (2016-2018) to prevent and eliminate child marriage in Burkina Faso. In addition, the government made its first public statement in March 2016 committing to eradicate child marriage and to raise the legal age for girls to marry to 18.

In their statement they also mentioned all the hundreds of thousands of letters that they received from Amnesty supporters from around the world including the UK calling for them to eradicate child marriage. Thank you to everyone who took action, it's made a difference!

As part of these commitments the government have also pledged to lower the cost of contraception - so more women and girls will be able to take control of when they want to start a family.

## Ireland (Republic of Ireland)

Throughout the MBMR campaign Amnesty have ensured that more information on abortion and the human rights impact of the current restrictive abortion in Ireland. The increased information and media work have had a positive impact on the discourse in the country and during the lifetime of the campaign the public support for the decriminalization has increased.

Amnesty's latest poll highlighted that 67% agreed that abortion should be decriminalized and 81% of people support expanding Ireland's abortion laws in line with human rights standards.

AIUK activists and supporters also contributed to over 54,000 of the 200,000 signatures to the global Ireland petition. Amnesty Ireland are organising a hand in June and will continue to campaign for reforms in Ireland post the MBMR campaign.

## Northern Ireland

As part of AIUK's campaigning in Northern Ireland we have made a positive contribution to the recent Belfast High Court ruling that Northern Irish abortion legislation is in breach of International law and minimum human rights standards.

AIUK's intervention in this case will continue in the Court of Appeal following the NI Attorney Generals appeal against the High Court ruling. We will continue our work including strategic litigation, lobbying and public campaigning in Northern Ireland to push for changes in law ensuring that women can access their rights.

AIUK's campaigning have further contributed to an increase in media coverage and public debate on the issue of abortion rights in Northern Ireland and made positive contribution to shifting the public debate where 70% of people in NI is for judicial reform.

## EL Salvador

In El Salvador we have seen the positive impact in the lives of Individuals. People like Guadelope, a 25-year-old Salvadorian women who was imprisoned on pregnancy related charges when her child was still-born. She is now pardoned and released from prison thanks to Amnesty supporters like you and others taking action.

On the 20 May a court decided to release Maria Teresea Rivera, a woman who spent four years in jail in El Salvador for suffering from a miscarriage (one of "Las 17" case). It is yet another step towards justice in the country. During the trial, one of Maria Teresa's bosses testified against her saying she knew she was pregnant in January 2011. This would have made her 11 months pregnant by the time the miscarriage took place. The outrageous testimony was used as one of the pieces of evidence to convict her. The release came after a judge ruled there was not enough evidence to prove the charges against her.

Upon her release Maria Teresa sent the following message to Amnesty supporters taking action:

*“I want to thank everyone who supported me and who never left me alone... everyone who believed in me and always said that I was innocent even though you did not know me...this was very special for me, I really want to thank you...”*

### Chile

In Chile we have seen positive developments with the parliament reviewing current legislation that makes abortion a criminal act where the Congress' Health Commission approved the idea of legislating on abortion and the Chamber of Deputies approved the legislation. The next step is approval by the Senate to become law.

### Peru

Through the MBMR campaign Amnesty Peru launched the campaign “Against their will” (“Contra su voluntad”) demanding reparations and justice for women who were forcibly sterilized in Peru during the 1990s. The campaign’s main objective has been for the Peruvian President to create a single register of victims to make clear the real number of women forcibly sterilized. This has now happened and we are now taking further steps calling on to ask the Peruvian President to ensure that the new register is adequately funded and implemented.

## **The Power of solidarity – a message from Burkina Faso**



Sara Rydkvist and Liv Fleming handing in bunting with solidarity messages created by AIUK local & youth groups while visiting a shelter in Kaya, Burkina Faso in May 2016.

While in Burkina Faso launching the MBMR report in May AIUK visited shelters for girls who fled forced and early marriage. One of the shelters we visited is in Kaya North East of Ouagadougou. There are currently 60 girls living there and the shelter play an important role in providing the girls with an education but also to integrate them back with the families and communities they fled from, but also to support the girls to make a future for themselves where returning home is not an option. Only 15 of the girls staying in the shelter had started school before coming to the shelter but now all 60 have access to education.

Many of you participated in this solidarity action earlier this year as part of the March Monthly Mailing and at the AIUK AGM and it was great to see how much the messages, thoughts and solidarity meant to the girls and the women working there.

Denise one of the women working in the shelter in Kaya (second right) sent this message to you all:

*'I would like to send a message of thanks to everyone in the UK who's written a message of solidarity – they give the girls strength and courage. Now they know that they are not alone'*



While in Burkina Faso AIUK also met with Mme Catherine who runs the Foundation cardinal Emile Biyenda Shelter in the Burkina Faso capital of Ouagadougou. The shelter takes in girls ages 12- 18 years old who have survived rape, early and forced marriage and unwanted pregnancy. Without the shelter many girls would have nowhere to go when rejected by their families. The work that Mme Catherine and the shelter does saves lives. Here she is with a bag of solidarity messages from AIUK activists and groups.

*'When the girls received and read the messages they felt like they are not degraded anymore – it gives the girls strength and courage and me the strength to continue my work'*

Mme Catherine

### **Solidarity Action for El Salvador**

Over 4,000 of you took action for women in El Salvador by supporting our solidarity action creating ribbon and keys with solidarity messages for the Sculpture "Global Solidarity for the Freedom of Las 17". The sculpture has been donated to the city of San Salvador and is supposed to encourage further dialogue about the abortion ban and will be a permanent display in the city.

The sculpture will be presented together with the Mayor in a public event in July. Your ribbons and messages will be attached to the sculpture when it's presented.

## Meeting Women's Rights & Youth Activists in Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso AIUK also met with Amnesty partners including grass roots organisations and Women's rights Activists who have worked with Amnesty on Sexual and Reproductive rights for many years.

These partnerships are instrumental for Amnesty to achieve change for women and girls in the country. Their work help to spreading awareness, changing attitudes and breaking down the barriers to information about family planning, contraception but also awareness about the negative effects of early and forced marriage and FGM.

During the visit we got to encounter the incredible bravery and determination of activists like Bibata Ouedraogo who are working tirelessly to give women and girls information about the right to family planning, sexual and reproductive health care, contraception and the right to say no to child marriage and FGM.

She and other activists we met talked about the main barriers facing women and girls from being able to access their sexual and reproductive rights. The lack of access to information, contraception, maternal health and the effects of early and forced marriage and FGM where mentioned as the key barriers and obstacles. ( In Burkina Faso where over 50% of girls are being married by the age of 15-17 in the northern parts of the country. )

Supported and funded by Amnesty International, Bibata is travelling across northern Burkina Faso working with communities to spread the message and information about family planning, contraception and reproductive rights to women and girls. The campaigning and Human Rights Education carried out by Bibata and other women's rights activists and partners are transforming communities across the country.

As part of this work we have seen a reduces number in teenage and unwanted pregnancies and a reduction of child marriages in the communities they are working within.



*"In certain villages, we see the people don't know they have rights. It's important to educate women to know their rights, to empower them to defend and protect their own rights. Amnesty approached us, trained us and empowered us as leaders so we now share all these skills and knowledge with the community. This is our motivation, to educate and empower other women."*

Bibata Ouedraogo a Women's Rights activist and Amnesty partner in Burkina Faso.

To see more about Bibata and her work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrrretXpr1gA>

**Further reading:** Amnesty International report -Coerced and denied: Forced marriages and barriers to contraception in Burkina Faso <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr60/3851/2016/en/>

## Education- the force to Change

In Burkina Faso one of the key drivers for change is Human Rights Education and the work that Amnesty Burkina Faso are doing in collaboration with teachers and young people in schools to raise awareness and change attitudes about sexual and reproductive rights and education. We visited a high school which has been working with Amnesty since 2005. The school has about 1000 pupils ranging from the age of 5-6 years up to colleague students. We met with the Amnesty youth leaders in the school. Their passion and commitment was palpable – we spoke to Bassirou Ilboudo, Peronella Diabire, Mandinatou Sana and Adama Ilbloudo, all aged 21, Asmao Zoure ,22, Saydou Nobo, 19, and Claire Combari, 18.

The youth leaders all received training from AI Burkina Faso and are working with Amnesty to promote Human rights in the school by training other pupils, running events and talks including on the issue of violence against women and women’s rights. At first not many came, but progressively more and more did they say. Gradually people got more interested and pupils are now getting involved in other campaigns and signing petitions. They have also seen a change in the classroom and how teachers are now more open to talking about issues around human rights but also how pupils respond in the classroom and are now more engaged.



*‘Before we started, people didn’t really believe in us because we are so young. Later through the training we received, people started to believe in us, so we have continued the training and awareness.*

*I am proud to be part of Amnesty. I want to say hello to AI groups in the UK and let them know that we are also working here in Burkina Faso to have people’s rights respected’*

Baaside Baguia, 19- Amnesty Youth leader



*'My hope is to see young women and girls free, so that they can go to school to finish their studies. To choose their husbands freely without being forced'*

High school teacher Francoise Lankaoande has worked with Amnesty since 2005. His students have taken part in the MBMR and Write for Rights campaigns.

## **How to stay involved- continued work on Sexual & Reproductive Rights**

As the global MBMR campaign is coming to an end Amnesty will continue its work on Women's Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

Here's an update of areas taken forward beyond the campaign and how to stay involved. To make sure you're always up to date and informed on Amnesty's work and actions for Women's rights join the AIUK Women's Action Network- <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/join-our-womens-action-network>

### **Northern Ireland**

There is a near-total ban on abortion in Northern Ireland, even in cases of rape, incest and fatal foetal abnormality and women face life imprisonment for a health service freely provided on the NHS everywhere else in the UK. Amnesty will continue to call for legal reform in Northern Ireland and for laws to be brought in line with international law.

Amnesty is calling for:

- Northern Ireland to bring existing abortion laws in line with international human rights law and standards;
- To make abortion available in cases of rape, incest or severe and fatal foetal impairment;
- To stop the criminalisation of women and girls who access abortion services.

AIUK's work on abortion rights and judicial review in Northern Ireland has been AIUK's section specific contribution to the global My Body My Rights campaign.

To date this work has achieved some great campaigning outcomes including AI/AIUK contribution to the successful ruling in the Belfast High Court in December 2016 ruling that Northern Irish abortion legislation is not in line with International law. AI/AIUK's intervention in this case will continue through a written intervention to the Court of Appeal on 6 June 2016 for court hearings starting 20 June 2016 following the NI Attorney Generals appeal against the December High Court ruling.

AIUK's campaigning has further contributed to an increase in media coverage and public debate on the issue of abortion rights in Northern Ireland and made positive contribution to shifting the public debate where 70% of people in NI is for judicial reform.

Until the end of 2016 the work and campaigning on Northern Ireland will be continued through three strands of work: Litigation, Legislative reform / General Assembly advocacy and public campaigning including continued push for AIUK online action

To take Action on Northern Ireland support AIUK's action for abortion reform in Northern Ireland: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Northern-Ireland>

AIUK Key contacts:

Women's Action Network – [womensnetwork@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:womensnetwork@amnesty.org.uk)

AIUK Campaigner in AIUK Belfast office – Michelle Beyers [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)

AIUK Campaign Manager – Sara Rydkvist – [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)

## **Burkina Faso**

### Individuals at Risk (IAR) Casework

The case of 'Maria' will continue to be part of the AIUK IAR Case portfolio. Maria is a young girl who lives in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso and was forced to marry a much older man when she was 13 years old, aims to highlight the issue of early and forced marriage. In Burkina Faso, girls as young as 11 or 12 are married. Once these young girls are married they are often taken out of school and have no say in the decision about whether and, if so, when to have children and how many.

The case is part of Amnesty's work and continued calls on Burkina Faso's government to implement recent National Action plan and commitment to eradicate early and forced marriage in the country.

For more information and to work on the case:

Individuals at Risk Programme- [jar@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:jar@amnesty.org.uk)

### Support AIUK/ DFID appeal

Beyond the global campaign we will continue to work with Amnesty Burkina Faso (AIBF) and partners in the country to increase awareness raising and Human Rights Education work on Sexual and Reproductive rights. Through the AIUK / DFID project, AIBF will increase its Human Rights Education work raising awareness of and change attitudes to early and forced marriage and FGM. This work to will be carried out in collaboration with local partners, women's rights activists, traditional and religious leaders, as well as communities.

As part of the project AIBF plans to work in 15 communities – 12 new and three old. This project will be implemented in: Centre, Eastern, Northern, Sahel and Boucle du Mouhoun regions. The project will help prevent early and forced marriage for thousands of girls and aim to secure increased commitment from policy-makers for longer term legislative change benefitting many more women and stronger legal protections from violence for women in Burkina Faso.

For more information contact:

AIUK Supporter Care team: [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)

## **El Salvador – Case of Teodora del Carmen Vásquez- EL Salvador**

Theodora del Carmen Vásquez suffered a still-birth in 2007 after the rapid onset of serious pain while she was at work. Rather than taken to the nearest hospital she was arrested by police. Theodora was later sentenced to 30 years for "aggravated homicide", accused and sentenced for illegal abortion.

Theodora's case illustrates the chilling effects that El Salvador's harsh abortion legislation criminalising abortion under all circumstances have on women in the country.

Amnesty are currently providing legal support to assist Agrupacion, our partners on the ground, to file appeals for the commutation of sentence for the remaining women in the group of "Las 17", women and girls who have been imprisoned on abortion-related charges. This support included the preparation of the appeal for the commutation of Teodora's sentence, which Agrupacion submitted on 18 November 2015.

The work on Theodora's will continue post the MBMR campaign and will continue to be part of the AIUK Case Portfolio.

For more information and to work of Theodora's case contact:

Individuals at Risk Programme- [iar@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:iar@amnesty.org.uk)

Graham Minter – Country Coordinator (South America except Brazil and Colombia – [graham.minter@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:graham.minter@amnesty.org.uk)

### **Argentina - Case of Belen**

We will continue to take action for Belén an Argentinian woman who on the 19 April was sentenced to eight years in prison for murder after suffering a miscarriage in a public hospital. She was held in pre-trial detention for over two years' in Tucuman Province, northern Argentina, after suffering a miscarriage in a public hospital. Medical personnel and police officials violated her right to privacy and have unfairly accused and mistreated her. She continues to be held in prison while her lawyers file appeals.

Belen's lawyer has highlighted the positive effect that the publicity around her case has had on her personally as she has been amazed by the level of support she has had.

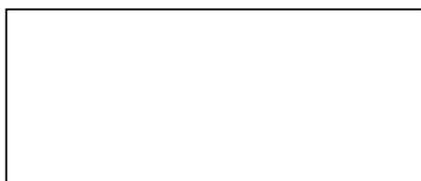
Take action for Belen here: [https://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/fi09516\\_1.pdf](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/fi09516_1.pdf)

AIUK key contacts:

Individuals at Risk Programme – [iar@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:iar@amnesty.org.uk)

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## **GOT QUERIES OR WANT TO DO MORE?**

If you have any queries about this update and continued work please contact

[SCT@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:SCT@amnesty.org.uk) / 020 WWW/ 0207 033 1563

Local group's monthly mailing can be downloaded from:

[www.amnesty.org.uk/groups](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups)

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