

Italy: Call for freedom for migrant women

Wednesday 6 October 2010, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 5 October 2010).

We are again facing the death of a woman, and the severe wounding of another, at the hands of a relative.

We are again facing femicide and violence in the name and on behalf of the sense of male ownership of female lives.

We are again facing the criminal link between submission to the patriarchal tradition and denial of inalienable human rights: as the terrible cases of Hina Salem and Sanaa Dafani, even this time the male part of a family of Pakistani immigrants tried to silence the rebellion of a young woman who was against a fundamentalist view of religion and tradition according to which every woman is destined to live without being able to decide about herself and her freedom.

Near Modena (in Italy), a Pakistani immigrant, because his daughter refused to be forcibly married, went on beating first his wife who courageously supported her twenty-year old daughter, and then, after having killed her, tried to suppress the girl with the help of his son. Fortunately, the girl, although seriously wounded, didn't die.

Once again, disobedience to male laws has been paid with blood and life. In this story, however, there is an important aspect: one mother has tried to support the interests of freedom of her daughter and, for us, this is remarkable.

Many migrant women look with hope to women's rights achieved through hard struggles in the West (but not only there) and they see them as such a great opportunity. Young women, but not only them, hope and dream of studying, getting a job, freely choosing if and when to become wives and mothers, and not being object under the violent symbolism of patriarchal religion. Many of them who live in Italy following the customs of a strict tradition, lose even those rights that in their countries of origin have become law.

If Italy is really a free country, it must above all provide opportunities to these hopes, that belong to the new Italian women of our future.

There will be people who want to build on this tragic episode a new campaign against migration, striking indiscriminately throughout the migrant community. We affirm that this is not the right way, that this is racism. We'd like to live in a friendly country, able to help those who are weaker and where citizenship is a right for everyone, regardless of their geographical origin.

There will be people who invoke the double standard according to which all traditions must be respected, all cultures should be followed without any criticism (consequently one can't intervene in 'private' matters when there are conflicts that affect women's choices inside their families). We say that neither religion, nor tradition can be used as a weapon against anybody.

In many countries around the world, women's rights are still not considered as human rights.

Too often, when it comes to women's rights, especially to sexuality, body, and relationships between men and women, advocacy of human rights gives way to plenty of 'ifs' and to endless 'buts'

according to cultural relativism, even in the name of democracy and tolerance.

If we welcome, encourage, defend immigrant women when they refuse to be oppressed (when they are victims in the name of religion and custom), we will help them find their own freedom. Besides, it will give us Italian, who have struggled or inherited the precious rights of self-determination, the possibility to reaffirm and extend these rights as a political sign of responsibility and civility.

Violence against women is barbaric; women's freedom is civilization.

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P.S.

* Tuesday 5 October 2010 by siawi2:

<http://www.siawi.org/article2215.html>

* <http://www.siawi.org/article2214.html>