

AMNESTY NEWS

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March 2004



Stop violence against women

Violence against women is a “cancer” eating away at the core of every society, in every country of the world, AI Secretary General Irene Khan said on 5th March, as she launched the organisations new global campaign to stop violence against women.

Speaking at a press conference in London, Irene Khan said: “Violence against women is a human rights atrocity. From the battlefield to the bedroom, women are at risk. Governments are failing to address the real “terror” of our world that millions of women face every day”.

Publishing a new report outlining the endemic scale and urgency of the problem AI emphasised that at least one in three women in the world will suffer serious violence in their lifetime.

The 122-page report, “*It’s in our hands-Stop violence against women*”, shows that whether in times of peace or war, women are being subjected to atrocities simply because they are women. The report challenges governments to act-both to enact new laws and enforce existing ones that are often ignored-to prevent millions of women being beaten, raped, murdered, assaulted, mutilated and even denied the right to ever exist.

“Cultural” practices such as female genital mutilation (already affecting 135 million girls and women globally, with two million more at risk every year) and so-called “honour” killings (thousands of deaths in dozens of

**Group Meeting
Monday 19th April 2004**

**Frank BOULTON
(Oxford Research Group)
will speak on
IRAQ**

**Avenue St Andrew’s
United Reformed Church
The Avenue, Southampton
(Use main Church entrance)**

7.30pm

ALL WELCOME
(Please note date of meeting)

countries every year) are major factors in violence against women around the world, and AI is calling for these to be generally acknowledged and treated as human rights crimes.

Violence threatens women in multiple forms during conflict e.g. female child soldiers who are routinely raped by their own troops; civilian women and girls who are mutilated, raped and murdered as a weapon of war.

Up to 70% of the world’s female murder victims are killed by male partners, and AI is linking violence in the family (often called “domestic violence”) with other harmful community-based practices and acts of violence that see girls and women being abused and killed on every continent.

AI’s VISION

is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

AI’s MISSION

is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

AI’s CORE VALUES

remain those of : international solidarity, effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, and democracy and mutual respect.

This News Letter is produced by The Southampton Group of AI. It may not necessarily represent the views of Amnesty International.

More details from
John Williams Editor

Stop violence against women. Take action now.

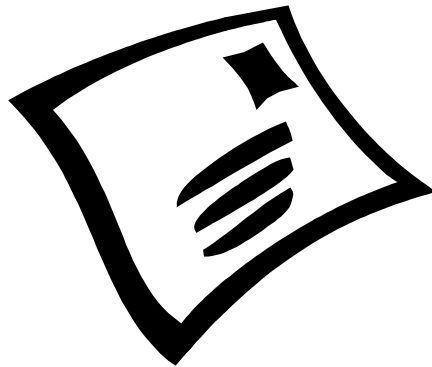
USA: Violence in the family

Maria Teresa Macias (Teresa) had good reason to fear that her husband would kill her: in the 18 months before her death, she appealed to the police for help more than 20 times.

Her husband beat her and sexually assaulted her and their three children. She fled, but he stalked her, terrorising her by making constant death threats. Finally, on 15 April 1996 he shot and killed her, then shot her mother twice, before turning the gun on himself.

Not once in the proceeding months was Teresa's husband arrested for flouting court orders that prohibited him from going near her or contacting her. Appeals to the police for assistance were ignored, rarely even documented, and no follow-up action was taken.

It took her family six years of legal proceedings to hold the Sheriff's Department in Sonoma County, California, to account. In June 2002, the Sheriff's Department paid them \$1 million.



Take action:

*Join our global campaign
for woman's right to
freedom from violence
and discrimination*

Teresa was not just a victim of violence at the hands of her husband: she was also a victim of the state's failure to prevent and punish that violence. She was denied her constitutional right to equal protection under the law because she was woman, a victim of family violence, and a

member of an ethnic minority.

Call on the President of the USA to increase efforts to ensure that US jurisdictions fund and implement the measures initiated by the federal government to combat violence against women in the "Violence Against Woman Act".

Ask him to ensure that all law enforcement agencies meet their obligation to arrest batterers, conduct immediate and exhaustive investigations of all reports of gender-based violence in the home, and receive appropriate training and guidelines.

Send appeals to:

George W Bush,
President,
The White House,
Office of the President,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,
Washington DC 20500,
USA

Send messages of solidarity and support to:

Purple Berets-Women Defending Women,
PO Box 3064, Santa Rosa,
CA 95402, USA

Letter writing guide

- *Always be polite. This rule is essential and invariable. Your aim is to help, not to relieve your own feelings. Governments don't respond to abusive or condemnatory letters (however well deserved!)
- *Always write your letters on the basis that the Government concerned is open to reason and discussion.
- *It is important where possible to stress a country's reputation for moderation and justice, to show respect for its constitution and judicial procedures, and to demonstrate an understanding of current difficulties. This will give you more scope to point out ways in which the human rights situation can be improved.
- *Follow strictly the instructions given by AI.
- *Never use political jargon. Don't give the impression that you are writing because you are ideologically or politically opposed to the government in question. It is far more effective to stress that your concern for human rights is not politically based in any way, but in keeping with basic principles of international law.
- *If appropriate, explain who you are and what you do. It shows your letter is genuine, and that people from varying walks of life are following events in the country concerned.

Group News: March 2004

There was no Group Meeting, instead the Southampton Group held a concert by SEGALULA to mark International Women's Day.

The large audience enjoyed a variety of music and poems by SEGALULA, a local women's group, which celebrated women.

The wonderful evening of celebration was launched by Southampton's Mayor, Parvin Da-

mani, by the lighting of the Amnesty Candle. The Mayor also closed the evening with some messages to the audience about the significance of this day and the fact that however small, we can all make a difference.

Thanks to all those responsible for organising this splendid event.

Selected key statistics about violence to women

- ◆ One in three women in the world will suffer violence in their lifetime.
- ◆ Each year two million girls aged between five and 15 are introduced into the commercial sex market and 700,000 women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- ◆ One in five women in the world will be the victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.
- ◆ In the USA a woman is raped every 90 seconds.
- ◆ In the UK there were 14,000 recorded rapes in 2003 (8% up on 2002); only one in five rape attacks are reported to the police; 167 women are raped every day.
- ◆ 79 countries have no (or unknown) legislation against domestic violence a UNIFEM survey has found.
- ◆ About 70% of female murder victims are killed by their male partners.
- ◆ In 1999 in the USA, over half a million women were the victims of domestic violence; a woman is assaulted (usually by her husband/partner) every 15 seconds and four women die each day as a result of violence in the family-approximately 1,400 women a year.
- ◆ Domestic violence accounts for more death and ill-health than cancer or traffic accidents in Europe.
- ◆ At least 1,000 women and girls a year are killed in "honour crimes" in Pakistan alone-despite under-reporting a minimum of one new case a day (on average) is reported by the Pakistani newspapers.
- ◆ In India there are approximately 15,000 dowry

deaths per year, mostly disguised as kitchen fires.

- ◆ "Honour" defences (partial or complete) are legal in Peru, Bangladesh, Argentina, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, the West Bank and Venezuela.
- ◆ Around 135 million girls and women globally are estimated to have undergone female genital mutilation-a further two million girls a year are at risk of undergoing FGM.
- ◆ 97% of married women in Egypt aged 15 to 49 have undergone FGM. In and around Juarez, Mexico at least 370 women (many low-paid workers in assembly plants for multinational companies) have been murdered in the last 10 years-nearly 140 of these were sexually tortured before they were killed.
- ◆ Between 250,000 and 500,000 women, or about 20% of women, were raped during the 1994 Rwanda genocide.
- ◆ In Bosnia and Herzegovina 20,000-50,000 women were raped during five months of conflict in 1992.
- ◆ Marital rape is recognised specifically as a crime in only 51 countries according to UNIFEM information.
- ◆ In Chile only 3% of all raped women report the incident to the police.
- ◆ In South Africa in 2000 52,975 rapes were reported, with the 12-17 year age group being the most vulnerable-the rape conviction is 7%.
- ◆ In the UK one in four women will experience violence at the hands of a partner.

