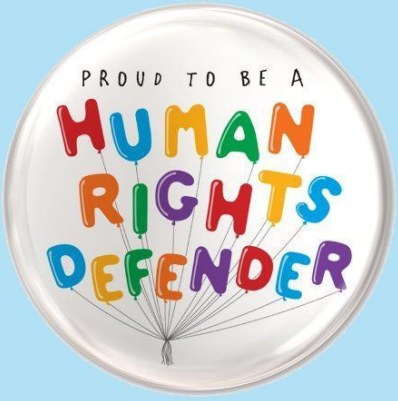
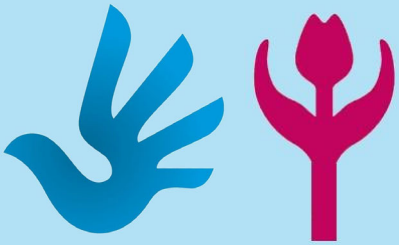
This time with the human rights defender Bob from Uganda!

WHO DEFENDS

THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS?

Third series - tenth version







Course material for 15/16 year old high school students

Scholengroep Nijmegen

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

NIJMEGEN SHELTER CITY

COLOPHON

Who defends human rights defenders?" is meant for 15/16 year old high school students.
Download free from http://www.nijmegen.amnesty.nl/educatie/lesmateriaal

Author: Harry de Ridder

Third series - Version 10: Now with human rights defender Bob from Uganda!





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Version 1: This time with human rights defender Placide from Congo!
Version 2: This time with human rights defender Lydia from Kenya!
Version 3: This time with human rights defender Zafar from Pakistan!
Version 4: This time with human rights defender Mariam from Georgia!

Second series - Version 1: This time with human rights defender Kiruba from India!
Second series - Version 2: This time with human rights defender Midhat from Sudan!
Second series - Version 3: This time with human rights defender Dinah from Kenya!
Second series - Version 4: This time with human rights defender Mary from Venezuela!
Second series - Version 5: This time with human rights defender Mary from Zimbabwe!
Second series - Version 6: This time with human rights defender William from Uganda!
Second series - Version 7: This time with human rights defender Nataliia from Russia!
Second series - Version 8: This time with human rights defender Guliaim from Kyrgyzstan!

Third series - Version 1: This time with human rights defender Prisca from Congo DR!
Third series - Version 2: This time with human rights defender Carmen from Venezuela!
Third series - Version 3: This time with human rights defender Jodesz from The Philippines!
Third series - Version 4: This time with human rights defender Mamikon from Armenia!
Third series - Version 5: This time with human rights defender Angel from Mexico!
Third series - Version 6: This time with human rights defender Lobe from Cameroon!
Third series - Version 7: This time with human rights defender Henry from Zimbabwe!
Third series - Version 8: This time with human rights defender Hachalu from Ethiopia!
Third series - Version 9: This time with human rights defender Geoffry from Kenya!

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PROTECT
ONE
EMPOWER
A THOUSAND

WORKSHEETS



Who defends the human rights defenders?

Human rights

All countries of the world have agreed that everyone in the world whether you are a man or a woman, young or old, poor or rich and no matter what skin color, has the same rights. This agreement was made in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on the 10th of December 1948 (UDHR). The rights named in the UDHR are called human rights.

The logo of the UDHR

In this short YouTube-movie some of these human rights are mentioned:

Human Rights - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Assignment

1. What human rights do you recognize in the movie?
2. What other human rights that were not mentioned in the movie do you know?





You probably already know that not everyone respects human rights. In that case, we speak of human rights violations. Some violations are easy to prevent, others are more difficult to find a solution for.

A human rights violation that can easily be prevented, is torture. If the government of a country prohibits torture and enforces the law, torture can be banned.

Assignment

3. Give another example of a human rights violation that can easily be prevented.
4. Give an example of a human rights violation that cannot be prevented easily.



Prohibition on torture

Freedom of expression

One of the most important human rights is freedom of expression. If you cannot express your opinion, you cannot oppose human rights violations either.

Martin Luther King was publicly opposing discrimination of people with a dark skin color. His only 'weapon' was freedom of expression. Partly because of his famous speech 'I have a dream' (in front of about a million people) he realized equality of law for everyone in his country.



In some countries you have to be careful in the way that you act or about the things that you say. That is especially true for people with the following professions:

- Artist
- Journalist
- Moviemaker
- Union leader



Protest of a union in Belgium



A piece of art of Chinese artist Yue Minjun

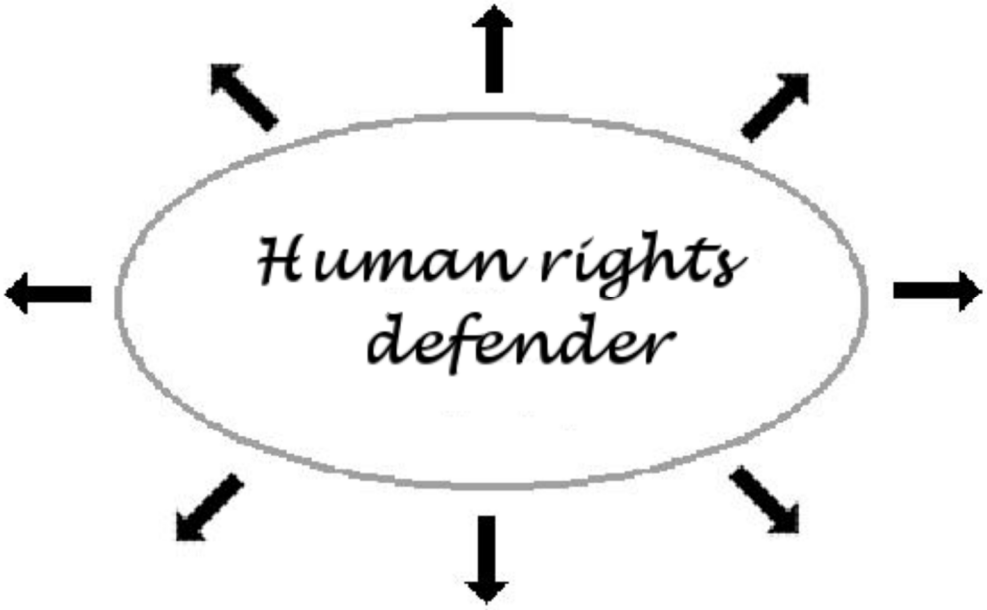
Assignment

5. Explain for each of the four professions mentioned above why these people should be extra careful according to you.
6. What do these professions all have in common?
7. Name a profession -not mentioned above- that could also be in the category of extra vulnerable professions.
8. Write your own text for a protest against a current wrong on the protest sign of Yue Minjun.

Human rights defenders



9. Write down as many words as you can that come to your mind when you think about 'human rights defender'.
Does a person like that have any special characteristics according to you? If so, which ones?





A human rights defender is not superman. What is a human rights defender according to you?



10. Try to think of your own definition of 'human rights defender' together with your neighbour.

A 'human rights defender' is someone who .....

Extra vulnerable

Human rights defenders stand up for human rights, individually or in an organisation, without using violence. Unfortunately they cannot always do that in freedom. Protection of civilians is most needed in times of armed conflict or war. A human rights defender who exposes violations committed by political leaders or armed militias are often accused of partisanship and get threatened.

Since 9-11 a lot of countries adopted rules to oppose terrorism. This often means that the work of human rights defenders is criminalized.

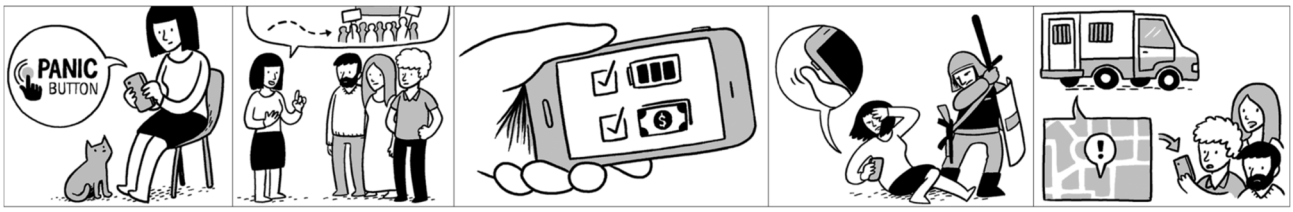
Amnesty asks special attention for female human rights defenders, who often work under more difficult conditions than men and are extra vulnerable because of that. They are often not taken seriously by their surrounding society because of prevailing about women.



Some governments see the work of human rights organisations of women as not important and unlawful.
Female human rights defenders are more at risk to be threatened because of their gender and are more likely to become victim of sexual harassment and rape.

Amnesty launched a special application in 2014 that human rights defenders can use to call out for help, if they are at risk of being kidnapped, attacked or tortured. The Panic Button-app is a silent alarm and can be activated in case of emergency.

By pressing the button, fellow-activists are alarmed if a colleague is in danger. This will fasten the process of providing help. In the first hours of the arrest, the human rights defender's network can act fast to get their colleague released. For example they can overwhelm the police station with phone calls, organise a protest or warn lawyers and organisations like Amnesty.





11. What is meant by 'criminalizing human rights defenders'?
12. In what way the Panic Button-app works, is explained by the above pictures. What is missing, is English explanation. Write the five steps down together with you neighbour.

Who defends human rights defenders?

Human rights defenders stand up for the rights of others. This often puts them in danger. They also need protection.



13. Who should protect human rights defenders according to you? Explain.

Different international organisations stand up for the rights of human rights defenders. The two most important ones are the United Nations and the European Union.



United Nations
In 1999 the UN adopted the *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders**. The official name of the declaration* already shows that everyone has an obligation to protection human rights defenders.

Article 12 of the declaration pays special attention to the obligations of States:

Article 12

1. *Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.*

2. ***The State shall take all necessary measures** to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.*

3. *In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively **under national law** in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and funda-*

* Officially: *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*



European Union
In 2004 the EU adopted the *Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders*. Embassies of member States and EU-missions must provide protection to human rights defenders by visiting, observing processes and where needed undertake action against governments. They must also help guarantee that human rights defenders have free access to (foreign) financial donations.



14. The UN Declaration and the EU Guidelines (it already explains in the name) have one important disadvantage. What could that be?
What could the UN and the EU do to further strengthen the protection of human rights defenders?

Next to States, private organisations can offer help to human rights defenders. We name a few, but there are more!

Amnesty International

One of the main tasks of *Amnesty International* is the protection of human rights defenders. Amnesty realizes that by protests, publicity, arranging visits and contacts, education and training, lobbying and sometimes financial support.

For example by supporting protests and by writing letters, you can participate yourself in the protection of human rights defenders.

#Idefend



#Idefend is an initiative of the delegation of the EU in the UN.

The goal of #Idefend is to show solidarity to human rights defenders and to improve their commitment and work for human rights for people all over the world. Maybe you have seen this on social media, like Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/idefend). You can support the initiative yourself by social media.

Justice and Peace

This Dutch organisation stands up for the protection and training of human rights defenders. *Justice and Peace* created several projects that support the work of human rights defenders.

Justice and Peace Netherlands

- *The Hague Training Course* provides training on digital security mechanisms and policy influencing.
- *Connet2Protect* connects human rights defenders with members of the parliament, lawyers and journalists.
- *Temporary Relocation* temporarily relocates human rights defenders from Africa and Asia in those continents.
- *Shelter City* is a European project. You can read more about that on the next page.

Assignment

15. Next to legal rules - for example by referring to antiterrorist regulations - the movie mentions another way to obstruct the work of human rights defenders. What is that?
16. Which four ways of threatening a human rights defender are named in the movie?

Shelter City Nijmegen

The movie of Justice and Peace showed that human rights defenders can be put to silence, arrested and tortured and sometimes even disappear. If their situation allows it, they can benefits a lot from temporary shelter. Based on an initiative of the European Parliament, Shelter Cities have been created in all of Europe.

How does Shelter City work?

Shelter City started by recruiting cities in Europe. Shelter Cities in the Netherlands (or soon to be) are: Amsterdam, Den Haag, Groningen, Maastricht, Middelburg, Nijmegen en Utrecht. After The Hague and Middelburg, Nijmegen was the third Shelter City of the Netherlands.

The next step is the selection of human rights defenders. They are chosen by a national selection committee, composed of representatives of Justice and Peace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, de Faculty of Law of the University of Amsterdam, Hivos en Free Press Unlimited.

Every Shelter City provides a human rights defender a safe environment for three months. In that period, the human rights defenders can recharge so that he or she can return with new found energy.

The human rights defenders will go back to their own country, empowered by a larger network and with more knowledge to better do their work. If desired, the human rights defenders can participate in education or training. Meetings with politicians in The Hague and Brussels will also be arranged.

An interaction should be created between the human rights defenders and civilians of the Shelter Cities. He or she will be part of events in the city (like Music Meeting and the Four Day Marches in Nijmegen). In their turn, the human rights defenders can participate in debate or have a speech on human rights in his or her country.

The human rights defender 'from Nijmegen'



Bob is an environmental activist and human rights defender from Uganda. He is an organiser within a coalition campaigning against fossil fuels in Uganda. The coalition is campaigning against a crude oil pipeline that runs right through Uganda and Tanzania. He and his organisation, as well as human rights defenders and journalists who have criticised this crude oil project, have faced threats, and some have even been arrested on dubious charges. Bob himself has also been arrested on several occasions, most recently for three months. In Nijmegen, Bob hopes to find some peace and quiet, but also to learn about campaigning in the Netherlands and expand his network.

Assignment

17. Shelter City does not just have advantages. What disadvantage(s) of the Shelter City project could you think of?
18. Imagine you would be in Bob's position. What practical matters could come up for a human rights defenders in Nijmegen?

Human rights in Uganda

The human rights situation in Uganda is dire. President Yoweri Museveni's government has been keeping a tight grip on power for decades. Political opponents, protesters and critical journalists are regularly threatened, arrested or mistreated.
Uganda has one of the strictest anti-homosexuality laws in the world. Homosexuality is a criminal offence and, in some cases, is even punishable by death.
There are widespread problems relating to land grabbing, whereby local communities and small-scale farmers lose their land at the hands of the government or large corporations, often without fair compensation.
Independent media and civil society organisations face serious obstacles to their work and their ability to hold those in power to account.





19. What are the most important differences in the work a human rights defender in Europe and of one in Uganda? Explain your answer.

Young people are taking action for the climate

Around a thousand young people in Uganda have come together to form an organisation called the Activists for Climate Justice Initiative (A4C). A4C opposes the use of fossil fuels and campaigns against harmful energy practices. It does so through public campaigns and legal action.

A4C states on its website: "We are guided by resilience, justice, and inclusivity so marginalised voices are heard and community futures are defended."



Participants in a peaceful A4C demonstration are being arrested



20. What do we mean by 'marginalised voices'?
21. Which organisation – which is also very active in the Netherlands – shares the same objectives as A4C?

"We can't drink oil"

Uganda, Tanzania and oil companies from France and China reached an agreement in 2026 on the construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), a project worth 3.5 billion dollars.
Once completed, the EACOP could become the world's largest electrically heated pipeline, transporting crude oil from western Uganda to a seaport on the Indian Ocean in Tanzania. The crude oil from Uganda is very viscous and must therefore be heated to remain liquid enough to flow.



Against the backdrop of a global climate crisis, East African environmental activists consider it short-sighted that the governments of Uganda and Tanzania are focusing on the extraction of fossil fuels. The pipeline will result in emissions of 34 million tonnes of CO_2 per year.



Activists from dozens of organisations have joined forces in the #StopEACOP alliance and are condemning the construction of the 1,443-kilometre-long oil pipeline.

The activists fear that the pipeline will pose major risks not only to protected areas, but also to water sources and the livelihoods of millions of people in the region. Furthermore, according to the alliance, its construction will result in 12,000 families being forced from their homes.

Vanessa Nakate, one of the campaign's spokespersons, says: "The fossil fuel industry has no future, and we can't drink oil. We demand that oil companies commit to people and the planet."

Opdracht

22. The pipeline is 1,443 kilometres long. What environmental risks might arise along its route?
23. The pipeline needs to be heated. What environmental risks might this pose?

Extra course material

As a preparation for the meeting with human rights defender Bob we came up with some questions you can ask him. Of course you can think of some question on your own that you want to ask. What would you like to know?

* Against what human rights violations is he fighting?
* Why do these violations take place and what can he do about it?
* What successes has he achieved in her work?
* He is threatened for opposing violations. How does that affect his work? Is he not scared?
* What does the future of Uganda look like?





Text in picture: Are there any question?

Notes

INSTRUCTIONS



Who defends the human rights defenders?

Introduction

The course material 'Who defends the human rights defenders?' is developed by the Education group of Amnesty Nijmegen in cooperation with Shelter City Nijmegen.

Shelter City is a national initiative of Justice & Peace in cooperation with Dutch cities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protect human rights defenders as initiated by a motion of the European Parliament. Human rights defenders that risk their own lives by fighting for human rights, will be provided temporary shelter in European cities.

Shelter City Nijmegen is realised by a cooperation between different organisations from Nijmegen, under which Amnesty Nijmegen, Radboud University, the municipality of Nijmegen and Bureau Wijland. Qader Shafiq of Bureau Wijland coordinates the project, q.shafiq@bureauwijland.nl.

Since 2015, two human rights defenders have been coming to Nijmegen every year. The tenth of the third series is Bob* from September-December 2026.

* For his safety we can not disclose his name.

Structure

The course material 'Who defends the human rights defenders?' takes two lessons of 50 minutes.

Lesson 1: worksheets 1-5
Lesson 2: worksheets 6-10

The course material can be used by the teacher independently as well as by guest teachers from Amnesty Nijmegen. For guest lessons you can contact the head of the Education group: Harry de Ridder, amnestynijmegen@gmail.com.

As a follow-up, you can ask Bob himself to tell his story as long as he still is in Nijmegen. For that you can also contact Harry de Ridder, amnestynijmegen@gmail.com.
As preparation for a possible meeting we have prepared some question and ask the students to prepare some questions as well before the meeting.

Preparation of the meeting: worksheets 11-12

Different versions

With the arrival of each human rights defender, we will release a new version of the teaching package 'Who defends human rights defenders?'. Each version will be connected to the individual story and backgrounds of the human rights defenders that come to Nijmegen. The first one and a half part of the material will not change, only the last half on the human rights defender will be adapted every time. As soon as we know the identity of the following human rights defender, we will publish the next version of the course material.

General notions	Lesson 1 and the first half of lesson 2 (worksheets 1-8)
Human rights defender	Second half of lesson 2 (worksheets 8-12)

Goals

- The student will be introduced to human rights and human rights violations.
- The student knows that the human right 'Freedom of expression' is connected to opposing human rights violations.
- The students know that people with certain professions have to more careful than others.
- The students can explain their own definition of a human rights defender.
- The student knows that human rights defenders are extra vulnerable and know why female human rights defenders are at even greater risk than their male colleagues.
- The student can tell who stands up for the rights of human rights defenders and can name some international and private organisations that protect their rights.
- The student knows about Shelter City.
- The student knows about the selection procedure of human rights defenders that come to one of the Shelter Cities of the Netherlands.
- The student knows human rights defender Bob and his background.
- The student can name some human rights violations in Uganda and explain why these violations mostly occur there.

- The student will meet and converse with human rights defender Bob.

Movie material

In the course material 'Who defends the human rights defenders?' two short movies are showed:

YouTube-movies:

* Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affair (2.22 min.) (in Dutch)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eRCogmiGfA

* Justice and Peace Netherlands (3.02 min.)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK1jAIJ0AcM

MP4-movies:

* Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affair (2.22 min.) (in Dutch)
  https://www.amnestynijmegen.nl/download/Mensenrechten-BuZa.mp4

* Justice and Peace Netherlands (3.02 min.)
  https://www.amnestynijmegen.nl/download/justice-and-peace-netherlands.mp4

Translations of the Dutch movie

Movie: Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affair
Everyone is equal and has the same rights… or is that not true?
Everyone has the right to peace and freedom… or is that not true?
Everyone has the right to freedom of expression… or is that not true?
Everyone has the right to belief what they want… or is that not true?
Everyone has the right to life with who they want… or is that not true?

Justice - Equality - Solidarity - Humanity

In a humane society everyone enjoys equal rights. For that reason there is a foreign policy on human rights.
Human rights - For everyone - Always - And everywhere

Human rights

The lesson starts with discussing what human rights and human rights violations are.



1. Everyone is equal, everyone has equal rights, everyone has the right to develop in a good standard of living, everyone has the right to live in freedom and safety, everyone has the right to sufficient food and water, there is a prohibition on the use of child soldiers, nobody can be arbitrarily arrested without the family of the person knowing where they are (prohibition on disappearances), everyone has the right to life, everyone has the right to freedom of expression, torture is prohibited, everyone has the right to believe, everyone has the right to live together with whom he or she want, everyone has equal rights.
2. -
3. For example: prohibition on slavery, prohibition on the use of child soldiers.
4. Some economical, social and cultural rights are less easy to realize, think of: the right to labour. Every society copes with unemployed people.

Freedom of expression

In this part of the course material we further discuss the human right 'Freedom of expression', a condition to be able to oppose human rights violations (of others).



5. Artist: if you show art that exposes the government or makes fun of it, you risk being arrested.
   Journalist: he can expose corruption or other wrongs which the risk of being arrested.
   Moviemaker: similar to the journalist, but not with words but with images. A moviemaker can make fun of the government as well.
   Union leader: he or she stands up for the rights of workers and stands up against the wishes of employers
6. They do not just stand up for their own opinion, but also for the rights of others.
7. A writer, blogger, cartoon artist, comedian.
8. -

Human rights defenders

We are discussing a self-made definition of human rights defenders and their characteristics.



9. After the students' opinion. A human rights defender is not superman, but someone who is not afraid to stand up for the rights of others. It takes some courage, or at least someone who is willing to take on his own fear.
10. For example: A human rights defender is someone who stands up for the rights of others (in a situation where he operates himself and where human rights are violated; someone from Amnesty who stands up for human rights in a safe environment are not called human rights defenders). A human rights defender can only be called a human rights defenders is he or she does not use violence

Extra vulnerable

Human rights defenders are at great risk, especially women. Amnesty's application can help with that.



11. The work of human rights defenders is criminalized to silence them.
12. Stap 1: Take the time to install the Panic Button-application in a calm situation.
    Step 2: Think of the people who should be informed when action needs to be undertaken.
    Step 3: Check that your phone is on, sufficiently charged and with sufficient credits (for a prepaid or contracted phone).
    Step 4: Press the button of the application in case of emergency.
    Step 5: Your network will be notified by text and indicate your location so that people from your network can help you fast.

Who defends the human rights defenders?

People who stand up for the rights of others are also in danger and need protection themselves.



13. According to the declaration basically everyone: individuals, groups, organisations and official institutions.
14. Both are not treaties with legal force, but declarations with no more than official promises. If the UN and the EU would contain that protection in a treaty, we could take on violators with the law or treaty in place.
15. Defamation (violate someone's honour or good name on purpose) with the goal of degrading the human rights defenders and taking away their credibilit.
16. 1) physically (physical intimidation or direct threats).
    2) online (digital surveillance and online threats).
    3) family (physical intimidation or direct threats of family members).
    4) mobile phone (surveillance of mobile phones and threats by text).

Shelter City Nijmegen / The human rights defender 'from Nijmegen'

In this part of the course material we further discuss the how and why of the Shelter City project and the human rights defender who came to Nijmegen..



17. It could be: the human rights defenders do not want to go back to their own country or the situation in their country has become so badly in those three months that they cannot go back. It could also be personal: for example when a person got into a relationship in the city where he or she temporarily lived.
18. Think of things like: a place to live, a place to work or take a course, the use of a computer, telephone, public transport card, a budget to their expenses, but also: people around them to accompany and help them.

Human rights in Uganda

The human rights situation in Uganda is dire. The Ugandan government does not take kindly to people who criticise Ugandan policy.



19. In Europe, governments stand up for the rights of people and of human rights defenders, while the Ugandan government is the cause of many human rights violations. In Uganda, not only do you not get any help from the government, but standing up for human rights can even be dangerous for you.

Young people are taking action for the climate

Around a thousand young people in Uganda have come together to form an organisation called the Activists for Climate Justice Initiative. They are campaigning against the use of fossil fuels.



20. By 'marginalised voices', we mean the opinions, stories and perspectives of people who are pushed to the 'margins' (the fringes or background) of society. These individuals or groups are less likely to be heard or to have influence in public debate, politics or the media. This is often due to prejudice, poverty, discrimination or unequal opportunities.
21. Extention Rebellion.

"We can't drink oil"

The #StopEACOP alliance opposes the construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) because it fears it will cause major environmental pollution.



22. The pipeline is being laid right through vulnerable nature reserves, above ground (as you can see in the photo). There is a high risk of an accident or a natural disaster.
23. The pipeline is heated using electricity. What if there is a power cut? What if the oil continues to flow in one section but not further along? What will happen to the oil then?

Literature

Human rights in Uganda

- https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/uganda/
- https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/uganda

Climate protection and fossil fuels

- https://www.a4cji.org/
- https://www.eacop.com/
- https://stopeacop.net/

Web links

- https://justiceandpeace.nl/en/initiatives/shelter-city/
- https://www.bureauwijland.nl (Dutch)
- https://www.amnestynijmegen.nl (Dutch)



Who defends the human rights defenders?

Course material for 15/16 year old high school students developed by the Education group of Amnesty Nijmegen and Shelter City Nijmegen

RIGHTS DEFENDERS

PROMOTE. PROTECT. DEFEND.



#DEFENDTHEDEFENDERS

#VERDEDIGDEVERDEDIGERS