

Human Rights Council 8th Session - 2 - 18 June 2008

Conchita Poncini, IFUW, released the Joint Statement in the General debate on women's human rights: Violence against women

Statement Delivered on 5 June 2008 by Berhane Raswork, Inter-African Committee

This is a joint statement by the following NGOs: International Federation of University Women, Pan Pacific & South East Asian Women's Association, World Movement of Mothers, Worldwide Organization of Women, Women's World Summit Foundation, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Inter- African Committee, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Women's Federation for World Peace International, International Planetary Syntheses, Solar Cooker International.

1. Violence against women is the most widespread violation of human rights in each country and region of the world and at any level of development. It is a phenomenon linked to direct or indirect inequality between women and men in the history of humanity.
2. The traditional exclusion of women from the public domain has relegated women of all ages to the private domain and has restricted the accessibility of women to the international human rights discourse. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence that often goes unprosecuted by law because of its private nature. Such violence should be condemned and punished as a crime. We call on the Council to review progress and accountability of the Ministerial Declaration signed by Foreign Ministers and other Ministers attending the Commission on Human Rights in 2004 on Violence Against Women, notably domestic violence. Additionally, we urge the Council to acknowledge that through domestic conflict and the disruption of supportive traditional family patterns, elderly women often suffer particular hardship.
3. The Beijing+5 review 2000 Agreed Conclusions call for treating all forms of violence against women a criminal offence. Some advances have been made in addressing crimes in the name of honour, dowry related violence, acid attacks, racially motivated violence, marital rape, forced marriages and female genital mutilation. It is crucial that these be brought before the Council and followed up in the Universal Periodic Reviews. An extreme form of VAW is collective rape in armed conflicts that should be condemned as crime against humanity. The Hague International Criminal Court at the hearing on the Rwanda genocide pronounced violence against women in the form of collective rape as a crime against humanity. We recommend that the Council look at this continuing phenomenon in armed conflicts within the Universal Periodic Reviews and by the Special Rapporteur on VAW.
4. Finally, we feel that active participation of NGOs with wide knowledge and practical experience from the ground is critical in ensuring success of future events on women's rights and gender equality and we recommend that the Geneva-based NGO Committee on the Status of Women be consulted in this regard.