

Women fighting for rights and freedom

**« France stands alongside
all those who advocate for
women's rights around the
world. »**

Catherine Colonna, Minister for Europe
and Foreign Affairs

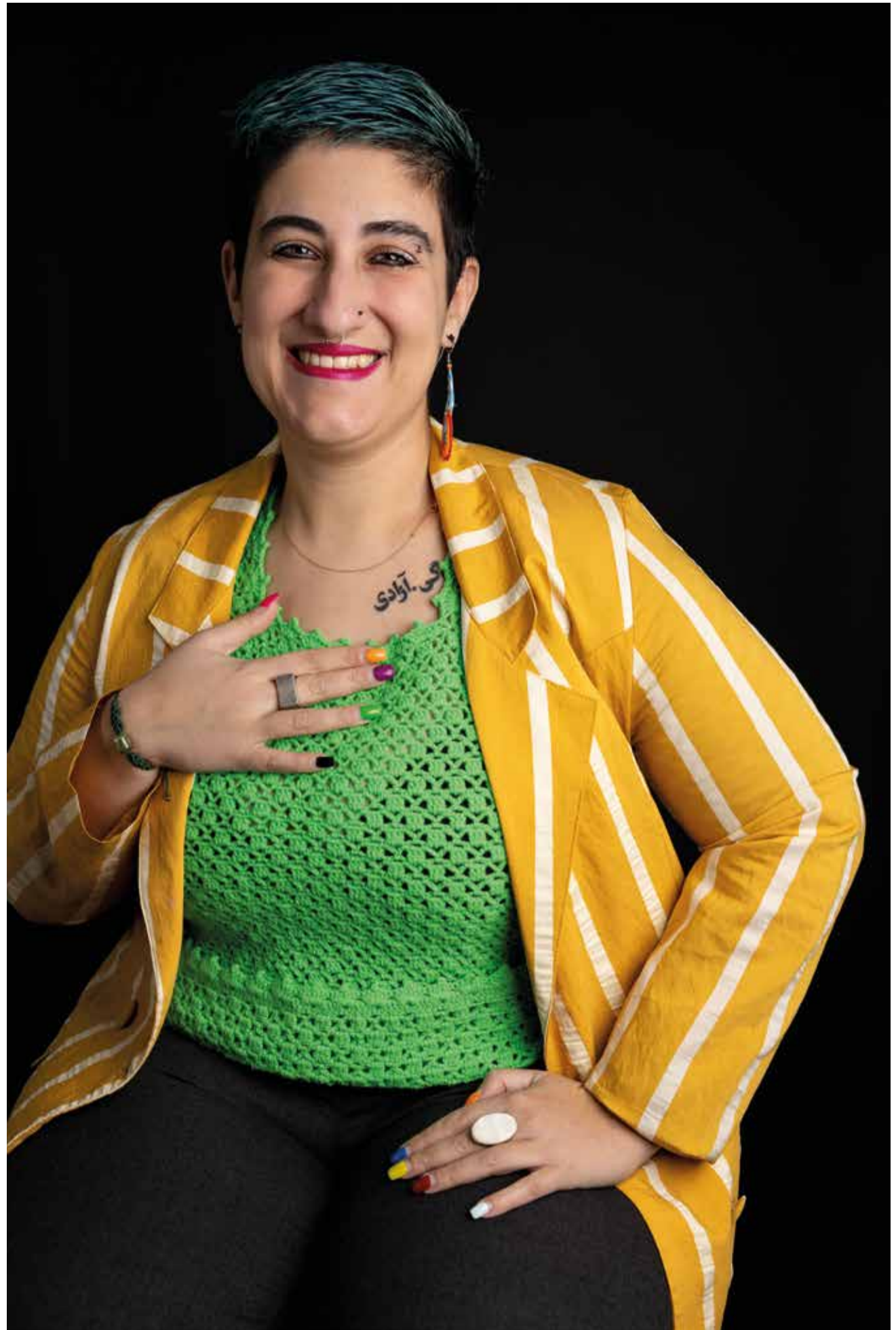
President Macron's "Marianne Initiative" aims to strengthen France's action in support of human rights defenders.

Presented by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2023, the exhibition Women fighting for rights and freedom showcases the faces and stories of some of the women chosen for this initiative launched in December 2021.

Representing the diversity of the world's regions and fights for human rights, these women were hosted in France for six months and given support to develop their projects and actions. They fight to defend human rights and fundamental freedoms, sometimes risking their lives.

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Asal ABASIAN

Iran

Asal Abasian is a journalist who specializes in research and translation. She is very active on social media, in the combat for feminism and the rights of LGBTQI+ people.

Having been forced to flee Iran because of her activism, she now promotes the slogan “Women, Life, Freedom” (زن زندگی آزادی - *Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*) – created after the death of Mahsa Amini, which sparked the protests that have taken place in Iran since September 2022 – to carry the voices of women and sexual minorities in her country.

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Karin Ruth ANCHELIA JESUSI

Peru

Karin Ruth Anchelia Jesusi advocates for the rights of women and local communities to access the justice system and fights discrimination. She creates training programmes to boost the visibility of women and encourage them to play a role in politics that corresponds to their role within the community.

She believes that culture is an essential way for communities to exist and resist.

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Asma DARWISH

Bahrain

While a student, Asma Darwish supported the democratic movements in Bahrain, before getting involved in the combat for women's rights, freedom of expression and civil and political rights. She works to fight against arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance, for the abolition of torture and to change the legal and social status of women in her country.

She lives in France, where she continues her work in support of human rights in the Middle East.

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Nisreen Abdelrahman ELSAIM

Sudan

Nisreen Elsaïm is an environmental activist who supports the democratization of Sudan. She chairs the UN Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change and is the head of the NGO Youth and Environment Sudan, "YES", which brings together 1,000 Sudanese environmental groups. In 2020, she was named by the Africa Youth Award in its list of the 100 Most Influential Young Africans in Civil Society.

In July 2021, while continuing the Marianne programme, she gave birth to a little boy, Neel, who comes with her to all the international climate conferences that she takes part in.

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Estelle EWOULE LOBE

Cameroon

As co-founder of the association APADIME, which works to protect internally displaced persons and environmental migrants in Africa, Estelle Ewoule Lobe promotes the rights and education of the equatorial forest populations, in particular women and young people. She helps communities preserving their forests by providing training and legal support, and also sets up activities that generate income.

She defines her combat as “helping local communities in the Congo basin to keep their rights over their forests, preventing the most vulnerable young people from getting involved in illegal immigration, and helping women in the region access land and its management.”

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Noura GHAZI

Syria

Noura Ghazi has worked as a Syrian human rights lawyer and activist since 2000. She has defended political prisoners since 2004. In 2018, she founded the organization Nophotozone in memory of her husband Bassel Khartabil Safadi, a prominent Syrian-Palestinian activist, who was imprisoned by the Syrian regime in 2012 and executed in 2015. Nophotozone is a French NGO that provides legal and psychosocial support and advocacy for prisoners, disappeared persons and their families in Syria, Lebanon and Turkey.

She began her international advocacy for the rights of prisoners and disappeared persons in Syria in 2014, and has received many international prizes, in particular from Amnesty International, for her valuable combat.

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Nagham Nawzat HASAN

Iraq

The Iraqi gynaecologist Nagham Nawzat Hasan, who is also Yazidi, has been fighting for women's rights and religious minorities for two decades in Iraq. As the director of a hospital in Sinjar in north-western Iraq, she has been working since 2014 to provide medical, social and material support to women who are survivors of kidnappings and sexual violence carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq.

She is fighting for the genocide of the Yazidi people to be recognized and for the thousands of women who are still missing to be remembered. She was the recipient of the International Women of Courage Award in 2016 and the Regional UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award in 2022.

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Anarkali HONARYAR

Afghanistan

Doctor, former Senator and member of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Anarkali Kaur Honaryar campaigns for political rights and public freedoms, with a focus on women, in her country. A member of the Sikh community, she is also fighting to end discrimination against minorities.

A winner of the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence in 2011 for the support she provides to Afghan women who are victims of domestic violence, she has taken refuge in France since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 2021.

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Tamilla IMANOVA

Russia

Tamilla Imanova, a human rights lawyer working for one of the oldest Russian NGOs, Memorial Human Rights Center, was forced to flee her country because of her work to uphold fundamental freedoms after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and her work to defend anti-war activists in court.

She has defended and provided counsel to people whose human rights have been violated, in both national and international courts. Her fields of expertise include the protection of the freedom of association and the freedom of speech, the fight against torture and arbitrary arrests and the protection of domestic abuse victims.

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Roshna KHALID

Afghanistan

In 2008, the journalist Roshna Khalid became the first woman newscaster on national television in northern Afghanistan. As Deputy Governor of the Parwan Province, she has championed gender equality and freedom of speech in her country, where she founded a radio station with women radio hosts.

While she was spokesperson for the Governor of her province, she was forced into exile when the Taliban returned to power in Kabul. Living as a refugee in France, she still supports Afghan girls and women by working remotely for the enrolment of young women in school in Afghanistan.

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Tatsiana KHOMICH

Belarus

The human rights activist Tatsiana Khomich is the sister of Maria Kalesnikava, a prominent member of the democratic opposition, winner of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, heavily and unjustly sentenced by the Belarussian regime in September 2021.

A representative of the Coordination Council for Belarusian political prisoners, she is the spokesperson for her sister and 1,500 political prisoners who are unfairly imprisoned in Belarus. She is advocating for the release and support of political prisoners and is denouncing repression in Belarus.

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Virginia ROQUE AGUILARH

El Salvador

Virginia Roque Aguilar, an activist for women and the environment, is fighting water privatization and pollution and the devastating effects of climate change. She is working to raise awareness about the short- and long-term impacts of mineral extraction in El Salvador and the consequences of metal mining in Central America as a whole.

For her, the combat for the environment has the face of a woman. She is also advocating for the inclusion of the right to access to water in El Salvador's Constitution.

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Safina VIRANI

Uganda

An ardent feminist, Safina Virani co-founded the organization Frauen Initiative that provides medical, psychological and legal assistance to sexual violence victims in Uganda. She helped organize the first Solidarity Summit on Refugees in Kampala with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and for the past year has worked on the integration of refugees in her country.

She believes that the combat for women's rights and freedoms should be at the forefront of defending human rights. Committed in the field, she is working to combat misogyny that occurs on a daily basis in the public and private realms.

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