



Commission on the Status of Women  
57<sup>th</sup> session

Oral statement

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE**  
**All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.**

*Submitted by the International Alliance of Women, Equal Rights – Equal Responsibilities, an international non-governmental umbrella organization of women's associations and individual members in general consultative status with ECOSOC.*

Despite Art 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, women all over the globe are living in an insecure, dangerous world. And this only for being women. Is humankind slaughtering Eve? And what is the role of the United Nations under these circumstances?

Firstly, what are we talking about when we say slaughtering Eve? We talk about gender-based murder, rape, sexual slavery, trafficking, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, so-called honour crimes, boy preference, neglect and infanticide of females, breast ironing and many more. Yes, indeed, humankind is slaughtering Eve, at a horrible scale! Only one example: According to estimates by the United Nations, up to 200 million women and girls were demographically missing in 2005. Given the biological norm of 100 new-born girls to every 103 new-born boy, millions more women should be living amongst us. If they are not, if they are “missing”, then they have been killed; they have died through neglect and mistreatment<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly, the role of the United Nations is indispensable in advocating respect for the human rights of the individual, woman or man, girl or boy. To name only the most important documents:

65 years ago, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by 48 votes to none, with 8 abstentions; 20 years ago, 171 Member States adopted by consensus the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights. In 1953 the United Member States adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women- one of the core documents for the International Alliance of Women /Equal Rights-Equal Responsibilities, featuring women's active and passive voting right, the right to hold public office and to exercise all public functions. In 1999, with the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of

<sup>1</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces: “Women in an Insecure World”, 2005

**President**

Lyda Versteegen  
Alexander Gogelweg 29  
2517 JE Den Haag  
The Netherlands  
iawpres@womenalliance.org

**Executive Vice Presidents**

Rafique Bashan  
United Kingdom  
Mapule Ncanywa  
South Africa

**Treasurer**

Thorbjörg Inga Jonsdottir  
Hamratangi 1  
270 Mosfellsbaer  
Iceland  
iawtreas@womenalliance.org

**Secretary General**

Lene Pind  
Åløkken 11, Bellinge  
5250 Odense SV  
Denmark  
iawsec@womenalliance.org

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Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), individual women and groups were granted the right to lodge petitions and complaints<sup>2</sup>. In 2000, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Each of these texts represents a milestone in the efforts to empower women and to address and eliminate violence against women.

What has happened since then? Is the United Nations system adequately responding?

Here are only few examples:

Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals 2000 “Promote gender equality and empower women” clearly encapsulates the token woman identification. According to IAW none of the MDGs can be reached without the active and equal participation of women and the respect of their human rights.

The Commission on the Status of Women in 2003 (47<sup>th</sup> session) failed to adopt draft agreed conclusions on violence against women. In 2012 (56<sup>th</sup> session) it also failed to reach conclusions which should have outlined the fundamental guidelines for gender equality policy for the coming years. Given CSW’s role to set global standards for all member states of the UN any failure to comply with this mandate hampers the implementation of national governments to comply with human rights requirements.

The Commission on Crime Prevention and Control failed to confirm the principle of good governance in its most recent deliberations. The absence of good governance thwarts the efforts of women to attain such rights and protection from their governments<sup>3</sup>.

IAW members note that international rules for gender equality are not lacking. What is lacking is the implementation of these rules including adequate budgeting and monitoring, interlinked with good governance and the political will of the rulers. Furthermore: In line with the recently adopted Vienna Declaration on Femicide<sup>4</sup>, IAW emphasizes that traditions and culture cannot be used as justification for the violation of women’s human rights, in particular the right to life and the right to be free from violence.

We, the members of the International Alliance of Women, in the light of the above, therefore urge governments to ratify and implement existing international instruments for the protection of female victims of violence, including monitoring and adequate funding for this purpose Moreover, we urge them to collect and publish reliable data on the dimension of the issue.

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<sup>2</sup> A proposal to add this protocol to the Convention made by former IAW President Alice Marangopoulos at the 1993 session of the Commission on the Status of Women in Vienna,

<sup>3</sup> In this connection, IAW considers the widespread practice of decision-making by “consensus”, applied in several UN bodies in recent years as primarily responsible for these failures

<sup>3</sup> Vienna Symposium on Femicide, 26 November 2012, held at the UN Office Vienna.

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In particular:

We call on governments

to revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex and remove gender bias in the administration of justice

to recognize femicide as a crime and its costs.

We call on UN Member States to amend the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1946, in order to include the gender dimension.

We call on governments, international organizations and private initiatives to establish rules guaranteeing the participation of women in peace-building and reconciliation programmes.

We call on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to consider violence against women's human rights through religious and traditional practices, such as FGM, in the framework of General Recommendations 12, 14 and 19.

And finally, IAW members are determined to work toward a post-2025 outcome based on the vision of peaceful and non-violent societies and the fulfilment of human rights and, in particular, women's human rights.

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