

Declaration for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

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In our Women's Global Charter for Humanity we, activists of the World March of Women, affirm the world that we are building. A world where, "all human beings live free of all forms of violence. No human being is the property of another. No person may be held in slavery, forced to marry, subjected to forced labour, trafficked, sexually exploited."

On 25th November 2007 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women - we are mobilised around the world to reassert the values of the Charter: freedom, peace, justice, solidarity and equality.

We denounce patriarchy, a system that for thousands of years has imposed inequality, exploitation, privilege, discrimination, values, standards and policies based on the presumed natural inferiority of women as human beings and on a hierarchy of social roles assigned to women and men. It is this system that generates violence.

We denounce machismo, which denies the right to sexual, reproductive and corporal freedom and to happiness and female pleasure. Machismo uses sexual violence and in this way negatively affects our capacity for enjoyment, the fulfilment of our desires and the exercise of all our rights. Machismo reduces women to the state of sexual objects, condemns lesbians and promotes sexism, prostitution, trafficking of women and girls, violence against women, girls and boys.

We denounce the racism present in our countries that - together with class and gender oppressions - forms a mesh of domination that condemns indigenous, afro-descendent, immigrant and peasant women to the appalling life conditions.

We denounce neoliberal capitalist globalization, which is supported by a sexual division of labour that creates additional inequality between men and women and concomitantly, the potential for increased violence. Our goal is to put an end to violence against women!

On this day we pay homage to the three Mirabal sisters assassinated by order of the dictator Trujillo in the Dominican Republic on 25th November 1960.

To this day Authoritarian States still use violence against women activists of social and women's movements. Just in the last week we received calls for solidarity concerning women from Burma, Colombia,

Guinea, Iran and Pakistan [1].

But where there is violence, there is also resistance. Mexican women are denouncing the links between militarization, the criminalisation of the poor and social movements, and patriarchal violence. Their 'One million signatures for women's security' campaign will be launched today, 25th November 2007, and run on to the 24th May 2008. This campaign enables the voices to be heard of the victims of sexual abuse in the heavily-militarised frontier zones with the United States, or in regions repressed by the State such as Oaxaca and Atenco.

We know that despite all obstacles to the contrary, impunity can be ended through the collective strength of women. On 4th December 2006, women from the Philippines won a great victory when an American soldier was declared guilty of rape of one of their Philippine sisters. It was the first time that an American soldier had been brought to trial for a crime under the jurisdiction of the VFA (Visiting Forces Agreement) - a victory for the exercise of National Sovereignty - and that the anti-rape law had been enforced with a view to consolidating the rights of women.

Our organisation needs to remain very strong and deep-rooted to counter the daily violence suffered by women in regions of conflict. We express our solidarity with the women who struggle against violence suffered by women - sexual abuse, rape, sexual and domestic slavery, torture, murder - in Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, and in Darfur, Sudan. We demand punishment for the perpetrators and the immediate resolution of these conflicts with the participation of women in every stage of the process.

Discourses that evoke the rights of women and their need for 'protection' are used to justify military occupations (for example, in Afghanistan) and the rise of racism and intolerance. In Iraq, Palestine and elsewhere not only are a very high number of victims of war women, but it is they that very often end up responsible for material survival in a context of infrastructural destruction, and emotional survival in a context of total insecurity.

Violence against women is not a cultural, geographical or class phenomenon, violence is transversal and concerns all of us. We will not allow the rhetoric of women's rights to be used to nourish xenophobia and the repression of immigrants.

No form of violence against women should be tolerated! On these grounds European WMW activists have launched their 'Not One More' campaign, which particularly emphasises domestic violence. They demand that laws regarding violence against women are voted on and implemented in all their dimensions: prevention, support centres and shelters, actions for the economic independence of women, etc... They highlight the importance of the work carried out by feminist associations with local populations with the objective of confronting the causes of violence against women.

With respect to the state, our demands are many. But we also call on our collective and individual responsibilities, women and men, to take a stand

against sexist violence wherever we encounter it.

We will march until all women are free from oppression!

Footnotes

[1] To read these calls for solidarity, see www.worldmarchofwomen.org and for more information on the current situation of Martial Law in Pakistan, see <http://pakistan-wmw.blogspot.com/>