

WE ARE STAI

Issue 2
NOVEMBER 2022

6 THIS MONTH WITH STAI

12 HUMAN RIGHTS:
MATTERS OF CONCERN

20 TAKE ACTION: PETITIONS

RIGHT
TO PROTEST

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL





WE ARE STAI

We are excited to introduce you to 'We Are STAI', the official magazine of STAI. 'We Are STAI' is a human rights magazine based in Tilburg, spreading awareness on human rights issues and organising various events, guest lectures, discussion nights, and cultural and social gatherings through which the community of STAI is established.

STAI is not just its Board members or active members. STAI is you, the person reading this right now, the person joining our events and sharing our posts, the person who is fighting bad guys with us every single day. STAI wanted to offer every person and member a place to express themselves and speak out about topics they are passionate about.

The magazine is a quick and easy point to find out information about our past events and upcoming events as well as to read the related features on human rights, sign petitions and discover the multilayer personalities of different people who have dedicated their lives to either working or volunteering in human rights. You will find this and more here! 'We Are STAI' is a voice that is shaped by you and your passion for morality, justice, and equality.

Welcome to the fight since 1971!

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BY CLICKING THESE ICONS!**

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The STAI press commission presents the second edition of We Are STAI! This issue is the first of the new academic year, and the first with our newly restructured editorial team. This being said, our internal changes do not change our goals and what we aim to achieve with this magazine, which is to give an inside perspective of Amnesty International's principles, campaigns and spirit as a student group at Tilburg University.

We started the academic year welcoming new members to all of our STAI committees, and the first events of the semester reflect their, and our continuing members', exciting kick offs to the year. The Right to Protest campaign kick-off event began the year with a collaboration with the Tilburg Right to Protest action group, and marked the start of the larger Amnesty International campaign. You can read about both of these in this issue, in "This month with STAI" and in "Human rights: matters of concern".

These sections also include recaps of our other events this month, namely the Creative Evening and the sustainable fashion clothes drive, and feature pieces on international human rights concerns. The limits of language and the scope of this magazine could never translate the true impact, extent and nuance of the human rights concerns we face around the world. Instead, we hope that our brief considerations will prompt you to seek out more information, to listen to the voices that are part of these stories, and to ask questions.

In the final section, "Take action", we invite you to participate directly. In this section you can get involved and join petitions for some of the pressing human rights concerns we've explored in this issue.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of We Are STAI, and until the next one!

Kayla Thomas



The Board for 2022/23



STAI at Amnesty International National Student Day in Amsterdam

INTRODUCING STAI

Students Tilburg Amnesty International (STAI) is a student group that is part of Amnesty International - a global movement of more than 7 million people fighting injustice. There are currently three active committees:

ACTIONS THAT MATTER COMMITTEE

The Actions That Matter committee organises various action-oriented and practical human rights events. These events are very diverse, thus allowing members a lot of space to be creative and

innovative with their ideas. The committee has participated in events like the annual and national Write for Rights campaign, organised protest and demonstration events, and held a clothing and book swap.

SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE

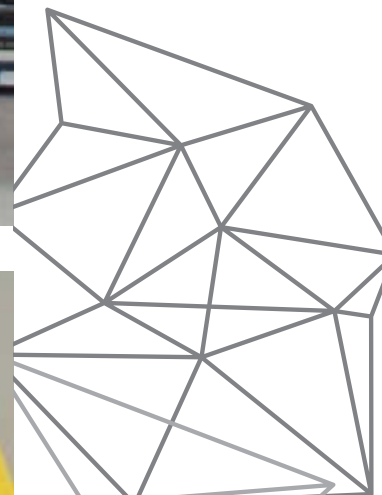
The Symposium committee organises discussion panels and symposia on human rights topics with very interesting speakers and knowledgeable experts. These symposia are focused on informing large audiences on pressing human rights issues like the refugee crisis and the hidden price of data.

Recent Symposium events have been the symposium on female genital mutilation and the discussion on statelessness and the child's right to a nationality. The committee also organises discussion evenings matters like the constitutional right to protest, and the national Let's Talk About Yes campaign.

ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE

The Arts and Culture Committee is the newest committee in STAI. This Committee aims to make the connection between activism and any form of expression brought up through art and cultural movements. Here, there are no limits, we use all elements of creativity, imagination and critical thinking to deliver social justice.

The Arts and Culture Committee has organised events and initiatives like a book club, human rights movie marathons, a poetry slam against gender based violence, and a fast fashion conscious clothing swap and donation drive. The committee is flexible and members can initiate ideas related to human rights and arts and culture



Follow STAI on social media for more details!



THIS MONTH WITH STAI

Kick-Off Event - The Right to Protest Campaign
Creative Evening
Sustainable Fashion Clothes Swap

Kick-off event - The Right to Protest



“It’s time to loudly remind those in power of our inalienable right to protest, to express grievances, and to demand change freely, collectively and publicly.”

- Secretary General of Amnesty International, Agnès Callamard.

Leya Pandova

On 17 September, members of STAI gathered in Spoorpark with the Tilburg Right to Protest action group for a demonstration to celebrate and kick-off the international Amnesty International campaign titled “Protect the Protest”. The peaceful demonstration included creating posters, distributing flyers, and having discussions with visitors to the park about their right to protest and what this entails.

The global campaign aims to confront governments’ growing attacks and restrictions on the right to protest, and to stand up with those who want their voices to be heard. Amnesty International calls for action by supporting activists and demanding accountability in cases where the right is violated.

The NGO has published a research briefing on the topic that touches upon interesting points like the militarisation of the police, the use of law to ban or restrict protests, and the discriminatory practices that affect particular groups of people and their rights under the freedom of expression.

Nowadays, governments often characterise protests as a threat to security, which leads to handling peaceful demonstrations with heavy police involvement. In some cases these officers carry military-like equipment and are in full gear.

Matter protests. After the killing of George Floyd, a victim of police brutality, people took to the streets in protest of police brutality and institutional racism in the USA. During the demonstrations, police fired projectiles at protesters, and gassed and pepper sprayed them. Until 3 June 2020 there were 12 reported deaths and deployment of 24,000 National Guard troops in 24 states, as reported in Live Science.

This is not the only example of police brutality during protests.

The kick-off event is just the beginning of such supportive action.

The way the protests are repressed can include lethal and non-lethal weapons with various examples and reports from countries where these means have been used to dismantle civil demonstrations. Tear gas, stun grenades and pepper spray are classified as non-lethal weapons, used to minimise injury, however, can still lead to (and have caused) disability and even death. Throughout recent years, these weapons have been increasingly used in the context of protests in countries like Bolivia, Chile, China, Colombia, Greece, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain and Venezuela.

An example seen worldwide that illustrates the situation were the George Floyd and Black Lives

A more recent example are the protests in Iran, following the death of Mahsa Amini, who was killed by the ‘morality police’ for not wearing her hijab ‘properly’. The New York Times notes that the security forces in Iran have a record of using brutality to oppose dissent. This instance is not an exception as Amnesty International noted that there have been 52 deaths since the start of the protests.

These examples highlight how important the campaign is to stand up against attempts to suppress the free will and voices of the people. STAI pursues this goal and strives to facilitate change. The kick-off event is just the beginning of such supportive action.



Creative Evening: human rights and art

Leya Pandova and Kayla Thomas

For this academic year the Arts and Culture Committee opened the autumn season with a Creative Evening. The core idea of the event, which explored the relationship between human rights and art, perfectly relates to what the committee represents: the inseparable link between artistic expression, and social and human rights issues in the world. The first installment of the Creative Evening was held on 13 October and kicked off the STAI year events with a focus on discrimination as expressed through art.



The event perfectly relates to what the committee represents: the inseparable link between artistic expression, and social and human rights.



The event started with an exhibition of printed artworks, personally picked by the committee members. Participants walked around the room, being drawn by whichever artwork spoke to them most. Enlightening discussions followed, relating to recent human rights violations around the globe, art symbolism, depiction of art styles and conversations about different artists. Some of the artists discussed during the evening were South African installation artist Mary Sibande, American collagist Barbara Kruger, Lebanese activist Bahia Shehab, and American painter Kara Walker. Walker and Sibande offer provoking commentary on race and experiences of gender in relation to race, and Kruger and

Shehab offer poignant perspectives of gender and feminism.

Talking about difficult topics like sexual violence, racism and discrimination in our world is not easy and the group discussions were not always lighthearted. So, after tackling the serious side, everyone moved on to express their own thoughts and emotions on paper.

Participants explored their own creativity and responses to the artworks presented and kept the discussions of art's importance going. Pencils, watercolour paint and lots of brushes were used to create great artworks and the evening continued as a communal space for creativity and reflection.



Sustainable Fashion Clothes Swap



Andreea Sandu

The fast fashion industry is one of the most labour dependent industries and has brought about widespread human rights violations in global supply chains. According to the ILO, 7 million workers work under poor working conditions. Human trafficking, forced labour, slavery and child labour have also been identified as violations in global garment supply chains. Furthermore, around 80% of the workers in the garment industry are women. Poor and dangerous working conditions, low wages, deprivation of workers' rights, gender-based harassment and violence, and opportunist employers worsen the societal and cultural limitations many women face and exacerbate the already worrying human rights situations.



Fast fashion is a shared problem and is maintained by all of our general consumer habits, particularly by not knowing where our clothes come from and the supply chains that led to our new clothes. As consumers, we can all do something to work against these violations of human rights.

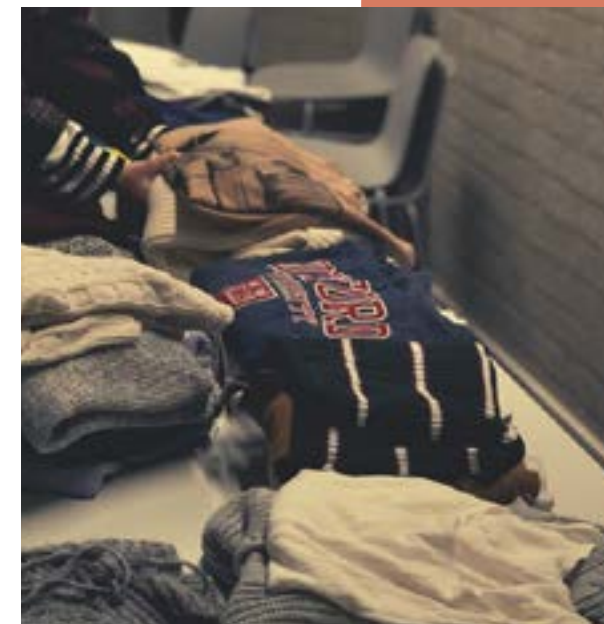
How could we all lessen the impact of fast fashion?

- buying less clothes;
- buying from ethical sources;
- reusing, refurbishing and recycling used clothes;
- donating or swapping used clothes;
- selling second and clothes;
- buying from second hand stores.

This year, STAI kept its annual tradition and hosted the annual clothing swap event. Students from Tilburg University and the public were invited to donate and swap clothes and accessories in order to promote sustainability in the fashion industry. The event was held in the MDZ building, where the Actions that Matter committee members decorated and carefully displayed all the clothes and accessories. Visitors brought clothes to donate and swapped with other students. The committee enjoyed meeting everyone and having conversations about sustainability and its necessity. Sustainability is a societal goal for everyone, and as consumers we have the responsibility to be aware and try our best to improve our behaviour.

The more products with toxic materials we buy, the more damage and harm we cause to the environment. It is important to monitor ourselves and be conscious of the materials that we buy as these have different properties and impacts on sustainability. Many of these materials are non-biodegradable, such as nylon and polyester. An interesting fact is that natural fibres are not very sustainable either. For example, the crop that uses the most pesticides worldwide is cotton, a material that could be found in most of our clothes. Also, leather is fabricated through polluting tanning and dyeing processes, which are very harmful to the environment and our health as well, as reported by [greenchoices.org](https://www.greenchoices.org).

At STAI, we try to raise awareness about these issues and encourage others to be more sustainable in their fashion choices. The clothing swap event was a success in this regard and we were able to donate and swap hundreds of products, and donate the remaining clothes to a second hand store. In this way, people could give their clothes prolonged use and donate them to others who may need them more. We look forward to the next clothing swap event and we are confident we could become the change that we want to see in the fast fashion world. As consumers, every person can become more conscious of the environment and human rights, and the impact of the fast fashion industry on sustainability.



HUMAN RIGHTS: MATTERS OF CONCERN

Protect the Protest campaign

Leya Pandova

On 17 September, Amnesty International launched the new campaign titled “Protect the Protest”. The campaign aims to ensure that “everyone – especially the marginalised and discriminated against – can participate in protests [for] a more just and equal world”. Amnesty International explains that the campaign seeks to “create a world where people can peacefully demand change without persecution”.

The right to protest can be traced across the many instances of civil unrest and public expression throughout history. While it is by no means the first protest, the Reformation movement in 16th century Europe is a good example of what can nowadays be defined as a protest. It was a direct opposition and challenge to the papal authority in a period when its power was considered fundamental and almost absolute. Similar movements throughout history

exemplify how protest was shaped and used as a tool for change. However, protest as a tool for societal contempt is under attack by governments, which instead of supporting and embracing the human rights that protesting facilitates, aim to shut it down.

The right to protest is an exercise of a collective of already recognised rights. These rights include the freedom of expression (Article 19 of the UDHR), freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (Article 20 UDHR), and freedom of thought and conscience (Article 18 UDHR). Other legal instruments that reflect these principles are, regionally, the ECHR and, internationally, the ICCPR. The universal recognition of these rights entails that everyone should be able to participate in and exercise the right to protest.

Governments may suppress the right to protest in different ways, including drafting legislation against the

right, and using the militarisation of the police to force compliance. Violent suppression of protests is becoming more common as police use lethal and (mainly) non-lethal weapons like batons, pepper sprays, tear gas, and projectiles.

Legislation can be used with other pressure to quell protest action – like in Senegal where protesting is banned in the centre of its capital, except at the front of government buildings.



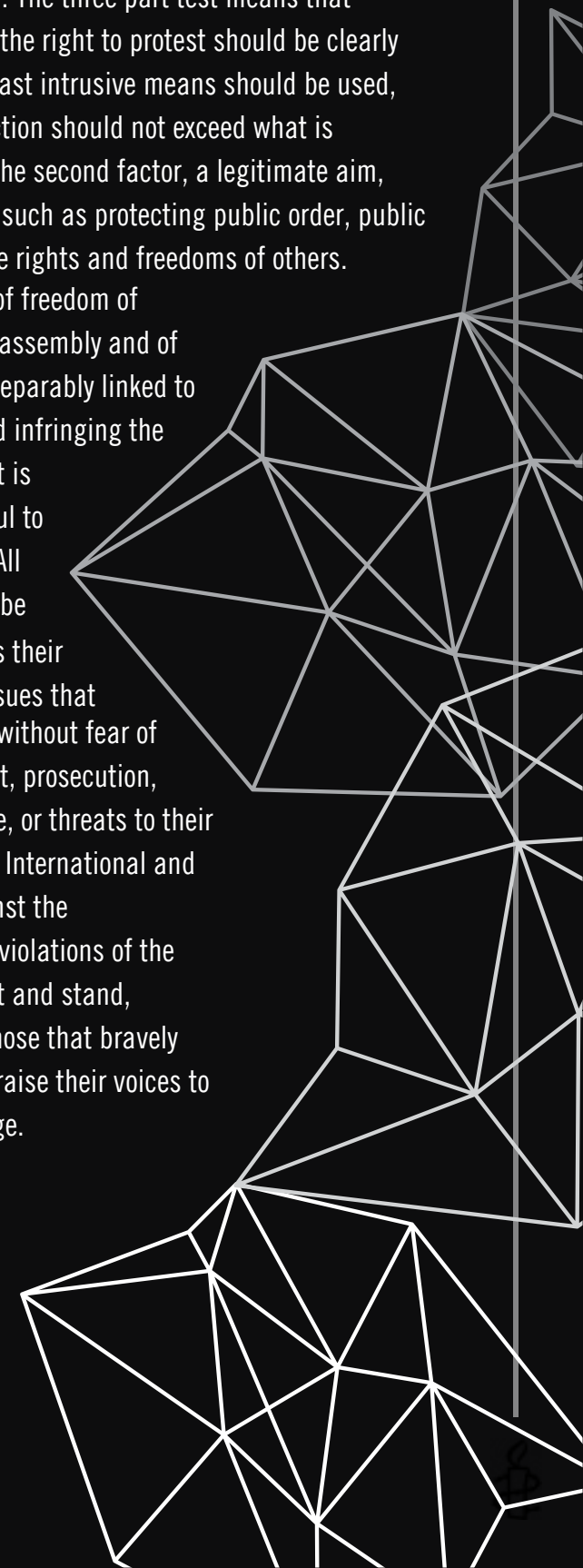
And like in Egypt, where due to continuous uses of violence against protestors, protests have essentially ceased. Another example is seen in Russia restricting protests aimed at authorities, and the violence, arrests and repression against the Russian population protesting against the war in Ukraine and President Putin's actions – documented by news sources like The Guardian and Reuters.

Some of the world's pressing examples of violations of the right to protest are seen in France's ban of Muslim women footballers from protesting, Iran's violent responses to women protesting against the 'morality police', and the shooting of dozens of protesters in Chad.

Minorities and vulnerable groups also face discrimination when exercising their right to protest, with bans preventing them from participating in peaceful demonstrations. Such groups include women, the queer community, gender non-conforming people and children. The complete ban against women to attend protests in Afghanistan serves as an appropriate example, and Pride marches are regularly suppressed and banned by more oppressive States and governments. Taking action to ensure the right to protest includes ensuring that all people have the ability to join equally.

Repressing protesting is different to the legitimate limiting of the right to protest. Amnesty International explains that the right to protest can be legitimately limited in terms of the ICCPR, which permits restrictions only if they satisfy the requirements of the “three-part test” – legality, proportionality and necessity – and the restrictions are in pursuance of a legitimate aim. The three part test means that restrictions to the right to protest should be clearly defined, the least intrusive means should be used, and the restriction should not exceed what is proportional. The second factor, a legitimate aim, includes aims such as protecting public order, public health, and the rights and freedoms of others.

The rights of freedom of expression, of assembly and of speech are inseparably linked to democracy and infringing the right to protest is directly harmful to democracies. All people should be able to express their voice about issues that concern them without fear of violence, arrest, prosecution, sexual violence, or threats to their lives. Amnesty International and STAI call against the governmental violations of the right to protest and stand, and support those that bravely stand up and raise their voices to demand change.



Mahsa Amini's death at the hands of 'morality' police

Kayla Thomas

On 16 September, Mahsa Amini died in Iranian 'morality' police custody. Amini was 22 years old, and first detained by Iran's 'morality' police for an alleged violation of the strict veiling laws. Amini was beaten by 'morality' police, kept in custody and taken to hospital in a coma, before dying three days later.

Amnesty International has called for Amini's death to be "independently, impartially and effectively investigated and those suspected of responsibility brought to justice in fair trials". In light of the Amini's death and the subsequent violent response to protest action, Amnesty International has also called for the urgent repeal of "laws that impose compulsory veiling on women and girls, perpetuate violence against them and strip them of their right to dignity and bodily autonomy, and abolish the 'morality' police which enforces these abusive and discriminatory laws".

The 'morality' police are reported by Amnesty International to "routinely subject women and girls to arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment for not complying with Iran's abusive, degrading and discriminatory compulsory veiling laws". Amnesty International further reports the use of "unlawful force" by security forces, and the injuries of hundreds of protesters. An excerpt from their website reads that hundreds of protesters have "sustained painful and serious injuries, including at least two who have been blinded in one or both eyes. Most are not seeking hospital treatment for fear of arrest, increasing the risk of infection and other health complications."

In addition to the violent crackdown of protest action, the Iranian authorities are being criticised for their failure to investigate the allegations of unlawful force, ill treatment in detention, and the treatment that lead to Amini's death in particular.



Further, in a public statement entitled "Iran: Urgent international action needed to ensure accountability for Mahsa Amini's death in custody", Amnesty International states that it is "concerned that the authorities are concealing evidence, including the video footage and medical and forensic records, that may be key to establishing the causes and circumstances of Mahsa Amini's death". Amini's family have continuously called for investigations into her death, and "have requested in vain for [...] access to [...] all the security

footage that exists from inside the van and Vozara detention centre, as well as bodycam footage from the members of the 'morality' police who arrested her".

The police information centre of Tehran announced that Amini's death followed an unexpected heart attack, despite her family refuting this. Amnesty International reports that Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, ordered an investigation into Amini's death by the Ministry of Interior, but that the Ministry "does not meet the criterion of independence under international standards and

is not a substitute for a criminal investigation by an independent, impartial body". Amini's family and supporters continue to call for Iran to allow an independent investigation into her death.

More than 200 people have been killed in the protests after Amini's death, and women continue to be targeted by the discriminatory veiling laws and the violent enforcement efforts by the 'morality' police's.

Join the international community to take action and end the bloodshed in Iran by joining the petition on page 22.



CHILD LABOUR IN AFGHANISTAN

Nina Škopac

Afghanistan, a wartorn geography since the Soviet-Afghan war of 1979, has started seeing less and less attention in the media after the unfolding of the conflict in Ukraine. However, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is still a pressing human rights concern. Following the withdrawal of the United States Armed Forces, the Taliban has regained power after 20 years of warfare. While the Taliban portrayed itself as embracing certain human rights more than the old regime, statistics and the personal experiences paint a bleak picture for the future.

Currently, Afghanistan's labour law states that the minimum employment age is 18. It is forbidden for children under 14 to work and children between 15 and 17 years old can work in jobs that "express vocational training where the environment is not harmful." However, according to Human Rights Watch, the government's will to enforce the labour law has faded since August 2021. As a result of lack of inspections, dangerous job positions that are held by children go unnoticed.

A study done by Save the Children in February 2022 estimates that one million children were engaged in child labour in Afghanistan at the time. According to the study, 18% of families have sent their children out to work since. The reasoning seems to be tied to the plummet of incomes across Afghanistan in the six month period between the Taliban's rise and February. Since February, several NGOs have pointed out that the wealth in Afghanistan dwindled furthermore.

Following the Taliban military offensive, it has become more burdensome to keep the record of the number of children occupying illegal and dangerous jobs. Amnesty International has reported that "from late August, the Taliban occupied all 14 offices of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, forcing its staff to flee the country or go into hiding." Because of a lack of statistics and reports, now, one can only speculate the increasing number of Afghan

children illegally working.

The Borgen Project estimates that children in Afghanistan are commonly working as metal workers, tinsmiths, welders, miners, street vendors, or in the carpet industry where the hours are long and the pay is not favourable. The number of dangerous jobs children are placed in requires healthcare to be efficient in the country. However, there is another lack of governance in the healthcare sector. Amnesty International has reported that the already weak health sector was further damaged following the Taliban's entrance into Kabul.

Children in Afghanistan are illegally forced to work in dangerous, tiresome and low paying jobs in order to prevent their family from starving - a plan which does not always succeed. Child labourers are working in an environment where they have inadequate access to healthcare under jobs that may harm their health permanently. This is an ongoing international matter of concern.



UAE: MODERN SLAVERY

Nina Škopac

According to the International Labour Organisation, around 49,6 million people lived in a form of modern slavery in 2021. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been linked to various allegations of human rights violations and it is one of the countries where modern slavery continues, but is not spoken enough about. In 2015 the International Labour Organisation reported that more than 80% of the country's population consists of foreign nationals, many of whom are migrant workers. Human Rights Watch reports that "low-paid migrant workers continue to be subjected to abuses that amount to forced labour".

According to Harvard.edu, in some situations as many as 10 workers may have to share one room. Moreover, Human Rights Watch reports that workers are usually only given food after they have completed their work for that day. Many migrant workers in the UAE also have no access to health care, despite working physically demanding jobs in extreme heat.

One may question why migrant workers do not complain or leave their employers. Firstly, it is worth noting that protests and strikes

are prohibited in the UAE and workers face being deported or jailed. Secondly, when migrant workers seek work in the UAE, their visas are linked to their employer through a 'sponsorship' system, which leaves workers trapped in the country and under the effective control of their employers. As the Human Rights Watch says, "the system gives employers inordinate power over workers". The impossibility of demanding better working conditions and defending their rights makes it hard for the migrant workers of the UAE to have their voices heard. If nothing changes, unseen modern slavery in the UAE will only get worse.

...they have utterly failed to protect migrant workers, and treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve."

Domestic workers also face employment conditions that the Human Rights Watch reports as "circumstances that amount to forced labour, slavery, or trafficking". This is because "domestic workers are excluded

from Ministry of Labor regulations that apply to other migrant labor sectors", and vulnerable to abuse by potential traffickers.

As Amnesty International's Middle East Research Director says: "Gulf countries are highly dependent on migrant workers in almost every major sector to help grow their economies — and yet they have utterly failed to protect migrant workers, and treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve."

Similarly, around the time of the famous Dubai Expo exhibition in 2021, over 370 African workers were deported to prisons as reported by Amnesty International in "UAE: Ensure the right to remedy to hundreds of African workers following racially motivated detentions and deportations". Moreover, the article mentions that that event was led by the UAE police force. Those workers were stripped of their personal belongings and could not have access to legal counsel, a basic right of an individual that has been arrested and taken to prison. Migrant workers continue to be subjected to maltreatment and the arbitrary limitation of their rights.

CHINA: INTERNMENT CAMPS IN XINJIANG AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Leya Pandova

Everything starts in the Xinjiang region, China. By the pretext of a campaign against 'terrorism,' the Chinese government has carried out abuses against mainly the Muslim population of the region, which includes Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Hui, and other ethnic groups. This has been happening since 2017 with the main goal being forceful assimilation achieved through mass detention. At first, the internment camps were in former schools and government buildings, but later, larger detention facilities were built. The reason for the detention was not revealed to the arrested individuals, nor did they have access to legal counsel.

Between 2019 and 2021 Amnesty International has interviewed 55 people who had spent time in the camps about their first-hand experiences. The NGO has released a full report titled "Like we were enemies in a war" delving deeply into the horrors executed against the detainees. The report is based on first-hand experiences of the victims. In addition to this report, articles like "China: UN visit to Xinjiang must be unhindered to be credible", "China: Draconian repression of Muslims in Xinjiang amounts to crimes against humanity" and "China: Families of Xinjiang detainees speak out as they await long-overdue UN report" give further insight into the situation.

Mass detainment:

People have been detained with no prior warning, and reports say they are subjected to educational and political re-education programs in order to make the detained assimilate - forcing people to forget their languages, give up their religion and traditions, and adopt the Chinese 'ideology'. The treatment of detainees can broadly be placed in two categories. The first form of ill-treatment has been experienced by everyone during the detainment period and includes being forced into various uncomfortable positions for many hours, sleep deprivation, and insufficient basic resources like light, food, water, fresh air, healthcare, and hygiene. Along with the physical mistreatment, the psychological harm upon the detainees includes living under the threat of violence, forceful "re-education", lack of communication, and more.

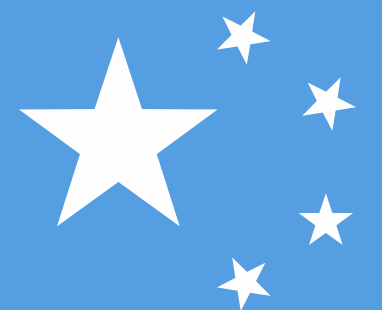
The second category of torture has been used specifically for punishment of certain detainees. Methods included beatings, electric shocks, stress positions, unlawful restraints, sleep deprivation, being hung from a wall, being subjected to extremely cold temperatures, and solitary confinement. Amnesty International has confirmed one instance of death due to torture.

Crimes against humanity and other violations:

With the evidence collected by Amnesty International, it is alleged that China's acts amount to crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture, and persecution. Suspected crimes against humanity are forced disappearances, enslavement, deportation or forceful transfer of population, and sexual violence comparable to sexual slavery, enforced sterilisation, and more.

The Chinese government uses threats and detainment against anyone who speaks out, leading to the massive cover-up of the situation. As of 2020, the estimated number of people taken is around 1.8 million.

Furthermore, Muslims in Xinjiang are not allowed to freely practice their religion - a principle found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 18), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18), and the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Their basic religious customs are deemed "extremist".



International response:

On 21 October 2021, 43 countries came up with a joint statement at the UN Third Committee, in which they expressed their worry about the situation in the region. The states called for "immediate, meaningful and unfettered access" for independent observers. An argument China has relied on to not let in monitors in the country has been the principle of state sovereignty, enshrined in the UN Charter. Especially as a response to the UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet in 2018, who expressed concern for the situation in China. The foreign ministry spokesman of the country said: "China urges the U.N. human rights high commissioner and office to scrupulously abide by the mission and principles of the U.N. Charter, respect China's sovereignty, fairly and objectively carry out its duties, and not listen to one-sided information".

Four years later, the UN Human Rights Council reached an agreement with the Chinese government for a visit to Xinjiang. In response, Amnesty International's Crisis Response Director, Joanne Mariner, said: "Access to Xinjiang for human rights monitors is an absolutely vital step towards accountability for human rights violations committed by the Chinese government against Uyghurs and other Muslims living in the region. However, it is equally vital that any visit by High

Commissioner Bachelet be independent and unhindered."

Her concern is connected to the past visitation of the region by journalists and diplomats, which were controlled by the Chinese government, and that if a "fact-finding mission" is intertwined with state control it could lead to "whitewashing human rights violations" and making the UN complicit with the Chinese propaganda that has been spread. In addition, on 8 March 2022, Amnesty International joined 200 other organisations in urging the High Commissioner to release her report on the human rights violations in Xinjiang, which High Commissioner Blachelet has said was being finalised in September 2021.

The long awaited UN report was released on 31 August, looking at the human rights concerns and China's anti-terrorist framework. The conclusion affirms that there are serious human rights violations in the region, which flow from this anti-terrorist framework. In the last sections titled "Recommendations", the OHCHR calls for the release of the detainees, disclosure of the whereabouts of all people subject to enforced disappearance, review of the counter-terrorism framework, and so on.

Whether the Chinese government will comply with the recommendations in the report remains to be seen.

Shackling: an unnoticed human right violation

Jahnavi Tomar

Disability is a mental or physical condition that restricts an individual from completing certain day to day activities, and impacts their daily life. Throughout history and even in the modern era, people who have faced mental and physical disabilities have been ridiculed, feared, and abandoned. The stigma associated with disability and endured by people who live with disabilities affects their stand in society, politics and the economy.

According to Human Rights Watch "about 80 percent of people with disabilities, including people with psycho-social disabilities, live in middle or low-income countries where it is often challenging to access healthcare, particularly mental health care" - this problem affects the treatment of disabled persons. Patients may be neglected, receive verbal and physical abuse, and some are even shackled and restrained.

Shackling is the practice of tying someone up and restraining their movement, individual decision-making and freedom. This is an infringement of their inherent right of mobility. The Human Rights Watch also published a report in 2020 on 'Shackling' which stated that in 60 countries within Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas, children, women and men with psychological conditions are chained or locked in small

spaces. There have been initiatives made by Human Rights Watch to stop this unethical conduct by demanding that the Nigerian government ban the chaining and locking up of these individuals. In Ghana, Uganda, South Sudan, and other states, governments have failed to protect the rights of disabled citizens which impacts the realisation of human rights, the right to education, mobility, participation in society and politics, and their reproductive rights. In Ghana, Uganda and South Sudan, disabled individuals have been sent to psychiatric institutions which lack adequate mental health services and basic hygiene standards. They face verbal and physical abuse and forced treatment and confinement as punishment. These institutions are made for disabled people with the aim of "healing" them and removing the "devil" who has possessed them.

An example of this mistreatment is seen in Doris Appiah's experience. Appiah is a Ghanaian woman who suffers from bipolar disorder. Due to Appiah's mental condition, she was sent to a "prayer camp" at the age of 22, after a self-described prophet claimed that Doris was "possessed by demons." She lived in the camp for 5 years, where she was tied to a wall with ropes and was forced to fast and sleep in the open. Appiah, now 58

years old, has finished her education, is a nurse by profession, and is also an advocate for human rights. She helps families and communities with disabilities integrate into society and redeem their lives in Ghana.

Shackling is not the only human rights violations which patients in health care centres experience. In countries like Russia, Peru and Nepal, disabled people face mobility issues due to a lack of sufficient infrastructure that is disability friendly. This then leads to them not being able to take part in or sufficiently access civil, political and societal events such as voting, a right to a fair legal hearing and employment. In 2011, Peru denied people with disabilities the right to vote since they considered them incompetent to make a rational decision. Only in 2018 this law was amended in order to recognise everyone's right, regardless of disability, to full legal capacity and to have assistance in making decisions if they choose as stated by the Human Rights Watch.

Despite the developments and efforts made to a more inclusive world we still have a long way to go in overcoming the stigmas and fears which are projected on disabilities. It is important to understand that we all are humans, we all have rights regardless of our gender, religion, ethnicity - and physical and mental capabilities.





Pierre Crom/Amnesty International

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