

RESOURCE SHEET 3

Youth Awards 2015 Shortlisted Articles

UPPER PRIMARY CATEGORY

WHAT HAVE I DONE?

“Why are they treating me this way I am the same as them, except I wear a headscarf, this is beyond my control I was made this way and I can’t change who I am”. Khadeja Fahat was a 14 year old girl who went to school in Wilmslow and is one of a growing number of pupils to have faced racial bullying. She was verbally and physically attacked at school regularly, being called names like ‘terrorist’ and ‘Taliban’. This left her feeling low, depressed and lacking in confidence. She was tormented nearly every day and was afraid of going to school.

She was a very excitable and happy girl but sadly all that changed. She was a teenager who went from loving learning to not really caring about her education. She stopped eating and began to lose weight, “I just wanted to go to bed straight from school, because I wanted the day to be over and done with, since there was nothing to look forward to not even coming home, since I would have to go to school the next day.”

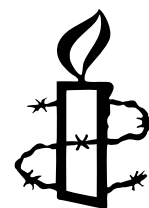
In an attempt to protect Khadeja from the abuse, which took place for over 6 months from September 2010 to March 2011, her mother told the school who assigned her to a buddy who had to stay with her at all times. Unfortunately, Khadeja ended up leaving because she no longer felt comfortable or safe there.

Children who have this experience have their education disrupted. They may be unable to concentrate on lessons because of feelings of fear or anger. Their self-confidence may be damaged and, as a result, they may not fulfil their potential. Pupils like Khadeja are not alone. Anti-racism charities say that racist bullying is a problem in schools around the country.

Nearly 88,000 racist incidents were recorded in Britans schools between 2007 and 2011, the BBC has found. Sarah Soyel of the anti-racism educational charity Shows Racism the Red Card says, “Racism is a very real issue in many classrooms around the country, but cases of racist bullying are notoriously underreported.” However, she went on to say that, “it is not about punishing very young children, it’s about educating them so they can understand why these behaviours are wrong so they can change them.”

Why does race discrimination happen? We are all human and alike, so I don’t understand why we dislike each other just because of our god given differences. I don’t know why someone should be treated badly because of their race, colour or beliefs.

Nia Addo-Quintyne (Winner)



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UPPER PRIMARY CATEGORY

FREEDOM OF THE BRUSH

It's 3rd April 2011 and there is confusion at Beijing International Airport. I'm hoping to catch a flight to Hong Kong with my wife, but suddenly police officers are everywhere.

"What can it be?", she says in a concerned voice. "I hope our flight won't be delayed."

Then a tall, dark-haired police officer approaches me and snarls "You're under arrest." Then everything happens at once. My wife is in tears, there's a lot of noise and somewhere a camera is flashing. My name is Ai Weiwei and my crime? Simply being an artist.

Ai Weiwei is a well-known Chinese artist, famous for his sculptures and architectural designs, who designed the "Birds Nest" stadium for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. He should be a national hero. For many he is. However, as far as the Chinese government is concerned he is dangerous critic – a man who has used his work and influence to expose their poor record on human rights, democracy and corruption. A man who ought to be kept quiet.

All over the world artists like Ai Weiwei are being silenced and imprisoned for expressing their feelings to oppressive governments or leaders.

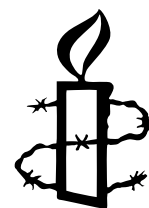
This is particularly the case in countries like North Korea, China and Russia. Why are artists so powerful? Is it because their works can communicate more vividly than the internet or newspapers, or is it because they have a world-wide audience? Whatever the reason, leaders should not snuff out the opinions of their people. This denies one of the 30 basic human rights which are set down by the United Nations, the right to free expression. We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think and to share our ideas with other people. And we all have the right to create.

This right has never been more relevant as the recent Paris bombings show only clearly. In this case, when cartoonists working for the French newspaper Charlie Hedbo were gunned down, free artistic expression was denied by terrorists rather than governments. However, the attempt to stifle artistic freedom was just as serious.

It is wrong to say that art should have nothing to do with religion or politics. Real art should be about life and life includes everything. Unfortunately, cases like this one are frequent throughout history. Osip Mandelstam, one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century, was killed just for writing a poem, taking a huge talent from the world. That is appalling because art, colour and music are among the great pleasures in life.

Ai Weiwei was eventually released after 81 days in prison and went on to produce more famous works like Sunflower Seeds at the Tate Modern. Later he said "We feel every person has the right to express themselves and their right of expression is fundamentally linked to our happiness and even our existence." If we put our leading artists in prison, what future can we hope for?

Louis Bumpus (Finalist)



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UPPER PRIMARY CATEGORY

JUSTICE FOR THE DISAPPEARED IN MEXICO

'My brother may or may not be out there. The thought of him being held captive hurts me. Dread sweeps through me everyday like a tidal wave. Will I ever see him ever again? It seems like not.'

On the 26th of September 2014 forty-three students departed from their teacher-training college for a demonstration in Iguala, Mexico. On the same day, after the demonstration, the students clashed with police who were following the demonstration. Forty-three students were taken and put into cells in a police station. Then, shockingly, they were given to a drug gang who call themselves Guerreros Unidos (United Warriors). The drug gang was told these innocent protesters came from a rival gang. Since that day, the students have not been seen. They disappeared.

This issue violates article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is 'We all have the right to life and to freedom and safety.' Where was the safety for these peaceful protesters?

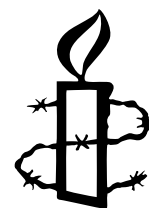
Alexander Mora was training to be a teacher and was in his first year of studies at the college. His body was the first of the forty-three to be found. His remains were found in a stream near a rubbish dump where the gang had allegedly shot and burned the bodies. His sister Edith demanded justice for her brother who she says 'was killed like an animal, but he was an innocent boy who knew nothing about life.'

I am passionate about this case because I know that Mexico is a beautiful country and I don't want that beauty to be marred by this violence. Also, we are all brought up being told we can trust the police, but in Mexico, can we? It seems that in Mexico the police are not upholding the law but instead are breaking it themselves. Millions of children dream of being a teacher when they grow up, but if this lawlessness continues, is it safe to train to be a teacher in Mexico? As Martin Luther King said, I have a dream, and so do others.

We should all stand together to defend the right to protest without the fear of violence. The Mexican government must address this police corruption and put an end to the violence between drug gangs. It has gone on too long. Children should be able to dream of being a teacher and teachers should be able to express their beliefs without being scared of those who should be protecting them.

Should gangs be allowed to rule our lives? Should the children of Mexico be told not to trust the police? We must defend the right to protest, and the right of children to dream.

Charlotte Kerr-Bell (Finalist)



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LOWER SECONDARY CATEGORY

WASTED LIVES

In the past 10 years, 163 children and young people under the age of 24 have died in prison. Their lives wasted.

Campaigners argue that the number of children and young people dying in custody means that the state is failing in its obligation to protect life under Article 2 of the Human Rights Act.

When you think about a young criminal what is the first thing that comes to mind? Bad person! Dangerous - stay well away! They are no longer a person but demonised. I often wonder how they arrived at this situation.

18-25 year-olds make up one in ten of the UK population, but they account for a staggering third of those sent to prison each year. Why are so many young people being sent to prison?

If we try to speak to young offenders we might learn the reasons why they commit a crime. Often peer group pressure to stay in the gang makes a person do something that they know is wrong. A split second of uncontrolled anger can lead to someone being hurt. The amount of young adults in prison for drug use, has also increased over the last decade.

The costs of young men and women offending have been estimated at anything up to Â£19 billion a year. Custodial sentences are not always the best way forward in helping people to change. Over half of young adults sent to prison reoffend within one year of release.

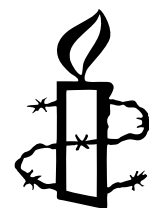
Many of these people will have a mental health condition or the literacy skills of a seven to 11-year old. Most 15 to 17-year-olds in custody have been excluded from school. It must be possible for us to consider the age and maturity of young people when we sentence them. There must be an alternative to prison. This view point is shared by Edward Boyce a senior person at the Centre for Social Justice.

Giving young offenders support to manage their mental health or access to education would help to turn their lives around. Restorative justice, where young people face their victims to understand the effects of their actions, can help offenders to see their errors and keep them safe.

The Kenny Report on gang violence which was submitted to parliament, said: "The tensions from outside continue in prison, so what you're doing is creating a breeding ground for that violence to take place. How can people rehabilitate themselves and change their lives and ways when they're living in constant fear for their own safety?"

I cannot imagine living my life in fear. It is time to consider using other sanctions such as using tags to track people's movements. Of course this will not work for everyone but sending a young person to prison brings out the worst in them as they become hardened criminals and whilst they are there another life is wasted.

Jordan Gordon-Harris (Winner)



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LOWER SECONDARY CATEGORY

“ENHANCED INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES”

I wake from an hour's troubled sleep in a dark, damp and deserted room. I have been left in a degrading position on the white bed that the foreigners have me strapped to. A single dim bulb illuminates a rusty metal door in front of me. It opens. The person who enters laughs cruelly as I cower from him. I am grabbed by white hands and forcefully knocked to the ground. I can't get up. I feel someone grip the back of my head and lift. A cloth is tied over my face. Without warning, my head is plunged into icy water.

This might sound like some nightmare, perhaps the result of a terrifying hallucination. No. He is a prisoner of the Central Intelligence Agency. A 480 page summary of a report was released in late 2014 by the Senate Intelligence Committee that has revealed that 'enhanced interrogation' techniques, what some would call torture, were employed by the agency in an attempt to extract information. The brutal methods used include sleep deprivation, humiliation, confinement in small places, rectal feeding, dehydration, slapping and waterboarding. Of the 129 detainees, 28 have been confirmed to have been tortured. How can it be that a country so dedicated to freedom has been caught committing atrocious breaches of the Human Rights Act?

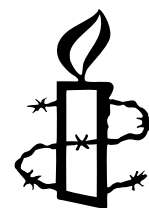
Ideally everyone is protected from torture, whether it be mental or physical, inhuman or degrading treatment. However, if a hugely influential power like America has mistreated people in this way, who is to say that cases like this don't exist all over the world? Great Britain's involvement with the CIA in their neglect of human rights is still unclear. In Syria, videos of torture were leaked, revealing a dark side to Assad. Security forces in South Africa's prisons have been reported to routinely torture criminals. Despite the action being taken, governments still try to get away with these crimes.

"It's torture!" yells my brother as he is dragged out shopping. We have all said it. Someone says or does something undesirable and suddenly you are being tortured. Think. Think of the detainees in America, who have been left in small boxes for days. Think of the Syrian prisoners of war that are subjected to mock executions. Think of the African inmates who get beaten regularly. That is torture in the real world.

Something needs to happen soon, before more and more countries see torture as the best way to obtain what they want. We need to do something to prevent any more individuals becoming victims of unreasonable disregard of the Human Rights Act. As the author Iain Banks said: "Torture is such a slippery slope; as soon as you allow a society or any legal system to do that, almost instantly you will get a situation where people are being tortured for very trivial reasons."

To conclude, no one should have to undergo such horrors at the hands of others. It is everyone's right to be protected from torture. Let's make it happen.

Harry Kirkham (Finalist)



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LOWER SECONDARY CATEGORY

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR WEDDING? ANNA DOES. SHE'S TWELVE.

What were you doing when you were aged 12? School? Football? Skipping?

Anna was giving birth.

After marrying a complete stranger, Anna almost died as she gave birth to her premature son. She was only 12. Surely that can't be right. Can it?

Every year 15 million girls marry under 18. Every day 41 000 girls marry under 18.

Every minute 28 girls marry under 18. Every 2 seconds 1 girl marries under 18.

These girls are forced to marry, most of the time to complete strangers. Many of them have no idea who their future husband is as their wedding is planned.

Let's be completely honest about this. Children are being deprived of their health, their childhood and their very lives for "cultural" reasons. A girl in poverty could be forced into marriage. A girl whose family is very religious could be forced into marriage. Or a girl who is thought to be in need of protection could be forced into marriage.

The life of a girl being forced into child marriage is at risk. Child marriage can interrupt a girl's education and schooling. Child marriage can limit career options. Child marriage can isolate the girl socially and increase the risk of violence towards her. Child marriage can result in an early pregnancy, which could risk the future mother's health and life. Often, because these girls aren't physically ready to give birth, it can result in maternal death. Child marriage cripples and destroys the valuable lives of children.

So, the question is "Should this be allowed?" After all, it is their culture. The answer is definitely NO. This should NOT be allowed. NO one should be forced to marry. Especially to a total stranger. So if it's against the law, why are so many girls forced to marry under 18? Many of the families of the girls forced to marry are oblivious to the fact that there even is a law stating that no person under the age of 18 can be forced into marriage. Many families, who hadn't even considered child marriage, turn to it as their last resort following emergencies and conflicts putting pressure on the household.

10% of women alive today were married under 18. Now, reading that, you may be thinking, "Only 10%?! That's hardly anyone. Why don't people fight against more important things like world hunger?" If that's your first thought, then what if I tell you that 10% is 720 000 000 people? And those 720 000 000 people could have been anyone. Could have been you, me or anyone.

In Yemen, the age of consent is 9! One girl aged 8 year bled to death after she was raped by her 40 year old husband on her wedding night. There are many other stories like this from around the world.

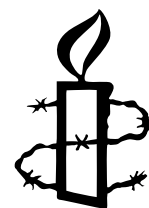
During the time you spent reading this report, approximately 60 girls found out they were being forced to marry.

Nobody deserves to lead a life like this.

It has to stop. Now.

Molly McGregor (Finalist)

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UPPER SECONDARY CATEGORY

LET'S CUT THE PRACTICE, NOT THE CHILDREN.

"I can hear my little sister scream , I never heard such scream, even today when I shut my eyes I can hear her screaming."

Istar was six years old when the bodies of she and her sister were permanently mutilated. She has only now, aged twenty-eight, been able to recount the horror of that experience - and in this time, around 66 million girls will also have been cut.

This is the distressing reality of Female Genital Mutilation, a truly barbaric practice that inflicts violent, unnecessary suffering on 3 million young girls each year .

FGM is child abuse; it's as simple as that. There are absolutely no health benefits; however the negative impacts are numerous; in some instances it can lead to death and many girls are so psychologically scarred that they develop post-traumatic stress disorder. Despite a publicity boom over the past few years, change is not happening fast enough - and the small bodies of young girls that should be protected and nurtured continue to have pieces chopped off them instead.

The practice of female genital mutilation is just as vicious and degrading as the name sounds. In violation of articles 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights , the cut itself is crude and excruciating, with instruments such as scissors, glass or even fingernails used to remove the external genitalia of a girl. 140 million women worldwide have been affected by Female Genital Mutilation , with 8000 girls becoming victims every day. The magnitude of this is indescribably horrifying.

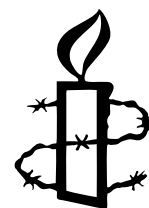
Even with the combined international efforts of the World Health Organisation, United Nations Population Fund, and multiple non-governmental organisations , the counteraction of FGM has been slow - a teenage girl in Kenya today is only a third less likely to be cut than 30 years ago, and in the UK there were 500 FGM cases identified in hospitals throughout the country in November 2014, despite the fact that the practice has been illegal since 1985. This information only serves to highlight the magnitude of the FGM problem.

On 6th February 2015 it was the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM , and wouldn't it be fantastic if this year we could really make a difference? The UK Charity Amref Health Africa has recently been leading the way with a remarkable achievement documented by The Times' Christmas Appeal. Amref's work with the Maasai people in Kenya has meant that over 3,000 girls have avoided FGM by completing alternative rites of passage instead. The significance of this is that now these girls finish their education instead of dropping out of school to get married. Additionally the denouncement of FGM by seven different Maasai communities will hopefully set the ball rolling for others to follow their example.

What we can learn from this is that there is hope. However, it is imperative that tackling FGM does not fall by the wayside; because a world where female genital mutilation occurs is not a world that we should live in.

Rhiannon Williams (Winner)

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EBOLA: WHEN A DISEASE BECOMES IMMUNE TO HUMAN RIGHTS

1.4 million people are being deprived of basic human rights in Sierra Leone's questionable Ebola quarantines.

According to the World Health Organisation, there have been over 10,124 cases of Ebola in Sierra Leone since the December 2013 outbreak began. With insufficient resources, quarantines striving to control the spread of the virus have been applied too broadly and unlawfully.

On the 2nd December 2014, Sierra Leone announced that the Bombali and Port Loko districts in the north of the country were to be quarantined until further notice. This means that over 1.4 million people in fourteen districts are now unable to travel, constituting a third of the entire population. As well as hindering people's access to healthcare, these quarantines restrict people's rights to liberty and freedom of movement.

It is required by international law that any measures to protect public health that could affect people's human rights must comply with standards of proportionality, legality and necessity. Quarantines such as those imposed in Sierra Leone have frequently breached these requirements, meaning those most vulnerable and unable to evade such quarantines have been adversely impacted; this includes the elderly (forming 3.7% of the population), the poor and the disabled.

This could not only restrict people's rights but also hamper efforts to control the virus: "Adopting overly-broad quarantines and other rights-abusive measures can undermine efforts to contain the Ebola epidemic", said Health and Human Rights Director at Human Rights Watch, Joseph Amon.

Security forces have been deployed to enforce quarantines, but reports of excessive violence has led to clashes between residents and the police. During a protest in Freetown, Liberia, a fifteen year-old boy was killed and many others injured in such demonstrations in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia.

The guidelines of the Use of Force by Law Enforcement Officials state that non-violent methods should be used by police as far as possible before force is resorted to. If the use of force is necessary, however, damage and injury must be minimised wherever possible. The security forces of Sierra Leone are not following these principles, potentially putting lives at risk. After years of police training provided by international partners, the Ebola epidemic should be an opportunity to both protect the people of Sierra Leone and build mutual trust after years of unrest.

Any quarantines implemented should adhere to UN guidelines, and other strategies to contain the outbreaks should be considered. Social mobilisation efforts could be used to educate the people of Sierra Leone about the risks and prevention of Ebola and the care of those infected as they are often more effective than quarantines in preventing the spread of disease.

The policing of any necessary quarantines must comply with the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. It comes with a responsibility that is absolutely critical for people's lives; any human rights violations surrounding the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone should be investigated and action taken against those responsible.

Katie Bottomley (Finalist)

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UPPER SECONDARY CATEGORY

SUFFERING OR SMILING? THE SLUMS OF JAKARTA

Driving through one of Jakarta's poorest areas in August 2013 is an experience I cannot forget. The snail-like pace of the Indonesian capital's infamous traffic allowed me to digest some desperate sights. Under a motorway bridge, teenagers my age sifted through a landslide of trash - did gold lurk underneath? Nearby, I saw two boys being washed in a plastic tub outside their home: a shack of corrugated iron dependent on a concrete pillar. If the children built a makeshift den nearby, it would look identical.

But did the vast skyscrapers dwarfing neighbouring slums look similar?

Hardly. Standing beside Tanjung Priok Harbour that afternoon, I noticed how the skyline fenced the poverty in.

Being half Indonesian myself, I take tremendous pride in the country's incredible culture and recent economic progress. But can I boast about the living conditions challenging its development?

Hardly. Though dwarfed by futuristic high-rises, ramshackle slums permeate Jakarta.

Lack of education, exposure to poverty and inadequate working conditions cement the divide between Jakarta's richest and poorest; the majority's only means of livelihood are small shops or food stalls. Teenagers quitting school to support their families are common. Scrap-metal extensions propelling buildings to four storeys high intercept all sunlight, casting permanent shadow on the quagmire of waste below.

The right to an adequate standard of living for all, including clothes, food and suitable housing, is unremarkable. Yet is there evidence of that in these conditions?

"There are over 4,000 people here," says Muratsih, a woman who calls Jembatan Besi- Jakarta's most overcrowded slum - home, "20 people live in one house with no toilet. We take turns to sleep because there is not enough room for everyone"; Drugs and alcohol also cause problems. But I like the sense of community. If someone dies round here, everyone goes to their funeral."

Yes, a 'sense of community' may be what an apartment block lacks- but is this really more important than a basic human right?

Hardly. Though many slum dwellers seem reluctant to leave, I wonder if doubt at the promise of change confines them more than house pride.

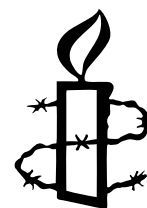
And a promise there is. Reforms such as more 'modern' housing and effective action on pollution have been proposed by Joko Widodo, the recently elected president. I pray they are the decisions of a visionary, not just another politician's empty pledges. Yes, many contend their content - but would they be as optimistic if they knew the standards entitled to them? That is the question I ask, and that is the question which I hope Widodo will make irrelevant. When I return to my native land, I ask for junkyard houses and sewage streams to be a tale from history. When I return, I ask that Jakarta's slum dwellers will be living life to the full.

Do I ask for the crack between poverty and prosperity to disappear?

Absolutely. When I return, I want that narrow gulf to be a distant memory.

Rosalind Byard-Jones (Finalist)

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FURTHER EDUCATION CATEGORY

FOREIGNERS IN THEIR OWN HOME: THE ABDUCTION OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

There is something unshakably routine about Sydney's opulence. Australia's most densely populated city skirts the province of New South Wales in a glistening film of placidity, a mirage which attracts over 11 million visitors every year. Tourists pass through Port Jackson and Bondi Beach in an interminable stream, rendered speechless in admiration of the Opera House and their material desires satiated in the city's abundant shopping districts.

Amid the incessant to-ing and fro-ing, Sydney holds no reservations in revealing to its guests the cultural presence of its Aboriginal peoples- the original inhabitants of the subcontinent who, throughout years of European colonialism, suffered near extinction from barbaric persecution. Tourists may stop to take jovial holiday snaps with men and women painted in white and terracotta, laden with quaint tribal dress and spears, through any one of Sydney's diverse "Aboriginal Heritage Tours". The tourists do not see, however, that these people are mere novelties: foreigners in their own country, who are displayed by their government as paper-thin tokens of contrition for racial mishandlings. Australia's slight nod of repentance for one of history's most prolonged genocides, in an age when the kidnapping of Aboriginal children still persists. In 2013 alone, 14,000 Indigenous children were forcibly and inexplicably abducted from their communities by district police.

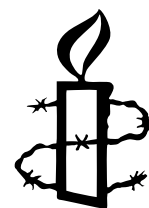
The practice of "stealing" Aboriginal children was inaugurated in the nineteenth century: during the construction of the Ghan railway, it was decided that Aboriginal children, particularly those of mixed Indigenous and European descent, were at risk of neglect from their own communities and thus were seized by government force. The act, euphemistically dubbed "Stronger Futures", continued into the 1970s. Whilst some children were taken to agencies and convents to be "saved from themselves" and essentially imbued with Anglo-Christian ideology, others were sold as cheap labour, to fuel an economy built upon the suffering of shattered families. This practice is evocative of the Nazi eugenics programme- that Aborigines, in some way evolutionary insufficient, would not be able to adapt to interracial breeding and would therefore "die-out". "Reconciliation", passed off as cultural welfare, was therefore permitted to flourish and, shockingly, still does. The rates of child abduction today rival those of the last century.

A few miles outside of Sydney, in rural New South Wales, Aboriginal families live in towns rife with diseases such as trachoma and scabies. Alcoholism is dangerously prolific. Life expectancy in these towns can be as low as thirty-seven. In a country as developed as Australia, this reality is as anachronistic as a Kenyan slum in London. Rather than alleviating these socio-economic concerns, \$80 million was spent on the inspection and removal of "at-risk" Aboriginal children in Australia's Northern Territory in 2012 alone, compared to the meagre \$500,000 allocated for welfare.

In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd expressed officially his apology for the abduction of a century's worth of Aboriginal children, whilst affirming that no financial reparation would be made. It is ultimate proof of the little hope available for yet another stolen generation.

Alannah Lewis (Winner)

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FURTHER EDUCATION CATEGORY

DIAGNOSIS OR DEGRADATION?

Imagine an illness which affects one in four people, yet still 91% of sufferers experience discrimination (1).

This illness is not cancer; this is not AIDS; this is mental illness. Incessantly, people suffering from mental health problems are dehumanised and neglected by their peers. The fundamental question is this: why are mental illnesses not viewed in the same way that physical illnesses are?

In a world where an estimated 450 million people have a mental health issue (2), the stigma of being labelled a “mental patient” is not only illogical, it is also damaging to those suffering. This stigma is a major hurdle to mentally ill people seeking help, in the knowledge that being labelled with a mental illness will affect their life for years to come; relationships, job prospects and self-esteem are all damaged by this label. And once a label is given, it is never removed; once labelled with a mental illness, the patient loses the freedom to redefine themselves in the future. A schizophrenic who re-covers is still identified as a schizophrenic “in remission”. Someone who overcomes their alcohol addiction is still identified as a “recovering alcoholic”. For many people struggling with mental illness it becomes impossible to ever truly recover because of the labels they are branded with.

For many people, the labels “depressive”, “psychotic” and “anorexic” replace the label “human being”. Sadly, this is shown through the abuse suffered by patients in a variety of places. In the US, 46% of autistic children reported being bullied, compared with 10% of children in the general population (3). In Britain, those with mental health problems are the least likely in any group to find work, find housing and be socially included in mainstream society (4). With the majority of sufferers reporting that they have experienced stigma and discrimination, it’s no surprise that 25% of mentally ill people will never seek help for their condition, with a further 50% only reporting their physical symptoms, neglecting the emotional and mental burdens they bear (5).

This discrimination must end. People with mental illnesses must be able to seek help and support. Nine out of ten prisoners in the UK are diagnosed with some form of mental illness; if this illness was treated earlier, the crime could have been prevented. Nine out of ten suicides are the result of mental illness; if the correct support was provided, these deaths need not have occurred. There is no reason for mentally ill people to be excluded or abused. The term “mentally ill” needs to cease being a label and cause for discrimination; it should become a way of gaining support.

The Declaration of Human Rights says all people are equal in dignity and rights. Education is needed to defeat the shame surrounding mental illness and to give these people back their dignity. Education is needed to create a fairer society not only for those who suffer from mental illness and their families. Nobody should be discriminated against, especially not because of an illness.

Georgia Ziebart (Finalist)



RESOURCE SHEET 3

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FURTHER EDUCATION CATEGORY

AN OPEN-AIR PRISON: WEST BANK REFUGEES

Yasmine draws furiously, her hand pressed against the paper, the pen - unnaturally large in her small hands - is trapped in a vice-like grip. The Arabic curse words she mutters stand out in her young, high-pitched voice.

Five-year-old Yasmine is hardened from the only life she will ever know: A refugee camp. She is without a hint of childish joy or curiosity in her eyes.

Too traumatised to string together coherent sentences, she draws. Her current scene shows her father surrounded by Israeli soldiers. "If that soldier was here right now," Tamara Masri, 18, asks pointing at the stick figure Israeli, "what would you tell him?"

"I hate him," Yasmine replies without pausing. "I want to shoot him."

Yasmine is not alone. She and nearly 750,000 other Palestinians are trapped, forced from their homes and unable to leave, living in the West Bank's 19 refugee camps. "They are all damaged," Masri said. "But some more than others."

Last summer, Masri worked for Tomorrow's Youth Organization, an NGO that provides education for Palestinian refugees in camps around the city of Nablus, in the West Bank.

Masri eventually coaxed details from Yasmine: The Israelis had forced her from her room, tearing it - and all semblance of her meager life - apart, before leaving with her father as a captive. "She was too scared to go back into her room because she thought they had put a bomb in there," Masri said. "For a five-year-old - you don't usually ever think that way."

Although Palestinian herself, it was only through Yasmine's perspective that Masri could fully understand the depth of the conflict. "It isn't about politics or religion or about whose land it [is]. You take that away and see a five-year-old who is unable to have free will, unable to flourish, who won't ever be able to cross that border. You realize it's about human rights and this girl."

The refugees live confined in slums, with multiple families - even generations - to a room. The acrid stench of burning rubbish hangs over the camps. Cut off from the outside world, few have much to live for. "Imagine living like this for 60 years," Masri said. "That is why there is such deep, passionate anger."

Since the 2001 uprisings against Israeli occupation, the psyche of many Palestinians has changed. The oppression has made them "afraid of anything on the outside," Masri said. "They fell deeper and deeper into religion and radicalism."

As tensions seem unlikely to cease anytime soon, it leaves the refugees in limbo, with no feasible end in sight. For Masri, that is the greatest injustice. "I don't see any hope for these kids or their parents. There are still so many barriers," she said.

But, "the second you lift the occupation you lift off the most oppressive barrier that these children and families have to live with," she said. "They might be poor [or] live in slums, but they [would] have the freedom to walk where they pleased and aim for the top."

Zack Longboy (Finalist)

Please note: These are the original articles and have not been edited or checked for accuracy by Amnesty