



To  
High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Ms. Navanethem Pillay  
Geneva

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Vienna, April 5, 2009

Ref.: PUBLIC FLOGGING OF YOUNG WOMAN IN SWAT VALLEY: STATEMENT CONDEMNING BLATANT ACTIONS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS

During CSW 53 the International Alliance of Women gained wide support for a letter which expressed alarm at actions by the Taliban in the Swat District of Pakistan to instill its extremist interpretation of Sharia law that "*education for girls is against Islamic teachings*" and to destroy schools and intimidate schoolgirls and their parents. This letter, addressed to Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon and the Government of Pakistan, was sent on 19 March 2009.

Now, less than a month later, a horrifying video is circulating on the Internet and being shown by various media of a public flogging of a young woman. A Taliban spokesman, Muslim Khan, claimed responsibility for the flogging. "She came out of her house with a man who was not her husband, so we must punish her. There are boundaries you cannot cross," he said. He also defended the Taliban's right to thrash women shoppers who were inappropriately dressed, saying *it was permitted under Islamic law*.

There is some question as to whether the flogging took place before or following the signing of a controversial peace deal under which the provincial government ceded control of the Swat Valley's judicial system to the militant Taliban. This is immaterial. Regardless of when it took place, this type of action should be internationally condemned.

Too often something like this becomes just a 24 hour news grab and then forgotten. The old media adage that *Yesterday's news is dead* is only too true of this and many other 'news stories'. Yet the barbaric practices continue unchecked, not just in full public view but in many countries behind 'closed doors' with tacit acceptance, if not approval, based on traditional/cultural/religious practices that were in force generations earlier.

The International Alliance of Women calls on the High Commissioner for Human Rights to condemn these practices generally and without reservation.

Rosy Weiss  
President  
International Alliance of Women

P.S. Besides being largely distributed among international NGOs and the IAW constituency, this letter is also sent to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and to H.E. Mr. Martin Ihoeghian Uhomobhi, President of the Human Rights Council.

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**President**

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