



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2017

DECLARATION

Socialist International Women affirms its support for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women as an opportunity to focus on the continuing suffering and oppression of women and girls worldwide, and the vital roles that governments and individuals have in creating positive change.

Discussions regarding violence against women have been highly active since the 1970's resulting in the creation of The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and later the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. These documents detail the specific expectations and human rights of women and girls and provide frameworks for governments and communities to progress towards gender equality and maintain environments where women and girls are free from gender based violence. These ground-breaking documents have contributed to immense positive changes and remain valuable reference points for the women's movement today. There is much progress in the elimination of violence against women to be remembered and celebrated as millions of women have become empowered to participate in political processes, govern countries and communities, pursue educational and career dreams and enjoy meaningful lives free from violence that in the past would not have been possible. Unfortunately, however, there remains much work to be done as far too many women and girls continue to experience horrifying violence and abuse.

The worldwide prevalence of physically and mentally damaging gender inequalities in the legal and social status of women, the widespread perpetration of violent acts and displays of demeaning and aggressive behaviours towards women and girls, including increasingly online and in social media, remain of critical and urgent concern. Sadly, there is no region in the world that is entirely unaffected by gender based violence. Even in nations and cultures regarded as progressive towards women the unacceptable reality is that millions of women and girls are harmed and violated on a daily basis.

Today one in three women will experience gender-based violence in their lifetime. Around 250 million girls were forcibly married before the age of 15. Women and girls account for almost 70 per cent of human trafficking. Of those who escape physical violence, the majority will still experience the threat of violence, humiliating remarks and offensive behaviours in their workplaces, their homes and their neighbourhoods. In some regions cyber harassment, with aggressive or sexually explicit words and images sent by text, email or on social media is a regular occurrence for girls from the age of 15 onwards. The likelihood of violence increases for vulnerable or isolated women, such as those living in rural areas or war zones and migrants. All too often these women and girls do not have any form of protection from violence and additionally do not have access to healthcare or emotional support following their abuse. The risk of infections such as HIV, unwanted pregnancies and lasting psychological damage is extremely high, which also affects other members of their families and communities who may depend on them for practical and care-giving support. The disrespect for the human rights and dignity of women and girls in the twenty first century is

a painful reminder of how far there is yet to travel before true gender equality has truly improved the wellbeing of all women and girls.

There are some encouraging changes, however, as the historic tendency has been for women affected by sexual violence in particular to be shamed and intimidated into silence. This is now being strongly challenged internationally with both women and men expressing shock and sadness at the suffering of violated women. Although this is long overdue, the issues of misogynistic and demeaning behaviours towards women are increasingly being highlighted and discussed by both governments and individuals. The outraged reactions are being strongly supported by social media and national news reporting. This is an immensely encouraging trend and it is essential for the achievement of the full emancipation of women and girls that the momentum of open dialogue about violence against women continues and grows. The international solidarity and courage of women to speak out about their experiences is inspirational. It is also a call to action to eradicate the blight of violence against women from our global community.

Socialist International Women will continue its mission to supporting, promoting and discussing violence against women to help ensure that the goal of reaching complete gender equality and the total eradication of violence against women worldwide is realised. SIW is firmly of the view that gender equality and an environment of compassion and mutual respect for women and men are vital for the creation of a peaceful, sustainable global community for the benefit of all citizens.