



# **New Internationalist**

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

# **Women and clothes**

**New Internationalist Easier English**  
**Ready Pre-Intermediate Lesson**



# **This lesson:**

**Speaking: discussion**

**Vocabulary**

**Reading 1 – about a nun in India**

**Grammar: past simple practice**

**Reading 2 – about a journalist from Iran**

**Speaking: role play**

# Discuss:

What do you think about women covering their head? Are there any problems?



Before you read about them, what do you think these women think about wearing a veil:

Sister Seba, Kerala, India



Amani Yahya and friends, Yemen

Masih Alinejad, Iran



# Vocabulary 1 – match:

1/ veil /  
headscarf/  
hijab / habit

2/ to cheat

3/ to frisk

4/ sleeve

5/ dress code

a) to search someone's  
body and clothes

b) a set of rules about  
what clothes to wear

c) different ways of  
covering your head  
and hair

d) part of clothes that  
covers your arm

# Reading (the next 2 slides):

Read about this nun in India – which is true. A, B or C:



- A) The nun took the medical exam, wearing a veil.
- B) The nun didn't take the medical exam because she didn't want to take her veil off.
- C) The nun cheated in the medical exam.

Last week, a Catholic nun was not allowed to take a medical entrance examination, the All-India Pre-Medical Entrance Test (AIPMT). She was wearing her religious 'habit', a nun's veil and a cross around her neck. They did not stop Sister Seba for religious reasons. Most people respect Catholic nuns in Kerala. But she couldn't take the exam because a lot of other people have been cheating.

They introduced a dress code because some people, not the nun, had secretly taken important papers material into the exam. They really wanted to pass the entrance exams for the top medical college. Earlier last week, the Kerala High Court allowed two Muslim girls to wear a headscarf and dresses with full sleeves for the exam – but only if one of the people responsible could 'frisk' them (search their body and clothes) if necessary.

There were big problems with the exam. People said some students found out the questions before the exam. And that students had secretly taken electronic equipment into the exam so they could cheat. So the Education Board cancelled the examinations after they happened. They then told candidates that they must not wear anything like 'belts, caps, scarves, etc' in the examination hall. The Supreme Court said students were not allowed to wear a hijab. They said 'your faith won't disappear' if you don't wear a hijab on one day.

We know it is difficult for them to organize exams to stop students cheating. But they could be more understanding.

Sister Seba, the nun, asked if she could sit in a separate, private room to take her exams but they said no. So she did not take the exam. She wasted a whole year. So did the Muslim women in hijabs.

In my opinion, it would be enough to search the veiled women before they went into the exam.



# Now fill the gaps with these verbs in the past tense:



Sister Seba ..(1.**want**).. to take an important exam in India. Many people ..(2.**cheat**).. in the exam. The organisers ..(3.**think**).. people ..(4.**bring**).. papers into the exam to cheat under their veils. So they ..(5.**not/allow**).. people to wear veils in the exam. Sister Seba ..(6.**not/want**).. to do the exam with no veil. So she ..(7.**not/take**).. the exam and ..(8. **go**).. home.

*Which verbs are regular and which are irregular?*

## Reading 2 (next 2 slides): which is true – a, b or c?



- a) Masih Alinejad wants to wear the hijab, but she can't because she doesn't live in Iran now.
- b) Masih Alinejad doesn't want to wear the hijab and she doesn't want any women to wear it.
- c) Masih Alinejad doesn't wear the hijab and she wants women to be free in Iran to wear it if they want to.

## **Freedom with no hijab: Masih Alinejad**

In one year, the Facebook campaign 'My Stealthy Freedom' - led by Iranian journalist Masih Alinejad (who lives in exile) - has nearly a million likes. Also it won a human rights award.

The aim is to stop the hijab law in Iran – this forces women to wear headscarves. It began when Alinejad put a photo of herself with no hijab in London on her Facebook page. She wrote: 'Every time I run and feel the wind in my hair it makes me think of when my hair was a prisoner in the hands of the Iranian government.'

Many people replied: many women in Iran said they wanted this freedom. So she put another picture of herself, in Iran with no headscarf. Then many other Iranian women sent pictures and videos of themselves with no headscarf.

So far, there has been no punishment for the women. The government talked about Alinejad on state TV – they said she was raped because she wasn't wearing a headscarf, that she is not a good person, she's anti-revolutionary and Western governments support her. But they have not been able to arrest her and stop the campaign.

The movement is growing. Women are now talking more about the hijab, how they have to wear it and how this affects their daily lives. Last year, the police warned 3.6 million women in the streets about their hair and clothing.

Alinejad understands this. She comes from a traditional, religious family from the countryside. She had to wear the veil all the time from when she was a child. She is the first woman in several generations of her family to show her hair.

But she still felt shame after she left Iran. In 2011, Alinejad first appeared on television without her hair covered. 'I'll never forget that day. When I left the studio, I called my brother. He said, "you have been living so long for the good name of your family but you need to think about yourself." Yes, my mother complained, but that was when I started to be myself on TV.'

Iranian women have had to wear the hijab for more than 30 years, so why the rebellion now?

The government owns all media in Iran. Alinejad says 'through social media, people discuss their rights.' Some women choose to wear a hijab but think it shouldn't be compulsory. And some men do not like it when the state says women must cover up because men have no self-control.

Alinejad asked men to wear the headscarf to show they agree with women. So many men have taken pictures with headscarves. 'If more and more men join us, the government cannot keep us silent,' she says.

She wants to empower [Iranian] women to talk about everything they shouldn't talk about – their body, their identity, themselves. When a woman has the power to talk about herself, then no-one can hide her, no-one can oppress her or force her to be someone else.'



## Fill the gaps with these verbs in the past tense:

Masih ..(1.grow up).. in a traditional family in the countryside in Iran and she ..(2.wear).. a hijab. She ..(3.leave).. Iran and ..(4.go).. to London. She ..(5.stop).. wearing the hijab and ..(6.feel).. free.

Masih ..(7.start).. a Facebook campaign for women to show photos of themselves with no hijab. Even men ..(8.post).. photos wearing hijabs because they support women's freedom.

*Which verbs are regular? Which are irregular?*

# Speaking: Role play

A is Sister Seba



B is Masih Alinejad



Have a conversation about wearing a veil or the hijab. What is your story? How do you feel, and why?

# Homework: Reading

1/ No exam because of veil:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Catholic\\_nun\\_cant\\_take\\_exam\\_in\\_India\\_because\\_of\\_her\\_veil](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Catholic_nun_cant_take_exam_in_India_because_of_her_veil)

2/ Freedom with no hijab:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Freedom\\_with\\_no\\_hijab:\\_Masih\\_Alinejad](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Freedom_with_no_hijab:_Masih_Alinejad)

3/ Now read this about a rapper in Yemen:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/A\\_woman\\_can\\_be\\_whatever\\_she\\_likes](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/A_woman_can_be_whatever_she_likes)

