

For a Life Free from Violence Against Women and Girls!
Call For Participation: International Women's Day March On March 8, 2013

During the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57), taking place at the United Nations in New York from March 4-15, 2013, Member State representatives will discuss the advances they have made in the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. **Participatory Human Rights Advancement Society, Dhaka, Bangladesh has joined the event as co-sponsor and endorsed the call “For a Life Free from Violence Against Women and Girls!”**. To see a chart of all participating organizations and activities please [click here](#).

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During the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57), taking place at the United Nations in New York from March 4-15, 2013, Member State representatives will discuss the advances they have made in the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. In response to this discussion AWID, the Center for Women's Global Leadership, United Methodist Women and the Women & Global Migration Working Group are calling on women's organizations around the world to hold rallies, marches and vigils on International Women's Day, Friday March 8, 2013, to advocate that States respond, protect, and prevent violence against women and girls in all their diversity!

This march calls on States to take concrete steps to end impunity, one of the biggest challenges to achieving justice in cases of violence against women; fund programs and services for gender equality and the realization of human rights; decrease military spending, one of the driving forces of violence against women; and protect women human rights defenders, who are at the forefront of defending women's rights and who face increased levels of gender-based violence globally.

1. Take Concrete Steps to End Impunity! Today, millions of women and girls still suffer disproportionately from violence both in peace and in war, at the hands of the State; non-state actors, including transnational corporations; and in the home and community. Around the world women in all their diversity are beaten, raped, mutilated, and killed with impunity.^[i] State policy must explicitly address the realities of women and girls who experience multiple oppressions due to race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, sexual orientation, marital status, age or national origin, including rural women, immigrant women, indigenous women, if ALL women are to be able to fully claim rights. States have the obligation to prevent, protect against, and prosecute violence against women whether perpetrated by private or public actors. ^[ii] States also have a responsibility to uphold standards of due diligence and take steps to fulfill their responsibility to protect individuals from human rights abuses. ^[iii] But there is a lack of State accountability when it comes to government's role in perpetrating violence against women, the role of transnational corporations that work in tandem with States to usurp natural resources and displace entire communities violently, and in protecting women and girls from violence in the home and community. Within militarism's culture of violence, individuals in positions of authority believe they can commit crimes with impunity, which is exemplified by high rates of sexual violence within the military, threats by police to women reporting cases of violence,

ongoing harassment and intimidation, forced “virginity tests” on female protestors by authorities, and violence against women living and working around military bases. [iv] Women human rights defenders who work on issues related to economic, social, and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights are also targeted. [v] This State failure to bring perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence to justice remains a critical challenge to ending violence against women. Across the globe more needs to be done to prevent violence against women and to prosecute those who perpetrate violence against women.[vi]

2. Fund Gender Equality and Human Rights Instead of Militarism! Military expenditure, the arms trade and conflict often exacerbate violence against women as well as decrease financial resources for social and economic rights and the promotion of gender equality. States have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill economic and social rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) specifies in Article 2.1 that, “Each State Party...undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.” Rather than allocating high levels of expenditure toward the military, States should increase financial resources to advance economic and social rights and women’s rights to build a culture of human rights instead of a culture of militarism.

3. Protect Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)! The world over, against all odds, Women Human Rights Defenders work tirelessly for the protection and promotion of human rights.[vii] Yet, violence against these advocates is increasing around the world.[viii] As human rights defenders, Women’s Human Rights Defenders face the same types of risks faced by all defenders who work to uphold the rights of people, communities and the environment; as women, they are also exposed to gender-specific risks and are targets of gender-based violence, such as sexual abuse, harassment, violations from husbands/partners and male colleagues, and violations by the State. [ix] They also face heightened risks and vulnerabilities because of their work on women-specific rights/issues that frequently challenge cultural stereotypes and religion. Their work can raise levels of hostility, more so because women are considered markers of culture and religion.[x]

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