



INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF YOUTH ACTION » OCT 12-17, 2009

DEMAND DIGNITY MATERNAL HEALTH IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

www.amnestyusa.org/iwya

Each year during the International Week of Youth Action, thousands of Amnesty International youth activists from around the world join together in solidarity to take action on a critical human rights issue. This October, your group will speak with the resounding voice of youth activists across the globe—making a difference for the right to maternal health in Peru, Sierra Leone, and around the world!

“Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

— Nelson Mandela

BACKGROUND

Everyone everywhere has the right to essential health care and housing, as well as to clean water, food, education, and decent work. Everyone has the right to security, both physical and economic; to freedom from discrimination; and to participation in the decisions that affect their lives. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantees these rights and more.

Yet more than 60 years after the adoption of the UDHR in the aftermath of the horrors of World War II and the Great Depression, freedom from want and fear is still unrealized for millions of people living in poverty. Poverty is not merely a lack of income. It is a tangible threat to basic rights -- to housing, adequate food, clean water, and a decent standard of health care. Thousands die every day from preventable disease, contaminated water, and hunger, and those who live in poverty often lack the power to stabilize their insecurity. These are human rights violations. The fact that these violations are common does not make them acceptable.

Amnesty International’s new Demand Dignity campaign combats the human rights violations that are both a cause and a consequence of poverty. In 2009-2010, the focus area of the campaign is the human rights scandal of maternal mortality, with reports on Peru, Sierra Leone and more. Globally, one woman dies every minute in pregnancy or childbirth; more than half a million women die every year. The vast majority of these deaths are preventable. As Mahmoud Fathalla, former president of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, said: “Women are not dying because of diseases we cannot treat. They are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving. Join us as Amnesty International demands dignity for everyone, regardless of gender or income.



Maternity waiting house, Mannah village, Kabala, Koinadugu district, northern Sierra Leone, 2 Feb 2009

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TAKE ACTION

LEVEL 1 All AIUSA groups are asked to complete the following actions:

- **Write letters to President García of Peru, calling on him to live up to his commitment to fulfill the right to maternal health.** Although Peru is a middle-income country, its maternal mortality rate is the second worst in South America. Low-income, rural, and indigenous women are most at risk. Peru has been a focus of the human-right-to-maternal-health community, and President Alan García has promised better equity in maternal health funding. But he has yet to fulfill that promise. Go to page 3 for recommended text.
- **Write letters to President Koroma of Sierra Leone, calling on him to implement his pledge to ensure access to maternal health care.** In Sierra Leone, one out of every eight women dies in pregnancy or childbirth, the second-worst rate in the world. Under pressure from Sierra Leonean and international civil society, President Ernest Bai Koroma recently pledged to prioritize maternal health. It's up to us to hold him to that promise. Go to page 4 for recommended text.

LEVEL 2 With more time and planning, your group can:

- **Collect petition signatures urging the U.S. government to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).** Of the world's 1.3 billion poorest people, 70 percent are female. Violence against women is pervasive: one in three women worldwide will experience abuse during her lifetime.

Due to lack of adequate health care, more than 530,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related complications – one every minute. CEDAW establishes international protections against these abuses. The United States is one of only eight countries that hasn't ratified CEDAW (along with Iran, Nauru, Palau, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, and Tonga). See pages 5-7 for the petition and facts about the treaty.

- **Craft 60 worry dolls to send a symbolic message to Congress.** Worry dolls are used in traditional Mayan culture to express concern. Around the world, 60 women die every hour in pregnancy or childbirth—a fact that should certainly be a source of urgent and widespread worry! To symbolize our concern, we ask each group to craft at least 60 worry dolls. Altogether, we're aiming for 10,000 worry dolls, for the 10,000 mothers we lose every week. Take pictures of yourselves with the completed dolls! Go to page 8 and 9 for detailed crafting instructions.
- **Send the petitions and the dolls to your AIUSA regional office.** They will be delivered to the Senate, calling on them to fight discrimination against women by ratifying CEDAW. See page 9 for your regional office address and mailing instructions.

LEVEL 3 With even more time and planning, your group can:

- **Organize a street stunt.** Raise public awareness about the number of women who die in childbirth or from complications in pregnancy! Go to page 10 to get started.



RESOURCES

Go to amnestyusa.org/demanddignity for further information on CEDAW, maternal mortality, poverty and human rights, and more! If you have any questions, or need help coordinating events, contact your regional office at 1-866-A-REGION or amnestyusa.org/contact.



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SAMPLE LETTER

URGE PRESIDENT GARCÍA OF PERU TO FULFILL THE RIGHT TO MATERNAL HEALTH CARE

Sr. Alan García Pérez
President of the Republic of Peru
Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza Mayor S/N.
Lima 1, PERÚ

Dear Sr. President García,

I am writing to you as a member of Amnesty International in the United States. I would like to share with you the concerns that I have with regards to the issue of maternal mortality in Peru, as outlined in Amnesty International's recent report *Fatal Flaws: Barriers to maternal health in Peru*.

While Amnesty International recognizes the steps that the government of Peru has taken since the organization's previous report in 2006, the organization believes that Peru can and must do much more to eliminate the barriers that prevent poor, rural and Indigenous women from accessing life-saving reproductive and maternal health care.

Accordingly, the organization is asking the government of Peru to co-ordinate existing government initiatives for the prevention and reduction of maternal mortality into a fully resourced and accountable plan of action which includes all relevant government ministries and local authorities. The plan must:

- Allocate adequate resources to maternal and reproductive health care, prioritizing the poorest regions with highest mortality ratios
- Systematically reduce economic, physical and cultural barriers that prevent poor rural and Indigenous women from accessing life-saving reproductive and maternal health care
- Ensure meaningful participation of women in decisions about maternal health care and in the evaluation and monitoring of current processes
- Provide accessible information to women about their sexual and reproductive rights and the right to health
- Ensuring adequate monitoring of government policy to reduce maternal mortality, in order to promote effective planning and accountability.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and I look forward to hearing how you propose to take forward these recommendations and any response that you might have.

Yours sincerely,

Name:
Country:

A first-class mail international letter to Peru needs \$.98 in postage -- that's up to 5 pages of 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, plus envelope and stamp. (That's 20# basis paper, standard office weight.)



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SAMPLE LETTER

URGE PRESIDENT KOROMA OF SIERRA LEONE TO ENSURE ACCESS TO MATERNAL HEALTH CARE

His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma
President of Sierra Leone
c/o Amnesty International Sierra Leone
P.O. Box 1021
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Dear President Koroma,

I am very distressed to hear of the high risks that women in Sierra Leone face in pregnancy and childbirth. I understand that more women in Sierra Leone die during childbirth than almost anywhere else in the world. I respectfully urge you to make every effort to guarantee the health and well-being of pregnant women. Access to maternal health care services would be improved by allocating more money to health within the budget, by addressing the mismanagement of resources, by ensuring hospitals are better supplied and medical staff paid adequate salaries and by providing women and girls with information about their health and reproductive rights.

It is your duty as President to ensure that the right to life and the right to health of all Sierra Leonean women are respected and protected. The government of Sierra Leone should ensure that costs are not a barrier to essential health services, including emergency obstetric care and other reproductive health services.

Yours sincerely,

Name:

Country:

A first-class mail international letter to Sierra Leone needs \$.98 in postage -- that's up to 5 pages of 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper, plus envelope and stamp. (That's 20# basis paper, standard office weight.)



CEDAW FACTS

- **CEDAW is the most complete international agreement on basic rights for women.** The treaty can be an effective tool in ensuring girls and women receive equitable access to health care (including maternal health care), reducing violence and discrimination against women and girls, achieving gender equality in education, and securing basic legal recourse to women and girls against violations and abuses of their human rights.
- **In many countries worldwide that have ratified CEDAW, women have worked with their governments in partnership to change inequitable laws:** to improve women's health care services; to protect women and girls against violence; to help girls receive a primary education; to enable women to get micro-loans to set up small businesses; to stop sex slavery; and to secure the right to own or inherit property.
- **The United States played an important role in drafting CEDAW,** which was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979 and which 185 nations have ratified. But our country is now one of only eight that have yet to ratify the treaty, alongside Iran, Nauru, Palau, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan and Tonga.
- **CEDAW represents a powerful principle that human rights of women are universal across all cultures, nations, and religions,** and worthy of being guaranteed through international human rights standards. The United States should embrace this principle, not undermine it by delaying ratification further.
- **CEDAW has long enjoyed bipartisan support in the United States, but has never come before the full Senate for a vote.** The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has twice voted favorably with bipartisan support to send CEDAW to the Senate floor for ratification, but the Senate has recessed each time before that occurred.
- **International treaties like CEDAW must be signed by the president with the "advice and consent" of the Senate.** So the key steps on the way to ratification are:
 - a simple majority vote by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy and Global Women's Issues, chaired by Barbara Boxer (D-CA);
 - a simple majority vote by the full Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by John Kerry (D-MA);
 - a two-thirds majority vote by the full Senate.
- **In the summer of 2009, the State Department notified the Senate that it supports ratification of CEDAW.** CEDAW was second on the list of treaties the State Department supports ratification of, and the only human rights treaty on the list.
- **Despite misinformation, CEDAW is neutral on the subject of abortion.** It is silent on the topic, leaving it to each government to determine policies and laws regarding the issue. The State Department concluded in its previous review that CEDAW is "abortion neutral".
- **Lack of U.S. ratification prevents the United States from participating in the CEDAW committee proceedings** and building partnerships among nations to end human rights abuses and promote the health and well being of women and girls around the world.
- **U.S. ratification of CEDAW would make an important global statement about the U.S. joining the international community** in support of the most complete international agreement on basic rights for women. It would also make an important global statement about the U.S. commitment to fulfilling the right to maternal health, stopping discrimination and violence against women, and improving the status of women internationally.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS -- RATIFY CEDAW, THE TREATY FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN!

We, the undersigned human rights supporters, urge the Senate to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Throughout the world, discrimination against women and girls is pervasive, and its impact is devastating. Of the world's 1.3 billion poorest people, 70 percent are female. Violence against women is prevalent: one in three women worldwide will experience assault, rape or other abuse during her lifetime. Two-thirds of the world's 771 million illiterate adults are women. Due to lack of adequate health care, more than 530,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related complications—one every minute.

CEDAW establishes international protections against these abuses: it offers women redress against violence, guarantees equal access to education, and commits nations to fighting maternal mortality.

Although CEDAW has always enjoyed bipartisan support in the United States, it has yet to come before the full Senate for a vote. This unfinished business puts the United States in the company of only a handful of nations that have not ratified the treaty, including Iran, Sudan, and Somalia. As a party to the treaty, the United States will have a seat at the table where decisions are made about women's lives around the world and, along with all other ratifying nations, will file regular reports on our progress.

The State Department has indicated its support for U.S. ratification of CEDAW. It's now up to the Senate to do its part.

NAME	CITY	STATE	ZIP	E-MAIL *

* Human rights supporters who sign this petition will get updates by email about Amnesty International's Demand Dignity Campaign. They may opt out at any time.

Return completed petitions to your Amnesty International USA regional office (see addresses on next page).

amnestyusa.org/demanddignity



CRAFT 60 WORRY DOLLS TELL THE U.S. SENATE THAT WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS – RATIFY CEDAW!

Amnesty International USA activists around the country are crafting worry dolls to send a symbolic message to the Senate. We're urging them to help protect women's human rights by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Throughout the world, discrimination against women and girls is pervasive, and its impact is devastating. Of the world's 1.3 billion poorest people, 70 percent are female. Violence against women is prevalent: one in three women worldwide will experience assault, rape or other abuse during her lifetime. Two-thirds of the world's 771 million illiterate adults are women. Due to lack of adequate health care, more than 530,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related complications – one every minute.

CEDAW establishes international protections against these abuses: it offers women redress against violence, guarantees equal access to education, and commits nations to fighting maternal mortality. Yes the United States remains one of the only countries that has not ratified CEDAW.

One woman lost to pregnancy-related complications every minute means more than 10,000 maternal deaths every week -- and those statistics are cause for urgent concern and attention. In Mayan tradition (and in some other indigenous communities around the world) one way to deal with worry is to make a "worry doll" -- a simple doll made with a few popsicle sticks or a clothes-pin and some yarn or thread.

AIUSA members around the country are crafting these worry dolls. Join us in crafting 10,000 worry dolls to symbolize the 10,000 mothers we lose every week! Next year, we'll deliver them to the Senate to push them to finally ratify CEDAW and protect women's human rights.

MATERIALS

- Two popsicle sticks
- Colored yarn or embroidery thread – if you want, you can incorporate white, the traditional color of the safe motherhood movement!
- Glue
- Scissors
- Colored markers



Northeast Region Field Organizer Thenjiwe McHarris with her simple popsicle-stick worry doll

PROCEDURE

1. Cut one popsicle sticks in half, for the "arms".
2. Attach the arms about 3/4 of the way up the second popsicle stick, just below the "neck".
3. Draw a face and hair on the top of the popsicle stick (its "head").
4. Cut two lengths of yarn (or thread).
5. Put glue on the "neck" of the doll and attach one end of one piece of yarn. Let the glue dry.
6. Wrap the yarn around the arms and torso of the doll to make a "shirt". Attach the end of the yarn with glue.
7. Put glue just below the shirt and attach one end of the other piece of yarn. Let the glue dry.
8. Wrap the yarn around the "legs" of the doll to make pants. Attach the end of the yarn with glue.
9. Let the whole thing dry.
10. You're done!



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CRAFT 60 WORRY DOLLS (CONTINUED)

SEND US YOUR COMPLETED WORRY DOLLS

1. Be sure to take pictures of yourselves with your completed worry dolls! Email them to us at demanddignity@amnestyusa.org.
2. Be sure to prominently include your return address on the package, so we can send a message directory to your senator!
3. Keep in mind that we need to receive your worry dolls as soon as possible, but no later than December 10th so that we can get ready to deliver them to congress.
4. Send your completed worry dolls to your Amnesty International regional office (listed below):

DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV

AIUSA Mid-Atlantic Office
Attn: Demand Dignity Campaign
600 Pennsylvania Ave. SE 5th Fl.
Washington DC 20003

IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI

AIUSA Mid-West Office
Attn: Demand Dignity Campaign
53 West Jackson Suite #731
Chicago IL 60604

CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, VT, RI

AIUSA Northeast Office
Attn: Demand Dignity Campaign
58 Day Street
Davis Square
Somerville, MA 02144

AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX

AIUSA Southern Office
Attn: Demand Dignity Campaign
730 Peachtree Street NE Suite 1060
Atlanta, GA 30308

AK, AS, AZ, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY

AIUSA Western Office
Attn: Demand Dignity Campaign
350 Sansome St. Suite 210
San Francisco CA 94104



A basic popsicle-stick worry doll -- you can keep it simple, or make one a lot more elaborate than this!

VARIATIONS

- Glue and wrap additional yarn to give your doll a more colorful shirt or pants.
- Give the worry doll hair made with yarn or thread, rather than marker.
- Instead of a popsicle stick for the doll's body, use a wooden clothespin (preferably with a rounded top). You can leave out the arms if you want.
- Instead of popsicle sticks, use matchsticks or toothpicks, for a smaller worry doll.



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ORGANIZE A STREET STUNT

MATERNAL MORTALITY: EVERY 60 SECONDS

RAISE AWARENESS about the number of women who die in childbirth or from complications in pregnancy.

IDEAS

- Get a group of your friends or classmates to line up in a public space. Every minute someone will lie on the floor to symbolize a dying woman. You could wear plain white face masks to show that you are representing other people.
- Make sure there is a banner showing the campaign symbol and the reasons for your street action. Get everyone who is taking part to wear T-shirts with the campaign symbol on them. You could also add campaign messages -- for example, "maternal health is a human right" to the T-shirts or on banners and placards.
- You could organize the event near a prominent clock such as a clock tower or use a prop of a large clock branded with the campaign symbol. This can help to reinforce the message that every minute another woman dies. You could reinforce this link with banners, posters and placards that carry messages such as: "Stop the clock on needless deaths in childbirth. Demand the right to maternal health now." "It's time to stop women dying. Demand the right to maternal health now."
- Organize a "flash mob" where a larger group of people are mobilized by the internet, text message or email to go to a particular central, prominent or symbolic location -- for example, outside a health department or a hospital -- at a set time on a set day. Get them to lie down and "die" for one minute as a demonstration.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

- Make sure that the event is safe and does not inconvenience members of the public too much.
- You might need to get permission to carry out street stunts in a public place.
- Set up a stall or have activists on hand who can sign people up to the Demand Dignity campaign and Amnesty International.
- Make sure the media know about it!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Get in touch with your local field organizer, or email the campaign team at demanddignity@aiusa.org!

SHARE IT!

Remember to take photos or film your street stunt. Your story might give other people ideas and inspire them to take action! You can also send stories, photos and film to the media.