



Socialist International Women

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

25th November 2018

DECLARATION

The Socialist International Women (SIW) honours the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and reaffirms its support of the fight to protect the human rights and dignity of women and girls worldwide. Violence against women in all its forms continues to be the single biggest and most distressing barrier to the achievement of global gender equality. Gender based violence destroys the mental and physical wellbeing of our most vulnerable and defenceless citizens who are predominantly women and girls.

The continuing pandemic of violence against women affects all regions and crosses all social barriers, so it is vital that all individuals, communities and nations pull together to challenge and end the beliefs, behaviours, customs and laws which allow these atrocities to continue and flourish. SIW strongly believes it is essential that we stand together as a global community and remain strong in our solidarity to eliminate violence against women and end this heartbreaking, persistent and unacceptable state of global affairs.

The brutality and inhumanity of widespread and sustained aggression towards women has a hugely destabilising effect on communities and regions. It severely damages the delicate societal balance of families and communities, leaving them fractured and often dysfunctional. It is well documented that the poverty and emotional misery which can result from gender based violence has a deeply negative effect on the health and wellbeing of children and young adults too, which in turn affects the stability and prosperity of our wider global community. This is a huge loss to us all as without the instinctive peace-keeping and negotiating skills of women there is an intolerable imbalance of power and influence in favour of men. This imbalance increases the likelihood of internal unrest, armed conflicts and wars between nations and factions. Sadly, it is voiceless and defenceless women and children who suffer the worst of the violence within these conflicts including marked increases in sexual violence.

In appreciation of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winners Congolese doctor Denis Mukwege and Yazidi campaigner Nadia Murad who have been honoured for their brave, selfless and inspirational work on combating sexual violence in conflict zones SIW draws particular attention this year to ending the use of violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.

Sexual violence is a frequently employed act of war used explicitly to break the spirit of communities and destroy precious familial and community bonds. At every turn our sisters suffer the brutalising effects of armed conflict. To maximise their cruel impact acts of sexual violence are often perpetrated in full public view. Men, women and children cannot escape the horror as they are forced to watch and hear the distress of their families, friends and neighbours. In addition, the fears, anger and frustrations of civilian men are taken out on their own community's women and children producing rises in both random and intimate partner violence.

Numbers affected are high, though it is difficult to find exact figures partly because reporting channels are usually in chaos and partly because the women themselves feel ashamed and do not report assaults for fear of reprisals from within their own communities. The emotional and physical

scars of these traumatic events have an impact long after conflicts cease but support is far too often unavailable. Increased funding for resources is urgently required to help heal their wounds.

It is also vital that media outlets and governments proactively champion the need for grass-roots support of survivors of sexual violence in war torn regions over both the immediate and long term. Urgent action is required to support the healing process and return war torn regions to being peaceful and sustainable communities in alignment with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

SIW warmly applauds the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19 June 2018) for highlighting the unique humanitarian and aid-related issues of women and girls in war zones and urges the Socialist International community to stand in solidarity with our sisters who are suffering in silence and fear within the chaos of armed conflicts around the world.

SIW remains committed to ending all forms of violence against women worldwide and continues to support all SIW members and NGO's with similar goals. SIW urges all to stand strong together to push for the urgent and essential changes needed to ensure that global gender equality is fully realised by 2020.
