

**WILPF REPORT ON ITEM 3:
SR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**
(11th HRC Session - 03 June 2009)



One Page Summary:

On Monday the 3rd of June the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences, took place. The Special Rapporteur, Yakin Ertürk, presented her final report at the end of her 6-year period. The first section of the report covered her activities over 2008 and 2009, specifically focusing on the country missions she undertook to Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Moldova. The second section of the report focused on the political economy surrounding women's rights. This emphasis was chosen by Ertürk, because the fulfillment of social and economic rights is amongst the causes and consequences of violence against women.

The Mandate itself was established fifteen years ago, in 1994 and was reviewed in side-events where a report was presented on the impact of the mandate. Please click [here](#) to read the comprehensive review of the impact of the Mandate between 1994 and 2009. In addition, the SR on VAW

During the interactive dialogue countries generally posed a variety of questions on how to improve efforts to eliminate violence against women, and in particular the role the Council could play. A few countries criticised the 15 years review of the mandate by arguing that the Special Rapporteur addressed issues and made references outside of her mandate and interfered in domestic affairs. Disputed references included issues regarding sexual orientation, same sex relationships, and safe abortions. In her concluding remarks Ms Ertürk recommended that the HRC should:

1. Launch an initiative on indicators and systematic data collection on VAW.
2. Focus on specific groups when discussing VAW.
3. Convene a meeting in conjunction with Beijing Plus 15.
4. Should strengthen the follow-up mechanism for the VAW mandate.

Most of the NGOs raised points over summary executions. WILPF registered for an oral statement but did not make the list to speak unfortunately. The same statement on SCR 1820 was made in the General Debate under Item 3.

Overview:

1. SR on Violence Against Women
2. State Interactive Dialogue
3. NHRI & NGO Input

1. SR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN *(Ms. Yakin Ertürk)*

The final report addresses the issue of the financial structure, inequality and violence against women. Unless women develop their capabilities and engage in economic activity, they will be unable to reach their economic rights. Ms Ertürk argues that economic and social aspects are often neglected in the strategies to address violence against women. The report claims that global phenomena such as armed conflict, natural disasters and other crises have created new vulnerabilities for women, thus increasing the risks of violence and exploitation. The declining role of the State and the privatisation of public services have often created a vacuum for poorer groups, who increasingly have to rely on community level survival strategies, which are mainly based on women's initiatives and labour. These communal enforcement mechanisms have strengthened the role of non-State actors and increased conservative interpretations of culture and religion. Such trends have posed new challenges for the rule of law and the universal application of human rights norms.

Brief overview of country missions undertaken:

- *[Saudi Arabia]*: Prior to the visit of the SR on VAW their CEDAW report had been presented. Positive developments: 1) women's education: significant improvements on women's literacy rates and schooling attendance, 2) recognition of violence against women. Regrettably, the increased women's education has not been exploited, because women are still excluded from the work force and decision making positions. Women still lack autonomy and have little chances of escaping abusive marriages. Violence against female domestic workers is not sufficiently addressed.
- *[Tajikistan]*: The political, economical and social situation in the country is unstable. Women have been hard hit by the consequences of the transition from planned economy to capitalist economy. Violence against women and girls within families is widespread and accepted as day to day behavior. Women and girls are victims of sexual violence at home and as part of trafficking. Responses by State bodies to fight VAW have been insufficient. Women in abusive environments have little to no options of escaping violence.
- *[Moldova]*: Most Moldovan women suffer from patriarchal and discriminatory attitudes, which make them victims of violence. Irregular and illegal migration leads to trafficking and slavery, which can be seen as torture and ill treatment. The law on assuring equal opportunities will play an important roll in forming the framework for implemented measures.

Requests were send out to visit Zimbabwe, Jordan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. VAW has become a major agenda item. SG UNITE campaign will have a positive impact. SC 1820 was mentioned and the work underway to create a Treaty on Violence Against Women. Ertürk expressed her thankfulness for the recent ratification of CEDAW by Qatar without any reservations, which amount to the number of ratifications to 186 in total.

2. STATE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Moldova :

Hopes to continue the dialogue, especially in linkage to the recommendations. Women have been increasingly taking part in the labour market and increasingly are capable of holding jobs on decision making level. Since July 2008, Moldova is implementing current legislation.

The representative emphasized that migration policy represents a high priority. The National Action Plan is part of the strategy the Moldovan government is taking to balance gender.

Saudi Arabia:

After the report was drawn up, the number of counselors, women in decision making decisions was increased. The Saudi representative emphasized that their country was led by the moderate form of Islam. It is not true that rape is not incriminated by Saudi law. Sharia law puts five sentences on the crime of rape and sexual violence. Forced labour, sexual exploitation or any other exploitation law will be examined very seriously. Saudi Arabia said to work as much as possible on eliminating VAW.

Tajikistan:

Tajikistan ratified CEDAW and ensured it was part of the national legislative framework. The representative said to have taken multiple steps to work towards increased women's rights and empowerment, in close cooperation with NGOs.

Pakistan (on behalf of OIC):

Pakistan congratulated the SR on VAW on her work and said that she rightly concludes that cultural rationales are based on power dynamics. The current economic system has given opportunities as well as marginalized women. Economic and cultural rights are at the centre of ensuring the fulfillment of women's rights. The representative expressed strong concern on the paper on 15 years of the SR on VAW: 1) sexual orientation, 2) abortion as well as 3) expanding the definition of the concept of family. The understanding of the SR's mandate is best left to the Member States.

Slovenia:

Said the report shows the universality of violence against women. Questions: 1) What is your view in respect to the initiative to introduce a UN mechanism to bring together a number of UN bodies and Treaties working against discrimination of women? 2) Questions on the specific situation of Dalit women: How can Dalit women ensure to have access to their rights?

Djibouti:

More importance should be given to professional training of women, especially from the rural environment. Djibouti established a social development fund and micro credit fund.

Burkina Faso:

The impact of the economic crisis on the enjoyment of women's rights in developing countries is significant. The government of Burkina Faso emphasized their fight against FGM. They presented numbers which clearly shows a declining trend.

Austria:

Thanked the SR on VAW for the report on the discriminatory policies and practices that keep women from enjoying their social and economic rights. Questions: 1) Elaborate further on the concepts introduced in the report. 2) How is appropriate follow-up ensured and what role does the HRC play in this?

Australia:

Access to education and housing is important for a holistic approach to tackle VAW. Australia said to take a zero-tolerance approach to fight VAW.

Sweden:

Lack of adequate housing is a major factor leading to VAW. The situation in Sri Lanka is of special concern to Sweden, with the high level of internal displacement. Question: What kind of advice would you like to extend to the Sri Lankan government on this issue?

Iceland:

Please elaborate on the point how bonus packages will not have a stronger impact on men than women. How will 1325 be better implemented, so that women's participation can be better guaranteed in post-conflict situations.

Republic of Korea:

Mentioned; 'Unite to end violence against women', the global campaign launched by the UNSG. Republic of Korea presented that they are implementing measures to ensure the fulfillment of economic rights of women, especially migrant women. Decentralized enforcement of economic rights is proposed by the SR on VAW. The Republic of Korea believes that the central government can influence micro-economic structures.

Thailand:

The current economic and political order are part of the consideration of the current situation of VAW, a holistic approach is needed. The negative impact of globalization and the current economic crisis on violence against women needs to be studied further. Thailand is working on maternal health care for women in rural areas. Thailand says to have achieved equality in participation in tertiary education between women and men.

Finland:

Questions: 1) There is an imbalance between social and economic rights versus civil and political rights. How can this be addressed? 2) The failure to address women's economic and social situation in post-conflict situations increases the risk for abuse. How can this be addressed in relation to SC 1325? 3) How does the SR see the position of men in fighting VAW? 4) HIV/AIDS is hampering the fight against VAW. Can efforts to fight HIV/AIDS be better harnessed into the fight against VAW?

United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the Arab Group):

It is rare for governments to incorporate social and economic rights in the strategies adopted to fight VAW. Globalization, the financial crisis and natural disaster worsen the situation of women. There is a relationship between work and the idea that women should ensure to fulfill their right to housing and food. Why does the SR not highlight the violations of HR of women and girls in the OPTs? There are many cases that women have suffered from humiliation and torture in Israeli prisons.

Sri Lanka:

Was critical towards the OHCHR, which wanted to open a OHCHR office in Sri Lanka two years ago, but did not do this in sufficient cooperation with the government of Sri Lanka.

Indonesia:

Ensuring gender equality is necessary for women to get access to fulfill their rights. We are especially concerned with women in positions of working girls. Indonesia is implementing measures to fight VAW. Could you inform what can be done in the area of public policy?

Canada (convener of informal sessions on the Mandate):

Questions: Given that the mandate will be ended. What were the key challenges and trends over the last six years? And what can current HRC members do about this?

New Zealand:

How can the HRC contribute to the fight against VAW? How can the HRC connect better to New York and have a greater impact on the grassroots level? The eradication of VAW is essential for all economic and social development and is not solely a women's issue. VAW is a leading cause of HIV/AIDS. What can the Council do to fight VAW via fighting HIV/AIDS?

Norway:

Norway agrees that the State has an important role to play to decrease the impact of the economic crisis on VAW. Would it be useful to compile data and analyze the role of the economic downfall on developments of VAW in the developing world? A change in male attitudes and practices is needed to tackle VAW.

Italy:

Paragraph 18 is linked to Italy, but is not correct. The fight against violence and discrimination has been seen as the major forte in the candidature to the HRC. Italy pays special attention to the fight against FGM. Italy will host an international conference on VAW, which is seen as an international problem.

Belgium:

It is still necessary to recognize that women, just as men, have the right to control their own life. What can be done for women to have full freedom and have control over their own body? What is the role of the State in this regard?

United States of America:

The USA listed strategies and measures taken and mentioned on SCR 1325 & 1820. The SR should in the future make comments on how to deal with women who are not able to fulfill multiple rights. How can the HRC better protect women of VAW, especially women who are victims of multiple forms of discrimination?

Turkey:

The SR is encouraged to further elaborate on local livelihood strategies to fight VAW? How would this be effectively monitored? Turkey is planning to increase the number of women's shelters and their service.

Denmark:

Raised the situation of Dalit women and transgender women.

Russian Federation:

Expressed concern that the studies are too academic and that the recommendations are too abstract and theoretical. States are entitled to choose themselves which strategies will be taken, in the context of the specific situation of women in their State. The end result will be the same according to the Russian representative. The CSW should work together with the SR to avoid duplication.

Egypt:

Thanked the SR for the analysis of the impact of the Israeli attacks on women in Gaza. A national strategy to battle VAW is currently being prepared in close collaboration with civil society. States and international organizations should address the underlying causes of violence against women. Egypt disagreed with the call on intervention with internal State affairs, specifically on the situation of abortion in countries.

Brazil:

It is not always duly recognized that governments should provide equal economic opportunities to ensure the fulfillment of women's rights. Professional training is currently being supported by the Brazilian government. How can States participate in the HRC framework to ensure that the fight against VAW will be effective?

Netherlands:

No strong comment made.

Switzerland:

The Swiss representative stated that it was an important point made that there should be a better focus on the fulfillment of social and economic rights for women.

Japan:

Traditional perceptions of gender roles – economically and socially – should be challenged to fight VAW. Japan stressed the importance of awareness raising. There was a part of the report that stated that women cannot support themselves independently and the Japanese representative contested this.

Algeria:

In rare occasions all rights of women are holistically taken into account when trying to tackle VAW. Algeria promoted its own policies and strategies. The impact of the current financial crisis should be taken into account. Algeria regretted the inclusion of the following issues in: 1) sexual orientation and 2) the concept of the family.

Senegal:

Women's entrepreneurship should not be forgotten.

Nigeria:

Called for gender sensitive knowledge on the impact of the current economic crisis.

Palestine:

Highlighted the special report prepared by the SR to promote the protection and safeguarding of the rights of women in the OPTs. Uniform national policies are advised. Political representation have been improved according to the Palestinian representative.

Holy See:

The Holy See named sexual violence as a wartime crime, strategy and way to enslave women. The Holy See expressed their critical thoughts on references related to same-sex unions, the expanded idea of the family and sexual orientation.

United Kingdom:

No strong comments made.

Maldives:

Maldives acknowledged the prevalence of VAW in their country and that VAW goes mostly unreported. Question: Can the SR recommend how to increase the number of females in decision making positions?

Colombia:

The State should agree that due attention is paid to the special needs of women and girls.

3. NHRI & NGO INPUT

[Most of the organizations raised points over summary executions. WILPF registered for an oral statement but did not make the list to speak unfortunately. The same statement on SCR 1820 was made in the General Debate under Item 3.]

Organisation against Torture:

Raised issues concerning the victimization of women held in prison, not only by torture, but also by rape. Eleven women who were tortured by the Mexican police force also reported to be raped. In this regard CEDAW linkages were made. The Organisation against Torture invited the SR on VAW to visit Mexico in combination with other Special Procedures.

General Federation of Arab Women:

Raised the issue of the situation of women in Iraq. Pushed for the discussion of the situation of human rights in Iraq.

Arab commission for human rights:

Emphasized that Islam and the right of women go really well together.