



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2019

DECLARATION

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is a powerful reminder that our global society remains plagued by violence against women and girls. Violence towards women is learned, perpetuated and enforced within our own communities and societies. It is therefore vital that both women and men work together to challenge and change oppressive and degrading attitudes and behaviours to create societies which honour and respect women. This change is urgently needed to end the abuse and brutality suffered by women and to defend their bodies and human rights.

Socialist International Women (SIW) reaffirms its support and commitments to all movements and campaigns related to ending violence against women. Gender equality initiatives are vital in highlighting inequalities and challenging narratives that devalue the status and rights of women. UN Women's 'Generation Equality' campaign is one of many powerful movements which are supporting the global fight for change and urging governments to take action. There are also campaigns such as UN Women's 'Orange the World – Generation Equality Stands against Rape' which focuses on the prevention and ending of sexual violence and the 'Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women' which honours women's movements worldwide and encourages the creation of sustainable strategies to prevent and end gender based violence. All movements such as these are invaluable contributions to creating the vital changes women and girls desperately need to end their suffering.

SIW also honours all individuals who show solidarity by contributing to social media campaigns including Ana Zeda, #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Niunamenos and #NotOneMore which enable women who might otherwise feel isolated to reach out and build powerful networks. This helps strengthen the collective voice of women to increase pressure on communities and governments to take meaningful actions, not just token gestures, which make a real difference in their lives.

It is true that in some regions immense progress has been made - such as improved employment laws and outlawing rape within marriage - but overall progress is disappointingly slow. It is heartbreaking that worldwide one in three women has experienced sexual violence, most often by an intimate partner, and that of 87,000 women murdered globally in 2017 over fifty per cent were killed by intimate partners or family members. It is unacceptable that approximately 15 million girls aged 15-19 worldwide have experienced forced sex at some point in their lives and 71% of all human trafficking victims are women and girls with three out of four trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It is appalling that at least 200 million women and girls are living with the trauma of FGM with the majority of girls being cut before they were 5 years old. Child marriage is also putting girls at greater risk of intimate partner violence affecting 650 million women who were married under the age of 18. In addition are the millions of women and girls who suffer within war and conflict, or as they try to escape. Even where women's political participation has been achieved, this too is affected by violence. A study by the Inter-parliamentary Union found 82 per cent of women parliamentarians experienced psychological violence including rape and death threats.

Behind each of these shocking numbers is a suffering human being. They are our mothers, sisters and daughters. While these inexcusable acts continue global gender equality cannot be achieved. Ending violence against women is vital to transform the daily lives of women and girls to the benefit of our entire global community.

SIW honours and supports the survivors of gender based violence and those who work tirelessly to help brutalised women and girls heal from their trauma and re-build their lives. This support is essential for all who are affected, including children witnessing gender based violence. Female children desperately need to be nourished and supported. It is also vital that they do not accept violence and degradation as inevitable. Male children need support and education to understand that gender based violence is totally unacceptable. This is critically important as male children who witness assaults on women are far more likely to be perpetrators of violence against women in the future. SIW asserts that on-going dialogue between women and men is essential to create sustainable change. Together women and men can influence perceptions and behaviours and nurture the respect and empowerment that women and girls have always deserved.

SIW applauds and supports this year's theme of 'Generation Equality Stands against Rape' and the '16 Days of Activism' campaign against gender based violence (25 November – 10 December). This potent campaign is being run under the UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women umbrella which includes the 'Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands against Rape' and the 'Orange the World: #HearMeToo' campaigns. The #HearMeToo campaign specifically highlights survivors of gender based violence who are courageously sharing their stories and standing in solidarity to defend women's rights at grassroots level. It is vital that the voices of all of our sisters are heard to help us better understand their needs and to develop more effective strategies to halt gender based violence entirely. Many women who are fighting inequality are not known in the media as it is too dangerous for them to speak out publicly. Their voices must be heard. Their actions matter and make a difference which ultimately benefits every one of us. The SIW honours all those who bravely fight for women's rights and defend the human rights of women and men equally.

SIW reaffirms its commitment to continuing its mission of proactively supporting, promoting and discussing violence against women within Socialist International and all affiliated groups which share the vision of a global society where violence against women has been eradicated and women and men are treated equally and fairly. At the heart of SIW's beliefs is the conviction that compassion and mutual respect for women and men are essential for the creation of a peaceful global community which cooperates in sustainable peace and prosperity for benefit of all citizens.

References:

1. UN Women Facts and Figures: Ending violence against women <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>
2. UNiTE to End Violence against Women <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/unite>
3. Orange the world: #HearMeToo / 16 Days of Activism <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism>