

# WE ARE STAI

ISSUE 1  
APRIL 2022

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# 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 organizing 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 single 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 news on human rights, sign petitions and discover the multiverse and multilayer personalities of different people who have dedicated their lives to either working or volunteering in human rights. You will find this and many more here!

'We Are STAI' is a voice that is shaped by you and your passion for morality, justice, and equalness. Welcome to the fight since 1971!

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BY CLICKING THESE ICONS!**



# INTRODUCING STAI

**S**tudents 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

This committee has organized events like a clothing donation event for refugees in Greece, fundraising events including the annual collection week, and informative events on how individuals can make conscious choices in the world of fast fashion as well as in their food choices. Additionally,

the committee organizes late-night events, which are more informal discussion-type events with experts; previous topics have included gender violence, statelessness, business, and human rights, and collaborated with other student organizations in Tilburg as well as organizing protests for different causes.

## SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE

The Symposium committee organizes a big symposium once a year with very interesting speakers and knowledgeable experts. The last one was held in March on the topic of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting with our two guests of honors Dr. Annemarie Middelburg and Istahil Abdulahi.

These symposia are focused on informing a large audience, often exceeding a hundred people on pressing human rights issues such as the refugee crisis and the hidden price of your data. Also, the committee is organizing monthly discussion nights on various topics, with an upcoming one on the right to protest.

## ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE

Arts & Culture Committee is our social and cultural committee that has a book club and organizes events discussing movies, art workshops and activism, movie nights, and anything else related

to human rights and the field of arts and culture. The committee also collaborated with other student organizations for bonding events for educational purposes, as well as local poets and artists.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ▶ **29 April**  
Human Rights Movie Marathon  
Arts & Culture Committee
- ▶ **3 May**  
Human Rights Dialogue  
Actions That Matter

- ▶ **6 May**  
General Members' Assembly  
New Board and Chairs recruitment
- ▶ **13 May**  
#LetsTalkAboutYES on Well-Being Day  
STAI x SAM collaboration

**Follow STAI on social media for details!**



Amnesty International solidarity action with Ukraine



STAI at Amnesty International National Student Day



# LAST MONTH WITH STAI

Symposium on Female Genital Mutilation  
 Vigil for Ukraine  
 Let's Talk About YES: Poetry Slam



## Symposium on FGM/C

**Jahnavi Tomar and Alba Willems**

On the 8th of March, in relation to International Women's Day, we as a Symposium committee organised an event about the topic of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting. Our two guests of honour, Dr. Annemarie Middelburg and

that we never learn to talk about anything, I think the world is now a better place and we are sharing and years ago we would say nothing!". This was one of the reasons for her to start telling her story and raise awareness regarding this issue. These two inspiring and strong personalities are now good friends and work closely in raising awareness and making a change.

The event was organised on campus, and we were happy to see many students join us live as well as remotely through zoom. The evening started with an introduction of the two speakers. We were then informed about what FGM/C is and the numerous risks which come with the procedure, as well as the reasons for its large acceptance in certain societies. The ethical dilemma existing in these societies and the reasons for its wide practice was elaborated on by Dr. Annemarie Middelburg, who herself was put in a difficult position when she was in Senegal. Local women asked her (despite feeling and knowing the harms of FGM themselves) whether their daughters should undergo the same agony. Dr. Annemarie Middelburg knows that if the daughter does not undergo this procedure she would not meet the social norms and therefore not find a suitable husband, which is essential for her existence and acceptance within the community. On the other hand, proceeding with FGM/C would mean lifelong emotional and psychological distress as well as long-

*Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Female G  
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**At the last symposium, our two guests of honour, Dr. Annemarie Middelburg and Istahil Abdulahi, spoke about the practice of FGM/C, why the practice continues, and the physical and psychological effects endured by the women who undergo FGM/C.**

Istahil Abdulahi, came all the way to Tilburg University Campus for this special occasion.

Dr. Annemarie Middelburg, with a background in International Public Law and human rights, is a

passionate consultant from the Netherlands, with unique expertise on women's rights and the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

Istahil Abdulahi comes from Somalia and underwent female genital mutilation herself at the age of 6. She shared her moving story from taking refuge in the Netherlands to settling down here and realising what had been done to her and many other girls during their childhood. She said, "the problem, I think, with Somalian people is

term complications like menstrual problems, scar tissue, keloids, and many more. The audience was moved and shocked by this. It still is the reality of many girls and women nowadays.

Due to the comfort and openness of our speakers, we were all given the chance to ask questions, which gave us an even deeper understanding and insight into this problem. All of us were keen to know how to help and step in to stop this lethal procedure and change the circumstances of many girls worldwide. We are really thankful that this eye-opening event showed us that there is still a lot of work and development needed to fight for a world with more equality and justice.



STAI held a vigil night in Spoorpark on 20 March to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine.



## *Vigil Night in solidarity with the Ukrainian people*

### **Andreea Sandu**

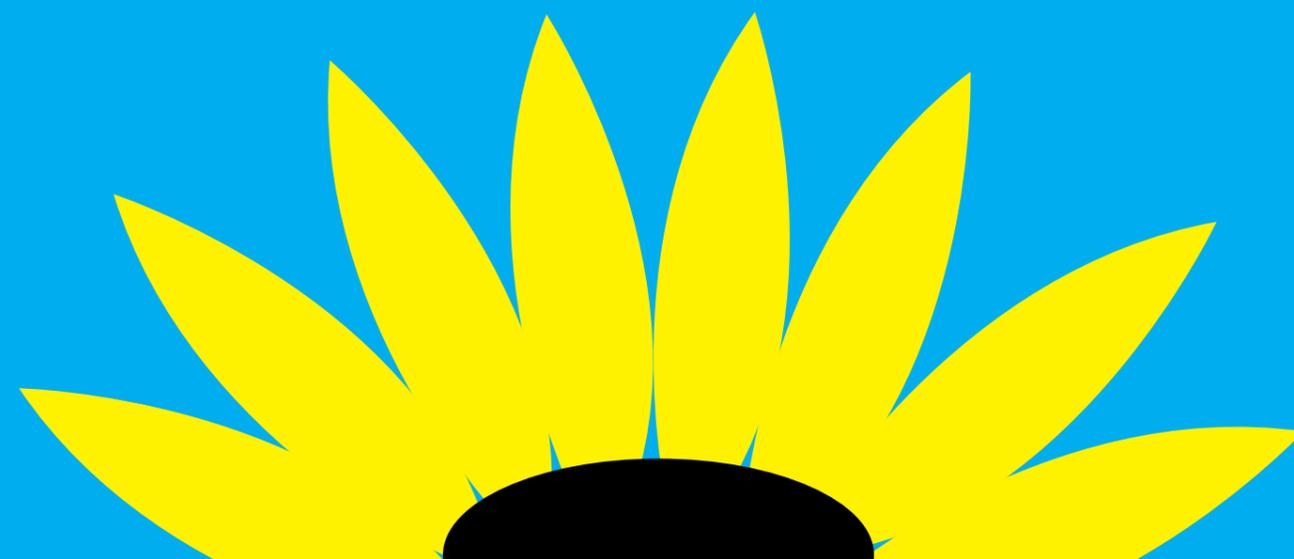
The war between Ukraine and Russia was described by politicians, journalists, and academics as one of the worst military conflicts after World War II. This War is embedded in international law and can be considered not only a violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity but also a violation of humanitarian law. Millions of civilians have fled their homes, finding shelter in other cities, while others escaped their country, leaving their family and friends behind.

In this aspect, we organized the Vigil Night to express our support and solidarity towards the Ukrainian people no matter where they are. We at STAI believe that the lives of individuals are more important than a power conflict between men, thus this event is not a political one, but a peaceful demonstration to show our respect to

the victims.

This event was held in Spoorpark and many people joined to show their solidarity. It was truly touching since we had the opportunity to connect with Ukrainian people here in Tilburg while listening to their stories and experiences. We know this is a difficult time, especially for them, thus we wanted to create a safe atmosphere where they would feel welcomed. All of us showed our respects and had moments of silent contemplation and reflection for the ones who died in the tragic events. Ukrainian music was playing in the background while all of us lit candles and quietly talked about our experiences and views.

We believe this event's purpose was successfully achieved and, hopefully, everyone who joined us left with an extraordinary feeling in their hearts knowing that their actions are very much appreciated by all of us.



## Let's Talk About **YES**: Poetry Slam

Leya Pandova

A successful collaboration between the 'Arts and Culture' and the 'Actions that Matter committees' of STAI birthed the event that was the Poetry Slam. Covering the topic of sexual consent and Amnesty's national campaign 'Let's talk about Yes', the emotional event gathered students from the whole university to read their poems as well as share their experiences. Among the students were talented writers, who shared their art pieces and experiences about women's struggles in society, the concept of consent, gender identity, and more with the Campus's Poet, Trijntje van de Wouw, honoring us with their presence and sharing heart touching work.

The event was specifically dedicated to celebrating Women's day and reflected the ideas of the campaign #Let'sTalkAboutYES, which is centered on the goal to criminalize all involuntary sex as rape in the Netherlands. On March 8th, the Minister of Justice and Security introduced new legislation regarding rape and sexual violence.



# HUMAN RIGHTS: MATTERS OF CONCERN

## Female genital mutilation & cutting

Jahnavi Tomar

Female Genital mutilation is a procedure which is performed on women and girls to aim to alter or injure her genitalia for non-medical reasons. The process involves the partial or total removal of the external genitalia. This process is a clear breach of girls and women's human rights. The process is practiced in many developing countries. It is deeply rooted in the cultural norms and values of the communities which normalize gender inequality and violence against women. In the patriarchal communities, this practice is seen as something every woman must do in order to be "accepted" in the community, it is a part of the journey into womanhood. If a woman wants to have a good married future and maintain the family honor she must go ahead with this procedure. Equally, it also aims for women to suppress their sexuality. There are however no religious beliefs associated with this practice.

The procedure in itself does not have any benefits and rather leaves girls and women with long term physical and psychological problems which include medical issues too. These include severe pain, prolonged bleeding, infection, infertility and even death. It can also lead to increased risk of HIV transmission. This procedure also adds complications during childbirth such as postpartum hemorrhage, stillbirth and early neonatal death. On a psychological

level, women can develop trust issues and long term depression.

The medicalisation of the process does not make it any safer since healthy tissue is removed and still leaves a woman unable to function normally. In some communities this process has also become an underground procedure. In order to hide the fact that the girls underwent this procedure, they practise is done on baby girls, since nobody would suspect that the female baby is crying out of tremendous pain because of the FGM procedure. What can we do to prevent Female Genital Mutilation?

Despite there being significant progress being made to prevent FGM in the past 30 years. The estimated number of women who have undergone this procedure adds up to "at least 200 million girls and women aged 15- 49 from 31 countries" according to UNICEF. This progress needs to be accelerated and awareness and change has to be enforced. The practise is still seen as a a norm in many communities, "Over 90 per cent of women and girls

This process is a clear breach of girls and women's human rights.

Action must be taken on many levels, which includes the initiative of families and communities, care services for girls and women, laws, and political commitment at the local, regional, national and international levels.

FGM/C in numbers: UNICEF

Who has undergone this procedure?

▶ 200 million girls and women

▶ 15- 49 years old

▶ 31 countries



# Ukraine: Humanitarian corridors for civilians



Jahnvi Tomar and Andreea Sandu

Tensions reached their peak when Russia began the war with Ukraine on 24th February 2022. Since the start of the War, over 6.5 million Ukrainians were forced to leave their homes and find shelter in subway stations, libraries and even in other cities, while 3.2 million left the country. Yet, there is still a high number of civilians who do not have access to food, drinkable water and medical supplies.

It is a critical moment for ensuring safe access to individuals who are seeking refuge from the bombardments and terrors in their country. Humanitarian passageways sometimes intersect with similar notions like ceasefires, brief cessations of military action, humanitarian pauses, and days of peace. Humanitarian corridors can be seen as a preliminary stage of wider peace discussions as long as civilians' needs are respected. During the Negotiation held on 3

March 2022, Ukraine requested the establishment of humanitarian corridors in cities like Mariupol, Harkov, Izyum or Sumy, Russia agreed to this decision but the implementation to date has been slow and limited. It is the citizens right to be provided these passageways urgently. "Genuine humanitarian corridors must be established quickly, effectively, and safely. Civilians must not be put at even more risk as they seek to escape the conflict," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

Humanitarian corridors can be used to do even greater harm by subjecting escaping individuals to more violence and risks. Even though Russia agreed to the conditions of ceasing fire and allowing civilians to use the corridors, Russian soldiers have assaulted individuals transiting these routes on several occasions. Ukraine claimed that Russia continued to bomb the southern

cities of Mariupol and Volnovakha less than three hours after the agreement. Russia's argument was that the cease-fire had been broken because the Ukrainian military had utilized it to fortify its positions. Moreover, a solution from Russia was to provide these humanitarian corridors from areas under attack into Russia or Belarus, which is an ally of Russia. This was not accepted by Ukraine's president who considers this action "just cynicism, just propaganda."

Older people and people with disabilities are especially at risk,

this is all the more a reason for why these passageways have to be prioritized as mentioned in the international

humanitarian law. Countries have to be more inclusive in their approach while planning and communicating about evacuations and safe humanitarian corridors, so that everyone regardless of social strata gets the accessibility to protect themselves and their family.

Over 6.5 million Ukrainians were forced to leave their homes

Countries have to be more inclusive in their approach while planning and communicating about evacuations



Source: ISW & Sky News



Image: Amnesty International protests against capital punishment. Source: amnesty.org.au: Toru

## 81 PEOPLE KILLED IN MASS EXECUTION IN SAUDI ARABIA

Kayla Thomas

Saudi Arabia announced the execution of 81 people on 12 March. This mass execution, which the Equal Justice Initiative called the country's "largest mass execution in modern history", included 41 members of the Shi'a minority group. Multiple human rights groups have shared criticisms of Saudi Arabia's judicial procedure and the alleged violations of human rights.

Amnesty International reported that the executions follow an escalating pattern of capital punishment. Lynn Maalouf, Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, on amnesty.org, said that Saudi Arabia "metes out death sentences following trials that are grossly and blatantly unfair, including basing verdicts on 'confessions' extracted under torture or other ill-treatment". The people executed were convicted for offenses including murder, terrorism, armed robbery, arms and drug smuggling and, Amnesty describes, "participating in and inciting sit-ins and protests" which describe acts that are protected by the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful

assembly and association".

The announcement by the Saudi Press Agency affirmed that the convictions included people who had pledged allegiance to terrorist organisations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, and "various [other] crimes including murdering innocent men, women and children". The Human Rights Watch reports that of the 41 Shi'a people who were executed, three had been convicted of murder. It also reports that some of the Shi'a minority group and the other 40 executed had trials with unfair processes and that they had "suffered torture and ill-treatment during interrogations, and that their confessions were forcibly extracted". This is comparable to the mass execution of 37 people in 2019, which the Human Rights Watch reports included 33 people of the Shi'a group, who were "convicted following unfair trials for various alleged crimes, including protest-related offenses, espionage, and terrorism". Both the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty note long standing systemic discrimination of the Shi'a group. Criticisms of Saudi procedure also include the alleged sentencing to death of people who were minors at the time of their

offenses, and the death penalty for nonviolent crimes.

Maalouf also said that the high number of people executed is an ongoing problem with a lack of transparency in death penalty cases in Saudi Arabia. This has repercussions moving forward, as the number of people sentenced to death and on death row is much higher than public records show.

**Saudi Arabia "metes out death sentences following trials that are grossly and blatantly unfair"**

The continued use of capital punishment for a wide variety of offenses is also concerning for other convicted people, and "many individuals today in Saudi Arabia are at imminent risk of execution".

The Saudi government denies human rights violations and said in its announcement that "the accused were provided with the right to an attorney and were guaranteed their full rights under Saudi law during the judicial process, which found them guilty".

The U.N Commissioner for Human Rights has condemned the mass execution by Saudi Arabia.





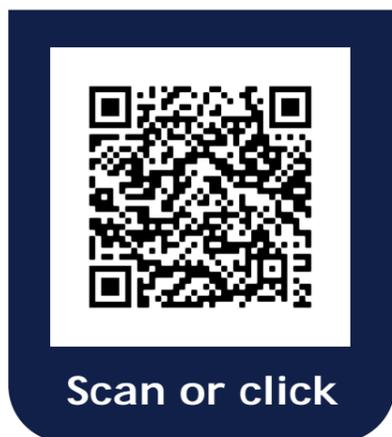
STAI at Amnesty International National Student Day



STAI symposium on FGM/C

# TAKE ACTION: PETITIONS

Scan or click these QR codes to share your support for the following petitions!



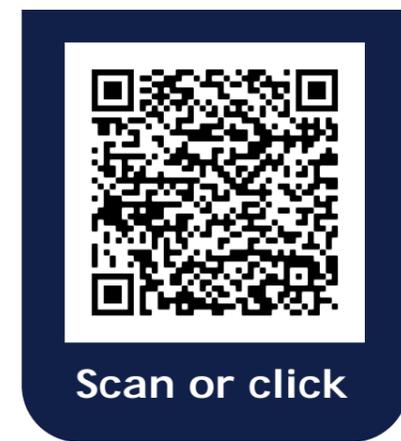
Scan or click

### Stop the aggression and protect civilians in Ukraine

Take action to demand that the Russian authorities stop this act of aggression and protect civilians now.

### Mass Execution in Saudi Arabia Shows Urgent Need to Abolish the Death Penalty

The mass executions go against a recent promise by Mohammed bin Salman, crown prince of Saudi Arabia, to reform the country's death penalty.



Scan or click

### Stand Up For Uyghur Muslims In China

Right now, more than 3 million Uyghur Muslims are put in concentration camps in Xinjiang, China. Those who are living outside the concentration camps are also in extremely bad conditions.



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